The Ontology of Evil:
Schelling and Pareyson

A thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

Daniele Fulvi

PhD Candidate in Philosophy

Western Sydney University

School of Humanities and Communication Arts

2020
Acknowledgements

First of all, I acknowledge the Darug, Tharawal, Cabrogal and Wiradjuri peoples as the traditional owners of the land on which this thesis has been written. Sovereignty was never ceded, and this has always been and always will be Aboriginal land.

I want to sincerely thank my principal supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Diego Bubbio, for his priceless guidance over the last few years. He had the initial idea for this research project in 2015 and without his encouragement and advice I would have never had the opportunity to continue and complete my education in Australia. I also have to thank my co-supervisor, Prof. Dennis Schmidt, for his very precious support and for his tremendous insights.

My sincere thanks also go to Dr. Chris Fleming and Assoc. Prof. Matt McGuire for having been part of my Confirmation of Candidature Committee. I also want to thank Assoc. Prof. Jennifer Mensch, Assoc. Prof. Dimitris Vardoulakis, Dr. Paul Alberts-Dezeew, and in general all the philosophy staff at the School of Humanities and Communication Arts of Western Sydney University, for having always been extremely friendly and available to me all the time. Special thanks also go to Dr. Wayne Peake for his immense patience and inestimable support for all the paperwork and administrative procedures I have had to complete. His help really made my life easier.

Moreover, I wish to thank Prof. Lore Hühn for having been my Gastgeber during my period as visiting PhD student at the Albert-Ludwigs Universität in Freiburg, Germany. I also want to thank all the friendly academic staff that helped me in Freiburg, and especially Dr. David Espinet and Dr. Tobias Keiling.

Additionally, I would also like to thank Prof. Maurizio Pagano and Assoc. Prof. Luca Ghisleri for having been my academic hosts during my semester as visiting PhD student at the Università del Piemonte Orientale “Amedeo Avogadro” in Vercelli, Italy, together with Dr. Ombretta Finotello for her help with the paperwork. I also have to thank Dr. Ezio Gamba, secretary of the Centro Studi Filosofico-religiosi “L. Pareyson” in Turin, for his help and assistance during my consultation of the archives of the Pareyson Study Centre. I also have to mention Prof. Gianni Vattimo, Prof. Claudio Ciancio, Prof. Francesco Tomatis, Dr. Emilio Corriero and all the academic staff in Turin and Vercelli for their friendly help during my stay in Italy.

Furthermore, I have to thank all the fellow PhD students, masters students, researchers, scholars and gracious people who have crossed my path during this journey. The complete list of them would be too long, but I am really grateful for every single person I have met and all the new friends I have made in Australia, Germany and Italy. My life changed for the better once they all became part of it.

I also want to thank and give all of my love to my father Antonello, my mother Stefania, my brothers Alessio and Leonardo and my grandmothers Gianna and Maria for their love and support during these years. I owe them everything and they have always been in my heart and in my mind, no matter how many thousands of kilometres we have been apart.
Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

(Signature)
Declarations

The writing of this thesis has been made possible also thanks to some external support that I received during my candidature in addition to the support provided by a Western Sydney University Postgraduate Research Award for International Students, which I received in 2016.

Specifically, I am referring to support from the Centro Studi Filosofico-religiosi “L. Pareyson” of the Università degli Studi di Torino (Italy), whose archival materials constitute an important part of my research. Also, I have received the support of the Albert-Ludwigs Universität of Freiburg (Germany) and of the Università del Piemonte Orientale “Amedeo Avogadro” of Vercelli (Italy), having spent one semester in each of these universities as a visiting PhD student in 2018.

Finally, I acknowledge the professional editorial assistance in the form of copyediting, but not proofreading, provided by Christopher Brennan, STB, AE (Accredited Editor, Institute of Professional Editors, Australia – IPEd), according to Standards D and E of the *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*, 2nd ed. (IPEd, 2013).
Table of Contents

List of abbreviations .......................................................................................................................... 7
Abstract.................................................................................................................................................. 10
Introduction............................................................................................................................................... 11

Chapter 1

F. W. J. Schelling: Evil, Freedom and Experience ...................................................... 21

1.1 Ground and Existence: Evil as a positive force .............................................................. 22
1.1.1 The Historical Background of Schelling’s Philosophy............................................ 23
1.1.2 From a Moral to an Ontological Point of View: Schelling’s Conception of Evil............. 38
1.1.3 "Where There Is No Struggle, There Is No Life": The Struggle Between Good and Evil as the Fundamental Condition of the Possibility of (Absolute) eExperience ............................................... 50

1.2 Freedom and Necessity: "The Capacity for Good and Evil» ........................................ 59
1.2.1 Freedom, Necessity and Temporality ........................................................................ 60
1.2.2 Freedom and Intuition ............................................................................................... 72
1.2.3 Freedom and Causality ............................................................................................ 83

1.3 Schelling’s Heritage: Some Afterthoughts ..................................................................... 92
1.3.1 Heidegger and Jaspers Interpreters of Schelling ..................................................... 93
1.3.2 An Alternative Reading of Schelling ...................................................................... 107
1.3.3 Towards a Theory of Absolute Experience ............................................................. 116

Chapter 2

Luigi Pareyson's Approach to the Question of Evil: A Critique.... 128

2.1 Pareyson’s Existentialist Interpretation of Schelling ................................................ 129
2.1.1 The Relevance and Originality of Pareyson’s Philosophy ........................................... 130
2.1.2 The Influence of Jaspers and Heidegger ................................................................. 141
2.1.3 Pareyson’s Reading of Schelling .................................................................................. 150

2.2 Evil, freedom and transcendence ...................................................................................... 163
2.2.1 "A Temerarious Discourse": Pareyson’s Conception of Evil .................................... 163
2.2.2 Transcendence, Freedom and Necessity ..................................................................... 174
2.2.3 Transcendence and Myth ............................................................................................ 183

2.3 A Critique of Pareyson’s Ontology ..................................................................................... 192
2.3.1 An Alternative Reading of Late Schelling ................................................................. 193
2.3.2 A Critique of Pareyson’s Reading of Schelling .......................................................... 205
2.3.3 A General Critique to Pareyson’s Existential Hermeneutics ..................................... 214

Chapter 3
Towards an Ontology of Immanence: Freedom as Resistance.......224

3.1 The immanence of Evil ..................................................................................................... 225
3.2 Absolute experience ........................................................................................................ 234
3.3 Freedom as Resistance .................................................................................................... 243

Bibliography ........................................................................................................................ 254
List of Abbreviations

Schelling’s Works

When citing from Schelling’s works, I will include two references: the first one from the English translation, and then from the original German Complete Works (*Sämtliche Werke*). In doing so, I will use the following abbreviations:

German Works


English Translations


PL for Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism, in Marti, The Unconditional in Human Knowledge.


Pareyson’s Works

When citing from Pareyson’s works, I will include both the reference from the original Italian work and, when available, the English translation. All translations are my own whenever I am referring only to the original Italian. Instead, in the footnotes, when a double reference for a quote is supplied, the first citation gives the location of the passage in the English translation, from which the passage has been copied; and the second citation gives the location of the equivalent passage in the Italian original. Also, I will often refer to Pareyson’s personal notes and unpublished excerpts, which I had the opportunity to consult in the archives of the Centro Studi Filosofico-religiosi “L. Pareyson” in Turin. I will then use the following abbreviations:

Italian Works


KJ for Karl Jaspers (Genoa: Marietti, 1983).


VI for *Verità e Interpretazione* (Milan: Mursia, 1971).

*English Translations*


Abstract

This dissertation focuses on the question of Evil in the philosophies of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling and Luigi Pareyson. Both Schelling and Pareyson shift the discussion of Good and Evil from the more traditional sense in which those notions have been understood as moral matters to regarding them rather as ontological forces that ground human life. One of the primary goals of this dissertation is to think through the meaning and importance of this shift for both Schelling’s and Pareyson’s philosophies.

The first chapter analyses Schelling’s understanding of Evil and Freedom by arguing for a strong degree of continuity between Schelling’s Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom and his early Philosophy of Nature. By so doing, the thesis argues that Schelling’s philosophy can be understood more effectively as an ontology of immanence, aimed at grasping the material conditions of the possibility not only of Evil, but also of life. That is, the thesis argues that Schelling’s discourse on Evil is ontological, since it relates Evil itself to the grounding forces of Being, and immanent, since it excludes any form of transcendent or supernatural Being.

The second chapter is devoted to Pareyson’s interpretation of the question of Evil by focusing on his reading of Schelling’s philosophy and by highlighting the religious and transcendent nature of Pareyson’s speculative reading of the issue. Drawing on the conclusions of the previous chapter, it is argued that Pareyson’s approach is unviable – or problematic at best – for two main reasons: first, Pareyson’s transcendent account of being is abstract and arbitrary and does not fit with Schelling’s thought; second, maintaining the discourse of Being on the level of immanence leads both to avoiding the abovementioned unviability of a transcendent explanation and to building a more robust understanding of such a question.

Building on the results of the two previous chapters, the final chapter further advocates for the fruitfulness of a philosophical perspective that addresses Evil in the context of an ontology of immanence. Such a perspective, it is argued, can also lead to a better comprehension of the grounding conditions of life and experience, and to an understanding of freedom in terms of Widerstand (resistance). In this context, resistance has to be conceived of as a fundamental ontological disposition of human beings, which means the inevitability of being in opposition to something and of resisting its occurrence because of the impossibility of being (and doing) otherwise.
Introduction

Evil as an Ontological Force: Research Case and Intellectual Context

To deal with the question of Evil in the 21st century is not an easy task; indeed, this question has been one of the longest-standing issues in the whole history of Western philosophy. From Plato to Kant, from Epicurus to Leibniz, from Voltaire to Nietzsche, the question of Evil has been one of the favoured objects of reflection of some of the most eminent thinkers in the Western philosophical tradition. Often linked to a metaphysical understanding of the world, Evil has mostly been defined as a negative concept and explained in terms of a lack or deprivation of Good, and even in terms of non-Being and nothingness. This kind of understanding has also generally been built upon the following moral and religious statement: since God is fundamentally Good, and God is the creator of the world, then the essence of God’s creation cannot include Evil. Consequently, Evil itself can only occur as a withdrawal from, or a negation of, that essence, namely as something external to the goodness of God and Being.

In this sense, Leibniz’s theodicy defines Being as such as identical with the metaphysical Good; consequently, Evil is defined as a deprivation of reality, that is, as non-Being, and the responsibility for Evil cannot be attributed to God. Similarly, Augustine claimed that the essence of reality is Good, and that Evil is the withdrawal of that essence.¹ In both cases, Evil is defined and understood as (negatively) related to Good and as a mere lack or deprivation of it; that is, Evil is understood in morally negative terms and not as an independent and autonomous concept. Such an account, I believe, does not grasp the true and effective nature of Evil.² However, here I am not strictly providing an argument against this conception of Evil, as this would take me too far from the purpose of my research – which is rather to advocate for a different perspective that, I argue, is able to grasp Evil in all its concreteness and without reducing it to non-Being or to a lack of Good. Indeed, Evil can be

explained to be as real as Good is, so that it can be returned to its positive ontological status, as is the case for the Good.

In order to do this, I will focus on a different tradition of thought, according to which Evil has to be understood as a positive ontological principle that is opposed (but not subordinate) to Good. Being two opposing ontological principles, Good and Evil are understood as engaged in a constant struggle for their own actualisation at the expense of the other principle. Nevertheless, these two principles, although being in opposition, do not have to be understood as separate, that is, as belonging to two different ontological levels. In other words, both Good and Evil pertain to Being and to God, even if they play different roles and are not simplistically reducible to each other.

Within this tradition, the 19th-century German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling plays a fundamental role, since his contribution represents a turning point for the treatment of the question of Evil; hence, his philosophy will be one of the two main focuses of my work. Alongside this, my second focus will be the philosophy of the 20th-century Italian existentialist Luigi Pareyson, who is one of the key intellectual figures in post–WWII Italy. Indeed, besides being the mentor of prominent philosophers such as Gianni Vattimo and Umberto Eco, Pareyson is also one of the fathers of 20th-century philosophical hermeneutics, together with Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur.³

Schelling’s philosophy has to be regarded as one of the most significant and incisive attempts at shifting the question of Evil from the field of morality to the field of ontology. Inserting himself in the footsteps of Immanuel Kant (and also drawing from Jakob Böhme and Franz von Baader), Schelling rejects Leibniz’s theodicy and its privative conception of Evil, with the aim of restoring the proper ontological status of Evil itself and of grasping it in its concrete occurrence. In other words, Schelling argues that Evil neither is a moral principle nor derives from a supernatural provider of rules and maxims; rather, it is a material and concrete force that strives to be actualised through human actions. In recent Schelling scholarship, there is nearly unanimous agreement regarding these points, that is, on the relevance of Schelling’s “ontological shifting” of the question of Evil and on the sources

from which he draws his reflections. I will go into detail on this throughout the first chapter of this dissertation.

Pareyson’s philosophy deserves attention because, although it is still under studied in the Anglophone world, it introduces a further important element within the abovementioned tradition of thought: indeed, not only does he reiterate Schelling’s ontological shifting, but he also rethinks this ontological shifting within an existential and hermeneutic framework. That is, Pareyson’s shift is existential because its focus is not on the traditional notion of the subject, but rather on the person; also, it is hermeneutical because it replaces the centrality of the concept with the notion of interpretation. This speculative structure is the basis of Pareyson’s reflection on ontology, which is also characterised in a strongly religious way; therefore, it is along these lines that he reads and reinterprets the question of Evil.

Moreover, this alternative philosophical tradition, which has in Schelling and Pareyson two key exponents, is in turn twofold: that is, the understanding of Evil in ontologically positive terms can be developed into either an ontology of immanence or an ontology of transcendence. The former account, which I will call immanentism, maintains that there is no ontological detachment between God and things and between Being itself and particular beings, that is, Being and God are not to be conceived of on a superior or supernatural ontological level, as opposed to particular beings and things. By contrast, the latter account, which I will call transcendentism, is the one according to which the true principle of Being and of God is beyond every possible experience, that is, it belongs to a different, detached and superior ontological level and cannot be fully unified or identified with particular beings and things. That is, despite moving from an analogous starting point (i.e., an ontologically positive understanding of Evil), it is possible to develop the question of Evil in two different directions, in turn leading us to two radically opposite and mutually incompatible outcomes.


It needs to be mentioned that in the last few years there has been a growing attention to Pareyson’s work in the Anglophone world. Besides the abovementioned *Existence, Interpretation, Freedom and Thinking the Inexhaustible*, a translation of *Verità e Interpretazione* (one of Pareyson’s major texts) was published in 2013, and generally speaking some well-known international scholars, such as Dennis Schmidt, Robert T. Valgenti and Martin G. Weiss (just to mention a few), have devoted attention to Pareyson. Moreover, Hans-Georg Gadamer had already mentioned Pareyson’s works in 1960 in his *Wahrheit und Methode*. Further bibliographical details on these works will be provided throughout my thesis.


---


5 It needs to be mentioned that in the last few years there has been a growing attention to Pareyson’s work in the Anglophone world. Besides the abovementioned *Existence, Interpretation, Freedom and Thinking the Inexhaustible*, a translation of *Verità e Interpretazione* (one of Pareyson’s major texts) was published in 2013, and generally speaking some well-known international scholars, such as Dennis Schmidt, Robert T. Valgenti and Martin G. Weiss (just to mention a few), have devoted attention to Pareyson. Moreover, Hans-Georg Gadamer had already mentioned Pareyson’s works in 1960 in his *Wahrheit und Methode*. Further bibliographical details on these works will be provided throughout my thesis.

Moreover, both ontologies deal with the notion of “God”, but the way in which this “God” is interpreted is not (necessarily) the same: it can be a theistic personal God (Pareyson) or it can be a naturalistic and immanent God (Schelling). That is, while Schelling argues that God has to be understood as a concrete and immanent life and not as an abstract or supernatural Being, Pareyson claims that God has to be conceived of as the immutable and transcendent creator of the world, that is, as a higher form of Being that belongs to a different ontological level from that of human beings. Put simply, on the one hand, we have an understanding of God according to which Godself is essentially bonded to and cannot be separated from earthly entities, since material and immanent reality is the only existing one; on the other hand, we have a strongly religious understanding of God, according to which Godself pertains to an otherworldly reality that is fundamentally non-reducible to the reality we live in.

In my dissertation I will reject transcendentism and advocate for immanentism. I will argue that the immanentist approach is the one endorsed by Schelling, and that the transcendentist approach, that is, the one endorsed by Pareyson, is less philosophically viable than the immanentist one. More specifically, the target of my criticism will not be Pareyson’s philosophy as a whole, but rather its religious outcome and the transcendentist nature of his ontology. In other words, I will show how immanentist thinking leads to a concrete and effective grasping of Evil in its positive ontological features, whereas transcendentist thinking is marred by an excessive and dogmatic arbitrariness.

**Research Aim**

The main aim of this dissertation is, as already mentioned, to show the validity of the immanentist approach to the question of Evil, as opposed to the unviability of the transcendentist approach. Without going into too much detail, here I will simply say that I aim at showing in the first place that an ontology grounded on nature and relying on concrete and material concepts is preferable to an ontology grounded on religious and metaphysical concepts. Put simply, the first and most immediate goal of this dissertation is for me to take a clear position within the abovementioned tradition of thought and within the philosophical debate around the question of Evil.

In addition, I will explore and deal with those issues that are directly related to the main question, namely those concerning freedom and experience (which are deeply examined also by Schelling and Pareyson themselves). As regards freedom, I will endorse Schelling’s understanding of the mutual interrelation of freedom and necessity, while rejecting
Pareyson’s account of freedom as “beginning and choice”. As regards experience, I will not analyse it in a traditionally empiricist sense, but I will point out how an immanentist understanding of Evil leads to an identification of the very conditions of the possibility of experience itself.

In particular, I will maintain Schelling’s immanentist understanding of Evil and of the struggle between Good and Evil, which he understands as the grounding condition of life. On top of that, I will argue that such an understanding leads us to grasp the abovementioned conditions of the possibility of experience, that is, of the moment in which experience emerges in its purest and absolute state and before being my personal experience. However, I will not argue that such a conception of experience belongs to Schelling’s philosophy, but rather that it is possible, by moving from Schelling’s philosophy, to legitimately reach such an understanding of experience, which I will call absolute experience. The concept of absolute experience has been widely used in Western philosophy, and especially by the 20th-century pragmatists and radical empiricists. For instance, in his Essays in Radical Empiricism (1912) William James conceived of “pure experience” as “the immediate flux of life” in which mind and matter co-occur and from which they emerge. Similarly, in Process and Reality (1929) Alfred North Whitehead claimed that “immediate experience is the sole justification for any thought”. Also, John Dewey understood experience not as an objective fact, but as a process in which both the experienced object and the experiencing subject are equally involved. I will not directly link my understanding of absolute experience to that tradition of thought, but (as already mentioned) I will rely on only potential developments of the philosophy of Schelling.

Additionally, I argue that, drawing from the intellectual resources provided by Schelling’s account, it is possible to develop an original and innovative conception of freedom that is significantly different from Pareyson’s conception. I take this to be one of my original contributions to the debate. In other words, I will demonstrate that, by maintaining the validity of the ontological and immanent nature of the struggle between Good and Evil, it can be argued that freedom is related not only to necessity, but also to resistance. From this it follows that freedom can be primarily understood as a matter of resistance, as opposed to the religious and metaphysical understanding according to which freedom relates to the transcendent features of Being.

---

Research Methodology

First of all, it is important to point out a fundamental terminological distinction that I am going to implement throughout my entire dissertation. I will begin by examining Schelling’s conception of Evil (chapter 1), both from a historical and from a theoretical point of view, in order to show both its originality (compared with Schelling’s contemporaries) and its philosophical validity. In doing so, I will capitalise “Evil” to mean the ontological principle (or force) to which Schelling refers with the term das Böse. Hence, “Evil” is different from “evil” (das Übel), that is, a particular evil, which can be a bad action or a bad physical affection. This distinction does not imply that das Böse and das Übel are two independent and unrelated phenomena: on the contrary, neither of them can exist without the other, as we shall see later. Similarly, I will capitalise “Good” in reference to the German das Gute, which is the ontological principle of the Good, coessential with, and complementary to, das Böse; and the uncapsulated “good” will be used to refer to the German das Wohl, which indicates a particular good, for example, in relation to individual wellbeing.

Subsequently, I will focus on Pareyson’s reception and reinterpretation of the question of Evil, as well as on the historical background of Pareyson’s account (chapter 2). I will maintain the same use of the capital initial letter for “Good” and “Evil” to refer to the ontological principles, while I will use uncapsulated “good” and “evil” to refer to the particular occurrences of these principles. Nevertheless, it should be noticed that in Italian there is no such terminological distinction as there is in German: that is, “good” and “evil” are translated respectively as bene and male, and Pareyson himself did not explicitly implement the distinction between the two occurrences of the terms by using capital letters. However, I think that maintaining the same use of the capital letters as in German will be helpful to immediately discern between the two uses of each of the terms “good” and “evil”.

Similarly, I will adopt the same use of capitalisation for the terms “Being” and “being”. That is, I will use “Being” to refer to the German Sein (or to the more archaic Seyn) and to the Italian Essere, namely to Being intended as an ontological principle, or simply to Being as such; and I will use “being” to refer to the German Seiendes and to the Italian essere (but also ente), that is, to singular and particular beings or entities. This terminological choice, I believe, preserves and conveys in the best possible way both Schelling’s and Pareyson’s use of these concepts.

Furthermore, I will focus my attention on the most relevant works of both Schelling and Pareyson in relation to the question of Evil. That is, I will mainly focus on Schelling’s
early and middle phases (namely from his *Naturphilosophie* and *Identitätphilosophie* to his 1809 *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*) and on Pareyson’s late speculation (and his *Ontology of Freedom* in particular). However, this does not mean that I will neglect or leave the other periods of their philosophies aside: on the contrary, I will outline the different phases of their thought both to provide a comprehensive account of the development process of the two philosophies and to emphasise the relevance of these different stages for the topic at hand.

Additionally, my focus on Pareyson’s philosophy will be sustained by a significant amount of material from the archives of the Centro Studi Filosofico-religiosi “L. Pareyson” in Turin, including Pareyson’s personal notes and unpublished excerpts, which I have had the opportunity to consult. To the best of my knowledge, most of this material, which I have used in this dissertation, has never been released to the public before. For this reason, I think that my dissertation provides a detailed and extensive insight into Pareyson’s thought in general, and into his religious ontology in particular.

Through this methodological approach I aim both at tracing back to the roots (i.e., to the historical background of) what I have called the “ontological shifting” of the discourse on Evil, and at strongly highlighting the great theoretical significance and innovativeness of it. Put simply, I have developed this dissertation by combining a detailed analysis of the texts with a detailed examination of the place that these texts have in the history of modern philosophy. Indeed, the speculative weight of a philosophical question is fully understandable only when one is able to grasp not only its theoretical content, but also the concrete reasons that have led to the particular development of that particular question.

Accordingly, both the philosophy of Schelling and the philosophy of Pareyson are understood in the light of the methodology that I have just given account of, which I also consider as the most suitable not only for the task of this dissertation, but in general for any philosophical research that aims at being accurate and truthful. That is, on the one hand, I will point out how Schelling addressed, in a groundbreaking way, the philosophical problems of the historical period he lived in, thus managing to provide a very original insight into the concepts of Evil and freedom. On the other hand, I think that this methodological and speculative setting further legitimises and reinforces an understanding of Pareyson’s contribution to this specific question as fallacious or, at best, misleading. Indeed, while Pareyson too aims at rethinking in an original way the philosophical problems of his historical period, the conceptual structure of his ontological reflection turns out to be forced and unwieldy – that is, as projecting into Schelling’s philosophy something that does not
belong, and indeed is opposed, to the premises and framework of Schelling’s philosophy. In other words, through the methodological approach that I have summarised here, I think I have been able to further show the inadequacy of the argumentative structure that Pareyson deploys in his dealing with the question of Evil.

**Structure of the Thesis**

This dissertation will be divided into three main chapters. The first two chapters will be devoted respectively to Schelling and Pareyson, with the aim of providing both a detailed historical background and an exhaustive theoretical account of their thoughts in general, and of their contributions to the question of Evil in particular. The third chapter will be devoted to the development of my personal understanding of the question under investigation, within the intellectual context and the tradition of thought that I have specified above.

More specifically, in the first chapter I focus on Schelling’s conception of Evil, taking his *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* (1809) as the fundamental reference text, but also exploring the genesis of such a conception in the early phase of his thought, and in particular his *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* (1795) and his *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (1803). Indeed, I believe that the abovementioned early texts constitute a crucial background against which Schelling’s insight can be understood more clearly. Therefore, I will consider Schelling’s account of freedom in all its complexity and in relation to the key concepts of necessity, intuition, and causality. Finally, I will focus on the notion of experience, showing how Schelling’s philosophical work can lead to a proper understanding of that which I have defined as absolute experience.

Subsequently, in the second chapter I focus on Pareyson’s understanding of the question of Evil and freedom, which is strictly related to his reading of Schelling (as well as to his reading of Heidegger and Jaspers). In order to do that, I mainly focus on the late phase of Pareyson’s philosophy, and particularly on his *Ontology of Freedom* (*Ontologia della libertà*, unfinished and published posthumously in 1995), as I consider it as the most prominent and significant of Pareyson’s work about Evil. However, I also provide a general overview of Pareyson’s philosophy, both to better understand his late thought and to clarify his conceptual background in the best possible way.

Finally, in the third chapter I present my own conclusions regarding the discourses on Evil and freedom, building both on the interpretation of Schelling I provide in the first chapter and on the rejection of Pareyson’s religious ontology, which I expound in the second chapter. Incidentally, the final chapter will be significantly shorter than the previous ones,
since its core is my speculative argument about the ontological nature of Evil and freedom, which needs no further historical remarks or extensive introductory sections. So, in the concluding chapter I will firstly focus on the ontology of Evil, by showing its radically immanent nature, that is, its material essence, arguing that to understand Evil ontologically is to define it in material terms, which in turn means to ascribe it to matter and move it to the level of immanence. Then, I will explain how such an understanding of Evil can lead us to grasp absolute experience, that is, experience in its very emerging moment and in its being not yet personal experience. Lastly, I will conclude by attempting a definition of freedom in terms of resistance, that is, understanding freedom as essentially related to resistance, or rather as a matter of resistance, seeing resistance itself as a fundamental element of the struggle between Good and Evil and therefore of life as such.

Additional Preliminary Remarks

In conclusion, I want to point out that, although the outcomes that I have set for my dissertation are admittedly ambitious and challenging, I do not presume to provide a definitive solution to the philosophical debate about the matters under investigation, that is, Evil, freedom and experience – indeed, such hubris would be ridiculous and anti-philosophical by definition. Rather, as I have already mentioned above, my aim is to address such questions by providing my personal and original contribution to the debate. Of course, Evil and freedom have already been understood and grasped in their immanent features before. For instance, both Spinoza and Nietzsche defined freedom in immanent and ontological terms, namely as an increase and fulfilment of one’s power to act. Also, both Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Carl Gustav Jung understood Evil as an immanent principle: while the former argued that the problem of immanence and the problem of Evil are one single problem, since the perpetration of Evil pertains to only free will, the latter argued that there cannot be a reality of Good without a corresponding reality of Evil. However, what I suggest is that, through a rethinking of Schelling’s philosophy in a contemporary philosophical context, it is possible to push the immanentist account further in order to legitimately reach the outcomes that I have already delineated.

---


In this regard, one could think of Gilles Deleuze’s “From A to Z”, a 1988 video interview where the French philosopher argues, among other things, that the history of philosophy is to be understood as the art of portrait. That is, doing history of philosophy is like doing a philosophical portrait of a philosopher, so that the history of philosophy is a fully-fledged part of philosophy, just as the portrait is a fully-fledged part of painting. A philosopher, according to Deleuze, is not someone who merely contemplates things or reflects on them, but someone who creates concepts based on specific problems. Therefore, the history of philosophy has the onerous task of both retracing those problems and understanding the novelty of the concepts that relate to those problems. Accordingly, a poor history of philosophy confines itself to an abstract lining up of concepts, neglecting the act of their creation. On the contrary, a good history of philosophy is a veritable apprenticeship, where one can learn how to philosophise by retracing all those problems that have led to the creation of new concepts.¹²

Deleuze’s account of the history of philosophy and of the creation of concepts can be a good and useful paradigm, and it somehow displays the pathway on which I ground my readings of Schelling and Pareyson, and on which I build the conceptual structure of this dissertation. Needless to say, this does not mean that I am arguing that Schelling or Pareyson in fact “invented” the concepts of Evil, freedom or experience; rather, it means that both of them were able to rethink and re-elaborate these concepts in a very significant way.

Through his speculation, Schelling provides a convincing ontologically positive account of Evil. The rejection of any negative and privative conception of Evil, and the subsequent endorsement of an ontologically positive conception of it, I argue, cannot be separated from the parallel rejection of the religious and transcendentist approach. A concrete and material concept of Evil itself cannot be grounded on an ontology of transcendence nor on a religious metaphysics: indeed, by endorsing an ontology of transcendence, Schelling’s entire conceptual framework would fade away, leading us to lose sight of the actual and concrete nature of the question at hand. I will provide a strong and detailed argument in support of this point in the course of my dissertation.

In other words, if we maintain that the actual problem is grasping Evil in its positive ontological nature, not only are we urged to lave aside every negative and privative explanation, but also we are required to maintain our discourse and our speculation on the level of immanence, in order to better grasp the actual concreteness of Evil itself.

Chapter 1

F. W. J. Schelling: Evil, Freedom and Experience

As Schelling himself says in his 1842 lectures on positive philosophy, “if one wants to honor a philosopher, then one must grasp him here, in his fundamental thought, where he has not yet gone on to the consequences. […] The true thought of a philosopher is precisely his fundamental thought from which he proceeds”.¹ Through this statement, I believe, Schelling gives us not only an important indication about how to approach the work of a philosopher (and the history of philosophy in general), but also a fundamental insight into his own way of philosophising.

Consistent with Schelling’s own recommendation, in this chapter I will not merely provide a rigid summary of Schelling’s thought, but rather I will focus on those points that can actually “catch his fundamental thought where he has not gone yet” and grasp the deep rationale of the problems that lead him to develop his own concepts – particularly the concepts of Evil and freedom. Needless to say, Schelling builds on accounts of such concepts as he finds them in the previous philosophical tradition – but then he provides us with very original insights into those concepts through an original way of addressing the philosophical problems of his age.

As an example of that, it will be useful to briefly mention Schelling’s reappropriation of the Greek concept of tragedy in his Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism. As Dennis Schmidt puts it, such reappropriation is a very significant case of reinvention of a philosophical idea, which results in a fundamental transformation of the idea itself and leads philosophical language beyond its own known limits.² In this respect, I would dare to add,

¹ PP, 130; SW, II, 3, 60.
this approach, which is adopted by Schelling even in the mature phase of his philosophical activity, is nothing but the previously mentioned creation of concepts. Put simply, this means that we do not have to read Schelling’s philosophy rigidly and dogmatically, that is, to understand it as a closed and immutable system, but rather we can see it as a vibrant and vital thinking process that still poses serious speculative challenges and is still able to surprise those who want to deepen it by following these challenges to unexpected outcomes.

1.1 Ground and Existence: Evil as a Positive Force

The question of Evil is a fundamental one in the entire philosophical production of Schelling, starting from his *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* (1795), and especially in the period between 1803 (when the second edition of the *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* was published) and 1809 (when Schelling published his *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*). Indeed, the first years of the 19th century were critical because they marked the moment when Schelling definitively put aside any form of morally grounded and primarily dialectical philosophical account.

I will begin this section with an outline of the historical background of Schelling’s philosophy (§ 1.1.1) in order to highlight the most relevant milestones that precede Schellingian philosophical activity. First, I will focus on the influence of Kant, arguing that it is the key for interpreting both the role of Jakob Böhme and Franz von Baader in Schelling’s speculation and Schelling’s position on Leibniz’s theodicy. Then, I will focus on the fundamental importance of Spinoza for the development of Schelling’s philosophy. Finally, I will move to the disputes between Schelling and some of his contemporaries – in particular, Fichte, Schlegel, Jacobi and Eschenmayer – which I consider extremely important, since they represent the starting point of Schelling’s discourse on Evil, which in turn has to be considered as inextricably linked to, and crucially determined by, this background. Thereafter, I will focus on the theoretical aspects of the Schellingian concept of Evil, showing both its innovativeness within its intellectual and historical context (§ 1.1.2) and how the subsequent struggle between Good and Evil can lead us into the domain of pure experience (§ 1.1.3).
1.1.1 The Historical Background of Schelling’s Philosophy

During his period as a theology student in Tübingen, Schelling first approached the question of Evil through the reading of Kant’s late works, especially Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason (1793). Indeed, Kant’s influence is very remarkable in the early and middle phases of Schelling’s thought. As we shall see later, Schelling takes a cue from Kantian philosophy to develop his own original reflection both on Evil and on the philosophy of nature (Naturphilosophie). Here, I will not analyse the historical reasons that led Kant to develop his later philosophy; rather, I will confine myself to briefly stressing those Kantian ideas that have influenced Schelling’s philosophical activity.

In that historical period, it was not possible to philosophise without dealing with Kant’s critical philosophy. As a student, Schelling was an enthusiastic Kantian, and even in the following years of his intellectual activity it is possible to see a Kantian presence. Particularly, Schelling deeply focuses on Kant’s notion of radical Evil, from which he draws an important lesson for developing his own theory of Evil. Schelling greatly appreciates Kant’s “modern” move, according to which Evil is not to be thought anymore as a deficiency or lack of Good, but as having a proper metaphysical nature. However, Schelling also aims at reconsidering the Kantian notion and at giving Evil itself a stronger ontological status. The same applies to the concept of freedom, which Schelling tries to radicalise in an ontological sense, moving from Kant’s understanding.

A brief overview of Kant’s ideas about Evil and freedom is now necessary. Regarding the former, Kant aims at overcoming traditional conceptions, which define Evil as a lack of Good or as coincident with non-Being. As stated by Michelle Kosch, for Kant the question of Evil concerns a fundamental disposition of an agent’s character, rather than an intrinsic moral value of individual actions.³ Indeed, Kant writes that “the difference, whether the human being is good or evil, must not lie in the difference between the incentives that he incorporates into his maxims (not in the material of the maxim) but in their subordination (in the form of the maxim): which of the two he makes the condition of the other”.⁴ That is, human beings are Evil only when they act in discordance with the moral order of Good and Evil and reverse or, better, invert it.

⁴ Immanuel Kant, Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason, in “Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason” and Other Writings, trans. and ed. A. Wood and G. Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 59.
Therefore, “if a propensity to this [inversion] does lie in human nature, then there is in the human being a natural propensity to evil. [...] Also, this evil is radical, since it corrupts the ground of all maxims”. Moreover, this tendency, far from being a lawful source of maxims for human conduct, is a “perversity of the heart, and this heart is called evil because of what results”. In this sense, Evil is always a matter of human will and arbitrariness. Indeed, borrowing Kosch’s words again, Kant, in outlining his own theory of Evil, “relies on a new distinction between two capacities – the will (Wille) and the power of choice (Willkür) – of the will as a general faculty”. According to this distinction, in Kant’s own words, “laws proceed from the will (Wille), maxims from choice (Willkür). In man the latter is a free choice (eine freie Willkür); the will, which is directed to nothing beyond the law itself, cannot be called either free or unfree, since it is not directed to actions but immediately to giving laws for the maxims of actions (and is, therefore, practical reason itself). Hence the will directs with absolute necessity and is itself subject to no necessitation. Only choice can therefore be called free”.

Again, Kant argues that “the good or the evil in human nature is said to be innate [...] only in the sense that it is posited as the ground antecedent to every use of freedom given in experience [...] and is thus represented as present in the human being at the moment of birth – not that birth itself is its cause”. Therefore, the predisposition to Evil is “not a natural predisposition but something that a human being can be held accountable for”, that is, it is an improper exertion of our freedom and of our Willkür and “must reside in the subjective ground of the possibility of the deviation of the maxims from the moral law”. Consequently, Kant says, “we can call this ground a natural propensity to evil, and, since it must nevertheless always come about through one’s fault, we can further even call it a radical innate evil in human nature”. But what is the origin of this “natural propensity”? As Kant puts it, “the rational origin [...] of this disharmony in our power of choice, [...] i.e. this propensity to evil, remains inexplicable to us, for, since it must itself be imputed to us, this supreme ground of all maxims must in turn require the adoption of an evil maxim”. In fact, as already mentioned, the predisposition to Evil is not a natural one, but rather it is a

---

5 Ibid.  
6 Ibid., 60.  
7 Kosch, Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling and Kierkegaard, 60.  
9 Kant, Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason, 47.  
10 Ibid., 56.  
11 Ibid., 53.  
12 Ibid., 56.  
13 Ibid., 64.
corruption of our natural predisposition to Good, namely an intentional deviation from the moral law. Accordingly, we can conceive of neither a rational nor a natural ground from which Evil arises in us, so “the absolutely first beginning of evil is thereby represented as incomprehensible to us […]; the human being, however, is represented as having lapsed into it only through temptation, hence not as corrupted fundamentally […] but, on the contrary, still capable of [moral] improvement”.14

Moreover, as Sebastian Gardner points out, according to Kant even “our freedom must be deemed in the final instance as incomprehensible […]. What philosophy can nonetheless do is specify the conditions of free agency, and underwrite its incomprehensibility – there can be a metaphysical explanation of its resistance to rational insight, which at the same time reassures us of freedom’s reality”.15 Kant already provided such conditions in his Critique of Pure Reason, arguing that, since causality as merely derived from the laws of nature is not sufficient to grasp the whole world and would lead to a never-ending causal chain, then we need to presuppose “an absolute causal spontaneity beginning from itself [von selbst] […] a series of appearances that runs according to natural laws, hence transcendental freedom, without which even in the course of nature the series of appearances is never complete on the side of the causes”.16 Kant also acknowledges that this idea of transcendental freedom is problematic, whence the abovementioned incomprehensibility of freedom (and Evil), but it is still necessary in order to ground the spontaneity of our actions without falling into blind determinism.

In addition, Kant also prefigures the existence of a struggle between the principles of Good and Evil, which vie for moral supremacy over human conduct. Indeed, he claims that “to become a morally good human being is not enough simply to let the germ of the good which lies in our species develop unhindered; there is in us an active and opposing cause of evil which is also to be combatted”.17 “Considered in themselves natural inclinations are good, i.e. not reprehensible”,18 as they comply with the moral law and tend to its realisation;

---

14 Ibid., 65.
17 Kant, Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason, 77.
18 Ibid., 78.
on the contrary, “only what is unlawful is evil in itself, absolutely reprehensible, and must be eradicated”.19

Finally, it must briefly be recalled that Kant developed these conceptions immediately after he wrote the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* in 1786, a work that is also very important for Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie*. In that work, Kant develops a dynamic conception of matter that is animated by the contrast between attractive and repulsive forces, whereby it expands itself in space: “Matter fills a space only through moving force […], a force resisting the penetration (that is, the approach) of others”,20 that is, a force that is the result of the combined effects of attraction and repulsion. Then, an alive and active matter can be conceived of only dynamically, since a static conception of it corresponds to a lifeless matter, as it would be inert and motionless. In other words, “all matter requires for its existence forces that are opposed to the expansive forces […]. Hence there must somewhere be assumed an original force of matter acting in the opposite direction to the repulsive force, and thus to produce approach, that is, an attractive force”.21 Indeed, “with merely repulsive forces of matter, all spaces would be empty, and thus, properly speaking, no matter would exist at all”.22

Schelling is very attentive to these issues, although he shelves the moral core of Kantian discourse on Evil. In other words, as I will discuss in more detail later, it can be said that Schelling’s main aim is to shift the focus of the question of Good and Evil from the field of morality to the one of ontology. Moreover, borrowing Gardner’s words, “Schelling’s departures from Kant begin with his importantly different view of the problem set by evil and its role in relation to freedom. Schelling holds that there must be – for the sake of freedom – some sense in which the choice between good and evil is open, some sense in which they are both *real options*”.23 Moreover, the latter is one of the main points of disagreement between Schelling and some of the key figures of his time, such as Fichte and Jacobi, as we shall see later.

Additionally, the figure of Kant is relevant in Schelling’s reception of the thought of the 17th-century German mystic Jakob Böhme, whose thought has several features in common with Schelling’s. Indeed, as stated by Robert Brown, some of Schelling’s works

---

19 Ibid.
21 Ibid., 46.
22 Ibid.
(including his Philosophical Investigation into the Essence of Human Freedom) have some fundamental similarities with the work of Böhme. The first one is that they both “assume that all life consists of a development process through which living reality passes […and then] God’s life therefore must be like this too, analogous to the life processes of the creatures”.  

Similarly, “for both Böhme and Schelling, God parallels the ontological structure of the world [… and] the nature of God can be known by perceiving the true nature of the world”.  

However, the most evident similarity arises in their respective conceptions of Evil. Indeed, “Böhme says that the God who is a complex of oppositions contains the ontological source of evil as a ‘positive’ (real) constituent in himself”.  

That is, Böhme claims that there are “two qualities, a good one and an evil one, which are in each other as one thing in this world, […] as also in all the creatures; and no creature in the flesh, in the natural life can subsist, unless it hath the two qualities”.  

Therefore, it is fundamental to understand that Good and Evil mutually imply each other, that is, that these two principles both arise from God’s nature and are coessential and complementary to each other. For this reason, Böhme firmly refuses any negative account of Evil, as well as any conception aiming at denying its ontological effectiveness, in compliance with an unfathomable divine project, namely “the mysterium of the eternal nature from which all creatures are born good and evil”.  

This argument could seem a bit cryptic (and perhaps it is), but Böhme is not interested in giving his discourse a strong philosophical systematicity; rather, he aims at claiming, using a doctrinal style, that Good and Evil are both real principles and that their reality is revealed and inspired by God.  

Böhme’s main goal is to provide an original account of the nature of God, on the grounds of his own interpretation of the Scriptures; thus his thought has to be ascribed to the field of theosophy, rather than to the one of philosophy. That is probably why in his writings Schelling does not directly refer to Böhme, since Schelling aims at understanding Evil in a stronger, ontological and less mystical way. In addition, Brown argues that Schelling seems to borrow Böhme’s conception of human nature; that is, they both agree that “a human being, as the highest and most complex creature, contains within himself all the constitutive elements of being. […] Therefore, one can conceive of God’s being by a process that

---

25 Ibid., 21.
26 Ibid., 22.
combines a kind of ontological introspection (self-knowledge) with an empathy for other creatures".29

The latter point can also be found in Kant’s philosophy, as shown by Paolo Diego Bubbio. Indeed, Kant’s epistemology presents some significant similarities with Böhme’s theosophy. Böhme claims that “God creates the universe by giving ‘form’ to it […] and] giving form to the world, God effectively knows it; and by knowing the world, he reveals himself to the world and, at the same time, he reaches knowledge of himself […] God needs to empty himself and to renounce his absoluteness to truly know himself and the universe”.30 Similarly, Kant argues that the human subject needs to renounce his/her absoluteness in order to know his/her true self and the world; it is true that “the Kantian ‘subject’ is the human being, rather than God: but once the subject is changed, the similarities [with Böhme] are impressive”.

That is, even Kant thinks that self-knowledge can arise only from the knowledge of external objects, which in turn can be reached by the subject only by subsuming sensory input into a priori forms (i.e., space and time and the categories). Therefore, as Bubbio writes, “even Kant’s cognitive agent has to renounce his/her absoluteness: what has to be renounced is the idea that the world can be known from an alleged God’s-eye point of view, free from the spatio-temporal and causal constraints usually limiting the knower in his cognition”.32 In view of the above, it is possible to argue that the similarities between Böhme and Schelling necessarily pass through the philosophy of Kant, who is still an essential point of reference for the young Schelling.

Moreover, the influence of Franz von Baader is also significant for Schelling’s approach to Böhme’s works, as well as for Schelling’s general philosophical activity. Von Baader was a contemporary and a close collaborator of Schelling, especially during the latter’s writing of his *Philosophical Investigations* (which include several references to von Baader’s ideas). For instance, von Baader argues that Evil is a misuse of reason, referring to a positive perversion that corrupts human behaviour, following a sort of inhuman and unnatural instinct.33 Schelling particularly appreciates this conception, writing that von Baader’s account of Evil is “the only correct one, according to which evil resides in a positive

31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., 23.
perversion, or reversal of the principles”.

The parallel influence of Kant and von Baader, additionally, shows how the role of Böhme in Schelling’s philosophy can be understood only in relation to the two abovementioned figures. The scarcity of Schelling’s direct references to Böhme might be explained through Kant and von Baader, as Böhme’s influence was mediated through them.

It must be added that Schelling, as well as Kant and von Baader, aimed at opposing Leibniz’s conception of Evil, according to which Evil is non-Being, namely the “pure privation of being that cannot be thought other than as a vont of being, of that which is good just because it is”. Leibniz’s intent is to justify and defend God’s justice and goodness against the attacks of the thinkers of the Enlightenment period, especially Pierre Bayle. Without going into the details of such attacks, it suffices to say that Leibniz coined the term “theodicy” (literally theós-díkē, “God’s justification”), from which comes the title of his Essays on Theodicy (1710), where he provides his arguments in favour of the divine justice and against the autonomous existence of Evil.

As stated by Susan Neiman, “Leibniz’s defense of God’s justice depends on his division of all our misery into metaphysical, natural and moral evil. [...] For Leibniz, metaphysical evil is the degeneration inherent in the limits of the substance(s) of which the world is made. Natural evil is the pain and suffering we experience in it. Moral evil is the crime for which natural evil is the certain and inevitable punishment”. Also, Leibniz assumes that there is a self-evident causal correlation between those forms of Evil: indeed, since all God’s actions are always aiming at the highest Good, so that everything that is must be Good, then Evil cannot be but a lack or a deficiency, of which we are the only responsible agent. Metaphysical Evil, in other words, arises from our limits and our incongruity with Being; consequently, we perform moral Evil, that is, evil actions – or sins – and because of them we unavoidably experience pain and suffering.

In support of his argument, Leibniz claims that “God created matter but not form. The truth of everything, including the essence of every possible object, is contained in the eternal forms, which functions in ways similar to a simple reading of Plato’s. Before God decided

---

34 PI, 35; SW, I, 7, 366.  
35 Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt, “Schelling’s Treatise on Freedom and the Possibility of Theodicy”, “Introduction” to PI, xi.  
which of all possible worlds He should choose to make real, He looked at all the forms, calculated which ones would fit together, and chose the best of all possible combinations”.\textsuperscript{38} It follows that there can be no room for a positive conception of Evil in Leibniz’s picture, and so the only way to explain it is through deprivation, deficiency and lack of Being.

Schelling, being under the influence of the triad Kant–Böhme–von Baader, cannot but disagree with Leibniz’s understanding. Indeed, Schelling claims that, although “Leibniz tries in every way to make comprehensible how evil could arise from natural deficiency […] deprivation in itself is absolutely nothing and, in order to be noticeable, needs something positive in which it appears”.\textsuperscript{39} Consequently, a positive ground needs to be presupposed to exist in Evil, otherwise the discourse on Evil would be controversial (insofar as, according to Schelling, it is not possible to understand it but in terms of ontological positivity), and the moral and material responsibility of human sins and misbehaviours should be attributed to God – which is impossible for Schelling. I will come back to this point later in this chapter.

Furthermore, Schelling’s philosophical development, which brings him to the formulation of his theory of Evil, cannot be properly understood without referring to the role played by Baruch Spinoza in it. That is, Schelling’s Freedom Essay can be read as an attempt to reconsider Spinozan pantheism by conciliating it with a stronger ontological conception of Evil and freedom. Several scholars, such as Dalia Nassar and Michael G. Vater, have already highlighted the relevance of Spinoza for Schelling’s philosophy. In this respect, it could be said that the real core of Schelling’s thought cannot be grasped without considering the crucial role of Spinoza in its development.

In particular, Spinoza’s philosophy provides the fundamental background for Schelling’s early phase, that is, for his Naturphilosophie and his Identitätphilosophie (Identity Philosophy) – that is, approximately from 1795 to 1802. Schelling, since his juvenile work Of the I as the Principle of Philosophy (1795), tries to include a stronger conception of the I (derived from a critical reading of Kant and Fichte) within a general Spinozan account. In other words, the latter emerges when Schelling argues that the principle of philosophy is “something that cannot be thought of as a thing at all”,\textsuperscript{40} referring to the German word Bedingen, which means “the action by which anything becomes a thing (Ding). Bedingt (conditioned) is what has been turned into a thing. Thus it is clear at once that

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{39} PI, 37; SW, I, 7, 369.
\textsuperscript{40} OL 74; SW, I, 1, 166.
nothing can posit itself as a thing, and that an unconditional thing is a contradiction in terms. *Unbedingt* (unconditional) is what has not been turned into a thing, and what cannot at all become a thing*.41

The I, in this sense, is posited as a form of self-power (*Selbstmacht*), as the I “contains a being which precedes all thinking and imagining. It *is* by being thought, and it is being thought because it *is* […]. It produces itself by its own thinking – out of absolute *causality*”.42 As Nassar explains, in this context “the non-objective principle of knowledge [and then of philosophy] must be, on the one hand, immediately united to the I, and, on the other hand, the ground of all reality”.43 Moreover, as I will show in detail in the next section, Schelling argues that the I cannot be grasped nor given merely through sensible intuition, but rather through intellectual intuition, and this is precisely his attempt to explain this conception of an absolute I in Spinozan terms.

Schelling claims that “the I cannot be given as a mere *concept* [… but] can be determined only in an intuition (*Anschauung*)”.44 Indeed, in this sense the I is neither a thing nor an object, so that “in the absolute I, there is no sense intuition, therefore either no intuition at all or else intellectual intuition. Therefore *the I is determined for itself as mere I in intellectual intuition*”.45 Here Schelling is not speaking, as already mentioned, of the empirical I, but he is aiming at providing a concrete and transcendental (in the Kantian sense) understanding of Spinoza’s idea of substance. By doing so, as Nassar brilliantly shows, Schelling is clearly aware of Spinoza’s *Ethics*, whence46 he borrows “the idea that the mind has an immediate capacity for perception and demonstration through which insight into what is eternal, into what cannot be given through either sensation or concepts, can be gained”.47

Schelling’s intellectual intuition will be analysed later in this chapter. What I want to do now is to recall those features of Spinoza’s philosophy that Schelling takes more significantly into account. First, Spinoza claims that the idea of the mind coincides with the mind itself, in the same way in which the body coincides with the mind, as the body is the

41 Ibid.
42 OL, 75; SW, I, 1, 167.
44 OL, 85; SW, I, 181.
45 Ibid.
object of the mind. In other words, the body and the mind are one and the same individual, considered neither under the attribute of thought (mind) nor under the attribute of extension (body). Similarly, the idea of the mind must be the same as its object, that is, the mind itself.

Moreover, Schelling particularly appreciates Spinoza’s idea according to which true knowledge (i.e., the knowledge of adequate ideas) is self-sufficient and does not need any further legitimation. That is, true ideas imply a perfect form of knowledge, so that if I know one thing to be true, it also means that I know that one thing. Also, the latter consists in the higher form of knowledge and truth, which represents the standard for truth itself and falsehood, just as light is the standard for light itself and darkness. “Following Spinoza”, continues Nassar, “Schelling’s claim is that what is perceived in intellectual intuition is the idea that underlies and constitutes reality. This perception must be absolutely non-objective. This means, first, that intellectual intuition does not perceive a thing, determined by other things, but sees it as a manifestation or an instance of an idea, the absolute I.”

Again, when Schelling claims, in his Presentation of My System of Philosophy (1801), that “outside reason is nothing, and in it is everything”, he is thinking of Spinoza’s idea that everything that is, is in God and cannot be conceived outside God. Indeed, Schelling thinks that “reason [is] absolute reason, or reason insofar as it is conceived as the total indifference of the subjective and objective”, echoing the Spinozan substance, which is necessarily infinite, and indivisible, and possesses infinite attributes – in a word, it is God. Consequently, all finite entities become essentially infinite and eternal, insofar as they necessarily constitute God, or the infinite substance in its infinite attributes. For all these reasons, Spinoza’s substance is causa sui, as it is not limited by another cause and cannot be conceived as non-existing.

48 Spinoza, Ethics, II, 21.
49 Ibid., II, 43.
52 Spinoza, Ethics, I, 5.
53 Schelling, Presentation of My System of Philosophy, 145; SW, I, 4, 114.
54 Spinoza, Ethics, I, 7.
55 Ibid., I, 13.
56 Ibid., I, 11.
Accordingly, Schelling takes the concept of Absolute as the ultimately real (and in this sense I will capitalise it), drawing this conclusion from Spinoza’s account of Substance, in accordance with what has just been said. The Absolute, in turn, presents itself in the ideal and real, subject and object, essence and form, without compromising its original and fundamental unity. Here too, Schelling “seems to have had Spinoza's attributes of Thought and Extension in mind and their identity in Substance, although the exact correspondences remain vague. Essence suggests the category of universality, and Form that of particularity, but both are still held to present ideal and real aspects, both are at once objective and subjective. The latter (Form) is the projection of the former in the realm of appearance to constitute what Schelling calls relative objectivity, as opposed to relative subjectivity, both uniting in the indifference of absolute Identity”.

I will return to these points later in this chapter. For now, it will be enough to say that Schelling’s view on pantheism (outlined both in his works on Naturphilosophie and in his Freedom Essay) is modelled on Spinoza’s account, in an effort of modernise it by showing its compatibility with a stronger notion of human freedom. Indeed, as already mentioned, Spinoza’s influence on Schelling is not limited to the juvenile phase of Schelling’s philosophy, but can be detected even in its later phase, including in his Freedom Essay and his discourse on Evil, where there is no shortage of (direct or indirect) references to Spinoza. As Michael Vater puts it, Schelling “did not try again to think and speak in the terminological guise of Spinoza, but in ensuing essays decked out his essential Spinozism – the eternal’s embrace of both the finite and the infinite orders – in Neoplatonic garb”.

Some of Schelling’s contemporaries criticised him for holding such philosophical positions. The young Schelling was one of the members of the so-called Jena circle, a group of German intellectuals led by Ludwig Tieck. This circle, which was active approximately from 1798 to 1804, represents the first phase of German Romanticism and includes some of the most prominent figures of German cultural life of that period, such as August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, Friedrich Hölderlin and Adam Karl August von Eschenmayer. Rather than detail the theoretical and philosophical orientation of the Jena

---

58 Ibid.
circle – where Fichte’s influence was very deep\textsuperscript{60} – here I will just focus on the positions of some of the Jena romantics in regard to Schelling’s philosophy, since the dispute between Schelling and the Jena romantics had an impact on his philosophy that is particularly relevant to the present discussion.

The Jena environment was a great stimulus for Schelling and a decisive moment for the development of his own philosophical system. In the early years of the 19th century, Schelling felt the need to develop an autonomous philosophy and to dispose of Fichte’s influence, which was very solid (alongside and in light of Kant’s philosophy) in the very first years of his activity. This was a slow process, which began in 1795 (when Schelling wrote his \textit{Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism}) and culminated in 1803, the year of the second edition of his \textit{Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature}. In particular, that year was the moment when Schelling definitively put aside any form of morally-grounded or merely dialectical philosophical approach in order to develop his own ontology of Evil.\textsuperscript{61}

Schelling’s intellectual exchange with Fichte was a very important moment for Schellingian philosophy, as shown by the private correspondence between them. Besides some personal skirmishes (which I will not consider here), it is centred on a serious and detailed discussion about their respective philosophies, whence there emerges a clear divergence between the two thinkers.\textsuperscript{62} However, that one divergence has to be understood as structural and unbridgeable and concerns the respective conceptions of God by Fichte and Schelling. It is clear, then, that from two different conceptions of God derive two different conceptions of ontology and morality, as I am about to outline.

Fichte’s conception of God is quite problematic and evolves over time, so here I will just consider those elements that are relevant for his dispute with Schelling. That is, the core of the controversy between the two philosophers is about the moral nature of God, which Fichte outlines in his \textit{Critique of All Revelation} (1792) and in his \textit{Science of Knowledge} (\textit{Wissenschaftslehre}, 1794–95). Basically, Fichte conceives of God as the moral lawgiver of the world, as “everywhere in this world we find order and purposiveness […]”. But for all the purposes to which we are led by observing it, our reason must seek an ultimate, a final


\textsuperscript{61} See Robert Stern, “Introduction” to \textit{IPN}.

purpose as the unconditioned to the conditioned. However, everything in our knowledge is conditioned except for the purpose of the highest good, established in us by practical reason […] This alone, therefore, is capable of being the final purpose we seek […]. No being was able to have this final purpose except the one whose practical faculty is determined solely by the moral law […]. This being is God. God is therefore creator of the world”.63

Moreover, in his Wissenschaftslehre Fichte outlines an argument according to which “God does not merely come in functionally as a guarantee for the highest good’s realization, but rather God provides the source of the moral law as a fact of pure practical reason in the form of the ‘absolute I’”.64 Hence, God is nothing but the supersensuous moral order that grounds and regulates the life of the world. Indeed, Fichte is convinced that “the living and efficaciously acting moral order is itself God [and we] require no other God, nor can we grasp any other”,65 according to which the finite I consists of will and action. Therefore, as Vater clearly explains, Fichte presupposes a transcendent absolute will that is not affected by our particular wills, but on the contrary affects them, ending up being nothing but the universal moral order, namely God.66

Schelling, conversely, resolutely rejects any conception of a moral God, as he thinks that such a conception is nothing more than a human projection that fails to grasp the real nature of God. This idea is present from the 1795 Philosophical Letters onwards, as we shall see later. For this reason, Schelling clearly aims at distancing himself from the Fichtean perspective, since he is convinced that moving from knowing, rather than from Being, as Fichte does, gives philosophy an arbitrary and instable foundation. In a letter dated October 1801, Schelling writes to Fichte that “your [Fichte’s] ‘knowing’ is not an absolute knowing, but some kind of knowing that is still conditioned”,67 that is, determined by human arbitrariness. For the same reason, Schelling cannot accept the conclusion that God coincides with the universal moral order, as this idea arises from the same arbitrariness and then cannot aim at grasping the core of the Absolute, being conditioned by its own structural limits.

66 See again Vater, “The Trajectory of German Philosophy after Kant”.
67 F. W. J. Schelling, Correspondence (1800–1802), in Fichte and Schelling, The Philosophical Rupture between Fichte and Schelling, 61.
The latter is also a response to Fichte’s idea that “all being is only in relation to knowing”, so that the moral order of the world is such because it is known and posited as such by God. Therefore, as highlighted by Gardner, “Fichte draws a sharp distinction between ‘activity’, which defines thought and intuition, and ‘being’, which defines its objects”. Instead, Schelling, dealing with that which Gardner calls a stronger ontological commitment, “emphasizes that the unconditioned, though we talk of it as ‘posited’, ‘postulated’ and so forth, as if its reality were still undecided, must be not merely thought as having being, but must have being”. In this respect, Schelling points out that “the opposition between transcendental philosophy and philosophy of nature […] lies not in the distinction between ideal and real activity; it is something higher”. This means that the “ideal–real I, which is merely objective but for this very reason simultaneously productive, is in this its productivity nothing other than Nature, of which the I of intellectual intuition or of self-consciousness is only the higher [ontological] potency”.

In conclusion, it will be useful to mention that, regarding the question of Evil itself, Schelling mainly refers – in a polemical way – to Schlegel, Jacobi and Eschenmayer, in order both to criticise some of their philosophical positions and to respond to their criticisms. Indeed, I think that taking into account the abovementioned disputes will result in a better understanding of Schelling’s philosophy itself.

In 1808, Friedrich Schlegel published On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians, in which there are some indirect criticisms of Schelling’s philosophy. Schlegel defines pantheism as a pernicious and nonsensical theory and as a degeneration of materialism, since it necessarily implies an unclear and ambiguous conception of the infinite. Therefore, as Schlegel puts it, pantheism coincides with blind and mechanistic necessity that radically excludes every possibility of human (and divine) freedom. Schelling, for his part, strongly disagreed with these points and one of his main concerns in the Freedom Essay (as we shall

68 J. G. Fichte, Commentaries on Schelling’s “Transcendental Idealism” and “Presentation of My System of Philosophy” (1800–1801), in Fichte and Schelling, The Philosophical Rupture between Fichte and Schelling, 119.
70 Ibid.
71 Schelling, Correspondence (1800–1802), 44.
72 Ibid.
see later) was precisely to show how, within a pantheist account, there can be room for freedom without implying dualism.74

Schlegel’s positions have to be understood in the light of Jacobi’s thought, according to which mechanistic philosophies fail to grasp the real nature of things, as they are not compatible with freedom. For this reason, Jacobi was convinced that the ultimate principle of the universe is a matter of faith, as it goes beyond the capacity of human reason as such, of which philosophy (including the one developed by Schelling) is the main expression. Indeed, in 1789 Jacobi wrote that “if the universe is not a god but rather a creation; if it is the effect of a free intelligence, then the original direction of each being must be [the] expression of a divine will. […] This principle, which is the condition of the existence of being itself, its original drive, its own will, cannot be compared with the laws of nature”.75 However, it is precisely on this latter point that Schelling strongly disagreed: that is, he could not accept the original condition of Being, that is, its source and origin, to be something supernatural, that is, exceeding and incomparable with the laws of nature.

The controversy between Schelling and his contemporaries continued even after the publication of the Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom, for which Schelling himself was criticised by Eschenmayer, following a longstanding debate, which went back to the Jena period. Basically, Eschenmayer challenged Schelling’s conception of the irrational ground of God’s existence, claiming that such a duality is nothing but an illusory explanation and an unsuccessful attempt to reduce the essence of God to the categories of the human intellect. Such categories, however, are just an abstraction from the reality of things, because they arbitrarily turn reality into intellectual concepts. Schelling’s conception of freedom, Eschenmayer argued, is a clear example of this tendency: freedom cannot be found (as Schelling believes) in the domain of necessity and it cannot be reduced to a merely conceptual object. On the contrary, Eschenmayer firmly believed that freedom is not conceptualisable and exceeds every intellectual investigation. God, in Eschenmayer’s view, unquestionably transcends human understanding; therefore God’s existence radically and qualitatively differs from human existence, meaning that God’s existence transcends the unavoidably human condition of finitude, and therefore cannot be understood as separated from its own ground.

I will examine Schelling’s account of Evil and God in detail in the next sub-section; for now, it would suffice to briefly mention Schelling’s response to Eschenmayer’s comments. Regarding freedom, Schelling points out that arguing that freedom cannot become a concept makes no sense (“as if anything could become a concept that is not one already!”). Rather, defining it as not conceptualisable, that is, as inconceivable, is equivalent to ascribing irrationality not to the ground of God’s existence but to God Godself. In addition, Schelling also objects that “if we say that God may not be thought with human concepts, then we likewise make creation into one of our human concepts, only as a negative measure of the Godhead”; in other words, the abstract conceptualisation is in fact that of Eschenmayer, as it results in a purely conjectural theology that provides a negative and moralistic conception of God, which Schelling considers, as already mentioned, a mere human illusion.

To sum up, in this sub-section I have examined in detail the historical background of Schelling’s thought. First, I have highlighted the influence exerted by Kant’s philosophy (alongside the works of Jakob Böhme and Franz von Baader), and in particular his notion of radical Evil and his *Metaphysical Foundation of Natural Science*. Moreover, I have also pointed out the fundamental influence of Spinoza in Schelling’s philosophy, especially Spinoza’s conceptions of Substance and God. In doing so, I have also relied on Dalia Nassar’s and Michael Vater’s readings. Further, I have outlined the radical and unbridgeable divergence between Fichte and Schelling concerning the moral nature of God, which Schelling sees as untenable and misleading. And finally, I have also examined the dispute between Schelling and some of his contemporaries, such as Schlegel, Jacobi and Eschenmayer, in order to facilitate the understanding of Schelling’s discourse on Evil and freedom, which will be the focus of the remaining sections of this chapter.

1.1.2 From a Moral to an Ontological Point of View: Schelling’s Conception of Evil

In 1809 Schelling published *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, which should read as a significant effort to ontologically rethink in a positive way the question of Evil. In this sense, Schelling claims that it is not possible to philosophise

---

77 Ibid., 179.
relying only on idealism or only on realism, as these two philosophical systems, taken separately, can grasp the nature of things only partially. Such a claim has to be intended (or understood) in continuity with Schelling’s early systematic understanding of philosophy, according to which “the intrinsic notion of everything merely objective in our knowledge, we may speak of as nature. The notion of everything subjective is called, on the contrary, the self, or the intelligence. The two concepts are mutually opposed […] the one [i.e., intelligence] as the conscious, the other [i.e., nature] as the nonconscious. But now in every knowing a reciprocal occurrence of the two […] is necessary”.

By “realism”, Schelling refers to that doctrine that arises from nature and is focused on the external reality of things and considers things as dogmatically independent from human knowledge. Conversely, he intends idealism as the highest philosophical system, which shows the reality and effectiveness of concepts such as freedom, life and activity in their original arising in the I, that is, in self-consciousness; however, idealism risks remaining a pure abstraction if it ignores that these concepts can become effective only through real and concrete matter. For this reason, “idealism, if it does not have as its basis a living realism, becomes just as empty and abstract a system as that of […] any other dogmatist”.

This conception has its roots, as mentioned above, in Schelling’s System of Transcendental Idealism (1800), where he claims that “if I reflect merely upon the ideal activity, there arises for me idealism, or the claim that the boundary is posited solely by the self. If I reflect merely upon the real activity, there arises for me realism, or the claim that the boundary is independent of the self. If I reflect upon the two together, a third view arises from both, which may be termed ideal–realism, or what we have hitherto designated by the name of transcendental idealism”. Put simply, he is convinced that convergence between idealism and realism is the only suitable approach for a far-reaching and reliable philosophy.

Schelling thinks that a correct deduction of the principles (the idealist side) must be construed from the Naturephilosophie (the realist side) and, vice versa, philosophy of nature cannot be conceived of without its idealist counterpart. By applying this conception to the discourse on Evil, Schelling claims that “since nothing is prior to, or outside of, God, he must have the ground of his existence in himself”. Hence, it inevitably follows that Evil itself can be considered neither as non-Being nor as a lack of Good, as this possibility is ruled out as

---

78 STI, 5; SW, I, 3, 339.
79 PI, 26; SW, I, 7, 356.
80 STI, 41; SW, I, 3, 387.
81 PI, 27; SW, I, 7, 357.
soon as we correctly approach the question of philosophy. In other words, defining Evil as non-Being or as lack of Good is equivalent to approaching the question erroneously: so, not only is it incorrect to postulate the unreality of Evil, but it is also incorrect to assume that a moral principle can occur outside Being and God’s will. “Will is primal Being [Ursein] to which alone all predicates of Being apply”; hence it is not possible to argue that something could occur in opposition to Ursein.

Consequently, Schelling argues, “God himself requires a ground so that he can exist; but only a ground that is not outside but inside him and has in itself a nature which, although belonging to him, is yet also different from him”. However, in order to fully understand Schelling’s thorny statement, the relation between God’s existence and the ground of God’s existence must be clarified. Indeed, the claim that the ground of God’s existence has to be understood as being different from Godself could be seen as an outright contradiction, especially after arguing that nothing can occur outside Ursein.

Nevertheless, the alleged contradiction can easily be avoided by defining the aforesaid relation in dynamic terms. God, to wit, is not the immobile creator of the universe and does not have an immutable and eternally fixed nature. Ground and existence then relate to each other in the same way as darkness and light, contraction and expansion, or potency and act. Indeed, “the relation is rather one of the ground’s being a condition or medium through which God’s existence first comes to light; it is the condition for the appearance of the light”. The ground cannot be conceived of as absolutely independent of God, as it is posited by God so that light can emerge. Light, indeed, can occur only in opposition to darkness and is meaningless outside its opposition to darkness. Also, “the tension between ground and existence is not one of attraction and repulsion but rather of contraction and expansion”; and Judith Norman writes, “Schelling’s idea is that contraction grounds and makes possible an anti-contractive force of freely flowing expansion, an act of affirmation in which God says yes to existence”.

Therefore, my point is that precisely because, according to Schelling, Ursein and will coincide, God has to be considered as a living being involved in the process of Becoming (namely the process which subtends and forms the ontological structure of every existing

---

82 PI, 21; SW, I, 7, 350.
83 PI, 42; SW, I, 7, 375.
84 PI, 149n32.
85 Ibid.
thing and of which God is the architect), rather than as an abstract and transcendent intellect, or the source of a rigid set of maxims. However, it follows that this conception of God can be asserted only by positing a ground on which God can base God’s own existence without identifying Godself with it. Put simply, Schelling presupposes a counterpart to God’s existence, which is a necessary moment of contraction in order to allow expansion to occur, a primordial and original darkness above which light can Werden, that is, come into Being. The latter point, moreover, has the merit of further enlightening and stressing how Schelling’s understanding of God has neither a static nor a moral nature, but is conceived organically within the process of Becoming (which God Godself produces).

“The whole spatially extended cosmos”, Schelling maintains, “is nothing but the swelling heart of the Godhead that continues, retained by invisible forces, in a continuous pulsation or in an alternation of expansion and contraction”.\(^{87}\) Furthermore, God can only be personal, because of the coincidence between Ursein and will, which makes Godself “a living unity of forces”.\(^ {88}\) Moreover, “because in God there is an independent ground of reality and, hence, two equally eternal beginnings of self-revelation, God also must be considered in regard to his freedom in relation to both”.\(^ {89}\) This means that God’s freedom is equivalent to the process of continuously becoming free by overcoming the dark ground through the rising up of light into existence. All of the above, consequently, shows that God is no longer the guarantor of the world’s moral order nor some sort of supernatural entity, because God neither dogmatically provides moral rules nor is ontologically detached from the material world.

That is, “God is something more real than a merely moral world order and has entirely different and more vital motive forces in himself than the desolate subtlety of abstract idealists attribute to him”.\(^ {90}\) In other words, God is a living being that constantly resolves in Godself the contrast of the two opposed forces and provides life in its purest potentiality. As Schelling puts it, “according to the necessary correspondence between God and his basis [Basis], precisely that radiant glimpse of life in the depths, of darkness in every individual flares up in the sinner into a consuming fire, just as in a living organism a particular joint or system, as soon as it has strayed from the whole, perceives the unity and

\(^{87}\) AW, 94; SW, I, 8, 326.

\(^{88}\) PI, 59; SW, I, 7, 394.

\(^{89}\) Ibid.

\(^{90}\) PI, 26; SW, I, 7, 356.
cooperative effort itself to which is opposed as fire (= fever) and ignites from an inner heat”.

The same conception can also be found in Schelling’s early writings, showing once again both that there is a degree of continuity in his philosophical activity and that his divergences from dominant idealist thinking (and particularly from Fichte) are anything but unforeseen and impulsive. Back in 1795, indeed, in his *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*, Schelling wrote that “the idea of a moral God […] not only signifies nothing sublime, but signifies nothing whatsoever; it is as empty as every other anthropomorphistic representation”. Schelling, in fact, directs his argument against the prejudice that our finite mind, in the impossibility of knowing the real nature of God, cannot leave aside the idea of God, and so it is forced to presuppose a moral law grounding the idea of the Godhead. Schelling also claims that “the deity cannot be affected by the weakness of your reason; though you could arrive at the deity only through the moral law, this is not in turn the only yardstick by which deity is to be measured”. In other words, Schelling points out that grounding the nature of God on the idea of an absolute moral law results in weakening God by subordinating God to an alleged highest moral principle.

As already said, the real nature of God, as outlined in Schelling’s discourse on Evil and freedom, is not about prescribing rules for human conduct, but is about grounding the potentiality of human actions; it is not about providing guidelines for our personal experience, but is about making our personal experience possible; it is not about morality, but about ontology. This is a fundamental claim, and my point here is that this is precisely what differentiates Schelling’s speculation both from the idealism of Fichte and from modern theodicy (in the terms in which I defined it above).

In fact, in Schelling’s philosophy (and particularly in his *Freedom Essay*) there can be no room for a negative conception of Evil nor for a privative one. Evil, on the contrary, can only be conceived of within (and never without) *Ursein*, that is, the original will of God. Accordingly, Evil is as real as Good is, rather than subordinate to Good or coincident with non-Being. Indeed, Evil is a positive principle that lies in the primal ground of God’s existence: the tension between expansion and contraction, then, is nothing but the tension between Good and Evil. Evil, to wit, is “the incomprehensible base of reality in things, the

---

91 PI, 56; SW, I, 7, 391.
92 PL, 157–58; SW, I, 1, 285.
93 PL, 160; SW, I, 1, 289.
indivisible remainder, that which with the greatest exertion cannot be resolved in understanding but rather remains eternally in the ground”.

Schelling claims that the order of things is derived by God’s self-revelation, which in turn is “the utterance of the logos or ratio, […] the pure principle of form and intelligibility that is God”. Also, “the emergence of God by means of the ground is not in fact the transition from nothingness to being […] but the point of revelation of a being that in some sense was always already there, even if ‘dormant’; […] therefore] the ground only emerges with the revelation […] which is] the latter’s condition of possibility”. Therefore, the order of things is constantly threatened by the yearning of the ground to subvert the existing order itself. This is an irrational tendency, an incomprehensible craving, an unconscious attempt to upset the hierarchy of principles. Evil, then, is an effort to turn harmony into chaos and to realise the uprising of “randomness” (das Regellose) against orderliness. Such effort, moreover, occurs as a struggle, namely as a conflict between Good and Evil, or between orderliness and chaos. I will focus in particular on the nature and crucial role of this struggle in the next sub-section.

Here we have to understand Evil in terms of Möglichkeit, that is, the perennial possibility that cannot but keep recurring as such and constantly missing its realisation: in this sense, being a perennial possibility implies the impossibility of its actualisation, that is, of its becoming real, and the persistence of its being potential. This is an essential condition for God’s revelation, which coincides with the ultimately Real (which I capitalise as it refers to the ontological structure of the world). In fact, the abovementioned struggle, together with Evil’s ontological condition of perennial possibility, generates the conditions “in which God reveals himself as spirit, that is, as actu real [actu wirklich]”. This precisely is the Real, as I have put it: in other words, Schelling, in the previously mentioned letter to Eschenmayer (1812), speaks about it as “being as such, this ‘is’ of which we can indeed be spiritually conscious”, that is, the Real understood as the fundamental ontological structure of the world as it originally occurs in God’s revelation.

To sum up, Schelling’s point is that Evil is the underlying possibility that constantly threatens the Real, aspiring to become itself the Real. However, this is a possibility posited

---

94 PI, 29; SW, I, 7, 360.
95 Love and Schmidt, “Introduction” to PI, xx.
96 Ibid., xxi.
97 PI, 47; SW, I, 7, 380.
98 Schelling, “Schelling’s Answer to Eschenmayer”, 175.
by God only in order to be overwhelmed by the Real, the dark ground from which the light principle springs, the ontological contraposition that gives sense and effectiveness to the affirmation and the revelation of Godself. That is, Evil is the perennially unrealised possibility whose grounding is fundamental and essential to provide value and concreteness to the Real, which otherwise would be a mere abstraction.

Schelling is also convinced that “all birth is birth from darkness into light”, from which it follows that the two forces cannot be but in a relationship of complementarity, which in turn is the only way they can relate to each other, according to their positive features. Therefore, “both principles are indeed in all things, yet they are without complete consonance due to the deficiency of that which has been raised out of the ground”. Hence, being the two principles in all things and being all things within Ursein, then they must be united, though complementarily, in God. God, to wit, embodies the two principles as the two opposite poles of God’s indissoluble ontological structure. This, once more, indicates that God is neither a moral being nor a moral ruler: rather, God’s ontological structure is based on a dynamic process of contrast between two complementary forces. Thereby, morality is dethroned as the highest and indisputable goal of humanity, as it is no longer considered the principle of reality or as the “right pathway” to be followed by human beings.

In this context, the traditional conception of the absolute coincidence of God with Good [das Gute] is no longer applicable, as it fails to acknowledge both the effective features of Evil and the real nature of the relationship between Good and Evil. As Schelling puts it, “the ground of evil must lie, therefore, not only in something generally positive but rather in that which is most positive in what nature contains, as is actually the case in our view, since it lies in the revealed centrum or primal will of the first ground”. This is the reason why, Schelling argues, “what needs to be explained is not, for instance, how evil becomes actual in individuals, but rather in its universal activity [Wirksamkeit] or how it was able to break out of creation as an unmistakably general principle everywhere locked in struggle with the [G]ood”.

More specifically, that which Schelling calls the universal activity of Evil, that is, its Wirksamkeit, is nothing but its effectiveness and operativeness. Consequently, a suitable philosophical examination of Evil has to focus on what makes Evil itself become actual,

---

99 PI, 29; SW, I, 7, 360.
100 PI, 32; SW, I, 7, 363.
101 PI, 37; SW, I, 7, 369.
102 PI, 40; SW, I, 7, 373.
effective and operative, that is to say, its positive essence. Such an approach immediately excludes any negative or privative conception of Evil, insofar as their “structural limits” make these negative conceptions of Evil unable to grasp Evil itself in its effectiveness. It is not possible, indeed, to grasp the Wirksamkeit of Evil by conceiving of Evil itself as a lack of Good or as non-Being: how could something that is neither real nor autonomous be understood in its Wirksamkeit? This, however, is a mistake that arises from the same old prejudice of the moral God, according to Schelling.

Therefore, as already mentioned, we have to understand Schelling’s conceptions of Good and Evil not in a moral sense, as they are not moral principles, but as two ontological forces that animate life itself by virtue of their contrast. Accordingly, Evil is neither the immoral converse nor the logical contradiction of Good, but rather the latent ontological counterpart of Good. Thus, they are not dogmatically given in a set of general rules, but keep fighting for supremacy over the Real and fight to direct (but also to subvert and pervert) the dynamic structure of the Real itself. It is in this sense that, yet again, Evil is to be understood as an endless threat to the divine harmony, as a “perverted desire” to upset the nature of things. However, we have already seen that this inclination is eternally defeated by God and persists only in its eternal defeat. On the contrary, the same cannot be said for humankind, for whom the perversion of the ground still threatens to realise itself through human actions, that is, “there must be a general ground of solicitation, of temptation to evil, even if it were only to make both principles [i.e., Good and Evil] come to life in man, that is, to make him aware of the principles”. 103

The latter point, according to Schelling, points precisely to the uttermost difference between God and humankind: indeed, “if ground remains a condition in God, it does not necessarily have to do so in man […]; hence, the danger of man, his inner dissonance, lies in the possibility that the ground may subordinate expansion to itself, that contraction may triumph over expansion by perverting it”. 104 In this case, “the ground ceases being a condition by which existence may become what it is, but seeks to become that for the sake of which existence becomes what it is, it seeks to become absolute”, 105 meaning that “the same

103 PI, 41; SW, I, 7, 374.
104 PI, 150n32.
105 Ibid.
unity [of the two principles] that is inseverable in God must therefore be severable in man – and this is the possibility of good and evil”. 106

Indeed, the possibility of Good and Evil always arises in the field of freedom, which is the fundamental and indelible feature both of God and of humankind. In other words, the very nature of God’s freedom and existence cannot be conceived of but within the dynamics of life. 107 That is, Schelling claims – borrowing from the Gospel of Mark chapter 12, verses 26–27 – that “God is not a god of the dead but of the living”, 108 which also means that, if the foundation of God’s life is God’s freedom, then we are also free, since God shares with human beings the same concept of “life”. Indeed, according to Schelling, the human being follows and complies with the divine ontological structure, so that humankind is free because God is free and cannot reveal and perpetuate God but through freedom.

Schelling’s conception of freedom will be explored in detail in the next section; for now, the points that have been made are enough to state the following: given that Evil is a positive ontological occurrence that lies in the ground of God’s existence, and given that the possibility of Good and Evil arises within the domain of freedom (as referred to above), Schelling manages to grasp Evil in its positive features, by placing its origin in God, but at the same time Schelling avoids attributing to God responsibility for its realisation. The latter, I argue, is precisely the core and aim of the “ontological shifting” made by Schelling: namely that only by putting the question of Evil in the field of ontology, rather than in that of morality, is it possible to deal with this question (as well as that of the relation between Good and Evil) without dogmatic restrictions.

Good and Evil, then, are two positive forces, two coessential and complementary principles. This means that they both originate in God’s will but occur in different moments of God’s life (i.e., as ground and existence, darkness and light). Moreover, as already argued, in the Godhead they are unified and inseparable, while human beings operate an arbitrary distinction between them and perpetrate the realisation of Evil (which is impossible for God). In Schelling’s words, “in the divine understanding there is a system; yet God himself is not a system, but rather a life”. 109 Again, God is not a provider of moral values, but a living unity of everything that is. This idea is also outlined in Philosophy and Religion, a brief essay

106 PI, 33; SW, I, 7, 364.
108 PI, 18; SW, I, 7, 346.
109 PI, 62; SW, I, 7, 399.
dated 1804 where Schelling argues that “God is the ideal par excellence, and without further mediation God is also the real par excellence;”\(^{110}\) that is, in God there is that immediate and original unity, that absoluteness and that “Being-One” that embodies the whole structure of the universe in an organic living structure. As we will see in the next section, this essential unity can be grasped only by intuition, rather than by description.

It follows that this unity of ideal and real, of Good and Evil, of ground and existence, is always already posited by God’s revelation, so that it is innate, original and irreducible. Indeed, as already stated, the distinction between the principles made by humankind is a purely arbitrary one and has neither absolute nor structural value. Even in his *System of Transcendental Idealism*, Schelling argues that “it is not concepts that are innate in us, but our own nature and the whole of its own mechanism. This nature is a specific one, and acts in a specific manner, for it is itself nothing else but this acting”.\(^{111}\) This is a further element that confirms that the essence of Evil has to be defined in ontological terms, rather than in moral ones. So the origin and the primary source of Evil can only be in the irrational ground of God’s existence, but, its realisation being a matter of freedom, practical responsibility for it exclusively belongs to those who concretely enact it, that is, to human beings.

The latter statement is extremely important. Indeed, it is to be considered as one of the most remarkable attempts made in the history of Western philosophy to systematically distinguish the origin of Evil from its realisation, that is, to avoid the reduction of ontology to morality. In God, indeed, Schelling recognises *Ursein*, that is, the primal will of the universe, which, in turn, coincides with primal Being, in which everything is, and outside of which nothing is. God, to wit, is the absolute unity and coincidence of opposites, the absolute undifferentiation of principles, the absolutely Real. However, my point is that this absolute unity is not given as a dialectical synthesis (in the Hegelian sense) nor as a negative process, but as an organic process that continuously becomes Real and could not be (nor become) otherwise. Therefore, interpreting God, as well as the Absolute or the Real, either in moral or in dialectical terms is nothing more than a human misconception with no real ground.

Moreover, I argue that Schelling’s account can be seen as a form of *radical monism*. The dualism of principles, consequently, is only apparent, since it turns out to be a mere human convention that does not comply with the ontological structure of the Godhead. In


\(^{111}\) STI, 152; SW, I, 3, 529.
other words, by saying that in God the principles of Good and Evil, lightness and darkness, ideal and real, and so on become united and undifferentiated does not mean to say that they are turned into a unitary principle because they were separated in the first place. Rather, saying that they become united and undifferentiated means to say that they keep recurring as united and undifferentiated as they were in the first place: that is, they can only become what they are and not something different from what they used to be. Becoming, in other words, is an organic process through which God exercises God’s “Being-One” freely and willingly; that is, through the process of Becoming, God reiterates Godself’s dynamic “oneness”, which constantly evolves, keeping its ontological core unharmed. Therefore, it is not the monism that follows and arises from an original dualism of the principles, but rather it is the dualism of the principles that is a human arbitrary separation of that which is (and cannot be but as) originally united and undifferentiated.

It still remains to clarify how Evil can be present in God without God’s being responsible for its realisation. That is, as already mentioned, since God, in the act of revealing Godself (in the terms in which I defined it above), overcomes Evil, making it a perennial and unrealisable possibility (as per above), then it becomes impossible for God Godself to actualise Evil. Therefore, the only way in which Evil itself can be actualised, that is, in which it can satisfy its irrational craving for actuality, is through humankind’s actions. Indeed, when human beings elevate their self-will above and in contrast with Ursein and God’s revelation, then Evil becomes real. That is, in this way Evil is able “to reverse the relation of the principles, to elevate the ground over the cause […] Hence[,] human will is to be regarded as a bond of living forces; now, as long as it remains in unity with the universal will, these same forces exist in divine measure and balance. But no sooner than [human] self-will itself moves from the centrum at its place, so does the bond of forces as well”. However, Schelling is convinced that when this happens, an impure form of life occurs, namely a faulty and insane one, since it deliberately deceives Ursein. Moreover, this cannot be but insanity, as Evil strives to actualise itself irrationally and in opposition to God’s revelation. It follows, then, that the only agents responsible for this kind of action, or, better, for this kind of life, are human beings, as it all depends on their free will.

In this respect, Schelling compares Evil to a disease, using a significant metaphor that he borrows from von Baader, as he himself acknowledges. In this sense, he claims that

---

112 PI, 34; SW, I, 7, 365.
113 See Schelling’s footnote in PI, 35; SW, I, 7, 367.
“the most fitting comparison here is offered by disease which, as the disorder having arisen in nature through the misuse of freedom, is the true counterpart of evil or sin”.114 That is, since the equilibrium of the forces is the highest and most perfect form of life, such an equilibrium will also coincide with the highest Good and healing. Therefore, every alteration and rupture of this equilibrium will bring to be a different form of life, which will be equally free but affected by Evil and disease, due to the perversion, that is, to the reversal or the overwhelming, of the forces. That is precisely what Schelling defines as the misuse of freedom.

Borrowing Dale Snow’s words, “evil is a willful disorder, a false life. Schelling’s central metaphor of disease conveys both the parasitism and secondary nature of evil, as well as recognizing the reality of evil […]. Disease is the paradigm case of an entity inappropriately subsuming everything to itself at the expense of the whole of which it is a part. This also explains, in Schelling’s view, why we are horrified by evil in a way that we are not horrified by mere weakness or impotence, which at most inspire pity”.115 Under these circumstances, it should be clear that moral responsibility for the realisation of Evil cannot be attributed to God, despite its origin being in God.

Schelling reminds us that he is focusing on the possibility of Evil and that “the reality of evil is the object of a whole other investigation”.116 Far from contradicting himself, Schelling is claiming that, in order to grasp the true essence of Evil, it is necessary to focus on its emergence as an ontological possibility, which is absolutely and continuously suppressed by God, but its re-emergence in humankind is due to humankind’s misuse of freedom and separation of the principles. Consequently, the efficacy and positivity of Evil does not originally lie in “bad behaviour” but in its arising as a condition of the possibility of our experience in the world. Then, it inevitably follows that moral responsibility for the practical realisation of Evil is to be attributed to humankind, as humans are the only beings who can realise and actualise it. However, moral responsibility is only a secondary feature concerning the nature of Evil, which is also why such responsibility is not attributable to God.

In conclusion, the way in which Schelling addresses the question of Evil has another significant outcome, which is often overlooked but can now be glimpsed. I argue that shifting

114 PI, 34; SW, I, 7, 366.
116 PI, 33; SW, I, 7, 364.
the focus from morality to ontology can lead us to take into account the domain of pure experience: since Evil is no longer a matter of morality but of ontology, then it does not merely coincide with what is morally wrong or despicable: it is a force that concretely grounds our experience in the world and makes it possible through its struggle against the Good. As mentioned above, philosophising on Good and Evil does not mean dealing with moral guidelines for our personal experience, but it means looking at the conditions of the possibility of our personal experience, as the features that ground and make it possible, that is, as that original moment in which experience emerges before it becomes my personal experience.

To sum up, in this sub-section I have shown how Schelling shifts the question of Evil from the point of view of morality to one of ontology, with the aim of grasping Evil itself in its very ontological concreteness and of rejecting any reduction of it to a mere lack of Good or to a non-Being (in particular against Leibniz’s theodicy). Specifically, I have argued that Schelling outlines Good and Evil as two opposing ontological principles that clash and fight in order to actualise themselves and overcome the opposing principle. Also, although the origin of Evil is ascribed to God, its realisation pertains exclusively to human beings, who alone are responsible for it. In the next sub-section, I will focus on the essential features of the abovementioned struggle, arguing that not only has it to be understood as the fundamental condition of the possibility of life (as Schelling does), but also as that of pure and absolute experience.

1.1.3 “Where There Is No Struggle, There Is No Life”: The Struggle between Good and Evil as the Fundamental Condition of the Possibility of (Absolute) Experience

Since Evil is a positive ontological principle, complementary to and coessential with Good, it also unfolds itself through opposition to, and consequently struggle against, Good. Therefore, as Schelling claims, Evil is “only explicable in terms of an arousal of the irrational or dark principle in creatures – in terms of activated selfhood – having occurred already in the first creation […] and] announces itself in nature only through its effects”.

117 In other words, the complementarity and ontological positivity of Good and Evil mean that neither of the two principles is passive and static; rather, just as the light principle, in order to actualise itself, needs a dark ground to overcome, the dark ground itself keeps reacting to this overwhelming,
aiming at subverting the current order of things. Moreover, “this principle is the very spirit of evil that has been awoken in creation by arousal of the dark ground of nature, that is, the *turning against each other* [Entzweiung] of light and darkness”.

Schelling also argues that the dark ground is characterised by a being-active-for-itself [*Für-sich-wirken*], from which Evil can emerge. Evil, in other words, is not the ground, but coincides with (and emerges from) the activity of the ground itself, or its being active (i.e., its *Wirksamkeit*). Accordingly, I argue that the *Entzweiung* (literally “division, separation”) and the struggle between Good and Evil are not to be understood as a dialectical opposition in which the negative moment (ground or Evil) opposes the positive one (light or Good) only in order to finally overcome the opposition itself through a superior synthesis. Rather, the *Entzweiung* of Good and Evil is made possible only by the fact that both of them are positive moments: that is, they do not negate each other dialectically, but they oppose each other as two ontological forces contending for supremacy over the Real, or as two potencies each struggling for its own actualisation. However, only one of them can hold that supremacy and fully actualise itself, at the expense of the other one: it is an *aut/aut*, and in this sense no dialectical synthesis is possible.

Moreover, “the principle [of Evil], to the extent that it comes from the ground and is dark, is the self-will of creatures which, however, to the extent that it has not yet been raised to (does not grasp) complete unity with the light (as principle of understanding), is pure craving or desire, that is, blind will”. I have already explained how the unity of the principles is a primordial condition in God’s essence, and that their severability depends only on human freedom; consequently, in its failing to grasp the absolute unity of the principles, the self-will, namely the individual perversion of the primordial will of *Ursein*, tries to set itself up as the *centrum* and the ruler of human conduct. Also, it is blind because it loses sight of the universal will, making its action partial and (then) selfish. It is no coincidence that Schelling refers to the two principles in terms of light and darkness: activity arising from the dark ground cannot be but blind if it is not illuminated by the light of its counterpart. For this reason, Evil is nothing other than – literally – *groping around in the dark*.

How is this possible? “In man”, Schelling writes, “there is the whole power of the dark principle and at the same time the whole strength of the light. In him there is the deepest

---

118 PI, 44; SW, I, 7, 377.
119 PI, 32; SW, I, 7, 363.
abyss and the loftiest sky of both centra”. Accordingly, “man is placed on that summit where he has in himself the source of self-movement toward good or evil in equal portions […] but he cannot remain undecided because God must necessarily reveal himself and because nothing at all can remain ambiguous in creation”. Therefore, humankind is required to act in accordance with one of the two principles; that is, every human being has to make a choice, which is always a free one, and cannot escape from this condition, as it grounds humankind’s life itself. The latter is a fundamental point in Schelling’s speculation: indeed, if God is not morally responsible for the actualisation of Evil (as already said), then humankind is, and such a responsibility cannot be but the result of a free choice. In other words, although the struggle between Good and Evil is a constitutive and necessary part of human life and experience, humankind can deal with it only by exercising humankind’s freedom. The relationship between freedom and necessity will be broadly analysed later in this chapter; at this point, however, I would rather focus on the nature of the struggle between Good and Evil, which I will consider as the ground and primal source of human life and experience.

In this regard, Schelling clearly argues that “where there is no struggle, there is no life”, meaning that the conflict between Good and Evil, existence and ground, attraction and repulsion is the fundamental condition of possibility for human life and experience in general. Accordingly, “all existence demands a condition so that it may become real, namely personal, existence”; and even God is not immune to that condition, which is the struggle itself. That is, as has been said, from the ground (and not from God) this appetite for selfhood and individuality arises, an appetite that, however, is always overcome by God through the prevalence of the absolute unity and the abovementioned oneness. The point here is that Schelling thinks that this craving for selfhood and selfishness is an essential impulse triggering the struggle between Good and Evil, which in turn is the only means through which Good itself can be fully actualised; that is, the ground provides that unavoidable stimulus that activates the process of actualisation of God.

Therefore, borrowing Schelling’s words, “activated selfhood is necessary for the rigor of life; without it there would be sheer death, a falling asleep of the good”. Hence, it follows that the struggle between Good and Evil is a constitutive element of life, but not in

\[\text{References:}\]

120 Ibid.
121 PI, 41; SW, I, 7, 374.
122 PI, 63; SW, I, 7, 400.
123 PI, 62; SW, I, 7, 399.
124 PI, 63; SW, I, 7, 400.
the sense that it is just one part (as important as it could be) of life; rather, it is life, in the sense that it represents the coming to life of Being, for, it is worth repeating, Schelling is convinced that with no struggle there is no life either. Consequently, my point here is that this struggle, in the form in which it is defined by Schelling himself, can be considered the ground and primal source not only of human life, but of human experience in general. That being the case, the struggle between Good and Evil coincides with the fundamental condition of pure and absolute experience. In this specific context, the term “absolute” is meant to recall its etymology (from the Latin ab-solutus), its being “free from any constraint” from singular beings. In other words, the latter is the original form of experience, which occurs in every single human being without being identified with any of them, but rather being (as just mentioned) free from any constraint from them.

The concept of absolute experience, however, is not directly and explicitly used by Schelling (who refers to “mere experience” in his Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature), so the way I have defined it above has to be understood as my use of it. Nevertheless, I argue that such a concept can help us both to better grasp Schelling’s meaning and to interpret this meaning in a fruitful and original way. Indeed, not only does the abovementioned understanding of absolute experience fit well into Schelling’s thinking, but it also expands the range of his philosophy by enriching it with a further element. I will go into more details about this matter later in this chapter. For now, suffice to say, a strong and direct link exists between the concept of absolute experience and Schelling’s account of the struggle between Good and Evil.

Put differently, the contrast between Good and Evil leads us to the deepest ontological core of life and experience, namely “the origin and life of the system”; in turn, Evil introduces an imbalance, or an ontological tension, that is “the essential medium of life, of the organic struggle of forces that constitutes the true basis of the whole [of life]”. Given all that, the fundamental function of the struggle between Good and Evil is even more evident: that is, once we establish that Evil is an ontological principle or force, opposing and struggling against its coessential counterpart (i.e., the Good), it follows not only that the struggle between them has an undisputable ontological value, but also that the struggle itself coincides with the starting point of the ontological process of the emerging of life and experience in themselves, that is, in their original condition of possibility.

125 Love and Schmidt, “Introduction” to PI, xx.
126 Ibid.
Put differently, the struggle between Good and Evil is not meant to be understood in terms of “moral dilemmas”, that is, in terms of the questions we human beings ask ourselves – whether something is good or bad, right or wrong, in the context of particular situations. Instead, the aforesaid struggle consists in an organic dynamism that makes life and experience possible, that is, it activates the process of life itself, rather than merely result in moral or axiological determinations. In fact, the struggle between Good and Evil, according to the points made earlier in this chapter, is the ontological foundation of human experience, that is, the primordial origin and conditio sine qua non, the coming to life of life itself. Therefore, it does not arise as a moral (and secondary) moment of human experience, but it grounds experience itself, being its concrete basis and only condition of possibility.

Since it concerns the field of ontology, the latter can also be linked to what has previously been said about the real. I have already pointed out that the struggle between Good and Evil provides a basis for the realisation of God’s revelation, which would otherwise have no way of being transformed from potentiality into actuality. In fact, that being the case, the struggle represents the critical moment of God’s revelation; in this context, the term “critical” has to be referred to the German krisis, which Schelling uses in his discourse on Evil and is very important in order to understand the key role of the struggle within the Real. Generally speaking, krisis is a decisive turning point, in which stasis is impossible and mutation is inevitable. The Greek term κρίσις (krisis), indeed, derives from κρίνω (krino, “to judge”) and from κριτικός (kritikós, “able to distinguish”); it indicates judgement, as well as a capacity for drawing distinctions and for choice. Moreover, Hippocrates originally used it to refer to a decisive moment in a patient’s clinical state, that is, to that moment in which the patient’s state of health could only get better or get worse but could not remain as it is.

It is no coincidence, therefore, that Schelling often uses the concepts of health and disease to metaphorically refer to Good and Evil. Accordingly, Schelling writes that “the primal ground of existence also continues to be active in evil as health continues to be active in disease [… so that life] is posited by the attraction of the ground itself in an ever higher tension against unity until it arrives at self-destruction and final crisis [krisis]”.127 Again, Evil expresses itself through an irrational craving, that is, the tension against the absolute unity of principles, in order to break and subvert the unity itself: this, for Schelling, is the moment in

127 PI, 66; SW, I, 7, 403.
which the struggle emerges and results in the coming into life of Being. In other words, with no craving, no tension and no struggle, life itself would not be possible.

For this reason, “God is a life, not merely a Being. All life has a destiny, and is subject to suffering and becoming”; indeed, the conditions for the emerging of life, which have been set by God, affect even God Godself. In other words, God, in order to create life, has to have life, has to be a life; consequently, God cannot escape the dynamics of life, the process of Becoming and the tension between ground and existence. As already said, God eternally resolves the tension between ground and existence, as well as the struggle between Good and Evil, into the original unity of principles, but this resolution cannot take place outside the process of Becoming, that is, in an inert and inanimate form of Being. As Schelling puts it, “Being becomes aware of itself only in becoming. In Being there is admittedly no becoming; rather, in the latter, Being itself is again posited as eternity; but, in its realisation by opposition, it is necessarily a becoming”.\(^{129}\)

The latter sentence is extremely important to further clarify my point. That is, not only can the realisation of Being not occur except within Becoming, but also this realisation can be effective only through opposition. Once again, this is not a merely dialectical opposition, but rather the result of the interaction of two opposite ontological forces – attraction and repulsion, Good and Evil, potentiality and actuality. This is why the struggle represents a critical moment of the actualisation of God, as Schelling himself points out. The ground, indeed, opposes the unity of the principles and, following its (free) craving, tries unsuccessfully to definitively break this unity. However, all of that is necessary so that God can reveal Godself: using Schelling’s words, “in its freedom, the ground therefore effects separation and judgement \([krisis]\) and, precisely in doing so, the complete actualization of God”.\(^{130}\)

Schelling is convinced that the \(krisis\) is a necessary moment for the inevitable restoration of the original unity, in the same way in which a passing disease is required for final healing. Accordingly, “all original healing consists in the reconstruction of the relation of the periphery to the centrum, and the transition from disease to health can in fact only occur through its opposite, namely through restoration of the separate and individual life into

\(^{128}\) Ibid.  
\(^{129}\) Ibid.  
\(^{130}\) PI, 67; SW, I, 7, 404.
the being’s inner glimpse of light. From which restoration division [Krisis] once again proceeds”.

Further, Schelling is also very attentive to the issue of the conditions of the possibility of matter, as well as of experience, in the period after his *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, in which there is a whole chapter (book II, chapter 6) devoted to the “contingent determinations of matter and to the following transition into the domain of mere experience”. Let me leave aside, for the moment, the question of contingency and necessity, which will be closely analysed in the next section in its connection with key concepts such as freedom and intuition. For now, it is important to stress the way in which Schelling interprets the relationship between the forces of attraction and repulsion and its consequences, since it is also important to understand Schelling’s discourse on Evil. That is, he argues that “we have to presuppose as possible a free play of the two forces […] which is also to occur in Nature, and thus according to natural laws”. Moreover, this free play cannot be determined by matter itself and has to be implemented by external causes; hence, “since attractive and repulsive forces pertain to the possibility of matter as such, these causes must be thought in a narrower sphere”.

What is relevant, at this point, is the fact that Schelling clearly refers to pure experience in terms of the conditions of the possibility of matter as such and of a free play of physical forces, that is, in a non-dialectical way. In this sense, there is a marked similarity with what Schelling himself will argue a few years later in the *Freedom Essay*: the struggle between Good and Evil, as I have already shown, is undoubtedly drawn from the organic account of Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie*. In other words, the struggle between Good and Evil has the same structure, or occurs in the same manner, as the free play of attraction and repulsion. Therefore, in addition to attraction and repulsion being the conditions of the possibility of matter, Good and Evil (as ontological and not moral principles) are the conditions of the possibility of life and experience. This analogy is further legitimised by Schelling’s conception of the unity of the principles: indeed, we human beings perceive Good and Evil, as well as attraction and repulsion, as separate and irreconcilable. However, I have already said (and will further argue later in this chapter) that this separation of the principles is a purely human and arbitrary one and does not have to be reflected in God’s mind. Indeed, for the latter there is always unity of principles, *coincidentia oppositorum* and absolute

131 PI, 34–35; SW, I, 7, 366.
132 IPN, 200; SW, I, 2, 251.
133 Ibid.
identity, which have originally been posited by God Godself. In this context, moreover, the act of positing such absolute identity is not referred to a transcendent imposition made by God from above, but rather such absolute identity naturally flows from God’s nature.

In view of all the above, I want to reiterate the main argument of this first section: it is possible to interpret the struggle between Good and Evil, as Schelling puts it, as the fundamental condition of possibility of absolute experience. In this sense, I have already shown how Good and Evil have to be understood as ontological principles (rather than moral ones), related respectively to the existence of God and its ground, light and darkness, attraction and repulsion. So the struggle itself assumes the role of the ontological basis of life, without which there would be no life at all. Similarly, from the struggle between Good and Evil experience emerges, in its most pure and absolute form, that is, the struggle grounds the possibility of experience as such, in its being ab-soluta, or free from any constraint from singular beings. The latter indicates the most fundamental and primordial form of experience, that is, in its general emergence before becoming personal and singular. However, this does not mean that it is possible to conceive of experience independently of the experiencer; rather, following Schelling’s arguments, it is possible to identify the conditions according to which experience becomes possible. Therefore, these two aspects are mutually interrelated and make no sense independently of each other.

In conclusion, and in addition to what has already been said, a few more issues should be addressed. Given the ontological nature of the principles of Good and Evil, the “battlefield” of the consequent struggle is the one of immanence. Indeed, as I will show more in detail in the next section, immanence is a fundamental point for Schelling’s philosophy, from its early period until its late phase, passing through the Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom. This is clearly confirmed by the aforesaid concepts of free play of the forces and Ursein. Regarding the former, Schelling clearly argues, as I have already shown, that the interaction of the forces cannot take place outside nature; regarding the latter, I have already pointed out how, for Schelling, nothing can occur or simply be outside of it. Moreover, I argue that such an understanding is nothing but a form of monism and immanentism; if not, it would be possible to admit the existence of something exceeding God’s will, that is, a principle ontologically independent of it, resulting, however, in a mere and unsubstantiated abstraction.
In this regard, Schelling is convinced that he has “sufficiently shown that all natural beings have mere Being in the ground of the initial yearning that has not yet achieved unity with the understanding, that they are therefore merely peripheral beings in relation to God”.\(^{134}\) This dynamic should now be clear enough; however, it is worth repeating that the centrum, that is, God, is not ontologically detached from the peripheries, that is, finite beings (including humankind). Similarly, as has been said, even if the ground of God’s existence is different from God, this does not mean that it is ontologically separate from God (or even that it is not at all, i.e., has no being), but rather that it is the necessary counterforce for the activation of the dynamics of life and Becoming. Put simply, Schelling is describing an immanent process, as all things are in God and God neither is a transcendent one nor has an ontological status per se. Being, for Schelling, is always univocal.

Once again, here it is possible to see the influence of Spinoza: as Whistler writes, “in Spinoza’s Ethics, this univocity [of being] becomes immanence. Substance (or God) is neither an occult force standing behind its phenomenal manifestations nor a thing-in-itself external to appearances. Substance is its phenomena; it exists only in the phenomena themselves”.\(^{135}\) Schelling, for his part, takes up this conception and applies it to his own philosophy, as I have tried to show. On this basis, he also refuses every static and passive conception of the world: indeed, only in Becoming and in struggle there can be life. Again, stasis is inconceivable, as it brings death, and life is conceivable only because of the critical moment of the struggle of the forces. Finally, it should also be clear how and why the struggle between Good and Evil, in addition to being the critical moment of the coming to life of Being, can also be considered as the grounding condition of possibility of absolute experience, without distorting or altering the core of Schelling’s philosophy.

To sum up, in this sub-section I have argued that the struggle between Good and Evil consists in the very ontological ground and source of life, that is, it makes life possible in the same way in which the contrast between attraction and repulsion makes matter possible. In this sense, I have also highlighted the continuity between Schelling’s early Naturphilosophie and his Freedom Essay. Moreover, I have also demonstrated that the abovementioned struggle, given that it has to be understood exclusively in ontological terms rather than in moral ones, leads us to grasp what I have defined as absolute experience, meaning experience in its being ab-soluta, that is, free from any constraints from singular beings. Put simply, I

\(^{134}\) PI, 72; SW, I, 7, 410.
have argued that the struggle between Good and Evil consists in the conditions of the possibility of experience in its purest occurrence, that is, in its emerging moment and before becoming personal. Finally, I have also shown that such a conception has to be characterised in a monist and immanentist sense. I will return to the latter point in the following chapters.

1.2 Freedom and Necessity: “The Capacity for Good and Evil”

When dealing with Schelling’s philosophy, the question of freedom cannot be avoided, since it represents a crucial one and is a constant presence in Schelling’s thought, from his early essays to his late works. That is, while being firmly convinced that freedom is the keystone for a suitable philosophical system, Schelling also advocates for a deep rethinking of the concept of freedom itself, as he believes that both the idealist and the realist accounts, each taken in isolation, can grasp it only partially and never fully. Moreover, it follows that a correct understanding of freedom becomes fundamental in order to properly understand Schelling’s philosophy as a whole; indeed, not only is freedom related to the struggle between Good and Evil (as I have already mentioned in the previous section), but it is also strictly related to necessity, temporality, causality and intuition (as I will point out in the current section).

For these reasons, in this section I will focus on Schelling’s understanding of freedom, still keeping my analysis within a precise period, namely from the beginning of Schelling’s philosophical activity (1794–95) to his middle phase (which I identify with the time around the publication of his Philosophical Investigations, i.e., 1809). Indeed, I consider the abovementioned period as the more significant and prolific for Schelling’s speculation on freedom; in other words, as we shall see later, it is in this period that Schelling develops his fundamental understanding of freedom, which will both influence his whole philosophical activity and serve as a fundamental point of reference for the present work.

Thus, in this section I will first focus on the relation between freedom and necessity and the account of temporality that emerges from it, arguing that Schelling sees freedom and necessity not as opposite and incompatible, but rather as two interrelated concepts that mutually presuppose each other. Accordingly, I will argue that the notion of temporality that follows from the latter account aims at recalling a primordial and original dimension of temporality itself, which I will identify as kairolological rather than chronological. Moreover, I will examine the relation between freedom and intuition (Anschauung), showing that
Schelling understands it as the highest expression of freedom and as the act of “atlooking” at things in their essential features. Finally, I will focus on the relation between freedom and causality, arguing that they are related to each other as an organism and its parts; that is, in order to avoid mechanistic explanations, Schelling claims that every part of an organism, despite being causally linked to every other part (and to the whole organism itself), preserves its own life and freedom and therefore acts freely.

1.2.1 Freedom, Necessity and Temporality

In the previous section I have shown that Schelling is convinced that idealism alone is not sufficient to build a suitable philosophical system, that is, a system able to provide an adequate account of the reality of concepts and to grasp them in their very concreteness. Schelling, as already said, defines this approach as a form of ideal–realism, according to which the only reliable form of philosophy is the one that grasps the original unity of spirit and nature, of form and matter. He also applies this conception to the discourse on freedom, saying that idealism gives “on the one hand, only the most general conception of freedom and, on the other hand, a merely formal one. But the real and vital concept is that freedom is the capacity of good and evil”. Therefore, the moral responsibility for the realisation of Evil, as well as of Good, falls entirely on the individual agent, who freely chooses to act in accordance with one principle and in contrast with the other one: that is, human freedom plays a crucial role in this choice.

This original unity brings us immediately to the core of the problem of this sub-section, namely, how Schelling characterises human freedom in relation to necessity and temporality. In the previous sub-section, I have shown that for Schelling the possibility of Good and Evil is always given within the domain of freedom; now I aim at focusing in more detail on the Schellingian conception of freedom itself. In this respect, Schelling maintains the idealist standpoint, which has the merit of raising “the doctrine of freedom to that very region where it is alone comprehensible”; that is, Schelling agrees that “the intelligible being of every thing and especially of man is outside all casual connectedness as it is outside

---

136 PI, 23; SW, I, 7, 352.
137 PI, 49; SW, I, 7, 383.
or above all time”. However, according to Schelling, the latter statement needs a further integration in order to avoid the risk of turning freedom itself into a speculative abstraction with no effective relevance. Therefore, the abovementioned “intelligible being of man” cannot be but a sort of preliminary condition for human actions that is determined neither by temporality nor by any other external cause. In other words, it can be portrayed as an original tendency to act in a certain way, that is, a natural inclination common to all human beings, but its effects vary within each single being. Therefore, it is nothing but the individual nature of human beings.

This may seem a convoluted argument, and in fact it is very challenging and not effortlessly understandable. Schelling’s position is that “I freely choose to act, but I cannot do so other than in accordance with the essential character of my being, hence, I freely choose to be according to what I already am, hence, I freely choose to be what I am”. But how is this possible? How can my choice be free if my choice itself could not be any other way? Solving this alleged contradiction is not simple, also because Schelling’s point might seem strongly counterintuitive. At a closer look, however, Schelling’s account effectively integrates freedom and necessity without reducing one to the other. Indeed, saying that our intelligible being is neither determined by an external causal chain nor subject to temporality does not mean that freedom has to be understood as an unlimited possibility of unleashing our will and of shaping the universe the way we like the most. In the same way, saying that I am free to choose what I already am and could not choose any differently does not mean that my freedom is an illusion and that my actions are predetermined by a “superior will”. Put simply, I am neither the undisputed master of the universe, whose will transcends every other existing thing, nor an automaton mechanically driven and devoid of any will and freedom.

As Schelling puts it, “[the intelligible being] itself precedes all else that is or becomes within it, not so much temporally as conceptually, as an absolute unity that must always already exist fully and complete so that particular action or determination may be possible in it”. In this context, the “absolute unity” Schelling is talking about is the one between freedom and necessity, which must be seen as two reciprocally interacting and strictly interrelated concepts, rather than as diametrically opposed and incompatible. That is, our actions, which follow our intelligible being, are essentially free, as there cannot be external determination or coercion that prevents human beings from choosing to act. Nevertheless,

---

138 Ibid.
139 PI, 161n70.
140 PI, 49; SW, I, 7, 383.
these actions are immediately and necessarily determined: indeed, “in order to be able to determine itself, it [the intelligible being] would already have to be determined in itself, admittedly not from outside, which contradicts its nature, also not from inside through some sort of merely contingent or empirical necessity […]; but rather it would have to be its determination itself as its essence, that is, as its own nature”.

Thus, Schelling states that “individual action results from the inner necessity of a free being and, accordingly, from necessity itself, which must not be confused […] with empirical necessity based on compulsion”. That being the case, there is no room for contingency within human actions, meaning that, again, the principle of our actions cannot be determined by particular occurrences; if so, indeed, there would be no freedom at all. In other words, how could I consider myself free if my actions are always and continuously driven by contingency, that is, how could I be free if the primary conditions of my actions are constantly at the mercy of unstable and incidental circumstances? For this reason, Schelling is convinced that “free is what acts only in accord with the laws of its own being and is determined by nothing else either in or outside itself […] Consequently,] this inner necessity is itself freedom; the essence of man is his own act; necessity and freedom are in one another as one being that appears as one or the other only when considered from different sides, in itself freedom, formally necessity”.

In order to better understand this point, it will be useful to briefly recall the historical background of Schelling’s philosophy, which I have provided in § 1.1.1. Schelling moves from the Kantian conceptions of radical Evil and of dynamic matter, trying to fit them into a general Spinozan perspective, namely a monist and immanentist one. In other words, Schelling himself admits that the concept of free action following the intelligible nature of humankind is a Kantian one; however, it is impossible not to see the Spinozan tone assumed by Schelling’s statement. Indeed, the way in which Schelling defines the intelligible being of humankind, rather than reiterating the idea of conformity (or non-conformity) to an alleged moral law, seems not far from the Spinozan idea of conatus, according to which each living being tends to preserve itself and persevere in its own being. This is why an intelligible being can be understood only in individual terms: it has nothing to do with moral integrity or

---

141 PI, 49–50; SW, I, 7, 384.
142 PI, 50; SW, I, 7, 384.
143 Ibid.
144 In the previous section, I have already shown how Kant’s Metaphysical foundation of Natural Science affects the philosophy of the young Schelling.
145 See Spinoza, Ethics, III, 6.
moral corruption, but rather it concerns the conatus of each being, that is, its conformity to its own nature. Preserving and persevering in one’s own being is indeed a choice that is simultaneously free (as every single being wants to preserve and persevere in its own being) and necessary (as the inner tendency of the conatus does not allow any exceptions).

Accordingly, it is incorrect to counterpose necessity and freedom, considering the former as a set of moral rules to be followed, and the latter as the possibility (exclusively depending on our free will) to decide whether to follow or to break those rules. In this way, indeed, both freedom and necessity would turn into abstract and obscure concepts, responding more to a human need for a stable belief than to the effective reality of things. Once again, this is not about moral principles, but rather about ontological forces. Therefore, human acting responds to the unfolding of ontological forces, through which we come into being and we concretely build our own experience through the struggle between the forces of Good and Evil (which I have already discussed in the previous section). Moreover, I freely choose to act, and to come into being and take part in the struggle between Good and Evil, primarily because I can freely choose only if I am; and, conversely, I am only if I freely choose to be what I (already) am. It follows that freedom and necessity cannot be considered in a dualistic way (that is, as ontologically separate), as they are deeply and essentially interrelated and are possible only if they presuppose each other. Here, also, the conatus comes in: that is, I am suggesting reading Schelling’s argument as a co-occurrence of freedom and necessity, which reciprocally ground each other. Put simply, there is only one possible choice (necessity), which responds to the exigencies of the conatus, and it coincides with the one I want to choose (freedom), because in order to be I cannot choose but be driven by my conatus. Otherwise, I would not be at all.

By choosing to be, every human being makes a decision. This may seem self-evident, but it is worth emphasising, as it gets straight to the core of the relation between freedom and temporality. As already shown in the previous sub-section, Schelling thinks that human beings originally come into life as undecided beings and that they have to “give effect” to their own being by determining themselves through a free decisional process. Moreover, Schelling argues that such a free decision “cannot occur within time; it occurs outside of all time and, hence, together with the first creation (though as a deed distinct from creation). […] Therefore] the act, whereby [human] life is determined in time, does not itself belong to time but rather to eternity: it also does not temporally precede life but goes through time
(unhampered by it) as an act which is eternal by nature”.\(^\text{146}\) As McGrath explains, “Schelling speaks of a beginning outside of time, but we should not cling too tightly to the image of a prelapsarian state of being ‘prior to’ the creation of the world; rather, we should understand that the inside of every moment is a timeless ground that can always appear as always past”.\(^\text{147}\)

In this regard, Charlotte Alderwick speaks about an atemporal essence that determines the agent’s (i.e., the single human being who acts) temporal life, bringing into play the notions of essence and form and their relationship. Indeed, she argues that “we should understand the relationship between atemporal essence and temporal acts in [Schelling’s] account of human freedom in the same way that we understand the relationship between the two terms in the law of identity”,\(^\text{148}\) namely, in a reciprocal implication rather than in a radical and insuperable opposition. This means that “for Schelling essence relies on and is determined by form to exactly the same extent that form relies on and is determined by essence”,\(^\text{149}\) so, on the one hand, “essence depends on form in order to exist at all”,\(^\text{150}\) as otherwise it would remain a mere abstraction, and on the other hand, “form is dependent on essence for its manner of being”.\(^\text{151}\) Put simply, the form is the concretisation and actualisation within time of the essence, which is a sort of guideline above time. This is also why “essence is not exhausted in form, therefore different forms will actualize different aspects of the same essence; and as form is not fully determined by essence different forms will actualize their essences in different ways”.\(^\text{152}\)

To fully understand Schelling’s position, I will also rely on Melissa Shew’s point, according to which we have to consider Schelling’s idea of temporality not in a chronological way, but rather in a “kairlogical” one. That is, the moment of choice is not a chronological one, falling within a series of regular intervals, meaning that it is neither at the beginning, nor in the middle, nor at the end of a series. A kairlogical moment, rather, is a qualitatively different one; it cannot be assimilated to chronos (Χρόνος), but rather to kairos (καιρός). The latter is an ancient Greek word referring to the right, opportune and critical moment. In Shew’s own words, “kairos is that which opens an originary experience – of the divine,

\(^\text{146}\) PL 51; SW, I, 7, 385.
\(^\text{149}\) Ibid., 130.
\(^\text{150}\) Ibid.
\(^\text{151}\) Ibid.
\(^\text{152}\) Ibid., 131.
perhaps, but also of life or being. Thought as such, kairos as a formative happening – an opportune moment, crisis, circumstance, event – imposes its own sense of measure on time”. 153 Furthermore, Shew is right to say that “Schelling highlights a primordial feeling of co-creation present in human life in accord with something beyond our merely happening to be in time. In reaching the ‘beginning of creation’, Schelling does not intend to speak of an original causal principle to which human life appeals; rather, his emphasis is on the way in which a feeling of freedom […] seizes us in our decisions and in our thinking”. 154

Accordingly, the traditional idea of linear and chronological time does not seem appropriate to grasp the meaning of Schelling’s account in all its complexity. That is, within Schelling’s speculation “kairos serves as a measure that speaks to an opportune moment in which a person is at risk. Bounded between an ‘already’ and a ‘not-yet’ – such is the uncanny time for philosophizing, a time at which […] all things are at risk”. 155 In other words, kairos is not subject to the domain of causality, that is, it is not to be thought of as either a cause or an effect; rather, it is the expression of the unity of the principles. Again, it is the timeless ground of temporality itself, as kairos is not subject to the flow of time (as we experience it), but rather it is its condition of possibility.

Also, Shew connects the concepts of kairos and crisis. I build on her position in order to argue that that there is a strong connection between kairos and krisis (in the terms in which I have analysed it in the previous section): as krisis is that condition in which stasis is impossible and mutation is inevitable, so kairos is that moment in which the mutation and the change occur. That is, while krisis represents the inevitability of change, kairos is the moment when the inevitable happens; in fact, I have defined kairos as a critical moment, precisely in order to emphasise the theoretical bond that exists between krisis and kairos. However, kairos is also, as already mentioned, the right and opportune moment, meaning that it is not due only to necessity, that is, to the critical impossibility of stasis; rather, it includes in itself also the impetus of freedom, since, as already stated above, freedom and necessity presuppose and found each other. Therefore, I argue that the kairological conception of temporality is the expression of the unity of principles, namely of Good and Evil, as well as of freedom and necessity, which could not be grasped from a chronological point of view, as this unity does not occur in time, but rather it grounds time itself.

154 Ibid., 54.
155 Ibid., 53.
Additionally, the relation between kairos and krisis follows the model of the relation between freedom and necessity: indeed, kairos does not causally follow nor is determined by krisis, but rather each presupposes the other in order to be effective. In the same way as I am only if I freely choose to be, and I can freely choose only what I am, so the inevitable and critical necessity of mutation can occur only through the right and opportune moment, and the right and opportune moment can happen only in a situation of krisis and of the impossibility of stasis. In other words, the inevitability of change would be ineffective without being realised in the right, opportune and critical moment, and the latter would be pointless without its necessary and unavoidable counterpart. However, this is not a cause and effect relationship, but rather a relationship of coessentiality and of co-occurrence, just like that between freedom and necessity and between Good and Evil. In such a context, as already said, temporality (intended kairologically) is that which holds everything together and expresses the absolute unity of the principles.

The latter also adds a further important piece to the conception of absolute experience. That is, I argue that the possibility of experience as such, grounded (as we have already seen in the previous section) by the struggle between Good and Evil, is a kairological moment of experience itself. Indeed, the emergence of the conditions according to which experience becomes possible is nothing but the right, opportune and critical moment for the genesis of experience itself, that is, for its original occurring as ab-soluta, as free from any constraint from singular beings. In other words, absolute experience consists in a kairological moment, as it pertains to the abovementioned timeless ground of our actions, that as such can be conceived of (by us) only as always past. In this sense, then, I want to reiterate that referring to absolute and impersonal experience does not mean to implicitly admit the possibility of conceiving of experience itself independently of an experiencer. Once again, absolute and personal experience have to be conceived of as correlated to each other, that is, they have to presuppose each other in order to make sense and be possible. Hence, there is no personal experience (experience within time, i.e., chronologically) without ab-solute experience (experience above time, i.e., kairologically), and vice versa; therefore, this correlation is analogous to the ones between Good and Evil, freedom and necessity, chronos and kairos, that is, it responds to the unity of principles, which grounds Schelling’s philosophy.

Again, it is temporality, intended as co-essence and coincidence of chronology and kairology, that conceptually binds all this together. As stated by McGrath, “Schelling remains
convinced, from his earliest treatises to his last lectures, that all intelligible structure, mental or material, physical or metaphysical, finite or divine, is characterised by polarity, opposition, and the creative and dynamic tension between incommensurables, a tension which must not be abrogated in a spurious logic that presumes to deny the principle of contradiction”.\footnote{156} This statement is fundamental to correctly understanding Schelling’s thought: in the previous section, we have already seen how there is a tension that animates the struggle between Good and Evil, and what the outcomes of this struggle are. On this basis, it should be easier to understand how the same kind of ontological and non-dialectical tension pervades all the aspects of the real, from Good and Evil to freedom and necessity, and that temporality is the way in which the ontological tension unfolds itself.

I will come back to the issues of the tension and the unity of the principles in the next sub-section, which will be devoted to the relationship between freedom and intuition. At this point, however, there are a few more aspects that require closer examination. That is, as McGrath points out, for Schelling “my beginning is never available to me. I did not experience it consciously, for there was no I to experience it, nor can I revisit it in consciousness. The beginning is the past that was never present. I cannot experience my birth, for my birth makes all my experiencing possible. The person becomes who he is in an unconscious decision for good or for evil. In a non-temporal, eternally past, unconscious but free act, the person chooses the character that undergirds his temporal existence. He can only experience his free decision in time as something irretrievably past, that is, as necessity”.\footnote{157}

In this sense, then, that which Schelling calls intelligible being (which has already been mentioned above) can be understood as the primordial act of our being, living and experiencing; that is, as already said, such intelligible being is a natural inclination or, using Schelling words, a “basic disposition”\footnote{158} that is common to all but differs according to individual manifestation. Moreover, as Schelling himself puts it, “this sort of free act, which becomes necessary, admittedly cannot appear in consciousness to the degree the latter is merely self-awareness and only ideal, since it precedes consciousness just as it precedes essence, indeed, first produces it”.\footnote{159} Accordingly, it becomes clear that the original act, in which both freedom and necessity operate, is not determined by our consciousness, but rather has an unconscious basis that eludes our arbitrary control. Consequently, I argue that,

\footnote{157} McGrath, “Schelling on the Unconscious”, 88.  
\footnote{158} PI, 51; SW, I, 7, 388.  
\footnote{159} PI, 51–52; SW, I, 7, 388.
alongside the ontological primacy of the unconscious within human experience (as is stated nearly unanimously by the current literature), consciousness can be defined and understood as the object of experience, rather than as its subject. I will return to this in the next subsection.

In using the term “object”, I refer to its etymological meaning, that is, to the Latin ob- (“in front of, against, towards”) and -iectum (“thrown, lying”). Similarly, with the term “subject” I intend to recall its etymological roots, which are the Latin sub- (“under”) and -iectum. Therefore, an object is that which is thrown in front of, and lies against, something, whereas a subject is that which is thrown and lies under something. In this sense, following Schelling’s thought, consciousness cannot be considered as the subject, but rather as the object of experience, as it does not lie under experience (i.e., it does not found experience or make it possible), but lies against and is thrown towards experience itself (i.e., it arises at a later stage and is produced by experience). In other words, consciousness is not the motor or the driving force of the original act, but its product and final result. By using this terminology, I aim at radicalising Schelling’s position (but without distorting or misinterpreting it) in order to legitimate the conception of absolute experience (which I have already outlined).

I now want to reiterate a distinction that might be useful to better understand the concept of absolute experience. I have implicitly assumed that the Schellingian concept of experience is twofold, meaning that it designates both empirical experience and that which I have defined as absolute experience. In the light of this distinction (which, once again, does not imply two ontologically different types of experience, but two moments of the same process), the unconscious and original act consists in providing the conditions of the possibility for experience as such, that is, ab-soluta and impersonal, while empirical and individual experience consists of conscious actions. Also, the unconscious and original act consists in the inescapable source and driving force of all our conscious actions; moreover, the former requires the latter for its realisation.

Therefore, the unconscious and original act is the sub-iectum not only of experience, but of life in general, as it lies under (or underlies) life itself. Indeed, it is in the framework of the unconscious act, which in turn occurs within a kairolological temporality, that the struggle between Good and Evil takes place; and I have already stated in the previous section how this struggle leads to absolute experience, that is, how it provides the conditions of the possibility
for experience in general. I have also shown that Schelling is convinced that the occurrence of the struggle itself coincides with life, or, better, with the coming into life of Being. All of this, then, must be framed within Becoming, which I have already defined as the process that subtends and forms the ontological structure of every existing thing and of which God is the architect, and whose processing is articulated by temporality, here intended as unity of chronos and kairos.

Conversely, consciousness cannot be but the objectum of life and experience, as it emerges at a later stage. Consciousness, indeed, arises only when the unconscious act has already taken place, when the struggle between Good and Evil is already determined in one sense or another, when freedom and necessity have already crossed paths. However, as already stressed, the word “after” in the previous sentence does not indicate a chronological time, that is, a certain amount of time (minutes, days, years) afterwards, but rather that primordial state of temporality that Schelling identifies with kairos and that, precisely because of its primordiality, paradoxically manifests itself and keeps recurring as perpetually past. Moreover, as this form of temporality is qualitatively different from mere chronology, it seems to create a sort of temporal suspension, in which all the chronological dimensions of past, present and future become blurred and almost indistinguishable. Only by referring to this kind of temporality is it possible to understand and explain the dynamics of unconsciousness and absolute experience.

In this sense, in his unfinished work The Ages of the World, not far – either chronologically or conceptually – from the Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom, Schelling reiterates that “all consciousness is grounded on the unconscious and precisely on the dawning of the consciousness the unconscious is posited as the past of consciousness”. Indeed, as Judith Norman writes, “Schelling refers to time as ‘an organism’, a form of life that, like all forms of life, only develops by continually overcoming a resistant, unconscious ground – the past”. Furthermore, Schelling says that time presents in itself a conflict between two principles, according to which “something inhibiting, something conflicting, imposes itself everywhere: this Other is that which, so to speak, should not be and yet is, nay, must be. It is this No that resists the Yes, this darkening

160 The first draft of The Ages of the World (Die Weltalter) dates back to 1811, while the second one was written in 1813, and then Schelling definitively abandoned the project in 1815.
161 AW, 44; SW, I, 8, 262.
that resists the light, this obliquity that resists the straight, this left that resists the right, and however else one has attempted to express this eternal antithesis in images”. Incidentally, the resisting moment within the field of ontology is of great importance for my argument, but I will deal with it at the end of this chapter.

Concerning, instead, the structure of time, Schelling specifies that “it is a contradiction that something is one and the same and also the exact opposite of itself”. Indeed, this “essential contradiction would be immediately sublimated again, or, rather, transformed into something merely formal and literal, if the unity of the being were taken to mean that that which has been set apart are themselves one and the same”. In order to avoid this contradiction, Schelling claims that “God can never come to have being. God has being from eternity […] therefore,] from eternity the necessary is subject to freedom”.

Borrowing Wirth’s words, Schelling resolves the contradiction about the unity of the principles by maintaining that “God, the whole, the cosmos, das Urwesen […] is the living tension of times within Being itself”. That is, Schelling ascribes to time the same structural tension of the principles that he developed in his Freedom Essay. Additionally, we can understand the term “subject” precisely as a sub-iectum, that is, as that which lies under our life and experience. This, then, recalls the interplay between freedom and necessity: the principle striving towards development is stimulated by freedom, while the principle striving against development is stimulated by necessity. This interplay and opposition, again, is analogous to the one between Good and Evil and is the source of life itself.

As Norman points out, “life begins with contraction, an envelopment that resists development. But this is only the beginning: life itself consists in a continual overcoming, a struggle against obstacles. It can only begin if an obstacle is placed at its ground, something to be continually overcome. The obstacle, moreover, must persist, or else the struggle that constitutes life would come to an end […] In this way[,] the necessary course of time is thus freely produced, making present a manifest, comprehensible world”. Therefore, the unity of principles, that is, the coincidentia oppositorum, is confirmed again: that is, “the antithesis is not enough if, at the same time, the unity of the being is not known, or if it is not known

163 AW, 6; SW, I, 8, 211.
164 AW, 7; SW, I, 8, 213.
165 AW, 8; SW, I, 8, 213.
166 AW, 38; SW, I, 8, 254. Italics mine.
167 J. M. Wirth, “Translator’s introduction” to AW, xvii.
that, indeed, the antithesis is one and the same, that it is the affirmation and the negation, that which pours out and that which holds on”.169

Similarly, according to McGrath, for Schelling “nature in itself is a primordial unconditioned unity which divides itself into opposing forces in order to become manifest. One force is expansive and directed outward to infinity, the other is contractive and directed inward to a single point. The opposed forces collaborate in striving to bring about a return of the original unity and, at the same time, in blocking that return by producing finite beings. The end result is endless manifestation and concealment, ceaseless activity, which consists in tension (blockage of flow) and release (freeing of flow)”.170 This ceaseless activity is life itself, and from this interaction between forces it emerges that which I have identified as absolute experience.

In this sub-section, I have introduced the idea that the ontological ground of our actions is an unconscious one, and that it is the sub-iectum of our experience (i.e., lies under it). In this sense, moreover, the very struggle between Good and Evil, which (as I have said in the previous sub-section) provides the conditions of the possibility for experience intended as ab-soluta and impersonal, can be equally defined in sub-jective terms, as it is in fact the sub-iectum, that is, that which lies under, our personal experience in the world. In other words, the occurrence of the struggle, as it has been outlined in the previous sub-section, creates a condition where experience (intended as ab-soluta and impersonal experience) arises but is still not experienced (that is, it is not yet personal experience), so it provides the ground for, that is, lies under, life itself and its becoming personal and moving from potentiality to actuality (I have already shown that, for Schelling, life cannot be but personal – even in the case of God).

Accordingly, the ground, that is, the sub-iectum of our actions, cannot be but unconscious and above time, coinciding with intelligible being, the primordial act that directs our actions and exceeds our conscious control. That being the case, consciousness, intended as mere self-awareness, is not a feature of the ground of our life, that is, of the sub-iectum; rather, it is produced by the latter, so that consciousness is the ob-iectum – it lies against our actions and our experience in the world. Put simply, it is not our consciousness that determines our way of acting and experiencing, but rather it is our way of acting and experiencing that determines our consciousness.

169 AW, 7; SW, I, 8, 212–13.
170 McGrath, *The Dark Ground of Spirit*, 89.
Moreover, I have also examined the relationship between freedom and necessity, which is, as Schelling outlines it, one of strict interrelation and reciprocal implication. That is, my actions are the result of my free choice, but at the same time my choice is tightly determined by the abovementioned intelligible being. This does not mean that freedom and necessity are the same thing (because they actually oppose each other) nor that their opposition makes them cancel each other. Rather, they interplay with and oppose each other in order to allow life to emerge. This interrelation between freedom and necessity also leads us to a peculiar and suggestive conception of temporality: indeed, as I have repeatedly said, the primordial act and the original choice do not occur within time, but above time. However, in such a context, we do not have to think of time in a chronological way, but rather in a kairological way. In conclusion, the sub-iectum itself can be considered in kairological terms, as its activity of grounding and providing the conditions of the possibility for experience in general occurs in turn above chronological time. Similarly, the ob-iectum, that is, our consciousness, pertains to chronology, as it follows the primordial and original grounding moment.

1.2.2 Freedom and Intuition

Within the discourse about freedom, Schelling’s conception of intuition cannot be ignored, as it represents a fundamental part of his philosophy. However, here I will focus exclusively on the (cor)relation between freedom and intuition, as it will help us to better understand the nature of freedom and its role within the goal of this work.

Schelling maintains the Kantian distinction between empirical intuition, that is, a wholly contingent sense perception of a single object, and intellectual intuition, that is, the object necessarily joined to all empirical intuitions in advance of any particular perception.\(^\text{171}\) However, while Kant believes that intellectual intuition is inaccessible to human beings, Schelling is convinced (as we shall see in detail later in this sub-section) that it represents the principal and higher instrument of philosophy itself.

It should be noted that the German word for “intuition”, which is of great importance for Schelling’s philosophy, is Anschauung, whose English translation is somewhat problematic. Generally, it is translated “intuition”, but it is true that this term does not always

\(^{171}\) On this point, see Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, Doctrine of Elements, Pt. II, Div. II, Book I.
recall the very literal meaning of the German *Anschauung*; therefore a quick terminological explanation needs to be made at this point. As explained by Paul Carus, *Anschauung* has to be understood “as an act of ‘atlooking’ […] since the word ‘atsight’ is the exact English equivalent of the German *Anschauung*. It describes the looking at an object in its immediate presence”. In this sense, the word “intuition” etymologically refers to an insight and a direct and immediate cognition of an object: it derives from the Latin *in-* (“at, on”) and -*tuere* (“to look at, to watch over”), resulting in the abovementioned act of “atlooking”. So, from now on I will use the word “intuition” in this sense, and so refer to intellectual intuition rather than to empirical or sensible intuition, as I consider the former more relevant to my topic and more congruent with the conception of “atlooking” at things in their immediacy.

Such an understanding of intuition also applies to Schelling’s conception of the absolute: indeed, as White puts it, “in the absolute, all is one; the ‘original conflict in human spirit’ starts with the emergence of human individuals from the unity of the absolute […] and the philosophical conflict starts when philosophers reflect, not on the absolute itself, but rather on its relation to the world of human experience”. However, the Absolute cannot be empirically experienced by human beings, and consequently it does not pertain to the domain of empirical intuition, intended in the Kantian sense of the term; rather, the Absolute can be grasped only through intellectual intuition, which exceeds our consciousness, meaning that the latter, in the terms in which I defined it above, yields to the absolute unity of principles. This account characterises the philosophy of Schelling from its very beginning: indeed, in his *Philosophical Letters* he argues that “intellectual intuition takes place when I cease to be an object for myself, when – withdrawn into itself – the intuiter subject is identical with the intuited”. Accordingly, “this [intellectual] intuition is distinguished from every sensuous intuition by the fact that it is produced by freedom alone”.

Moreover, intellectual intuition plays an important role even in Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* and *Identitätphilosophie*. That is, in the later phase of his thought (i.e., from the *System of Transcendental Idealism* to the *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, including the second edition of the *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*), as stated with commendable clarity by Vater, “Schelling offers three overlapping definitions of intellectual intuition, as: (1) a generalised or God’s-eye-point-of-view version

---

174 PL, 181; SW, I, 1, 319.
175 PL, 180; SW, I, 1, 318.
of what we call, from the outside, the ontological proof for divine existence; (2) a double-coincidence of thought and being, so that intuitive thinking comprehends absolute reality and, conversely, reality expresses itself as intuition (‘formally absolute cognition’) of the absolute; and (3) immediate insight into the uniqueness of this point where cognition wholly comprehends its object. […] So] the philosopher deploys his constructions in a rational intuition that is the presupposition of all non-temporal and non-spatial thinking”. 176

In this regard, Schelling opens his Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature, saying that “philosophy is not something with which our mind, without its own agency, is originally and by nature imbued. It is throughout a work of freedom”. 177 Indeed, if (as already mentioned) intellectual intuition is produced by freedom and is “the principle and ground of possibility of all philosophy”, 178 then it follows that philosophy itself cannot but arise from freedom, that is, cannot be but an act of freedom as such. Therefore, “all intuition is an identification of thought and being and […] only in intuition as such is reality […] so that] the mere thought of the absolute […] is in no way yet a true cognition of the absolute”. 179 As explained by Vater, Schelling’s point here is that “all cognition involves a convergence or interpenetration of factors that can be distinguished in analysis, but are real only when working together, unified in the immediate confluence of intuition”. 180

Furthermore, in his Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature, Schelling argues that “how a world outside us, how a Nature and with it experience, is possible – these are questions for which we have philosophy to thank; or rather, with these questions philosophy came to be. Prior to them humankind had lived in a (philosophical) state of nature. At that time man was still at one with himself and the world about him. In obscure recollection this condition still floats before even the most wayward thinker. Many never lose it and would be happy in themselves, if the fateful example did not lead them astray; for Nature releases nobody willingly from her tutelage, and there are no native sons of freedom. Nor would it be conceivable how man should ever have forsaken that condition, if we did not know that his spirit, whose element is freedom, strives to make itself free, to disentangle itself from the fetters of Nature and her guardianship, and must abandon itself to the uncertain fate of its

177 IPN, 9; SW, I, 2, 11.
179 Ibid.
own powers, in order one day to return, as victor and by its own merit, to that position in which, unaware of itself, it spent the childhood of its reason".\textsuperscript{181}

The latter excerpt is emblematic of the way Schelling structures the relation between freedom and intuition. Philosophy, indeed, begins when humankind deliberately separates itself from the external world, exerting its own freedom, since Nature, as Schelling argues, tends to preserve the original unity, rather than break it. This separation, that is, is a purely human exigency and as such cannot but result in the restoration of the unity itself, as this unity can be broken only theoretically and in order to allow humankind to better understand its practical indissolubility. In other words, this separation is means and not end, as Schelling identifies in (capitalised) Nature the coincidence of opposites, the identification of the principles. “Originally in man there is an absolute equilibrium of forces and consciousness. But he can upset this equilibrium through freedom, in order to reestablish it through freedom. But only in equilibrium of forces there is health.”\textsuperscript{182} I have already shown how the upsetting of the original equilibrium has an important role also in Schelling’s \textit{Philosophical Investigations} – and particularly with regard to the struggle between Good and Evil.

Philosophy, then, is not mere reflection, which for Schelling “is a spiritual sickness”,\textsuperscript{183} but has to conciliate reflection itself with action; that is, it is not passive contemplation but an activity, that is, the \textit{act} of thinking, a sort of inner “being active” of humankind that complies with its inner free necessity (and necessary freedom). In other words, philosophy presupposes the separation of action and reflection only in order to reconcile them through freedom; or, more to the point, philosophy is the moment where action and reflection are the one and indistinguishable act, of which intuition is the highest expression. “Therefore [philosophy] assigns to reflection only a \textit{negative} value. It proceeds from that original divorce to unite once more, through freedom, what was originally and necessarily united in the human mind, i.e., forever to cancel out this separation.”\textsuperscript{184}

The starting point of philosophy is this separation, or, better, this attempt at separation of the original unity, but also “a necessary evil, a discipline of errant reason”,\textsuperscript{185} that is, an arbitrary disunion of subject and object, mind and matter, ideal and real. However, this separation, far from being a definitive and irreparable destruction, is instrumental for a final

\textsuperscript{181} IPN, 10; SW, I, 2, 12.
\textsuperscript{182} IPN, 11; SW, I, 2, 13.
\textsuperscript{183} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid.
reconciliation. Hence, Schelling argues, when I question how I can have ideas, I raise myself above ideas themselves and perceive myself as originally and necessarily free. Indeed, “through this question itself I become an entity which, independent of external things, has being in itself”.\(^{186}\) This statement underlines again the active core of humankind, refusing any passivity; moreover, the being that I become is not something that arises \textit{ex novo}, but precisely the abovementioned restoration of the original unity of the principles. Thus, recalling the conception of Becoming (already shown in the previous sub-section) and the relation between freedom and necessity, I do not become something different from what I used to be, but rather I become what I already and originally am. For Schelling, this is a further argument in support of his monism, which I have already outlined in the previous sub-section.

Moreover, by raising myself above external things, I access the domain of intuition. For this reason, borrowing White again, Schelling acknowledges “that there can be no rationally compelling theory of the absolute. Etymologically, ‘theory’ is closely bound to the notion of seeing; to theorise is to look at something, either physically or with the mind’s eye, and to describe and explain what is seen”.\(^{187}\) Accordingly, intellectual intuition, which (as already mentioned) is the highest moment of philosophy, coincides with the moment in which there is no distinction between the seer and the seen. The root of this conception can be found in Schelling’s 1795 \textit{Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism}, where he argues that “intuition [\textit{Anschauung}] as such is usually explained as the most immediate experience […] as well as] the closer to disappearance. […] Still, as long as intuition is intent upon objects, that is, as long as it is sensuous intuition, there is no danger of losing oneself. […] However, where sensuous intuition ceases, where everything objective vanishes, there is nothing but infinite expansion without a return into self. Should I maintain intellectual intuition I would cease to live: I would go ‘from time into eternity’”.\(^{188}\)

There are two relevant aspects that I want to stress from the latter passage. First, I consider it as providing further support for my argument on the objective nature of self-consciousness, namely that the raising of oneself above external things of which Schelling is speaking about has to be understood as the withdrawal of the \textit{ob-iectum}, that is, of consciousness itself in its lying against our experience. In other words, as already said, being the \textit{Anschauung}, the vanishing of everything objective and, as White puts it, the vanishing of

\(^{186}\) IPN, 13; SW, I, 2, 16.
\(^{188}\) PL, 185; SW, I, 1, 325.
consciousness itself, then it follows that, once more, consciousness is not the subjective moment of experience, that is, it does not lie under experience, and cannot be understood in subjective terms nor can it be the grounding moment, the sub-iectum, of experience. Accordingly, since in intellectual intuition there is no longer any difference between the seer and the seen, we are faced with the vanishing of the differentiation of the two opposing sides, resulting in an absolute sub-iectum, which includes the ob-iectum in itself rather than completely annihilating it.

The second aspect I want to stress, which is related to the first one, is that the going “from time to eternity”, as Schelling puts it, can be understood in the same way I outlined the conceptual distinction between chronology and kairology. In this respect, indeed, Schelling argues that “we awaken from intellectual intuition as from a state of death”,\(^{189}\) meaning not that we arise from an actual condition of lack of life or of nothingness, but rather that the very act of intuition, of the absolute coincidence of sub-iectum and ob-iectum, pertains to a different dimension of temporality. This dimension, in other words, is the kairological one, so that the Anschauung itself, that is the act of “atlooking” at things in their immediate occurrence, can be defined as the kairological event (in the terms by which I defined it in the previous sub-section), which, as such, cannot be grasped within the chronological flowing of time.

In addition, Schelling says that “we awaken through reflection, that is, through a forced return to ourselves”,\(^{190}\) so laying the groundwork for the conceptions he will develop both in his Naturphilosophie and in his Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom. In this respect, White points out that “intuition is always followed by reflection, vision is always followed by the attempt to understand what has been seen. Reflection on the absolute poses unique problems, however, for in the vision of the absolute, nothing is seen”.\(^{191}\) That is to say, nothing is seen because there is nothing external, ontologically separated and differentiated from the seer to be seen; conversely, the intuition, or the “atlooking”, results in an absolute vision that grasps everything that is in the very act of “atlooking” at itself.

As claimed also by McGrath, “‘Intuition’ signifies immediacy between knower and known […] so that] there is no gap between the intellect and the absolutely intelligible; they

\(^{189}\) Ibid.
\(^{190}\) Ibid.
\(^{191}\) White, Schelling, 31.
are, to use Schelling’s preferred term, ‘indifferent’. Intellectual intuition, therefore, could never be reflective; it is not a self-conscious act, not a representation accompanied by ‘I think’. […] it is a non-dual state of knowing, which is just as accurately described as a state of being, the non-objective condition of the possibility of reflectively cognizing an object, and the a priori horizon of identity within which things can show themselves as what they are”. After all, I have already shown that Schelling is convinced that mere reflection, if not accompanied by action, is a spiritual sickness, as reflection alone is incapable of overcoming the state of passivity. Drawing a parallel, the act of “atlooking” can be considered as the subjectum of knowledge, while the reflection, conceived of as a self-conscious representation accompanied by “I think”, is its ob-jectum.

Building on Vater’s definition I mentioned above, according to which Schelling’s conception of intuition also refers to the God’s-eye point of view, I argue that Schelling maintains this position both in his Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom and in his late philosophical reflection. Indeed, Schelling writes that “God looks at the things in themselves”, where “to look at” is the translation for Anschauen, from which is derived Anschauung, the meaning of which has been already discussed above. In this sense, God intuits things in themselves, “atlooks” at them, meaning that there is, again, no difference between the seer and the seen. The latter is a further element in support of Schelling’s monism and immanentism; that is, it is a further argument for the immanence of things in God and against the transcendence and ontological detachment of God from things themselves. Consequently, in the act of intuiting and “atlooking” at things in themselves, God intuits and “atlooks” at the Godhead. Therefore, “only the eternal is in itself as based in itself, will, freedom. […] So little does immanence in God contradict freedom that precisely only what is free is in God to the extent it is free, and what is not free is necessarily outside of God to the extent that it is not free”.

This clearly shows how freedom and intuition are strictly interrelated within Schelling’s speculation; to some extent, it is also possible to understand intuition as the ontological process of freedom par excellence. In fact, to be more precise, intuition is the only act capable of grasping the relation between freedom and necessity, namely their reciprocal implication, interrelation and undifferentiation into the absolute, which has already been explained in the previous sub-section. In this regard, I would add that intuition, intended

192 McGrath, The Dark Ground of Spirit, 97.
193 PI, 18; SW, I, 7, 347.
194 PI, 18–19; SW, I, 7, 347.
as “atlooking” at things in their very ontological core, is the only way through which we can render the real interplay that occurs between freedom and necessity. Again, in this process reflection as such is not enough and it also requires the activity of freedom in order to make intuition possible. Borrowing Wirth’s words, “reflection must first return from the periphery to which it first withdrew as it breaks the grip of the seeming iron cage of necessity that it had originally identified with nature”.\textsuperscript{195}

At this point, however, a clarification about the meaning of “God’s-eye point of view” is required. I have already shown that Schelling considers God neither as a transcendent and supernatural demiurge nor as a provider of incontrovertible moral decrees, but rather as an immanent living being that is subject to the conditions of life itself. Accordingly, Schelling maintains the immanence of things in God and the idea that God grasps in Godself the absolute unity of principles, that is, of Good and Evil, subject and object, ideal and real. That is to say, God grasps the original unity as God is the original unity, according to which the \textit{Anschauung} pertains to the field of being, rather than the one of knowing. Also, as already said, Schelling considers philosophy as an arbitrary break of the unity of principles, whose only goal is to restore the unity itself.

So, it follows that, precisely by virtue of the immanent nature of God and the ontological nature of intuition, the reconciliation of the unity of principles cannot be but the “atlooking” at things from the God’s-eye point of view. In other words, taking the God’s-eye point of view does not mean abstracting from the concreteness of the material world and assuming a sort of supernatural position; rather, it means to “atlook” at things from inside, that is, from their ontological core, as grasping the original unity means \textit{being} the original unity. This means, as already said, that the unity and undifferentiation of the principles is not an arbitrary or a merely theoretical declaration, but rather a response to the original state of Being, that is, to \textit{Ursein}. Therefore, grasping the original unity and undifferentiation of principles is not a cognitive activity but recalls the way in which all existing things are; put simply, “atlooking” at things does not mean to know or understand things in a certain way, but to be in a certain way, namely to be in conformity with the original unity of principles. Thus, being this original unity, the Godhead, the \textit{Anschauung} can only be possible then from the God’s-eye point of view.

\textsuperscript{195} Wirth, \textit{Schelling’s Practice of the Wild}, 150.
Moreover, it also emerges that Schelling, as already mentioned, while he maintains the Kantian distinction between empirical and intellectual intuition, is convinced (unlike Kant) that the latter is accessible to human beings. This also implies that when Schelling speaks about the ontological core of things, he does not mean to refer to the Kantian noumenon, that is, to an object as it is in itself independent of the subject who knows it. Rather, Schelling is outlining, once again, a form of radical monism, according to which the subject and the object of knowledge cannot be conceived of as ontologically detached from each other. The “thing-in-itself”, then, is not something essentially unattainable for our finite minds, but rather coincides with Ursein, that is, primal Being, and then reflects the inner structure of Being, which characterises and conditions (or better: which is) even our being human.

Therefore, in the light of the above, I want to reaffirm that it is only through intuition that we can grasp the indissoluble unity of freedom and necessity and that we can acknowledge that the unity of principles, initially broken by humankind in order to make philosophy possible, can only be a means to and cannot but result in a reconciliation and undifferentiation of the opposites. Accordingly, due to the relation between freedom and necessity (analysed in the previous sub-section), it must be acknowledged that this process, that is, the break of the unity and its subsequent restoration, is at the same time both free and necessary. In other words, breaking the unity is a free act performed by humankind, but at the same time it responds to an inner necessity, namely that original tendency to act in a certain way, or that which has been defined by Alderwick (as mentioned in the previous sub-section) as the atemporal essence that determines the agent’s temporal life.

That being the case, it follows that, when it comes to the very core of human actions, there can be no room for contingency, intended as mere and absolute fortuitousness. Indeed, Schelling argues that “contingency is impossible; it contests reason as well as the necessary unity of the whole; and, if freedom is to be saved by nothing other than the complete contingency of actions, then it is not to be saved at all”.196 In addition, contingency itself cannot be a constituent part of the process of intuition; or rather, to put it simply, intuition is not (and cannot in any way be) a contingent process. If it were to be so, indeed, philosophy would be at risk, since it would be grounded on a very unstable and weak base – it should not be forgotten that Schelling is convinced that intuition is the ground of all philosophy. Also, by claiming that philosophy is a work of freedom, as already said, Schelling does not mean to

196 Pl, 48–49; SW, I, 7, 383.
say that it is a merely arbitrary discipline or a fanciful product of human imagination; on the contrary, he means to strongly claim that philosophy itself is the very expression of freedom, which in turn is strictly interrelated with necessity.

Therefore, philosophy is the highest form of knowledge, as it is the only way to grasp the absolute unity of the principles, which would otherwise be inaccessible. In other words, if intuition means (as argued above) “atlooking” at things in themselves from the God’s-eye point of view, then the core of philosophy itself lies precisely in this divine form of “atlooking” at things. Consequently, intuition raises humankind to a greater level of potency, in the sense that it expands humankind’s “visual field” and allows human beings to “atlook” at things in greater depth, namely at how things are in themselves. So, in a way, it is possible to say that Schelling uses the concept of intuition in order to make humankind capable of “atlooking” from the God’s-eye point of view, overcoming Kant’s statement according to which intuition exclusively pertains to God and is never accessible to human beings.

It follows that pretending that the act of “atlooking” at things is a contingent process is simply untenable. It is not possible, in fact, to argue that the process through which we can grasp the very essence of things is one of contingent nature, that is, casual and fortuitous, because if that were to be the case, freedom would be annihilated and our actions would be entirely determined by external causes. I will get back to the issue of causality in the next sub-section, but what needs to be said now is that Schelling’s immanentism (as defined in §1.1.3) is another argument against contingency. That is, since all things are in God and nothing is possible outside Ursein (conceived of as that will that coincides with primal Being – i.e., as God’s will), any form of contingency is automatically excluded. Indeed, the acceptance of contingency as the core of human actions would imply the admission that the primal cause of our actions is an external one, that is, outside and beyond Ursein – but that is impossible, according to what I have argued in §1.1.2.

Hence, given that the core of our actions has to be necessarily free, that is, at once free and necessary, it must be acknowledged that intuition constitutes the only possible way to grasp this unity of the principles, according to which the seer and the seen become one and the same thing. Also, this is precisely the reason why Schelling considers intuition as the ground of all philosophy: that is, only through grasping, or better through “atlooking”, at things, is it possible to give philosophy a stable foundation and to fulfil its function, thereby
restoring the (necessary) unity of principles after the original (free) break. In this sense, any other foundation is purely arbitrary and inconsistent, as well as unable to “atlook” at things.

Therefore, borrowing Nassar’s words, “if intellectual intuition is truly non-objective, then there cannot be any difference or objectification between the knower and the known. Thus, what is intuited has to be identified with they who intuit, so that neither of them can be reduced to an object – or a subject”. That is – it is worth repeating – since intuition means “atlooking” at things from a God’s-eye point of view, it would be mistaken to reduce the latter to a mere object or a mere subject, that is, solely to the knower or to the known object, to the seer or the seen, where “or” implies an exclusive disjunction that radically dismisses the unity and identity of the two sides. In other words, according to what has already been said, intuition can only occur as the grasping of the absolute unity of the principles and the absolute coincidence of knowing agent and known object, subject and object. This conception, moreover, has also some implications for the notion of causality, which I will consider in the next sub-section.

In conclusion, Schelling’s discourse on intuition emphasises once again his dismissal of the Fichtean perspective. I have already analysed some aspects of the relation between Fichte and Schelling in §1.1.1, and now I want simply to briefly recall their controversy about the relation between being and knowing. As already said, Schelling firmly rejects Fichte’s conception according to which knowing is prior to (that is, precedes and grounds) being; that is, he is convinced that such an account is greatly unstable and arbitrary, as knowing itself cannot be considered as an unconditioned activity. On the contrary, Schelling argues that an immanent being that he defines as Ursein can be the only reliable ground not only of knowing, but of every existing thing. This represents the point of no return of Schelling’s detachment from the traditional conception of the I, of which the subjective idealism of Fichte is one of the strongest expressions. In this sense, Schelling’s understanding of the Anschauung, which can be understood as the exact opposite of the Cartesian Cogito, ergo sum is a precise attempt at overcoming that which he considers as the limit of Fichte’s subjective idealism.

To sum up, in this sub-section I have argued that for Schelling the Anschauung, namely intellectual intuition, is the highest form of knowledge, as it coincides with the act of “atlooking” at things in their essence from a God’s-eye point of view (borrowing Vater’s

definition). This means that intuition is the only way through which we can effectively grasp the unity of the principles and the undifferentiation of sub-iectum and ob-iectum, seer and seen, knowing agent and known object. Accordingly, I have argued that this act of “atlooking” at, namely intuiting, things, is the kairological moment of knowledge, since Schelling conceives Anschauung itself as a moving “from time into eternity”, that is, as an “atlooking” at things from the God’s-eye point of view, which cannot occur in chronological time but is conceivable only kairologically (in the sense I defined it in 1.2.1).

Finally, I have also claimed that this account further legitimises Schelling’s monism and immanence and at the same time excludes any possibility of contingency within human actions. This is even more evident when we recall the Schellingian conception of Ursein, which decidedly excludes both contingency and the transcendence of the principles. Furthermore, all of the above is due to the unity and undifferentiation of the principles, which, as has repeatedly been stated, is the leitmotif and the recurring pattern of Schelling’s philosophy.

1.2.3 Freedom and Causality

In order to complete the picture of Schelling’s ontological account of Evil, his conception of causality, particularly in its relationship with freedom, still needs to be considered. Therefore, I will now focus on the argument (that Schelling outlines in his Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom) according to which his conception of pantheism does not exclude any possibility of freedom (as already mentioned), and the idea of causality that follows from such a pantheistic conception is not a mechanistic and deterministic one, but rather an organic one. That is, precisely because Schelling maintains a strong conception of freedom within his philosophical system, then even cause and effect dynamics must reflect the structure of freedom itself (in the terms in which I defined it in §1.2.1 and §1.2.2). On top of that, I will argue that the argument from the Freedom Essay is in continuity with that which Schelling argued in his Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature, in order both to show the internal coherence of his thought and to further stress the organic nature of causality in its relationship with freedom.

Schelling is convinced that the very fact of being caused does not rule out the freedom of those who are caused. Indeed, he writes that “it is not inconsistent […] that he who is God is at the same time begotten and vice versa; just as little is it a contradiction that he who is the
son of a man is also himself a man. On the contrary, it would be far more contradictory, if the dependent or consequent were not independent”.198 This recalls the previously outlined arguments concerning the nature of God: indeed, I have already shown that Schelling clearly argues that God is life, and as such Godself must be subject to the dynamics of life itself, namely to suffering and Becoming.199 This leads us to understand the notion of causality in a very organic sense, which for Schelling means that causality itself is not given as a chain of events, in which the (chronologically) previous one determines the following one; rather, it is an act of free generation, in which the two terms reciprocally cause each other, that is, they are simultaneously cause and effect. This is why God begets and is begotten at the same time; otherwise, life itself could not perpetuate itself and would not be possible at all.

It is no coincidence, then, that Schelling depicts the relation between causality and freedom through the image of a living organism, writing that “an individual body part, like the eye, is only possible within the whole of an organism; nonetheless, it has its own life for itself, indeed, its own kind of freedom”.200 That is, every part of an organism must necessarily be free and contribute to the achievement of the freedom of the whole organism; if this were not to be the case, there would be no organism, but a mechanism, in which case there would be no room for freedom. Indeed, I have already said (in §1.1.2) that Schelling believes that a proper philosophical system cannot be built without freedom, otherwise it would be dogmatic and unreliable. Hence, freedom (in the way that Schelling conceives of it) is still a fundamental and inescapable moment of Schelling’s ontology, since every part of an organism cannot contribute to the life of the organism itself but freely.

Moreover, Schelling argues that every part of the organism “obviously proves [its life and freedom] through the disease of which it is capable”.201 This clearly recalls what I have already discussed in §1.1.3 about the nature of disease and the concept of krisis. That is, through its own freedom, a single part of an organism can cause a change in the whole organism: in this sense, I argue (in the light of the conclusions of the previous section) that this kind of freedom is a critical one, as it brings the whole organism to a condition where stasis is not possible and change is inevitable (which, again, is the very meaning of the concept of the Greek κρίσις, as well as the German krisis). In other words, the kind of freedom that Schelling attributes to the part of an organic body does not contradict the

---

198 PI, 17; SW, I, 7, 345.
199 See above, §1.1.3.
200 PI, 18; SW, I, 7, 346.
201 Ibid.
freedom of the whole organism, neither does the latter contradict the freedom of its single parts. Rather, they reciprocally cause each other, and could not be otherwise: indeed, first, as already said, according to Schelling, it is not possible to conceive of life without freedom; and secondly, it is not possible to conceive of an organism without attributing life (and then freedom) to all its components. Finally, the organism Schelling is talking about is not exclusively a human being, but also God Godself, so his organic conception embraces all the modalities of Being.

Accordingly, Schelling provides a notion of causality that is strictly interrelated with his notion of freedom. Hence, I argue that such an account of causality can be better understood through the concepts of *krisis* and kairos. Indeed, if we accept that every part of an organism has a *critical* freedom, as it brings the whole organism to the impossibility of stasis and the inevitability of change, then also the notion of causality has to convey the same structure. Furthermore, recalling the relation between *krisis* and kairos (which I explained in §1.2.1), I argue that causality should be placed in the kairological temporal dimension, rather than in the chronological one. Rather than repeating what the difference is between kairological and chronological temporality, I will simply argue that Schelling’s account of causality does not stretch across chronological time, but occurs as that critical, right and opportune moment in which cause and effect imply and produce each other. Put simply, causality here is not a chronological chain of causes and effects, but the emerging of the free interplay and interaction between an organism and its parts (as well as between the parts themselves). That is, again, causality is not a lifeless mechanism, but an organic dynamism.

This also recalls the unity and identity of principles, which is, as I have already shown in §1.2.1, above chronological time. In this sense, it needs to be specified that when Schelling talks about the unity and identity of principles, he is reinterpreting the law of identity in a very pantheistic and ontological sense. That is, Love and Schmidt explain that, for Schelling, the law of identity implies “that the predicate is contained in the subject […] that is, the subject contains all its possible predicates; […] therefore] the subject merely needs to be unfolded”.202 Again, Schelling’s account stresses the primordial nature of the identity of principles, which are not only logically identical, but also ontologically identical; this reading is further legitimised both by the repeatedly mentioned immanence of things in God and by the nature of *Ursein*, that is, primal Being. Furthermore, the subject that contains all its

---

202 PI, 140n13.
predicates, and that just needs to unfold itself in order to be, is nothing but the *sub-iectum*, which I outlined in previous sections, namely that which “lies under” our life and experience.

Accordingly, “the unity of this law [of identity] is an immediately creative one”,\(^2\) meaning that it is part of the process of God’s creation (in the sense in which I defined it above); that is, such unity is inherent in the very ontological structure of reality, rather than being a mere logical construct. Therefore, it is creative itself, in the sense that it is neither mere cause nor mere effect, but reproduces the abovementioned dynamics of causality in relation to freedom. Indeed, Schelling argues that “however one may conceive of the way in which beings proceed from God, the way can never be mechanical, not mere production or installation whereby the product is nothing for itself”\(^3\), rather, beings dynamically flow from Godself into the process of Becoming. Thus, “the procession [*Folge*] of things from God is a self-revelation of God. But God can only reveal himself to himself in what is like him, in free beings acting on their own, for whose Being is no ground other than God but who are as God is”\(^4\).

The German term *Folge* is particularly significant in the latter sentence, where it has been translated with “procession”, but it also means “consequence”, “succession” and “sequence” (in the mathematical sense). So, God’s self-revelation, as well as God’s creation, is the immanent *Folge* of things from Godself: indeed, if (as already said) the creation is nothing but the actualisation of the Real, then the whole process is characterised as a necessary self-affirmation of the Godhead. That is to say, things proceed from God as a natural con-sequence, or as a “mathematical” sequence (which is in turn a natural sequence and not an arbitrary one). The latter is even truer if we recall Schelling’s immanatism: if, indeed, things are immanent in God and God is not ontologically detached from them, then the *Folge* of things from God is an immanent process as well, meaning that their way of being naturally follows the immanent nature of Godself. This is, according to Schelling, the only proper way to deal with the nature of creation and God’s revelation; otherwise, we would fall back into a transcendent and supernatural conception of God, which is inadequate to give a truthful account of reality (as already argued in the previous section).

Such an immanalist conception follows from Schelling’s rejection of the old-fashioned Platonic “two-world metaphysics”. Indeed, as Whistler points out, in Schelling’s

\(^{203}\) PI, 17; SW, I, 7, 345.
\(^{204}\) PI, 18; SW, I, 7, 346.
\(^{205}\) Ibid.
Identitätphilosophie there is a rejection of the idea according to which “pre-existing archetypes produce inferior copies of themselves, and these subordinate and dependent entities constitute the material world”. Indeed, “all there is is the absolute and the absolute does not produce anything else”, which in turn means that the abovementioned Folge cannot be but an absolute process. In other words, saying that only the Absolute exists and that it does not produce anything else but the absolute itself means that things are immanent in God and that God Godself is in nature, rather than being ontologically separate from it. Therefore, for Schelling, immanentism (and the following rejection of any metaphysical transcendentalism) is the only suitable philosophical approach to avoid abstractions and maintain the concreteness of concepts (like freedom, intuition, Good, Evil, etc.) by binding them to a solid and material account of Nature.

This is also why, once again, the roots of this idea of causality can be found in Schelling’s Naturphilosophie. Indeed, in Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature Schelling argues that “every organic product carries the reason of its existence in itself, for it is cause and effect of itself. No single part could arise except in this whole, and this whole itself consists only in the interaction of the parts. In every other object the parts are arbitrary; they exist only insofar as I divide. Only in organised beings are they real; they exist without my participation”. Thus, an organism’s cause and effect cannot be separated, as the organism is simultaneously cause and effect of itself, in the same way as the parts of an organism exist only in relation to the whole organism itself. In other words, according to Schelling’s argument, to conceive of cause and effect separately would be as incorrect as to conceive of the parts of an organism separately from the whole organic system they form; on the contrary, cause and effect can be conceived of only in their mutual implication and interaction, and the parts of an organism can be conceived of only within the whole organism itself.

This account of causality follows, once again, from Schelling’s presupposition of the unity of principles, according to which “every organization is therefore a whole; its unity lies in itself; it does not depend on our choice whether we think of it as one or many. Cause and effect is something evanescent, transitory, mere appearance (in the usual sense of the word)”.

---

206 Whistler, Schelling’s Theory of Symbolic Language, 87.
207 Ibid., 88.
208 IPN, 31; SW, I, 2, 40.
209 Ibid.
referring to the German *Erscheinung*, which is a Kantian term referring both to appearance and to phenomenon. Indeed, Kant argues that appearance is not just a mere semblance or an illusion, but a datum that affects our sensible faculty; it is also the foundation of sensible intuition, in opposition to the noumenon, the unattainable thing-in-itself and hypothetical object of intellectual intuition (which exclusively belongs to God, and in turn is inaccessible to human beings). As already said, Schelling does not endorse the Kantian argument about intellectual intuition, but he maintains the idea that the *Erscheinung* is not just a mirage due to the unreliability of our senses. That is, he argues that the division of cause and effect is transitory and evanescent in the sense that it does not correspond to the unity of the principles and that it must be recognised as arbitrary and mistaken, but still necessary.

Put differently, Schelling is clearly not endorsing some sort of mysticism, that is, he is not claiming that our senses are inherently illusory and misleading, and that only through detaching ourselves from the sensible world can we reach the truth. Rather, Schelling is aiming at pointing out that the *Erscheinung*, the evanescent and transitory moment, is a necessary one in order to restore the unity of principles. As I have already shown in §1.2.2, Schelling is convinced that the very beginning of philosophy is a free act of disruption of the original unity, which in turn cannot but result in its final restoration. Hence, it follows that the *Erscheinung* has to be understood not as something misleading and to be avoided, but rather as the negative and necessary moment through which philosophy itself can become positive. Simply put, the only way through which we can grasp the original unity of principles is philosophy, meaning that the unity has to be upset and be restored; accordingly, without *Erscheinung*, there is no unity of principles either.

Moreover, the abovementioned original unity of the principles, according to Schelling, implies that cause and effect relate to each other as inseparable parts of the same process. However, when we break the unity they appear, momentarily and transitorily, as separated (as is the case of freedom and necessity, ideal and real, Good and Evil); but, once the *Erscheinung* is overcome, the unity is restored, and we can “atlook” at things for what they really are (as already said in §1.2.2). Indeed, Schelling claims that such absolute unity “is inexplicable in terms of matter as such. For it is a unity of the concept, a unity that exists only in relation to an intuiting and reflecting being”. Bearing in mind that for Schelling (as already said earlier in this chapter) philosophy is not only mere reflection and that intuiting is

---

211 IPN, 31; SW, I, 2, 42.
equivalent to “atlooking” at things in themselves, namely from a God’s-eye point of view, then we can conclude that the intuiting and reflecting being of whom Schelling is speaking is not only humankind, but the Godhead.

Moreover, this unity, Schelling maintains, cannot be explained through the concept of a superior divine intelligence, that is, it cannot be understood as an effect whose cause is a supernatural purposiveness. Indeed, accepting a supernatural purposiveness would be equivalent to saying that the purpose of Nature is imposed on Nature itself from outside or above; consequently, creation itself, as Schelling conceives of it, would be impossible, and God would not be the creator, but the mere artificer of Nature. In other words, by doing this, “you destroy all idea of Nature from the very bottom, as soon as you allow the purposiveness to enter her from without, through a transfer from the intelligence of any being whatever”.212 That is, Schelling is convinced that a supernatural intelligence, and with it a supernatural purposiveness, would lead us to conceive of the relation between cause and effect in a transcendent way, and consequently to accept a form of dualism. Yet, as I have repeatedly said, Schelling constantly advocates for immanentism and monism, which are the grounding strongholds of his thought.

The latter conception is also present in Schelling’s *Presentation of My System of Philosophy* (published in 1801, i.e., four years after *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* and two years before the second edition of that work – in which, as already said, Schelling made some substantial changes – but also eight years before the *Freedom Essay*). Indeed, in §52 he writes, “The essence of absolute identity, insofar as it is immediately the ground of reality, is power. – This follows from the concept of power. For every immanent cause of reality is designated a power. But if absolute identity is the immediate ground of a reality, it is immanent cause as well. This is so because it is really only the immanent cause of a being”.213 Here it is impossible not to notice once again the Spinozan style of Schelling’s argument: indeed, Schelling understands the concept of power in a very Spinozan sense, namely as that inner force that animates the *conatus*.

Thus, that being the immanent cause of reality, external causality and transcendent purposiveness must be excluded from Schelling’s philosophy. Indeed, he clearly argues that “absolute identity is not cause of the universe, but the universe itself. For everything that is, is

212 IPN, 34; SW, I, 2, 45.
absolute identity itself”.\(^{214}\) That is, as already mentioned, the law of identity inheres the fundamental ontological structure of the universe, that is, the real itself. Consequently, such an account cannot but result into a monist and immanentist conception of causality, according to which every being carries its own cause in itself and cannot be caused by something external.

In conclusion, I argue that Schelling’s conception of causality also has implications about the relation between agents and acts. That is, on the one hand, Schelling rejects any mechanist conception of causality, and on the other hand, he also rejects the idea of God as purest actuality. As he himself puts it, “nothing can be achieved with such abstract concepts of God as actus purissimus [purest actuality], […] as it is equivalent] to remov[ing] God quite far indeed from all of nature”,\(^{215}\) which is simply inconceivable for Schelling, as I have repeatedly shown. In the previous sentence, the actus purissimus is understood by Schelling as a pure and abstract act with no agent, which for him is the same as postulating an abstract principle of reality from which life emanates, which in turn is passively received by “inferior beings”. Similarly, Schelling cannot accept the account according to which God is the purest and highest agent, whose acts are just a secondary moment, that is, a mere effect of God’s agency. This also recalls the Schellingian idea of philosophy, namely the idea according to which (as already said in §1.1.2) in order to correctly philosophise an integration between idealism and realism is needed.

As I have already shown above, Schelling’s idea of causality does not have to be understood as a chronological chain of causes and effects, but rather as a kairological occurrence where cause and effect imply and generate each other. Accordingly, I argue that the relation between act and agent works in the same way: that is, neither of the two is merely cause nor merely effect of the other, but rather they emerge as a kairological co-occurrence. This, of course, does not mean agent and act are blended together into one and indistinguishable thing, but rather that they cannot be conceived of or occur without each other. Put simply, there is no act without agent, but there is also no agent without act. This could seem self-evident, but it is actually a complex statement, as it does not correspond to the common belief according to which my acts are nothing more than the effects of my actions, but it means something different. Indeed, I am arguing that claiming that there is no act without agent means that agents cannot have ontological and causal priority over their

---

\(^{214}\) Schelling, *Presentation of My System of Philosophy*, 359; SW, I, 4, 133.

\(^{215}\) PI, 26; SW, I, 7, 356.
acts, and that agents are such only through their acts and not because they fully determine them.

Furthermore, for Schelling, an act is to be understood as a process in which reality and being actualise themselves. However, as already mentioned, this does not mean that it excludes or is diametrically opposed to potentiality, but rather includes and resolves potentiality in itself, that is, by actualising it. After all, I have already shown how God’s creation is an act, and more specifically the act of God’s self-revelation; therefore, it would be inconceivable, according to Schelling’s position, to attribute to God an act that does not include and resolve potentiality in itself, namely a partial act that opposes itself to potentiality rather than actualise it. Moreover, the unity of principles can only take place through an absolutising act, namely an act able to resolve in itself all the contrapositions that we have progressively encountered in Schelling’s philosophy (e.g., Good and Evil, freedom and necessity, contraction and expansion).

Finally, I also argue that it is possible to rely on the latter argument to conclude that within Schelling’s philosophical system it is not the agent that grounds the act and makes it possible, but rather the act that grounds the agent and makes it possible. Indeed, if God’s creation is the very source of everything that is, and being the creation itself the act of God’s self-revelation, it follows that that which produces reality itself is nothing but the abovementioned absolutising act. However, this does not mean that God coincides with the actus purissimus, which for Schelling is nothing but a mere conceptual abstraction, as it disposes of any concrete and natural (i.e., within Nature) grounding of Godself; the act of creation and of self-revelation, indeed, has an agent, namely the Godhead. Therefore, God is, at the same time, both the agent and the act, both the cause and the effect of reality. Similarly, in God there is the coincidence of freedom and necessity, Good and Evil, form and substance; that is, as repeatedly said, God is the living unity of the principles.

To sum up, in this sub-section I have shown how Schelling’s conception of causality is strictly related to freedom, in the sense that he is convinced that all caused entities preserve their freedom and cannot be conceived without freedom itself. That is, Schelling outlines an organic conception of causality, arguing that causality and freedom relate to each other in the same way in which all the parts of an organism relate to the organism itself. Indeed, every part of an organism must preserve its own life and freedom, which is the only way it can contribute to the freedom of the organism as a whole. This is not a contradiction as, Schelling
points out, if the parts of an organism were not free but determined by an external force, then the organism itself would not be free but determined and we would have a lifeless mechanism.

Moreover, I have also shown how the latter conception is related to the concept of *krisis*, that is, that state in which stasis is impossible and mutation is inevitable. This also leads us to argue that causality, as Schelling defines it, takes place according to a kairological dimension, rather than a chronological one. Indeed, it is not a chronological chain of causes and effects, but a kairological occurrence in which the two terms in play mutually cause each other, so that they are at once cause and effect. This further reinforces an immanentist reading of Schelling, because such a conception of causality radically excludes any transcendent and supernatural cause. Also, this conception is based on the unity of principles, which is the cornerstone of Schelling’s philosophy, to which I will return later in this chapter. Lastly, I have also briefly outlined how Schelling’s understanding of act is related to the discourse on causality, saying that Schelling conceives God’s creation as the act of God’s self-revelation, which in turn resolves in itself and actualises potentiality, rather than oppose to it. Therefore, I have argued that, within Schelling’s thought, it is possible to argue that the act (in the latter sense) grounds and makes the agent possible, rather than the converse.

### 1.3 Schelling’s Heritage: Some Afterthoughts

From the previous sections of this chapter it emerges that Schelling’s understanding of Evil and freedom is undoubtedly complex and non-reducible to a simplistic approach; on the contrary, a great effort is required in order to understand it in all its complexity. Schelling’s philosophy, despite its discontinuity and complexity, deals with critical issues in a way that was certainly original for his time. For instance, as I have already mentioned, understanding Evil as an ontological force, and no longer as a moral concept, put Schelling in a position of strong disagreement with a significant portion of his contemporaries (especially Fichte and Jacobi), yet, since his time, Schelling’s thought has been increasingly taken into consideration by many great Western philosophers, from Heidegger and Jaspers to Bergson and Deleuze.

In particular, as we shall see in detail later, it is thanks to the work of Martin Heidegger that Schelling has been reconsidered independently from the shadow of Hegelianism in 20th-century scholarship. Therefore, Heidegger’s reading of Schelling is
worth being discussed, both because it demonstrates the philosophical independence of Schelling and because it has considerably influenced other important philosophers, including Karl Jaspers. For these reasons, Heidegger’s interpretation can also be considered as a very good starting point for looking at Schelling’s philosophy from a different point of view, that is, one of a radically immanentist ontology of the world.

Therefore, in this last section I will begin by examining Heidegger’s and Jaspers’s interpretations of Schelling’s thought – but not only to criticise them, because they are strictly related with Pareyson’s understanding of Schelling. More specifically, I will rely on the argument (supported, among others, by Lore Hühn) according to which Heidegger’s reading of Schelling’s *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, despite its being very detailed and meticulous, in some cases represents a distortion of Schelling’s philosophy. Moreover, both Heidegger’s and Jaspers’s interpretations of Schelling come to the same conclusion, since the two philosophers have an influence on each other. Furthermore, as I will show in chapter 2, Pareyson’s interpretation of Schelling is in turn based on Jaspers’s reading and sometimes reiterates its inaccuracies. Finally, in the last sub-section (§1.3.3) I will show a different interpretation of Schelling’s philosophy, relying both on current scholarship and on what I have argued in the previous sections.

1.3.1 Heidegger and Jaspers as interpreters of Schelling

In the 19th-century philosophical debate, according to Heidegger, there was a strong and unquestionable predominance of Hegel’s ideas, which hindered a correct understanding of Schelling’s philosophical system. Indeed, Heidegger points out (quite rightly) that “Hegel didn’t see that just this single thing, freedom, was not single for Schelling, but was thought and developed as the essential foundation of the whole, as a new foundation for a whole philosophy”.

Therefore, according to Heidegger, Hegel’s misunderstanding of Schelling’s conception of freedom was the starting point of several misinterpretations of Schelling’s philosophy in general, and of his *Freedom Essay* in particular. This is why Heidegger’s goal is to liberate Schelling’s *Freedom Essay* from the shadow of Hegel’s misconception.

It is useful to bear in mind that Heidegger’s effort in taking up Schelling is not ultimately to provide an interpretation of Schelling’s philosophy, but to engage Schelling as

part of his own philosophical project. Here I will not go into details about the exegetical accuracy of Heidegger’s interpretation of Schelling, but rather I will focus on only those elements of Heidegger’s and Jaspers’s readings that are more relevant for my research. Therefore here I will just say that I agree with Lore Hühn’s argument, according to which the goal of Heidegger’s critique of Schelling is to legitimate his own philosophy, rather than to make a real effort to understand Schelling’s project. Hühn also argues that “on the one hand, a precise analysis of Heidegger’s Schelling interpretation certainly demonstrates the essential structural relation between the two, but on the other hand, it is not altogether free of its own distortions [of Schelling’s philosophy]”\textsuperscript{217} Consequently, it is important to have a proper understanding of some of Heidegger’s key concepts in order to gain a proper understanding of his reading of Schelling.

I will now focus on the notion of “jointure”, which plays a key role in Heidegger’s reading of Schelling; also, it is crucial for the aim of my work, as it is the kernel of Heidegger’s analysis of Schelling. Indeed, Heidegger’s main criticism of Schelling is that in Schelling’s philosophy “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”\textsuperscript{218}

First, it needs to be clarified what Heidegger means with the term “jointure” and how he relates this concept to Schelling’s philosophy. Here “jointure” stands for the German \textit{Gefüge}, which refers to the inner structure of a thing, or to a coherent whole with a certain internal order; moreover, \textit{das Gefüge} can be more simply translated also as “structure”. This concept became quite important for Heidegger after the late 1930s, that is, when he wrote both his essay on Schelling (which, in turn, is taken from a lecture course he taught in 1936) and the \textit{Contributions to Philosophy} (which he composed between 1936 and 1938). However, this concept is a very complex one and requires a deeper examination, in order to properly understand how Heidegger uses it.


\textsuperscript{218} Heidegger, \textit{Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom}, 161.
Etymologically, the word *Gefüge* is composed of the prefix *Ge-*, which indicates a chain (e.g., *Ge-birgskette* is a mountain chain) and *Fuge*, whose meaning is ambiguous and equivocal; that is, “the German word ‘Fuge’ means not only a musical fugue but also ‘joint’, ‘seam’, ‘cleft’, or ‘fissure’”. Indeed, it is both a carpentry word that indicates a joint (intended not as a welding into one, but as a dovetail that pieces things together while holding them somewhat independently), and the interweaving of repetitive elements or themes (for instance in a musical composition). So, the word *Fuge* has to be referred to the idea of holding some elements together while maintaining their differences. Moreover, the same can be said for the term *Seynsfuge*, that is precisely that “jointure (*Fuge*) of Being (*Seyn*)”, since Heidegger’s main criticism of Schelling consists in the fact that Schelling’s *Seynsfuge* cannot be understood as a valid foundation for his philosophical system.

As already mentioned, the term *Fuge* (and with it *Gefüge* and *Seynsfuge*) plays a crucial role in Heidegger’s *Contributions to Philosophy*, where he defines *das Fuge* (i.e., the jointure) as “the disposal which is compliant to the call [of the event] and which thereby grounds *Da-sein*”. In this context, “event” (*Ereignis*) means “the meaning of beyng [*Seyn*], understood as its truth and essence, in other words, as its essential occurrence”. Put simply, what Heidegger is trying to say in the abovementioned passage is that the jointure is nothing more than the most original ground on which Being emerges; and the main reason he uses the spelling *Seyn* (“Beyng”) rather than *Sein* (“Being”) is that the former is the older German spelling of Being and therefore a preferable option to recall the “originarity” of Being itself. In other words, despite the controversial terminology, Heidegger argues that “beyng ‘is’ the appropriating event of the ap-propriation of the ‘there’ [*Da-*]”, that is, it is that act through which we concretise and actualise our being, by emerging as a “Being-there” (*Da-sein*).

The Heideggerian concepts of *Fuge*, *Seyn* and *Ereignis* (as developed in his *Contributions to Philosophy*) clearly recall the Schellingian conception of the struggle between Good and Evil, which also coincides, as already seen in §1.1.2, with the emerging of life and the coming to life of Being. That is, both conceptions are meant to be referred to the very original core of Being, intended not in an abstract metaphysical sense, but as the material condition of the coming to life of Being itself (which also determine the process of

---


221 Friedrich W. von Herrmann, “Editor’s Afterword”, in Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)*, 403.

222 Ibid., 189.
Becoming, as I have already outlined in §1.1.1). Also, both the Schellingian struggle between Good and Evil and the Heideggerian appropriation of the “there” require humankind to be an active part in the process of Becoming, rather than passively to let this process occur.

More specifically, Heidegger talks of jointure of Being (Seynsfuge) to refer to the Schellingian distinction between ground and existence (which I have already explained in §1.1.1), which he understands “not [as] a distinction between two beings or kinds of beings, but between two aspects of being itself […] since the distinction is a feature of the immanent creator of all being”.223 In this sense, Heidegger claims that “we can already see here the sameness of Being and jointure shining through. Insofar as we understand ‘Being’ at all, we mean something like jointure and joining”.224 Moreover, he draws a very interesting parallel between the concepts of jointure (Fuge) and disjointure (Unfuge), and Anaximander’s notions of díke (δίκη) and adikía (άδικία), which literally mean “justice” and “injustice”. However, Heidegger specifies that “here we must keep at a distance all moral and legal and even Christian ideas about justice and injustice”,225 interpreting the two terms in a strictly ontological sense.

As early as 1932 (four years before his lecture course on Schelling), Heidegger had already defined díke as “compliance” (der Fug) and adikía as “noncompliance” (der Un-fug), arguing that compliance means “harmonization, the dovetailing of the totality of something coordinated in itself. Compliance therefore characterizes something inter-related; we see this in phenomena such as day-night, birth-death, etc. Its opposite is noncompliance, where the being is somehow out of order; άδικία is noncompliance, in this original sense”.226 Consequently, Heidegger also understands Seynsfuge not only as the jointure of Being, but also as a compliance with Being: indeed, once we link together (as Heidegger does) the concepts of jointure, Fuge and díke, then it immediately follows that the only way to conceive of Seynsfuge is to define it as a fulfilment of the inner structure of Being. In other words, it is that “wholeness” that achieves and realises the inner order of Being itself. In this sense, Fuge is also right, but not because it is morally preferable to an alternative potential compliance (in a moral account of justice); rather, its rightness is due to the accordance with the inner structure of Being.

224 Heidegger, Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom, 50.
225 Ibid.
This is also why, Heidegger says, in Schelling’s *Freedom Essay* “Evil is not treated in the sphere of mere morality, but rather in the broadest sphere of the ontological and theological question”.\(^{227}\) I have already shown how Schelling, when outlining his conception of Good and Evil, shifts the focus of the question from morality to ontology, so I will not repeat this at this stage. The point here is that Heidegger, while agreeing with the basic ontological approach on Evil that Schelling takes, is yet convinced that that same (and correct) approach might yield different conclusions. That is, as already mentioned, Heidegger clearly defines Schelling’s effort to provide an ontological account of Evil a failure, since Schelling himself could not see that “positing the jointure of Being as the unity of ground and existence makes a jointure of Being as system impossible”.\(^{228}\)

What Heidegger means is that Schelling’s own philosophical system is based on a misleading conception of unity between ground and existence, which in fact can never take place because of the fundamental incompatibility of those two metaphysical elements. Moreover, he argues that Schelling’s conception of evil fails to differentiate itself from traditional Western metaphysics and its partial and subjective statements; therefore, “the manner of its saying must become a performance of its content – a performance, that is, of the act in which the claim to be absolute is renounced”.\(^{229}\) To further paraphrase, the main reason for Heidegger’s negative judgement (but not total rejection) of Schelling’s conception of Evil is that Heidegger believes that it cannot grasp Being in its absoluteness, as it is still vague and not capable of being the ground of a valid and stable philosophical system.

Hence, Heidegger considers the Schellingian jointure between ground and existence as extremely fragile, as it breaks immediately because of the fundamental incompatibility and discordance of its components. That is, as already mentioned above, Heidegger means to grasp the very inner structure of Being, which he identifies as the *Seynsfuge*, namely with Being in its wholeness and its consequent inner order. However, in the *SeynSFUGE* theorised by Schelling the discordance between ground and existence takes over and rules out any possibility of a stable and enduring jointure, that is, of a valid and binding ontological order of things. Borrowing Hühn’s words, Heidegger “vehemently denies that Schelling actually took the final step beyond the fundamental stance of a metaphysics of the will. Yet according to Heidegger, it was Schelling who first addressed this distinction [i.e., between ground and


\(^{228}\) Ibid., 161.

\(^{229}\) Sikka, “Heidegger’s Appropriation of Schelling”, 443.
existence] in the history of philosophy, even if he did not recognize all of its consequences."^230

That being the case, it follows that from a Heideggerian point of view the concept of Seynsfuge provided by Schelling can neither grasp the inner core of Being, nor be the starting point of life and experience (as Schelling himself puts it), since it fails to put and keep together all the different components of Being itself. Put differently, Schelling confounds jointure and disjointure, without realising that the latter makes the former impossible and that therefore his whole discourse on Evil loses credibility and becomes unsustainable. Indeed, this means that there is no longer a valid foundation for Schelling’s conception and therefore the whole system needs to be refounded on a different and more stable philosophical ground. In other words, as soon as the jointure of Being is found to be a disjointure of Being, all the speculation built on it immediately and irreparably becomes precarious, and the only way to amend it is to give it a stronger basis, namely a proper Seynsfuge.

The way Heidegger approaches these philosophical issues is highly regarded by Jaspers. There is a reciprocal influence and admiration between the two philosophers; also, an extensive correspondence took place between them, in which they openly confront and discuss their reciprocal ideas with great respect and admiration for one another, but without hiding their deep philosophical and political divergencies.^231 Heidegger and Jaspers faced similar issues and highly regarded the other’s opinion and understanding of those issues, despite the fact that they saw those issues differently and therefore they often came to different conclusions. In other words, the relation between Heidegger and Jaspers is made both of mutual esteem and of sincere philosophical debate, which brings them, in some cases, to a basic agreement on some issues, as shown by their reciprocal understanding of Schelling’s philosophy.^232

Without going into details of the affinities and divergencies between Heidegger and Jaspers, I will now focus on the latter’s interpretation of Schelling, always bearing in mind the former’s one. In order to do that, it is necessary to take a step back and briefly focus on those aspects of Jaspers’s thought that are relevant for our purposes. First, Jaspers moves from the idea that “philosophy is an activity, a movement of thought that knows no ends and

---

produces no set of doctrines, theories, or even concepts”; rather, it aims at reaching the source of knowledge and being. “Philosophy, then, is different from both science and religion and yet is bound to both. From science it gains critical, factual and objective knowledge. From religion it receives the idea of transcendence, although in a determinate and hence unacceptable form. […] Living thus at the boundaries of knowledge and religious faith, philosophy grasps the truth of being itself lying beyond those boundaries but coming to expression only within them.”

Therefore, philosophy has to overcome objective and scientific knowledge, that is, mere empirical experience, since its very source exceeds the limits of human experience. “Jaspers calls this source transcendence. […] In this way Jaspers comes to the realization that both the thinker and reality are more than what can be known about them in objective terms.” Indeed, as Jaspers himself puts it, “whatever becomes an object for me is always a determinate being among others, only a mode of being. […] Therefore] No known being is being itself”. All of this is due to the fact that I am given as a being-in-a-world, namely in a particular spatio-temporal situation that prevents me from grasping being in itself and then has to be overcome and transcended through the activity of philosophising. In other words, Being itself “always seems to recede from us, in the very manifestations of the appearances we encounter. This being we call the encompassing. But the encompassing is not the horizon of our knowledge at any particular moment. Rather, it is the source from which all new horizons emerge, without itself ever being visible even as a horizon”.

Borrowing Olson’s words, “as a given, my being-in-a-world is a fact, a precondition for any questions raised concerning its meaning”, and it is precisely that precondition that needs to be transcended in order to properly philosophise. Immediately connected to the latter question is the experience of die Trennung, that is, “disjunction” or “separation” between the self and the world: “one’s experience of the disjunction between self and world generates the notion that the world as a Whole or Unity is something far more than that which is cognisable as mere object, or the controlled management of an environment of objects”. Accordingly, I immediately experience an unbridgeable ontological discrepancy between my own

234 Ibid., xv.
235 Ibid., xiii–xiv.
236 Jaspers, Philosophy of Existence, 17.
237 Ibid., 18.
238 Alan M. Olson, Transcendence and Hermeneutics. An Interpretation of the Philosophy of Karl Jaspers (The Hague and Boston: M. Nijhoff, 1979), 10.
239 Ibid., 11.
particular being and being itself, since Jaspers “believes that the intuitive apprehension of disjointness is not only a primal philosophical experience initially giving rise to reflection but that it is characteristic of the very act of thinking itself”.  

Some clarifications need to be made at this point, in order to correctly understand Jaspers’s concepts in relation to Schelling’s philosophy. First, Jaspers refers to the encompassing as an articulated process through which we first discover the distinction between ourselves and the world, then we understand ourselves immanently as existence, consciousness and spirit, and finally we move from immanence to transcendence. “This articulation thus does not mean cogent deduction from a principle, but rather an encounter at the limits. It means an acceptance of the modes of the originary presence of being.” In this sense, Jaspers speaks about “all-encompassing” (das Umgreifende), which explicitly refers to an act of grasping every form and mode of being and requires the transcending of my particular and limiting situation for making new horizons of knowledge emerge.

Moreover, die Trennung (i.e., the “disjunction”) between ourselves and the world terminologically recalls the Schellingian separation of the principles of Good and Evil made by humankind (Schelling uses the same word when he refers to the arbitrary separation that we make between Good and Evil). Indeed, die Trennung means “separation”, “division”, “laceration”, and so it has to do with the abovementioned ontological discrepancy between myself and the world, between subject and object, spirit and nature. However, differently from Schelling’s definition of the term (which, once again, refers to something that is arbitrary and freely performed by humankind), Jaspers’s understanding of die Trennung seems to have some sort of constitutive value, as it is both a primal philosophical experience and a fundamental step for final and necessary transcendence. That is, as Olson explains, “this awareness of world, which both does and does not have to do with me, drives me beyond the particularity of my givenness-in-a-world to a more comprehensive standpoint whereby I may develop a unified world orientation”.

Finally, a few words need to be said in relation to Jaspers’s notion of transcendence. Stephen Erickson clearly argues that “Jaspers construes philosophy as a self-generating act of the thinker’s nature. Philosophy’s generation is the result of human nature touching upon  

240 Ibid., 10n2.  
241 Jaspers, Philosophy of Existence, 21.  
242 Olson, Transcendence and Hermeneutics, 11.
Transcendence. Philosophy, thus, is more reactive and responsive than analytical”.243 Put simply, in this context “to touch upon transcendence” means that I, as a human being given in a particular spatio-temporal situation, become able to overcome my particular situation and embrace and know being itself. Erickson also sees a Kantian influence on this point: indeed, he states that “Kant could see ideas both as limiting concepts and as regulative ideals. […] Surely in this, Jaspers follows Kant, enriching Kantian Ideas both by derationalising them into unfathomable boundaries of Transcendence and by suggesting an unpredictably productive encounter with them, the productivity of which, however, is manifested not beyond, but within, this world in a myriad of enriching intellectual consequences and personal deepenings”.244

Accordingly, for Jaspers, the idea of transcendence does not correspond to a supersensuous world, but it is still meant to outline a hierarchical order within being, according to which the human condition, being confined to spatio-temporal limits, consists in a lower and less pure expression of being itself, which indicates, on the contrary, being in its most originary and deep sense, namely beyond all human dichotomies – including the one between subject and object. Hence, as argued by Paul Tillich, it cannot be grasped dialectically, but rather “we know by way of ciphers, or symbols ([Jaspers] uses both terms) of Transcendence. In the symbol, he says, Being-Itself is present, and it is there and only there that you can find it. And Transcendence is present in its fullest power […] just where it appears in sense perceptions. The visible symbol, therefore, is the place where the all-embracing Transcendence reveals itself to us. Thus the symbol, he says, opens itself up for Being and shows us the depths of Being”.245

These few points about Jaspers’s philosophy are enough now to properly understand his interpretation and critique of Schelling, which is one of the two main issues considered in this sub-section. First, we must bear in mind that Jaspers reads and interprets Schelling in the light of his own philosophical view, as is the case for Heidegger. In general, Jaspers believes that Schelling, despite his indisputable originality and depth of thought, was unable to give to his thought a systematic coherence. In other words, Jaspers is convinced that Schelling’s philosophy is devoid of a central and coherent insight, losing sight of the real essence of some fundamental concepts, such as freedom. Regarding the latter, as put by Krystyna Gorniak-Kocikowska, “Jaspers claims that the human being is free; however, according to

---

243 Stephen A. Erickson, “The Space of Transcendence in Jaspers and Heidegger”, in Olson, Heidegger and Jaspers, 126.
244 Ibid., 130.
him the human being is not free on the empirical plane nor in the sphere of transcendence. [...] Only existential freedom is the true freedom. In freedom, there is a movement that aims at transcendence, but freedom itself does not reach transcendence”.

As a result, Jaspers thinks that Schelling’s conception of freedom is unclear and somehow irrational, meaning that Schelling, far from radically renewing Western metaphysics, takes as its foundation an arbitrary concept of freedom, which is therefore inadequate to be the kernel of philosophy itself. Indeed, Jaspers claims that “philosophical criticism that draws assurance from the origins runs as follows: The fundamental experience of freedom takes place in relation to transcendence, through which it knows itself as a gift to itself. It amounts to a denial of the essence of existential freedom and to a violation of transcendence, if freedom is ascribed to the latter as its essence. ‘There is no freedom without transcendence’ – this is the experience, to be sure, not of arbitrariness but of every substantial freedom”. That is, Jaspers is convinced that freedom can be thought of in different modes, which are all interrelated; for this reason, he refuses to conceive freedom in an absolute metaphysical sense, as he thinks Schelling does.

Jaspers continues by stating that “in transcending, Schelling arrives, appropriately, at thinking Supra-Being, which neither is nor is not, at the Being of everything, at the unthinkable”, the appropriateness of which probably lies in the fact that Jaspers sees a similarity between his abovementioned symbolic conception of being itself and Schelling’s Supra-Being. However, Schelling “relinquishes such transcending [...] in favor of a fixation of transcendence. He thinks transcendence itself, that is, as freedom, as master of Being, and he defines this freedom as being able to act or not to act, hence as arbitrariness, as the form of freedom that is the worst for us”. In Jaspers’s understanding, freedom cannot be defined as pure and absolute arbitrariness, but has to be conceived of within the spatio-temporal conditions that determine my existence.

In other words, true freedom, according to Jaspers, can be given only within our “being-in-time” (Zeitdasein) and makes no sense without this condition. In turn, freedom occurs in different degrees; first, “in the empirical world, there is formal freedom, which

---

246 Krystyna Gorniak-Kocikowska, “The Concept of Freedom in Jaspers and Heidegger”, in Olson, Heidegger and Jaspers, 144.
249 Ibid., III: 151.
250 Ibid.
manifests itself in ‘freedom as knowledge’ and ‘freedom as willfulness’. Other kinds of freedom are transcendental freedom, which is self-confidence in obedience toward an obvious law (in a Kantian sense); freedom as idea, which is life in a whole; and finally existential freedom, which is the self-confidence of the historical source of decision”. 251 This gradual division of freedom, which culminates in existential freedom, allows Jaspers to avoid (in his opinion) any conception that may turn freedom into a rigid and objectified metaphysical absolutisation. Nevertheless, as Gorniak-Kocikowska points out, “existential freedom includes all other kinds of freedom. However, existential freedom cannot be objectively conceived, according to Jaspers”. 252

That being the case, Jaspers argues that “[Schelling’s] use of the idea of freedom makes him speak of possibility and capability. Using the categories of possibility, actuality, necessity – the categories of modality – he thinks first an inner-divine life, and the theogonic and cosmogonic process”. 253 However, Jaspers believes that this conception of freedom inevitably yields an ontology that fails to take into account what he has called existential freedom, resulting conversely in an abstract objectification of freedom itself. In this sense, for Jaspers, “[Schelling’s] philosophizing first appears of the knowledge of how things should be, and subsequently like the forgetting of this knowledge”, 254 meaning once again that the philosophy of Schelling results in an abstract metaphysical speculation, since he “confounds conjuring something up in order to make it present with objectification, or illumination of Existenz with gnosis”. 255

Jaspers, in fact, thinks that Schelling becomes a victim of his own argument on the negative value of mere reflection (which I pointed out in §1.2.2), because he himself fails to combine reflection and action, or theoretical and practical philosophy, in a coherent philosophical system; on the contrary, Schelling develops nothing but a merely reflexive thought that has nothing to do with his own conception of philosophy. Using Jaspers’s words, “in his passionate struggle for actuality, Schelling neglects the task of arriving at actuality by the way in which he thinks actuality. His failure consists in his preserving in ‘the pure ether of thought’ and in being satisfied with the noncommittal intuition of fancies, fixating the objects in the bottomlessness of such fantasies”. 256 It follows that not only can such a

252 Ibid., 143.
254 Ibid., III:155.
255 Ibid., III:159.
256 Ibid., III:160.
conception of freedom not be a stable ground for a philosophical system, but also that it can be proven wrong using Schelling’s own argument on the negativity of mere reflection.

Moreover, Jaspers also overturns Schelling’s conception of the struggle between Good and Evil, arguing that the struggle itself does not have an absolute value and does not give rise to absolute freedom, but occurs only within some precise and limited spatio-temporal conditions. As explained again by Gorniak-Kocikowska, “for a human being, freedom is the beginning sense of one’s existence which, as a continuous ‘becoming’ (das Werden), is the only absolute truth. However, this ‘becoming’, this self-creation, even in relation to oneself is limited by numerous external conditions. For that reason Jaspers denies the possibility of absolute freedom. If such freedom did exist, […] it would have to be the freedom of totality. Nothing could exist outside of it; all contradictions would necessarily be contained within it. Without contradictions, however, freedom is impossible, because freedom must develop itself in a process, and this process is a struggle”.

Put simply, according to Jaspers, the fact that freedom arises from a struggle between Good and Evil does not bring us, as Schelling thinks, to the very core of the emerging of life and freedom in an absolute sense, but rather shows how freedom is conceivable and experienceable only within the spatio-temporal frame of our particular existence. Accordingly, Jaspers concludes that freedom itself can never be fully realised, since this would imply its absolutisation and objectification, which is impossible. In this sense, as already mentioned, in freedom we move towards transcendence, to the full actualisation of freedom itself, but we do not reach it, since it is impossible to go beyond the boundaries of our Zeitdasein. Jaspers himself clarifies that “freedom is not being-in-itself. In transcendence freedom ceases because decision has an end; in transcendence there is neither freedom nor unfreedom. Being free […] is not the same as being transcendent. Confined to itself, even freedom withers. It seeks its fulfillment in transcendence, which as such opens only to freedom, and whatever this fulfillment is will turn into a possibility for freedom: into the possibility of perfection or of reconciliation, of redemption or of pain at transcendent being. In every case the end of possible self-sufficiency is freedom’s ultimate satisfaction in temporal existence”.

Jaspers also insists on the misleading objectification that he ascribes to Schelling’s philosophy. “In thinking”, Jaspers writes, “we objectivize. Objectification is essential. But it

must be carried out philosophically, that is, in such a manner that what is objectified remains in suspension, that it is always a foothold in a movement that lets it disappear again.²⁵⁹ Therefore, the objectivity of concepts cannot be claimed “as a fixed possession”,²⁶⁰ as Schelling so claims, according to Jaspers’s reading, but it has to be considered as being just a phase of the process towards transcendence. This is also why Jaspers believes that Schelling’s philosophy is twofold and equivocal, since it raises philosophy to its highest level, but then it reveals itself as inadequate for such an “altitude” (Höhenlage); in other words, Schelling’s philosophical knowledge shows us the peaks that could be reached by our intellect through a proper philosophical knowledge, but is unable to lead us to actually reach such peaks and grasp such knowledge.²⁶¹

Concluding on this point, Jaspers claims that “Schelling’s thinking frees us from the accepted commonplaces. He leads us to the comprehension of the finite as finite; he shows how we gain assurance in the speculative ascent of Being. As long as we avoid slipping into the entanglements and bewitchments of his concrete intuitions about nature, myth, revelation, we arrive at the wondrous possibilities of philosophy”.²⁶² Indeed, Jaspers comes to the conclusion that the main failure of Schelling’s thinking is that it cannot be considered a viable philosophical system because Schelling is unable to properly follow the path that he himself discovers and indicates. Put simply, Schelling’s philosophical system is grounded on a misleading and fallacious ground; therefore the system itself turns out to be misleading and fallacious, despite its deep originality and innovativeness.

Jaspers’s conclusion is not very different from Heidegger’s, since they both contend that Schelling’s attempt to build a philosophical system ended up in a failure, despite the greatness of his philosophical insights. In this regard, Jaspers writes to Heidegger that “not only Schelling’s indifference and all other phrases of the idealists, but also mysticism in its obsession with images, which always say the same thing, seem to me to be a great temptation to run away from the world and from men and from friends — and to get nothing in return, when it succeeds, but an endless light, an unfillable abyss”.²⁶³ Thus, despite their different approaches to the same philosophical questions, they both set up a similar critique of Schelling, whose philosophy is defined as inadequate in the light of their own philosophical arguments. That is, they both tried to point out the limits and deficiencies of Schelling’s

²⁶⁰ Ibid.
²⁶¹ See Jaspers, Schelling, 341ff.
²⁶³ Heidegger and Jaspers, The Heidegger–Jaspers Correspondence, 140.
philosophy, although through different approaches. Indeed, while Heidegger tries to delegitimise Schelling’s philosophy as if the latter could not have reached the results that Heidegger himself has reached, Jaspers aims at stressing the weaknesses and contradictions of Schelling’s work, attributing them to the misunderstanding of some basic concepts of philosophy. Thus, the fact that Jaspers and Heidegger, despite taking two different approaches, share the same basic idea about Schelling proves that their interpretations are mutually and interestingly interrelated, as largely shown by the current scholarship.264

To sum up, I have shown that the main point of Heidegger’s criticism of Schelling is that his idea of *Seynfüge*, or “jointure of being”, is inadequate to be the foundation of a philosophical system. Indeed, Heidegger argues that an analysis of Schelling’s jointure brings us to the conclusion that it is in fact a disjointure, since its component parts (namely ground and existence) are fundamentally and essentially incompatible with each other. Consequently, the very possibility of a jointure is immediately ruled out, and that which Schelling defines as jointure is in fact a disjointure; for this reason, Heidegger points out that Schelling was unable to fully understand and develop the conclusions of his own thinking and succumbed to the illusion that an arbitrary conception could ground and sustain a trustworthy philosophical system.

Analogously, Jaspers affirms that Schelling was unable to develop a coherent philosophy, because he misinterpreted the real core of freedom and transcendence. In other words, Jaspers is convinced that Schelling, under the pretense of objectifying and absolutising freedom, lost sight of its real meaning and disregarded his own philosophical project. In this sense, he provides a very ambiguous and arbitrary idea of freedom, relating it to a misleading account of transcendence. That is, for Jaspers, what makes the Schellingian account untrustworthy is the fact that Schelling pretends to absolutise freedom and detach it from the concrete *Zeitdasein*, and to understand transcendence as a fixed and reachable concept. Put simply, Jaspers is convinced that Schelling lost himself in the intricacies of his own speculation, which remains limited to a pure and abstract speculation and therefore is able neither to grasp the reality and concreteness of the concepts of freedom and transcendence themselves nor to found a wide-ranging philosophical system.

In the next sub-sections, I will distance my reading on Schelling from Heidegger’s and Jaspers’s interpretations, in order to show that it is possible to read Schelling’s

264 About this, both the abovementioned volume *Heidegger and Jaspers* and their *Correspondence* provide clear evidence of the confrontation between the two philosophers and their mutual influence.
philosophy not as a failure to build a valid system, but as an internally coherent speculation that can legitimately be used to develop a theory of absolute experience, avoiding abstractions and mysticism. Moreover, in chapter 2 I will show how Pareyson’s interpretation of Schelling is grounded on Heidegger’s and Jaspers’s readings (especially the latter), and how the same criticisms that I will now apply to Heidegger and Jaspers can be applied to Pareyson too.

1.3.2 An Alternative Reading of Schelling

In this sub-section, I will provide an alternative reading of Schelling to that of Heidegger and Jaspers, in order to show that it is possible to consider Schelling’s discourse on Evil as a viable philosophical speculation. This, in turn, will be useful for the purpose of showing how Schelling’s account can be used as a starting point for a philosophy of absolute experience. In doing so, however, I will not criticise Heidegger and Jaspers on the basis that their interpretation can be read as an improper forcing or a lack of understanding of Schelling’s original insight; rather, my point of criticism will be that their readings of Schelling, despite being legitimately subordinated to their own philosophical projects, do not provide for the possibility of a positive philosophical outcome, which I think would be preferable. A positive reading of Schelling, that is, one that does not dismiss his philosophy as a mere failure or as inconclusive speculation, allows one, I argue, to see more clearly the actual relevance of Schelling’s philosophy and opens up to speculation on absolute experience.

Regarding Heidegger, I have already mentioned that a large part of the current scholarship accepts that his reading of Schelling is strongly influenced and determined by his own philosophical ideas and that it is mostly limited to the sole Freedom Essay, resulting in a misrepresentation of Schelling’s philosophy. However, this does not necessarily imply that Heidegger’s interpretation has to be a priori refused as incorrect and distorting and cannot be used to stimulate further reflection. Indeed, Heidegger partly denies the extent of Schelling’s Freedom Essay; however, as Lore Hühn points out, “it is possibly indicative of the productivity of Heidegger’s misunderstanding that it continues to give rise to opportunities to rethink, at its very core, the constellation of the history of philosophy”.265

In other words, my point is not that Heidegger’s reading of Schelling has to be rejected because it is inaccurate, non-objective and not true to the original; indeed, a good philosopher is not the one who faithfully reports the words of other philosophers, but the one who is able to originally reinterpret other philosophers’ thoughts in the light of new philosophical achievements. Accordingly, I will argue that it is possible and legitimate to provide a different interpretation of Schelling without considering his philosophical thought as a failure or as an incomplete system, but as speculation responding to a precise philosophical need, namely to draw a radically immanentist ontology. Further, I will argue that Schelling’s ontology can be used as a good and valid starting point for a theory of pure experience.

Heidegger is right to say that Schelling’s *Freedom Essay* is the first and foremost philosophical attempt to understand God’s will as *Ursein*, that is, as primal Being, which in turn results in a unification of theology and ontology. That is, “theo-logy means here questioning beings as a whole. This question of beings as a whole, the theological question, cannot be asked without the question about beings as such, about the essence of Being in general. […] Thus,] philosophy’s questioning is always and in itself both onto-logical and theo-logical in the very broad sense. Philosophy is *Ontotheology*. The more originally it is both in one, the more truly it is philosophy. And Schelling’s treatise is thus one of the most profound works of philosophy because it is in a unique sense ontological and theological *at the same time*”.\(^{266}\) However, such a correct interpretation does not prevent Heidegger from finally criticising Schelling’s philosophy, mainly due to some misunderstandings that I will now point out.

First, Heidegger seems to underestimate and sometimes to misconceive Spinoza’s influence on Schelling, which I have already outlined in §1.1.1. Indeed, Heidegger is firmly convinced that “the fact that Schelling’s philosophy was interpreted as Spinozism belongs to that remarkable history of the misinterpretations of all philosophies by contemporaries. If Schelling *fundamentally fought against* a system, it is Spinoza’s system”.\(^{267}\) Yet, the latter affirmation is quite unfounded and can be easily proven wrong. Without going again into detail, I would simply reiterate the claim that Schelling is constantly aiming at rethinking Spinozan pantheism and immanentism by integrating them with stronger ontological accounts of freedom and Evil. Put simply, Schelling does not fight against Spinozism, but

\(^{266}\) Heidegger, *Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, 51.

\(^{267}\) Ibid., 34.
tries to reassess it in the light of philosophical developments of his time. In other words, it is true that Schelling is convinced that a mechanistic interpretation of Spinozism would exclude every possibility of freedom and therefore needs to be rejected, but this brings Schelling neither to reject Spinozism as a whole nor to fight against it and try to prove it wrong. Again, I think that what I have shown in §1.1.1 is sufficient to demonstrate how positively remarkable Spinoza’s influence is on Schelling.

In this sense, the ontotheology that Heidegger correctly attributes to Schelling is the clearer example of how Schelling himself rethinks Spinozism, rather than prove his opposition to it: indeed, Schelling’s ontotheology recalls the immanence of things in God, that is, the fact that everything that is, is in God and cannot be conceived outside God. In addition, even Schelling’s conception of the relation between freedom and necessity, as I have shown in §1.2.1, clearly recalls the Spinozan conatus, that is, the conformity of each being to its own nature. As already mentioned, Schelling’s engagement with a reinterpretation of Spinozism gave rise to lengthy disputes between him and his contemporaries.

In his reading of Schelling, Heidegger seems to follow a misleading path, or at least a very problematic path. As Hühn shows, “according to Heidegger, a subject which empowers itself to comprehend itself as ‘primordial and fundamental willing, which makes itself into something’ and therefore is grounded in nothing, is the expression of a preconceived notion of nihilism”. Morever, as explained by Zimmerman, Heidegger thinks that “Nihilism refers to the fact of the ‘withdrawing’ (Entziehung) of Being, which began at the beginning of and continues throughout the history of metaphysics. This, of course, means that the history of metaphysics is essentially Nihilistic”. In this sense, saying that metaphysics results in nihilism means to say that it forgets “Being as such, i.e., the lighting-process in which beings can be encountered. By forgetting Being, man comes to believe that he himself is the ground for being in the whole. He thus forgets his own belongingness to and ultimate ground in Being”.

Put simply, by forgetting Being as such, namely the fundamental ground of humankind, the very fundamental question of Being itself remains unquestioned and then forgotten. That being the case, at least according to Heidegger’s view, giving metaphysics a

270 Ibid., 398.
purely subjective ground, as Schelling does, cannot but lead to nihilism. That is, the
subjectification of metaphysics yields the withdrawal of Being itself because it turns the
fundamental question of Being itself into an anthropomorphic one, losing sight of the
originality of Being itself. Indeed, Heidegger claims that, by equating Ursein and God’s
will, Schelling falls back into the same mistakes made by Western metaphysics and reinstates
nihilism rather than overcome it. In other words, overlapping the lack of objectivity of
traditional metaphysics with a subjectivist principle does nothing but reiterate the
forgetfulness and withdrawing of Being itself, as it fails to give Being itself a new and
permanent ground. This is one of the key points of Heidegger’s criticism of Schelling,
namely the fact that Schelling was unable to formulate an adequate account of the Seynfüge
and therefore failed to provide an adequate foundation to his philosophical system. That is,
the Schellingian jointure of ground and existence, rather than grasping the inner core of
Being itself, reveals itself as an abstract and arbitrary speculation, because of its subjective
core. Indeed, it pretends to keep together two discordant elements (namely ground and
existence) without realising that they are compatible only by virtue of a subjective construct,
rather than according to their own nature. Consequently, a subjective and abstract construct
can neither act as the foundation of a viable philosophical system nor grasp Being itself,
which always transcends subjectivity.

At this point, I want to outline the most controversial points of Heidegger’s
interpretations, in order to reinforce the points I have made in the first two sections of this
chapter. First, I want to point out that Heidegger’s critique of Schelling seems to rely on a
form of subjectivism that does not fully comply with the depth of Schelling’s speculation.
That is, Heidegger is convinced that Western metaphysicians (including Schelling) “concern
themselves with beings, with man’s relation to them, and ultimately with how man can
control them”, resulting in the already mentioned forgetfulness and withdrawal of Being
itself. The point here is that, as I have already argued in §1.1.3, it is definitely possible to
understand the Schellingian notion of subject as sub-iectum, namely as that which is thrown
and lies under our experience in the world, rather than in the traditional sense. Thereby,
Heidegger’s objection falls, allowing us to argue that Schelling’s philosophy neither
makes the same mistakes as traditional metaphysics nor results in nihilism, since the sub-iectum on

---

272 Zimmerman, “Heidegger on Nihilism and Technique”, 398.
which his discourse is grounded has nothing to do with Heidegger’s understanding of subjectivism.

In other words, Heidegger applies to Schelling a notion of subjectivism that understands the subject as the experiencer, namely as the one who experiences the world; however, the notion of *sub-iectum*, as I have defined it above, does not refer to the experiencer, but rather to that which lies under the experiencer, namely that which grounds and makes experience possible. In this sense, moreover, not only is the question of Being itself, as Heidegger poses it, not forgotten, but it provides an original and solid response that points out the process of coming into being of Being itself. Therefore, there are no grounds for considering Schelling as a traditional subjectivist metaphysician and consequently some sort of forerunner of nihilism, as his discourse on Evil and freedom relies on a strong and concrete ontological basis.

In addition, this yields an incomplete understanding of Schelling’s philosophical demand, which I have repeatedly outlined throughout this chapter. Besides the fact that Heidegger’s argument on Schelling is limited almost to only his *Freedom Essay*, it needs to be said that Schelling’s *Seynfuge* is immune to Heidegger’s criticism. Indeed, as I have largely shown in the previous sub-sections, ground and existence are not only compatible, but necessary to each other in order to allow life and experience to be. This is even truer a fortiori if we consider that no subject in the traditional sense of the term is involved in the process; rather, the concept of *sub-iectum* does nothing but strengthen the validity and inner coherence of Schelling’s speculation on these issues. I will give a final statement of the latter validity in the next sub-section; for now, what I have pointed out is enough to claim that there can be an alternative reading of Schelling that is preferable to Heidegger’s, in order to preserve the legitimacy of Schelling’s thought.

I will now consider some objections that can be made to Jaspers’s interpretation of Schelling, along the lines of the ones made to Heidegger’s. Indeed, I consider Jaspers’s critique of Schelling unconvincing, and I argue again that an alternative reading of Schelling is preferable. For instance, a different interpretation of Schelling is provided by Xavier Tilliette, who argues that Jaspers’s assessment of Schelling is very severe, since it states that in the end Schelling’s philosophy spoils authentic existential experience.273 In his turn, Tilliette thinks that Schelling’s philosophy, being a reinterpretation of Spinoza in the light of

---

Fichte’s conception of the I, assumes freedom as its cornerstone, or better its Alpha and Omega, its beginning and its end.\textsuperscript{274} Therefore, Schelling is able, according to Tilliette, to grasp the core of the Absolute in a very religious and Christian sense; that is, Schelling provides a philosophy that emanates from eternal and absolute freedom, grasping the Absolute as the infinite subject that comes from nothing and makes philosophy begin.\textsuperscript{275}

Without going into the details of Tilliette’s understanding of Schelling, I want to point out simply that Tilliette’s objection to Jaspers consists in the fact that the latter distorts Schelling’s philosophy and does not see its fundamental unity beyond its ostensible ambiguity. Moreover, Tilliette remarks, both Heidegger’s and Jaspers’s readings have had a significant influence on Schellingian scholarship: for instance, even Habermas reads Schelling relying on Heidegger, claiming that Schelling himself deceived the intuition of existence and of historicity.\textsuperscript{276} However, I do not want to explore Habermas’s interpretation of Schelling at this point; rather, I mention it just to further stress the relevance of both Jaspers’s and Heidegger’s works on Schelling, showing once more that they have to be taken seriously when dealing with Schelling’s philosophy.

Returning to Jaspers, I now argue that the weaker point of his critique of Schelling lies in his notion of transcendence. In other words, I argue that the way Jaspers applies this notion to Schelling’s speculation leads to a distortion of Schelling’s speculation itself. More specifically, Jaspers’s notions of transcendence and of the necessity of going beyond my particular situation of being-in-a-world, that is, my spatio-temporal condition, actually leads to some sort of ontological dualism, or at least conflicts with Schelling’s monism and immanentism. In this regard, Jaspers uses the term “encompassing” (\textit{das Umgreifende}), by which he means to refer to the mutual overlapping of subject and object, which he understands as inseparable but irreducible to each other.\textsuperscript{277} Moreover, encompassing is also the process through which we first discover the limits of our reason in relation to truth and to our possible experience of it. Therefore, truth can never be fully grasped by human reason, since the absolute inseparability of subject and object refers to the necessary being of God, which in turn transcends our particular selves. Accordingly, such a conception paves the way for a transcendentist and dualist account of Being, which again does not fit into Schelling’s speculation.

\textsuperscript{275} Ibid., 213.
\textsuperscript{276} Tilliette, “Actualité de Schelling”, 361.
A clear example of this dualist outcome is the different views of the concept of *die Trennung* ("disjunction", but also "separation", "division", "laceration") that the two philosophers have. Indeed, while Schelling defines it as an arbitrary separation of the principles of Good and Evil made by humankind, Jaspers characterises it as an ontological "disjunction", meaning that the separation is not an arbitrary human action but recalls the deep ontological discrepancy between our being-in-a-world and Being itself. Put simply, Jaspers argues, as already said in the previous sub-section, that so-called Being itself ontologically exceeds our particular being-in-a-world and is irreducible to it; therefore we can never fully grasp it. However, it seems that the latter conception is much more abstract than the Schellingian one; that is, by putting an ontological "disjunction" (as Jaspers does) between Being itself and particular being makes Being itself abstract and unreachable, and therefore a chimera. On the contrary, this is not the case for Schelling, since his philosophy relies on a solid immanentist base, which makes the very structure of Being fully graspable by human beings.

Therefore, Schelling is aiming neither at a "Supra-Being" nor at a "fixation of transcendence", which lead (according to Jaspers) to a further abstraction from the real concept of freedom, namely existential freedom. For Schelling, indeed, the very idea of a Supra-Being is simply inconceivable, due to his immanentism, according to which (as I have already said in the first section of this chapter), *Ursein* is the living unity of everything that is. That being the case, a Supra-Being, that is, a superior form of being that somehow surpasses *Ursein*, is impossible. Additionally, since freedom is an essential feature of Being for Schelling, he defines it as immanently present in all the aspects of Being and as the fundamental and inescapable co-occurrence both of necessity and of intuition. By doing so, Schelling avoids both falling into empty forms of mysticism and putting freedom itself on a transcendent and unattainable level.

Finally, Schelling does not objectify freedom: he does not understand it as an object, either in the Jaspersian sense (i.e., as a being among beings, or as a thing that can be possessed by us), or as an *ob-iectum*, in the sense I defined it in §1.2.1, that is, as that which is thrown forward and lies against our experience. Indeed, for Schelling, philosophy is essentially a work of freedom, originating from the arbitrary separation of the principles, which in turn cannot but be necessarily restored through freedom itself. In this sense, the very act of philosophising coincides with the very act of freedom, which yields intellectual intuition and the reconciliation of action and reflection, Real and Ideal, freedom and
necessity. Therefore, as already said, acting freely for Schelling means exclusively acting according to one’s own nature, which in turn means that freedom and necessity co-exist and co-occur as the one fundamental and essential act.

Moreover, it is only through that act that humankind can reach intellectual intuition and the God’s-eye point of view, which means (as I have said in §1.2.2) to “atlook” at things from inside and to be able to grasp the core of their essence; in a word, it means to grasp the Absolute. That being the case, Jaspers’s argument according to which Schelling objectifies and absolutises (in an abstract sense) freedom is not sustainable. As I understand it, Schelling’s account of freedom is not objectifiable or a naïve and intellectualist abstraction; rather, it is the most concrete and all-embracing foundation for the essence of human being. Furthermore, as I have already argued, the strongest point of Schelling’s account lies in the fact that it does not require any further metaphysical explanation, since it is firmly grounded on the level of the immanence of Being, whence it derives its self-sufficiency and self-evidence. I will return to this in the next sub-section, while now I will just focus on the limits of Jaspers’s criticism of Schelling.

In the light of what I have just pointed out, even the objection according to which Schelling maintains his arguments at the level of mere speculation is not supported by enough evidence, excluding Jaspers’s own understanding of transcendence and disjunction. That is, Schelling is so attentive to the “active moment” of philosophy that his description of the process of co-occurrence and interrelation of freedom and necessity radically excludes abstract speculativeness. In other words, as I have shown in the previous section, Schelling unquestionably provides an ontological account of freedom that refuses to understand freedom itself as a supernatural and unattainable principle, but rather he defines it as the most concrete and practical ground of our own being, which occurs together with (and inseparably from) necessity. Consequently, it is not Schelling who fails to create a valid and stable philosophical system, as Jaspers claims; rather, it is Jaspers himself who fails to understand Schelling’s philosophy by applying to it his misleading conceptions of transcendence and die Trennung.

To sum up, after having highlighted both Heidegger’s and Jaspers’s interpretations of Schelling, I have shown how they, despite their being so relevant and challenging, still have some controversial and unconvincing points. That is, I have argued that both Heidegger and Jaspers deal with Schelling in a philosophically original way, trying to understand and
reinterpret his thought in the light of the philosophical achievements of their time. However, despite that, a different reading of Schelling, one that avoids considering him as a philosopher unable to complete the task of setting up a suitable philosophical system, is preferable because it shows the internal coherence of Schelling’s thinking and because it allows us to use Schelling’s philosophy to develop a theory of pure experience, through a different understanding of the concept of subject, object and freedom. I will go into the details of the latter statement in the next sub-section.

In particular, I have argued that both Heidegger’s and Jaspers’s interpretations of Schelling rely on a partial understanding of Schelling himself. Indeed, on the one hand, Heidegger reads Schelling through the lenses of his conviction that Schelling himself makes the same mistake as all other Western metaphysicians, namely that of falling back into a rigid form of subjectivism and nihilism; on the other hand, Jaspers argues that Schelling comes up with an abstract philosophy that fails to take into account the real meaning of concepts such as freedom and *Existenz*. Thus, both think that Schelling fails to develop a coherent philosophy, despite his understanding that philosophy itself could have been built a different way from the one followed by traditional Western philosophy. Additionally, it is also important to bear in mind that Pareyson’s philosophy, as well as his interpretation of Schelling, is deeply influenced by both Jaspers and Heidegger, and therefore Pareyson reiterates the same inaccuracies that I have just pointed out, as I will show in detail in the next chapter.

At this stage, I think I have sufficiently shown how it is possible to provide a different and preferable understanding of Schelling by preserving the validity of his immanentist ontology and rejecting both Heidegger’s and Jaspers’s criticisms. Furthermore, in the next sub-section I will show in detail how Schelling’s thought, as I have outlined it throughout the current chapter, is viable to ground a philosophy of pure experience, through a different understanding of the concepts of subject, object and freedom. In this sense, I have already said in §1.2.1 that I intend to define subject and object by recalling their precise etymological meaning, that is, as *sub-iectum* and *obi-jectum*. Moreover, as regards the idea of freedom, in the next sub-section I will argue that, following the arguments I made in §1.2, the concept of freedom itself can be related to the idea of resistance (*Widerstand*), referring to the ontological status of being resistant to something (which in the present case will be related to the notion of the struggle between Good and Evil).
1.3.3 Towards a Theory of Absolute Experience

We now have an overview of Schelling’s account of Evil and freedom that allows the advancement of a speculative interpretation according to which, coherently with Schelling’s philosophy, it is possible to develop a proper concept of absolute experience. In other words, I intend to show how it is possible to understand Schelling’s thought, as I have explained it in the previous sections of this chapter, as a philosophical inquiry about the nature of life and experience in their original arising, that is, in their very ontological core and before they are individualised.

As already shown in §1.2, Schelling postulates the unity and co-occurrence of freedom and necessity, leaving no room for contingency in human actions, which means that I can freely choose to act only in accordance with the fundamental characters of my being. Again, this means neither that freedom is an illusion nor that our actions are predetermined by a “superior will”, putting us on the same level with machines. Rather, in order to fully understand Schelling’s position, we need to consider the influence of Spinoza, on which Schelling’s immanentism and monism are based. Therefore, according to Schelling, freedom and necessity are strongly interrelated and presuppose and ground each other, meaning that it is not possible to conceive the former without the latter and vice versa. Moreover, the interplay between freedom and necessity can occur only in compliance with the conatus of each human being, namely the tendency to preserve and persevere in one’s own being, which in turn means that human actions are at the one time both free and necessitated. Indeed, I can only be and act in accordance to my own conatus, but I do that freely and willingly. Put simply, there is only one possible choice, and it is the one I want to choose.

Additionally, I have already shown how Schelling grounds his conception of freedom on a precise understanding of temporality; that is, Schelling refers to the timeless ground of temporality itself, on which the unity of principles is based. I have identified the latter as a kairological conception of temporality, rather than a chronological one, referring to the ancient Greek term καιρός (kairos), meaning literally the right, opportune and critical moment. In other words, a kairological account of temporality neither occurs as a regular sequence of identical intervals of time, nor is it affected by the flowing of time, but rather it is the ground and original condition of the possibility of temporality itself. So, understanding temporality from a kairological point of view implies a qualitative difference, rather than a
quantitative one, from the traditional chronological and linear account, as I have already explained. I have also shown how this conception of temporality is related to the idea of intuition as “awakening from a state of death”, intended as a transition “from time to eternity”. That is, the *Anschauung* (intuition), namely the act of “atlooking” at things (as explained in §1.2.2), through which we grasp the absolute coincidence of *sub-iectum* and *objiectum*, pertains to the kairomological dimension of temporality. Furthermore, as already said, Schelling claims that philosophy arises from freedom (i.e., from the free upsetting of the principles) and therefore intuition is a product of freedom and the ground of possibility of philosophy itself. The latter point is very important, since it allows me to introduce a further concept that is of fundamental importance for the final goal of this work: the concept of resistance (*Widerstand*).

First, a terminological distinction needs to be made: in some cases, English translators use the term “resistance” both for *Widerstand* and for *Widerstreben*. However, those two words have a different meaning: indeed, while they both share the root *Wider-* (“against”, “opposed to”, “contrary to”), the respective suffixes *-stand* and *-streben* give to the two words a different sense and meaning. That is, *Streben* means “to strive”, “to aspire”, “to tend” towards something, while *Stand* means “stand”, “status”, “position”, and therefore recalls a stronger sense of “being opposed” to something. Put differently, *Widerstand* expresses a way of being firmer in its being “against” something; whereas *Streben* is a move to being against something, namely a sort of being “dragged” to do something unwillingly and reluctantly (indeed, *Widerstreben* is also often translated “reluctance”, which may be its most appropriate translation).

Consequently, the main and fundamental difference between *Widerstand* and *Widerstreben* lies in the fact that the latter can refer to a deliberate process of opposing something unpleasant and undesired, while the former concerns a stronger and deeper form of opposition. Put differently, *Widerstreben* comes after a conscious and deliberate decision to oppose a certain thing, while *Widerstand* is nothing but the definition of a way of being, of an ineluctable ontological status. In fact, *Widerstand* means that I cannot do anything but oppose something and resist its occurrence, not (only) because I decide to do that, but (also) because I could not relate to it any other way. Simply put, *Widerstand* is an ontological disposition that directly and inevitably arises from the way I am. Thus, from now on I will use the word “resistance” to refer to the German *Widerstand*. 
Moreover, in the concept of resistance there is an evident coincidence between freedom and necessity, because in the aforesaid definition resistance itself is both necessary (since it is an ontological disposition that cannot be avoided) and free (since I also want to oppose and resist something, according to my way of being). Schelling already uses the concept of resistance, in the sense I defined it above, in his *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*, where he states that “with absolute freedom no consciousness of self is compatible. An activity without any object, an activity to which there is no resistance [Widerstand], never returns into itself. Only through a return to one’s self does consciousness arises. Only a restricted reality [Realität] is actuality [Wirklichkeit] for us”.

What Schelling means by that is that resistance is a fundamental part of the process of the actualisation of the real, in the sense that it is the part of the process that opposes its activity, the ob-iectum of activity itself, but also the necessary momentum in the abovementioned process.

In this sense, “where all resistance [Widerstand] ceases, there is infinite expansion”, but we have already seen how mere expansion is not sufficient to understand life and being, since it needs its vital and essential counterpart, that is, contraction. In the same way, activity needs a passivity that opposes and resists it, and a positive ontological force (Good) needs the opposition of a negative one (Evil). Therefore, resistance, in this philosophical context, does not have to be understood as mere opposition, but as the act that keeps the process alive by providing the ontological ground for opposition itself and the struggle between the principles. “The supreme moment of being is, for us, transition to not-being, the moment of annihilation. Here, in this moment of absolute being, supreme passivity is at one with the most unlimited activity. Unlimited activity is absolute repose.”

According to the points I made earlier, it follows that what Schelling calls the supreme moment of being is made possible by resistance, without which the separation of the principles would have no possibility of being restored, since there would be neither conflict nor reconciliation between the opposites (activity and passivity, expansion and contraction, Good and Evil).

Also in his *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, Schelling uses the concept of Widerstand in the same way. In this case, however, Widerstand should not be confused with Bestreben, which is also translated “resistance” but whose original meaning is “endeavour”,

278 PL, 184; SW, I, 1, 324.
279 PL, 185; SW, I, 1, 324.
280 PL, 185; SW, I, 1, 325.
“strive”, “aspiration”. It is also interesting to note that Schelling relates the concept of resistance to the “Basic Principles of Dynamics” (which is the title of chapter 5 in the second book of his Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature), reinforcing my previous point according to which Widerstand should be understood as the act of providing the ontological ground for the opposition of and the struggle between the principles. Put simply, Widerstand is not something that occurs at a later stage after the emergence of matter, but is a basic process that grounds matter and makes it possible.

Schelling, in this regard, claims that “matter occupies a space, not through its mere existence […] but through an inherently moving force, whereby the mechanical motion of matter first becomes possible. […] This inherently moving force is necessarily opposed to another force that is likewise inherently moving, and can be distinguished from the former only by its opposite direction”.281 Schelling defines those two forces, as repeatedly said, as a positive and a negative one, and therefore their interplay, opposition and struggle consists in matter’s lifeblood, that is, they give life to that inherently moving force that could not take place without opposition and struggle. Indeed, as already said, either of the two forces, taken in isolation, would yield the annihilation of matter itself: on the one hand, the positive force alone would result in an endless expansion, and on the other hand, the negative force itself would result in an endless contraction. In either case, matter would cease to exist, since it would lose its essential and vital core, which is the opposition and struggle between the forces.

Since both forces are infinite, it is only by opposing and contrasting one with the other that matter can exist without being annihilated by virtue of either infinite expansion or infinite contraction. Moreover, as Schelling points out, “Force, as such, is a mere concept of the understanding, and hence something that cannot, directly, be any sort of object of intuition”.282 Consequently, if the basic forces of matter cannot be considered the object, that is, ob-iectum, of intuition, they cannot but be its subject, that is, sub-iectum, from which it follows that what Schelling has called the inherently moving force of matter coincides with what lies under intuition itself. Put simply, intuition (that is, a work of freedom, as I have previously shown) is made possible by the opposition and struggle between the forces, in turn sharing the same origin with freedom and life themselves.

281 IPN, 185; SW, I, 2, 231–32.
282 IPN, 182; SW, I, 2, 228.
In other words, the positive and repulsive force is such only if opposed by the negative and attractive one. That is, the repulsive (and therefore expansive) drive of the positive force needs to be opposed by the attractive (and therefore restrictive) core of the negative one, in order to allow matter to exist and fill up space. As Schelling himself argues, the “inherently positive [force], by its nature unrestricted, [is] capable of restriction only by an opposite activity. […] Therefore, it] exerts against restriction a resistance [Bestreben] that is infinite, and can never be totally abolished or destroyed by any opposing force.” 283 Conversely, the other force is “restrictive, inherently negative and in this respect likewise infinite. […] Since it has reality only in contrast to a positive force, it must in fact be opposed to the repulsive force, i.e., be attractive force”. 284

The positive force, Schelling adds, expands indiscriminately and infinitely in all possible directions; therefore the opposition of the negative force is necessary in order to narrow down this expansion within finite and determined directions. With no opposition, indeed, there would only be a chaotic and indefinite expansion of matter, resulting in turn in its annihilation; then, the opposition of the attractive and negative force acts as essential restraint that directs the former force into a precise spatial path. That is, “this mode of the mind’s action, taken generally, yields the concept of space, which is extended in three dimensions”. 285

Schelling applies the same reasoning to the positive force’s counterpart, arguing that “an inherently negative force has, as such, no direction at all. For insofar as it is utterly restrictive, it resembles, in relation to space, a single point. But insofar as it is thought of as in conflict with an opposing positive activity, its direction is determined by the latter. But conversely too the positive activity can react upon the negative only in this one direction. And thus we have a line between a pair of points, which can equally be drawn either forwards or backwards”. 286 In other words, the negative force being a restrictive one, it needs to be pushed by the positive one in order not to make matter retract unto its annihilation. Furthermore, “this line is also actually described by the human mind in the state of intuition. The same line in which its original activity was reflected, it again describes, in that it reacts

283 IPN, 183; SW; I, 2, 229.
284 Ibid.
285 Ibid.
286 IPN, 183–84; SW; I, 2, 230.
upon the point of resistance [Widerstand]. This mode of the human mind’s action, taken generally, yields the concept of time, which is extended in one direction”.287

So, while the resistance, or better the point of resistance, is unfolded by the negative force, we would be mistaken if we ascribed resistance itself exclusively to the negative force. Rather, as I argued above, resistance has to be understood as the act through which the ontological ground for the opposition and the struggle of the principles is provided. That is, progressing from the considerations I have made above, I want to argue that resistance does not pertain exclusively to only one of the two forces. Indeed, I have shown that Schelling understands it, in the first place, as the ob-iectum of the expansion activity and of the actualisation of the real, that is, as the “point of resistance” that arises from the negative force and that “lies against” the activity of the positive force, in fact narrowing it. However, resistance is not just a point, but rather a process, which means that, once again, it cannot be reduced only to the negative and ob-jective moment of the process itself; reducing the whole concept of resistance to the point of resistance itself, I argue, would make us lose sight of the relevance of the concept of resistance itself.

In addition, I want to reiterate the point according to which the basic forces of matter cannot be in any way an object of intuition, but they inescapably are their sub-jectum, from which it follows that resistance develops itself as a process within the sub-jective interplay of the forces. Therefore, my point is that resistance occurs in both the activity of the positive force and in the passivity of the negative one, which is the only way through which we can understand it as the provider of the ontological ground for the opposition and the struggle of the forces. Indeed, as already mentioned, resistance is both free and necessary, and then both passive (the point of resistance) and active (resistance as ontological process), namely the merging of Wider and Stand.

In order to better understand the latter point, it is useful to go back to the definition of the term Widerstand. That which Schelling called the point of resistance, that is, the passive part of resistance and its being ob-iectum, corresponds to the Stand, which recalls precisely that way of firmly and immovably standing in an ontologically determined position. At the same time, the very process of resistance, that is, its active part and its being sub-jectum, corresponds to the Wider, namely to the perpetuating of the opposition not as a static feature, but as an essential one that constantly needs to be reaffirmed within the opposition and the

287 IPN, 184; SW, I, 2, 230.
struggle of the forces. Accordingly, understanding resistance as mere and static opposition seems inappropriate both for a correct understanding of Schelling’s philosophy and for the validity of our goal, that is the development of a concept of pure experience on the grounds of Schelling’s philosophy.

Moreover, it is also interesting to note that Schelling draws a parallel between resistance and temporality, relating the (bidirectional) “line” between the point of resistance and the point of reaction with the concept of time that is yielded by this activity. I argue that we have to read this parallel as a further confirmation of the point according to which resistance relates to the kaiiological conception of temporality. Indeed, the line Schelling speaks about is nothing but the opposition of the forces, which in turn produces the concept of time, that is, it makes time possible; in other words, this means that the opposition of the force (kaiologically) occurs before chronological time and is not reducible to it, but rather takes place in a qualitatively different dimension of time, namely the kaiological one. On this background, it follows that even resistance cannot but occur in the same way, since, as I have repeatedly argued, it is the act of providing the ontological ground for opposition itself. Hence, it is an ontological originary act that cannot be in any way reduced to mere chronology, but has to be encompassed in the kaiological dimension of time. Put simply, resistance being a fundamental ontological process, and not a mere opposition to something, it has to precede and yield the concept of time itself, characterising itself as a kaiological process, rather than as a chronological one.

As a conclusion, I argue that resistance, as per the fundamental ontological process described above, consists at one time of freedom and necessity, sub-iectum and ob-iectum, expansion and contraction, etc. For this reason, it is a fundamental and original momentum of the existence of the matter; therefore, it affects also the concept of space, as well as the concept of time, providing the ontological ground for the interplay of the forces of attraction and repulsion, and the subsequent yielding of space and time themselves, as I have already shown. In this sense, Schelling claims, “Space is nothing else than the undetermined sphere of my mental activity, and time gives it limits. Time, on the other hand, is that which is in itself mere limits, and only acquires extension through my activity.”

This, according to Schelling, leads us directly to absolute experience. He argues that “since every object must be finite and determinable, it is self-evident that it can be neither

\[288\] Ibid.
limits without a sphere nor a sphere without limits. If it is an object of the understanding, then it is the repulsive force that provides it a sphere, and the attractive force that gives it limits. Both are therefore basic forces, that is, forces of matter which precede all experience and all experiential determinations, as necessary conditions of their possibility. Every object of the outer sense is as such necessarily matter, that is, a space limited by attractive and occupied by repulsive forces”. 289 Schelling’s line of argument is extremely clear in this case: since it is not possible to conceive of matter independently from the forces of attraction and repulsion and experience is determined by matter itself, then it follows that the basic forces of matter (which, again, precede and determine matter itself) cannot but precede experience also, that is, be its conditions of possibility.

To sum up, I have identified resistance as the grounding ontological process for the struggle of the forces, that is, the vital element and the moving force of matter that in turn is the inescapable condition in which experience can be given. In this sense, it will be easier to understand the ontological shifting that I defined in §1.1.2, namely the ascription of the question of Good and Evil to the field of ontology, rather than to that of morality. I have also argued that the struggle between Good and Evil has to be understood not as a moral dilemma but as an ontological process that consists in the emergence of the condition of possibility of absolute experience. At this point, then, we may legitimately draw an analogy between the argument in §1.1.2 and the one in the current sub-section, arguing that they pertain to the same aspect of Schelling’s ontology, that is, in the Philosophical Investigations Schelling in fact extends the argument about the basic forces of matter to speculation on Good and Evil, since they are also understood as ontological forces (das Gute and das Böse), rather than as moral principles.

Accordingly, we can argue that within Schelling’s philosophy (at least from the early phase to the publication of the Philosophical Investigations and the years immediately following) it is possible to find valid philosophical elements through which Schelling himself tries to set up a proper speculation about the nature of absolute experience (i.e., ab-soluta, as I have explained in §1.1). That is, in both Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism and Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature, Schelling clearly and unequivocally identifies those features according to which we can understand the conditions of the possibility of absolute experience, referring to the concept of resistance and to the nature of the struggle of the forces, which are the lifeblood of matter. Later, in the Freedom Essay, he applies these

289 Ibid.
arguments to the concepts of Good and Evil, providing an account according to which they also have to be understood as two ontological forces struggling between themselves, with the aim of obtaining supremacy over the real.

By doing so, Schelling manages to provide an all-embracing ontological account of the world, strongly characterised in an immanentist sense. Consequently, the contrast and struggle between the forces presents itself through different forms, which however are all expressions of the same process, namely the process of laying the ontological ground of life and experience. We have also seen how resistance is a fundamental motive force of the process itself, which binds it directly and indissolubly to the very core of absolute experience. In other words, absolute experience is made possible by the struggle of the forces, which in turn takes place only through resistance, that is, the vital core of matter. Therefore, just as with no struggle there is no life (which is a fundamental conception of Schelling’s Freedom Essay, as I have already explained in §1.1.3), so there can be no struggle without resistance; and not only that, but in this context we can see and understand resistance in its most essential and fundamental part, since it is the essence and lifeblood of the struggle, which is in turn that which makes life and experience possible.

Also in Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom Schelling argues that what is to be shown is “that everything real (nature, the world of things) has activity, life and freedom as its ground or […] that not only is I-hood [Ichheit] all, but also the reverse, that all is I-hood”,290 in order to integrate it with the idealist standpoint according to which only activity, life and freedom are truly real. I have already explained in the first section of this chapter how Schelling sees the relation between idealism and realism, so I will not return to that at this point. Rather, what I want to point out now is that the latter passage clearly shows, once more, that Schelling is aiming at grasping the ontological core of the world and of our experience in the world. Moreover, by doing so, Schelling also aims at criticising Fichte’s perspective, for the same reasons I explained in §1.1.1, namely because Schelling is still convinced that the Fichtean argument according to which being is only in relation to knowing relies on an arbitrary and conditioned conception of knowing, and therefore cannot be as such a stable foundation for a philosophical system.

In this sense, Schelling tries to go beyond Fichte’s idealism even when he speaks about resistance. That is, when Fichte argues that “wherever and whenever you see activity,
you necessarily see resistance as well; for otherwise you see no activity”; he exclusively ascribes resistance to the negative part, that is, to the mere opposition to the activity. However, we have already seen that the Schellingian account of resistance embraces the whole process and cannot be understood as a mere opposition, but rather has to be conceived of as that which makes the moving force of matter possible and allows the struggle of the principles to take place. In fact, it would not be possible for Schelling to conceive of absolute experience without looking beyond Fichte’s subjective idealism. As I have already stated, “absolute” means “free from any constraints” from singular beings; therefore absolute experience is to be conceived of as the very emerging moment of experience, before it becomes personal.

In conclusion, I want to go more into detail about the meaning of the concept of absolute experience. I have already stated that it is possible, following Schelling’s line of thought, to grasp the conditions of the possibility of experience as such, that is, those conditions that determine experience as ab-soluta. But how can we understand such a kind of experience, if it refers to that moment that precedes our own experiencing? As I have already said in §1.1.3, I am not arguing that the concept of absolute experience implies the sideling of the experiencer; rather, I am pointing out that, consistent with the aspects of Schelling’s philosophy I have analysed, it is legitimate to identify the concept of absolute experience with a qualitatively different and ontologically original moment of emergence of experience itself.

Looking back at Schelling’s understanding of temporality once more, it is also possible to relate absolute experience and kairological temporality. That is, the only possible way to understand absolute experience without turning it into an abstraction is to attribute it to the kairological dimension of temporality, since it also refers to that moment that precedes and grounds our empirical experience (i.e., chronological experience, which takes place over a chronological time line) in the same way that kaiology precedes and grounds chronology. In other words, the only way to conceive of experience as ab-soluta, as free from any constraint from singular beings and before its becoming personal, is to understand it as the kairological moment of experiencing itself, namely that moment above experience in (chronological) time that is necessary in order to make experience in (chronological) time possible.

Moreover, absolute experience can also be understood as that right and opportune moment (καιρός) whence experience itself originates, namely the originary momentum when the very ontological core of experience emerges, making experience itself possible. That is, providing the conditions of the possibility of experience means to grasp that originary moment in which experience occurs in its purest form, that is, when it is not yet singular and personal. However, as already said, this means neither that there is a radical separation between experience and experiencer, nor that experience as ab-soluta is chronologically antecedent to empirical experience. Rather, it just pertains to a different sphere of temporality, which in the previous section has been defined as the “timeless ground of temporality”, or that moment that is not reducible to the chronological flowing of time and that, precisely because of that, appears to us as always past.

Therefore, absolute experience is neither a transcendent nor a supernatural occurrence, but rather the immanent ground of empirical experience. Indeed, as I have already said in §1.2.1, absolute and empirical experience are possible only if they presuppose each other; they cannot be conceived of separately, but rather as mutually interrelated, in accordance with Schelling’s conception of the unity of the principles. Otherwise, we would just have an abstraction from real experience, on the one hand, and a mechanistic conception of experience itself, on the other; whereas not only can there be no empirical experience without absolute experience (and vice versa), but the very process of experiencing cannot but be conceived as their co-occurrence. Hence, it follows that absolute experience is a fundamental part of Schelling’s philosophy, since it allows us to understand how our experience in the world becomes possible without resulting in unfounded abstractions or a transcendentist philosophical account.

Additionally, I want to further emphasise the legitimacy of the conclusions I have drawn from Schelling’s thought. In this last sub-section I argued that the concept of resistance is of critical importance within Schelling’s philosophy (at least until 1809) and has not to be understood as a mere and passive opposition to something, but rather as the act of providing the ontological ground for the opposition of the principles, which in turn makes matter and life possible. Analogously, I have argued that absolute experience, namely an experience that is ab-soluta, free from any constraint from singular beings and before it becomes personal, is also a critical point for Schelling’s thought, since it refers not to an abstract and immaterial account of experience but rather to the original emergence of experience in the kairological dimension of temporality.
Finally, all of the above can also be considered a fully-fledged theory of absolute experience, given the significant role that the latter concept has in Schelling’s intellectual activity. Furthermore, the points I have made in this last sub-section have also some interesting and important implications about the discourse on freedom that I started in this chapter. However, I will discuss in detail these implications in the last chapter of this work, after having discussed and analysed the philosophy of Pareyson in the next chapter, with a special focus on his understanding of Evil and the Schellingian features of it.
Chapter 2

Luigi Pareyson’s Approach to the Question of Evil:
A Critique

“No one will truly deny that free Evil is better than imposed Good: imposed Good contains in itself its own negation, since the true Good is only that which is freely done, even though one could do Evil; while free Evil has in itself its own correction, that is freedom itself, from which one day free Good could arise”.¹ This sentence, I believe, can be regarded as one of the key passages to understanding Pareyson’s thought in general and his discourse on Evil in particular. That is, Pareyson’s view can be summarised as follows: without freedom, neither Good nor Evil are possible. We can immediately notice the affinity with Schelling’s claim according to which with no struggle there is no life (see §1.1.3); yet Pareyson’s position is aimed at a radicalisation of the role of freedom, in an attempt to overcome the idea of necessity, which is very present in Schelling’s thought.

In this respect, Pareyson believes that the endorsement of a dialectics of necessity leads to confusion between eternity and temporality, the infinite and the finite, transcendence and immanence, as I will explain in detail later. As noted by Bubbio, such a belief “should be evaluated in the Italian philosophical scene within which Pareyson had received his philosophical education, a scene that was heavily influenced by the neo-idealism of Giovanni Gentile […]. Italian neo-idealism, in fact, presents some distinctive characteristics (which extend to the other important figure of that movement, Benedetto Croce), is still concerned (like classical idealism) with the identity of the finite and the infinite, but it aims at reaching that identity positively, that is, by showing the presence of the infinite within the very structure of the finite, in its intrinsic and necessary rationality. [… Moreover, Gentile’s neo-

¹ OL, 467–68.
idealism] regards history as a ‘tendentially linear process’ aimed at the progressive achievement of immanence as the true dimension of Spirit’.²

Moreover, we must bear in mind that Pareyson directly experienced the horrors and injustices of the Italian fascist regime, of which Gentile’s neo-idealism was “the official philosophy” (at least for a certain amount of time). So, in his unquestionable rejection of fascism, Pareyson could not but also reject that philosophy which was officially endorsed by the regime. In order to do that, he firmly believed that the only possible way was to recover the idea of freedom in all its radicality. Moreover, it is unquestionable that Pareyson’s philosophical research was animated by a deep religious faith and a strong need for unshakeable moral values, leaving behind the dreary nihilism that belonged to the fascist and Nazi regimes. Besides political aspects, however, Pareyson also thinks that neo-idealism, leaving the issue of the nature of personhood unsolved, paved the way for existentialism, which was the only philosophy left to shoulder the entire burden of Western thought after the “crisis and dissolution of idealism”.³

Hence, in this chapter I will focus on Pareyson’s understanding of the question of Evil and freedom, which is strictly related to his reading of Schelling, Heidegger and Jaspers. In order to do that, I will mainly focus on the late phase of Pareyson’s philosophy, and particularly on his Ontology of Freedom (Ontologia della libertà, published posthumously in 1995), as I consider it as the most prominent and significant of Pareyson’s work about Evil. However, I will also provide a general overview of Pareyson’s philosophy, in order to better understand his late thought and to clarify his conceptual background in the best possible way.

2.1 Pareyson’s Existentialist Interpretation of Schelling

In this opening section, I will first provide a general overview of the philosophy of Pareyson, with a particular focus on the early and middle phase of his thought; this will lay the ground for properly understanding the late phase of his thought, where he tackles the question of Evil more directly. I will underline the historical importance and novelty of Pareyson’s speculation and, most importantly, I will highlight its theoretical contents in relation to their source of inspiration. I will maintain the upper case terms Good (Bene) and Evil (Male), as

² Paolo Diego Bubbio, “The ‘I’ Beyond the Subject/Object Opposition: Pareyson’s Conception of the Self between Hegel and Heidegger”, in Benso and Schroeder, Thinking the Inexhaustible, 142–43.
well as Being or Being itself (Essere), and the lower case being(s) (ente/enti), in the same senses I used them in the first chapter.

With good reason, Pareyson should be considered one of the fathers of 20th-century philosophical hermeneutics, as well as one of the main contributors to the development of existentialism and hermeneutics in Europe. Philosophy, as he understands it, needs to go beyond the old-fashioned rational metaphysics, which Pareyson sees as culminating in Hegel’s idealism and in Italian forms of neo-idealism; the latter in particular are regarded by Pareyson as merely abstract formalisms. Accordingly, as I will explain in detail, Pareyson believes that proper philosophical reflection cannot but be centred on concrete human existence, but without ever forgetting to give due weight to religious experience.

After a brief summary of the intellectual itinerary of the early Pareyson in its coherence and linearity (§2.1.1), I will analyse the influence exerted on him by Jaspers and Heidegger (§2.1.2), who can in fact be considered as Pareyson’s maîtres à penser. By so doing, I will reconnect to the last part of the previous chapter, where I explained and criticised both Jaspers’s and Heidegger’s readings of Schelling. Finally, I will focus on Pareyson’s reading of Schelling, which I consider as directly related to the influence that Jaspers and Heidegger had on the development of his thought (§2.1.3).

2.1.1 The Relevance and Originality of Pareyson’s Philosophy

In 1985, Pareyson wrote the “Introduction” to the fourth edition of Existence and Person (Esistenza e Persona), one of his most famous works. Being close to turning seventy, he felt the need to look back at his own philosophical activity and to draw some conclusions. In such an “Introduction”, Pareyson identifies three different phases of his philosophy, which are outlined by Francesco Tomatis as follows:4 “personalistic existentialism” or “ontological personalism” (early phase), “ontology of the inexhaustible” (middle phase) and “ontology of freedom” (late phase). Further, it is worth noting that Pareyson developed his hermeneutic view between the late 1940s and the early 1950s, forerunning the philosophies of Gadamer and Ricoeur: indeed, Gadamer’s Wahrheit und Methode was published in 1960, while the early works on hermeneutics by Ricoeur were published in the late 1950s.5 This clearly shows the importance of Pareyson for 20th-century philosophical hermeneutics, and possibly

---

4 See Francesco Tomatis, Pareyson: Vita, filosofia, bibliografia (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2003), 37–68.
5 Ibid., 47.
some influence he might have had on the other two fundamental thinkers of that current of thought.\textsuperscript{6} In this sub-section I will provide a brief summary of the first two phases of Pareyson’s thought, to pave the way for a deeper analysis of the late period of his philosophical activity in the next section of this chapter.

Pareyson presents the different phases of his thought in a degree of continuity, namely as three different moments of the analysis of the same fundamental issue: the (paradoxical) nature of existence. Pareyson aims at grasping existence in its very concreteness, namely as singular, finite and personal existence. In this sense, he defines existentialism as the dissolution of Hegelian metaphysical rationalism, borrowing from Kierkegaard and Jaspers the idea that “existence is not only \textit{ex-sistentia}, being outside, protrusion, emergence, but also \textit{in-sistentia}, being inside, presence, intimacy”.\textsuperscript{7} Accordingly, Pareyson claims that existentialism must be characterised by three fundamental features: “the revaluation of the singular, ontologicity, and the concept of situation”.\textsuperscript{8} This means that concrete existence is to be understood as the proper object of philosophy, and therefore that philosophy has to focus on the living person, rather than on any sort of metaphysical and idealistic abstraction.

This conception is the fundamental feature of Pareyson’s early philosophy, which begins with the 1940 book \textit{The Philosophy of Existence and Karl Jaspers} and culminates in the first edition of \textit{Existence and Person} in 1950.\textsuperscript{9} “To explain the advent of Existentialism”, Pareyson writes, “it is not sufficient to reduce it to the filiation, derivation or deformation of a philosophical movement, to the mere revival of an author, or to the mere rebellion against a trend or a theory. […] The most precise perspective and the most complete interpretation of Existentialism is therefore the one that places it amongst the liveliest inclinations of contemporary thought, and sees in it the most vigorous manifestation and the boldest expression of the \textit{personalistic exigency}, which seems to constitute the substratum of the most contemporary philosophical speculation”.\textsuperscript{10} Thus, existentialism must be personalistic, and this means that it cannot be built without taking into account and assuming as its proper ground the existence of the singular living person.

\textsuperscript{6} It is worth highlighting that, in his \textit{Wahrheit und Methode}, Gadamer cites Pareyson’s works on hermeneutics and aesthetics, acknowledging their relevance and innovativeness. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, \textit{Hermeneutik I: Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik} (Tübingen: Mohr, 1990), 66n110 and 124n219. See also Gadamer, \textit{Hermeneutik II: Wahrheit und Methode; Ergänzungen, Register} (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993), 433.

\textsuperscript{7} SE, 16.

\textsuperscript{8} SE, 14.

\textsuperscript{9} EIF, 37–38; SE, 12.

\textsuperscript{10} EIF, 37–38; SE, 12.
However, the person carries in herself a paradoxical (but essential) element, since she is the coincidence of self-relation and hetero-relation (i.e., relation to the other): in this sense, as already mentioned, existence is both ex-sistentia and in-sistentia. Therefore, as Bubbio highlights, “it is necessary to save not only the intimacy of the person, that is her ‘closure’, but also her continuable validity, that is her ‘opening’”.11 This means that existence is not to be intended as a closed system, that is, exclusively from an intimist point of view, since this would lead to a limited understanding of it. Conversely, a fundamental aspect of existence is the act of opening towards Being, that is, an opening towards transcendence and towards the “other-than-self” (altro-da-sé).

In this sense, Pareyson argues, the opening towards transcendence implies the possibility of religious experience, or, better, it is a religious experience as such, since it establishes a direct and concrete relation with the authentic (and therefore transcendent) Being. Put simply, once existentialism has been defined as a philosophy of the singular living person, and therefore a philosophy of the finite, the finite itself is conceived as a relation both with the self and with the other-than-self. However, the finite cannot be understood as pure negativity, since this would lead to nihilism; rather, it has to be grasped in its positive reality. As Pareyson himself claims, the finite is “insufficient but not negative, positive but not sufficient”;12 hence, although Being cannot be reduced to it, the finite still participates in the authenticity of Being itself through the opening towards transcendence. In other words, existence is the experience of the insufficiency of the finite – but also of the positivity of Being, transcendence and alterity.

What is the nature of this paradoxical coincidence of self- and hetero-relation in the human being? According to Pareyson, “on the one hand, Being is irrelative, namely unobjectifiable, and neither reducible nor resolvable in the relation, nor established as cause or external principle of the relation, yet it is present in the relation, since precisely because of its unobjectifiability it alone can build the relation that can be formed with it; on the other hand, human being is in relation with Being since human being is constitutively this relation itself: the human being does not have, but is relation with Being”.13 This argument, Pareyson believes, implies both the coincidence of self- and hetero-relation and the inseparability of existence and transcendence. The human being, indeed, is the ontological relation with that Being that transcends humankind itself; therefore “there is, between humankind and Being,

---

12 EP, 12.
13 Ibid., 14.

132
an original solidarity, an initial complicity, which manifests itself, on the one hand, in the constitutive ontologicity of humankind and, on the other hand, in the inseparability of existence and transcendence; in this lies the fundamental concept of the unobjectifiability of Being".14

Consequently, Pareyson theorises an ontological intentionality of the human being, which goes hand in hand with the irrelativity [irrelatività] and unobjectifiability [inoggettivabilità] of Being. That is, while “ontological intentionality” refers to that relational dimension in which the self calls into question something other-than-self, the irrelativity of Being means that it is to be understood as that which establishes the relation, but then withdraws itself from it. So, Being is unobjectifiable because it cannot be the object of the abovementioned relation, but only its subject, namely its foundation, which ceases to be the foundation since it withdraws itself from the relation. Being, Pareyson argues, is present in the relation because it establishes the relation itself, but it is also beyond the relation, from which its transcendence and unobjectifiability derive. Instead, the human being is essentially constituted by this relation with Being.

As Tomatis explains, Pareyson’s existentialism fundamentally aims at grasping the singular existence and positivity of the finite. It is in this sense that existentialism is personalistic, since the undeniable starting point not only of philosophy, but of life in general, is one’s concrete and finite existence, that is, one’s situation in the world here and now. In other words, the starting point of human thinking and acting is always situated in and limited by the finiteness of singular existence. However Pareyson’s personalism is also ontological, meaning that it has to contemplate the opening towards Being and transcendence, in order to grasp the positivity of existence and of “being-person”; otherwise, the finitude of singular existence would have a negative nature, resulting in a form of nihilism. Accordingly, “personalistic existentialism” and “ontological personalism” cannot be understood separately, but rather they are almost identified as one and the same by Pareyson himself, that is, as two inseparable philosophical occurrences that are necessary to fully understand the concreteness of existence.15

Pareyson clarifies that “the meaning of Existentialism consists precisely in the inquiry into the very strict relations (indeed, as strict as possible) between the singular on one side

14 Ibid., 15.
15 See Tomatis, Pareyson, 41.
and Being and situation on the other”. Hence, the concept of situation, that is “the relationship of the human being with the world as it limits or conditions, grounds and determines human possibilities as such”, becomes fundamental in order to understand the core of his existentialism. Put simply, Pareyson thinks that one’s situation coincides with one’s concrete and unique existence in the world, that is, with that which makes me be who I am and determines my singularity as a person. Therefore, “only in the essential relation between myself and the situation am I really myself: unique, incarnated, placed, singularised, concrete. Thus after all, incarnation is a relation I maintain with myself, a concrete and singularised self-identity: my own ipseity”.

The latter conception is strictly related to the middle phase of Pareyson’s philosophy; however, before moving to examine its aspects, it is appropriate to briefly recapitulate the key ideas of Pareyson’s early thought. I have already explained that his existentialism is grounded on three principles: first, the “revaluation of the singular”, that is, the idea that one cannot philosophise without giving a central role to the concrete and personal existence of the singular living being; second, “ontologicity”, which means that the human being, in its finiteness, is (rather than has) an essential relation with Being, which in turn transcends the human being’s finiteness; and third, “the concept of situation”, which recalls the very core of existentialism, that is, the fundamental importance of considering one’s concrete and particular existence as the inescapable condition to grasp the deepest essence of every single human being.

The cardinal principle of the middle phase of Pareyson’s philosophy, namely the “ontology of the inexhaustible”, whose peak is represented by his 1971 book *Truth and Interpretation (Verità e Interpretazione)*, is summarised by Bubbio as follows: “if reality is accessible only and always through personal existence, every human act or thought is an interpretation, a personal incarnation of Being which transcends the situation *hic et nunc*”. In this sense, “interpretation is not only a particular kind of knowledge but, more fundamentally, the constitutive feature of all human activity”; it follows that interpretation has an ontological value, that is, it represents an ontological relation between human beings and truth. However, Pareyson does not understand truth as the object of interpretation, but rather as its ontological source.

---

16 EIF, 42; SE, 16.
17 Bubbio, “Introduction” to EIF, 10.
18 EIF, 42; SE, 16.
20 Ibid.
Following the same reasoning of the unobjectifiability of Being, Pareyson claims that truth is not objectifiable either; rather, truth is inexhaustible, that is, it cannot be exhausted in interpretation. However, this means neither that interpretation can grasp truth only partially, nor that truth as a whole has to be conceived of in isolation from interpretation. Far from saying that truth is inexpressible, Pareyson argues that “interpretation is neither a part of truth nor a partial truth, but is the truth itself as personally possessed,” referring both to the abovementioned ontological features of interpretation and to its originary nature. Indeed, “every human relation […] always has an interpretative character. This would not occur if interpretation were not in itself originary: it qualifies that relation with Being in which the very being of humanity resides; in it, the primigenial solidarity of human beings with the truth is realised”.

Pareyson rejects negative ontology, that is, a theory of Being according to which Being itself is ineffable and therefore grasped in its coincidence with nothingness. Conversely, he theorises an ontology of the inexhaustible, which means that, although we cannot possess Being as the object of our knowledge, Being itself can still be said and grasped in its transcendence and irreducibility to finite beings. Moreover, an ontology of the inexhaustible cannot but be a hermeneutics of the inexhaustible, since, as already mentioned, to exist means to interpret, namely to singularly incarnate Being and to personally possess truth. This is why the originary relation with Being also implies the equally originary solidarity of human beings and truth.

The execution of a musical score is a clear example of these dynamics, Pareyson argues. Indeed, “the existence of the musical work consists in its living and sonorous performance, and not in the inert and mute pages of the score. The performance is always new and different, that is, multiple due to its necessarily personal and therefore interpretative character. But its multiplicity in no way prejudices the unicity of the musical work: In fact, the aim of the performance is to maintain the very individuality and unicity of the work without adding anything alien to it or dissolving it into ever different acts.” Similarly, truth can be possessed and spread only through a singular and personal interpretation, and existence can be understood only through the singular living person that experiences and interprets existence itself.

21 TI, 66; VI, 76.
22 TI, 47; VI, 53.
23 TI, 59–60; VI, 69.
Pareyson expresses this conception in a very powerful claim: “there is nothing but interpretation of truth and [...] there is no interpretation of anything but truth”.\(^{24}\) Once again, this means that “the originary ontological relation is necessarily hermeneutic and every interpretation necessarily has an ontological character”,\(^{25}\) that is, Being and truth, and ontology and hermeneutics, go hand in hand and never occur separately, so that ontology can only be hermeneutically understood, and hermeneutics can be founded only on ontology. Put simply, there can be no existence without interpretation, due both to the mutual implication of ontology and hermeneutics and to the originary solidarity of human beings with truth.

Accordingly, interpretation has to be intended neither as merely historical nor as purely metaphysical. That is, interpretation is not the mere expression of a historical truth, that is, a truth exclusively related to a particular historical moment; in that case, interpretation would be relative and truth itself would be relativistic. Interpretation is not a purely metaphysical occurrence either, since in that case it would coincide with ideology, which Pareyson understands as a falsification of interpretation itself, because it imposes the same truth for each time, each interpreter and each situation.\(^{26}\) Instead, interpretation is both historical, since it is always situated in space and time, and revelatory, as a new aspect of truth is always revealed in it. In Pareyson’s words, “interpretation is that form of knowledge that is at one and the same time and inseparably truth-bearing and historical, ontological and personal, revelatory and expressive”.\(^{27}\)

Every interpretation carries in itself both the finiteness of the interpreter’s situation in space and time, and the revelation of truth; that is, it implies both a personal formulation of truth and the constitutive openness towards Being and transcendence. In this sense, interpretation is the synthesis of receptivity and activity, since every human activity is not self-initiated, but at the same time every external stimulus provokes an active reaction in human beings.\(^{28}\) As Pareyson puts it, “human initiative does not come about by itself, but initiates its own movement only because it is initiated. In fact it is true that I must act and decide, but also that I cannot avoid deciding”.\(^{29}\) That is, if human acting were characterised only by activity, it would be limitless creativity; conversely, if it were characterised only by

---

\(^{24}\) EIF, 161; VI, 53.
\(^{25}\) TI, 47; VI, 53.
\(^{26}\) See Tomatis, Pareyson, 49.
\(^{27}\) TI, 47; VI, 53.
\(^{28}\) On this point, see Francesco Paolo Ciglia, Ermeneutica e libertà: L’itinerario filosofico di Luigi Pareyson (Rome: Bulzoni, 1995), 157–59.
\(^{29}\) EIF, 102; EST, 180.
receptivity, it would be sheer passivity with no freedom. That’s why, Pareyson argues, activity and receptivity are inseparable and must imply and constitute each other.

This conception also seems to bear some similarities with the abovementioned paradoxical coincidence of self- and hetero-relation in singular living beings, even if in this case Pareyson does not seem to explain the co-occurrence of receptivity and activity in a paradoxical way, but rather as a dialectical synthesis. Nonetheless, we are still dealing with the simultaneous manifestation of two opposite movements that contribute to the same process. That is, on the one hand, we have self- and hetero-relation as the two inescapable opposite moments that paradoxically constitute human existence; on the other hand, we have receptivity and activity as the two fundamental and opposed tendencies, whose synthesis leads to interpretation (and human activity in general).

“Not only, then, can receptivity have no other form than activity, but neither can activity be anything but the directed and desired outcome of receptivity: this is the indissoluble connection between receptivity and activity that characterizes all human action.”

Here Pareyson is arguing that interpretation is both interpretation of someone and interpretation of something; however, it is to be understood neither as an imposition of the object on the subject, nor as an overlapping of the subject with the object. More specifically, as Pareyson explains, “in one way interpretation is the object’s resonance in me: receptivity which extends into activity – a datum, which I receive and develop simultaneously; and in another way it is syntongization with the object – action which prepares to receive, making something speak in order to listen, activity in view of receptivity”.

Moreover, in the 1950 essay Art and Knowledge: Intuition and Interpretation (Arte e conoscenza: Intuizione e interpretazione), Pareyson argues that “interpreting is a certain form of knowledge in which, in one way, receptivity and activity are indivisible, and in another, the known is a form and the knower is a person”. The concept of form plays an essential role in the development of Pareyson’s theory. As Bubbio explains, “form is invention and production together. It is a doing which also invents its way of doing. This process (formativity) is not arbitrary”; that is, interpretation cannot be understood as a schematic method that always follows the same pattern, and the form is not just the final outcome of an interpretative process. Rather, the form is a continuous movement, that is, it constantly keeps

---

30 EIF, 104; EST, 181.
31 EIF, 106; EST, 183.
33 Bubbio, “Introduction” to EIF, 14.
forming; and interpretation is also configured as a continuous process of knowing, rather than static knowledge. “This process”, Bubbio writes, “generates multiple interpretations of truth, but truth remains inexhaustible. Being reveals itself through forms, and forms can be grasped from many points of view. Interpretation is a process in which the more the subject expresses herself, the more the form reveals itself”.

The distinctive and most peculiar feature of Pareyson’s notion of form, as elucidated by Ciglia, is that it encompasses a virtually infinite variety of accessible perspectives and dimensions. Consequently, interpretation results in a sort of “infinite intertwining” of the infinite possible points of view of a person and the infinite dimensions and perspectives that a form provides to its interpreters. This is why interpretation is a way of knowing that is neither unique nor definitive, but manifold and infinite; once again, truth, despite being personally possessed as a whole in every single interpretation, still maintains its inexhaustibility. In this way, Pareyson intends to reject relativism and endorse pluralism, so that he can maintain both the transcendence and inexhaustibility of truth, and the possibility of personally grasping truth through interpretation.

Concluding on this point, Robert Valgenti highlights that Pareyson’s aesthetics “reveals a movement in thinking that is constitutive of the very being of the human, one that is marked by the risk and responsibility of interpretation”. That is, Pareyson’s speculation aims at grasping the common ground of all human experience, namely formativity (in the sense specified above); in other words, Valgenti argues that Pareyson’s aesthetics reveals the ontological core of human activity. In fact, he explains, “to say that all experience, and therefore all human activity has an aesthetic character to it means that all human activity is, at its root, formative, and therefore open to infinite interpretative possibilities while still bound to the finitude of individual commitment”.

Furthermore, the “risk and responsibility of interpretation” is another crucial element of Pareyson’s account; borrowing Bubbio’s words again, “interpretation always runs the risk of misunderstanding, and the interpreter, who is the only possible perspective on truth, is involved in this risk”. Due to the risky, somewhat dangerous nature of interpretation, human beings have to bear the responsibility that comes with interpretation itself, which

34 Ibid., 15.
35 Ciglia, Ermeneutica e libertà, 153.
36 Robert T. Valgenti, “Translator’s introduction” to TI, xxvi.
37 Ibid., xxvii.
38 Bubbio, “Introduction” to EIF, 18.
therefore requires not only courage and commitment, but also fidelity – which in turn implies doubt and angst. Indeed, considering both the ontological relation between humankind and Being and truth, as well as the originary ontological opening represented by interpretation, interpretation itself cannot but be characterised by responsibility and fidelity to Being.

The latter conception has a clear ethical intent, since “interpretation is a free act as the human being can either freely accept fidelity to Being or break that bond”. In this regard, we can see how Pareyson’s aesthetics is very relevant both for his theory of interpretation and for the transition to his late phase, that is, the ontology of freedom. As shown by Tomatis, Pareyson’s aesthetics, by theorising the indissolubility of singular and universal, and truth and interpretation, opens up to the exigency of a deeper ontological investigation on freedom, that is, to the last phase of Pareyson’s philosophy. Therefore, the “ontology of the inexhaustible” aims at reinforcing both the idea according to which Being and truth, in their transcendence, are unfathomable, and the very hermeneutical nature of our relation with Being and truth themselves. Put simply, despite the transcendence and inexhaustibility of Being and truth, we can still relate to them (or better: we are the relation with them) and grasp them in their totality, by virtue of that ontological and formative process that we call interpretation.

At this point, we can clearly see how the three phases of Pareyson’s intellectual activity are strictly interrelated with each other and inspired by the same speculative needs/demands. However, as already mentioned, I will fully engage with the late phase of Pareyson’s philosophy in the second section of this chapter; now I will briefly mention some of its essential points, in order to make the next sub-sections more understandable. First of all, it needs to be said that Pareyson’s late phase is essentially a reflection on Evil and freedom, developed in continuity with the first two phases of his thought and integrated with a close reading of Heidegger and Schelling. In this sense, as we shall see later, Pareyson’s reflection on Evil is drawn on Schelling’s philosophy, reinterpreting it in a hermeneutic and existentialist fashion and addressing the issue in a very original way.

Pareyson considers the hermeneutic relation with Being as a free one, meaning that it originates from freedom; that is, since it implies fidelity to Being, it cannot be but the result of a free choice, because a genuine fidelity can only be freely embraced, and thus it cannot be imposed. Similarly, Being is originally free, since it chooses to be through a free act of self-

39 Ibid., 20.
40 See Tomatis, Pareyson, 49.
affirmation. In this sense, Pareyson maintains, Being has its own will, which makes it a person, namely God: however, Pareyson is not referring to “the God of the philosophers”, that is, the rational outcome of a purely intellectual speculation; instead, he means the God of religious experience, that is, a personal and concrete God who embodies the abyss of freedom, rather than coincide with the necessary Being. Therefore, being the source of freedom conceived of in absolute terms, God is that original positivity from which everything springs, including Good and Evil. However, Evil subsists only as the originally rejected option, which cannot be actualised by God: as Pareyson claims, “God is not Good, but the chosen Good, […] namely the victory over Evil”.41

In conclusion, it must be added that Pareyson’s discourse on Good and Evil is structurally analogous to the one on Being and truth. That is, Pareyson argues that a genuine theodicy cannot ignore the reality of Evil, to which he attributes a primordial and positive ontological core, rejecting any form of thought that aims to belittle or deny its effectiveness. Then, as Evil keeps subsisting as a constant threat for every single human being, an endless struggle between Good and Evil, which deeply characterises the concreteness of human existence, takes place. Once again, Pareyson’s hermeneutic and existentialist turn aims at re-evaluating the concreteness of human life intended as an actual situation taking place here and now. That is, this kind of situation can be understood only hermeneutically: in other words, not only does Pareyson consider Evil as a persistent ontological threat (in its concrete occurrence), but he also indissolubly and hermeneutically relates it to the material situation of actual human existence. This means that Good and Evil are not objectifiable, because every single experience is hermeneutically different from all the others and has to be considered in its peculiarity and singularity.

To sum up, in this sub-section I have provided an overview of Pareyson’s philosophy, relying on the division outlined by Pareyson himself and reiterated by Tomatis. According to this division, Pareyson’s philosophy passes through three different phases, without breaking the internal coherence of his intellectual activity: ontological personalism, ontology of the inexhaustible and ontology of freedom. The first one is the revaluation of the singular living person, intended as the ontological relation with Being; the core of the second phase is the idea according to which the relation between humankind and Being can be known only through interpretation, which in turn has a fundamental ontological value; finally, the last phase is characterised by the ontological analysis of Evil and freedom, intended as positive

41 OL, 178.
ontological occurrences. On these grounds, I will now move to the next sub-section, where I will focus on Pareyson’s reading of Jaspers and Heidegger, which in turn will be useful to understand his reading of Schelling.

2.1.2 The Influence of Jaspers and Heidegger

Pareyson’s philosophy is deeply influenced by several thinkers: indeed, he draws inspiration not only from philosophers of the past, such as Kierkegaard, Fichte and Schelling, but he also works side by side with some of the most prominent philosophers of his time, such as Jaspers, Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur, Marcel, and Barth. However, in this sub-section I will exclusively focus on his reading of Jaspers and Heidegger, since I believe this reading is crucial to understand Pareyson’s interpretation of Schelling, and therefore for the purpose of my dissertation. On the one hand, the philosophical beginnings of Pareyson are characterised by a critical engagement with Jaspers’s philosophy, from which Pareyson deduces some of the central points of his whole philosophical speculation; on the other hand, Heidegger is a crucial figure for Pareyson, especially (but not only) in the late phase of his thought, when he focuses more deeply on the question of Evil and freedom.

As already mentioned, Pareyson engaged with the study of Jaspers’s philosophy from his years as a student: indeed, Jaspers’s thought is the subject of his graduate thesis, which was published in 1939 with the title *The Philosophy of Existence and Karl Jaspers*, becoming the first book that introduced Jaspers in the Italian philosophical world. In his analysis, Pareyson moves from the conviction that the only way to do philosophy is to focus on human existence, namely to do existential philosophy. Moreover, he believes that Hegelian neo-idealism is mistaken in arguing that everything can be reduced to rationality, since the irrational features of reality (such as faith, divinity or transcendence) cannot be reduced to the categories of reason. This shows that Pareyson is aiming at critically analysing Jaspers’s philosophy, which means that he wants both to elucidate Jaspers’s thought and to stress its weak points in order to develop his own philosophy.

First, by arguing that the only proper philosophy is the philosophy of existence, Pareyson intends to shift the focus of philosophy itself to the concrete and living person.

---

Accordingly, Pareyson particularly appreciates Jaspers’s idea according to which it is not possible to give a rigid definition of existence, since this would presuppose the objectivity of both reality and existence. Conversely, existence has to be understood as a relation both with itself and with its transcendence, namely as that which is both closed to itself and opened to the other-than-self, in-sistentia and ex-sistentia.\(^{44}\) It follows, then, that objectivity alone is not sufficient to grasp reality and existence, since for Jaspers existence is reducible neither to objectivity nor to subjectivity; on the contrary, “existence is the inseparability of the intentional relation to the other and self-relation”.\(^{45}\) With this definition, Pareyson intends to stress that, in Jaspers’s philosophy, it is not possible to consider the self without considering the other-than-self, and that therefore existence cannot be understood as a mere conceptual objectification of a living process, but as the living process itself.

This critique of objectivity, Pareyson argues, has to be intended as the statement of the impossibility of the activity of philosophising without including oneself in the activity itself,\(^{46}\) referring both to Jaspers and to Heidegger. Furthermore, in his preparatory notes on Jaspers, Pareyson writes that “in the question of Being I question myself. Dealing with Being, I deal with myself, since I am. Then I find myself being at the same time object and subject of philosophising”.\(^{47}\) In other words, the activity of philosophising essentially means dealing with the fundamental question “Why is there Being rather than nothingness?”; hence, in such activity there is always an element that cannot be objectified, that exceeds a merely rational understanding and calls transcendence into question. So, Pareyson remarks that Jaspers’s account also rejects the absolutisation of intellect (in the idealist sense) as well as the reduction of existence to dasein, that is, to mere “being-there”, on the basis of that personalistic exigency that places the singular living person at the very heart of philosophy.

The absolutisation of objectivity, that is, the idea according to which the whole of reality can be grasped objectively and fixed in the categories of the intellect, fails to fulfil its task, since it cannot leave aside the irreducibility of human existence to mere rational speculation. Objectivity, then, cannot be absolutised, but has to be conceived of as an insufficient and limited perspective that needs to be transcended. Jaspers, Pareyson argues, understands objectivity as dasein, as being-there, that is, as spatial and temporal presence; more specifically, Jaspers defines dasein as concrete and empirical, since it is given as an

\(^{44}\) On this, cf. KJ, 44.
\(^{45}\) Ibid., 55.
\(^{46}\) Ibid., 57.
\(^{47}\) Luigi Pareyson, Notes on Jaspers (1937–40), XI.2.4, n. 630, Archivio Luigi Pareyson, Centro Studi Filosofico-religiosi “Luigi Pareyson”.

142
object in space and time; consequently, “everything can be presented as dasein, including existence and transcendence […]. Dasein is everything that presents itself forward (objectum, Gegen-stand), that is object or objectified”. In other terms, it cannot be a mere empirical manifestation, but has to include in itself the transcendent occurrence of existence.

Our orientation in the world, Pareyson explains, is twofold, since it can be based both on absolutised objectivity and on intimate objectivity, that is, both on empirical existence and on transcendence. This “twofoldness”, namely the paradoxical coincidence of self- and hetero-relation, leads to a mutual implication of absolutisation and intimacy, of existence and transcendence, of the self and the other-than-self. Hence, it follows that “as dasein I am undoubtedly tied to the world, but as person and self-identity I obtain my possibilities from transcendence”, meaning that “as dasein I am subject to fixed and rigid causal laws, but as self-identity I freely decide about myself”. Put simply, this means that while my concrete situation is affected by material conditions, my freedom has its roots in transcendence.

Consequently, “the absolutisation of dasein is inevitably destined to setback and ‘wrecking’, so that this same absolutisation becomes a limit that implies [the act of] transcending, and is, precisely for this reason, the possible manifestation of existence. The wrecking of the absolutisation of dasein is the leap of existence that affirms itself”. More specifically, the leap neither presupposes nor is the consequence of the wrecking, but rather “it implies the wrecking, is the wrecking itself. This is not about contiguity, but about coincidence, and about coincidence that is implication”. That is, the negative element (the wrecking) has to imply in itself the positive one (the leap), in order to avoid nihilism and grasp the transcendent nature of existence. In this sense, the wrecking of the absolutisation of objectivity means the failure of the attempt at reducing existence to a mere object of rational speculation; therefore the leap towards transcendence becomes the essential act through which the objectification of existence can be avoided and transcendence can be grasped.

Despite his praise, Pareyson still sees in Jaspers’s account a residue of Hegelianism, which lies in the abovementioned reciprocal implication of negative and positive. Indeed, Pareyson believes that such an implied dialectic results in denying personalistic need, which he believes should be the focal point of philosophy. By so doing, he adds, despite moving

---

48 KJ, 62.
49 Pareyson, Notes on Jaspers (1937–40), XI.2.4, n. 630, Archivio Luigi Pareyson, Centro Studi Filosofico-religiosi “Luigi Pareyson”.
50 KJ, 61.
51 Ibid., 65.
from a personalistic perspective, Jaspers’s existentialism eventually comes to the conclusion that concreteness and necessity have to be identified, from which it follows that freedom, possibility, moral duty and will are reduced to mere being.\textsuperscript{52} Pareyson’s main criticism, then, concerns the identification of freedom with necessity, and of the I with the situation; that is, Pareyson claims that by identifying the I with the situation, freedom disappears, together with the uniqueness of the person. Conversely, the I always exceeds and transcends the situation, that is, the I cannot be reduced to a mere occurrence taking place here and now, but has its roots in transcendence and freedom, grounding the uniqueness of the person.

For Jaspers “the intimacy of existence must be concrete”, as Pareyson explains, but “the implication of negative and positive sets up this concreteness as necessity (cannot but [\textit{non poter non}]) that excludes contingency (may not [\textit{poter non}])”.\textsuperscript{53} While it is true that freedom is exercised within a concrete situation, it is also true that freedom cannot invalidate the range of possibilities. This means that the source of freedom is not the necessity of the “cannot but” (\textit{Müssen}), but the contingency of the “may not” (\textit{Sollen}). Indeed, Pareyson argues, if we conceive freedom as \textit{Müssen}, as “I cannot but”, then we will come to the contradictory conclusion according to which my freedom is necessitated by something else. Contrariwise, if we understand it as \textit{Sollen}, that is, as a contingent initiative arising from the insufficiency of existence, from the wrecking of absolutisation and the leap into transcendence, then we are able to grasp freedom in its purity.

Therefore, rather than accepting Jaspers’s implication of positive and negative, Pareyson theorises “an effective duality between the point of departure, that is, the insufficiency of existence, and the point of arrival, that is, the positive aim”.\textsuperscript{54} In this sense, Pareyson intends to reject the idea of implication in favour of the idea of exigency, “namely the nexus duty–aim in which the purity of free initiative consists. The insufficiency of existence does not imply, but requires the free exercise of the will: indeed, the bond to duty is the ‘may not’, that, with contingency, breaks the tautology of reiterated necessity”.\textsuperscript{55} Put simply, Pareyson agrees with Jaspers’s argument according to which in order to be, I have to freely will; however, Pareyson believes that the “have to” does not correspond to the strict implication of the \textit{Müssen} (must), but to the moral exigency and demand of the \textit{Sollen} (should).

\textsuperscript{52} See KJ, 116.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 117.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 119.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
This distinction clearly presupposes a dualism between human actions and their aim, that is, between that which is and that which ought to be. This also means that the aim of an action is not in the action itself but has to be found in something external to or beyond it – in a word: transcendence. Hence, the exigency of the *Sollen* is characterised by our contingent and free initiative and does not automatically imply the reaching of any moral goal; conversely, the moral goal has to be reached through a proper exercise of our free will in the sea of contingency and possibilities. That is, an improper use of free will may result in neglecting the exigency and in the misuse of our free initiative. What is certain, according to Pareyson, is that free initiative has to be understood as the inescapable evidence of the purity and concreteness of freedom; otherwise, freedom itself would be reduced to mere fate and necessitation and therefore negated. The latter is precisely the main point of Pareyson’s criticism of Jaspers; moreover, as we shall see later in this chapter, Pareyson reiterates the same refusal of the identification of negative and positive even in his reading of Schelling.

Concluding on this point, Pareyson claims that the philosophy of Jaspers is ultimately anti-personalistic, since “in Jaspers’s theory all personalistic exigencies are dissipated in the absence of judgement, criteria, value, or measure; therefore it is impossible to ground the absoluteness of the person”. In other words, Pareyson thinks that Jaspers is unable to hold firm to an existential and personalistic conception of philosophy, because he does not see that identifying the I with the situation, the negative with the positive, and freedom with necessity is equivalent to negating every personalistic ground of philosophy, to reducing freedom to fate, and to losing sight of the transcendent core of existence.

The fundamental question of philosophy, namely “Why is there Being rather than nothingness?”, animates the philosophy of Heidegger too and, as I will show later in this chapter, it is also the starting point from which Pareyson reads Jaspers, Heidegger and Schelling. But in order to understand the latter point, we need to shed some light on Pareyson’s understanding of Heidegger’s philosophy. Pareyson engages with Heidegger’s philosophy (as well as with Jasper’s) from his graduate years: indeed, in 1936–37 Pareyson spent two different periods of study in Germany, where he met both Jaspers (in Heidelberg) and Heidegger (in Freiburg). Needless to say, he took these opportunities to ask them for some clarifications about their respective philosophies, as well as to discuss with them his then-forthcoming dissertation. For this reason, not only does Pareyson’s book on Jaspers

---

56 Ibid., 131.
contain several references to Heidegger, but Pareyson also keeps considering him as a constant point of reference during his entire intellectual activity.

The young Pareyson argues that, for Heidegger, existence is the condition for temporalisation of *dasein*, and therefore it is not eternal, but coincides with temporality itself.58 “Existence”, Pareyson writes, “is the being of the *dasein*; it is in itself finiteness”,59 and in turn this finiteness is the proper condition of the human being and includes the implication of positive and negative. In other words, the mutual implication of positive and negative comes under the finiteness of *dasein*, that is, the concrete situation of the human being; the human being is always thrown into a situation that is finite and negative, but it is precisely within this negativity that all human possibilities can open up. This means that negativity and finiteness become positivity and openness.60 However, Pareyson claims that such an understanding of existence and *dasein* leads to a limited understanding of temporality, since the latter is conceived of only within the finiteness of *dasein* and not in its transcendent and eternal nature.

Consequently, Heidegger’s structure of existence is, according to Pareyson, merely formal and abstractly atemporal, meaning that in the identification of existence and temporality, the very essence of time vanishes, leaving only a formal and limited conception of it and “an anodyne and neutral temporality”.61 According to such an understanding, time consists of the authentic present moment, in which there is both openness to the future and a bond with the past; however, this results in atemporality, because it does not take into account the transcendent feature of concrete existence but considers only the formal and abstract structure of *dasein*. Therefore, Pareyson believes that Heidegger’s account of temporality is unable to grasp the concreteness of existence, since it excludes its transcendent features and focuses only on the finiteness of *dasein*. Indeed, “Heidegger accentuates time and denies eternity: by so doing, he compromises that Kierkegaardian exigency that is not willing to sacrifice the invocation of eternity or the presence of the eternal”.62

Even in the middle phase of his thought, Pareyson does not hold back in his criticism of Heidegger; nevertheless, his criticism is not aimed at rejecting Heidegger’s philosophy, but rather at deeply meditating on it and at integrating it with an existentialist and

---

59 Ibid., 14.
61 KJ, 19.
62 Ibid., 20.
personalistic account. In the preface to his *Truth and Interpretation*, Pareyson argues that “one must avoid the blind alley in which he has trapped philosophy by proposing a solely negative ontology and by rejecting the totality of Western philosophy from Parmenides to Nietzsche. […] By confusing inexhaustibility with ineffability and regeneration with revolution, Heidegger returns involuntarily to the indifference of historical forms and to the univocity of the temporal process affirmed by the very historicism that he had so victoriously defeated”.63

Put differently, Pareyson aims at overcoming “the impasse of negative ontology into which [Heidegger] has unfortunately and hopelessly forced [his philosophy]”.64 That is, Pareyson is still convinced that Heidegger’s ontology and temporality cannot grasp the very core of Being, since they are exclusively focused on the immanence of *dasein*, in fact neglecting the transcendent source of *dasein* itself. However, as already mentioned, Pareyson’s final goal is not to confute Heidegger’s philosophy, but rather to subsume its most problematic knots within his own philosophical perspective, in order to go beyond negative ontology and avoid the risk of refusing transcendence and endorsing nihilism. It follows, then, that Pareyson constantly and continuously reflects on Heidegger’s thought, from his early philosophical work to his late work – as I will now explain.

Indeed, in his *Ontology of Freedom*, Pareyson states that his early reading of Heidegger, that is, the one he provides in his book *Karl Jaspers*, was too humanistic and “finitistic”, since for Heidegger “the transcendence of *dasein* was nothing but a transcending internal to mankind intended as self-sufficient, and mankind was characterised by its own pure temporality unaware of any eternity”.65 However, Pareyson himself admits that a more radically ontological reading of Heidegger is preferable to a humanistic one, because the focus of Heidegger’s philosophy is not the human being but Being itself. In this sense, such an understanding leads Pareyson to the conclusion that “the question of nothingness posed by Heidegger is strictly connected to that program of a philosophy of freedom that is the real goal of modern philosophy”.66

The latter statement is particularly important for two reasons: first, because the connection between freedom and nothingness is the key point to understand Pareyson’s discourse on freedom; second, because Pareyson sees a fundamental kinship between

---

63 TI, 5; VI, 9.
64 TI, 100; VI, 117.
65 OL, 441.
66 Ibid., 450.
Heidegger and Schelling here. Indeed, Pareyson claims that both Schelling and Heidegger build their arguments on the fundamental question “Why is there Being rather than nothingness?”\(^67\), in fact giving a critical contribution to the cause of the philosophy of freedom. Therefore, the question “Why is there Being rather than nothingness?” represents the contact point between Jaspers, Heidegger and Schelling, that is, the source to which Pareyson leads back the thoughts of the three philosophers.

I have already explained Pareyson’s argument about Jaspers’s account of the fundamental question of philosophy, and now I will focus on the relevance of the question itself for Pareyson’s reading of Heidegger, since it is an essential element to understand his reading of Schelling (which will be analysed in more detail in the next sub-section).

In Heidegger’s philosophy, Pareyson writes, “Being and nothingness are inseparable, or, better, truly interchangeable, not to say somehow identifiable, ontology always being accompanied by meontology, which is nothing but the other side of ontology”.\(^68\) Moreover, “freedom is not a faculty of the human being, but the human being is a possibility of freedom, and then the human being is nothing but a custodian (Verwalter) of freedom. There is a deep nexus between human freedom and human comprehension of Being: the problem of Being is deeply rooted in the one of freedom”.\(^69\) Accordingly, it follows that freedom has to be connected to nothingness in order for it to be fully grasped and understood; that is, if the problem of Being is rooted in freedom, and ontology and meontology (i.e., Being and nothingness) coexist and mutually imply each other, it is then clear, Pareyson believes, that freedom can be understood as a crucial philosophical question only if it is related to nothingness. Put simply, if freedom is related to Being, andBeing cannot be separated from nothingness, then freedom is also indissolubly related to nothingness.

However, Pareyson also attributes a certain ambiguity to Heidegger’s thought, arguing that it leads almost indistinctly both to Being and to nothingness and remains suspended between them without clarifying their very nexus.\(^70\) In Pareyson’s words, “Heidegger’s thought is a philosophy of ambiguity, where ambiguity is originary, but without thematising its principle, which in fact lies both in the reciprocal exchangeability of Being and nothingness […] and in [Heidegger’s] radicalism, which for fear of any absolutisation refuses to fix itself in one of the two terms. But it is a blocked radicalism, because it does not

\(^{67}\) Ibid.
\(^{68}\) Ibid., 451.
\(^{69}\) Ibid., 455.
\(^{70}\) See ibid., 452.
come to grasp the principle of ambiguity”,\textsuperscript{71} that is freedom. For this reason, Pareyson believes that the philosophical primacy of Being needs to be decidedly reaffirmed, in order to dispose of any indeterminateness and to give a solid and stable ground to philosophy of freedom.

Again, Pareyson’s criticism is not aimed at rejecting Heidegger’s philosophy, but rather at using it in order to reach his own philosophical goals. Similarly to the abovementioned irrelativity of Being, Pareyson argues that “freedom, which is in itself twofold and ambiguous, [...] is the only possible source of universal ambiguity, and at the same time comes towards the exigency of radicalism, because it is a grounding that denies itself as a grounding. I am inclined to believe that Heidegger could have greatly benefited [...] from a deepening of freedom, or rather from elevating it to originary freedom”.\textsuperscript{72} The very essence and origin of freedom, then, can neither be grasped nor be experienced by humankind, given the constitutive ambiguity of freedom itself. Therefore, originary freedom carries in itself both the source of Being and the possibility of its own annihilation, namely the possibility of nothingness.

In this sense, Pareyson argues that freedom should be situated “not in the deepest zone of the relationship mankind–Being, but in Being itself. [...] This would amount to conceiving of Being itself as freedom, that is, to giving up the centrality of Being and replacing Being with freedom itself”.\textsuperscript{73} That is, “freedom is start, pure onset, absolute beginning. It originates from itself: the beginning of freedom is freedom itself”.\textsuperscript{74} Accordingly, Pareyson claims that by developing the fundamental identification of Being and nothingness, which he finds in Heidegger’s thought, it is possible to relate freedom with nothingness, that is, with “that nothingness in which one needs to acknowledge Being when on the basis of the ontological difference one wants to differentiate it from beings”.\textsuperscript{75} Such an account, Pareyson believes, can easily avoid the misleading identification of freedom and necessity, which, as already mentioned above, results in denying the absoluteness and originarity of freedom itself.

In conclusion, Heidegger’s influence on Pareyson can be summarised as follows: Pareyson is very attentive to Heideger’s discourse on Being and freedom, and he particularly

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 454.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 457.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 458.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 457.
appreciates the strong nexus established by Heidegger between Freedom and nothingness. Nevertheless, Pareyson also finds a couple of weak points in Heidegger’s thought, which he points out not to reject it but rather to take account of it with a view to outlining an ontologically stronger conception of freedom. That is, Pareyson believes that the Heideggerian quasi-identification of Being and nothingness is intrinsically ambiguous and gives rise to philosophical indeterminateness; for this reason, he believes that we must preserve Heidegger’s understanding of freedom, namely to relate freedom to nothingness and not to necessity, but we must stress the original ontological nature of freedom itself in order to overwhelm meontology and not to give an ontological primacy to nothingness.

Finally, it is worth stressing once again that Pareyson reads both Jaspers and Heidegger (as well as Schelling) in relation to the fundamental question of philosophy, that is, “Why is there Being rather than nothingness?” In addition to what I have already said on this particular point, in the next sub-section I will underline the centrality of this fundamental question in Pareyson’s reading of Schelling, according to which the most effective way to grasp the philosophy of Schelling is to understand it through the awe (stupore) of reason in the presence of Being.

2.1.3 Pareyson’s Reading of Schelling

As already mentioned, Pareyson claims that the philosophies of Jaspers, Heidegger and Schelling are essentially an attempt at answering the fundamental question of philosophy, that is, “Why is there Being rather than nothingness?” However, contrary to his studies on Jaspers and Heidegger, Pareyson engages with Schelling only in the mature phase of his intellectual activity; more specifically, Pareyson’s most relevant writings on Schelling date back to the mid and late 1970s, but Schelling was also the subject of some of Pareyson’s university courses on moral and theoretical philosophy in the late 1960s. As also argued by Ciancio, Schelling does not represent a fully-fledged turning point in Pareyson’s thinking, but rather he is crucial and essential for Pareyson in the development of his own philosophical reflection.76

In Ontology of Freedom, Pareyson claims that, in the modern era, Schelling is the philosopher who has given more relevance to and focused more deeply on the

---

abovementioned fundamental question; even Heidegger’s formulation of (and answer to) this question is largely drawn on Schelling’s philosophy, Pareyson highlights. In addition, he argues that Schelling, in order to solve the dilemma of the relationship between Being and nothingness, emphasises the absolutising necessity of Being, which derives from the inner positivity of God, which in turn makes it impossible for nothingness to be. Put simply, the idea of God undermines the possibility of nothingness, so that “the possibility itself of nothingness is dispelled by the necessity of Being”. That is, Pareyson explains Schelling’s idea of God as the expression of the purest and highest positivity, which coincides with the necessity of Being and in turn categorically excludes the possibility of nothingness.

In Schelling’s account, Pareyson further clarifies, “the alternative to ‘nothingness’ is not ‘somethingness’, but ‘wholeness’, the unitotality [unitotalità] of Being, which as such makes nothingness impossible”. By the word “unitotality”, Pareyson means to stress the features of unity and univocity of Schelling’s conception of totality (namely the resolution of the finite into the infinite), and also to underline the monist nature of Schelling’s necessitarian understanding of Being (which I have explained in the previous chapter). Therefore, “the positivity of Being is the absolute negation of nothingness; nothingness is eternally impossible; the opposite of nothingness is wholeness, and wholeness is that which is impossible not to be, and nothingness is that which is impossible to be; Being is necessary, nothingness is nothing”.

Such a denial of nothingness is the direct consequence of Schelling’s identity philosophy, Pareyson believes. Being a philosophy of necessity, Schelling’s identity philosophy not only negates the possibility of nothingness, but also distrusts its thinkability. Accordingly, “the fundamental question is ultimately a rhetorical question, whose purpose is – if anything – to highlight the fullness and brightness [solarità] of Being”. It is no wonder, therefore, that something exists rather than nothing, or, better, it is no wonder that there is Being rather than nothingness. However, “it follows that those who marvel that something rather than nothing exists remain at an inferior level of knowledge”, since they do not grasp the fullness and wholeness of Being and the nature of God. That is, while God is “the indissoluble nexus of unity and multiplicity”, they see only “mere unity, with neither contrast

77 See OL, 376.
78 Ibid., 377.
79 Ibid., 378.
80 Ibid., 379.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
nor life” and therefore they keep marvelling because they miss the necessary inner structure of Being.

Moreover, Pareyson adds, God is not to be conceived of as the mere and inert unity of finite and infinite, because such a conception would lead to a mechanistic understanding of the world and to the inevitable denial of freedom. Accordingly, such a conception cannot grasp the radical feature of the fundamental question, since it does not grasp the abovementioned unitotality of Being. Conversely, by shifting to the level of the unitotality of Being, namely to that level in which one can see how, at the same time, the finite resolves itself into the infinite and the infinite concretely manifests itself in the finite, there emerges “a sense of wonder, or rather of fear and of sacred terror”. In this way, the fundamental question plays a different and more radical role in Schelling’s thought, as Pareyson argues, since it grasps “both the whole in the one [uno] as life-flow and the one in the whole as the pure existing being [puro esistente]”.

Consequently, looking at the fundamental question from a different angle leads to a different understanding of nothingness: “we need nothingness not to be so easily dissolved before the brightness [solarità] of Being, […] we need wonder and awe to be accompanied by dark and painful aspects, […] we need to face, on the one hand, the harsh and steep bareness of Being, and on the other hand, the dark and anguished side of reality”. According to Pareyson’s interpretation, this means dealing with the living bond that connects finite and infinite, God and singular beings, Being and nothingness; therefore, we do not marvel because something rather than nothingness exists, but instead we marvel and experience awe because of the “dizziness” caused by the act of looking at the very heart of Being from the greatest heights that the human intellect can reach.

Such a dizziness, and the accompanying awe, is a sort of ecstasy, that is, a “being out of oneself”, that occurs in the presence of the abovementioned “pure existing being”. This assumes a key role in Pareyson’s reading of Schelling, so it will be good to have a closer look at this fundamental conception and to give a more precise explanation of it. In some of his personal notes on Schelling (which date back to 1978–79 and have been included in Ontology of Freedom), Pareyson writes that “the pure existing being is the absolute prius, against which everything else, namely concepts, essence, possibility and potency is nothing but

---

83 Ibid.
84 Ibid., 382.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
in other words, Pareyson defines the pure existing being as that which is not the essence of any existence and is not preceded by any possibility or any potency, but rather is that bare reality that comes before every essence, potency and possibility. Borrowing Ciancio’s words, “reality intended as pure existence can indeed be thought as irreducible to possibility and necessity”.88

“The pure existing being is such not only because it does not have before itself any concept, any essence, any possibility, but also because it itself precedes every possibility, every essence, every concept.”89 Since it is not preceded by anything, pure existing being has no past, but is itself the past, that is, the absolute past and the antecedent of everything that exists. Such an account recalls what I earlier stated about Schelling’s discourse on temporality in §1.2.1, and more precisely it refers to its kairiological dimension. However, here Pareyson’s intention is likely to further emphasise the transcendent nature of Being: indeed, by preceding every possibility, every essence and every potency, the pure existing being in fact transcends them, so it is beyond every human experience and is not reducible to it. It is also in this sense that Pareyson speaks about the inexhaustibility of Being, which can only be known and possessed as irreducible to and perennially exceeding finite beings.

From Schelling, Pareyson also draws the conclusion that reality is neither necessity nor possibility, but freedom. As Pareyson points out in the abovementioned “Introduction” to Existence and Person, reality is ungrounded, that is, it has no foundation, since it is incorrect to argue both that it is the realisation of a possibility and that it is the actualisation of a necessity. Indeed, “of reality which is sole reality, not promoted by possibility nor reclaimed by necessity, nay anterior to the former and free from the latter, […] only one thing can be said: that it is because it is; which is nothing but another formulation of its ungroundedness, since it is not because, given that it could not be, it supposes a ground, nor because, given that it could not but be, gives itself a ground, but because, in fact, it is ungrounded”.90 Hence, reality is gratuitous and dependent exclusively on freedom, which leaves it suspended over an abyss, rather than resting on stable ground.

Being suspended over the abyss of freedom means both that the abyss itself has to be understood as the origin of reality (rather than as nothingness), and that God is pure

87 Luigi Pareyson, Schellingian Meditation: Notes on Awe, XI.2.6.2 (1978-79), n. 686, Archivio Luigi Pareyson, Centro Studi Filosofico-religiosi “Luigi Pareyson”.
89 Pareyson, Schellingian Meditation: Notes on Awe, XI.2.6.2 (1978-79), n. 686, Archivio Luigi Pareyson, Centro Studi Filosofico-religiosi “Luigi Pareyson”.
90 EP, 25.
positivity, or, better, the ontological priority of positivity over negativity. Following this line of reasoning, Pareyson also calls into question Schelling’s discourse on Good and Evil and develops his own interpretation of it, as I will show in detail later in this chapter. For now, it suffices to say that Pareyson associates Good and Evil respectively with God’s positivity and God’s negativity. Therefore, the ontological priority of the former over the latter corresponds to the priority of Good over Evil, but not to the definitive annihilation of Evil and negativity: if that were so, there would be no Evil at all. In other words, Evil and negativity keeps subsisting as eternally overcome by God’s will and freedom.

Freedom, in this sense, is characterised by Pareyson as freedom for Good and Evil, so the possibility of Evil is still latently present even in God Godself. That is, Pareyson claims that God is freedom and also that freedom is preceded only by freedom itself; accordingly, Evil is not only in the human being but also in God. In support of this statement, Pareyson argues that God freely created the world, that is, God was not forced to create anything and in fact could have not created anything and remained alone. The latter possibility, although unrealised and eternally defeated and overcome by God, consists precisely in the possibility of Evil in God. God, to wit, could have chosen egoism instead of the abovementioned gratuitousness; nevertheless God freely decided to reject Evil and nothingness in favour of Good and Being.

Pareyson also claims that Schelling provides a similar understanding of the relationship between reality and freedom, according to which reality presupposes freedom, but in turn freedom presupposes freedom, from which follows the abovementioned abyss of freedom itself. Furthermore, Pareyson attributes a certain melancholy to Schelling’s philosophy, which is, once again, strictly related to the fundamental question. Indeed, Schelling’s philosophy is melancholic “not because finite reality could fall back into nothingness […] but because one is rather than one is not”. Therefore, Pareyson seems to suggest that the fundamental nature of the question “Why is there Being rather than nothingness?” is due not to the rational speculation that it generates, but rather to the depth of the abyss that such a question reveals.

---

91 Luigi Pareyson, Notes on the Course on Schelling (1983), II.2, n. 62, Archivio Luigi Pareyson, Centro Studi Filosofico-religiosi “Luigi Pareyson”.
92 See Luigi Pareyson, Miscellaneous Notes (1984), IX, n. 267, Archivio Luigi Pareyson, Centro Studi Filosofico-religiosi “Luigi Pareyson”.
93 Ibid.
The essay The “Awe of Reason” in Schelling [Lo “stupore della ragione” in Schelling], first published in 1979, is a fundamental text for understanding Pareyson’s interpretation of the late philosophy of Schelling, since in it Pareyson focuses in detail on that which he considers the very core of Schelling’s philosophy, that is, the awe of reason, which in turn is related to the passage from negative to positive philosophy, to the abovementioned concept of “pure existing being” and to the fundamental question of philosophy. Put differently, Pareyson tries to exploit the concept of the awe of reason in order to provide a common thread for his reading of Schelling, that is, to use it as the main key to interpret Schelling’s philosophy in an existentialist manner. So now I will simply report Pareyson’s argument in support of his reading, while I will critically discuss it in the final section of this chapter.

Negative and positive philosophy, Pareyson argues, are in contrast with each other, since the former deals with “pure concepts”, remaining at a level of speculative abstraction, while the latter concerns concrete existence, at the level of reality and facing the pure existing being (as I have defined it above). In this sense, Pareyson continues, the transition from negative to positive philosophy is not automatic, meaning that negative philosophy does not necessarily need to resolve itself into the positive one. Conversely, this transition is “a fully-fledged turning point, which consists in a leap, because it is about starting back from the beginning moving from real existence, and in an overturning, because existing Being from which positive philosophy moves is the opposite of the idea of Being to which negative philosophy refers”.

In this sense, then, Pareyson argues that Schelling’s conception of reason includes an ecstatic feature, but not in a mystical sense; rather, Pareyson acknowledges that Schelling’s idea of reason needs to move further and be “out-of-itself” (ἐκ-στασίς, ek-stasis) in order to be able to grasp the pure existing being.

“Reason realizes that despite all its efforts it cannot reach reality by itself, because its movements are purely conceptual […]. Hence it is the reason itself that, […] once it has verified that existence is really existence only outside thinking, precisely for finding it, goes beyond its boundaries and out of itself.” Accordingly, the awe of reason is not due to the simple and obvious fact that there is Being instead of nothingness, but rather that reason finds existence, or, better, the pure existing being, as something other than reason itself, that is, as something that exceeds and takes place outside reason itself. Otherwise, if awe were just

---

94 SR, 511.
95 Ibid.
simple marvelling at the mere existence of Being, awe itself would still be limited to only negative philosophy; therefore, in order to be the moment of transition between the two philosophies, awe has to coincide with that revelatory act through which reason discovers the pure existing being as something other than reason itself. Only by so doing can the awe of reason be the unique moment of the transition from negative to positive philosophy.

The pure existing being manifests itself as incomprehensible, inaccessible and irreducible to anything else, and so reason cannot but become impotent, mute and subjugated in its presence. As Pareyson writes, reason is “stupefied in front of the incomprehensibility of the pure existing being, from which its impotence; amazed by the appearance of the pure existing being up to the point it becomes speechless, from which its mutism; enchanted by the transcendence of pure existing being before which it just has to kneel, from which its submission”. As already mentioned, the pure existing being exceeds rational speculation and conceptual schematisation, and consequently “it comes before every essence and possibility, and in general before every thinking. To grasp it as such we need to present it in its characteristic non-conceptuality, on the one hand not anticipated by any concept, and on the other hand prior to every concept, not preceded by anything and precisely for that preceding everything, independent from the idea and then exceeding the idea”. Consequently, facing the pure existing being means for reason to go out of itself, to exceed its capacity and therefore to be caught up by dizziness, confusion and awe.

The pure existing being, according to Pareyson, is also intransitive, undoubted and immemorable. It is intransitive since “it is not first possible and then real, but is immediately and solely real: it is already there, irrevocably existing”. So, the awe of reason occurs because reason itself is directly faced with the immediate and unavoidable existence of something that exceeds its categories of understanding. Moreover, the pure existing being is undoubted because it is not subject to possibility, but exists directly and unequivocally; hence, there can be no doubt about it since, as Pareyson argues, doubt would be justified only if we had two or more possibilities to choose from, but this is not the case. Finally, it is immemorable because, as already explained, the pure existing being is the “absolute prius”, that is, it precedes every other existing being and has no past, but rather is itself the past; this also recalls the kairological temporal dimension, which in turn makes it not reducible to thought and memory.

---

96 SR, 513–14.
97 Ibid., 514.
98 Ibid.
More specifically, Pareyson seems to refer to the same discourse on temporality that I have already outlined in §1.2.1; that is, Pareyson acknowledges that in Schelling’s philosophy there is a temporal dimension that occurs outside time as we understand it, namely outside chronological time. In other words, Pareyson thinks that the pure existing being pertains to a temporal dimension that is not preceded by anything and therefore precedes every existing being. However, rather than providing the inner and unconscious ground of our actions (like what I argued in §1.2.1), Pareyson aims at strongly emphasising the transcendence of the pure existing being, against which the finiteness of the human condition is indisputable and ineludible.

Concluding his analysis, Pareyson reaffirms that the awe of reason is the key concept to properly understand the transition between negative and positive philosophy, whose main goal consists “not in demonstrating that God exists, but in proving that that which exists is God”. In other words, “the two parts of the Schellingian demonstration of the existence of God are then the definition of the concept, which is up to the negative philosophy, and the denomination of the existing being, which is up to the positive philosophy”. In this context, the awe of reason serves as a fundamental nexus between negative and positive philosophy, a sort of “break in continuity” between the two philosophies. That is, it is both the act of division of the philosophical discourse into a negative and a positive moment and the only possible act through which the philosophical discourse itself can be conceived of as one. Put simply, the awe of reason occurs when reason acknowledges itself as insufficient and faces the transcendence of the pure existing being and of God, which goes beyond rational categories of understanding and against which human reason can only be stupefied and experience awe.

In the contemporary Anglophone world, Bruce Matthews’s understanding of Schelling’s philosophy is very similar to Pareyson’s, at least on this specific point. It is worth mentioning Matthews’s “Introduction” to Schelling’s The Grounding of Positive Philosophy, I believe, in order to show the fruitfulness of Pareyson’s interpretation of Schelling: indeed, although Matthews does not explicitly refer to Pareyson in his work on Schelling (and is very likely unaware of it), he in fact endorses a reading of Schelling that is very similar to the one provided by the Italian thinker. As we can read in his “Introduction”, Matthews writes that “according to Schelling, the experience of the groundlessness of being must give rise to an

99 Ibid., 519.
100 Ibid., 520.
ecstatic feeling of awe and wonder [...]. Refusing clear and certain ideas as both a beginning and an end of philosophy, Schelling constructs his philosophy around the central role of the ecstatic experience of wonder". 101

“Positive philosophy begins with the absolute magnitude of pure existence, unlimited by reason’s negating determinations”, which according to Matthews allows Schelling “to be able to tap into the sublime power of awe and wonder that, since Plato, has been the starting point of philosophy”. 102 Therefore, here the awe of reason comes from an abduction of reason itself, since it “is forced out of its static circuit of reflection to become ecstatic, and thus capable of further supporting philosophy in its ongoing efforts to develop the meaning of creation”, 103 which is nothing but another way to claim that reason can find the bareness of the pure existing being only out of itself, from which its awe follows, as I have already explained. Put simply, rational categories of understanding reality cannot grasp the core of existence (and then of philosophy); so these categories are left behind by reason itself in its being dragged and abducted by the immediacy and the “over-rationality” of existence. According to all that has been said in this chapter, there can be no doubt that Pareyson would embrace such a reading of Schelling’s philosophy.

Concluding on this point, Matthews also claims that Schelling, in an effort to overcome a merely negative conception of philosophy (i.e., abstract and solely rational), “resolves [...] the problem of providing an account of the transcendental ideal qua God as both the sum and ground of philosophy’s activities”. 104 Matthews calls it “the progressive method of positive philosophy”, which advocates “the integration of purpose and finality into the very structure of existence. The will, motivation, intent, and purpose would thereby become constitutive of the world and our existence: the ‘ought’ of practical reason would then share its telic force with that of theoretical reason”. 105 However, the core of such a philosophical method “can only be the power whose essence reveals itself in our freedom and our capacity for awe and wonder at the fact of creation and existence itself, a fact of existence whose inner meaning he seeks to demonstrate as the reality of the divinity of creation”. 106

Consequently, Schelling’s starting point cannot be the abstract rationality of negative philosophy, that is, that which Pareyson explains as the definition of the concepts (as we have

102 Ibid., 68.
103 Ibid., 68–69.
104 Ibid., 72.
105 Ibid., 73.
106 Ibid.
already seen), but rather he has to start from Being and existence, that is, from the abovementioned pure existing being. Borrowing Matthews’s words again, “beginning with the inverted idea of that which just is, the task of the progressive method of positive philosophy is to interpret the consequences of this groundless fact as they make themselves manifest in existence”.107 This latter point is analogous to the one made by Pareyson, according to which Schelling’s aim is not to demonstrate the existence of God, but to show that that which exists is God (as I have already explained). Hence, this explains, from a Pareysonian point of view, both the origin of the awe of reason and its key role in understanding Schelling’s philosophy: that is, the awe of reason is the only way in which reason can face the pure existing being and embrace the transcendence of existence and Being.

Going back to Pareyson’s reading of Schelling, in his last lecture at the University of Turin (held in 1988 and published in the final part of his Ontology of Freedom), he claims that Schelling, together with Heidegger, has the great merit of having developed a philosophy of freedom independent of any metaphysical rationalism and of any identification with morality. Indeed, Pareyson argues that there is a strong affinity between the philosophies of Schelling and Heidegger, from which it can be inferred that freedom can be properly understood “only if it is related not to necessity, as modern philosophy has unsuccessfully done, but to nothingness, which was so propitiously evoked by Heidegger”.108 In his turn, Heidegger draws his own understanding of freedom from Schelling, “who regarded ‘the question of despair’ as the fundamental question”;109 accordingly, Pareyson believes that both Schelling and Heidegger belong to existentialist philosophy, since they deal with “the obscure and disturbing aspects of existence. But it is necessary to free Schelling from any residual concern for the idea of necessity, and Heidegger from the thorny question of the relationship between nothingness, Being and beings; so that from Schelling comes the clear echo of freedom in all its purity, and from Heidegger the neat and genuine image of nothingness”.110

In support of this argument, Pareyson recalls the abovementioned discourse on the categories of modality, that is, possibility, necessity and reality. That is, Pareyson reaffirms the gratuitousness and groundlessness of reality, which are neither anticipated by the possible

---

107 Ibid.
108 EIF, 238; OL, 463–64.
109 EIF, 239; OL, 464.
110 EIF, 239; OL, 464–65.
nor determined by the necessary; then, such gratuitousness and groundlessness have ontological priority over the other two categories of modality, that is, sheer possibility and necessity. Therefore, reality is neither contingent nor predetermined, but exclusively dependent on freedom, which in turn “is not a foundation but an abyss, that is, a foundation which always denies itself as a foundation”\textsuperscript{111} (as repeatedly mentioned above). In this sense, reality presents itself in its duality: on the one hand, “in its gratuitousness, it appears as something extra: an authentic gift owed to an act of generosity, a pure surplus that becomes an object of admiration”,\textsuperscript{112} and on the other hand, “in its groundlessness, however, reality shows its dark aspect: life appears as a punishment, which provokes both sorrow for existing and regret for not existing: better not to be than to be”.\textsuperscript{113}

“In itself, then, reality simultaneously elicits [awe] and horror, anguish and wonder: its basic characteristic is ambiguity”,\textsuperscript{114} this ambiguity is directly related to the abyssal nature of freedom and to the following duality of freedom itself, which is “simultaneously positive and negative, anxious to affirm and strengthen itself and capable of denying and losing itself”.\textsuperscript{115} Such a duplicity, moreover, also determines the relationship between Being and nothingness, which Pareyson understands (as I have already said) as a mutual implication of the two terms, meaning that ontology always implies meontology and vice versa. Consequently, freedom too must be understood in relation to nothingness, since freedom carries in itself the possibility of its own annihilation; this discourse also applies to the question of Evil, as I will show later in this chapter. For now, it is important to stress both the connection that Pareyson establishes between Heidegger and Schelling, and the conclusion he draws from his reading of the two of them.

Pareyson fundamentally (and paradoxically) reads Schelling as a “post-Heideggerian thinker”, both in \textit{Truth and Interpretation}\textsuperscript{116} and in the last edition of \textit{Existence and Person}. More specifically, in the latter book, Pareyson claims that Schelling can be considered as a post-Heideggerian philosopher since “the interpretation of the late Schelling can be innovated starting from Heidegger precisely because Heidegger originated his thought from

\textsuperscript{111} EIF, 240; OL, 465.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{114} EIF, 241; OL, 466. Here I have replaced the term “astonishment” (used by the translator) with “awe”, since I think it fits better with the Italian \textit{stupore}, which Pareyson uses both in the abovementioned essay “Lo ’stupore della ragione’ in Schelling” and in his own philosophical reflection.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{116} See TI, 143; VI, 164.
Schelling”, and then Heidegger’s interpretation of Schelling results in actualising and in revitalising Schelling’s philosophy by laying the foundation for a different interpretation of his philosophy, free from the influence of Hegel. Hence, Schelling is both a post-Hegelian thinker, since he is the main instigator of the abovementioned dissolution of Hegel’s philosophical system, and a post-Heideggerian, since Heidegger’s (re)interpretation of his philosophy allows us to see Schelling himself in a different light and to associate him with the issues of existentialism. In other words, the prefix “post-” does not refer to chronology, but to the fact that Schelling’s philosophy can be understood both as a conceptual “overtaking” of Hegelianism and as the natural outcome of Heidegger’s thought.

It is in this light that we must read Pareyson’s appropriation of Schelling; first, it is important to underline that Pareyson highlights Schelling philosophy in the following maxim: “being affirmed more by Being than by consciousness”, which implies the “antiority of the human being to herself [and the] foundation of human temporality”. Once again, Pareyson intends to draw our attention to the transcendent nature of Being, which also characterises our singular existences; in other words, by saying that the human being is anterior to herself means to argue that our ontological structure precedes our consciousness of it, and not the opposite, and then that Being precedes and cannot be reduced to consciousness. Put simply, this is nothing but one more restatement of the transcendance of Being towards humankind and its inexhaustibility and irreducibility to human reason and consciousness. Accordingly, once again, reality cannot but have ontological priority over the other categories of modality, that is, necessity and possibility, otherwise Being would not transcend singular beings and would not be inexhaustible.

In conclusion, Pareyson claims that for Schelling (especially in his late phase) philosophy is not about thinking through the relationship between God and the world, but rather “the main issue is God’s freedom towards God’s being”, from which follows the conception of freedom as abyss. That is, as Pareyson himself writes in one of his latest personal notes in 1990, “creation reveals God’s pure freedom”, which means that God has to be thought of in terms of freedom and that “as the origin of Godself, [as that which] could have not been”. Accordingly, Schelling’s philosophy cannot be conceived of merely as

117 EP, 246.
118 Luigi Pareyson, Notes on Kierkegaard, Luther, St. Paul, Dostoevskij, Schelling, Fichte, Nietzsche, Dilthey, Castelli (1986), IX, n. 272, Archivio Luigi Pareyson, Centro Studi Filosofico-religiosi “Luigi Pareyson”.
119 Ibid.
120 Luigi Pareyson, Notes on Atheism, Existentialism, Schelling, Abyss, Freedom, Rebellion, Awe of Reason, Language, Thought as Adventure (1990), IX, n. 299, Archivio Luigi Pareyson, Centro Studi Filosofico-religiosi “Luigi Pareyson”.

161
“the second stage of the history of [German] idealism; [but rather as that philosophy that] prepares and dissolves [the philosophy of] Hegel”.121 This highlights once again how Pareyson understands Schelling at the same time as a post-Hegelian and a post-Heideggerian thinker, as I have explained above.

To sum up, I have shown how Pareyson interprets the philosophy of Schelling in continuity with his previous readings of Jaspers and Heidegger, namely in relation to the so-called fundamental question, “Why is there Being rather than nothingness?” Even though, in the first place, Schelling tried to solve this issue through the idea of the necessity of Being and the following identity philosophy, Pareyson believes that in his mature phase Schelling introduces into his philosophical system some new concepts that allow him (and us) to answer the abovementioned question differently and from a perspective that is closer to the philosophy of existence. Indeed, Pareyson highlights the relevance of that which I have called the “pure existing being” [puro esistente], that is the bareness of Being in its immediate existence and so that which precedes every necessity, every possibility and every existing thing. The impact with the pure existing being generates the awe of reason, which Pareyson interprets as the main reading key of Schelling’s philosophy, with particular reference to the passage from negative to positive philosophy. Finally, Pareyson repeatedly insists on the ontological priority of reality over necessity and possibility, which directly follows from the abovementioned elements of his reading of Schelling.

In this section I have first provided a general outline of Pareyson’s philosophy, and then moved to his reading of Jaspers and Heidegger, which I have considered as extremely important for two reasons: first, because both Jaspers and Heidegger significantly influence Pareyson’s philosophical activity; and secondly, because Jaspers and Heidegger are the “filter” through which Pareyson reads Schelling, being therefore the link from the previous chapter to the current one. In the next section I will focus more deeply on Pareyson’s conception of Evil and freedom, underlining its derivation from his reading of Schelling, before providing a critique of both Pareyson’s reading of Schelling and of his discourse on Evil and freedom.

121 Ibid.
2.2 Evil, Freedom and Transcendence

In this section, which I consider crucial for the development of my argument, I will focus on the fundamental concepts of Pareyson’s late philosophy, namely Evil, freedom and transcendence. In particular, the idea of transcendence is a constant presence in Pareyson’s reflection, from the early to the mature period, and therefore even his interpretation of the questions of Evil and freedom is to be considered within the theoretical frame set by his notion of transcendence. As I am going to explain in detail, not only Evil and freedom are inscribed in God’s transcendence, but they cannot be properly grasped and understood, according to Pareyson, independently of their deeply religious implications.

Moreover, the conceptual triad composed of Evil, freedom and transcendence is also the result of Pareyson’s attempt to move beyond Schelling’s philosophy in a hermeneutic and religious sense. As we have already seen, Pareyson maintains Schelling’s “ontological shift” on Evil, which is also strictly associated with the concepts of freedom and choice. Also, he aims at freeing Schelling’s idea of freedom from all the residues of necessity: as I will explain in detail here, the main reason for this speculative move is to grasp freedom in its transcendence and in its relation to nothingness.

I will begin by outlining Pareyson’s discourse on Evil (§2.2.1), which he himself defines as “temerarious”, since his aim is to ascribe the origin (but not the cause) of Evil to God, drawing on Schelling’s position. Then, I will move to the role of freedom in Pareyson’s speculation in its relation to necessity and transcendence (§2.2.2), before concluding this section with Pareyson’s understanding of myth (§2.2.3), which is both the natural outcome of his interpretation of Evil and freedom, and the final point reached by his philosophy.

2.2.1 “A Temerarious Discourse”: Pareyson’s Conception of Evil

One of the key issues in Pareyson’s late philosophical activity is Evil, which he reflects on largely in his *Ontology of Freedom* and in his personal notes from which that book partly derives. Although he draws his speculation from Schelling’s philosophy, Pareyson provides some innovative elements, as I will show in detail in this sub-section: that is, he maintains Schelling’s “ontological shifting” on Evil, but he also reinterprets such a shifting in a hermeneutic and religious sense, which means that Evil cannot be grasped independently of
religious experience and can only be realised through a personal interpretation of our freedom.

First, Pareyson moves from the belief that Western philosophy has not been able to do much to properly understand and answer the question concerning Evil; in the 1986 essay “Philosophy and the Problem of Evil” (later included in *Ontology of Freedom*), Pareyson underlines the insufficiency of philosophical solutions on the issue of Evil over the centuries, since they do not grasp the reality and effectiveness of Evil itself. In this sense, Pareyson adds, Kant’s theory of radical evil can be considered as the first successful criticism of theodicy and of any other account aimed either at reducing Evil to a lack of Good or at denying the reality of Evil itself. Schelling’s discourse on Evil is also very highly regarded by Pareyson, together with “authentic existentialism” (i.e., his personalistic existentialism, as I defined it in the previous section), since they point the way ahead and open up “enlightening perspectives” on the issue of Evil.\(^{122}\)

The most common mistake in philosophy, according to Pareyson, is to ascribe Evil exclusively to the ethical dimension, since such an approach cannot but result in a limited understanding of the issue. That is, Pareyson claims that Evil cannot be understood only in ethical terms, that is, as a moral and axiological disvalue, because by so doing the vital core of Evil would be disregarded. Therefore, in order to get to the root of the question, our understanding cannot be confined to the attempt to find a solution to a mere moral dilemma, but rather we have to consider the ontological extent of Evil. Put differently, Evil has to be understood not only through a mere rational and philosophical analysis, since “the issue of Evil has its roots in the dark depths of human nature and in the secret meander of the relationship between the human being and transcendence”.\(^{123}\) The question of Evil, Pareyson believes, is directly and deeply related to suffering, showing that it is not about “the realization of a virtue, but rather [about] the very negativity that inheres in the human condition”.\(^{124}\) Accordingly, “the very negativity” of Evil and suffering transcends rational comprehension, from which follows the insufficiency of philosophical speculation alone.

That being the case, Pareyson thinks that it is obviously not possible to encompass the very core of Evil within the rational and objectivising categories of philosophical analysis: indeed, that would yield a clamorous misunderstanding and denial of Evil, since its

\(^{122}\) See OL, 151–56.

\(^{123}\) Ibid., 152.

\(^{124}\) Ibid.
transcendent and ontological features are not graspable by mere objectivity. Therefore, reason needs to recognise its own limits, which in turn need to be overcome and transcended in order to grasp the abovementioned “pure negativity”; otherwise, as already said, an exclusively rational and philosophical approach would result in a theodicy, namely in a misleading account of Evil unable to acknowledge its effectiveness. Indeed, “objectivising thought would rationalise Evil looking either for its place in the universe or for its purpose in human life: it will see in [Evil] a simple deprivation of Being and a pure lack, or will make it a factor of progress and rather an efficacious contribution to the advancement of Good”.\textsuperscript{125}

Pareyson, then, argues that once reason recognises its limits and its inadequacy to have the final word about Evil, it has to retreat and leave room for a different kind of speculation, that is, religious experience. Indeed, only through religious experience does it become possible to fully grasp Evil in all its anguishing effectiveness. By shifting the core of the problem of Evil from rationality to religious experience, Pareyson means to stress, once again, the finiteness of human reason, rather than to embrace irrationalism or fideism. Put differently, Pareyson aims at developing an existentialist hermeneutics (in the terms in which I explained it in §2.1.1), which is characterised by “concepts but not objectivising, ideas and thoughts but existential, discourses and reasonings not demonstrative but rather interpretative, knowledge not achieved by the extension of demonstrations but acquired through direct experience”.\textsuperscript{126}

As I will show later, through this argument, Pareyson also intends to reinstate the philosophical value and the truth-value of myth, which he considers as revelatory and directly related to the original and transcendent dimension of truth. For now, it suffices to say that Pareyson considers it indispensable to resort to religion and myth in order to properly grasp Evil and God in their concrete nature and to avoid the pitfall of abstract metaphysics and rational theodicy. Accordingly, Pareyson builds his discourse on Evil on that which he calls “the God of religion”, rather than on “the God of the philosophers”: by the latter, he refers “to a God that is reduced to a mere metaphysical principle, or that, as existing reality, has to be somehow related to Being”;\textsuperscript{127} by the former, instead, he means the personified and living God of religious experience, the God to whom we can directly relate through faith and prayers. Put simply, the latter is an abstract conceptualisation of God, while the former is the

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 155.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 165.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 85.
concrete and living God, who carries in Godself the abyssal nature of freedom, as well as the burden of the vestige of Evil (even if as eternally overcome).

But what is Evil for Pareyson? As I have argued in §2.1.1, his discourse on Good and Evil draws largely on Schelling and has to be understood as structurally analogous to the discourse on Being and truth: that is, Pareyson asserts that existential hermeneutics is the only way to properly interpret and understand the ontological nature of Good and Evil, as it is for Being and truth. Moreover, as I have said above, this can be considered as the main innovation in comparison to Schelling’s philosophy: indeed, not only does Pareyson maintain Schelling’s standpoint according to which Good and Evil have to be understood as ontological forces, rather than moral principles, but he also gives (coherently with his existentialist positions) to such an ontological shifting a hermeneutic connotation, making it inseparable from personalism and religious experience.

As Pareyson himself explains, “Evil is not absence of Being, deprivation of Good, lack of reality, but is reality, and more precisely negative reality in its positivity. It results from a positive act of negation: […] from a negating force, that does not limit itself to a negative and privative act, but that, positively instituting a negativity, is a negating and destructive act”.\textsuperscript{128} This means that Evil is to be understood not as a decrease or a disappearance of Good, but rather as a deliberate act of ontological opposition to Good, that is, as “a real and positive negation [of Good] in the sense of a deliberate infraction and inobservance”.\textsuperscript{129} These words clearly show Pareyson’s rejection of any positive and rational theodicy, whose final aim is to deny the effectiveness of Evil and understand it as a mere lack or deprivation of Good without a proper ontological reality.

Evil, then, is an act of opposition and rebellion aimed at annihilating Good, Being and freedom, that is, it is negativity trying to overwhelm positivity. In other words, Evil is nothing but omni-destruction turning into self-destruction, since it is aimed at destroying the originary freedom but results in destroying only one’s individual freedom. As Pareyson puts it, “freedom is free also not to be free, and it is still through an act of freedom that it denies itself as freedom, becoming then potency of destruction, in the double sense of omni-destruction and self-destruction. From which the ambiguity of both freedom and Evil: on the one hand, that freedom that aims at destroying Being ends up in destroying itself instead […]

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., 167–68.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 168.
and on the other hand, freedom’s self-destruction is still an act of freedom, and then self-affirmation”.130

In fact, Evil is freedom unsuccessfully turning against itself, that is, it is that free and deliberate act through which we operate in opposition to originary freedom by denying our individual freedom. However, such an act of opposition, despite being ontologically rooted in our will, cannot but fail and reinstate the transcendent and ambiguous nature of freedom (which I have already defined in the previous section and which I will return to in the next sub-section). Accordingly, Evil cannot but miss its main target, namely the transcendent core of freedom, leaving unharmed the originary positivity; conversely, the only thing that Evil can actually do is to destroy individual freedom, the latter being the only target within its reach. Put simply, the will of omni-destruction perpetrated by Evil can only be frustrated and fall back on individual freedom, since Evil itself has been originally and incontrovertibly defeated by God and can only occur through humankind’s behaviour without affecting the originary positivity.

In this sense, Pareyson argues that “the reality of Evil and negating force presupposes the priority of the positive”,131 meaning that, in order to be characterised as a negating force, Evil needs a prior positive force to oppose and by which to be negated. Therefore, it can be deduced that, as already mentioned, originary positivity is equivalent to the primal and irreversible victory of the Good, which has left Evil subsisting as a mere latent counterpart with no possibility of full actualisation. Hence, Evil can actualise itself only through humankind’s actions, for which reason it appears as a constant threat to human will and conduct and keeps itself alive by opposing and negating originary positivity, despite the perennial impossibility of subverting the positivity itself and of taking its place as the ruling core of Being.

And conversely, “if on the one hand, real Evil [intended] as active negation supposes a prior positivity, on the other hand, positivity is not conceivable if not as the overcoming of negativity, as victory over negation”.132 Positivity and negativity, then, are deeply interrelated and mutually imply each other, in accordance with the inner structure of freedom, as Pareyson himself points out: “freedom is itself dialectic, because it is always both positive and negative, both positive choice in the presence of the possibility of the negative choice,

130 Ibid.
131 Ibid., 170.
132 Ibid., 173.
and negative choice in the presence of the possibility of the positive choice”. Consequently, Pareyson notes that the ontological interrelation between positivity and negativity cannot be grasped by a sterile and abstract dialectics of necessity, according to which the two terms are logically interdependent. Rather, he believes that through a dialectics of freedom it is possible to reach a better understanding of the vital core of reality, that is, a temporal succession of unpredictable acts and non-deducible facts.

Accordingly, Pareyson argues, the language of freedom is similar to the one of religious myth, so much so that “philosophical reflection cannot but assume the character of the hermeneutics of religious consciousness”. Indeed, an ontology of freedom and religious hermeneutics are interwoven in Pareyson’s discourse, which is aimed at disclosing the mutual relation of the opposites, such as Good and Evil, Being and nothingness, and positivity and negativity. In this respect, the originary positivity is the victory of Being over nothingness and of Good over Evil, but still it carries in itself a shadow of negativity, of nothingness and of Evil, even though it is eternally defeated. This is also why “at the core of reality there is contrast, conflict, contradiction. Ontology is not to be separated from meontology. Being and nothingness, Good and Evil, are always somehow associated and are inseparable”.

This does not mean that even God has to face the alternative between Being and nothingness and Good and Evil, as the human being does. God, indeed, is originary positivity, meaning that God has eternally chosen Being and Good at the expense of nothingness and Evil. That is, God is also freedom, and therefore God fully represents the ambiguous core of freedom, carrying in Godself the vestige of unchosen possibilities, that is, Evil and nothingness. Thus, God “is not the Good, but the chosen Good, namely the Good placed before Evil, affirmed through the negation and rejection of Evil”, from which it follows that Evil keeps subsisting in God only as eternally negated and rejected and as the shadow cast by the light of Good.

That being the case, Pareyson comes to the conclusion (bearing Schelling’s philosophy in mind) that the origin and the ontological source of Evil is to be found in God. That is, since the reality of Evil cannot be denied (otherwise one would fall back into rational theodicy or abstract metaphysics), it also has to be accepted that its source and origin coincides with the source and origin of its ontological counterpart, that is, the Good.

133 Ibid., 173–74.
134 Ibid., 174.
135 Ibid., 175–76.
136 Ibid., 178.
Therefore, as repeatedly said above, in God we find the origin of Evil in the terms in which Evil itself is nothing but (and cannot be anything else than) the originally rejected option, namely a possibility that has been discarded in the very moment in which it has been provided. Put simply, in the very primordial and originary act of freedom through which God chooses and reveals Godself, nothingness and Evil are posed only in order to be negated and irreversibly overcome by Being and Good.

However, Pareyson specifies, we must not confuse the origin of Evil with its cause: that is, arguing that God is the origin of Evil does not mean that God is also the cause of Evil. Pareyson is also well aware that such an understanding represents a “temerarious discourse” (as he himself defines it in 1988\textsuperscript{137}), which could lead to a slippery slope. In order to avoid that, he reaffirms that “the expression ‘Evil in God’ does not mean that God encounters and finds Evil in Godself, as forming part of God’s own reality”\textsuperscript{138}, rather, Evil is immediately defeated by the very existence of God, since “the act through which God originates Godself is the same through which nothingness is vanquished and Evil is defeated”.\textsuperscript{139} Thus, it is incorrect to conclude that God is also the cause of Evil, because God cannot in any way be its perpetrator, since such an option is ruled out as soon as it is posed.

Nevertheless, maintaining that Evil is in God is extremely disconcerting and maybe counterintuitive, whence the abovementioned “temerity” of such a discourse: how is it possible that Evil is originated by God, that is, by the creator of the universe and the source of Good? Similarly it is possible to assert that nothingness also is in God, even if as eternally unchosen possibility. Nevertheless, Pareyson believes that such an account is not related to nihilism, but rather is a philosophical statement of religious experience: as he writes, “in philosophy [intended] as hermeneutics of religious experience, […] every statement has at the same time a philosophical and religious nature”.\textsuperscript{140} Put simply, hermeneutic philosophy and religious experience cannot but cooperate to enlighten the very essence of God and freedom, which inevitably brings us to the acknowledgement of the ontological consistency of Evil and nothingness, in the terms I explained above.

Once again, despite its being thorny and “temerarious”, Pareyson firmly dissociates his discourse from nihilism, relating it instead to a strongly hermeneutic and religious account of Evil and God. In other words, the claim that Evil and nothingness are in God does

\textsuperscript{137} See Luigi Pareyson, “Un ‘discorso temerario’: il male in Dio”, in OL, 235ff.
\textsuperscript{138} OL, 243.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 244.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., 236.
not annul God’s Being and Goodness, but rather strengthens them. Indeed, Evil and nothingness are in God as negative principles, namely as those terms that are essentially and primordially negated by God and against which Good and Being are eternally affirmed. On these grounds, Pareyson argues that “the divinity implies a negation of the negation”, which has to be understood not in logical terms but in ontological ones. That is, by negating any ontological primacy to Evil and nothingness, God negates that anything can be outside Godself, and in turn does nothing but absolutely reaffirm the abovementioned originary positivity, as well as God’s transcendence. As Pareyson puts it, “the negation of the negation is […] the acknowledgement of God’s ontological fullness, which then excludes every metaphysical nihilism”.

Pareyson’s goal, it is worth repeating, is to argue that the presence of Evil in God implies that God is not the perpetrator of Evil, but contains it as suppressed possibility, which in turn makes God coincident not with the Good, but with the will for Good. This is also why Evil cannot be defined as a moral principle, but has to be understood in ontological terms. More specifically, “Evil is to be distinguished as either possible [Evil] or real [Evil]: in God Evil is present as possible, and there it is found by the human being, who realises it in history”. The true perpetrator of Evil, then, is the human being, who freely and deliberately actualises and enacts that which otherwise would remain a mere and unrealised possibility. Indeed, humankind feels the possibility of Evil, which in turn manifests itself as a threat to and a temptation for human freedom.

The human being “is the only perpetrator of Evil, but cannot be its inventor. [Human] creativity and its potency are limited, and suffice at most to discover Evil as a possibility to be realised, and to effectively realise it”. In other words, as soon as the human being feels the possibility of Evil, it also feels an irresistible impulse to turn such a possibility into a real act: this, for Pareyson, is the only possible way through which Evil can become real. Furthermore, as already mentioned, he also strongly characterises his position in a hermeneutic and religious sense, differently from Schelling (his main source of inspiration). In this sense, Pareyson understands the realisation of Evil in humankind as sin, not in the moral sense of the term, but rather as an intentional transgression of and deviance from God’s ontological statute and God’s will for Good.

---

141 Ibid.
142 Ibid., 237.
143 Ibid., 184.
144 Ibid.
In Pareyson’s account, God is not defined as foundation (*fondamento*), but as freedom and abyss; and “it is precisely the fact of not being foundation but freedom that ensures that God can be the origin of Evil without being its perpetrator”.\(^{145}\) Here clearly emerges the main feature of Pareyson’s discourse, which is at the same time hermeneutic and religious. That is, in the light of all the above, it must be acknowledged that Evil cannot be grasped outside a deeply religious understanding of God, since the God we are presented with is not abstractly identified with pure rationality, but is involved in the “human tragedy”,\(^{146}\) as Pareyson himself calls it, and suffers from that. It is God, indeed, who gives freedom to humankind, implicitly accepting the possibility of its misuse and abuse.

Accordingly, God takes on Godself the burden of the realisation of Evil perpetrated by humankind, who alone remains responsible for its actualisation; this also implies that God assumes on Godself both Evil as actual and realised and not anymore as suppressed possibility, and the following suffering generated by the sinful behaviour of humankind, in order to comply with God’s redeeming nature. That is, Pareyson here intends to stress the paradoxicality of God’s assumption of sin and suffering, since this would clash with God’s perfection and transcendence; however, such a paradoxicality is compliant with the fact that the redeemer must identify himself with the sinners in order to understand their suffering and redeem them. On this particular point, it is worth mentioning that Pareyson is deeply influenced by the 19th-century Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky, to whom Pareyson devotes some of his late works (the most important of which is *Dostoevsky: Philosophy, Novel and Religious Experience*). However, I will not focus on this topic, since I consider it as unnecessary in terms of the purpose of my dissertation.\(^{147}\)

In conclusion, Pareyson’s discourse is also hermeneutic, since the claim that the realisation of Evil is nothing but a deliberate and willing act perpetrated by humankind, as opposed to the ontological nature of God, can be understood as a false and misleading interpretation of one’s freedom. That is, God is also aware that humankind could misuse its freedom, succumbing to the temptation to perform Evil rather than Good. Such an attitude is the reverse of freedom, that is, a singular and particular freedom that opposes absolute and transcendent freedom, which in turn is made possible only by a misleading interpretation of freedom itself. In other words, the realisation of Evil in the human being also coincides with

---

\(^{145}\) Ibid., 183.

\(^{146}\) See ibid., 220ff.

the attempt of freedom to annihilate itself, which does not consider the impossibility of realising Evil in God and the following absurdity of its demand.

“Evil in God is an idea that yields incomprehensible and scandalous results in the horizon of a philosophy of Being, and that solely in the perspective of a philosophy of freedom can show itself as immune to misunderstandings and misinterpretations and then reveal its true meaning.”\textsuperscript{148} In other words, Pareyson argues that the key concept to understand the nature and modalities of the presence of Evil in God is freedom, rather than necessity, since it is due to the ambiguity of freedom that Evil subsists both in God as suppressed possibility and in humankind as concrete and viable alternative. Accordingly, it is worth providing some additional remarks and clarifications about Pareyson’s understanding of freedom, in order to highlight once again the great relevance of that conception in Pareyson’s philosophy.

In accordance with what has already been said about it, Pareyson further emphasises that “freedom is first beginning and pure commencement”.\textsuperscript{149} The latter observation is obviously aimed at reinforcing and further clarifying the constitutive ambiguity of freedom: that is, freedom has to be considered as unity of originary and derived freedom, namely of divine and human freedom. Simply put, Pareyson defines freedom as beginning and choice. Indeed, “freedom originates from itself: the beginning of freedom is freedom itself”,\textsuperscript{150} from which it follows that freedom cannot be determined and generated by anything but freedom itself. In other words, freedom has to be understood as first and pure beginning, since it initially poses itself and does not require anything else to exist. Freedom arises and commences only from itself, and it is also preceded solely by itself. Accordingly, “at the highest level, God and freedom coincide in their pure self-originating, in their self-origination from themselves. And this is the originary freedom, that is to say divine freedom: neither God as Being fitted with freedom nor as supremely free Being, but rather God as freedom Godself, as full, originary and absolute freedom”.\textsuperscript{151}

Moreover, arguing that freedom is preceded by nothing but itself, according to Pareyson, is equivalent to arguing that freedom begins and emerges from nothingness, from which he derives the expression “nothingness of freedom”. That is, “the expression ‘nothingness of freedom’ refers to its initial position: [namely] to its deriving from nothing, \textsuperscript{148} OL, 254.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 255.
to its sudden [act of] generating itself […]. But the expression is meaningful, since it relates freedom to the negativity of a non-Being. To designate freedom as beginning it can be said both that prior to freedom there is nothing but freedom and that prior to freedom there is only nothingness”.\textsuperscript{152} The latter passage, despite its complexity, is emblematic of Pareyson’s conception of freedom, since it explains his fundamental understanding according to which the self-generation of freedom inevitably implies the alternative of nothingness. Put simply, freedom emerges from nothingness, in the sense that “as beginning, freedom has a past of non-Being, but a past that has never been present”\textsuperscript{153} and occurs only as an impossible alternative. Such a conception, finally, clearly recalls the mutual implication of Good and Evil, as well as the one of ontology and meontology, which I have explained above.

Further, such a beginning and emergence from nothingness cannot be defined as necessary, but is a choice, Pareyson believes. “The beginning intended as such is already a choice, in the sense that freedom could not begin, namely not emerge from non-Being, and could cease, namely return to non-Being.”\textsuperscript{154} Consequently, freedom is such only as opposed to nothingness, and Good is such only as opposed to Evil. This does not mean that freedom concretely aims at annihilating itself and at being replaced by nothingness, but rather that nothingness is that unavoidable alternative over which freedom emerges and generates itself. Therefore, beginning and choice are not two separate moments of freedom, but they co-occur and mutually imply each other: in the moment in which freedom emerges, freedom has already chosen itself, relegating nothingness to the role of unrealisable alternative. The analogy with the discourse on Good and Evil is extremely evident here: just as Evil occurs only as definitively suppressed and overcome by God, nothingness is to be understood only as the meontological counterpart of freedom, which can never become actual and replace Being and freedom itself.

Finally, a few words must be added about how freedom occurs in humankind: indeed, even though in the human case freedom is not absolute but derived from God, we also experience it as simultaneous beginning and choice. However, the main difference lies in the fact that the human being is actually capable of misusing it and of perpetrating Evil, which remains a mere and eternally overcome possibility in God. The reasons for this derive from the fact that, as repeatedly said above, the origin of Evil does not coincide with its cause: indeed, the former is in God, but the latter is in humankind. Furthermore, human

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., 256.
misbehaviour and misuse of freedom also derives from a misleading personal interpretation of freedom itself, according to which one tends to act against the transcendent nature of freedom and Being, with the aim of destroying them.

To sum up, in this sub-section I have explained Pareyson’s conception of Evil and recalled its kinship with Schelling’s conception (without forgetting to highlight Pareyson’s original insights on the issue). Indeed, while Pareyson maintains Schelling’s idea that Evil has a proper ontological reality and does not have to be understood as a mere lack of Good, he also adds that the ontological features of Evil itself can be correctly grasped only through a religious and hermeneutic discourse. In the next sub-sections, I will focus on the notions of transcendence, freedom, necessity and myth, the importance of which is essential to understand not only Pareyson’s discourse on Evil, but also his philosophy in general.

2.2.2 Transcendence, Freedom and Necessity

We have seen that the framework of Pareyson’s discourse on Evil and freedom is strictly related to the concept of transcendence, which is a constant presence in his writings. However, it is not easy to provide a unique and unequivocal definition of what Pareyson means by the term “transcendence”; therefore, the main aim of this sub-section will be precisely to clarify the meaning and role of transcendence in Pareyson’s philosophy, with a particular focus on its relation with freedom and necessity.

The notion of transcendence occupied Pareyson’s thoughts from the time of his early studies on Jaspers; indeed, in his notes we can read that “transcendence is the trans-ontic relation, and therefore trans-objective, of Dasein with Being”. Pareyson derives this definition from the idea that “as Dasein, I am related to the world, [but] as existence I am related to transcendence”. Moreover, another definition of transcendence can be found in one of Pareyson’s latest writings, where he states that “in the end, the philosophical affirmation of transcendence has no other meaning than the acknowledgement that the human being is not everything, so much so that she always has to do with something that does not depend on her, but rather resists her”. These statements have to be understood as the two extremes of Pareyson’s reflection, but they are neither in contrast nor in contradiction with

---

155 Pareyson, Notes on Jaspers (1937–40), XI.2.4, n. 630, Archivio Luigi Pareyson, Centro Studi Filosofico-religiosi “Luigi Pareyson”.
156 Ibid.
157 OL, 90.
each other; rather, they are two points that delimit the philosophical domain in which Pareyson positions transcendence. That is, the role and meaning that transcendence assumes from time to time in Pareyson’s philosophy always pertain to the relation between Being itself and human beings and their finitude.

Accordingly, in his 1985 essay “Philosophy and Religious Experience”, Pareyson claims that “the fundamental experience of the human being is an experience of transcendence: she knows she didn’t make herself, everywhere she clashes with irreducible transcendences, and she even happens to transcend herself”. Moreover, he argues that the experience of transcendence is deeply and essentially religious, since transcendence itself has to do primarily with God – intended not as the God of the philosophers but as the God of religion. Indeed, Pareyson writes that “not only I am ready to renounce the God of the philosophers, […] but] to avoid in my writings the name ‘God’, because it seems to me that, in philosophical discourse, it is better, if ever, to talk of transcendence”. In other words, Pareyson understands transcendence as the primal and fundamental ontological condition of God.

If the experience of transcendence is our fundamental experience, as Pareyson believes, then we must somehow face it in our lives, that is, transcendence has to reveal itself in an accessible and understandable way for humankind. But how does this happen? How can we actually experience transcendence? To answer these questions, Pareyson identifies four examples of transcendence: nature, moral law, history and the unconscious. These manifestations “are so clearly independent of [the human being] that their relation with her deserves the name of alterity. [They] do not reduce themselves to the experience of the human being, but firmly demand an acknowledgement and offer themselves only to an experience of transcendence”. That is, these occurrences exceed humankind’s finiteness and impose on it constantly beyond human rational control; put simply, their transcendence consists in their alterity to the human being.

The transcendence of nature, Pareyson claims, is given by its being unfathomable and mysterious, as well as its appearing alternately – but simultaneously – as friendly and as hostile to humankind. Not only does nature elude human control and understanding, but it also manifests itself as irremediably ambiguous and twofold, constantly showing its greatness

---

159 OL, 90.
160 Ibid., 89.
161 Ibid., 90.
and superiority over us. That is, nature is always beyond human rationality and experience, and then irreducible to such finite categories. Conversely, the human being constantly feels its finiteness and its inadequacy towards nature, which makes it able to actually experience transcendence in the sense I explained above.

Similarly, the moral law is transcendent because it is “irreducible to human activity, precisely for its capacity to regulate and rule it”.162 That is, the human being feels impelled to follow the norms established by the moral law, which in turn precede our understanding but still push us to behave in a certain way. In other words, we feel the imperative of the moral law as stronger than and independent of our will, so much so that we are fundamentally unable to change or influence it, and we can only unconditionally obey it. This is due to the fact that the origin and source of the moral law itself is inaccessible for us, that is, it transcends every human capacity and possibility, from which it derives its strength and inflexibility: precisely because the moral law is transcendent and superior to our will, we must follow it. Indeed, by perceiving its transcendence, we experience the moral law as eternal and immutable, and then as the higher moral authority that cannot be questioned or doubted.

The transcendence of history, moreover, results from the transcendence of both the future and the past. Regarding the former, Pareyson argues that it “is irreducible for the sole reason that it cannot be but the object of hope and waiting, and never [the object] of wisdom and knowledge”,163 and therefore it is unpredictable, that is, ulterior and elusive. For its part, the past is also transcendent, because of its being fundamentally immemorable, from which follows its anguished ambiguity. Moreover, the “ancipital” nature of the past and the future is also due to the fact that “the future and the past are the places of two [transcendent and unavoidable] events [...] birth on the one hand and death on the other hand, both enigmatic and fatal, the former for its irrevocability and the latter for its inevitability”.164 Then history, in its being both oriented to the future and shaped by the past, transcends every human activity, which cannot completely manage either of the two temporal dimensions.

Regarding this question, in 1981 Pareyson notes that the sense of history is not within history, but outside it; it exceeds history itself. However, he is also aware that such an

162 Ibid., 91.
163 Ibid.
164 Ibid., 92.
argument derives from a choice and cannot be empirically demonstrated;\(^{165}\) nevertheless, this choice is legitimated by the irreducibly transcendent nature of the future and of the past. Indeed, it is precisely because both the future and the past are transcendent and surpass human rational control that the sense of history cannot be found within history, but must exceed and be beyond history itself. Otherwise, history would be nothing more than the sum of all human actions, reducing itself to a mere causal process and to a sheer work of pure chance.

Finally, Pareyson also believes that the transcendence of the past is strictly connected with the ambiguous nature of memory, since it can alternatively lead us to oblivion or to remembrance. Thus, the transcendence of memory depends on the fact that we have no real and definite control over the things we remember and the things we forget; as Pareyson puts it, “memory is transcendent because its availability is not subordinated to the will of the human being”\(^{166}\), meaning that memory preserves its independence from human will and consciousness and appears to be unfathomable and uncontrollable.

Concluding on this point, Pareyson also finds a parallel between memory and the unconscious, defining the latter as “not less the antagonist than the precursor of consciousness”.\(^{167}\) Indeed, the unconscious is both the grounding and the fundamental condition of consciousness, and a constant threat to the centrality of consciousness itself. Also, its transcendence lies in the fact that the unconscious contains all those original and unperceived sensations of which we are not aware, besides being an “abyssal place of obscure potencies, of occult presences, of cosmic instincts”.\(^{168}\) Put simply, Pareyson justifies the transcendence of the unconscious by stating that it includes all those inexplicable drives and forces that overcome our consciousness and our rationality and of which we are terrified.

“These are all realities that elude every human being’s attempt to dispose of them as she wants, because [they] either require obedience and respect or instill concern and angst.”\(^{169}\) In other words, Pareyson ultimately aims at defining the transcendence of these concepts by claiming, as already mentioned, that the human being cannot be sufficient to grasp and explain the reality of Being, but rather there must be a reality that exceeds and overcomes human possibilities, and to which human beings have to be subjugated. This is

\(^{165}\) See Luigi Pareyson, Schellingian Meditation (1980–81), XI.2.6, n. 650, Archivio Luigi Pareyson, Centro Studi Filosofico-religiosi “Luigi Pareyson”.
\(^{166}\) OL, 93.
\(^{167}\) Ibid.
\(^{168}\) Ibid.
\(^{169}\) Ibid.
nothing but the “trans-ontic and trans-objective” relation to Being, which I quoted at the beginning of this sub-section: the transcendent reality of Being is essentially independent from humankind, and therefore it has to be ascribed to a different ontological level. Such a reality is also beyond every possible human experience, being the grounding condition of a divine and “superhuman” Being; accordingly, the only way in which human beings can relate to transcendence is by acknowledging its inescapable alterity and superiority, which is manifested through the feelings of awe and torment and through the clear fact that reality is neither completed nor fully explained by the mere existence of humankind.

Pareyson firmly maintains that “the human being transcends herself, and she is even in herself the symbol of transcendence”;\(^ {170}\) that is, nature, morality, history and the unconscious not only are independent of human beings, but are above and dominate them. “Then, it needs to be acknowledged that the human being is by nature transcendent to herself: not only is she not everything, but it cannot even be said that she coincides with herself”\(^ {171}\). Indeed, the main structures that characterise the reality in which we are thrown, according to Pareyson, are neither graspable nor controllable by us; and this in turn results in a fundamental inability to access that Being with which we are originarily and indissolubly related.

The human being is (rather than has, as has been explained) an “ontological relation, in the sense that her being consists indeed, totally and with no residue, in being a relation with Being itself; which means that her very being is dislocated and implies a constitutive discard, a structural offset, which make her always to be beyond herself”.\(^ {172}\) This is a fundamental point of Pareyson’s philosophy, as has repeatedly been said, and it does not come from nowhere, but characterises his reflection from the time of his early writings. Indeed, Pareyson constantly reflects on the idea that the human being is essentially related to something that transcends herself and that pushes the human being beyond herself, coherently with her fundamental ontological structure.

As early as 1940, Pareyson wrote \(^ {173}\) that “I am ‘thrown’ to live in a situation […] that is, I have a very definite position in the universe, a specific place in the world. In a word: a situation, or better, my situation. I cannot regard my situation as one among many others,

\(^{170}\) Ibid., 96.
\(^{171}\) Ibid.
\(^{172}\) Ibid.
\(^{173}\) I am referring to Pareyson’s essay “Genesi e significato dell’esistenzialismo”, Giornale critico della filosofia italiana 5 (1940), then included in SE, 11–18. Finally, the essay has been translated and included in EIF, 35–44.
any of which I could have been given at random. My situation is my concreteness, my configuration, or, to use Marcel’s word, my ‘incarnation’: without it, I, as a single person, would not exist. The bonds that connect me to my situation are very tight, and above all, they are essential to me: they are not links of ‘features’, but of ‘essence’.

Consequently, “incarnation cannot be a reduction of the singular to fact, because it is a choice: I do not reduce myself to my situation, but I choose it. Choice, through which I assume my situation, acts so that I do not identify myself with it. On the other hand, participation cannot be the annulment of the singular in Being, because Being is transcendent: the transcendence of Being prevents me from drowning in it and ensures that it is not reduced to me”.

The latter passage is not only the kernel of Pareyson’s early conception of existence and transcendence, but also the ground for his late speculation on these issues. Put simply, he claims that I, as a finite human being, can neither be identified with my situation, nor raise myself to the ontological level of Being itself. It is precisely in this sense that, in my limited condition of human being, I am related both to the here-and-now (i.e., to the concrete and actual world) and to the irreducible transcendence of Being. Accordingly, I always transcend myself, since my being exceeds my situation in the world, but at the same time I have to acknowledge that my being does not equal Being itself, which in turn proves that reality as a whole does not end with myself, intended as a mere human being, but rather is characterised by elements that irremediably transcend and are independent of my intrinsic finitude.

Moreover, as already mentioned in the previous sub-section, this discourse also concerns the nature of truth, which is as transcendent and unobjectifiable as Being. Even Vattimo sees a continuity in this sense in Pareyson’s speculation, arguing that “in [Pareyson’s] insistence on the transcendence and eternity of truth, […] I forebode, and perceive even more clearly today, the persistence of a metaphysical residue that will be more frankly dissolved, I think, in his later ‘ontology of freedom’”. Indeed, in *Truth and Interpretation*, Pareyson states that “the declared unobjectifiability of truth in no way endangers its transcendence because personalism […] completely reveals its nature only when taken as ‘ontological personalism’, according to which the person is constituted by the

---

174 EIF, 42; SE, 16.
175 EIF, 44; SE, 18.
176 Gianni Vattimo, “Foreword” to TI, xii.
relation with Being. Such a relation is essentially the, albeit active and revelatory, listening to truth”.

On this point, Vattimo is undoubtedly right, since Pareyson certainly dealt with the issue of transcendence in every phase of his philosophical speculation, making such an issue particularly relevant, not to say crucial, in his late writings. In this respect, it must be acknowledged that the notion of transcendence is strongly intertwined with the one of freedom; therefore, at this point it will be useful to focus more deeply on the correlation between these two concepts. In this way, I intend both to further stress the fundamentality of freedom and transcendence within Pareyson’s philosophical reflection, and to clarify some aspects of Pareyson’s understanding of freedom.

Looking back at Pareyson’s definition of freedom, we can clearly see that transcendence plays an essential role in it. That is, the fundamental duplicity and ambiguity of freedom are nothing but the testimony of its transcendence; moreover, the same applies for its being absolute beginning. Indeed, all these features unquestionably put the very root and origin of freedom out of our reach, that is, they make human beings unable to control and have at their disposal the originary occurrence of freedom. Consequently, it could be argued that for Pareyson the abyss of freedom is the abyss of transcendence, since the primordial self-origination of freedom and its emergence from nothingness, that is also the initial choice of Being over non-Being, is inexorably beyond all human capacities and possibilities, meaning that it does not depend in any way on human will, but rather makes its exercise possible.

It is precisely in this sense that God and freedom coincide in their absolute and transcendent self-originating, as I have already explained in the previous sub-section. In other words, the coincidence of God and freedom lies precisely in their transcendence, which also explains why God cannot but be the highest and supreme expression of freedom, and why freedom cannot but be the essential and fundamental feature of God. Accordingly, Pareyson claims that in philosophical speculation God, that is, the God of religion and not the God of the philosophers, can be identified with the term “transcendence”, which perfectly grasps and explains the real and vital essence of God Godself. Put simply, transcendence does not reduce God to a merely intellectual notion, but rather exalts freedom as the beating heart of God Godself.

---

177 TI, 88; VI, 101–2.
As Paryeson writes in his personal notes, God is to be understood as “absolute freedom in its concrete exercise”,\textsuperscript{178} in turn, God’s arbitrariness is “one of the more decisive affirmations of divine transcendence”,\textsuperscript{179} which also strengthens the centrality of the choice. That is, by choosing freedom, God also chooses to allow human beings to participate in the exercise of freedom, from which is the originary coincidence of divine and human freedom. Therefore, despite the human being being culpable of misusing freedom and perpetrating Evil, this affects neither the transcendent nature of freedom nor the mutual source of divine and human freedom. Freedom, in other words, always preserves its transcendent core, although human beings continuously misuse it: indeed, we have already seen that to perpetrate Evil is to turn freedom against itself, to aim at its own self-annihilation. However, we have also seen how such attempts are inevitably doomed to fail, given the impossibility of humankind to effectively undermine the very essence of freedom.

It is due to the transcendent nature of freedom that it is not possible for us to annul it through the perpetration of Evil; that is, God’s originary choice appears as definitive and irrevocable to us, meaning that we can only acknowledge and accept it, without any power to change or withdraw it. Put simply, such a choice has an ontological value that transcends us and is not at our disposal; hence, under these circumstances, freedom is eternally preserved by its divine and transcendent nature. Moreover, being free for the human being implies both to choose and to be chosen, meaning that we can freely choose and act because we have been chosen by God in the first place, that is, we can exercise freedom because God’s originary choice established that we participate in God’s freedom without being entitled to dispose of it. As Pareyson puts it, “choosing, then, is a being chosen, but such a being chosen is still freedom, namely divine freedom”.\textsuperscript{180}

That being the case, a contraposition could emerge between freedom and destiny, that is, between freedom and necessity. Indeed, at first glance it might seem that the only way to conciliate choosing and being chosen, namely our freedom and the transcendence of freedom itself, is to defer to the concept of necessity. However, Pareyson claims, in this case human beings would be prey to a predetermined fate and to an inexorable necessity, in fact frustrating their freedom. Moreover, such an understanding is vitiated by an excessive philosophical conceptualisation, which rigidly counterposes choosing and being chosen and

\textsuperscript{178} Luigi Pareyson, Notes on Freedom and Transcendence in God (ca. 1988), IX, n. 290, Archivio Luigi Pareyson, Centro Studi Filosofico-religiosi “Luigi Pareyson”.
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid.
intends them as human freedom and the necessity of fate, in fact making it impossible to conciliate them.

However, such a contraposition can be resolved through a religious understanding of God and of divine arbitrariness. Thus, being chosen “is not truly fate or destiny, because it does not fall within the range of blind and inexorable necessity, but rather within the range of God’s freedom, of originary and absolute freedom, of God’s arbitrariness”.¹⁸¹ This passage, I believe, shows very clearly both the fundamentality of freedom within Pareyson’s philosophy, and his rejection of necessity as primal ontological modality. In this sense, I have already explained how Pareyson conceives of reality as a pure expression of freedom, which in turn overcomes both mere contingency and rigid necessity, from which it follows that reality has its raison d’être exclusively in freedom. Also, as I have explained, this makes reality gratuitous, ungrounded and solely dependent on freedom; accordingly, it is suspended over an abyss, which is nothing but the abyss of freedom and transcendence.

In conclusion, I want to reaffirm the key role of transcendence in this phase of Pareyson’s thought. Indeed, his aim is to use transcendence both to legitimate the divine nature and source of freedom, and to delegitimate necessity as a binding ontological category. Indeed, Pareyson maintains that freedom is inherently transcendent, meaning that it essentially is beyond our control, emphasising once again that human beings are not able to exhaust reality but have to face several aspects of it that are beyond their disposal. At the same time, necessity has to be put aside due to the aforesaid transcendence of freedom, which allows us to properly understand the true nature of God and reality. Indeed, if God and reality were determined by necessity, we would be in a situation where there would be no room for freedom, even in God’s will, which would be predetermined by something else.

Hence, in order to preserve freedom and overcome necessity, the concept of transcendence becomes indispensable for Pareyson: that is, he understands transcendence as that ontological condition that corresponds to the divine principle and then lies not only beyond any possible human experience, but beyond our finite being itself. Accordingly, as I have repeatedly mentioned, for Pareyson the term “transcendence” can successfully replace the term “God” in philosophical discourse, since it grasps better the religious nature of God Godself and avoids any misleading conception, such as the merely conceptual God of the philosophers.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.
The religious nature of Pareyson’s late reflection is extremely evident, and it becomes even more clear and predominant in his discourse on myth, which also occupies a significant part of that period. That is, moving from the questions of Evil and transcendence, Pareyson calls myth into question, understanding it as the most suitable way to grasp those occurrences that transcend human reason and defining philosophy as the hermeneutics of myth (as I will show in detail in the next sub-section).

2.2.3 Transcendence and Myth

In the final stage of his philosophical speculation, Pareyson focuses his attention on myth, which “is not conceived as an irrational, arbitrary or superstitious exposition, but as the only way of discussing facts that escape human reason, without dispelling their revelatory quality”. That is, myth is understood as the most appropriate way to express the transcendence of divinity and, more generally, the fundamental essence of reality. Therefore, in this last sub-section I will provide an account of Pareyson’s understanding of myth and its role in relation to transcendence, showing its Schellingian derivation, while in the next section I will critically discuss Pareyson’s philosophical conclusions, distancing myself both from his reading of Schelling and from his radically religious account of transcendence.

By resorting to myth, Pareyson aims at reaching the very roots of Being, which transcends human rational understanding, as I have already explained. This is why Pareyson states that myth pertains to ontology, rather than to morality or fiction; in other words, myth tells us about the deepest essence of reality, which in turn cannot but be spoken of in a mythical and non-rational language, because of its fundamental transcendence. As Pareyson himself puts it, “the profound and originary discourse concerns Being, and not value. Ontology is primary over axiology. The level of philosophy and the level of religious experience must not be confused, as happens when in philosophy God is mentioned and qualified as Value and Person. To consider God philosophically as Value and Person means nothing more than making a mythological representation of his generosity and freedom”. Indeed, mythology and myth are intended as two different things, just in the same way as philosophy and religious experience, as I will explain shortly.

---

182 Bubbio, “Introduction” to EIF, 22.
As Bubbio suggests, “from this point of view, the myth attains an epistemological superiority over any philosophical concept. […] Philosophy thus becomes the hermeneutics of myth”.\textsuperscript{184} Just as it is for truth, myth can be known only through a personal interpretation, rather than through an objectivising speculation. That is, “interpretation plays a central role precisely because it allows the myth to be interpreted, problematized and universalized without having to exit the realm of philosophy, which remains a rational and rigorous thought”.\textsuperscript{185} In fact, as early as 1967 Pareyson argues that “the fecund co présence of personal dimension and ontological dimension […] occurs in ‘myth’, when it is understood not merely as primitive and primordial, but rather and primarily as primigenial and originary, that is, as an original and surging gathering of [truth]”.\textsuperscript{186} Put simply, myth is not a figment of human imagination, but the primordial and more faithful interpretation of truth, since it reproduces the ontological relation between human beings and Being itself, as well as the hermeneutic relation between human beings and truth.

Accordingly, philosophy and religious experience meet each other and merge in myth, that is to say myth represents the synthesis of one’s situation and interpretation with the unfathomability and universality of Being. As Pareyson writes, “in this case it is a question of resorting to a hermeneutics of religious experience, aiming both to clarify its widely human meaning and to extract meanings which are philosophical, that is, universal or at least universalizable, and which are capable of arousing the interest, if not the agreement, of all human beings, believers or nonbelievers”.\textsuperscript{187} Indeed, the non-rational and direct language of myth is the only possible way to properly express transcendence and religious experience.

Therefore, Pareyson claims that myth is the only way to properly give a voice to religious experience, because its language is the only one capable of speaking of transcendence. In this sense, myth has not to be confused with mythology, since the latter is allegorical, while the former is tautegorical; this means that, while mythology presupposes a separation between its symbols and their meaning (i.e., its symbols are used to refer to something other than the symbols themselves), myth is made by symbols whose meaning directly refers to reality and not to something else (i.e., its symbols evoke and recall a concrete originary identity with reality itself).\textsuperscript{188} This conception, I believe, shows very

\begin{footnotes}
\item[184] Bubbio, “Introduction” to EIF, 22.
\item[185] Ibid.
\item[186] Luigi Pareyson, “Filosofia e ideologia”, in Ideologia e filosofia (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1967), now in VI, 138. The actual citation is from TI, 122. See also EIF, 222.
\item[187] EIF 244; OL, 469.
\item[188] See Pareyson, “Dal personalismo esistenziale all’ontologia della libertà”, in EIF, 223ff.
\end{footnotes}
clearly the abovementioned epistemological superiority of myth, which is considered as the primary way to access the true and originary meaning of reality.

With respect to this latter point, I want incidentally to stress that Pareyson draws the idea of the tautegorical nature of myth from Schelling’s philosophy. Indeed, in his Berlin lectures on the philosophy of mythology, then published under the title *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* (1842), Schelling states that “mythology is not allegorical; it is tautegorical. To mythology the gods are actually existing essences, gods that are not something else, do not mean something else, but rather mean only what they are”. I will come back to Schelling’s Berlin lectures in the last section of this chapter; for now, I just want to point out that Pareyson, while borrowing from Schelling the idea of the tautegoric nature of myth (i.e., that the symbols of mythic language do not stand for something else but signify only themselves), further problematises the question by differentiating myth and mythology, the former being tautegorical and the latter allegorical (i.e., its symbols stand for and recall something other than themselves).

Going back to Pareyson’s reflection, he specifies that in religious experience, when we refer to God’s generosity and freedom, we have to understand these terms in a *mythical*, not *mythological* way; in other words, this means that God’s generosity and freedom have to be understood for what they mean in themselves, that is, not as abstract conceptualisations, but as actual and lively characteristics of God Godself. That is, not allegorically, but tautegorically, since this is the only way to comply with the concreteness of religious experience. “Thus philosophy either forms its own myths, or resorts to religious experience, in which case it must adapt itself in some way to mythical language, respecting the tautegoric nature of symbols and exercising caution with regard to the particular eloquence of coded writing.”

Indeed, philosophical language is essentially inadequate and cannot grasp the transcendent structure of Being. It follows that the role of philosophy is “not to translate mythical discourse into rational discourse, which is impossible by definition […]; but to illuminate universally human themes in mythical and religious discourse, […] that is, to include religious discourse, which is so intimately linked to personal experience, in a universal and broadly human interlacement, capable of ensuring the widest communication

---

189 PM, 136; SW, II, 1, 196.
190 EIF, 223; Pareyson, “Dal personalismo esistenziale all’ontologia della libertà”, 310.
and to guarantee, or at least promise, the possibility for participation by everybody”.\textsuperscript{191} Put simply, philosophy in itself, intended as sheer logical and conceptual speculation on reality, is not enough to grasp the core of reality itself, which is why, Pareyson believes, it has to give up mere rationality and become a hermeneutics of myth in order to get straight to the heart of Being.

Additionally, Pareyson argues that resorting to myth does not mean giving up philosophy; on the contrary, it is precisely philosophical reflection that characterises myth in its ultimate content. However, it is quite obvious that philosophy has to be intended neither as a form of rationalistic conceptualisation nor as an empirically demonstrative science, but once again it needs to be conceived hermeneutically, that is, as a personal interpretation of the truth revealed by myth. Here Pareyson is not aiming at a denial of philosophy as such, but rather he intends to propose “a new kind of philosophy, based not on demonstrative reason, but on hermeneutical thought […] , which is a reflection upon and within experience – in a very broad sense, of course, not limited to sensible experience – and is an interpreting thought applied to pre-existing knowledge, a remembering thought which knows only what it knows already”.\textsuperscript{192}

The latter quote clearly recalls the Heideggerian concept of remembrance (\textit{Erinnerung}), which in this case refers to the originary solidarity between human beings and truth, as well as to the originary relation of human beings with Being itself (which I have already explained in §2.1.1). That is, since these originary relations transcend all human empirical knowledge, they constitute a pre-existing knowledge, which can be interpreted by human beings only within their inescapable finitude and which at the same time reveals itself as absolute and unfathomable. Hence, “it is possible to philosophize on everything: no sphere of experience can escape philosophical reflection, and it is even better if the field has already been ploughed by one of the human sciences. With the opening of these new fields of experience, a boundless field stretches before philosophical research, suitable for that ‘superior empiricism’ that is hermeneutical thought”.\textsuperscript{193}

Accordingly, hermeneutical thought has the peculiar capacity of being able to both deeply problematise and universalise those philosophical issues it deals with. That is, it gets to the bottom of reality and raises the most urgent and compelling questions, which in turn

\textsuperscript{191} EIF, 224; Pareyson, “Dal personalismo esistenziale all’ontologia della libertà”, 311.

\textsuperscript{192} EIF, 230; OL, 158–59.

\textsuperscript{193} EIF, 217; Luigi Pareyson, \textit{Essere libertà ambiguità} (Milan: Mursia, 1998), 13.
are related to the deepest and originary meaning of truth; at the same time, hermeneutical thought is also able to reveal such originary meaning of truth in a universally accessible way, that is, through a personalistic interpretation of it. Hence, hermeneutical thought fundamentally deals with “a knowledge which already exists […], and sets out to expose by appropriate discursive and speculative means its originary revelatory nature and intrinsically participatory qualities”\(^{194}\). Once again, this kind of knowledge can be expressed only by myth, because of its tautegorical nature and its capacity to reveal the transcendence of Being and truth, which is an impossible task for a merely rational analysis of reality.

Consequently, the aim of philosophical reflection on myth is neither to replace myth itself with logical concepts, nor to turn it into a rational discourse; rather, philosophy has to reject any form of demythologisation, acknowledging and preserving the revelatory nature of myth, since it represents the only suitable language to grasp and speak of the transcendent and originary meaning of Being. Myth, indeed, has the unique capacity to directly speak of transcendence and of the ultimate structure of reality, while philosophical language as such cannot go that far. Therefore, “hermeneutical thought neither destroys myth nor means to go beyond it, […] but equally it does not cease to explore it. In fact, if encouraged and suitably questioned by hermeneutical thought, it is myth itself that reveals its own meaning, thus initiating and encouraging an inexhaustible reflection within itself […]. In this sense, it is neither possible to replace myth with logos, nor to provide a philosophical translation of it, for such things would destroy it, while at the same time ‘myth’ is the source, heart, starting point, stimulus, and guide of ‘logos’”\(^{195}\).

This further clarifies, I believe, what Pareyson means by the hermeneutics of myth, which is not a speculative analysis of myth, but rather the only way for human beings to investigate and grasp the originary meaning of myth itself. In other words, if a hermeneutics of myth were simply a rational rephrasing of myth, it would be nothing but mythology, that is, it would irremediably lose its tautegorical nature and assume an allegorical one. Instead, Pareyson aims both at preserving myth in its pure and originary way of expressing truth, and at reiterating that we can access myth itself only through a personal interpretation. In fact, as I have said, this is consistent with Pareyson’s idea that we can actually possess truth only through a personal interpretation, and that we can grasp Being only through our personal existence.

\(^{194}\) EIF, 231; OL, 159.

\(^{195}\) EIF, 232–33; OL, 161.
Pareyson’s goal, then, is to outline “a hermeneutics of myth, and more precisely of religious myth. As hermeneutics, it is not ontic and objective metaphysics, but existential ontology. As an approach to religious myth, it is neither theology, nor philosophy of religion, nor religious philosophy, but philosophical interpretation of religious experience or religious consciousness”. Indeed, Pareyson intends to further underline the concreteness of his existential hermeneutics, arguing that the only concrete expression of myth is religious myth, and that such an expression cannot but be indissolubly related to our religious experience. Thus, the God of the philosophers gives way to the God of religion, that is, to the most concrete and lively expression of God Godself. Finally, such an understanding cannot but lead us directly to the transcendence of Being and truth, emphasising once again the fundamental ontological relation with Being and truth that we are (and not have).

As Vattimo explains, commenting on this aspect of Pareyson’s thought, “that which opens philosophy to religious experience is not the impossibility of theoretically embracing the totality of Being and its infinity, but rather the abyssal ‘novelty’ of the free act. […] Of free happening there is no logical ‘explanation’, but there is only narration, that is, in the etymological sense, myth. […] Philosophy, which Pareyson also calls ‘ontology of freedom’, encounters myth when it looks at the issue of the origin of freedom”. Thus, philosophy intended as a hermeneutics of myth is neither a rationalisation of myth itself nor a demythologisation, but rather it aims at providing the interpretative ground that makes it possible to clarify and penetrate the deepest meaning of religious experience. There is no “objective truth” to be found through the interpretation of myth, Vattimo adds; rather, according to Pareyson, the clarification of myth allows us to uncover a common and universal meaning of religious experience and consciousness.

Pareyson also argues that a hermeneutics of myth implies a clear religious content, which in turn has to be seen as a constitutive and concrete part of religious consciousness and experience. That being the case, philosophy has to be characterised as a reflection on such religious content, with the aim of clarifying it and making it accessible and applicable to all of humanity, in accordance with the abovementioned “double feature” of hermeneutic thought, namely of problematising and universalising. Put differently, the task of philosophy is not to rationally demonstrate the validity of myth, but rather to make myth accessible.

---

196 EIF, 233; OL, 161–62.
through giving up a narrow rationalism and acknowledging that the fundamental structure of Being and truth transcends human reason and experience.

However, this does not mean that philosophy has to result in irrationalism. Indeed, “denying philosophical thought the demonstrative and extensive capacity for knowledge is not sufficient for an accusation of irrationalism. What causes the so-called ‘crisis of rationality’ is not this attenuation of the powers of reason, but the suppression of its ontological and revelatory character. What is important is not reason in itself, but truth: the value of reason depends upon its bond with truth and its foundation in ontology”.¹⁹⁸ That is, myth being the source and origin of logos, that is, of rational speculation, it also gives reason a pattern, which in turn is based on the transcendence of truth. Indeed, in myth an originary truth is present, which in turn is inseparable from reason; hence, philosophical thought must acknowledge such an incontrovertible unity that myth reveals, since it is nothing but a development and an emanation of this originary truth.

Similarly, it cannot even be said that philosophy becomes fideism, since “the ontological relationship in which the human being consists is an act of freedom, because with regard to Being and truth, there can be no attitude but one of consent or refusal, assertion or denial, loyalty or betrayal. It follows that human action, whether theoretical or practical, being unable to consist in anything but the selection of an alternative, always assumes the form of a choice”.¹⁹⁹ I have already shown the centrality of the concept of choice for Pareyson, so I will not return to it now. What is important to highlight here is that Pareyson firmly maintains freedom and the subsequent possibility of choice as the core of our relation with Being and truth.

Concluding on this point, Pareyson reaffirms that philosophical reflection on myth does not originate independently of myth itself, freely shaping it as its object; rather, it derives from an originary thought and a transcendent truth that reside in myth. Indeed “hermeneutical thought grasps and manifests the interlacement of freedom and truth that operates within myth. In one way it exposes the existential choice through which the originary possession of truth is fulfilled in myth, and in another it makes explicit the potential for universality that the truth of myth already carries within itself, even if only implicitly”.²⁰⁰ That is, myth contains and expresses the originary and transcendent bond between freedom,

¹⁹⁸ EIF, 234–35; OL, 163.
¹⁹⁹ EIF, 235; OL, 164.
²⁰⁰ EIF, 236; OL, 164–65.
truth and Being, which cannot be said but through its tautegorical language, as mentioned above.

It follows, then, that myth pertains to a dominion that is different from human rationality, which however does not make it irrational or unreal. Rather, myth has to be understood as the most concrete and appropriate expression of the transcendent features of reality, as repeatedly stated above. As explained by Pareyson himself, “by virtue of the truth and originary thought that reside in it, myth therefore has its own ‘rationality’, which philosophical thought in one way grasps and penetrates, and in another clarifies and highlights, with its assiduous eye for analysis and its universal vocation. In this way, in hermeneutical thought, there are concepts, but they do not objectify; ideas and thoughts, which are purely existential; discourses and reasoning, which are not demonstrative but interpretative; items of knowledge obtained not through an extension of demonstrations, but by direct experience”.

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that Pareyson’s last focus was on the notion of eternity and eschatology, although when he passed away in 1991 most of his reflections on these topics were still in the form of personal notes. For this reason, I will confine myself to briefly describing Pareyson’s position, showing its affiliation with his discourse on Evil. As Bubbio explains, “Pareyson distinguishes between protology (eternity before the fall mythically expressed by the original sin) and eschatology (eternity after the end of time). Eternity is not conceived as intemporality. It is a history constituted by ages or ‘eons’. Similarly, there is an eternal dialectic (God’s overcoming of the ‘dark ground’) and a temporal dialectic (struggle between good and evil, which are not distinct, but confused)”.

In his notes, then included in *Ontologia della libertà*, Pareyson characterises eschatology as referring to “the salvation of the human being, namely the one alone who could awaken Evil in God, that is a free being, that is the human being, who cannot do it anymore: she tried to do it, but in vain, and due to the force of God she escaped the empire of Evil. So history flows into eternity”. That is to say, Pareyson supposes an end to Evil, which cannot but occur outside temporality and in eternity, through a restoration of the originary defeat of Evil made possible by God. Pareyson refers to this occurrence using the

---

201 EIF, 236; OL, 165.
202 Bubbio, “Introduction” to EIF, 23.
203 OL, 306.
term “apocatastasis”, 204 which “precisely means the annihilation of evil and the reinstatement of the origin” 205 and which does not provide for any “time lapse”, but occurs in continuity with God’s free will and with the flowing of history into eternity.

Nevertheless, as noted by Tomatis, human beings are still unable to go beyond their situation and their finitude. But our constitutional opening towards Being and transcendence makes it possible for us to glimpse eternity without exiting from our finitude and from history. “The human being cannot be a substitute for God, it is impossible for her to assume God’s point of view. However, within the human point of view, she can have either a temporal or an eternal vision of her historical-existential horizon, and of its relation with that which transcends its finite temporality.” 206 Such an understanding, moreover, clearly diverges from that of Schelling: indeed, as I have explained in §1.2.2, Schelling argues that it is possible to attain the so-called “God’s-eye point of view” through intuition (i.e., Anschauung, “atlooking” at things), maintaining the discourse on the level of immanence. I will return to this point in the next section.

Borrowing Bubbio’s words again, “the dialectical thought of this dynamic of evil and freedom resolves itself in what could be regarded as the core of Pareyson’s philosophical speculation. Namely, the conjecture that to affirm the existence of God means to affirm that the world makes sense, and that evil will end”.207 Put differently, “this dynamic can be regarded as a dialectic: not a triadic, but a dual dialectic for the contradiction remains open and the only synthesis possible is a paradoxical reconciliation through suffering. That is to say, this dynamic of evil is a dialectical thought whose center is in a dialectic of freedom, not of necessity”. 208 Therefore, Pareyson postulates the optimistic conclusion (of a deeply religious nature), according to which Evil and suffering will be ended through redemption, and God’s goodness will triumph through freedom, and not through necessity or contingency.

To sum up, in this section I have explained Pareyson’s conception of Evil and freedom, in its relation with transcendence, since I consider it as the kernel of his late philosophy. That is, I have shown how Pareyson draws his discourse on Evil from Schelling,

---

204 This term derives from the Greek ἀποκατάστασις, which literally means “restoration” and refers to a return to the original condition of beatitude for all beings, with the ending of Evil. First used by the Greek theologian and philosopher Origen of Alexandria in the third century, the doctrine of apocatastasis asserts that the course of events progressively tends to the abovementioned restoration and therefore has a beginning (i.e., the fall from the intelligible world) and an end (i.e., the apocatastasis itself).

205 Bubbio, “Introduction” to EIF, 23.


207 Bubbio, “Introduction” to EIF, 23.

208 Ibid., 22.
while still drawing from Jaspers and Heidegger; moreover, I have also shown the centrality of the idea of freedom in his thought, at the expense of necessity and contingency. Finally, I have clearly underlined how such a discourse implies a strong and constitutive notion of transcendence, in a deeply religious sense. In the next section, which will conclude this chapter, I will provide a critical reading both of Pareyson’s interpretation of Schelling and of his transcendentist philosophy in general.

2.3 A Critique of Pareyson’s Ontology

In light of the previous analysis of Pareyson’s understanding of Evil and the ontology that grounds his philosophical reflection, it is now appropriate to point out that such ontology poses some insurmountable difficulties that undermine its own sustainability. Without prejudice to the undeniable relevance of Pareyson’s thought, his dualist and transcendentist ontology, I argue, ultimately fails to address the issues of Evil and freedom in continuity with the philosophy of Schelling. In this sense, I will also show that Pareyson’s reading of Schelling is misleading, both because it is not possible to free Schelling from the idea of necessity, and because Pareyson seems to fundamentally misinterpret some points of Schelling’s philosophy, such as the role of immanence and transcendence and the conception of the awe of reason. Put differently, although Pareyson reads Schelling in a very peculiar and fruitful way, it cannot be denied that the interpretation he provides is sometimes inaccurate, twisting and overinterpreting some parts of Schelling’s thought.

I will then begin by outlining a reading of Schelling that can lead us to an immanentist ontology of nature (§2.3.1), which I intend as the proper outcome of Schelling’s philosophy. Afterwards, I will criticise in detail Pareyson’s reading of Schelling (§2.3.2) by pointing out that his understanding of transcendence is not the one provided by Schelling, and that the core of Schelling’s discourse on negative and positive philosophy lies in the interplay between potency and act and not in the awe of reason. Finally, I will conclude this section with a general critique of Pareyson’s existential hermeneutics (§2.3.3), which results into the abovementioned dualist and transcendentist ontology.
2.3.1 An Alternative Reading of Late Schelling

It is true, as Pareyson argues, that the late Schelling tried to provide an answer to what has been identified as “the fundamental question of philosophy”. Indeed, Schelling inaugurates his Berlin lectures in 1842 by claiming that “thus far from man and his endeavors making the world comprehensible, it is man himself that is the most incomprehensible and who inexorably drives me to the belief in the wretchedness of all being […]. It is precisely man that drives me to the final desperate question: Why is there anything at all? Why is there not nothing?”

Nonetheless, in this sub-section I will argue that, through a contextualisation of Schelling’s thought and lectures, it is possible to understand his claims in a different way from that provided by Pareyson. Indeed, in the next sub-section my aim will be to show that Pareyson’s reading of Schelling’s philosophy overemphasises its religious aspects, without properly considering them in relation to the other moments of Schelling’s philosophical activity, resulting in a radical transcendentism that is actually alien to Schelling’s thought.

In the abovementioned lectures, Schelling outlines the relationship between negative and positive philosophy, defining them not as two separate and irreconcilable ways of doing philosophy, but as two different moments of one and the same science of knowledge, that is, philosophy itself. Generally speaking, negative philosophy is that speculative moment through which we can grasp the necessary (but not sufficient) conditions of Being, remaining at a logical and conceptual level; conversely, positive philosophy grasps existing being in its actual occurrence, rather than as a mere concept. Put simply, negative philosophy concerns the potency of being, while the positive one embraces its actuality. And it is only by properly understanding the relationship between positive and negative philosophy that we can correctly comprehend what philosophy is and therefore answer the fundamental question concerning Being and nothingness.

Accordingly, Schelling argues that when we begin to philosophise “we are aware of an immediate content in reason, which of course is not an object, that is, already a being, but is rather only the infinite potency of being”. Since such a content is immediate, it is neither determined nor preceded by any sort of object, but rather implies the existence of an “infinite potency of cognition”, as Schelling calls it. Indeed “the question […] is not at all whether there is an infinite potency of cognition – since this would be the same as to ask whether there is reason […]. And that this infinite, that is, free toward all or prepossessed of nothing,

---

209 PP, 94; SW, II, 3, 7.
210 PP, 141; SW, II, 3, 74.
potency of cognition exists, one must concede as well: prepossessed of nothing, I said, namely, of nothing that is real [Wirklichen]).

It follows that reason is dominated by a “sheer potency of being”, in which the act in its concreteness is lacking; yet, at the same time, sheer and pure potency is “open toward everything”, that is, it leaves every possibility open and does not exclude anything. Reason, Schelling continues, “is the infinite potency of cognition and, as such, has nothing but the infinite potency of being as its content. Precisely because of this it can, from this content, arrive at nothing but what is possible a priori. This, of course, is also what is real and occurs in experience, but reason arrives at it not as something real, but as what is merely possible a priori”. In other words, reason alone is unable to grasp being in its positive occurrence, but can understand it only through a negative conceptualisation: this is precisely the core of negative philosophy, which is only able to grasp the logical and a priori structures of being without being able to reach the concrete “effectivity” of Being itself.

Consequently, in order to speak of Being itself, we must exclude all the potential features of particular beings and understand it neither as a concept nor as a rational product, but rather as that which purely and immediately is. As Schelling explains, “to this being [Seyenden] belongs first and foremost that it is the subject of [B]eing [Seyn]. With this, however, that it is just the subject of [B]eing, that is, just that of which [B]eing can be predicated, it would not yet be [B]eing (in the pregnant sense which we are using here, where it means the cause of all [B]eing [Ursache alles Seyns]). Initially, being [Seyende] must be the subject of [B]eing [Seyn] – that which can be – and to this extent it is the potency of [B]eing [Seyn]. But it is not the potency of something that it not yet is because then it would not even be being [nicht das Seyende], but it is rather the potency of that which it already is, of that which it is immediately and without transition”.

Moreover, such being is also an object, since “it is pure being, entirely and completely objective being, in which there is just as little of a capacity as there is something of a [B]eing [Seyn] in the subject. And since in the subject = or potency = being there is immediately also an object, a complete concept of being [Seyende] must also incorporate this (the third element), which is a subject and object thought as one inseparable subject = object,

---

211 Ibid.
212 PP, 142; SW, II, 3, 75.
213 PP, 143; SW, II, 3, 77.
so that this must still be distinguished as a third determination”.\textsuperscript{214} In other words, Being is the jointure of subject and object, namely their identification and their mutual implication. Accordingly, Schelling claims that there are three different moments of Being, that is, subject, object and “subject = object”; however, these three moments can neither occur nor be grasped as separate and independent occurrences, but rather only as inseparable features of Being itself. That is, Being is neither subject, nor object, nor “subject = object”, but only the indissoluble combination of these three moments.\textsuperscript{215}

Hence, not only is Being not presupposed by anything else, but it presupposes its own object. In this sense, Schelling argues that “the word subject means nothing other than supposition. The only thing that presupposes itself, that is, allows nothing to presuppose it, is precisely the subject (in the former philosophical language subjectum and suppositum are synonymous): nothing can immediately be an object, for nothing is an object save in relationship to a subject, and for precisely this reason nothing can also be an immediate subject = object. This last element presupposes the other two: (1) that which lacking all supposition has the capacity to be – the subject – and (2) the object. Only with the third, however, can precisely that which was the subject and the object become subject = object”.\textsuperscript{216}

Nevertheless, in order to effectively reach Being itself, we need to speculatively separate these three moments and understand them as if they were not one Being, but three different and separated beings. “This occurs when we allow what in being [Seyende] is the subject, thus, the potency of [B]eing [Seyn], to be a potency for itself, that is, to be the potency of its own being. We then think of it as passing over into [B]eing [Seyn], whereby, however, it ceases to be a subject and becomes an object. In contrast, that which was an object in being must then cease to be an object and must itself become a subject in precisely the same manner as that which was subject = object is similarly excluded and posited as a being in its own right.”\textsuperscript{217} Put simply, even by positing the three moments as separate and unrelated, their true nature, that is the true nature of Being itself, comes out, due to the interaction of negative and positive philosophy; indeed, “these elements are identical, but they are not what is absolutely identical with itself”.\textsuperscript{218}

\textsuperscript{214} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{215} On this point, see also Manfred Frank, Eine Einführung in Schellings Philosophie (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), 118–32.
\textsuperscript{216} PP, 143–44; SW, II, 3, 78.
\textsuperscript{217} PP, 144; SW, II, 3, 79.
\textsuperscript{218} Ibid.
Negative philosophy is the branch through which the conceptual and arbitrary separation of the three moments operate; however, precisely due to the conceptuality and arbitrariness of this operation, it is able to possess Being only in thought and not in practice. It is in that moment that positive philosophy comes into play, as the counterpart of the negative, allowing us to grasp Being in its purity and beyond the distinction between subject and object. Thus, on the one hand, negative philosophy makes sense only when it allows us to grasp (even if only conceptually) the object of positive philosophy; on the other hand, positive philosophy can arise only by opposing the conceptual and arbitrary speculation of the negative one, by concretely reaching Being in its concrete existence. And it is in this case that we can finally grasp both the necessary and the sufficient conditions of being in its concreteness. As Schelling puts it, “only the correctly understood negative philosophy leads to the positive philosophy; conversely, the positive philosophy is first possible only in contrast to the correctly understood negative. Only the latter’s withdrawal back into its limits makes the former discernable and then, not only possible, but also necessary”.219

Consequently, Schelling considers negative philosophy as “the first science” and positive philosophy as “the highest science”. Indeed, “just as that from which the negative philosophy proceeds – from that which is before being – is alone the primum cogitabile, so will that which is beyond being (and in this sense also before being), and that which is the task of the positive philosophy, be the summum cogitabile. Between these two, the first and the highest sciences, lie all the other sciences in the middle: as negative, philosophy precedes all sciences, just as when positive, it resolves all sciences, so that in this way the entire sphere of the sciences is set between these philosophies”.220 This is why, as already said, philosophy cannot but begin by assuming an a priori position towards all beings (negative philosophy) and end at the ultimate structure of being (positive philosophy), that is, Being in its actual existence.

By being both the first and the higher science, true philosophy is put in a privileged position in comparison with other sciences, since it is the only one that is able to grasp the fundamental nature of Being. As Schelling puts it, the object par excellence of philosophy “is no longer just being, but is rather being itself, being in its truth, and, therefore, that which was really wanted from the very beginning – not just cognoscibile (for everything else is this as well), but rather the maxime cognoscendum, that which is most worthy of knowing […].

219 PP, 145; SW, II, 3, 80.
is not just that which is most worthy of knowing, but it is also that which is to be known in the purest knowing, since, according to its nature, it is entirely being, not potency, but rather entirely *actus*, pure actuality*.²²¹

Such a discourse mainly concerns the idea of necessity, as well as the ideas of God and transcendence, which are also the concepts on which Pareyson focuses more deeply in his reading of Schelling. This is why I will now move to examine these ideas, assuming that I have provided enough elements to properly understand them. Then, I will also show that it is not only possible, but also preferable, to provide an interpretation of this phase of Schelling’s thought that differs from that of Pareyson.

As I have already said, the object of philosophy is true being (*Seyende*), that is, that which really and ultimately exists and must not be confused with Being itself (*Seyn*). Borrowing Schelling’s words, “the ultimate [*das Letze*] that can exist, however, is the potency that is no longer potency but, rather, since it is being itself, is pure *actus*; for this reason we could call it the *existing* potency [*die seyende Potenz*]”.²²² In this last sentence, the *existing* potency, or *die seyende Potenz*, literally refers to the potency of being, which in turn is that which ultimately and fundamentally exists. This is a very important passage, since it perfectly highlights the moment of the transition from negative to positive philosophy, in which the potency of being becomes coincident with actual being. “Here it becomes immediately clear that the potency, which is not a potency, but is rather itself the *actus*, does not exist via the transition a *potentia ad actum*. If it exists, then it can only be a priori, having being as its *prius*. We could, therefore, also call it the inverted capacity to be, namely, that capacity to be in which the potency is the *posterius* and the *actus* is the *prius*.”²²³

Consequently, Schelling goes beyond Leibniz’s argument, according to which “God is one, from whose essence existence follows [*Deus est Ens, ex cujus essentia sequitur existentia*]”,²²⁴ since such an argument is confined to the negative and rational sphere of philosophy, and therefore grasps God’s existence only conceptually and not actually. If we understand Leibniz’s formula as a definition of that which necessarily exists, Schelling continues, such an existence requires no proof, since it affects only thought and does not correspond to any actual existence. Even in Spinoza, according to Schelling, a similar

---

²²¹ PP, 194; SW, II, 3, 149.
²²³ PP, 199; SW, II, 3, 156.
oversight occurs when he affirms that the purely existing being, that is, God, is the one “of which nothing can be thought except that it exists \( \textit{quod non cogitari potest, nisi existens} \).”\(^{225}\) Unlike Leibniz, Spinoza does not provide an abstractly metaphysical account of God, but moves from that which exists in order to prove God’s existence.

However, Schelling argues that “Spinoza was correct \textit{in that} the only thing positive from which one may begin is precisely that which just exists, [but] his error lies in the fact that he posits this being immediately equal to God without having shown, as true philosophy must, how one can get from that which just exists as \textit{prius} to God as \textit{posterius}, that is, he had not shown how that being which simply exists (which to this extent is not \textit{God}, indeed, is not \textit{natura sua}, since this is impossible), is as \textit{actu}, as effective, according to its actuality, a posteriori God”.\(^{226}\) In other words, Schelling argues that a further step is required from Spinoza, in order to move from the necessary and a priori conditions of God’s existence (which however are not sufficient conditions, as mentioned above) to the actual existence of God Godself, that is to move from the \textit{prius} (i.e., God’s divinity) to the \textit{posterius} (God’s effective existence).

In taking a further step in the abovementioned direction, Schelling argues that “the concept of God as it occurs at the end of the negative philosophy also provides me with the \textit{prius} of divinity [\textit{Gottheit}]. This \textit{prius}, however, is \textit{in itself} that which is irrefutably, indubitably certain, from which on its own account I can likewise proceed if I discard the concept of \textit{God}. […] Now, if the divinity is the what, the essence, the potency, then I proceed not from potency to being, but rather, conversely, from being to essence: being is here \textit{prius}, essence \textit{posterius}. But this transition is not possible without a reversal, without changing the entire direction of the science that proceeded from that which has the capacity to be, and to break off from it, and to start from the very beginning a new science, which is precisely the positive philosophy”.\(^{227}\) Put simply, Schelling here is arguing again that philosophy does not have to derive, through a mere conceptual speculation, God’s existence from God’s essence, but rather has to assume as its object and starting point that which has already been defined as the purely existing being. Hence, God’s existence is not derived from a rational and speculative necessity but from an actual and effective occurrence.

\(^{225}\) See Spinoza, \textit{Ethics}, I, 1.
\(^{227}\) PP, 201; SW, II, 3, 159.
In this sense Schelling argues that God is not merely the necessarily existing being, since this would confine God Godself once again in a merely conceptual and abstract speculation. Rather, “the most supreme being (the most supreme being that can be, which is to this extent, of course, the most supreme potency), in a word God, if he exists, can only be that which necessarily exists. This expression shows that God is not merely the necessary being, but is rather necessarily the necessary being”. That is, God cannot be merely the necessary being, since that is only God’s prius, namely the a priori rational concept to which negative philosophy comes. However, such a concept shows that God can only be necessarily, which in turn means that when it comes to God’s actual existence, God Godself is necessarily that which necessarily is. In addition, this also means that God is pure actus, but not in the sense that in God there is no trace of potency anymore; rather, saying that God is a priori act means that in God there is no potency that precedes act, but rather God’s potency immediately becomes act in God’s effective and concrete existence.

In conclusion, Schelling’s understanding of God as a priori act also has relevant implications for the notions of immanence and transcendence: indeed, he does not understand God as the highest and purest manifestation of transcendence, which occurs outside human finitude and radically excludes any form of immanence. Indeed, Schelling himself claims that “God is not, as many imagine, the transcendent, he is the immanent (that is, what is to become the content of reason) made transcendent. In that this has been overlooked lies the great misunderstanding of our time. As I have already said, what is a priori incomprehensible, because it is conveyed through no anterior concept, will become a comprehensible being in God, or it arrives at its concept in God. That which infinitely exists, that which reason cannot hide within itself becomes immanent for reason in God”. 229

The transcendence that Schelling is describing here is not relative, that is, it is neither related to the transcended object nor still determined by a rational concept. Rather, he understands transcendence as absolute, as ab-soluta, that is, as not related to the transcended object but as the very starting point of philosophical speculation. The latter is the way of proceeding of positive philosophy, which implies that transcendence encloses immanence in itself, rather than merely overcome and reject it as a finite and insufficient manifestation of Being. Indeed, on the one hand, if we were to rely on only negative philosophy, this would leave us with the sterile immanence of the rational concept, and, on the other hand, if we

228 Ibid.
229 PP, 209; SW, II, 3, 170.
were to rely on only positive philosophy, this would provide us with an exclusively transcendent being, unintelligible to reason and then as such unattainable for us. Therefore, true philosophy, understood as the integration of and mutual interpenetration of negative and positive philosophy, must move from immanence in order to grasp transcendence. This process, however, does not dispel immanence as such, but rather maintains it at the same ontological level as transcendence. Put simply, here we are facing immanence that becomes transcendence, as well as transcendence that returns to immanence.

Making it transcendent, the immanent becomes the concrete content of reason, rather than an abstract postulate of it. Reason, Schelling argues, “posits the transcendent in order to transform it into the immanent and to have that which is absolutely immanent simultaneously as something that exists and that is only possible in this way, since reason indeed already has that which is absolutely immanent in the negative philosophy, but not as something that exists”.\textsuperscript{230} That is, reason needs to acknowledge the non-conceptual nature of the pure existing being, which fundamentally exceeds reason’s speculative range, in order to be able to grasp it; conversely, in order to be grasped, the pure existing being has to return to immanence and make itself accessible by reason through experience. Once again, here Schelling exemplifies how negative and positive philosophy interpenetrate each other in order to become true and complete philosophy.

Moreover, this process also underlines how we can dispose of contingency and embrace necessity, that is, how we can move from sheer potency to pure act, which, as already said, does not annul potency but includes it in itself. Indeed, contingency here is represented by mere thought, which is not able to grasp concrete existence but only to prefigure it, while necessity is the coming into existence of being. In light of the above, we can understand this passage as a further confirmation that grasping Being itself, that is, God, is equivalent to grasping the necessarily necessary being. In addition, it is worth repeating, here Schelling is not theorising a form of transcendence that radically excludes immanence as an inferior manifestation of Being, but rather a transcendence that returns to immanence in order to be grasped and understood. In this sense, Schelling rejects that which he calls “relative transcendence”, that is, a form of transcendence that is related to and dependent from the transcended object, since such an understanding of transcendence pertains to the “old metaphysics” and fails to grasp the real meaning of both transcendence and immanence.

\textsuperscript{230} Ibid.
As a conclusion to this sub-section, I will now argue for a naturalist and ontological reading of Schelling’s thought, laying the groundwork also for a critique of Pareyson’s reading, which will be discussed in the next-sub-section. By a naturalist and ontological reading, I mean an interpretation that attributes a prominent role to ontology within Schelling’s philosophical speculation, stressing its constitutive bond with nature, rather than understanding it as primarily religious. In this way, I believe, it is possible both to clearly show the continuity and coherence of Schelling’s philosophy and to provide a stronger and more radical understanding of Schelling’s ontology.

As Jason Wirth claims, drawing on Lore Hühn’s reading, Schelling’s philosophy can be understood as a “return of the repressed”.\textsuperscript{231} Indeed, “retrieving the living ground [of nature] that modern philosophy represses […] is the task of what Schelling called negative philosophy, of moving through $x$ to go beyond $x$ (über $x$ hinaus). This is the movement of Depotenzierung [depotentialisation], of bringing something to its limits, of exhausting it in order to unleash what it otherwise represses. […] Consequently[,] there is only the eternally new beginning of thinking and the ruse of a final position. Negative philosophy begins with clots, attempting to break through to the life that clots arrest. The error, so to speak, of modernity for Schelling lies in its inhibition of nature”\textsuperscript{232}. Building on the latter position, I argue that the whole philosophy of Schelling must be read as an immanentist and monist ontology of nature, in continuity with what I have already argued in the final part of the previous chapter.

To repress and to inhibit the living ground of nature means to repudiate its active core and acknowledge it as mere and passive potency. It is in this sense that we have to understand the abovementioned Depotenzierung, namely as that process through which we bring potency to its limits and move through potency itself in order to go beyond it and reach the act within nature. Moreover, as I have already explained, this is nothing but the true being, whose potency is no longer sheer potency but pure act, in the sense that the act includes potency within itself rather than annul it, so that they mutually imply each other. The Depotenzierung, then, is the only way to grasp that which has already been defined as the existing potency, that is, the potency of the true being and that which ultimately exists as pure act.

\textsuperscript{231} See Lore Hühn, \textit{Kierkegaard und der Deutsche Idealismus: Konstellationen des Übergangs} (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

\textsuperscript{232} Wirth, \textit{Schelling’s Practice of the Wild}, 71–72.
This conception, I argue, is the very core of Schelling’s discourse on negative and positive philosophy, as well as an important element of his ontology in general. First, it is precisely on the interplay between potency and act that the relation between negative and positive philosophy (and then also the passage from the former to the latter) is hinged. Indeed, true being, which in turn is the proper object of philosophy, consists precisely in the interplay between potency and act, containing them both in a pure act that embraces and includes potency in itself. Therefore, in order to properly understand the roles of negative and positive philosophy, as well as the passage from one to the other, it is indispensable to correctly understand how potency and act determine true being. I have already explained that process in detail in this sub-section, so I will not return to it at this point.

In this regard, I also want to argue that the relation between potency and act, and in turn the one between negative and positive philosophy, clearly recalls the distinction between the two forces of the matter (i.e., negative and positive) that Schelling outlined in his *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (as I explained in §1.3.3). Indeed, as we have already seen, Schelling defines sheer potency as a pure and total opening that leaves every possibility open and does not exclude any of them; conversely, sheer act is that which narrows down such potentiality, throwing it into real existence, from which it follows that the nature of true being is the pure act, that is, the pure existing being as potency resolved into (but not annihilated by) the act.

Here, it is possible to draw an analogy with the attractive and repulsive forces of matter. That is, I have already explained that the negative force is an attractive one, which tends to drive matter to a constant and indiscriminate expansion. Such an expansion, I argue, is equivalent to the negativity of potency, since it also can be understood as stimulated by a fundamental opening towards possibility. Conversely, the positive and repulsive force tends to a restriction and a delimitation of the abovementioned expansion, in order to allow matter to exist and narrow it down to concrete and determined existence. Such interplay, once again, clearly recalls the one that occurs between potency and act, that is, between that which exists a priori and a posteriori, or better within the true Being.

Such an analogy, moreover, tells us several important things. First, it allows us to grasp and to attest to the continuity of Schelling’s philosophical speculation: that is, Schelling does not seem to break with his early philosophy, but rather he preserves the same ontological account while moving from the field of the philosophy of nature to that of the
philosophy of religion. Secondly, I argue that it is possible to assert that Schelling maintains the immanentism and monism that I identified in chapter 1, rather than reject them to endorse a radically transcendentist philosophy. Moreover, I believe that a proper reading of the late phase of Schelling’s philosophy cannot only give us further detail about his immanentist account, but can also strengthen it.

Regarding the first point, several scholars (including Manfred Frank and Ian Hamilton Grant) have recently highlighted the importance of Schelling’s philosophy of nature and identity philosophy for his ontology of the Real (as I have defined it in the first chapter). For instance, Frank shows that Schelling does not understand nature as a mere lifeless object that is opposed to and absorbed by a subject (i.e., the I), but rather as absolutely real, emphasising the identity of Ideal and Real, of nature and spirit, within the notion of organism. I have already explained this part of Schelling’s thought in the previous chapter, therefore I will not return to it at this point. What I want to point out now, though, is that Schelling relies profoundly on his early reflections in developing his discourse on negative and positive philosophy, rather than put aside or even reject his philosophy of nature and identity philosophy. Moreover, the latter point *ipso facto* implies that Schelling’s discourse is primarily ontological and has its roots in the immanent conception of the matter and not in a naïve understanding of transcendence.

In this sense, I have already shown that the kernel of Schelling’s late philosophy is the interplay between potency and act, which in turn excludes a relative understanding of transcendence (i.e., a transcendence given exclusively within the relation with the transcended), but rather posits transcendence only moving from and in order to lead it back to immanence. Accordingly, such an account cannot but be characterised as monist, since it both relies on the identity of subject and object, as well as of nature and spirit and of Ideal and Real, and clearly recalls his early understanding of the two forces that animate matter. Put simply, dualism can be used only as a negative moment of philosophical reflection, since in the end everything is resolved into a monist and immanent conception of the Absolute (which I have outlined in the first chapter). I will return to this discourse in the final chapter of my dissertation, since I believe that for now I have provided enough elements to support my argument, according to which Schelling’s late philosophy must be read as a strong

---

ontological commitment in continuity with his early and middle phases, rather than a transcendentist account of Being radically different from his previous speculation.

Finally, a few words must be added about the concept of necessity. As I have said above, the being with which philosophy – intended as the withdrawal of negative philosophy into the positive and as the grounding of the positive philosophy on the negative – deals is the “necessarily necessary being”. In other words, given that the potential a priori conditions of God’s existence are necessary and not contingent, and given that the actualisation of such conditions does not come about by accident but is the narrowing down into existence of them, then such necessary conditions cannot but be necessarily actualised. This process, as already mentioned, is similar to the interplay between the two forces of matter and shows once again that the idea of necessity is of vital importance within Schelling’s speculation, besides reinforcing the immanentist features of his ontology.

Furthermore, in the light of all the above, it is also possible to conclude that Schelling’s ontology implicitly provides the answer to the “fundamental question of philosophy”. However, such an answer does not maintain nothingness as a recalcitrant and frustrated being that aims at moving from potentiality to actuality; on the contrary, the pure existing being, that is, that which merely and immediately is in accordance with its necessary structure, is itself the answer. Even Pareyson himself acknowledges this part of Schelling’s thought; however, while he argues that a proper answer to the fundamental question can be given only through radicalising the “threat of nothingness” and leaving aside any concern for the idea of necessity, I argue that the simple and bare fact that being immediately and concretely is can be considered as a sufficient answer to the “fundamental question”, without the need to call nothingness back into play. Indeed, Schelling’s understanding of Being itself, as I have explained it, definitively overcomes nothingness through the fact that it necessarily and unavoidably is.

In this sub-section, I have shown that it is possible to read Schelling’s late philosophy as an immanentist and monist ontology, rather than as a radical transcendentism. In support of this reading, I have shown that the key to understanding Schelling’s discourse lies in the interplay between potency and act, which in turn characterises the purely existing being. Therefore, such a reading provides a much more stable ground to understand Schelling’s philosophy, both because it allows us to argue in favour of a continuity of his thought, and because it relies on a concrete conception of the matter. Accordingly, in the next sub-section I
will argue against Pareyson’s reading of Schelling’s late philosophy, since it seems to be based on that same notion of transcendence that Schelling explicitly rejected; moreover, I will also argue that the “awe of reason”, pace Pareyson, cannot be understood as the key to understanding the passage between negative and positive philosophy, since I have already shown that its key moment lies in the ontological relation between potency and act.

2.3.2 A Critique of Pareyson’s Reading of Schelling

There is no doubt that Pareyson’s reading of Schelling provides some interesting and innovative elements, such as the definition of Schelling as simultaneously a post-Heideggerian and a post-Hegelian thinker, which allows Pareyson to point out both the actuality of Schelling’s philosophy and its divergence from Hegel’s thought. However, in this sub-section I will argue that such an interpretation ultimately fails to grasp the core of Schelling’s philosophy. As was the case for Jaspers and Heidegger, Pareyson seems more interested in emphasising those elements in Schelling’s thinking that could legitimate his own philosophy. Along these lines, it is not an unfair assessment to say that the conclusions drawn by Pareyson fundamentally diverge from the core of Schelling’s philosophy, as I will show below.

First, Pareyson is right in acknowledging that Schelling’s identity philosophy dispels the very possibility of nothingness through the idea of necessity: indeed, the opposite of nothingness is not somethingness, but wholeness, that is, the “unitotality of Being”, which in turn makes nothingness eternally impossible, as shown in §2.1.3. Hence, when it comes to the “fundamental question”, the very existence of Being, intended as wholeness, is already an answer to the question, since the possibility of nothingness is denied a priori. Hence, it follows that God is not a mere and inert conciliation of finite and infinite, but rather the living unity of them, consistent with Schelling’s identity philosophy. The latter is precisely that “unitotality of Being” that Pareyson acknowledges, although not convincingly, since in his opinion this unitotality dismisses nothingness too easily.

At the same time, as we have already seen, Pareyson is convinced not only that it is possible to answer the “fundamental question” differently, but also that it is needed to free Schelling from the idea of necessity in order to fully grasp the existential elements of his thought. Accordingly, Pareyson strongly emphasises the ecstatic feature of Schelling’s speculation, that is, the “being outside itself” of reason when facing the pure existing being,
which in turn causes dizziness and awe. That is, we experience awe and dizziness because we look at the purely existing being from the highest possible standpoint, which leads us out of ourselves and out of mere rationality. I have already explained this in detail in §2.1.3, so I will not return to it now. What I think is important to underline here is that Pareyson understands the abovementioned awe as the key concept to read and comprehend Schelling’s thought, with particular attention to the passage from negative to positive philosophy.

The awe of reason, Pareyson claims, has to be understood both “as torpidity of reason and as dizziness of reason”, since reason itself is, on the one hand, unable to translate the purely existing being into mere rational concepts, and on the other hand, it cannot but be astonished when facing the irreducible ulteriority of Being. That being the case, the awe of reason is the best expression of the true nature of Schelling’s speculation, which is neither rationalist nor irrationalist, and therefore can be considered as the key concept to grasp its deepest meaning. In this sense, the awe of reason is both the breaking point and the reconciliation point between negative and positive philosophy, that is, between abstract speculation and the concreteness of existence. Under these conditions, “the awe of reason would be not only the cornerstone on which the two philosophies are hinged, but even the central core of the whole philosophy in its rational and unitary discourse […] and] the originary and fundamental relation with Being”.

However, as I anticipated in the previous sub-section, I argue that such an interpretation is unconvincing, since it fails to grasp both those elements that I have defined as essential for Schelling’s ontology (i.e., the interplay between potency and act, immanentism and naturalism, etc.), and the internal coherence of Schelling’s philosophical activity, focusing only on the religious aspects. Hence, I will now criticise both the possibility of freeing Schelling from the idea of necessity and the centrality of the awe of reason in Schelling’s philosophy, which are the two fundamental points of Pareyson’s interpretation.

Regarding the first point, it must be acknowledged (as Pareyson himself does) that the idea of necessity is fundamental within Schelling’s philosophy, both in his early and in his mature phase. But it is precisely for this reason, I argue, that it is not possible to understand the real meaning of Schelling’s philosophy without maintaining the centrality of the idea of necessity. Besides what I have already argued in the previous sub-section, I will add that

---

235 SR, 521.
necessity, within Schelling’s account, does not exclude freedom, as Pareyson thinks. As also noted by Bernard Freydberg, the absolute unity and totality of Schelling’s philosophical system denies freedom only in appearance; as he writes, “the apparent clash of freedom and necessity is not a logical problem, nor is this clash something that can be treated from a distance. The clash is by its very nature provocative, calling forth a response that itself belongs to the meeting of freedom and necessity”.

That is, the clash and the alleged contradiction and inconsistency are provocative in the sense that they trigger and stimulate not only philosophy, but also life. Accordingly, “the contradiction is necessary for living science, and serves as the concealed inspiration without which life could not first come forth. […] One cannot opt for either freedom or necessity, although, if they are contradictory, one seemingly must opt for one or the other. […] Thus, the philosopher must undergo the contradiction of freedom and necessity, in order to arrive at the unwavering ‘concept of freedom, without which philosophy would be completely without value’”. However, this does not mean that Schelling’s philosophy has to be freed from the idea of necessity, but rather that necessity has to be understood not as the contrary of freedom, but rather as that which makes freedom actual and concrete.

In the previous chapter (§1.2.1), I have already explained that Schelling argues for an interrelation and mutual implication of freedom and necessity, from whose opposition life can emerge, so I will not return to it again. What is important to stress here is, once again, that necessity plays a very important role in Schelling’s speculation, including its late phase. In this sense, I have already explained (in the previous sub-section) that Schelling argues that God is not a merely necessary being, but rather the necessarily necessary being, meaning that God’s existence can neither be the result of sheer determination nor be prey to unprincipled arbitrariness. Therefore, it is only by reinstating the importance of necessity, that is to say the necessity of necessity, that it is possible to preserve the importance of freedom in Schelling’s thought, without falling into the naïve error of understanding necessity and freedom as essentially excluding each other.

The latter point, I argue, is strictly linked to my second point of criticism of Pareyson’s reading of Schelling. That is, the necessarily necessary being does not pertain exclusively to the abstract necessity of rational speculation (i.e., negative philosophy) nor to the concrete emergence of being in its existence (i.e., positive philosophy), but rather to the

237 Ibid., 17.
ontological jointure of these two occurrences, that is, to that pure act that resolves and includes potency in itself. As I have already argued, this is precisely the key point of Schelling’s discourse on negative and positive philosophy, since it is the core of his late ontology, which he develops in continuity with the early and middle phases of his thought. Consequently, Pareyson’s reading, according to which we should adopt the “awe of reason” as the privileged key to access the core of Schelling’s late speculation, should be rejected as not accurately representing Schelling’s thought.

Indeed, since Schelling’s philosophy (from the early to the late period) is essentially an immanentist and monist ontology of nature, it follows that the ontological kernel of Schelling’s late speculation lies precisely in the interplay between potency and act, as I have already shown in the previous sub-section. Accordingly, I argue that the abovementioned ontological kernel does not concern the awe of reason, but rather the fundamental structure of Being, which is intrinsically (and necessarily) necessary, meaning that it follows neither from a contingent freedom nor from mere chance. In other words, my point here is that the key to Schelling’s ontological discourse is not represented by the awe of reason, which at most can grasp one moment of the ontological process that occurs between potency and act; indeed, the awe of reason seems to force such ontological process in an exclusively religious direction, without taking the role of nature into proper account and dismissing the relevance of Schelling’s identity philosophy as merely transient. However, I have already said that there is a degree of continuity between the early and the late philosophy of Schelling, from which it follows that the conclusions he draws from his late reflections cannot be read as radically diverging from his philosophy of nature and his identity philosophy.

Furthermore, Pareyson himself acknowledges that Schelling does not provide a detailed reflection on the concept of awe of reason;238 conversely, I want to specify that the entire course of Schelling’s Berlin lectures revolves around the concept of true being and the following interplay between act and potency. Thus, it is more reasonable to assume that the latter, being the focal point of those lectures, is also the focal point of that specific period of Schelling’s speculation, rather than looking for such a focal point in some secondary and less frequently occurring elements. In other words, it is at least implausible, in my view, that Schelling deliberately decided to provide the key element of his late philosophy in a concept such as the awe of reason, which, by Pareyson’s own admission, recurs quite rarely in Schelling’s writings and lectures.

238 See the opening statement in Pareyson, “Lo stupore della ragione come messaggio di pensiero”, 507.
In addition, the awe of reason can supply only a partial understanding of the ontological process that Schelling outlines throughout his entire philosophical reflection, since it essentially emphasises the ecstatic feature of Schelling’s late philosophy (which is undoubtedly a very important moment of his reflection), but without integrating it with its material aspects. Put differently, Pareyson’s awe of reason appears to be inadequate since it fails to grasp the core of Schelling’s ontological discourse by giving an excessively strong role to religious aspects, dismissing too simplistically every other part of it. In fact, the centrality and prominence of the awe of reason can be justified only by endorsing Pareyson’s conception of transcendence, which has already been explained in the first part of this chapter. In this sense, the awe of reason can hardly be conciliated with Schelling’s definition of God as “the immanent made transcendent”, since Pareyson and Schelling seem to conceive of transcendence in two different ways.

In this respect, it must be first noted that Pareyson’s account of transcendence seems to recall that “relative transcendence”, insofar as it is given in relation with the transcended object, which Schelling rejects in favour of an “absolute transcendence”, as I have already explained. Secondly, Pareyson also misunderstands Schelling’s interrelation between immanence and transcendence: indeed, while Schelling claims that God is the immanent made transcendent, Pareyson writes that for Schelling “God is the transcendent made immanent”. By so doing, Pareyson inverts the terms of the question, in fact giving his statement an opposite meaning. That is, it is one thing to move from the immanent and make it transcendent (as Schelling does), and another thing to move from the transcendent and make it immanent (as Pareyson does). In the first case, it is possible to understand transcendence in an absolute sense, since it is not given in its relation with the transcended object but in its sheer existence; in the second case, conversely, transcendence cannot but be relative, since it makes sense only in its relation with that which is transcended and therefore assuming it as an absolute starting point is nothing but an arbitrary statement.

Accordingly, I argue that by inverting the terms of Schelling’s claim, as Pareyson does, we arrive at a form of transcendentist philosophy that is both alien to Schelling’s thought and fallacious from an argumentative point of view. That is, moving from transcendence to understand immanence inevitably amounts to basing philosophical reflection on an unstable ground, which rather than certifying the finitude of human

239 “Gott ist nicht, wie viele sich vorstellen, das Transcendente, er ist das immanent (d. h. das zum Inhalt der Vernunft) gemachte Transcendente.” SW, II, 3, 170; PP, 209. See also above, note 227.
240 See SR, 519.
experience and rationality through a speculative analysis, dogmatically assumes them as inescapable facts on which to build a specific line of reasoning. In other words, positing transcendence as the first term of the relation with immanence automatically implies movement from positive philosophy and not from negative philosophy, thus effectively not acknowledging the a priori and potential condition of the actual existence of God and therefore making it fundamentally arbitrary and abstract.

Schelling’s idea of “the immanent made transcendent” describes precisely the opposite process: the sheer, pure and transcendent existence of God cannot occur without moving from immanence, that is to say that the rational and a priori conditions given by negative philosophy are the essential and inescapable first step in order to make immanence transcendent, to resolve potentiality into actuality and to grasp both God’s divinity and God’s existence. Hence, moving from transcendence to make it immanent neither grasps the sense of Schelling’s ontological process, which in turn grounds the discourse about negative and positive philosophy, nor provides an absolute and trustworthy account of transcendence, understanding it only relatively, that is, only as related to the transcended object, and reiterating the mistake of the old metaphysics.

Finally, if we return to the abovementioned analogy between potency and act on one side and the negative and positive forces of matter on the other, another incongruence of Pareyson’s discourse emerges. Indeed, just as the positive and expansive force needs to be immediately narrowed down by the negative one in order to avoid indiscriminate expansion, the negative and rational conditions of existence have to precede positive and actual existence in order to make it real and determined. That is precisely why, in Schelling’s discourse, negative philosophy comes before positive philosophy and the immanent is made transcendent (and not vice versa). In contrast, by following Pareyson’s line of argument, we would be facing indiscriminate expansion, unintelligible existence, which leads to an unsustainable form of ontology based on no criteria but the arbitrary belief of those who posit it.

Therefore, even the awe of reason can be considered at most as the acknowledgement that there is a missing piece in philosophical discourse, namely the acknowledgement that the negative and a priori preconditions of existence are lacking and arbitrarily posited only at a later stage. Nevertheless, the latter statement is very far from grasping the core of Schelling’s ontological discourse, as well as his understanding of negative and positive philosophy, as I
have already explained. Once again, Pareyson’s transcendentism, besides differing from Schelling’s monist and immanentist ontology, does not seem to rely on a solid and stable ground. In the next sub-section, I will say something more against Pareyson’s notion of transcendence; for now, I think I have provided enough arguments to show the fundamental flaws of such a reading.

To sum up, I have shown that Pareyson’s reading of Schelling has to be considered as misleading and incorrect for at least two reasons: the emphasis on the awe of reason as the main interpretative key of Schelling’s late thought, and the dismissal of necessity in favour of a re-actualisation of nothingness intended as concrete possibility. Both these reasons are directly related to Pareyson’s conception of transcendence, which is different from Schelling’s, since the former understands it in a relative way, which had already been rejected by Schelling qua dogmatic and old-fashioned. Moreover, I have also shown that Pareyson’s interpretation, being focused on the awe of reason and based on his own understanding of transcendence, misses the target of Schelling’s late speculation, which is centred not on awe and dizziness but on the ontological and material process that occurs between potency and act.

In conclusion, a few words should be added about the undeniably religious core of Pareyson’s discourse. As I have said at the beginning of this sub-section, Pareyson’s interpretation of Schelling’s philosophy can be easily read as an attempt to pick up those parts of it that could legitimate Pareyson’s own philosophical view. Besides the elements of inaccuracy that I have already addressed, I also want to further stress that Pareyson excessively emphasises the religious features of Schelling’s late philosophy in order to legitimate and ground (without much success, I believe) his own transcendentist and religious philosophy.

This tendency is particularly clear in the very last phase of Pareyson’s philosophy, that is, his hermeneutics of myth (which I have already addressed in §2.2.3). Although Schelling is the main point of reference for Pareyson’s speculation on myth, I argue that even in this case there is a crucial difference between the two thinkers. I have already shown that Pareyson draws from Schelling the distinction from the allegorical and the tautegorical nature of mythology, also having the merit of further problematising it through the differentiation between mythology and myth; however, it must be noted that Pareyson develops his reflection on myth in a very different way. Indeed, while Schelling aims at providing a
concrete and historical analysis of the role of mythology in human understanding of religion, Pareyson outlines myth as fundamentally and ineluctably transcendent and beyond human rationality.

It is not my intention to scrutinise Schelling’s reflections on mythology, since here I just want to point out the main differences from Pareyson’s approach to that question. In this sense, Schelling’s “mythology lectures not only are rich in concepts and their development but also offer a full engagement with both the ancient mythological world’s historical detail and a broad swath of the scholarly literature available during Schelling’s era”.241 Moreover, Schelling does not understand mythology as a supernatural occurrence, but as a natural process and as an early stage of a fully developed religious consciousness.242 (Pareyson would agree on this.) In other words, Schelling integrates a purely speculative approach to the question of mythology with a historical and critical one, in order to grasp both the theoretical fruitfulness and the development throughout time of this question. Again, I will not discuss the validity of Schelling’s conclusion on this point, since my aim is exclusively to underline the difference between his approach and Pareyson’s.

Differently from Schelling’s approach in his analysis on myth, Pareyson does not take into consideration any historical example, since he aims at legitimating and showing the concreteness of his reflection through transcendence and religious faith in the individual person. In this respect, I have already said that Pareyson understands myth as the most appropriate way of grasping and expressing the transcendence of God; however, given the abovementioned relativity and arbitrariness of Pareyson’s conception of transcendence, it can be argued that Pareyson’s hermeneutics of myth reiterates the same mistake of his reading of Schelling’s negative and positive philosophy. In this sense, one has the feeling that Pareyson’s religious faith, insofar as it pervades his whole philosophy, is assumed as an inescapable starting point, rather than reached as the final goal of his speculation, which I consider to be more a weakness than a strong point of Pareyson’s argumentation.

In the final analysis, as already mentioned in the previous sub-section, Pareyson’s hermeneutics of myth, by maintaining the inescapability of human finitude, radically excludes the possibility for humankind of reaching the “God’s-eye point of view”, marking another relevant difference from Schelling’s philosophy. That is, as I have already explained,

241 M. Richey, “Translator’s Introduction” to PM, xvi.
Pareyson argues that the only way through which we can be related to the transcendence of God, Being and truth is our constitutive openness, which however does not allow us to be such transcendence, but only to be within the relation with it. From such a religious understanding cannot but follow that the God’s-eye point of view has to be considered as ontologically superior and eternally unattainable for the human being. Nevertheless, here Pareyson moves once again from his misleading notion of transcendence, which I believe invalidates his position on this issue.

As for Schelling, the God’s-eye point of view is the natural standpoint of intuition, intended as Anschauung, that is, as the act of “atlooking” at things in their essence (as I have already explained in the first chapter). In other words, this is nothing but looking at things in their immediate presence, in their sheer existence, that is, nothing but looking at being itself, in the sense I have defined it above. Hence, the God’s-eye point of view is not only possible but necessary in order to make the immanent transcendent, to resolve potency within act, to restore the unity of subject and object, of Ideal and Real, and to allow the passage from negative to positive philosophy. In this sense, rather than emphasising the constitutive finitude of all human beings or grounding a transcendentist and religious account, the God’s-eye point of view is a further element in support of the immanentist and monist reading of Schelling’s ontology, as I have already argued. In fact, Schelling’s understanding of the God’s-eye point of view radically differs from the understanding of the epistemic ideal of the “God’s-eye view” in traditional metaphysics; the crucial difference here resides in his endorsement of the immanence of things in God within his Naturphilosophie, which can be understood (as I have already explained in the previous chapter) as an ontology of immanence and not of transcendence.

At this point, I think I have said enough to show the inadequacy of Pareyson’s interpretation of Schelling, which was the main point of the current sub-section. In the next section, I will return to Pareyson’s conception of transcendence in order to provide a general criticism of his philosophical system, and particularly of his conceptions of Evil and freedom. In particular, I will argue that Pareyson’s discourse on Evil and freedom not only shifted the question onto a hermeneutic and existential level, but then developed it into a form of religious transcendentism that is, in my view, hardly sustainable from an ontological point of view.
2.3.3 A General Critique to Pareyson’s Existential Hermeneutics

In the light of what has been said, one might now wonder to what extent Pareyson’s philosophy is relevant for the main issue of this dissertation, that is, the question of Evil, given the objections I have moved against his reading of Schelling. The answer to this question is that Pareyson’s philosophy represents both an original and a necessary development of Schelling’s understanding of Evil; that is, Pareyson’s hermeneutic and existential interpretation follows from Schelling’s urgency to understand Evil concretely, in opposition to the abstractness of the old metaphysics (and of Leibniz’s theodicy in particular), which pretended to reduce Evil to a mere lack of Good. Accordingly, Pareyson’s understanding is inscribed in this attempt to reject the abstractness of metaphysics and to grasp Evil in its concrete occurrence. Hence, as I have argued, Pareyson advocates for the necessity of overcoming Hegel’s rationalism, which he regards as abstract, in the name of a revaluation of the concreteness of the individual existence of the living person. However, I argue that Pareyson’s existential hermeneutics, despite its relevance and originality, results into an unsustainable ontology of transcendence that is ultimately unviable.

Moving from the “dissolution of Hegelianism”, Pareyson aims at giving a central and prominent role to the concept of situation (i.e., our being here-and-now and our relation with the external world) and to the ontological relation between the human being and Being itself, which in turn is given in terms of transcendence and religious experience. However, such a starting point is already problematic for at least two reasons: first, Pareyson’s notion of transcendence appears to be weak and arbitrary, as I have shown in the previous sub-section; secondly, in some cases Pareyson seems to embrace some of the instances of that metaphysical rationalism that he rejected and labelled as abstract, even if he addresses them in a strictly religious way.

Regarding the latter point, it must be said that, although Pareyson was very critical of Hegel in his early writings, in the later phase of his thought he returns to the concept of negation of the negation, albeit in a non-rationalistic understanding and without directly mentioning Hegel himself. Indeed, in 1949 Pareyson criticised Hegel’s alleged ambiguity in relation to the finite and to religion: in the first case, he accused Hegel of trying both to preserve the finite in its own reality and to resolve it into the infinite; in the second case, Pareyson saw in Hegel both the exalting of religion, whose dogmas are nothing but the content of philosophy, and the denial of religion itself, understood as an obsolete and
outdated form of philosophy. As a response, Pareyson claims that “existentialism was born essentially as a philosophy of crisis. Crisis means dissolution of a conclusion and the problem of a new beginning” referring to the philosophical necessity of overcoming Hegelian idealism (i.e., the “conclusion” of a philosophical era) in favour of the development of an existentialist reflection (i.e., the “new beginning”).

Regardless of the accuracy of Pareyson’s criticism of Hegel (which is questionable), what is important to note here is that Hegel’s philosophy represents an important point of reference, even if in a negative sense, for the early Pareyson; moreover, as pointed out by Pagano, Pareyson deals with the philosophy of Hegel (and welcomes some of its ideas) even in the mature phase of his reflection. Further, I want to highlight that Pareyson, in the process of developing the abovementioned “temerarious discourse” on Evil, does not openly endorse Hegel’s dialectics – but he endorses the idea of the double negation (negation of the negation), assimilating it to negative theology and to its mythical and symbolic language. Referring to the examples of Meister Eckhart and Angelus Silesius, Pareyson claims that God can be understood as negation of the negation and that such an understanding rightfully belongs to that hermeneutics of religious experience that is the core of his philosophy.

Specifically, Pareyson argues that Eckhart’s and Silesius’s claims according to which nothing exists outside God and that God Godself is true nothingness do not have to be interpreted as metaphysical claims: indeed, in that case they would lead us either to nihilism or to pantheism. Rather, if we understand them as an expression of negative theology, it is then possible to grasp both their philosophical and their religious meaning. Hence, in Eckhart’s and Silesius’s thought, God “implies a negation of the negation, both in the divine reality and in the human discourse. […] Then,] the negation of the negation is nothing but affirmation”, namely the affirmation of God’s “ontological fullness” and God’s transcendence. In this way, Pareyson believes, God overcomes nothingness and affirms God’s transcendence, also giving the material world a stable foundation.

My point here is not that Pareyson endorses Hegel’s understanding of the negation of the negation, but rather that (and I agree with Pagano on this point) in his thought there are some elements that recall – directly or indirectly – the philosophy of Hegel. Therefore, rather
than overcome that which he called “Hegel’s abstract metaphysical rationalism”, in this specific case Pareyson seems to try to rethink Hegel’s dialectics of the negation in the light of his own religious hermeneutics. However, such an attempt partly delegitimises Pareyson’s starting point, since the “dissolution of Hegel’s metaphysical rationalism” becomes nothing but the translation of it into radically religious terms. In addition to that, Pareyson uses his understanding of the negation of the negation to introduce his “temerarious discourse” on Evil and essentially connects it to God’s transcendence, resulting in a rigid and dogmatic form of philosophy that is hardly sustainable outside the frame of Pareyson’s religious faith.

Before moving to the question of Evil, I intend to critically analyse Pareyson’s notion of transcendence, in addition to what I have already said in the previous sub-section. A slight criticism of it has already been raised by Antonio Calcagno, who writes that “a pure and absolute infinity, as contained and manifested in Pareyson’s view of God, is a religious possibility, a possibility registered in one’s own faith system, but it is hard to say that the infinity of God is revealed in the very transcendence opened up by the Pareysonian initiative, if we understand it outside the rubric of Pareyson’s Christian commitment”. However, I intend to go beyond Calcagno’s argument and to focus on the examples of transcendence provided by Pareyson in his *Ontology of Freedom* (which I have outlined in §2.2.2), in order to argue that they reveal a biased and dogmatic approach to the question of transcendence and lack argumentative strength.

As I have shown, Pareyson believes that nature, moral law, history and the unconscious are the main examples of transcendence, due to their fundamental alterity to human beings and their being unavailable to every possibility of rational control. However, I argue that Pareyson’s line of reasoning on this point is mostly rhetorical and weakly supported by argument; also, I argue that the alterity and irreducibility to human rationality of one thing does not consequently imply its transcendence, both if we understand transcendence as that divine principle that is beyond every possible experience and if we understand it as a relation that excludes the reconciliation of its terms. Put differently, Pareyson’s point of view is fundamentally biased by his religious faith, which is assumed as both starting and end point of his reasoning, as both unit of measure and what is to be measured.

---

In this respect, I have already shown that Pareyson believes that nature has to be considered as transcendent due to its being unfathomable and mysterious, while the transcendence of the moral law is determined by the impossibility for human beings to rule and regulate the moral law itself. Also, Pareyson postulates the transcendence of history, since its goal is outside itself and then exceeds human actions, and of the unconscious, which grounds our consciousness but ultimately eludes rationality, as well as consciousness itself. Put simply, Pareyson summarises the transcendence of the abovementioned occurrences in the conception that we cannot dispose of them at our convenience, but rather we fear them, and we feel we are impelled to obey them, even unwillingly.

The weakness of Pareyson’s argument, I believe, emerges quite clearly here. First, as I anticipated, Pareyson’s statements on transcendence are largely rhetorical, that is, they are mostly confined to a mere religious contemplation without being accompanied by a speculative analysis. Indeed, saying that nature is unfathomable, indifferent and even hostile to human beings does not prove its transcendence; similarly, the transcendence of the moral law cannot be proven by its alleged inescapable imperative character – actually, this does not even prove that a moral law, as Pareyson understands it, effectively exists. And yet, claiming that both the immemorability of the past and the unpredictability of the future make history transcendent and exceed all human activities is hardly a convincing argument; it is supported only by an arbitrary decision (by Pareyson’s own admission249) rather than by empirical evidence. Finally, the claim that the unconscious is home to occult forces and to repressed tendencies is still a long way from proving the transcendence of the unconscious itself.

Moreover, I also argue against Pareyson’s claim according to which the philosophical meaning of transcendence is the acknowledgement that the human being is not everything and the totality of the world is not exhausted in her. In other words, I argue that, while it is undoubtedly true that the totality of the world is ulterior to and not exhausted in the human being, such an ulteriority is not necessarily given in terms of transcendence. Indeed, saying that there are other realities than the human being is perfectly compatible with the immanentist ontology of nature that I have attributed to Schelling in §2.3.1. Indeed, such an ontology does not imply that the entire reality exhausts itself in the human being, but rather that that which exceeds and is other than the human being does not belong to an alleged supernatural and unattainable ontological level.

249 See above, note 165.
Specifically, Pareyson’s words about the transcendence of nature seem to pertain exclusively to a religious and quasi-fictional account of nature itself, since he limits himself to enunciating the alleged transcendent features of it relying only on the emotional sphere (fear, obedience, hostility, etc.). Additionally, a transcendent and normative moral law, whose existence depends only on a supernatural decree of God, seems to clash with the understanding of Evil as an ontological force, rather than as a moral principle. That is, if Evil has to be understood primarily as ontological and not as moral or axiological, then there is no need to affirm the existence of a moral law whose normative validity transcends the immanence of things, since the interplay and the struggle between Good and Evil can be understood as a material occurrence. Once again, Pareyson builds his claim in the emotional sphere, which however has very little speculative strength.

Moreover, when it comes to the transcendence of the past and the future, Pareyson tries to reinforce his point by quoting Schelling’s exclamation “O the Past, you abyss of thoughts! [O Vergangenheit, du Abgrund der Gedanken!]”\(^{250}\). However, although Schelling’s phrase refers to that timeless ground of our actions, and that unconscious and eternally past beginning of our temporal existence, which I have already outlined in §1.2.1, such an expression is not aimed at endorsing the transcendence of history and of temporality. As explained by Wirth, “[Schelling, who] considered every thing of nature to be organic, here claimed that what is most essential, most wesentlich, of nature, the ground that abides once everything accidental in nature has been removed, is not at all a ground but an Ab-grund, an abyss”\(^{251}\). However, that abyssal and “non-grounding” ground of temporality does not imply the transcendence of history in the sense Pareyson understands it, but rather remarks that our first and initial drive to action is primarily unconscious and not reducible to chronological temporality, that is, to our understanding of it, without dismissing the immanent nature of it. Rather, such an abyssal ground becomes clear if we understand it in terms of the immanent, unconscious and original drive of our actions, rather than as a transcendent and immaterial occurrence.

The same applies to Pareyson’s conception of the unconscious, whose alleged transcendence is fundamentally misleading. That is, the fact that the unconscious precedes and forms our consciousness and that it encloses “occult forces” does not have to lead us to the conclusion that the unconscious is transcendent. Here, Pareyson’s point is again rhetorical

\(^{250}\) See OL, 92. On this point, see also J. M. Wirth, “Foreword” to PM, viii.

and not properly argued. Also, Pareyson attributes to Sigmund Freud the conception according to which “the man [l’uomo] is not master in his own house”, while Freud says that “the Ego is not even master in its own house”, since it is unaware of the unconscious activity of the human psyche. However, he does not refer to der Mann (l’uomo, “the man” – in the sense of “the human being”), but to das Ich (“the I” or “the Ego”). Without going into too many details of Freud’s thought, it suffices to say that referring to the Ego is equivalent to referring to a very specific part of the human being’s psyche (which is composed by Id, Ego and Super-Ego) and not to the human being in toto, which in turn cannot be reduced to the sole Ego. Thus, the unconscious is not transcendent because it eludes human rational control, but rather it is that which immanently grounds human psychic activity.

Concluding on this point, I think I have shown that Pareyson’s notion of transcendence is to be rejected not only because it fits with that which Schelling defined as “relative transcendence” (and rejected as outdated and unviable), but also because the examples of transcendence that Pareyson provides are misleading and rely on a merely rhetorical basis.

I will now make some further observations about Pareyson’s conceptions of Evil and freedom, which I consider as very strictly related to his interpretation of transcendence, and the key points of his hermeneutical and existential account.

As I have already argued, Pareyson’s contribution to the discourse on Evil is both original and necessary, since it is a consequence of Schelling’s need to rethink the question of Evil from an ontological point of view. In this sense, Pareyson undoubtedly has the merit of further developing the reflection on this question by focusing on the concreteness of human existence and understanding it hermeneutically, by which he means as a personal interpretation of it. Nevertheless, while Pareyson’s speculation represents a necessary step forward along the lines envisaged by Schelling, I believe that it cannot be considered as the final resolution of the question and has to be put aside in favour of a naturalist and non-religious account.

252 See OL, 96.
253 “Die dritte und empfindlichste Kränkung aber soll die menschliche Größensucht durch die heutige psychologische Forschung erfahren, welche dem Ich nachweisen will, daß es nicht einmal Herr ist im eigenen Hause, sondern auf kärlich Nachrichten angewiesen bleibt von dem, was unbewußt in seinem Seelenleben vorgeht.” See Sigmund Freud, Gesammelte Werke, vol. XI, Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1969), 295.
My main criticism of Pareyson’s thought is that, through its understanding of Evil and freedom, it opens up to religious experience, which in turn is characterised as a dualist and transcendentist ontology. Indeed, not only does such an ontology not comply with the one developed by Schelling, but it is also hardly sustainable outside the frame of Pareyson’s religious beliefs. Put differently, Pareyson correctly draws on Schelling when he claims that the origin of Evil is in God and its perpetration is attributable to the human being; however, he seems to have very little reason to shift the question on to the field of religious experience, or better to understand philosophy itself as the hermeneutics of religious experience. Once again, I believe that such an understanding reveals a biased approach to philosophy itself, as well as a circular way of argumentation: indeed, the final point (namely the transcendence of Being itself in a strictly religious sense) is already arbitrarily assumed as the starting point of his reflection, leaving no room for a different conclusion.

Consequently, it seems possible to deduce, from Pareyson’s thought, a form of dualism of the principles, according to which Good and Evil, Being and nothingness, and freedom and nothingness are ontologically different and separated. Such a dualism, I think, leaves no room for the reconciliation of the principles theorised by Schelling (which I explained in the first chapter); moreover, it clearly reflects Pareyson’s notion of the transcendence of Being, and of the ontological gap between Being itself and finite human beings, and it reiterates its inaccuracies. Hence, I argue once again that a form of monism (which in turn is inscribed in the ontology of immanence) has to be preferred to such a dualism, in order to avoid the unseemliness of that ontology of transcendence that derives from Pareyson’s existential and religious hermeneutics.

In addition to what I have already said in the previous sections of this chapter, I now intend to further stress that the hermeneutics of religious experience advocated by Pareyson not only is not the only way to grasp the relation of the opposites, that is, Good and Evil, or Being and nothingness, but it is not even the most appropriate one. That is, the equating of philosophical reflection with the hermeneutics of religious experience results in a dialectics of transcendence that maintains that abstractness that Pareyson wanted to overcome. In other words, the ontology developed by Pareyson is understandable only through his own religious faith, which is built on a personal and arbitrary belief, while a philosophy that aims at being concrete should be able to demonstrate the validity of religious faith without dogmatically assuming it as its starting point.
Moreover, while it is true that the core of reality is animated by the fundamental conflict between Good and Evil, it is no less true that such conflict can be understood in a non-religious way. Indeed, as Schelling argues, the concreteness of this conflict is given by the fact that the two forces in play are characterised as two different and opposing wills, fighting each other for supremacy over Being and over the Real (as I have defined it in the first chapter). Further, this struggle occurs not only within Being, but is also that which animates Being itself and makes life possible (as Schelling claims, “where there is no struggle, there is no life”\textsuperscript{254}). This also implies that meontology is not to be considered as the alternative possibility to ontology, that is to say that nothingness is not to be considered as an alternative ontological possibility to Being, as Pareyson claims.

In addition, while the understanding of Being as essentially free is correct, defining freedom as an abyss and as originating from nothingness still leaves some perplexities. That is, as I have repeatedly said, relating freedom and necessity does not imply the annulment of freedom itself in the name of blind determinism; rather, it reinforces the concept of freedom by making freedom itself necessary and not an arbitrary choice and a relative beginning. In Pareyson’s case, freedom and transcendence cannot be considered as absolute, but should be regarded as relative: that is, in Pareyson’s reading freedom is not necessary, and therefore absolute and unavoidable, but it depends on its relation with nothingness, from which it originates, and therefore it is given only in this transcendent and arbitrarily posed relation. God’s original choice of Good and Being over Evil and nothingness is a necessary one, in the sense that God Godself becomes subject to it without any possibility of overturning it; otherwise, such a choice would be relative and extremely weak, since the rejected option could have equally been chosen.

Therefore, the structure of Being follows from the interplay between freedom and necessity, resulting in its being both a free choice and the only possible choice: indeed, nothingness is not a viable ontological possibility, but a merely logical negative term of comparison with no real ontological value. From this follows, as I have argued, both the absoluteness of freedom and Being and the immanent nature of Being itself and God. In this sense, both Schelling and Pareyson believe that nothing can occur outside the Godhead, but while the former understands it as a statement for the immanence of things in God, the latter prefers a religious explanation according to which everything has to be led back to God’s originary and unfathomable transcendence. Put simply, while for Schelling the immanence of

\textsuperscript{254} I have explained this in §1.1.3.
things in God can be understood as a philosophy of nature, for Pareyson the claim that everything is in God can be understood only in a religious way – a result that is hardly sustainable if one does not embrace Pareyson’s religious faith.

Furthermore, I argue that Pareyson’s claim according to which freedom speaks the language of religious myth (which I have explained in §2.2.1) has to be questioned; conversely, on the basis of the arguments I have provided in support of an ontology of immanence, it is more reasonable to argue that the language of freedom is the one of nature. That is, freedom is not a transcendent occurrence that risks falling back into nothingness, but rather an immanent one that is narrowed down and made possible by its interplay with necessity. I think I have already provided enough evidence in support of this last point; in any case, I will further deepen it in the next chapter, when I will resume the discourse on freedom intended as ontological resistance (i.e., *Widerstand*), which I initiated in the final part of the first chapter.

Concluding on this point, I maintain Pareyson’s argument according to which freedom and Evil are to be understood respectively as beginning and choice, and as an ontological occurrence rather than a moral principle; however, I also argue that such concepts can be grasped neither in a hermeneutical and religious frame nor in a dialectics of transcendence. Despite acknowledging the relevance of Pareyson’s response to the demand of concreteness initiated by Schelling, I also argue that the dualist and transcendentist ontology developed by Pareyson fails to address this demand in a viable way. Indeed, Pareyson’s discourse on Evil, freedom and transcendence moves from his religious faith, that is, begins with an act of abstraction that prevents him from properly developing the premises laid by Schelling. As a result, Pareyson’s arguments are sometimes weak and rhetorical, aimed more at justifying his religious faith than at developing a strong philosophical argument.

In the final analysis, I want to underline that for both Pareyson and Schelling the concept of crisis plays a very important role, even if each considers it in different ways. I have already shown that Schelling’s notion of *krisis* is strongly characterised in an ontological sense, since it refers to the struggle between Good and Evil. As for Pareyson, he understands the notion of crisis in a more hermeneutical way. Indeed, I have mentioned that he understands existentialism as “philosophy of the crisis”, where crisis means the problem of the conclusion and of a new beginning: so, crisis being that moment in which stasis is
impossible and mutation is inevitable (as I have explained in §1.1.3), in Pareyson’s case the crisis is purely hermeneutic, since it is due to that which he called the dissolution of Hegelian metaphysics, the response to which is his own existentialism. In other words, Pareyson builds his own existential hermeneutics on the crisis of abstract rational metaphysics, trying to refocus philosophy on the concreteness of personal existence.

As Pareyson himself writes, existentialism is the only possible response to the crisis of Hegelian metaphysics, since “it proves the inanity of the haughtiness of reason, of the enormous hubris of the human being who wanted to pose herself in God’s point of view, of the modern principle of the complementarity of finite and infinite”. However, I have already shown both that such a conception results in an unsustainable ontology of transcendence, and that it is possible, by reiterating Schelling’s thought, to assume the so-called “God’s-eye point of view” without exiting the level of immanence. Hence, the solution offered by Pareyson to the crisis of philosophy does not solve the crisis itself, since it still maintains that abstractness that Pareyson ascribes to metaphysical rationalism, and also strengthens it through Pareyson’s biased religious approach.

In the light of all the above, I want to draw the following final conclusions: first, it has to be acknowledged that Pareyson’s existential hermeneutics represents an innovative and necessary dialectic relating to Schelling’s rejection of “the old metaphysics”, since it both tackles the question of Evil from an original point of view and has a non-negligible role in Western philosophy of the 20th century. Secondly, I also argue that Pareyson’s account has to be rejected, since it results in a form of ontology that is essentially dualist and transcendentist, which I have already proven as an unviable and arbitrary move. Thus, Pareyson’s response to the “crisis of philosophy” can be regarded, on the one hand, as necessary and unavoidable, but on the other hand, it is to be considered as a sort of “negative example” of the reflection on Evil, that is, a possible outcome that has to be rejected qua misleading and impracticable. Consequently, in the next (and last) chapter, I will further reiterate my arguments in favour of an ontology of immanence, showing how it can lead us both to a more solid understanding of the question of Evil and to an original understanding of freedom, by connecting it with the concept of Widerstand.

---

255 EP, 87.
Chapter 3

Towards an Ontology of Immanence:
Freedom as Resistance

As we reach the end of this dissertation, my aim is not only to maintain the discourse on Evil and freedom on an ontological level, but also to radicalise the ontological nature of such discourse, that is, to present it as a theory of Being, in addition to the conclusions reached in the previous chapters. That is, once we assume, together with Schelling and Pareyson, that Good, Evil and freedom have to be understood ontologically and not morally, then it follows that such concepts have to be understood in relation to Being and its occurrences and modalities, rather than as some sort of detached or otherworldly principles.

Subsequently, I also argue that such a discourse, that is, such a theory of Being, concerns the immanence of Being itself and includes transcendence only if we understand it as “the immanent made transcendent”, namely in accordance with Schelling’s understanding of it, which I have explained in the previous chapter. In other words, I am arguing that transcendence cannot be understood as the starting point of a viable ontology of Evil and freedom, since it would lead us to an abstract and relative form of ontology, that is, one in which the transcendent Being is irremediably related to the transcended object, as I have already shown. Conversely, immanence is, I argue, the only legitimate starting point to correctly grasp the nature of Evil and freedom: I have already addressed this point in the previous chapters, and will reinforce it in this chapter by showing how the development of an ontology of immanence provides us with a solid and concrete understanding of the main issue I have tackled throughout my dissertation, that is, the dynamic of Good and Evil and the nature of freedom.
More specifically, in this chapter I will present my own conclusions regarding the discourses on Evil and freedom, building both on the interpretation of Schelling I have provided in the first chapter and on the rejection of the religious outcomes of Pareyson’s existential hermeneutics, which I have addressed in the second chapter. In detail, in the first section of this chapter I will focus on the ontology of Evil, by showing its radically immanent nature, that is, its material essence. In other words, I will argue that to understand Evil ontologically is equivalent to defining it in material terms, which in turn means ascribing it to matter and to the level of immanence. In the second section I will explain how such an understanding of Evil can lead us to grasp absolute experience, namely experience in its very emerging moment and in its being not yet personal experience. Finally, I will conclude this chapter by attempting a definition of freedom in terms of resistance, that is, understanding freedom not only as essentially related to resistance, but also as a form of resistance, resistance itself being a fundamental element of the struggle between Good and Evil and therefore of life as such.

3.1 The Immanence of Evil

The first theoretical move I intend to make in order to outline an ontology of immanence is to reinstate the immanence of Evil, moving from Schelling’s philosophy and in the light of the rejection of Pareyson’s hermeneutical and religious interpretation of it. In other words, reinstating the immanence of Evil means, on the one hand, maintaining its understanding at an ontological level rather than a moral one, and on the other hand, bearing in mind the unreliability of the hermeneutical and religious approach, of which Pareyson is the initiator and one of the most significant proponents(as I have showed in the previous chapter). Thus, I argue that the immanence of Evil implies a material understanding of it (that is, an understanding in light of its struggle against the Good) and its being a constitutive part of the process of absolute experience and of freedom intended as resistance. By so doing, I will both maintain Schelling’s ontological shift on the question of Evil, and move it beyond the philosophical impasse to which we are led by Pareyson’s ontology of transcendence.

In the first two chapters, I have explained both Schelling’s ontological reading of Evil and Pareyson’s reinterpretation of such a reading, so I will consider these elements as fully established. However, there are still some considerations that I need to point out. As I have
anticipated, I want to outline an immanentist account of Evil by both maintaining the valid points of Schelling’s understanding and by rejecting the outcomes of Pareyson’s existential hermeneutics and of the ontology of transcendence that follows from it. Hence, I will show how a correct understanding of Evil in ontological terms inevitably leads us to an ontology of immanence; moreover, by so doing I will also reinforce the conclusion I came to in the second chapter, that is, the idea that Pareyson’s existential and hermeneutic approach to the question of Evil is a necessary one in order to oppose the abstractness of the “old metaphysics”, but one that Pareyson develops it into a form of religious transcendentism that falls back into the same abstractness and arbitrariness that it originally wanted to avoid, and that ultimately turns out to be an unviable philosophical solution.

Accordingly, I argue that to understand Evil on an ontological level, rather than on a moral one, necessarily means understanding it in material terms, which in turn implies that Evil fundamentally pertains to matter itself and not to some supernatural and transcendent occurrence. Thus, Evil is to be understood (as Schelling does, drawing from Kant¹) as a concrete and immanent force, that is, a moving force that animates and gives life to matter through the struggle against the Good, which in turn is the moving force opposing Evil and hence its ontological counterpart. However, so far nothing has been added to Schelling’s definition of Evil, since all I have done was to further highlight his immanentist approach to this question. But what needs to be specified is that, in the light of the inadequacy and rejection of Pareyson’s approach, not only does Evil become knowable only as immanent, but its immanence can lead us to a different understanding of freedom and experience, as I will show in the next two sections of this chapter.

For the moment, I want to focus exclusively on the immanence of Evil, in order both to provide an alternative to the transcendentist reading of Pareyson and to lay the ground for discourse on absolute experience and resistance, which will be the focus of the next (and last) two sections. But let us take a step back and recall the starting point about the question of Evil, which is, for Schelling, the exigency of giving Evil a proper and autonomous reality. In order to do this, Schelling argues that every form of thought aimed at defining Evil as a mere lack of Good and at denying its effectiveness and concreteness has to be rejected. As I have explained in chapter 1, the main target of Schelling’s criticism is Leibniz’s rational theodicy, according to

¹ Here I am referring to the influence exerted by Kant’s *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* on Schelling’s philosophy of nature, which I have addressed in the first chapter.
which Evil is a mere deprivation of Being and therefore cannot be thought of as autonomously existing. Consequently, Schelling feels the need to liberate Western philosophy from the abstractness of sheer rationalism, as well as from the inaccuracies of the so-called “old metaphysics”, as I have shown.

Even Pareyson’s contribution has to be inscribed within the same theoretical demand, namely the demand to avoid those forms of philosophy that deny Evil in its real existence. Moreover, Pareyson is the first one to openly and broadly interpret the question of Evil from an existential and hermeneutical point of view, while maintaining his discourse on an ontological level. Nevertheless, his speculation presupposes a radicalisation in a transcendent sense of key concepts such as Being, truth and freedom, that falls into an even deeper form of abstraction and arbitrariness, as I have shown in the previous chapter. As a result, it ultimately fails not only to grasp the effective ontological reality of Evil, but also to develop a viable and concrete ontology.

Therefore, Pareyson’s ontology has to be considered in the first place as an inevitable and necessary development of Schelling’s discourse on Evil, although such a development addresses the question of Evil on an impracticable path, that is, the path of the hermeneutics of religious experience. On the grounds of what I have argued in chapter 2, Pareyson’s ontology can then be considered as a “negative development” of the question of Evil, namely as a misleading reinterpretation of it in a transcendent and religious direction. In this sense, Pareyson’s contribution is necessary insofar as it allows us to see that his peculiar hermeneutical and religious approach, without prejudice to its theoretical innovativeness, but it is unable to overcome that metaphysical abstractness that Pareyson himself indicates as the main problem of philosophy. Consequently, the failure of the transcendentist interpretation results in reinforcing and legitimising the alternative approach, namely the immanentist one.

Specifically, in its effort at disposing of the idea of necessity through the dialectics of freedom, the ontology of transcendence advocated by Pareyson undeniably assumes a dogmatic and rhetorical nature, by virtue of which freedom itself is presented as originating from nothingness and as an abyss under that which could have not been, which is hardly sustainable outside of Pareyson’s religious faith (as I have shown in the previous chapter). Once again, I want to point out that the target of my criticism is specifically the religious outcome of Pareyson’s existential and hermeneutic discourse. Put differently, the material analysis of Evil
turns out as still wanting within Pareyson’s hermeneutical-religious discourse, and its abstractness and unviability derives from that. Hence, such unviability is nothing but a further argument in favour of an immanentist account of Evil.

The immanence of Evil, indeed, derives precisely from its occurring primarily and essentially as a material force and as an ontological principle, which in turn arises within the actual struggle with the Good. Further, I have argued that such a struggle should not be understood in dialectical terms, meaning that it is not a struggle between two different forces and principles that choose to oppose to each other, but may choose otherwise. It is true, as Schelling argues, that primal Being (Ursein) is fundamentally characterised as will, but this will does not emerge from the abyss of nothingness, as Pareyson claims; rather, such will is free and necessary at the same time, meaning that it freely determines the fundamental material conditions of Being itself, from which derive the immanence of both the struggle and the forces taking part in it.

Such an understanding, as I have shown in the first chapter, is a monist one, that is, it excludes the dualism of the principles, as well as their transcendence, since the opposing forces are reconciled in the Godhead. Moreover, I have also shown that while Schelling explains this conception through the immanence of things in God, Pareyson defers to a religious justification according to which the origin of the principles has to be attributed to God’s alleged transcendence, which in turn pertains to a supernatural and unfathomable ontological level. In addition, I argue that, given that the immanence of Evil (i.e., its material understanding in the terms I have outlined it) is the only way to properly grasp its concrete occurrence while avoiding its reduction to a mere lack of Good or of Being, it has to be further acknowledged that such a hermeneutical–religious approach to this question is misleading insofar as reintroduces an arbitrary and relative notion of transcendence, thereby effectively resulting in an abstract form of thought that turns out to be unviable.

Moreover, the immanence of Evil is further legitimised by the fact that both Schelling and Pareyson acknowledge that its realisation can be perpetrated only by humankind; not without reason, Schelling understands the ontological principle of Evil in terms of Möglichkeit, that is, of that perennial possibility that constantly threatens to realise itself but can only recur as such and
never be fully actualised. However, it is clear that Möglichkeit cannot exhaust Evil, nor can it explain its effective and concrete happening if we understand it beyond the level of immanence. That is to say, the immanence of Evil is given neither by its sheer perpetration through human beings’ actions nor by its recurring as an ontological possibility; rather, both these aspects together constitute the immanence of Evil, since they both pertain to the struggle with Good. Hence, the Möglichkeit of Evil is not due to an alleged transcendence, since in that case the threat of the realisation of Evil itself would be inconsistent. On the contrary, by understanding it as immanent, we can relate it to the material conditions of Evil, that is, to its being a moving force of matter.

A potential objection to this account could be that Evil can still be understood in its concreteness while maintaining its transcendence, if transcendence is understood in terms of alterity. In short, this understanding aims at overcoming the radically immanent conception of Evil, which is defined as that conception in which Evil – together with the moral responsibility for its realisation – has to be ascribed exclusively to human beings and not to any other supernatural principle. In addition, defining transcendence as alterity, according to the words of Anné Verhoef, implies that Evil “is something beyond comprehension, something essentially mysterious, something rationally and emotionally overwhelming. There is often an enormous gap between our experience [of] evil and our intellectual capacity for understanding it. […] The general ‘feeling’ or ‘awareness’ is therefore that there is always ‘something more’ to evil”.  

That is, Evil is conceived as something inherently mysterious that eludes our rational understanding, and thus reason Evil itself is defined in terms of radical and inescapable alterity. In other words, transcendence as alterity “allows one to understand evil as something concrete, part of every human being, and it allows for the fact that evil appears to us as something chaotic, something defying comprehension, something abnormal, ‘transcendent’. The concreteness or immanence of evil is therefore not neglected in this understanding of evil and it allows one

---

2 I have explained this at length in chapter 1.
4 Verhoef, “The Relation between Evil and Transcendence”, 263.
therefore to take moral and political responsibility for evil”. Also, Verhoef claims that this philosophical account does not necessarily imply a radically transcendent and supernatural God, but rather a notion of transcendence that is given in the relation with the other, that is, with something that is completely other from me.

I partly addressed such an objection in the previous chapter, when I discussed Pareyson’s notion of transcendence, so the same counterobjection can be applied here. First, I have argued that alterity can be better understood in terms of immanence; that is, an occurrence or an entity that eludes my rational control and understanding can still belong to the ontological level of immanence. In this regard, I think it makes very little sense to talk about some sort of “horizontal transcendence”, meaning that “transcendence is something immanent (found in each other), but also something transcendent (in that each other is absolutely other). Transcendence is therefore not to be found in a radical/vertical way, but in a more horizontal way”. Put simply, immanence does not mean the indiscriminate identification of all beings and entities, but it preserves and maintains alterity and differences within the same material and ontological level; therefore, identifying transcendence with alterity results in an arbitrary and quasi-fictional conception of transcendence itself, since (it is worth repeating) there is no reason to argue that that which exceeds my rational understanding and control is consequently transcendent, whether we understand it as a supernatural and non-experienceable divine principle or we define it as that relation which excludes the reconciliation of its terms.

Secondly, I want to point out that relying on the alleged awareness, or even on the mere feeling, that the essence of Evil lies beyond our reason and experience is an argument that is quite weak, or problematic at best, whose weight is mostly rhetorical. As was the case for Pareyson’s account of transcendence, I argue that moving from the feeling that there is something more than material Evil neither grasps its concreteness nor addresses the question of its origin. That is to say, the fact that Evil appears to us as chaotic, enigmatic and incomprehensible does not mean that Evil is effectively chaotic, enigmatic and incomprehensible; conversely, understanding Evil as transcendence and alterity entails the misleading conception of its being chaotic, enigmatic and incomprehensible. In other words, my point is that defining Evil in terms of “transcendence as alterity” is misleading, since it is not true that Evil is obscure and:

---

5 Ibid., 265.
6 Ibid.
unfathomable *insofar as* it is transcendent, but rather it is presented as obscure and unfathomable *insofar as* it is assumed as transcendent *in the first place*. Or yet: it is not the unfathomability and obscurity of Evil that make it transcendent, but it is by assuming Evil as transcendent (whatever meaning we attribute to it) that it misleadingly appears as unfathomable and obscure.

Finally, I want to clarify that an immanentist account of Evil does not mean understanding it as exclusively pertaining to the human domain, but rather understanding it in ontological and material terms, meaning that it affects human beings because it originally and primarily affects matter itself. I have explained that such an understanding is equivalent to arguing that Evil fundamentally pertains to matter and its origin has to be explained in terms of a moving force of matter itself that is immediately engaged in a struggle with Good. In this way, Evil emerges in all its concreteness, allowing us to avoid the abstractness and arbitrariness of the transcendentist position: indeed, as a material force, Evil is not obscure, chaotic or incomprehensible, but rather real, distinct and explicit, with no need of any further metaphysical or religious justification.

Furthermore, the immanentist account of Evil that I am advocating also leads us to that which I have defined as absolute experience. For now, it suffices to say that Evil, being one of the basic and moving forces of matter and in struggle with Good, contributes to constituting the *sub-iectum* of experience, where *sub-iectum* indicates that which “lies under” and grounds experience itself (as I explained in chapter 1). That is, Good and Evil are fundamental ontological forces, which animate matter and allow life to be, hence Schelling claims that “where there is no struggle, there is no life”.

Accordingly, the struggle to which the forces give life is the subjective moment of experience, that is the *sub-iectum* of it, or that which lies under and precedes our personal experience. Put differently, the struggle constitutes the moment in which life arises and in which experience – before it becomes *my* experience – originates. Thus, the struggle between Good and Evil is nothing but that moment in which experience emerges in its being *ab-soluta*, that is, in its being not yet personal and free from any constraint from singular beings.

In conclusion, what I want to further stress is that if understanding Evil from an ontological point of view, on the one hand, means denying that it is primarily a moral principle,

---

7 See above, §1.1.3.
then, on the other hand, it does not imply the trivialising of the concrete reality of Evil itself. Indeed, the immanentist account of Evil I intend to advocate does maintain the alterity and ulteriority of it, that is, its being not exclusively dependent on the human will, but at the same time it acknowledges that such alterity and ulteriority do not occur on the level of transcendence, in either of the two meanings that I have attributed to it. That is, I argue that the only way to maintain both the concreteness of Evil and its alterity to humankind is to understand it within the frame of ontology of immanence, that is, as an immanent moving force of matter, rather than a moral or supernatural and transcendent principle.

By so doing, it is also possible to maintain that the responsibility for the perpetration and the actualisation of Evil is to be ascribed to human beings, while its origin pertains to God. In turn, God is not to be understood as the transcendent Being, as a supernatural demiurge or as a moral ruler, but rather as a living being involved in the process of becoming, that is, as not ontologically detached from nature and particular beings, as I have explained in the first chapter. Accordingly, God is the coincidence between Ursein and will, or “a living unity of forces”, borrowing Schelling’s definition; in this sense, I would dare to add, God can be understood as a living and immanent unity of material forces. Therefore, Evil is one of the two forces that constitute God’s being and that are posited by God’s will as the inescapable starting point of life and experience. But again, this is just the possibility of Evil, while its factual realisation cannot take place independently of the actions of human beings; however, both its possibility and its realisation are radically immanent occurrences.

Moreover, the realisation of Evil is always a matter of freedom, that is, we realise it in the vain attempt to oppose and upset the primal will of Ursein and overwhelm it by our particular will. Hence, such an opposition and attempt at upsetting is nothing but the attempt to oppose and upset the original unity between freedom and necessity, which has been largely explained in the first two chapters. However, it is impossible by definition to succeed in such an attempt and eventually to disjoin the unity of freedom and necessity, that is, it is impossible to change Ursein and the fundamental structure of Being and make things different from what they are by virtue of their free necessity. As Bernstein puts it while explaining Schelling’s understanding of Evil, “Evil is the assertion of one particular, idiosyncratic, narcissistic will over universal will – or,

---

8 See above, §1.1.2, note 90.
more accurately, it involves deceiving oneself into believing that one’s particular will is identical with the universal will. Evil involves the delusion that one is omnipotent – a rival to God”.

Further, I argue that it is precisely from this attitude, that is, from one’s deluded attempts to overturn the current order of things and to overcome the primal will that the error about how we conceive of transcendence arises. That is, it is precisely when we experience our individual freedom driving us to act against freedom itself, namely against the unity of freedom and necessity, that we let ourselves believe that such a tendency reflects the fact that freedom universally intended is intrinsically related to nothingness. However, such a belief, which is the cornerstone of Pareyson’s ontology of freedom, can be regarded as unfounded, since it is grounded on abstract understandings of transcendence and freedom, as I have shown in the previous chapter. In opposition to such a conception, I want to underline once again that the immanent understanding of Evil I am advocating allows us to avoid the abstractions and inaccuracies of a transcendent definition. Put simply, it is only by confusing our particular will with the one of Ursein that we are led to a transcendentist understanding of Evil and freedom.

In the final analysis, I want to restate that it is necessary to understand Evil as an immanent occurrence, both as regards its origin and in terms of its factual realisation, in order to grasp it in all its concreteness and reality and to avoid both its reduction to a mere lack of Good and reliance on any residue of abstract metaphysics. I think I have provided quite enough argumentation in support of the latter statement, both in this section and in the previous chapters, so from now on I will consider it as established. As strong as it may be, the lure of a transcendent conception of Evil has to be put aside; that is, even if, on the one hand, such a conception may seem easier and more intuitive, on the other hand, it must be acknowledged that it is not a feasible option and that its viability is irremediably flawed by its sheer arbitrariness.

To sum up, in this section I have outlined an immanentist reading of Evil, drawing on the points I have made in the first two chapters. That is, I have argued that Evil has to be understood in material terms, that is, as a moving force of matter rather than a moral principle, and that its realisation pertains to our individual will. However, I have firmly maintained that both the origin and the realisation of Evil have to be regarded as immanent occurrences, rather than ascribe the former to an ontologically transcendent conception. In this sense, I have also argued that the

---

misleading transcendentist definition of Evil arises from the confusion between our individual will and freedom, on the one hand, with the will and freedom of Ursein, on the other. Finally, I have also underlined that my reinstatement of the immanence of Evil is to be regarded as the first move in a general ontology of immanence. Indeed, I have also mentioned the fact that an immanentist reading of the question of Evil leads us to grasp that which I have defined as absolute experience, which will also be the focus of the next section.

3.2 Absolute Experience

The discourse on absolute experience has already been mostly supplied in chapter 1, so in this section I will reiterate the points I have already made and further legitimise them in the light of my critique of transcendentism. In this regard, in §1.1.3 I have argued that it is possible, drawing from Schelling’s thought, to understand the struggle between Good and Evil as the ontological ground of life and as that moment in which experience originates and arises in its being not yet personal but ab-soluta, that is, “free from any constraint” from singular beings. Moreover, I have also argued that this does not mean to provide an abstract conception of experience by arbitrarily separating it from the experiencer, but rather to identify these conditions according to which experience itself becomes possible.

Moreover, in §2.2.3 I have also pointed out that even Pareyson considered hermeneutical thought as a form of “superior empiricism”, which he intends as an interpretative bond with the originary and transcendent truth, which in turn pre-exists its interpreters. However, as I have explained, Pareyson’s aim is to maintain the transcendence and unfathomability of Being itself and truth, as against the finitude of human beings. Here, Pareyson is referring to the positivity of God, who posits Being itself and the Good through a pure act of freedom.10 Put differently, in Pareyson’s understanding, “superior empiricism” does not recall the material conditions of the possibility of experience, but rather its impenetrable, otherworldly and ungraspable source. However, I argue that such an understanding, precisely because it does not point out the material conditions of the possibility of experience, is characterised by the same misleadingness as Pareyson’s transcendentism, which I have explained in the previous chapter.

10 On this point, see also Roselena Di Napoli, Il problema del male nella filosofia di Luigi Pareyson (Rome: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2000), 203ff.
Indeed, the absoluteness of experience, that is, its being *ab-soluta* and not yet personal, does not have to be intended as a return to a supernatural and otherworldly dimension, but rather as the concrete and immanent ground from which experience arises and becomes possible. Accordingly, such a material ground cannot but be related to the struggle between Good and Evil, which I have identified as the basic forces of matter. In turn, I argue that it is also possible to define the struggle between Good and Evil as the subject of absolute experience, that is, as its *sub-iectum*, in the sense I have defined it above; similarly, our personal and conscious experience is the object of absolute experience, that is, its *ob-iectum*, or that which is thrown and lies against it. Put differently, the earlier stage of experience can be identified as its being *ab-soluta*, that is, free from any constraint from singular beings, and therefore the struggle that makes life and experience possible cannot but lie and be thrown under it, that is, be its *sub-iectum*. Conversely, the moment in which experience becomes my experience, that is, that moment in which I in fact experience the world and become conscious of it, only occurs at a later stage and then is the objective moment of experience, that is, it is thrown and lies against the arising of absolute experience.

Therefore, it follows that this conception of absolute experience leads to an understanding of the terms “subject” and “object” that differs from the traditional post-Cartesian interpretation and recalls their very etymological meaning. Put simply, in this case “subject” does not refer to that sentient being that is essentially characterised by self-consciousness and thought activity; similarly, “object” does not indicate that which is thought and produced by the conscious activity of the subject. On the contrary, by the former I want to refer to the root of the word, that is, *sub-* (“under”) and *-iectum* (“thrown, lying”), in order to grasp that process that subtends and is the substratum of experience as such; likewise, by the latter I mean that which is thrown and lies against and in front of (in accordance with the original meaning of the Latin prefix *ob-*) absolute experience.\(^{11}\)

By so doing, I am not aiming at separating experience and experiencer, nor experiencer and experienced, but rather I intend to highlight two moments of the unitary process of experience intended as a whole, that is, both as *ab-soluta* and as empirical. That is, the subjective moment of experience is the one that grounds and makes possible experience itself, and as such

---

\(^{11}\) See above, §1.2.1.
precedes its empirical and conscious dimension, while the objective moment is the one in which experience presents itself to our consciousness and becomes our personal experience. Put simply, the subject of experience is its concrete grounding moment, while its object is our consciousness of it, which happens at a later stage, that is, it does not found experience but rather is founded by experience.

In its originating moment, experience cannot but be intended as *ab-soluta*, as free from any constraint and not yet personal; then, it is clear that its subject, that is, its grounding moment, cannot be our conscious thought, but has to be something that precedes it and from which it can derive. In §1.2.1 I have argued that, according to Schelling, the act through which the conditions of the possibility of life and experience are provided is an unconscious one, meaning that it precedes our consciousness and is the driving principle of all our conscious actions. Hence, the subjective moment in which experience arises as *ab-soluta* is an unconscious one, in the sense that it precedes our consciousness, and is related to the struggle between Good and Evil, since it provides the ontological conditions for life to be (as I have said). Therefore, the *sub-iectum* of experience is posed directly by the struggle itself, and not by our conscious and deliberate act, which occurs only at a later stage.

Once again, I am neither pointing out a separation between absolute (and subjective) experience and empirical (and objective) experience, nor I am asserting that absolute experience transcends (namely belongs to a separate ontological level compared to) empirical experience. Rather, my point is that experience, considered in its emerging moment and in its being *ab-soluta*, has to be understood in relation to empirical experience in the same way in which I explained the relation between kairological and chronological temporality in §1.2.1. That is, just as kairos has been defined as that right and opportune moment in which a critical change occurs and temporality emerges, then absolute experience can be understood in an analogous way, that is, as that right and opportune moment in which experience emerges in its purest occurrence, namely as not yet personal and in its fundamental conditions of possibility.

Hence, the “absoluteness” of experience lies in its very emergence, which in turn grounds the possibility for it to be *my* experience. Moreover, that moment, which I have already identified as the subject of experience, is constituted in a kairological way, being nothing but that right and opportune moment in which experience itself arises and in which the struggle between Good and
Evil is triggered. Further, the grounding moment of experience is to be considered as fundamentally immanent and as part of the process of experience as a whole; that is, it is not conceivable without and independently of the empirical occurrence of experience. In other words, absolute experience is not a supernatural and transcendent occurrence that is ontologically detached from personal experience, but rather it is that inevitable moment from which experience originates and becomes possible. Put simply, in order to be my experience, experience has to firstly emerge as impersonal and \textit{ab-soluta}; however, in such emerging, experience immediately includes the possibility of becoming personal experience.

Accordingly, not only does experience as a whole have to be understood in immanent terms, but absolute experience has to be characterised as the grounding moment of the process of experience itself, rather than as a transcendent and supernatural cause of it. Indeed, the struggle between Good and Evil being the \textit{sub-iectum} of experience, and such struggle being understandable only in material and immanent terms, it follows that the subjective moment of experience, even if it eludes and precedes our rational control, can occur only materially and immanently, that is, as that which lies under experience. Similarly, the objective moment of experience, that is, my being conscious and aware of it, also happens at the level of immanence. However, as I have said, these two moments belong to the same immanent process and cannot be understood independently and separately from each other; that is, absolute experience makes sense only in view of personal experience, and personal experience can occur only if grounded on absolute experience.

Put differently, by understanding Evil as an ontological and immanent force, we are led to understand experience as \textit{ab-soluta}, that is, as free from any constraint from singular beings, which in turn leads us to a different understanding of subject and object in relation to experience itself. In this sense, I am not the subject of experience, but rather the object of it: that is, the \textit{sub-iectum} of experience, that is, that which lies under it, is not the I, intended as that consciousness in relation to itself, but rather the struggle between Good and Evil, which in turn lays the ground for the possibility of experience; conversely, the I emerges at a later stage, that is, it lies against experience intended as \textit{ab-soluta}, and therefore it is the \textit{ob-iectum} of experience itself.

Arguing that the I has to be considered as the object of experience, rather than as its subject, might seem a controversial point, but I think that such an understanding is fully
legitimated by my previous arguments about absolute experience. In this order of ideas, I argue that experience is not posited and made possible by the I, but rather that the I is posited and made possible by experience. In this sense, the I has to be understood both as consciousness of itself (i.e., as self-consciousness) and in relation to the external world. Although this seems to recall Pareyson’s argument about the person intended as a coincidence of self-relation and hetero-relation, I want to point out that I firmly reject the idea according to which hetero-relation implies an ontologically transcendent bond with God, Being and/or truth. Rather, my point is that the I occurs as a result of the emerging of the possibility of experience, that is to say that our self-conscious activity cannot take place without a preconscious and unconscious ground.

Indeed, the sub-iectum of experience, being the struggle between Good and Evil, is neither determined nor controlled by our consciousness, but rather it precedes and grounds our consciousness, in the terms I have explained above (as well as in §1.2.1). Instead, the I pertains to and constitutes the ob-iectum of experience, namely the conscious and empirical moment of it. Accordingly, the sub-iectum of experience is the unconscious and originary moment in which experience emerges in its being ab-soluta and not yet personal, while the ob-iectum of experience is the conscious and subsequent moment of it. As I have said, I am not aiming at implying an abstract and arbitrary separation between experience as such and experiencer, but rather at grasping the fundamental conditions of the possibility of experience. Moreover, this process has to be understood in a radically immanent way, meaning that the subjective moment of experience is not a transcendent and supernatural one, but rather a purely immanent one that materially grounds the concrete possibility of personal and empirical experience.

In this respect, this shows once again that Pareyson’s existential and religious hermeneutics is both a necessary moment in reflection on Evil and freedom, and a fallacious way to pursue such a reflection, due to its transcendentist and religious outcome. I have already explained this particular point, so I will not return to it now. What is important to point out here, though, is that the understanding of absolute experience I am outlining is not compliant with the outcomes of Pareyson’s transcendentist approach, but rather is in contrast to it. That is, while maintaining the demand for the concreteness of reflection on Evil and freedom, I also maintain

---

12 See above, §2.1.1.
my previous point according to which a hermeneutical and religious approach is misleading and results in an arbitrary and unviable account of transcendence.

Further, it is worth recalling my critique of Heidegger’s and Jaspers’s reading of Schelling, which I outlined in the first chapter.\textsuperscript{13} Regarding Heidegger, I have explained that his interpretation of Schelling is based on the idea that Schelling himself was unable to provide a viable account of \textit{Seynfuge}, that is, of “jointure of Being”, since the ground and the existence of such Being are essentially incompatible. Accordingly, Heidegger also argues that Schelling’s discourse ultimately falls back into a form of metaphysical subjectivism that has to be rejected. However, I have already argued that Heidegger’s conception of subjectivism does not comply with Schelling’s philosophical discourse: indeed, when we define the subject not as the experiencer and as the I, but as the \textit{sub-iectum} and as that ground of life and experience itself that precedes the I, Heidegger’s objection to Schelling loses all its weight.

Similarly, Jaspers’s reading of Schelling can be rejected because it both maintains Heidegger’s argument according to which ground and existence are incompatible, and asserts that Schelling’s aim is to posit a supernatural and transcendent understanding of Being. However, I believe I have already made clear that such a transcendentist account is totally alien to Schelling’s philosophy, whose fundamental aim is, on the contrary, an ontology of immanence. Moreover, this point is directly related to Pareyson’s interpretation of Schelling, which, as I have explained in chapter 2, reiterates the same inaccuracies as Jaspers’s interpretation, namely a fundamentally transcendentist understanding of Schelling himself.

In particular, I argue that Heidegger’s approach to Schelling’s conception of Evil and freedom can be regarded as incorrect, since it attributes to Schelling a form of metaphysical subjectivism that in fact does not fit into Schelling’s account. Furthermore, I want to point out that by maintaining the validity and soundness of Schelling’s reflection I am not only defending Schelling himself, but also advocating for an original interpretation of his thought. That is, while I have already shown that endorsing Heidegger’s and Jaspers’s criticism of Schelling could lead us to a misleading subjectivist, dualist and transcendentist position, I argue not only that an immanentist and monist reading is preferable, but that such a reading also leads us to grasp that which I have defined as absolute experience and to a different understanding of the terms

---

\textsuperscript{13} On this point, see above, §1.3.1 and §1.3.2.
“subject” and “object”. Additionally, as I will show in detail in the last section of this chapter, an immanentist approach allows us to legitimately understand freedom in terms of ontological resistance.

In conclusion, a few words should be added about the role of freedom in this context. Indeed, a potential objection at this point of my work could be that if we accept that the subject of experience is the struggle between Good and Evil, which precedes and grounds our conscious activity, then freedom will be automatically dismissed. In other words, if I am the object and not the subject of experience, how can I be free? And if I do not ground the conditions of the possibility of my own experience, how can I act and experience freely? So, in the final part of this section I will address these questions by maintaining the effectiveness of freedom, while I reserve a more detailed analysis of it for the next section.

First, I want to reiterate the point according to which Schelling understands freedom and necessity as mutually implying – and not excluding – each other. Indeed, his argument recalls the Spinozan concept of conatus, that is, the tendency of each being to preserve and persevere in its own being.\textsuperscript{14} In this sense, freedom can only occur in its interplay with necessity, that is, if on the one hand I can freely choose to perpetrate Evil, on the other hand that free choice cannot but be driven by my conatus. That is, I can exert my freedom only in accordance with my conatus and my own nature. However, this does not mean that my freedom is annulled by some inescapable predetermination or prearranged doom; on the contrary, the conatus has to be understood as a predisposition, which however does not force me to act in a certain way and still allows my freedom to be exerted.

In other words, the sub-iectum of experience and the unconscious ground of our actions, which I mentioned above, while eluding our rational and conscious control, are mere inclinations and tendencies that do not irreversibly set us on a predetermined life path on which we have no power. Rather, such ground represents the emerging of the possibility of life and experience and therefore carries in itself the possibility for us to be free. Indeed, our being the ob-iectum of experience and unable to determine its conditions of possibility does not make us passive beings nor deprive us of our freedom. Instead, the unconscious and necessary ground of life is essential for our freedom to be exerted, and our freedom can be exerted only in the interplay with the

\textsuperscript{14} See above, §1.2.1, but also §1.2.3 and §1.3.3.
opposing ground. Thus, our tendency to preserve our own being is to be understood in terms of potency, which is necessary for the act of our freedom without preventing it from happening.

Moreover, I argue that such an understanding is further legitimised by my criticism of the transcendence of freedom, which I outlined in chapter 2. Schelling refers to the concept of potency as the “subject of Being”, as I have explained in §2.3.1, which in turn can be understood as the sub-iectum, in the terms I have outlined it above. Accordingly, on the one hand, we have the sub-iectum, that is, the struggle between Good and Evil, which is sheer potency and “that of which Being can be predicated”, and on the other hand, we have the ob-iectum, which is the conscious and deliberate act that “lies against” the potential ground. Put differently, it could be said that absolute experience is also the sheer potency of Being, since it concerns its sub-iectum and the conditions of the possibility of experience itself, that is to say the potentiality of experience. Conversely, absolute experience needs to become personal, that is, it needs an ob-iectum following the sub-iectum in order to turn potency into act.

Needless to say, potency and act, as well as sub-iectum and ob-iectum, also have to reconcile themselves through a third moment, which Schelling explains as an absolute unity and coincidence of the two terms. Put simply, as I have said, Being is neither subject nor object, neither sheer potency nor mere act, but rather it is the absolute reconciliation and indissoluble coincidence of them. Therefore, we have to understand the interplay between freedom and necessity and between absolute and empirical experience in precisely the same way, since neither of them can occur without their counterpart. Also, it must be reiterated that such an understanding is not a mere defence of Schelling’s philosophy, but rather a reinterpretation of it in the light of my criticism of that form of transcendentism that has Pareyson as one of its major proponents.

To sum up, I have shown that moving from an immanentist reading on the question of Evil it is possible to grasp that which can be defined as absolute experience, that is, experience in its being ab-soluta and free from any constraint from singular beings. That is, I have argued that experience emerges from the struggle between Good and Evil in its purest conditions of possibility, that is, before its becoming my experience. In this sense, absolute experience is the immanent ontological ground on which empirical experience can occur, that is to say the

---

15 See §2.3.1, note 143.
unconscious ground on which consciousness can emerge. Indeed, I have also defined absolute experience as the *sub-iectum* of experience itself, that is, as that which lies and is thrown under experience, while I have considered the I, intended as self-consciousness, as the *ob-iectum* of experience, that is, as that which lies and is thrown against experience. Put simply, experience first occurs as *ab-soluta*, that is, as unconscious and impersonal, and only at a later stage does it become conscious and personal.

Additionally, I have also specified that absolute experience pertains to the kairological dimension of temporality, rather than to the chronological one, taking up the distinction I made in the first chapter. That is, absolute experience also represents that critical moment in which change inevitably happens and stasis becomes impossible, and that right and opportune moment in which experience itself becomes possible. However, this does not mean that absolute experience consists in a transcendent and unreachable occurrence, but rather that it represents that practical, concrete and grounding moment in which the immanent process of life and experience is triggered. Thus, it has to be understood neither as radically separated from empirical experience nor as unrelated to the material (pre)conditions of life, but rather as part of the process of experience as a whole and of the interplay between *sub-iectum* and *ob-iectum*, and between potency and act.

In this respect, I have claimed that the concept of potency, as understood by Schelling, perfectly explains the notions of *sub-iectum* and absolute experience. In other words, just as the subject of Being consists in sheer potency and in that which can only be predicated of Being, absolute experience is the sheer potency of experience itself – its mere conditions of possibility – which still need to be actualised by the *ob-iectum*. Consequently, absolute experience cannot exist without empirical experience, in the same way that potency cannot exist without act and subject cannot exist without object, since they exist only if they imply and presuppose their respective counterparts.

Finally, this account also has some implications for the question of freedom, which I have only partially addressed so far. That is, I have restated that freedom can be understood only as an immanent occurrence and in its interplay with necessity, bearing in mind my criticism of Pareyson’s transcendent understanding of this question. In other words, my point is that freedom can be concretely understood only immanently, so that we can avoid any metaphysical
abstraction; so it is obvious that, in order to do so, freedom has to be related to necessity and to the following interplay generated by them, rather than to sheer nothingness. Moreover, I have also specified that the *sub-iectum*, despite being unconscious and preceding our rational control and disposability, does not represent an obligation for us to act in a determined way; rather, it is just a fundamental predisposition, which is necessary for our consciousness and our freedom to be exercised. Subsequently, rather than saying that necessity annuls our freedom and implies an inescapable predetermination for human beings, it is preferable to argue that necessity grounds our freedom through the predisposition that it entails, which can however be eluded, whence the possibility of committing either Good or Evil.

In the next (and final) section of this chapter, I will focus more deeply on the immanentist understanding of freedom, showing that it can be understood as a matter of resistance, whereby the term “resistance” will be used to refer exclusively to the German *Widerstand*. As I have already explained in the first chapter, the latter term refers to an ontological status of resistance, that is, to resistance intended as a way of being, rather than as a deliberate reluctance to act in some way.

### 3.3 Freedom as Resistance

As a final conclusion, I want to focus more deeply on the concept of freedom; more specifically, I will argue that freedom can be defined as resistance, both by mentioning the Kantian root of such an understanding and by reiterating the points I made in §1.3.3. However, I do not mean to argue that Kant and Schelling advocate an understanding of freedom as resistance, but rather that in Schelling’s philosophy it is possible to find some elements that can be interpreted in this direction, and that such elements are drawn from Kant’s thought (especially from his *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*). Subsequently, I will conclude by arguing that the understanding of freedom I am supporting is a fully-fledged part of an immanentist ontology of nature, reaffirming the inadequacy of the transcendentist position.

First, it is worth repeating that by resistance I am referring to the German *Widerstand*, which literally means “to stand against or in opposition to something”. Thus, *Widerstand* implies a firm opposition to something, a fundamental being against something, that is, it recalls an
ontological status and a definite way of being. In other words, Widerstand pertains to our very ontological structure, that is, it consists in a resistance that occurs not due to a deliberate decision but due to a precise ontological predetermination. Put even more simply, I resist something not because I deliberately want to, but because of the way I am, that is, because I cannot do otherwise. So, Widerstand is not a mediate resistance, that is, produced by my deliberate decision, but an immediate one, that is, arising from my ontological features. Accordingly, from now on I will use the term “resistance” to refer to the German Widerstand in the sense I have explained it above (unless otherwise specified).

In the first chapter, I have shown how Schelling understands the concept of resistance and I will not return to this now; in addition, I have also outlined how Schelling draws a significant part of his reflection (especially concerning his Naturphilosophie) from Kant’s philosophy. Further, I also want to point out that the idea of resistance within a philosophy of nature has its roots in Kantian philosophy, and particularly in Kant’s 1786 work Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science. In this work, Kant specifically addresses the concept of resistance in the context of his dynamic explanation of the concept of matter, which subsequently had a very clear influence on Schelling’s philosophy of nature.

In this respect, Kant argues that “matter is the movable insofar as it fills a space. To fill a space is to resist every movable that strives through its motion to penetrate into a certain space”;

16 but at the same time he points out that “matter fills a space, not through its mere existence, but through a particular moving force”. Hence, matter is animated by the interaction between an attractive force and a repulsive one: while the former is a retractive one, “by which [matter] resists the removal of others from it”, the latter is an expansive one, “by which [matter] resists the approach of others to it”. As Kant himself puts it, “the latter force will also sometimes be called driving force, the former drawing force”, since “resistance to motion is the cause of [matter’s] diminution, or even of the change of this motion into rest […] while the
resistance that a matter offers in the space that it fills to every penetration by other matter is a cause of the motion of the latter in the opposite direction”.20

As explained by Friedman, “if matter had only the fundamental force of repulsion, Kant argues, it would expand itself to infinity by its own internal pressure – and, in this case, matter would have zero density everywhere, and space would turn out to be empty. In order that matter be really possible as that which fills a space, therefore, there must be something that resists this internal pressure. This, Kant concludes, can only be a second fundamental force essentially opposed to the fundamental force of repulsion: namely, a fundamental force of attraction”21. Put simply, resistance is a feature that is fundamental in order to allow matter to fill space properly and to avoid both indiscriminate expansion and endless retraction. Resistance, that is, sets the limits of the expansion of matter and at the same time prevents matter from totally withdrawing itself from space, that is, it ensures that matter neither overfills space nor leaves it completely empty.

If we look back at Schelling’s conception of repulsive and attractive forces, the analogy with Kant’s philosophy is undeniable; besides, Schelling himself acknowledges that Kant is the source of some of his key ideas. However, the point here is not to analyse to what extent Schelling drew his Naturphilosophie from Kant’s thought, but rather to demonstrate how the concept of resistance, as developed by Schelling within the Kantian tradition, can be used to better understand the nature of freedom. In other words, I argue that the centrality of resistance within the dynamics of matter has crucial implications for the fundamental structure of Being, that is to say about life and freedom.

In this respect, I have already shown that the struggle between Good and Evil, as argued by Schelling, has to be understood as the vital core of Being, since “where there is no struggle, there is no life”. Consistent with this, I have also argued that resistance is the fundamental feature of this struggle, that is, without resistance there would be no struggle either. Consequently, it can be argued that without resistance there is no life, that is, the grounding conditions of Being are lacking, and therefore freedom cannot arise. Resistance, then, is not only the fundamental precondition of freedom, but also the only way through which freedom can be

20 Ibid., 34.
21 M. Friedman, “Introduction” to Kant, Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science, xvii.
realised; that is, my point is that not only is there no freedom without resistance, but also that freedom *can only arise and be understood as a matter of resistance*.

In other words, by arguing that freedom is a matter of resistance, I am not arguing that freedom has to be understood in its relationship with resistance. Rather, my point is that freedom is made possible by, and can arise only through, resistance, in the very ontological sense of *Widerstand*. Accordingly, freedom being a matter of resistance means highlighting both the material and immanent essence of freedom itself and the fact that such essence is founded on resistance, which in turn triggers the struggle between Good and Evil and make life itself possible.

I take this to be not only the key point of this chapter, but also my original and (in my view) theoretically relevant contribution to the philosophical debate about Evil and freedom. For this reason, I will now focus in detail on it, in order to justify and reinforce my position about the nature of freedom in relation to Evil.

First, I want to further stress that an understanding of freedom as a matter of resistance is directly linked to the ontology of immanence that I have advocated throughout my dissertation; accordingly, such an understanding inevitably implies the firm rejection of a transcendent interpretation of freedom, due to the reasons that I pointed out both in chapter 2 and in the previous sections of the present chapter. Put simply, I argue that resistance is the most proper and concrete feature of freedom, which in turn exclusively pertains to the level of immanence.

In order to further clarify my understanding of freedom as a matter of resistance, it will be useful to recall the interplay between freedom and necessity and the concept of *conatus*, which I have explained above. Indeed, if on the one hand the *conatus* is my tendency to preserve my own being, on the other hand it has to be understood as a predisposition and not as an inescapable fate, from which it follows that I can still exert my freedom upon it. In other words, the fact that I am inclined to act in a certain way does not automatically imply that I am forced or doomed to act in that particular way, and my acting in conformity with my inclinations and predispositions does not mean that I am unfree. It is precisely in this context that freedom as resistance comes into play; that is, in its concrete and immanent meaning, freedom is nothing but the resistance to an opposite tendency of acting, that is, the resistance to the opposing ontological force that pushes me to act in a different way.
Looking back at the struggle between Good and Evil, I have already explained that, while it is true that on an ontological level it represents the triggering moment of life and experience, on a personal level the committing of Good or Evil exclusively depends on one’s own will and actions. Accordingly, while the struggle between the two forces predetermines my way of being and of acting, the effectiveness of my being and actions depends only on my choices. Thus, it is obvious that complying with one particular force or inclination means opposing the other one, that is, resisting its vigor. Moreover, such a resistance cannot but arise from my freedom, or better it is precisely my freedom, which in turn can arise only within the material understanding of the ontology of immanence.

Consequently, I argue that being free means neither to be able to act in the total absence of external restrictions nor to entirely determine one’s own being; rather, it means to be able to resist some inclinations by virtue of certain stronger ontological features. Therefore, such a resistance is not characterised as an a posteriori opposition to something, that is, it does not occur after a deliberate and conscious decision; instead, it is a priori, that is, it determines my way of being, rather than being determined by it. In other words, resistance is that ontological predetermination that prevails over the other ones, that is, that moment in which sheer potency and indiscriminate and omni-inclusive possibility are narrowed down and actualised within concrete actions. So, resisting something means both to preserve and persevere in one’s own being and to take part in the struggle between Good and Evil.

Put differently, it is only through resistance than I can effectively be free; however, it also has to be acknowledged that I am not able to determine the nature of such resistance, just as I am not able to determine the nature of freedom, but rather I am determined by it. That is, given the presence of a subjective (referring to the sub-iectum) and unconscious ground of my actions, it follows that within the transition to the objective (referring to the ob-iectum) and conscious moment resistance comes into play, in order to avoid any mechanistic or deterministic account of freedom itself. Indeed, in its effectiveness and concreteness, freedom is precisely a form of resistance to the absolute dominance of both the unconscious sub-iectum and the conscious ob-jectum. In other words, resistance occurs in the interplay between the two opposing forces and prevents the total overwhelming of them both.
In realising my freedom, then, I resist both sheer determinism and indiscriminate arbitrariness, since on the one hand, I can only act in accordance with my unconscious predetermination, yet on the other hand, my acting is also necessarily free. Accordingly, freedom can neither occur nor be realised outside the struggle between Good and Evil, which means that I have to take a stand within that struggle by exercising one of the two forces or principles, which in turn inevitably entails that I have to resist the counteraction of the other one. Moreover, such a resistance is free, that is, it pertains to and coincides with freedom, but it is not purely arbitrary, meaning that I neither have rational control over it, nor do I determine its occurrence in the first place. Once again, my point is that I resist something not because I decide to do so after a rational and conscious assessment, but because I cannot but resist and oppose that particular thing, due to my ontological features and determinations.

Concretely, the committing of Good or Evil is always a free and personal choice, as both Schelling and Pareyson argue; however, as I have shown, consistent with Schelling’s understanding, such a choice is inevitably affected by elements that precede our consciousness and elude our rational control. Also, my choice is not a definitive one, since the unchosen principle keeps recurring and struggling for its actualisation. In other words, if I choose to commit Good, I will always face the possibility of Evil, which keeps threatening my actions and pushing for its realisation, that is, for its becoming real and not just merely possible. According to both Schelling and Pareyson, this dynamic recurs in every individual person’s life, since the struggle between Good and Evil is a grounding and unavoidable feature of Being. Thus, it follows that choosing to commit Good goes hand in hand with resisting the backlash of Evil, since my choice does not prevent the other force from operating.

Moreover, taking a stand in the struggle, namely choosing one of the two principles, does not terminate the struggle itself, but rather keeps it active, since with no struggle there would be no life either. For this reason, my freedom cannot but coincide with my resistance to the unchosen principle – even considering that I have neither control nor power over the struggle and I cannot but take a stand in it, since it pertains to the sub-iectum and then shapes my way of being, instead of being shaped by it., Hence, resistance is necessary not only for freedom to take place, but also for life in general: as I have stated above, if there is no life without struggle, and there is no struggle without resistance, then there is no life without resistance.
Further, moving from Schelling’s conception of the coincidence of will and Ursein within that “living unity of forces” that is the Godhead, I argue that resistance is a constitutive part of Ursein itself, “to which all predicates of Being apply”.²² That is to say, given that Ursein is coincident with God’s will, so that it is characterised as free, then resistance also comes into play as that moment in which Ursein effectively takes place. In other words, Ursein being the original will of God, which in turn is a free one, and bearing in mind the interrelation between freedom and necessity, Ursein itself is nothing but the highest form of resistance, since it is precisely that ontological standing against and in opposition to something. Put simply, the primal will of Ursein irrevocably sets up that way of Being and that fundamental ontological structure within which human life takes place. Accordingly, Ursein establishes that “ontological posture” that characterises our freedom, that is, it sets itself up as a form of Widerstand, as a “standing against and in opposition to” other ways of being (as well as non-being), that is, as a resistance.

Once again, I want to point out that, while I am drawing this account of resistance from Schelling’s philosophy, Schelling himself never explicitly advocated the understanding of freedom in terms of resistance. I also want to further stress that my point radically differs from Pareyson’s hermeneutics of transcendence, which I have already proven to be a necessary but misleading development of Schelling’s philosophy. Therefore, here I am aiming at providing an original reinterpretation of the questions of Evil and freedom, both by avoiding the abstractness of a transcendentist and religious approach and by maintaining such questions within an immanentist ontology of nature.

In this sense, resistance is neither an unfathomable and transcendent principle nor the manifestation of nothingness in opposition to Being and freedom. On the contrary, it is the fundamental and immanent condition of freedom, as well as the essential feature of matter and the lifeblood of the struggle between Good and Evil (which in turn is the permanent and inescapable ground of life itself, as argued above). Accordingly, understanding freedom in terms of resistance means neither that I am not entirely free nor that my freedom is conditioned or limited by some transcendent impediment. Rather, such an account wholly preserves freedom in its concreteness, which in turn implies grasping it in its interplay with necessity, and not as the condition of being suspended between Being and nothingness. Put simply, being free does not

---

²² See §1.1.2, note 84.
mean resisting the metaphysical possibility of nothingness, but resisting the immanent possibility of indiscriminate expansion, that is, sheer and ineffective potentiality and, at an individual level, the counteraction and perpetration of Evil.

There is a crucial difference between the two conceptions of resistance that I have just outlined. Indeed, while in the latter case resistance, and therefore freedom, are presented in all their concreteness and effectiveness, in the former case we fall back into the abstractness and arbitrariness that both Schelling and Pareyson wanted to avoid in their respective philosophical reflections. That is, if that which has to be resisted, that is, that which I stand against and in opposition to, is a transcendent and metaphysical possibility, no real resistance and no real freedom take place, since their source and occurrence are related to a purely arbitrary and dogmatic principle, which in turn results in a relative and unviable account of Being. Specifically, I am referring to the arbitrariness and relativeness of Pareyson’s notion of transcendence, which I have already criticised in the previous chapter.\textsuperscript{23}

Furthermore, my understanding of freedom as resistance is also compliant with the immanence of things in God, which I have identified as one of the key points of Schelling’s thought. In other words, given that everything that is can only be within the Godhead, which in turn does not belong to a superior and detached ontological level, it follows that the resistance that pertains to matter has to be ascribed to immanence and not to transcendence. Additionally, this latter point provides a further argument in support of my account: that is, it is precisely because of the immanence of things in God that freedom can be concretely defined and understood in terms of resistance, which in turn is the essential trigger for the struggle between Good and Evil, from which life and experience begin.

In the final analysis, I want to underline that all of the above is a fully-fledged element of an immanentist ontology of nature. That is, I argue that moving from Schelling’s \textit{Naturphilosophie} and \textit{Freedom Essay}, it is possible to achieve a solid ontology of nature that allows us to reject any form of ontology of transcendence, in the sense I have explained it in chapter 2. Indeed, I think I have largely shown, throughout the development of my dissertation, that the only way to properly grasp Good and Evil, as well as freedom, is through an ontology of immanence that maintains nature as its core rather than rely on transcendent entities or concepts.

\textsuperscript{23} See above, in particular §2.3.2 and §2.3.3.
In this sense, I have also argued that a proper understanding of such compelling philosophical questions cannot but move from grasping their material conditions, that is to say that both the struggle between Good and Evil and the essence of freedom, since they are ontological and not moral questions, can only be understood within their immanent relation to matter and nature.

Needless to say, my understanding is not aimed at an absolutisation of the concept of nature, but rather at emphasising the inescapable and constitutive immanence that I believe has to characterise a viable philosophical discourse on Evil and freedom, in order to avoid all the fallacies that belong to the transcendentist position. Put differently, given that the questions of Evil and freedom do not pertain to morality but to ontology, then they have to be understood as immanent principles and material occurrences, rather than in a transcendent way. A different approach, indeed, will lead us to rely on abstract principles and on a relative account of transcendence, inevitably resulting in an arbitrary and dogmatic ontology. I have largely and repeatedly discussed the inadequacy of transcendence in relation to these questions, so I believe that at this point such a theoretical option can be definitively dismissed with no further discussion.

In conclusion, I think it is worth to briefly recapitulate my position, in order to make it even clearer. First, I have argued that an ontological understanding of Evil, aimed at maintaining its reality and effectiveness without reducing it to a lack of Good, cannot disregard the material conditions of Evil itself. That is, I have argued that, on the grounds of Schelling’s ontological shifting of the question, Evil has to be regarded as an ontological principle and as a moving force of matter and as opposed to its counterforce, that is, Good. In this sense, Evil can be understood only as an immanent principle rather than as a transcendent one, from which it follows also that the struggle between Good and Evil, which is the ground of life, pertains to immanence and not to transcendence.

Furthermore, I have also argued that the struggle between Good and Evil leads us to absolute experience and can be defined as the subject of experience itself, by which I mean to refer to the etymological meaning of *ab-soluta*, that is, being free from any constraint from

---

24 By “relative account of transcendence”, I am referring to the understanding of transcendence exclusively in relation to the transcended object – i.e., as given exclusively in its relationship with the transcended object. As I have shown in §2.3.1, Schelling rejected such an understanding, as it reiterates the inaccuracies of the “old metaphysics” by failing to grasp the true nature of transcendence. Moreover, I have also shown that such a relative account of transcendence is endorsed by Pareyson, who then reiterates the same misconceptions criticised by Schelling.
singular beings, and *sub-iectum*, that is, lying and being thrown under something. In other words, my point is that through a material and immanentist understanding of the struggle between Good and Evil we can grasp the concept of experience in its purest occurrence, namely in its absoluteness and before it is personal. Moreover, in the light of the above, it can be argued that the struggle between the two principles constitutes the unconscious ground of life and experience, that is, it precedes my consciousness and my personal experience and therefore is the *sub-iectum* of them. Conversely, the *ob-iectum* of life and experience, that is, that which lies and is thrown against them, is precisely my consciousness and my personal experience. Put simply, since they arise at a later stage and emerge from the unconscious ground, they represent the *ob-iectum* of experience, whose *sub-iectum* is the abovementioned unconscious ground.

In addition, I have criticized the legitimacy of understanding Evil and freedom in a transcendent way. That is, in my investigation of the circumstances and conditions of the question of Evil intended as ontological force, I have rejected transcendence both as that divine principle that is beyond every possible human experience and as that relation that excludes the reconciliation of its terms, as well as its being identified with alterity and as “horizontal transcendence”. I think I have sufficiently shown the inadequacy of these conceptions. Suffice to say that arguing that the source of Evil and freedom is something other than myself and exceeds my rational and sentimental understanding not only does not prove the transcendence of Evil and freedom, but further reinforces the idea that this source is actually better understandable and explainable from an immanentist point of view. Consequently, I have also rejected the dualism of the principles, since, according to the ontology of immanence I am endorsing, the principles reconcile themselves in the Godhead, due to the immanence of things in God Godself.

The final conclusion I have drawn from this line of argument, which I also consider as my personal and original contribution for the purpose of my dissertation, is that freedom can be defined in terms of resistance. In this sense, I have moved from Schelling’s dynamic of the matter, which is animated by two moving forces in contrast with each other and for which resistance is necessary in order to allow it to exist. Applying the same line of reasoning to the struggle between Good and Evil (which in turn have to be understood as material occurrences, that is, as affecting matter itself), then it can be argued that resistance is the fundamental feature not only for the exercise of the struggle, but also for life and freedom to occur in the first place.
In particular, when it comes to the realisation of freedom in its utter concreteness, then such a realisation can only occur and be understood as resistance. That is, I have shown how being free does not mean acting in the absence of external limitations, but rather in accordance with one’s *conatus*, which in turn implies resisting sheer potency as such and persevering in one’s own being, namely in one’s own particular predication of Being. In other words, being free means resisting both the realisation of other ways of being and the rigid determinism that might result from blindly embracing the idea according to which our *conatus* fully determines our being. Put simply, this is nothing but a predisposition, and not an inevitable fate, which means that I can still exert my freedom upon it. However, that being the case, I have also argued that the best way to grasp such freedom in its immanent concreteness is to define it as resistance, in the terms I explained above.

In the final analysis, as for the struggle between Good and Evil, in which I have to take part by exercising one of the two principles through my free choice, it can also be said that the freedom I exert within it is nothing but resistance. Indeed, by choosing to exercise one of the principles, for example, Good, I cannot definitively annihilate the other principle, so I constantly have to resist its counteraction and its concrete threat to my choice. In addition, I have said that the struggle is the ground of life, so it follows that my choice and my taking part into it cannot put an end to it—otherwise that would be equivalent to putting an end to life, experience and freedom in general. Based on the points I have made throughout my dissertation, I think that this is clear enough. Therefore, I believe I have reached my purpose of outlining an ontological understanding of the questions of Evil and freedom, moving from Schelling’s philosophy and passing through Pareyson’s interpretation of it, in order to go beyond them and to reinstate an immanentist philosophical approach to such questions.

Clearly, conceiving freedom as resistance opens up a large number of paths for further philosophical reflection, such as exploring its implications within political and social philosophy (just to mention one avenue for further research). However, for space reasons I cannot focus on these aspects, which it would be extremely interesting to pursue. As for the present dissertation, I think I have successfully achieved my main goal of providing an immanentist and ontological understanding of Evil and freedom.
Bibliography

(a) Schelling’s Works in German


(b) English Editions of Schelling’s Works


(c) Pareyson’s Works in Italian


“Genesi e significato dell’esistenzialismo”. Giornale critico della filosofia italiana 5 (1940), 326-37.


(d) English Editions of Pareyson’s Works


(e) Secondary Literature on Schelling


(f) Secondary Literature on Pareyson


(g) Other References


