

The Logic of Schelling's *Freedom Essay*

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Surface Obscurantism

Schelling's 1809 *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*¹ appears to be designed to deliberately disorient the reader. Not unlike the way a Romantic symphony, say by Brahms or late Beethoven, frustrates the easy aesthetic gratification of clear structure and obvious melody, Schelling denies us system even as he promises it to us in a new way. If we were to try to read the structure off of the surface of this extraordinary essay, we would have to conclude with bewilderment that it has none. The *Freedom Essay* begins with a series of apparently random interrogations into pantheism—a topic that might have been considered fairly flogged to death in the *Pantheismustreit* of twenty years previous. Schelling, it seems, still has something to say to Jakobi on the topic. The error in the determinist interpretation of pantheism is shown to lie in a reductionist account of the nature of the proposition. The “is” in judgment is not just a conjunction but a mediator that stands in for a real if concealed relation.² With the obstacle to a pantheist denial of freedom removed, Schelling plunges into theodicy on the grounds that evil is the presupposition of freedom. Freedom is the capacity for good or for evil (*ein Vermögen zum Guten und Bösen*), Schelling asserts.³ A distinction is introduced into the divine (between the ground of being and being insofar as it exists) in order to avoid the contradiction between evil and monotheism, and a second obstacle to a thinking of freedom is removed. And then—we fall down the theosophic rabbit hole. An entirely unexpected metaphysical rehabilitation of Jakob Boehme's theogony occurs, which occupies the greater part of the *Freedom Essay* and for which the work is best known, achieving lyrical heights unmatched in any of his previous works but leaving us even more disoriented than we were. The God who makes us free is one who has himself come to be in some manner, has himself authored himself and thus overcome the centripetal pull of the anarchic freedom out of which he is born. Higher than God is meontic freedom and from it we are born as children of God or devils, each according to his choice. In the final part, a theory of human freedom as self-determination is sketched, which does not depart in essentials from the late Kant's understanding of noumenal freedom: freedom consists in the timeless authoring of moral character which originates the souls' trajectory in time.⁴

It is not entirely clear how these parts of the *Freedom Essay* fit together. It would appear that Schelling wishes to rehabilitate pantheism in order to maintain a robust notion of nature, the immanent divine, while offering a naturalistic account of freedom: far from requiring that we abandon an immanentist understanding of God, freedom requires it. Beyond that simple

¹ F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Inquiries into the Essence of Human Freedom* (*Schelling's Sämtliche Werke* [hereafter SSW] I/7, 331-416), trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2006). Hereafter, *Freedom Essay*.

² See Iain Hamilton Grant, “The Law of Insuperable Environment: What is Exhibited in the Exhibition of the Process of Nature?” *Analecta Hermeneutica* 5 (2013): especially page 7 f; Mark J. Thomas, “The Mediation of the Copula as a Fundamental Structure in Schelling's Philosophy,” *Schelling Studien* 2 (2014): 20-39.

³ Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 23; SSW I/7, 352

⁴ See Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. Trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), Part 1.

assertion, the careful reader is left with questions. Have we not substituted an even more problematic theology, a God who is not sovereign over being but has himself by some means come to be, for the traditional impasse of freedom *or* pantheistic determinism? And what kind of moral system has been rescued for us at the end of the *Freedom Essay*, when all we can say of freedom is that it consists in a decision for or against God, a decision that has always already happened, a decision which is nothing less than the soul's moment of birth and at which, therefore the soul could not be present, and which cannot be reversed or revisited? In the end, it seems Schelling is advocating a new kind of determinism, determinism by the self, which looks suspiciously like an Augustinian notion of election. Is this a reduction *ad absurdum* of the very concept of freedom?

The fog generated by this 68 page treatise is rendered all the more dense when one considers that this is the 34 year old Schelling's last major publication. The *Freedom Essay* appeared as the only new piece in an 1809 published selection of Schelling's works. The selection was dedicated to gathering in a single volume scattered writings from the previous fourteen years that had as their common theme what Schelling called "the ideal part" of his philosophy.⁵ The book was anticipated as volume one in a collected edition of Schelling's works but the project seems to have been aborted after the publication. It is clear from Schelling's preface that Schelling believed the *Freedom Essay* marked a new phase in the development of his philosophy, but it is not at all clear what this new phase is, or at least, since the new phase did not produce any publications in his lifetime, what he thought it was. Up until this point, Schelling notes, he had been concerned with nature and for the most part silent on questions concerning religion, personality, freedom, and morality. Schelling takes some pains to insist that this turn towards ethics is not a break with his previous work, for up until then he had neither affirmed nor denied freedom, morality, or the existence of the personal God upon which such concepts, he will argue in the *Freedom Essay*, depend. Thus the new turn is complimentary to nature-philosophy rather than revisionary. Until now, Schelling says, he has not produced a "complete, finished system," and he has been misunderstood as having done so. He has "shown only individual facets of such a system." His works are mere "fragments of a whole" still undisclosed.⁶

Clearly, the *Freedom Essay* is not a break with nature-philosophy. To the contrary, the point of the text is to demonstrate the relationship of freedom to nature, albeit a nature expanded greatly in conception from anything Schelling had previously discussed. In the light of Schelling's later lectures on mythology and revelation, the *Freedom Essay* is the *hinge* in Schelling's career, representing a turn away from (but not a turn against) objective idealism and nature-philosophy, toward the philosophy of religion which would occupy him for over four decades. A hinge does not break; it joins two things that might be otherwise separated. The *Freedom Essay* is thus the mediator between the early Schelling and the late Schelling, between nature-philosophy and the philosophy of Christianity. On a proper understanding of its structure depends not only the much disputed unity of Schelling's work as a whole but the unity of Western philosophy itself. The *Freedom Essay* both naturalizes freedom, explaining how something like freedom is still possible within a dynamic philosophy of nature, and transcendentalizes nature, explaining how *natura naturans* is productive, not only of things that are beneath it, that fail to fully express it, but also of a being that is above it, that transcends it entirely for it possesses intelligence and will. The nature conceived in Schelling's early work as

⁵ Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 4.

⁶ Ibid., 5.

absolute productivity is now revealed to be the origin of not only the order of causally-determined finite things but also of the creator God who freely produces those things and who alone makes free individuals possible. Thus is the *Freedom Essay* not simply continuous with nature-philosophy; it is a transcendental overhaul of nature-philosophy. Unconditioned nature is now also productive of beings who *will* the universal *deliberately*, and who therefore can just as deliberately refuse it. The order of freedom stands opposed to the order of necessity but no longer in the old terms which had spirit on one side and mechanism on the other. Spirit inhabits both sides of binary: on the one side, the dynamic and endlessly becoming order of *necessary* self-production, and on the other side, the order of freedom. And, according to the logic of the proposition outlined in the beginning of the essay, these two are one: auto-production *is* self-production, because the same thing that is in one respect bound is in another respect free, in one respect objectified, in another respect morally free.

Deep Logic

Despite the above questions—questions which will not go away and which explain something of the perennial fascination the *Freedom Essay* has on philosophy—Schelling’s meandering arguments and thought experiments in the essay are held together by an underlying logic. Like any point in logic, it can be tersely expressed, even formalized. But to leave the logic on the formal level is to miss its profound significance for ontology, theology, ethics and psychology. Perhaps this is the reason why Schelling himself refuses to formalize the logic of the *Freedom Essay*. Perhaps the text is deliberately constructed in such a way as to present the reader with a task of interpretation. By the time the logic is unravelled, the investigator will have inhabited certain extraordinary thought experiments that ought to de-stabilize common conceptions concerning good, evil, God and creation, freedom and time. Nevertheless, the formal point must be expressed lest we hastily conclude that the *Freedom Essay* is nothing more wild romanticism.

Unlike Hegel’s, Schelling’s logic is inflexible—it presumes the inviolability of the principle of non-contradiction.⁷ It does not *move* or *turn into something*, and we would do well to consider it in its steely rigour. To do so is to risk trivialization, but that risk is unavoidable.

Let us venture it. Opposition, Schelling says in many different ways, is only possible between two of the same kind. Thus opposition is always triadic, where the third term does not re-capitulate the opposition or draw us into infinite regress; it transcends it entirely by being *qualitatively* other than it, the conditions of its possibility. Let the formal structure of any opposition be $A \neq B$, then the ground of the opposition, X, is the hidden mediator of the structure.

$$\begin{array}{c} A \neq B \\ \hline X \end{array}$$

Crucial to the finality of this structure is that X itself is not an opposite; it does not oppose $A \neq B$, at least not in the same way that A opposes B. For if it did, and we applied the rule that opposition is always triadic, presupposing a third term which is the condition of its possibility (call it its relation), then we would need to triangulate our terms endlessly.

$$X \neq (A \neq B)$$

⁷ On this difference with Hegel, see Sean J. McGrath, “The Question Concerning Metaphysics: A Schellingian Intervention into Analytical Psychology,” *International Journal of Jungian Studies* 6 (2014): 23-51, at 42-43.

Would then mean that

$$\frac{X \neq (A \neq B)}{Z}$$

And so on, ad infinitum. This is, of course, a version of the third man argument which Plato introduces in the *Parmenides* (132a-b) and which returns in the history of early analytical philosophy as “Bradley’s regress.”⁸ The way that Schelling avoids the regress is by insisting that where opposition is not *qualitative* difference, not difference in kind, the deepest grounding is. That is, X is indeed different in kind from A and B, and therefore cannot be opposed to it. But if it is neither identical nor opposed to A or B, what language shall we use to describe its relation? It is, Schelling says, “indifferent” to A or B and hence can be the deep ground of both. Were it not for X, A could not be related in opposition or identity with B. But X as the deep ground of the relation of A to B is not of the same order of being as the *relata*.

Let us now put flesh back on these bones. What opposites are at issue in the *Freedom Essay*? Plainly, nature and freedom. Or as Schelling puts it, if the opposition in which modern philosophy lost its way was the confused modern opposition of nature to spirit, where nature was understood mechanistically as a spiritless order of external causality, and spirit was understood subjectively as reflective thought (exclusive to humans), the true opposition, “the higher” or “genuine opposition,” is that of necessity and freedom. With this opposition “the innermost centerpoint of philosophy first comes into consideration.”⁹ The “resolution” of this opposition “is the unconscious and invisible driving force of all striving for knowledge, from the lowest to the highest.”¹⁰ The opposition is not to be waved away through a Hegelian dialectic. No *Aufhebung* is needed, desired or even possible. On the contrary, the struggle with the contradiction is itself life-giving. “Without the contradiction of necessity and freedom not only philosophy but each higher willing of the spirit would sink into the death that is proper to those sciences in which the contradiction has no application.”¹¹ What Schelling has in mind here is any spurious evacuation of the space of contradiction which proceeds by means of denying one side of the opposition: either a denial of freedom, which achieves a rational and systematic account of nature by leaving the human being out, or a denial of reason, which asserts “the fact of freedom,” “the feeling,” “immediately . . . imprinted on every individual,” but at the expense of a realist account of nature. The opposites of necessity and freedom, of nature-philosophy and moral philosophy, are life-giving oppositions, or productive dissociations.¹²

⁸ See Richard Gaskin, *The Unity of the Proposition* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 223-235.

⁹ Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 4.

¹⁰ Ibid., 10.

¹¹ Ibid., 10-11.

¹² On productive dissociation see my “Schelling and the History of the Dissociative Self,” in *Schelling After Theory*. Special issue of *Symposium. The Journal of the Canadian Society for Continental Philosophy* (2015); idem, “The Psychology of Productive Dissociation, or What Would a Schellingian Psychotherapy Look Like?” in *Comparative and Continental Philosophy* 6, n. 1 (2014): 35-48; idem, “The Dissociated Self,” in *Selfhood East and West: De-Constructs of Identity*. Selected Papers from the 18th Symposium of the Académie du Midi: Identity—East and West, Alet-les-Bains, France, 2010, ed. Jason Dockstader, Hans-Georg Möller and Günter Wohlfart (Nordhausen: Traugott Bautz, 2012), 93-109.

Schelling would have us return to Kant's "Third Antinomy," which because it is irresolvable (because reason must affirm both the thesis and the anti-thesis) produces an apparently irreconcilable cleft between necessity and freedom.

Thesis: Causality in accordance with laws of nature is not the only causality from which the appearances of the world can one and all be derived. To explain these appearances it is necessary to assume that there is also another causality, that of freedom; Anti-thesis: There is no freedom; everything in the world takes place solely in accordance with laws of nature.¹³

Of course Schelling had already, extensively and with great effect on his contemporaries, demolished the mechanistic notion of nature as the iron clad system of mechanical causality presumed in Kant's thesis. In much of his prodigious output of the previous decade, Schelling demonstrated that nature conceived dynamically is not mechanism but spirit made visible.¹⁴ Nature is to be thought of as the activity of self-manifestation, as the unconscious subject of nature (slumbering spirit) which exteriorizes itself endlessly through the production of natural beings. But the notion of freedom as spontaneity remains for Schelling in 1809 no less ambiguously related to nature conceived as auto-production. Would not a natural history of the self, however, speculatively conceived, not drive us to recognize that far from free or self-productive, the individual human being is a means towards bringing into being the universal will of nature: to become manifest? "Nature contests the Individual; it longs for the Absolute and continually endeavors to represent it. It seeks the most universal proportion in which all actants, without prejudice to their individuality, can be unified. Individual products, therefore, in which Nature's activity is at a standstill, can only be seen as *misbegotten attempts* to achieve such a proportion."¹⁵

What place is there for transcendental freedom in this account, that power of spontaneity which Kant had shown is the practical assumption without which morality is incoherent? The transcendentally free individual is precisely *not* a natural product; as transcendental, he has no natural history, he is not *something* that essentially depends upon conditions exterior to him. Freedom is self-productive and therefore responsible for itself. The finding of external conditions to account for the character of the personality, an origin in time, or natural causality is always a disavowal of freedom and an abrogation of responsibility. Schelling is entirely with Kant on this

¹³ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith, revised second edition (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), A 444/ B 472, p. 409.

¹⁴ F.W.J. Schelling, "Ideas on a Philosophy of Nature as an Introduction to this Science" (1797, SSW I/2: 1-73), trans. Priscilla Hayden-Roy, in *Philosophy of German Idealism*, ed. Ernst Behler (New York, N.Y.: Continuum, 1987), 167-202, at 202.

¹⁵ F.W.J. Schelling, *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature* (1799, SSW I/3: 1-268), trans. Keith R. Peterson (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2004), 35. See also p. 33: "The egotism of each individual actant must join itself to that of all the others; what is produced is a product of the subordination of all under one and one under all, i.e., the most complete *mutual* subordination. No individual potency could produce the whole for itself, but all together can produce it. The product does not lie in the *individual*, but in *all together*." Crucial to note here is that the subordination of the individual actant to the whole is not a free and moral act, but a naturally necessary act. In the moral order, this subordination will be the production of love, but the condition of its possibility is the possibility of its reversal, the possibility of the elevation of the individual over the whole, i.e., moral evil.

point, who writes in the *Religion*, “we must not . . . look for an origin in time of a moral character.”¹⁶

The opposites in question, then, are nature, properly conceived *dynamically*, not mechanistically, as auto-production, and freedom transcendently conceived as moral, that is, free self-production. Schelling argues that we must allow each of these opposites the fullness of their reality, even exacerbate the contradiction between them, if we are not to lose the achievements of nature-philosophy, on the one hand, or transcendental philosophy, on other. For nature-philosophy has still not made an advance on transcendental philosophy in the conceiving of freedom. It is transcendental philosophy or “idealism” which we have to thank “for the first complete concept of formal freedom.”¹⁷ Now presumably, we are to make the concept concrete.

Consider the following substitution:

$$\frac{A \neq B}{X}$$

$$\frac{\text{Necessity} \neq \text{Freedom}}{X}$$

According to Schelling’s theory of the proposition, the opposition means that when the copula in the judgment is understood as *the identification of the opposed*, we can also say “necessity is freedom.” Every identification is a differentiation if not always an opposition.¹⁸ The *Freedom Essay* brings the two highest achievements of early 19th century philosophy, the dynamic notion of nature and the transcendental notion of freedom, into explicit opposition (and therefore identification), not for the sake of recapitulating Kantian skepticism (that would indeed be a step back), but for the sake of raising the question concerning the identity of X. What is the vanishing mediator that makes possible the genuine antithesis of necessity and freedom? What real relation allows us to oppose natural production to free production in this way? To what common kind do non-human nature and freedom belong?

Or, to put it in Schelling’s words, “If in a different turn of phrase, necessary and free things are explained as One, the meaning . . . is that the same thing (in the final judgment) which is the essence of the moral world is also the essence of nature.”¹⁹

The context of this alarming sentence is Schelling’s theory of the proposition. Identity, Schelling argues, is never mere sameness, even in apparently tautological statements. When I say

¹⁶ Kant, *Religion*, 38. See also ibid., 35-6: “To seek the temporal origin of free acts as such (as though they were natural effects) is thus a contradiction. Hence it is also a contradiction to seek the temporal origin of man’s moral character, so far as it is considered as contingent, since this character signifies the ground of the *exercise* of freedom. . . . There is then for us no conceivable ground from which the moral evil in us could originally have come. . . . In the search for the rational origin of evil actions, every such action must be regarded as though the individual had fallen into it directly from a state of innocence. For whatever his previous deportment may have been, whatever natural causes may have been influencing him, and whether these causes were to be found within him or outside him, his action is yet free and determined by none of these causes; hence it can and must always be judged as an *original* use of his will.”

¹⁷ Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 21.

¹⁸ The theory holds good also for non-opposites, in Schelling’s example, “the body is blue,” which identifies by differentiating but without opposing, since “body” and “blue” are not opposites.

¹⁹ Ibid., 21.

$A=A$ the whole power of the claim resides in the fact that A is meant differently in its second iteration than in its first. $A=A$ is always $A=B$ on some basic, formal level. Identity should therefore be understood *dynamically* not *statically*, as an *identification of the different* not as a bare repetition. “The principle [of identity] does not express a unity which, turning itself in the circle of seemless sameness [*Einerleiheit*], would not be progressive and, thus, insensate or lifeless. The unity of this law is an immediate creative one.”²⁰

Schelling unpacks the relation of predicate to subject in identity statements in various ways. The subject is the *antecedens*, the predicate, the *consequens*; subject and predicate are set against each other as what is enfolded to what is unfolded, as *implicitum et explicitum*; and in a third statement, crucial for what is to follow, the subject and the predicate are united in a mediating third, which is not expressed but implied by the presence of the copulas. Thus in any judgment of the form A is B , some X is presupposed which is in one respect A and in another respect B .

This non-reductionist reading of the proposition sets Schelling against the main trajectory of 20th century analytical philosophy. Where the philosophy of language after Frege and Russel holds that the copula is a mere conjunction that can be replaced by a quantifier, Schelling insists that the copula expresses a real relation, or otherwise put, that the unity of the proposition is irreducible to its constituent parts. Something is expressed in “ A is B ” which is more than merely the conjunction of A and B .

There follows a contrastive analysis of identity as sameness and identity as identification of the different. In the former we have an empty, non-progressive, circular and lifeless theory of the proposition; in the latter we have a concrete, progressive, open and dynamic theory. In the former case $A=A$ is a redundancy since the right side of the equal sign expresses nothing more than the left side; in the latter case $A=A$ means $A=B$ in as much as the right side of the copula expresses something other than the left, the *consequens* which is other than the *antecedens* else it would not be consequent upon it. In the former, subject and predicate are non-differentiated or have a merely formal difference; in the latter the predicate explicates or unfolds what is implicit in the subject. Schelling provides several examples to explain what he means. The one that is most telling for the analysis of evil which pre-occupies him in the second part of the *Freedom Essay* is: “The perfect is the imperfect.” If identity is sameness this statement amounts to a denial of difference between the perfect and the imperfect: “The perfect and the imperfect are the same [*einerlei*], all is the same [*geich*] in itself, the worst and the best, foolishness and wisdom.”²¹ If identity is *identification of difference* the claim means something else entirely, namely, that imperfection is *consequent* upon perfection, presupposes it, unfolds something implicit in it, or more helpfully, imperfection does not ground itself but presupposes something opposed to it yet intimately related to it which makes it possible. As Schelling puts it, “The imperfect is not due to that through which it is imperfect but rather through the perfect that is in it.”²²

Back to the claim at issue: the same thing which is the essence of the moral world is also the essence of nature. And to say that is to say that the moral world and the natural world are true opposites. That means, necessity is freedom; necessity is the *antecedens*, freedom the *consequens*; moral freedom makes explicit what is implicit in non-human nature.

But what is this “same thing” which is the essence of both of them?

²⁰ Ibid., 13-14.

²¹ Ibid., 13.

²² Ibid., 13.

The Deepest Ground is the Non-Ground

It is not easy to say what the answer to this question is. X is *not* “the ground of existence.” The point is worth examining in detail since so much high-level commentary, from Heidegger to Zizek, attends to Schelling’s distinction between ground of being and being. The ground of being is not God; it is *other* than God (*praeter Deum*), but not *outside* of God (*extra Deum*). Ground “is *nature*”²³—unconscious, yes, but not spiritless. Ground is driven but in a peculiarly personal way: “It is rather of intermediate nature, as desire or appetite, and is most readily comparable to the beautiful urge of a nature in becoming that strives to unfold itself and whose inner movements are involuntary (cannot be omitted), without there being a feeling of compulsion in them.”²⁴ Ground is oppositional; its opposite is consciousness, “understanding,” or the ideal. Ground cannot therefore be the X we seek. For X is *non-oppositional* and must be if it makes opposition as such possible. X therefore does not ground in an oppositional sense at all. And since the conditioned ground (the ground of being) is nature considered as dynamic auto-production, or *natura naturans*, X cannot be identified with the unconditioned of the nature-philosophy (*natura naturans*), for this has now been revealed to be only relatively unconditioned. *Natura naturans* is also oppositional: its opposite is moral freedom.²⁵

Are we any closer to answering our question? X is “the end” which serves “the primary distinction” between ground and existence, the “common point of contrast for both,” a “being before all ground and before all that exists … before any duality … It cannot be described as the identity of opposites; it can only be described as the ‘absolute indifference of both.’”²⁶ Out of this X, the ground of being and God himself have emerged as two that stand opposed. Nature-philosophy gave us the distinction between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, but it did not bring us to the place of questioning Schelling now reaches, where the distinction between ground of being and being, or between unconditioned nature and conditioned nature is put into relation with the distinction between free and necessary self-production, in the interest of excavating a deeper origin of all that is, an older beginning, more primordial even than God or the ground of God. The clue to this oldest of all origins is the fact which only comes from “the ideal part” of philosophy: nature not only produces products which endless and necessarily strive to make the absolute concrete (an impossible task, the failure of which is productive of the universe of things); it also produces an order of being entirely opposed to this, the order of freedom, and its first inhabitant is God himself.

This non-oppositional absolute, which Schelling calls “the non-ground”—is it not simply the old idea, well developed in the thousands of pages the young Schelling had dedicated to the “identity-philosophy” of absolute indifference? In one sense, yes. X is absolute indifference. But the new approach to the absolute via the series of related oppositions—necessity and freedom, good and evil, ground and existence—brings us to a decisively new question: why did the

²³ Ibid., 27.

²⁴ Ibid., 59.

²⁵ So many passages in the *Freedom Essay* support this reading of *natura naturans* as merely a conditioned ground in the middle Schelling (and therefore no longer an adequate figure for the absolute), it is a wonder that the point continues to go unnoticed in the Schelling literature in English. Nature, we are told, is the Old Testament, freedom the New. Ibid., 72. Nature is the older, unwritten revelation, Christianity (the content of which is freedom) is the new (written) revelation. Ibid., 77. Nature therefore stands in oppositional relation to freedom and nature-philosophy stands in oppositional relation to the philosophy of revelation (Christianity). X must be other than nature and freedom if it is to make possible their relation.

²⁶ Ibid., 68.

absolute divide itself and produce opposition where previously there was non-duality? Why indeed when one of the products of this opposition is evil, sickness, moral degeneration, and things that should not be? The answer is nothing short of Schelling's explanation of why there is something rather than nothing: the non-ground divides *for the sake of love*. Only if there are two, related in this way, can there be love. This is, Schelling says, "the highest point of the entire investigation ... What end should serve this primary distinction between being in so far as it is ground and in so far as it exists?"²⁷

The being [essence] of the ground, as that which exists, can only be that which comes *before* all ground, thus the absolute considered merely in itself, the non-ground [*Ungrund*]. But as proved it cannot be this in any other way than insofar as it divides into two equally eternal beginning, not that it can be both *at once*, but that it is in each *in the same way*, thus in each the whole, or its own being. But the non-ground divides itself into the two exactly equal beginnings, only so that the two which could exist simultaneously or be one in it as the non-ground, become one through love, that is, it divides itself only so that there may be life and love and personal existence. For love is neither in indifference nor where opposites are linked which require linkage for [their] Being [as in Hegel's dialectic] but rather (to repeat a phrase which has already been said), this is the secret of love, that it links such things which could each exist for itself, yet does not and cannot exist without the other.²⁸

To sum up what has just been said:

$$\frac{A \neq B}{X}$$

$$\frac{\text{Necessity} \neq \text{Freedom}}{X}$$

$$\frac{\text{Evil} \neq \text{Good}}{X}$$

$$\frac{\text{Ground} \neq \text{Existence}}{X}$$

X, which is the same in each of the above disjunctions ("We have, then, one being [*Wesen*] for all oppositions, an absolute identity of light and darkness, good and evil"²⁹) is the non-ground, or absolute indifference. But indifference is not love. All the above opposites exist so that something other than indifference might come to be, a different kind of identity, a richer unity that presumes duality. X is the absolute. The absolute divides itself into two so that love might exist. Not that the division between ground and existence *must* produce love; it can also produce evil, but division is *for the sake of* the production of love, and love cannot exist unless it allows for its own rejection.

²⁷ Ibid., 68.

²⁸ Ibid., 70.

²⁹ Ibid., 68.

