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# Heidegger and Schelling: The Finitude of Being

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The recent publication of Heidegger's 1936 lectures on Schelling's essay on human freedom<sup>1</sup> reveals yet another point of transition along the way from *Being and Time* to the later works on language and poetry. It brings to light an influence on Heidegger almost as weighty as his reading of Hölderlin and Nietzsche in that same decade, an influence hitherto only hinted at in published works. It now appears that Heidegger's essays on identity, on grounding, on being, all bear the imprint of a dialogue with Schelling, that he discovered in the latter thinker a valuable prototype of his notion of being. If the reader is not aware of the direction of Heidegger's own thought, the 1936 lectures on their own reveal little of the dialogue. Schelling's *Investigations*<sup>2</sup> is a difficult and obscure work, and Heidegger confines himself to close textual work, with care and insight bringing even the most obscure passages out of allegory into lucid philosophical statement. The lectures are a triumph of pedagogy, the most careful attempt to date to read Schelling as an ontological thinker. Yet their smooth surface, scholarly poise, and objectivity leave hidden a question of real interest: Why should Schelling, commonly thought a weak link to Hegel or the first symptom of "existentialist"

anti-Hegelian reaction, be of interest to Heidegger the philosopher? And why, in particular, should this most exotic of Schelling's works, touched by the influence of theosophists like Boehme, be accepted by Heidegger as one of the crucial moments of the West's historical thinking through of being?

There are certain affinities between Heidegger and Schelling, including a shared preoccupation with the question of being, an anthropological or "anthropomorphic" approach to that question, common interests in language and temporality, common repugnance for the domination which "things" exercise in ontology, for the easy way in which being-at-hand wins acceptance as the paradigmatic mode of being. But what fundamentally attracts Heidegger's interest and moves him to take Schelling as seriously as Plato, Kant, and Nietzsche in the "history of being" is the direction and movement of thought found in the *Investigations*. In what Hegel found a work interesting but lacking in significance since it handled an isolated problem<sup>3</sup> Heidegger discovers a line of thought which leads earnest ontological thought or "system" away from the formalism of logical categories such as identity and difference to categories of concrete spirit, human existence if you will, to process, decision, history, to finitude, to being as a doublefold structure in which man finds himself ambiguously placed as the inbetween.

The central question of Schelling's essay is whether spirit can be made the basis and central point of systematic philosophy, not merely its product, whether spirit can be grasped without the reduction of selfhood, otherness, and their uneasy togetherness to ciphers in an abstract calculus. The key to a live grasp of spirit, first provided by Kant, is the notion of freedom. Yet Kantian freedom is itself abstract and formal, a general notion of self-determination which interprets the self off the model of abstract identity ( $A=A$ ) and is unable to specify the quality of causation this "freedom" involves. Schelling wanted to surpass this Kantian notion of freedom to enable systematic philosophy to reach down to a founding act of spirit—an act which founds spirit's sense of self and can accordingly found "system" on the same basis. This is a decisive turn from idealistic formalism, from the attempt which Schelling's earlier thought and Hegel's system alike embody, viz. to grasp spirit in terms of structure. Schelling moves to

replace a logic of things as the hermeneutical tool with a logic of founding acts, a logic of human existence. Heidegger recognizes the importance of the attempt while admitting its fragile character, its partial success, for as a problem it is the pathfinder for serious thought. Schelling enunciates the question of "system," the togetherness of things in thought which, Heidegger claims, is what the ancients meant by *logos*. How, he asks, can freedom be contained within system? If reason proceeds from will and yet system is the work of reason, in reason, how is will comprehended? How, in the last analysis, is system founded or judged to be well-founded?

Heidegger's 1936 lectures are cast in the form of a close commentary which somewhat conceals the points of his own philosophical attachment to Schelling. Heidegger's aim is not mere scholarship or a reproduction of the course of the *Investigations*. The essence of truth is in process, it carries its history along, and each point of that history has life and validity in the present.<sup>4</sup> Heidegger is engaged in *thinking with* Schelling, not "thinking about." Our task will be to locate the essential points of confluence of their thought which permit this co-thinking. They are four in number:

(1) Philosophic thought is systematic in essence. It is or represents the whole of being in its structured configuration as the whole. (2) The system-principle is being itself, not as revealed in things or in a metaphysics which grasps only the *Seiendheit* of beings, bald identity, but as an identity *of* the different. This identity is not one of sameness but of gatheredness. It is "grounding," the emergence of the existent from a ground, the maintenance of this manifest difference as their togetherness. (3) Grounding is ungrounded, there is no reason for reason. The meaning of grounding must therefore be sought humanly, in terms of will, and accordingly it appears as temporal process, as decision, as differentiation of good and evil. Along with Schelling Heidegger maintains that the meaning of grounding lies in freedom and so likewise does the meaning of "system," the "sense of being." (4) That freedom is the ultimate sense of grounding, which in its own right is the structuring sense or logic of being, implies that being is essentially finite. For freedom is always "thrown," necessity in its most decisive appearance, its most divisive appearance. Schelling emphasizes that *concretely* freedom is decision

for good *and* evil. Since this conditioned freedom, the place where the doublefold character of being breaks out as decision, is the only sense of grounding, grounding is always ungrounded and *ab-gründig*, abysmal. The doublefold structure of being is ambiguous. Schelling at this stage of the argument attempts to expunge the finitude from freedom and propose a ground for grounding, an absolute timelessly beyond the process of separating ground and existent. Heidegger must here reject Schelling's line of thought, and the rejection indicates the motives behind his rejection of metaphysics and his call for a new beginning in the thinking of being which would at least keep faith with the ambiguities of experienced being.

## I

Heidegger and Schelling both believe that philosophical thought is systematic *in essence*. System is not a mold for thought, a form somehow imposed on a hitherto amorphous stuff which, for all its lack of definition, is supposed to be "thought." System is the heart of thought itself. We can best convey the centrality of the notion of system to both thinkers if we distinguish two aspects. First, philosophy aims at a grasp of the whole. Not as a mere aggregate, however, but as a founded totality. It is a fundamental knowing, a getting down to foundations. In the West this quest for the fundamental took the form of the question of being, hence philosophy is systematic in being *ontological*. Secondly, philosophy is systematic in a peculiarly modern or postmodern sense. It attempts a knowing command over what is, that is, it tries to discover or construct the structure of being itself in human knowing. Hence philosophy is systematic in being a *will toward ordering knowledge*, whether one makes grandiose claims for the sense of things thus unearthed and calls it "the absolute" or whether one acknowledges the limits of an hermeneutical enterprise forever locked inside interpretations and preinterpretations.

To bring to light their common belief in the essentially systematic nature of thought let us compare Schelling and Heidegger first as ontological thinkers, then as "systematic" philosophers in the narrower sense of the term spelled out above. For in our lax and somewhat pictorial approach to the history of thought we normally do not treat "absolute idealists"—commonly imagined as philosophers in

whom the will toward ordering knowing turned malignant—as ontological thinkers nor do we represent philosophers of existence or "historians of being" as systematic philosophers.

Schelling came to the position that philosophy's orientation is ontological early in his career, at the start of the *System of Identity* and eight years prior to the *Investigations*. Philosophy does not occupy itself with the particular as such, nor is it rooted in the particularistic epistemic stance of subjectivity. Its object is "being in reason," the whole, that which is actualized in the differentiated individual, which realizes itself as subject and as object. Subject and object are not different *au fond*; they are instances of identity comparatively differentiated, thus quantitatively different (4, 123).<sup>5</sup> It is this essential identity, not the differentiated particulars, which is philosophy's proper object. For it is, above all, comprehending knowledge, one which binds the individual in its independence into the universal (7, 140 f.). It is, says Schelling, knowledge indifferent with the absolute, the emergence and exhibition of the sense of the whole—in fact the "construction" of that whole.

The being which is philosophy's object is constructible, not lying at hand but yet-to-be-fashioned. Its fashioning is a process of intermediation which Schelling calls a uniforming or invention of the universal and the particular. We may liken it to artistic creation, as the term *Ineinsbildung* suggests. Like those artistic processes whose outcome are ideas made concrete, the universe captured in individual form, each individual a universe (5,390), systematizing philosophic invention depends upon a creative prescience of sorts, "intellectual intuition into the absolute." By intuition into the absolute Schelling does not mean an access to a thing-like totality, a ready-made whole, for the whole and the "sense of the whole" is philosophy's work, necessarily a child of process and labor. He means by it rather the insight into the ultimate equipollence of being and thought, the congruence of being and thought which is the principle and the ground of philosophy (4,368-69). Intellectual intuition is methodological certainty, and receives the name "intuition" from an idealistic polemical stance. Intuition alone delivers the real, and the highest "reality" for philosophy is that congruence of being and thought which supplies a pattern for working the isolated and fragmented bits of

experienced being into a totality But why call this constructible totality Schelling has in mind *being*? Why does Heidegger explicitly point out Schelling as an ontological thinker? It would appear a misuse of the term if names name only things, and if being is a thing of sorts, albeit an odd thing.

The question of being, insists Heidegger, is not simply a question of the things that are. It is a double question, the onto— theological question. It asks after not just being as the beingly, the denominated being in its individuality, but after the *theion*, the divine or the ground of being, i.e., after being in its totality.<sup>6</sup> In asking after a sense of the whole, then, Schelling is asking *the* ontological question. Inasmuch as the *Investigations* poses the question in a new way (the static incorporation of the individual into a structural totality, the position of the System of Identity, gives way to a dynamical totalization of being in its history) Heidegger praises it as one of the deepest ontological works. Its profundity, he maintains, lies in the way it seeks out the hidden unity of the onto— theological question and through the notion of the historical existence of the individual as the revelation of the whole links the questioning of what is as such to the questioning of what is in its totality.

The central thrust of Heidegger's own thought is ontological; thought directs itself to a questioning of being, seeking the "sense of being" or the "truth of being" or the "essence of truth." As the plurality of terms indicates, the basic ontological orientation survives a number of tactical shifts. The questioning of being took the form first of a metaphysical inquiry, then that of an existential analytic of human experience, then that of an "antimetaphysical" history of being, and finally that of inquiry into truth and language.

We cannot here present in detail the stable core of Heidegger's thought and document its ornamentation and expression from phase to phase. In general outline, the questioning of being turned out for Heidegger to be an historical dialectical search. The question of being is inexorably tied to being's first opening in the West, the Greek experience, to what was revealed there, to what was concealed, to the forgetfulness of the concealment. In this forgetfulness the search for being gets linked with the questioning of the being of beings; the

stable way beings have of standing *in* being is accepted as characteristic *of* being itself. The urge to answer the question after being easily and falsely by pointing out *a* being which is being arises again and again. These mistakes cannot simply be brushed aside as conceptually wrongheaded. For they are part of the original experience of being, and if there is any way to an adequate grasp of being, it must be a way *back*, won through grappling with the primal falsifications of the sense of being.

In Heidegger's sense of the terms, a serious ontological philosophy is the exact opposite of a metaphysics. It is precisely antimetaphysical, challenging the way the question of being is mistakenly heard as the question of the being-ness (*Seiendheit*) of beings and mistakenly answered by the construction of an extra worldly source of this odd property. An ontological inquiry which proceeds down to the ground, which is fundamental ontology, destroys the dominance of beings over being and tries to lead questioning back to the truth of being, i.e., to the dialectic of hiddenness and clearing in which being happens, and back to the way truth *happens*, viz. temporally, in discrete social quanta, hence historically and finitely.

For both thinkers, then, the philosophical task is to come to a sense of the whole through a dialectical overcoming of false particularistic or thing-oriented perspectives. For both philosophers the dialectic is internal, part of the structure of being itself, and not an external and merely critical tool. Schelling does not deny the truth of particulars, just the ultimacy of their particularity, and he attempts to open out their meaning until they are seen as specified functions or organs within the whole. Similarly Heidegger does not just point out the falsity of taking *Seiendheit* for being, but pursues the meaning of the falsity to its positive function as concealment of being. The "sense of being," or as Schelling calls it, "the absolute," is in no sense an alternative to the experience of things, to knowledge at its most everyday. Neither philosopher hopes to locate the absolute *instead of* individuals, being *instead of* beings. Neither Heidegger's being nor Schelling's absolute is available as *a* being. This is what Schelling's intellectual intuition means: there is no particularistic or thingly way of grasping the whole.

For both philosophers speculation must bring being to expression in *thinking through* the obviously or historically determined false. It must be the thoroughgoing refutation of the everyday and the commonsensical. For Schelling philosophy must think through the particularity of beings to their common "deep structure" and then proceed to think through the abstractness of this structure to its existential basis in the human and divine will. For Heidegger philosophy must rethink the historical opening of being, i.e., it must think through the primal concealment of concealment, the original falsification in this opening. It must follow the Platonic detour from truth as the *sense* of being to truth as the *certainty* of being,<sup>7</sup> and think it through to its ground. It must break apart the Greek reification of the concealing-clearing doublefold of being into "idea," that which steadily holds itself open for sight, and deliver us over to experiencing the doublefold within our hedged and conditioned transcendence, in our freedom which is ungrounded grounding.<sup>8</sup>

Many names, including that of "dialectic," could be put on this thinking through to the ground wherein the one-sidedness which would advance an aspect valid in its place to a false picture of the whole is conquered. Yet it is not so much the method of philosophy as its substance. Philosophy is ontological; it achieves the whole, wrests the whole from the aggregate of parts. It is onto-theological; it puts in the light the essential connection between questioning after the truth of being and questioning after a ground and wholeness for being.<sup>9</sup> If philosophy achieves this wholeness by a thinking through to the ground, rather than calling this movement "dialectic," we might say it is but the negative aspect of the central act of philosophy, the fulfilling of the ontological difference. The ontological difference—crudely put, that being is not beings and beings are not being—is at the basis of all ontology; it grounds every metaphysics, i.e., every misguided ontology, as the unasked and the unexplored central question, as that which is most worthy of question.<sup>10</sup> The ontological difference is that which is most pressingly to be thought through and, likewise, metaphysical neglect of the difference is that which most urgently calls forth the negative movement of thinking through to the ground. The difference between being and beings, between being and *Seiendheit*, is the crux of philosophy. Or rather, philosophy's chief *task*, pursued through all subordinate detail, is the correct drawing of this distinction,

the progressive differentiation—over against the muddled identification in the framework of the everyday—of the structure of being and the characteristics and properties of certain beings.<sup>11</sup> Systematic philosophy, then, is the disengagement of the framework from the particulars placed therein, of the field of happening and its temporal structures from isolated acts occurring within it.

We have seen that both Heidegger and Schelling are ontologically oriented thinkers, that they view philosophy as the construction or reconstruction of a sense of the whole, as an onto-theological effort in which the crucial step is the fulfilling of the ontological difference, thus protecting the whole against thingly or particularistic interpretation. How are they systematic thinkers in that narrowed sense wherein "system" means will toward ordering knowing?

An initial difficulty is that Heidegger does not seem to fall even roughly within the bounds of comparison. He certainly does not strike one as systematic in the popular sense of the term. In his eyes philosophy cannot pretend to completeness, formal perfection, and all-sidedness if a ground for that completeness, a comprehensiveness of intuition is lacking. We sense today the falsity of attempting to impart a purely formal closure to thought. Here Nietzsche is formative of the modern attitude. The age is the age of nihilism, and the will to system is always in bad faith if the problem of nihilism has not been solved.<sup>12</sup> Such an attitude does not denigrate the notion of system as such, rather it holds it in the highest reverence. Nihilism is the transformation of all meanings, of the highest and consequently normative meaning, into "values," strange "moral entities"; it signals the banishing of meaning from the world. Now system or the ordered integration of meanings into a body of central meanings cannot be founded on the premises of nihilism, upon meanings found meaningless in themselves and forced into otherworldly exile. There can be no nihilistic system.

We cannot call Heidegger's thought systematic, then, if we mean that it has the formal trappings of a finished system or that it heads toward conceptual closure. If system means only completeness or the full set of categories for the complete range of phenomena, then

Heidegger's thought is radically unsystematic. But Heidegger continually points out that thought must be intensive before it can be extensive, that it must be a fundamental knowing before it can be comprehensive. In that Heidegger wishes to leave thought open toward phenomena and let them reveal the kind and degree of coherence of which they are capable, he might be called "systematic" in a sense more primitive than that of completeness and closure. His thought is foundational; it consistently aims at getting to the bottom of things, if not as metaphysics or even "fundamental ontology," then as a fundamental questioning. He takes completeness in listening to the question of being as a value inestimably higher than the elegance which motivates arbitrary conceptual closure. He aims not at a complete account of things, but at a ground-laying account which makes possible the coherence of phenomena and brings the integrity of being to the fore inasmuch as it is capable of "integrity." His thought is systematic in that it attempts to reach down to integrative forces and enunciate the first structures on the basis of which all will cohere, on the basis of which being can assume the completeness for thought of which it is capable. Its aim is *logos* in what Heidegger takes to be its pristine Heraclitean sense, the *versammelnden Vorliegenlassen* of being itself, the gathering grounding for presence and individuation.<sup>13</sup>

It is in this spirit that Heidegger sympathetically approaches Schelling's investigations of the possibility of system and freedom. System, in its authentic sense, is the structure and integrity of being itself, "*die wissenmässige Fügung des Gefüges und der Fuge des Seyns selbst*."<sup>14</sup> The taste for system in this sense—not the desire to find a casual framework for an aggregate at hand, but the urge to find their proper matrix, the framework in which they take their origin—is identical with the taste for the whole which we found central to ontological philosophy.<sup>15</sup>

Heidegger's exegesis of the notion of system in post-Kantian idealism is quite incisive. The concept itself, he notes, is wholly a modern invention, a clear claim of self-certain thought over being such as ancient thought never witnessed. It is no coincidence that the central attitudinal components of the will to system are also determinative of the modern scientific temper, including the emphasis

on certainty in thought, on reason's power over what is, on man's ability creatively to reconstruct being through technique, through art and the work of genius.<sup>16</sup> Philosophy's whole business is thus to become a system, a grounding and a gathering of being inside man's knowing. It is "the will toward a freely patterning and knowing ordering of being in its structure and integrity."<sup>17</sup>

System is *will* to a *knowing ordering of being*, to a structure of thought congruent with the structure of being. Heidegger indicates that on such a model—and the model was operative in all of post-Kantian idealism—philosophy has a double outreach, toward a coherence in knowledge *and* toward a comprehensive grasp of being. The goals do not really differ from one another:

System is the structure of what is in its totality, which structure knows itself with absolute knowledge. This knowledge itself is part of "system." Knowledge constitutes the inner connectedness of what is. Knowledge is not, as man usually supposes inside the horizon of the everyday, just an occasional affair which from time to time stumbles upon what is. Being as articulated structure, as structured togetherness, and as the knowledge of being are one and the same—they belong together. Through what, then, is the structure of being determined? What is the law of being, and what is the mode of grounding of this consonance of being? What is the "principle" of system? What other than being itself? The question of the principle of system-building is the question of where the essence of being stands, where being has its truth. And this is the question of the region in which something like being can come generally to be revealed, how being can maintain this openness and maintain itself within it.<sup>18</sup>

Knowledge constitutes the inner connectedness of what is, supplies the coherence of being. If system is the will toward coherence of knowledge it is *eo ipso* the will toward finding and preserving the integrity of being; it as the concern for *being's* openness and the conditions of this openness. The two aims are not different; since being is brought before the bench of reason for justification, it suffices that thought *will itself as system* for it to be a comprehensive grasp of being. System is precisely what Schelling's philosophy is about, and its essence, as Heidegger recognizes, lies in the richly misunderstood

claim that the system of philosophy is founded on and is the explication of "intellectual intuition."

Heidegger finds the historical origin of Schelling's notion of system in Kant's teaching of the unitive work of reason in the production of "ideas." Two suppositions of the critical theory of knowledge kept Kant from acknowledging the validity of the will to system, first, that knowledge depends upon sensible experience, and, secondly, that *what is known* must necessarily be an *object*. Schelling rejects the presuppositions. System is an holistic knowledge, not parceled out and dependent upon representation. It is knowledge of the whole, thus nonobjective, not thingly or reified. Heidegger seems to appreciate how free of the model of the thing Schelling's ideal of philosophical knowledge is. It is intuition into being which comes to itself *inside* of philosophical inquiry. It is not knowledge of a being, but a progressive and self-won achievement of a sense of the whole. Of the nature and task of the philosophical system Schelling had said, "One cannot describe reason, it must describe itself in everything and through everything" (7, 146). Heidegger, in comment on this systematizing knowledge, reveals the ontological impulse in the will to system or intellectual intuition:

This non-object-oriented knowing of what is as a whole recognizes itself as the authentic or absolute mode of knowledge. What it pushes on to know is none other than the structure of being which no longer opposes itself to knowing as an object of some sort, but comes to itself in the knowing. This *becoming* and *coming into itself* is *absolute being*.<sup>19</sup>

System pushes beyond knowledge of objects at hand into a process of knowing which is fundamental in the full sense of the word, self-founding. Our being and being as such are implicated in this process; their togetherness is at once the basis of the systematic knowing and its outcome. *System* is thus *the work of spirit*, of human knowing in its gathering power, functioning as eros. Spirit finds and founds the sense of the whole in coming to itself: this is the central doctrine of the *Investigations* and the one point where Heidegger's philosophical sympathy for Schelling is firmly anchored. The philosophical moment, maintains Heidegger, lies not in any mechanical progression of thought, whether analytical or synthetical, but in a leap in thought

away from beings and their seemingly static *Seinendheit* to the "play" of being wherein our human existence is located, the "play" in which man is used, set in play, remains in the play, and in which being itself plays and delivers being and grounding over to us.<sup>20</sup> The fundamental question for philosophy is not how far it can explain, but the perfection and integrity of its will to explain. One asks of thought not how "comprehensive" it is, but how deeply it is founded in the workings of spirit, how perfect it is in its coming to itself in the play of being, how perfect its will to system. For after all explaining is done "the question remains whether and how we who attend to the moves of this play, play along with it and gather ourselves in the play."<sup>21</sup>

Heidegger thus agrees with Schelling that thought is in essence systematic, both in its ontological direction, its impulse toward disengaging the structure of being as a whole, and in its commitment to "system," the will that being be captured in an ordering knowing and reveal itself as essentially involved in that process. In this agreement it might seem that Heidegger endorses the program of an *absolute* idealism. This is far from true. Whatever else one makes of Heidegger's rather obscure pronouncements on being, one does not get the sense that he thinks all being *in principle* graspable. It is graspable only inasmuch as it is elusive; its whole availability for thought is in the dialectic of hiddenness and clearing.

Absolute idealism is, for Heidegger, part of the history of metaphysics, that is, it belongs to the tradition that has forgotten being inasmuch as it has consistently forgotten the moment of being's hiddenness. It is not as an absolute idealist that Heidegger values Schelling, certainly not as the creator of a paper system, a closed Euclidean deduction of all being. His affinity with Schelling lies in a common view of systematic philosophy as *will* to system, as a process in which the philosopher and his audience are engaged, a process which alone can convey the doublefold character of being, the tension between its availability for thought and its elusiveness. Heidegger values Schelling because he understood system as the work of spirit, as the product of man concernfully engaged in the roots of his being. We must understand that it is neither the author of the System of Identity who attracts Heidegger nor the Schelling of the later positive philosophy, with its emphasis on divine transcendence, but the author

of the *Investigations on Human Freedom*, the "anthropomorphic" approach to system which takes human transcendence as the key to being's structure and integrity.

Schelling's earlier thought was systematic only in an abstract and structural manner. The central element of system, the impulse of self-certain thought to bring forth the structure of the whole, was there conceived as the work of disembodied intelligence, timeless and impartial, rather than as the work of spirit bound into time and history. The possibility of coming to a sense of the whole was thought to depend upon a transcendence of the perspectival character of our knowing, upon an "abstraction from subjectivity" (6, 142-43). Being was conceived as a nondifference of subjectivity and objectivity; for philosophy to attain this supporting medium for both thingly being and human subjectivity, it must renounce the place of the subject for an indifferent state of knowing. Systematic philosophy must presume a congruence between its knowledge and the whole, and this congruence dictates its basic logic and mode of investigation. Philosophy's most basic thought is the equivalence of knowing and being; the structure of this equivalence determines all the further reaches of that thought. In the *System of Identity*, then, all being was captured as structure, as a quantitative tensing of the fundamental equipollence of subjectivity and objectivity. Prior to the *Investigations* we might say that Schelling's grasp on being is purely logical.

The essay on freedom marks a new stage, the removal of the basis of system from a mathematicized nature to spirit, an attempt to come to the whole not only in terms of structure but in human terms, in terms of will. This is, as Heidegger points out, an anthropomorphic approach, but it remains an approach to *system*, to a thought-gathered structure of being. Such an approach, which Schelling calls "comprehending the god outside oneself through the god within" (7, 337), places human action, reasoning or knowing will at the basis of its concern for the total grasp of being. As Schelling expressed it in an 1811 manuscript:

Created out of the source of things and kindred to it, the human soul has a conscience of the creation. In it lies the greatest clarity of all things and it is not so much knowing as it is itself science.<sup>22</sup>

System is to be founded in man's essence. The *Investigations* is so taken up with this program that there is little explicit discussion of what system means. Schelling's concern is how will can be made central to system, even its foundation. Only through a thinking appropriation of the complex dependence-independence relation involved in human freedom can the togetherness of man and nature, nature and God, and man and God be *formulated—and* the temporal character of their interdevelopment.

Heidegger finds himself attracted, then, to this anthropomorphic attempt at system, to Schelling's effort to conceive being and human being as process, to conceive the underlying structure of being not in terms of spatial inherence but in terms of temporal development, differentiation *within* unity. And it is not just the similarity to his own project of a fundamental ontology based on an analytic of Dasein that attracts Heidegger's attention, but the way that Schelling *almost* transcends the limitations of metaphysics in posing the question of grounding. This almost-transcendence interests Heidegger both in its positive and negative aspects. As we shall later see, Schelling's attempt to think the groundlessness of being into a transcendent ground of some sort, an indifferent absolute, is for Heidegger one of the crucial repetitions of the "metaphysical" falsification of being, the forgetting of its hiddenness, the consequent distortion of its evanescent openness into a timeless holding itself in the open.

## II

The whole course of Heidegger's thought might be described as an attempt to think through the question of being without the presuppositions which have made that thinking "metaphysical," namely, that the thing is the paradigm existent and that its being, unchanging presence or strict identity despite change, is characteristic of being itself. The metaphysical way of thinking is nihilistic, world-destroying; in seeking for a being which is timelessly evident and self-present, metaphysics ejects being as a process of bringing truth to light and concealing it from the "real world." Truth, maintains Heidegger, is happening, covering-uncovering, an interplay of man and world, the contingent and fragile outcome of the interworkings of the

fourfold, of earth and world, of the divine and the mortal.<sup>23</sup> Truth is a worldly occurrence, being is radically finite and incomplete. This is what metaphysics time and again forgets in thinking being as steady presence, as a permanent holding itself in the open, free from the counterweight of a hiddenness ever seeking to enclose.

Both Heidegger and Schelling see the West's understanding of being as mediated through its understanding of the copula, the "is" of the judgment. Metaphysical thinking finds the copula enunciating the same kind of unspecified, atemporal, fully symmetrical identity which the mathematical equation sign signifies. It says: Being is sameness, a timeless ground in which the "states" of a "being" are interchangeable, within which, fundamentally, nothing ever happens to what is. The detemporalizing of being worked by this understanding of identity distorts the worldly character of being. If we consider identity as a character of being, not as the sameness typical of the *Seiendheit* of beings, we find it is *happening*, the context of the togetherness of being and man, of the way they mutually call each other out. Identity is a belonging together, with the emphasis on belonging. Far from being abstract sameness, it is a fragile togetherness based, as it were, upon acts of will, upon call and response.<sup>24</sup>

To think through being in a nonmetaphysical way, Heidegger must find a way of enunciating being in its event character and avoid the sterile logic of thing-identity which underlies Western metaphysics. One way to do this is to work upon language itself, to exploit the kinship of poetry and thought, to force language into naming the fragile situations in which man and world as different bearers of being interplay. Another way is to work upon inherited metaphysical language itself, exploiting the possibilities as yet not thoroughly integrated into the everyday sense of being as object. For this second task a logic of difference or progressive differentiation must be developed, a logic which adopts as its primitive sense-making operation not identification across change, but change and differentiation across nominal identity or continuity. Heidegger finds the key to this logic in Schelling's notion of grounding, in his proposal that the basic sense of being is not self-enclosed identity but emergence from a ground itself ungrounded. Heidegger's central ontological terminology, widely used beyond the Schelling lectures,

indicates his debt to the latter philosopher, e.g., being as a "ground" which is "ungrounded," as the "primal ground" or reason for that which is itself groundless, the "*Abgrund*" or abyss.<sup>25</sup>

The *Investigations* is a system of grounding, an attempt to fashion a "sense of the whole" on the model of emergence or progressive differentiation. Now part of the task of system, the "theological" part of the onto-theological project, is thought's discovery of a ground for the coherence of being into a whole. For there to be system, being must be thought *in* a ground which gives wholeness and integrity, a *the ion*. What is crucial here is how this *theion* grounds, or in what sense being is "in" a ground. Against Spinoza, Schelling remarks that his fault lies not in conceiving *all* things as inhering in God, but in conceiving them all as *things*, consequently in thinking their inherence in the ground as spatial containedness (7, 349). The *Investigations* demands that we think being from the model of human being, from the experience of human freedom. How is being as experienced in freedom grounded? We do not feel ourselves placed, containerized. Freedom reveals not only the passive dependency we normally associate with inhering in a ground, but the active autonomy of selfhood. Hence the kind of grounding in the *theion* which the system of freedom must have as its basic thought must be complex; it must be a thinking through of the complex dependence-independence which the Christian stories of creation represent. God (in the ontological, not the theistic sense) must be conceived not only as a ground of beings in their dependence but as a ground of their independence.

Thus the ground of being must ground not only the moment of inherence in the ground, the moment of wholeness, but also that of differentiation, the individuation of the whole. The ground of being in Schelling's system of freedom is not an inert measure of sameness, a kind of platinum bar for identity, but a ground for difference. The togetherness of being as a whole is established not by a simple being-in-a-ground, but by individuated beings proceeding *from* the ground or being. Beings not only inhere *in* a ground, they are *out of* the ground, they are grounded, establish their selves by differentiation from a containing ground.

The experience of freedom indicates that man is independent of the ground upon which he depends, that man's being is his own doing in spite of his dependent origin (7, 385). Man's independence of his ground indicates for Schelling that the grounding of the ground or the *theion* must be a process of coherent (thus structuring) differentiation. Grounding is not simple containedness or having a place, it is differentiation from the ground, emergence out of the ground. Grounding thus splits into two moments, the ground or basis and the existent, that which has emerged from the ground. What connects the two moments is not the passive identification of spatial inherence, but temporal differentiation, becoming.

The possibility of a system of freedom rests on this notion of grounding, the emergence of the existent from the ground. On the basis of his differentiation from the ground of being, man, the togetherness of being and thought, exists, and on the basis of this existence the ground or *theion* has its actuality and is progressively actualized. Being comes into wholeness in a progressive and dynamic togetherness achieved through differentiation, through the separation of ground and existent in man. Man's freedom (*Entscheidung*) is the place where this differentiation (*Scheidung*) of principles takes place; consequently it is the locus of the structuring or gathering of being—themes close to Heidegger's formulations of the reciprocal interplay of being and Dasein.

It is rather too much to hope that a thumbnail sketch of the system of freedom will seem cogent upon first reading. To see philosophically how the logical character of grounding as differentiation passes over into a cosmological process of the separation of the dual principles (basis and existent) in which human decision plays the key role we must look more closely into the logic of grounding Schelling proposes, first investigating how it situates the experience of human freedom and solves traditional objections to the possibility of freedom, and secondly searching into its ontological presuppositions, viz. that being is will.

The task of founding the philosophical system upon the experience of freedom posed for Schelling the challenge of adjusting ontology to the complex situation of independence-dependency. It

demanded the rethinking of the problem of pantheism, more pointedly, the rethinking of the concepts of identity and being expressed in the "is" of "God is all," taken as an expression of the inherence of all in a unifying ground. The complexity of freedom forbids any static formulation of this inherence; the nonsensical nature of all interpretations of the pantheistic statement in terms of abstract identity forces Schelling to conceive inherence in a dynamic fashion, as inherence across a definite and unbridgeable difference. Since freedom is the model of being, grounding must be a structure of thrusting-forth and gathering-back, and the identity which the copula expresses in "God is all" must be an identity of antecedent and consequent. The relation indicated by the "is" is one of emergence and outcome. As illustrations of this sense of identity Schelling offers these statements, "The perfect is the imperfect" and "The good is the evil," both of which indicate that the subject term is prior to, and in fact the essential component in the predicate, which is a modification or redirection of the subject's essential activity. Identity in these instances is a case of grounding, the identity at the basis of each being whereby it is a being, i.e., whereby it divides into ground and existence. The ground component is that which remains behind and, as it were, under as a physical basis, while the existent component goes forth from the ground in revealing itself, i.e., revealing what in the basis is hidden.<sup>26</sup> This processive identity-in-differentiation, the togetherness of ground and existent, neither component logically or temporally prior to the other, is what Heidegger simply calls the *Seynsfuge*, the structure of being.<sup>27</sup>

Every being has a ground out of which it exists. Schelling's logical solution to the problem of reconciling freedom and system, of correctly delimiting the interplay of independence and dependence, is to locate man in God's basis or ground, nature. Man inheres in or depends upon God's ground, upon that which *is* God inasmuch as it is *God's* ground, but which is not strictly to be identified with God, who as existent and personal has gone forth from this ground. Man is independent of the existent God—thus his being is "his own deed"—while inhering in God's ground. Schelling thus achieves a purely formal notion of freedom: Man is "in God" and yet "free" since he pertains to the basis. The basis is "in God"—since there can be nothing outside

God—and yet it is not God, for the essence of every being (God included) consists in difference, a difference of ground and existence.

Formulated in such high abstraction, the ontological divergence between ground and what exists as grounded furnishes only a negative concept of freedom. Man is "left free," exempted from the control or overwhelming determination of God, since he is contained in God's ground. "The real and vital conception of freedom," however, "is that it is a possibility of good and evil" (7, 352). This negative freedom does not really establish its own possibility either, but pushes all the problems of pantheism back one step where they arise once more, now in relation to God's basis rather than his personal existence. And finally the question arises of why God is subjected to the *Seynsfuge*, why not only beings but the *theion* or ground of being should be characterized by the split of existence from ground.

It is only when being is grasped as *will*, says Schelling, that the true notion of freedom as decision, the division of good and evil, comes to light. Only when the highest ground of being is seen as will and not self-enclosed identity does the differential structure of being become meaningful.

In the final and highest instance there is no other being than Will. Will is primordial Being, and all predicates apply to it alone—groundlessness, eternity, independence of time, self-affirmation. All philosophy strives only to find this highest expression (7, 350).

Abstract structural formulations do not reach down to the essence. Being is "will," but "will" itself is an abstract expression. Brought, as Schelling would say, closer to the human, interpreted in terms of our experience, being is process, development through differentiation. "Being is only aware of itself in becoming ... All history remains incomprehensible without the concept of a humanly suffering God" (7, 403).

Grounding, then, is not a static difference of two components, but their progressive differentiation, the emergence of the existent *out of* the ground. Time is the sense of this differentiation; its continuity gathers the different back together. And yet, as we shall see, it is not

just a uniform mechanical passage of events that establishes continuity and gatheredness, but the temporally processive work of spirit, the actualization of will as eros, the *binding* of the separate and disparate. That the articulated system of beings, the togetherness-through-differentiation, is not a matter of abstract structure but is the *logos* enunciated by finite spirit is the new element in Schelling's speculations in 1809 and the point of Heidegger's convergence in that line of thought. For Schelling man is the locus of divinization, of the emergence of the divine from the ground of nature as spirit, the power of binding basis and existent, just as for Heidegger man is the place where the earth "worlds," where the divine shows itself in the finite, fragmented and deathridden creature whose "destiny" is to suffer being.

The *Investigations* leaves much unclear about the relation of God and man, for example, whether the divine exists over and against the humanly revealed divine, whether being is still conceived, in consonance with the metaphysical tradition, as a being, the highest of beings. The single-minded direction of Schelling's later thought toward establishing the existence of a transcendent God leaves little doubt about the tendency of Schelling's thought as a whole. Heidegger, however, attaches himself only to the Schelling of 1809, the man, he claims, who for the first time entered into dialogue with Leibniz on the full significance of the concept of ground,<sup>28</sup> who captured being as a doublefold structure of grounding and refused to think its doubleness away into a singular being, into Cartesian substance, the self-grounding. For the Schelling of the *Investigations* God and man are inexorably intertwined in a dialectic of revelation. Neither term of this dialectic has meaning on its own, neither God nor man, and neither has at its own disposal, so to speak, the meaning of being. Their interplay is revelation, i.e., progressive separation of differentiation, progressive establishment of the *Seynsfuge*.

Emergence or separation from the basis and the eventual binding of the fully separated basis back into the existent as the fulfillment of the process are, on God's part, delivered over to man's spirit, to his decision, to his ultimately contingent and fragile binding. Read ontologically, as it should be, this cosmological scenario indicates that being is revealed only in spiritual beings, beings capable of

appropriating the doublefold structure of being-ground-existence or, in its human meaning, good and evil—and effecting the actual differentiation. The separation of basis and existent and their subsequent binding or union in spirit is "absolute in God, but actualized in man." Only through the finite and temporal binding of ground and existent in man does the emergence out of the ground take place, i.e., the ultimate elevation of will as impulse into reason or spiritual selfhood. Man alone is the place of decision, of differentiation, of revelation or the establishment of difference. Man is the place where the grounding character of being can break into the open, and "grounding" is only a convenient way of saying that identity or togetherness of being must be founded through differentiation. Man is the point of difference where the structure of being establishes itself, the difference of good and evil, of ground and consequent, of being as ground and of being as existent, i.e., as beings. This is the central point of the system of freedom, as this schematic passage indicates:

If God as spirit is the indivisible unity of the two principles [ground and existent] and this same unity is actual only in man's spirit, then if it were just as indissoluble in him as in God, man could not be distinguished from God at all; he would disappear in God and there would be no revelation and no stirring of love. For every nature can be revealed only in its opposite—love in hatred, unity in strife. If there were no division of the principles unity could not manifest its omnipotence; if there were no conflict love could not become real. Man has been placed on that summit where he contains within him the source of self-impulsion toward good and evil in equal measure; the nexus of principles within him is not a bond of necessity but of freedom. He stands at the dividing line; whatever he chooses will be his act, but he cannot remain in indecision because God must necessarily reveal himself and because nothing at all in creation can remain ambiguous (7, 373-74).

### **III**

To this point we have explored how Schelling's system of freedom demands that being be conceived as progressive grounding or differentiation and noted how, generally, the doublefold structure of grounding must be conceived in terms of process, becoming, or being as will. We must now go to the central point, that the progressive

differentiation of ground and existence which frames the structure of being is not an abstract cosmological process but a human work, the accomplishment of spirit. For Heidegger's adoption of Schelling's notions of grounding and emergence from the ground may signal little more than a casual eclecticism if the two philosophers are not in agreement that it is man's privilege to frame the structure of being while standing in it and that this structure is possible only through the unitive work of spirit. We must see how *human freedom* founds system, how man's resolute standing in being brings forth the articulated wholeness of the world's meaning, how, in Heidegger's words, "*freedom is the ground of grounding.*"<sup>29</sup> Since Heidegger puts his own explanation of this "freedom" in terms borrowed from Schelling, e.g., freedom as ultimate ground is *Abgrund* or unground, we must plunge further into the most complex parts of the *Investigations*.

The separation and the binding together of the two principles in the structure of being, in simpler terms the bringing of what is to system, depends on man's decision for good and evil. Schelling wants to establish freedom as the "reason" or ultimate meaning for that framework of grounding within which alone something can be "reasonable" or maintain its meaning. Yet freedom in the negative sense, as being left free from divine determination, is possible only because the twofold split of ground and existence has *already* opened, because man inheres in God's ground or nature. How can this circle be explained? How can freedom as decision for good and evil ground grounding and yet depend upon that very structure?

There are two main senses of "freedom" in play in the *Investigations*, the negative or Cartesian sense of being exempted from influences and left free to act, and what Schelling calls the "true concept of freedom," the possibility of good and evil (7, 352). (The "true" concept, it should be noted, does not involve choice or acting, but refers only to the outbreak of double possibilities. "Good" and "evil" are ontological poles, not mere moral qualities.) There are also, we recall, two senses of "grounding," the abstract one wherein ground and what is grounded are conceived as simply different, and the truer dynamic conception, based on the insight that being is essentially will, wherein ground and existence are differentiated into clearly different

entities only through the process of emergence from the ground. The two senses of freedom correlate with the two senses of grounding. Abstractly freedom is simply inherence in a ground different from the divine. Dynamically, however, freedom is a process of dividing existence from the ground, a process of establishing the double possibilities "good" and "evil," a process of man as spirit emerging out of God's ground or nature. And just as grounding statically conceived made sense only with the introduction of the dynamic sense, the idea of grounding as emergence, so the static sense of freedom first becomes meaningful in the light of the dynamic. Only because man divides existence from ground (and binds them as spirit) in emerging from nature is he left free from God's domination, i.e., from that of Spinozistic "nature" (the ground) and from that of the personal God (existent).

Schelling conceives human ways of being as constitutive of being itself, as determinative of its fundamental structure or meaning. Differentiation and reunification, individuation and "binding" (spirit's gathering into a whole), in more human terms, the choice of self and the choice of community, are all processes in being itself. They establish the *Seynsfuge* of ground and existent, nature and the divine. Primally being is will; its highest possibility—the revelation of God—is spirit and its unitive work in eros, the binding together of such things as are capable of existing without each other (7, 408), or as Heidegger would express it, that gathering into a unity or towards a self which the ancients called *logos*.<sup>30</sup> The history of being necessarily involves division, separation, individuation, for the gathering worked by spirit in eros, the revelatory speaking out of the hidden unity, is possible only across the greatest difference, across the greatest resistance. In man this gathering—speaking appears most decisively as freedom, the possibility of good and evil, the necessity for decision and separation.

But how is the *decision* for good and evil the *division* of ground and existent? How does freedom, on any definition, determine the structure of being? Schelling's answer is simple: The unity of spirit, the fragile and dissoluble union of the double possibilities, of good and evil, of selfhood as universal will and selfhood as individuality, of will as rationality and will as impulse: this unity is the *structure* of being, and not only its structure but its *history*. Systematic philosophy thus

becomes a natural history of spirit, in Schelling's terms, a philosophy of the creation. Man's spiritual character is not factual; it is not explained by man's being an instance of being inside the decisive-unity *Seynsfuge*. Rather it is active and historical; the doublefold structure of being is established only in man's progressive decision, his adoption of self-enclosed, self-grounded existence as one possibility and a gathering communicative type of existence as the other.

Man is decisive for being, divisive and integrative within being, because he carries the history of being, because starting within nature, a creature of the ground, he *has become spirit*. Starting as negatively free or sheltering in the ground he has become the willed and intelligent unity of that ground and of his present being. Man as spirit is at once the product and the bearer of the history of being. Schelling calls him the spiritualization of the ground, the revelation of the divine in nature, of the godly light hidden in the depths. Declining to alter the anthropocentric approach in any way and think nature and spirit as radically different types of being, Schelling insists that they differ only according to the pattern of emergence of the *Seynsfuge*. Man is central to the whole creation, he maintains, that is, the creation has taken place within man's being and in its culmination brings his spirituality to light as the meaning of being. Man's creation or coming into being has been the history of nature, its transformation from chaos to stable and individuated existence. Likewise the history of nature has been the emergence of man as spirit, the transformation of blind impulse into *logos* (7, 360-61). Man's being is thus the historical framing of the structure of being. He takes his rise in the ground, in the primal will-state Schelling pictures as impulse and yearning, and has become spirit, will operative as reason and love. And as the spiritualization of the ground and the ordering of nature man is ever more sharply the division of ground and existent, of individuality and community.

The progressive differentiation which structures being is a division worked out over history, reaching its full development in man's choice of his self, the double possibility of "good" and "evil" which Schelling visualizes as the possibility of individual existence, of *selfhood*. Man as individuated—Heidegger would say "thrown" existence has come out of the central ground, out of the generality of will, and in his individuality he clearly and finally divides ground (the

general) and existence (the individual). This is the final division. Throughout the process of being—first as a cosmological development, then as an historical one—the division has been one of knowing will. But once the division is accomplished and man stands out in his individuality the division explicitly becomes *decision*, decision about individuality, about selfhood.

Within man's spirituality, we might say, the cosmological process of division is interiorized. He is placed at the dividing line, the point where everything as yet ambiguous and undecided about being will be revealed in his decision (7, 374).

The decision is about individuality, about the possibilities opened up for the tenuous state of individuation which the cosmological and historical dialectic of impulse and reason has brought to light. The decision is the possibility of good *and* evil, of the unification of individuality with the generality of nature which is spirit *and* of self-enclosed individuality, self-will. In his interpretation of the *Investigations*, Heidegger emphasizes that this freedom or decisive setting apart of the two principles of the ontological framework is indeed the possibility of good *and* evil. It is the outbreak of a double possibility, not a division of good and evil as a decision for good and against evil, but a *decision for good and evil*. The decision for selfhood which is freedom's essence is evidently not a choice of one kind of selfhood as opposed to another; such choices are ontic possibilities for selves, but we are concerned here with a decision which opens up the very ontological structure of selfhood. The "good" and "evil" whose possibility founds the structure of being are not moral qualities, but the fixed double possibility of being itself, polar opposites whose polarity cannot be thought away or suppressed, even by choosing one over the other. Thus Heidegger remarks that the emergence of "evil" in human existence is at the same time the emergence of "good." The selfhood chosen by man in his essence, ontologically decided then, is the dialectic of individuality itself, the possibility of self-enclosed existence and of existence in community with the ground from which he takes his rise (7, 364-65). Neither possibility can be eliminated, and were one to be left behind, selfhood would perish and being would be sterile and lifeless, revealing nothing.

Why should Schelling conceive selfhood, particularly the spiritualized selfhood of freedom, to be so tenuous, so delicate a thing that its very essence is a double opposition of tendencies, the possibility of good *and* evil? We have seen that spirit is an historical-cosmological product, the outcome of the division of principles in nature and a transformation of that division into decision. The unity of principles which man is is inherited from nature; spirit is a unity of factors implicitly united in the ground but which could not there attain unification and which were in need of differentiation through emergence from the ground. Spirit, then, is the selfhood of the ground made over, it is the self-seeking and self-enclosure of impulse changed into a unity which gathers difference, into love. "It is will beholding itself in complete freedom, no longer the tool of the universal will operating in nature, but above and outside all nature" (7, 364). There is the key. Man as spirit is the self-seeking *of* the ground *gone out from* the ground, thus the definitive division of ground and existent which yet holds them together into a structure. The history of nature is this act of emergence from the ground and man in his capacity as spirit is this fundamental act of being raised to consciousness. Now the whole sense of man's spirituality lies in his having emerged from the ground, gone out from nature. Thus his spirituality is ever conditioned and fragile since it is, in its first instance, the ground's own impulsive self-seeking distanced from itself. If spirit's highest possibility, the gatheredness of love and reason, is the selfhood of the ground *transformed*, it is in *basis* identical with' the self-will of the ground, and part of its very essence will be the constant solicitation to return to the ground.

Spirit is of its essence conditioned and tenuous. It is a dynamic union of opposing possibilities, more of the nature of a balance than of physical solidification. Thus man's decision is about selfhood, about the dual possibilities of selfhood as self-enclosure and selfhood as a gathering thrusting-forth of being in its diversity. Spiritualized selfhood can forget itself and return to the ground, i.e., it can forget that it is spirit off of the basis of the ground and attempt to be spirit in a self-grounded and self-seeking manner. This is evil, that "self-will may seek to be, as a particular will, that which it is only in its identity with the universal will" (7, 365).

For Schelling evil means that man can take his life without regard for the ground from whence it arose, that as spirit he can attempt to be spirit without regard for nature and his history in nature, that, in theological terms, man can seize his independence as spirit while forgetting the creaturely basis of that independence. In ontological terms this "evil" is the possibility of the collapse of the structure of being itself, the possibility of senselessness. Since the gathering and uniting sense of all that is depends upon the progressive emergence or grounding which nature has undergone and which comes to itself knowingly in man's capacity as spirit, the forgetfulness of the ground which is one of spirit's fundamental possibilities for selfhood signals the persistent possibility of senselessness, the collapse of the *Seynsfuge*. Freedom is the possibility of good *and* evil. Spirit establishes itself tenuously as a dialectic of differing possibilities of selfhood, self-enclosing impulse on one hand, world-gathering reason on the other. Spirit establishes the sense of being, the structure of the whole, only contingently, temporally, never in some timeless and absolute manner.

How does Heidegger concur with this analysis of freedom establishing the sense of grounding, of man in his decision framing the structures of being's coherence? He is deeply sympathetic to Schelling's thesis that man's spirituality is in its ontological basis *historical*, a process implicated in articulating nature into world. Man has historically become the decision place in being, a "clearing" where the doublefold or ground-existent structure of being comes to expression. Yet this locus of expression is being's most fragile point; the principles Schelling supposed absolutely united in God are bound only contingently in man by the finite and temporal act of spirit. Human freedom is decision for good *and* evil, the standing possibility of both the maintenance of the structure of being and of its collapse. As the clearing for being, man is radically limited, and the sense of being which can emerge from his spirituality, from his historical standing in being as a gathering place, is similarly limited. Man stands in being tenuously and gathers tenuously. Schelling does not maintain that man simply *is* spirit; he has become spirit and that spirituality involves a constant solicitation to misinterpret his being, to miss the meaning of spirit. For Heidegger man's authentic standing in being or listening to being is only one pole of his possibilities as Dasein, the

other of which is the mechanical and object-like life of the everyday. The sense of being which can emerge from man's fragile standing in being is as finite as man's spirituality itself. Being itself is as fragile as the web of opposed possibilities Dasein reveals, insists Heidegger. In its clearing it shows itself as clearing-and-hiddenness.

I would suggest that what Schelling indicates in making man the place of decision for being, the standing possibility of good *and* evil, is what Heidegger wants to convey by the dialectic of hiddenness and clearing within being, that dialectic which enables metaphysics to cover over the moment of hiddenness and reduce the dynamic tension of being to the solidified openness of the thing. Man's decision is the systematizing of being, the outbreak of the double possibilities which are his response to the call of the ground and the revelation of the final meaning of that ground. Schelling's notion of decision, the emergence of the differentiated being-structure from the originally undifferentiated ground, is akin to what Heidegger calls man's listening to conscience, the response of the mortal to the divine whereby man finitely and in thrown fashion makes a world or allows the world to world around him.<sup>31</sup> This systematizing of being which man effects or the world he occasions around him is a radically finite structure, a "situation" rather than a "thing." Being itself is a tension; it has deep within it a cleft, a fault, an inner dialectic which comes to expression in the thrownness of freedom. Being, says Heidegger, is something to be suffered: ". . . only the finite existent has the privilege and the pain of standing within being as such and experiencing the true as what is."<sup>32</sup> Schelling maintains that even the *theion*, the divine itself, suffers being, suffers from being's internal wound or finitude:

All existence must be conditioned [i.e., grounded] in order that it may be actual, that is, personal existence ... This is the sadness which adheres to all finite life, and inasmuch as there is even in God himself a condition at least relatively independent, there is in him too a source of sadness (7, 399).

Comparisons such as the above can be drawn between Heidegger and Schelling but what is of more interest and importance is the parallel Heidegger himself proposes between the *Investigations* and his own thought, namely, between Schelling's sense of freedom as

decision (*Entschiedenheit*) and his own notion of authentic existence as anticipatory resolve (*Entschlossenheit*).

According to Schelling man is in essence decisive. This means not that he has choices ahead of himself to make but that he has already fundamentally chosen himself. At issue in freedom is not any particular ontic choice, but the constitutive choice of selfhood. Man is a revelation of the decision in being, the doublefold unity of ground and existent. Man is *in* freedom, he dwells in the decision. Hence his existence is characterized not so much by having choices yet to make, but in having to live out a prior decision for selfhood. In commentary on this reading of freedom Heidegger adds:

This essence [of man] must, in accord with the origin of man from out of the life-glance of the divine ground, have been determined from eternity, and in fact, since the essence of man is always an individual, it must consist in the eternal determination of itself to its self. The characteristic essence of every man is always his own eternal act. Thence that feeling, at once uncanny and gratifying, that we have always been who we are, that we are nothing other than the uncovering of things long ago decided.<sup>33</sup>

The self-choice or spiritualization of will wherein man essentially consists is not so much active choice of selfhood as the acting out of selfhood already, in contingent or thrown fashion, chosen. As Heidegger interprets Schelling, then, the decisiveness of human freedom is a taking one's place in history. Deciding one's self is not the bundling together of fragmentary introspective acts into a null point of unity, but rather *resolve*, a standing in the openness of truth and history. Commenting on Schelling's interpretation of freedom as decision for good *and* evil, Heidegger says,

Within decision toward one's inmost essence it will be found that no one reaches the peak of his good nor the depths of his evil (7, 433), but that he is placed in this in-between to work out his truth, which is in itself necessary, but for just that reason historical ... An achieved truth alone is truth, for it wrests the being into the open, prepares the way for the binding of beings to come into play.<sup>34</sup>

How does this *decisiveness* which Heidegger says is in its true state only as *resolve* compare to the anticipatory resolve of *Sein und Zeit*? There resolve was described as the choice of the choice of selfhood (270), as preparedness for anxiety or projection into guilt (297, 301), most fundamentally as a comprehending being-toward-death (305). Resolve is Dasein's appropriation of the dialectic of self-gatheredness and thrownness in selfhood. It is anticipatory living under death, a fashioning of a self-understanding in terms of mortality, the general situation for man (382). It is a freedom to give oneself over to one's place, one's situation, a situation which places the individual by the way it compels his interest and limits his activity. Resolve is man's recognition of his radical finitude, a recognition of how his own being as spirit appears only within the structures of finitude, viz. time, death, the "nothing" of consciousness.

There appears to be little difference, ultimately, between the decisiveness which Heidegger discovers in Schelling's thought (and which he wishes to push into the foreground in his interpretation of the *Investigations*) and the anticipatory resolve of *Sein und Zeit*. They are figuratively different ways of indicating the same thing, man's radical finitude and the corresponding finitude of the being in which man stands. Man's decisiveness is really decidedness, a revelation of the twofold structure of being in a backward-pointing glance to the conditions of spirit, to spirit as the history of nature. Resolve reveals the same decidedness in a forward-pointing manner. It defines man's finitude as a being-toward-the-end, indicates spirit's fragility in the present by pointing out its future dissolution.

## IV

It has become evident that Heidegger's fundamental point of accord with Schelling, the basis for his sympathy with Schelling despite his lack of taste for "absolute philosophy," is his grasp of the radically finite character of being. Heidegger reads the *Investigations* as an attempt to fashion a systematic grasp of being from the hermeneutical standpoint of man's experience of his radical finitude, his ultimate groundlessness. Human existence first brings the structure of being into the open as a doubling of being—a split into ground and existent, into *Sein* and *Seiendes*—and it does this by suffering being. Heidegger

would clearly like to read what Schelling points out as man's groundedness, the double orientation of his being toward good and evil, toward self as self-enclosure and self as gathering thrusting-forth, as thrownness pure and simple. Man is a creature out of the ground, he lives off of grounds—off of possibilities, bases, reasons—but there is no ground for this grounding, no primal possibility for possibilities, no reason for reasons. The ground in which man is grounded, from which he lives, is ungrounded. Grounding itself is *ab-grundig*, abysmal, utterly without foundation.<sup>35</sup>

Schelling will not easily be read this way. In the last analysis he does not wish to abandon man and history to pure thrownness, but sees in the doublefold of being, in the dialectic between spirit's self-gatheredness and its dispersal in the world, the workings of a teleology which will ultimately decide the competing principles in the human spirit and subject the ground to existence. This teleology he calls the will to love, to revelation. It is an impulse toward an ultimate sense of ground and existence, toward a final togetherness transcending their fragile differentiation and reunification in man as spirit. On the basis of this projected teleological union of principles Schelling tries to make sense of their original disparity, their tensed unity in emergence or becoming. He searches here for a logic more ultimate than that of grounding itself. He attempts to think through the *ab-grundig* character of the structure of being and to convert it into an ultimate ground. It is here that Heidegger is forced to dissociate himself from Schelling's way of thought.

Schelling has shown that the being of finite, comprehensible beings must be thought through difference, the emergent differentiation of consequent from ground. All positive predication is of finite characters, based ultimately upon difference or upon the logic of grounding. Yet the grounding structure is in some ways an ultimate dualism, a hidden dialectic which frustrates reason in its desire for unity of principles. Grounding reaches only so far as to throw light upon the finite and conditioned character of being, upon a necessarily unhealed dualism at the basis of things.

Heidegger would say that reason with its demand for unity is brought up short at this point, but Schelling disagrees. If reason

persists in asking after the ground of grounding—and for him it must—it must abandon thinking through difference, must therefore abandon positive predication, and think through nondifference or "indifference." Schelling conceives indifference as a disjunction of principles or entities absolutely opposed in themselves. Prior, then, to the split of being as ground and being as existent is a principle of indifference called the *Abgrund* or *Ungrund*, and it is nothing more than the disjunction of ground and existence, a logical prior to their actual and progressive differentiation in history.

As Schelling describes the primal unground in the *Investigations* it is truly an abysmal principle. Not a product of antitheses, it is a point where their opposition has become meaningless. It is the place where distinctions break apart upon the rock of their nonbeing, where difference is superseded without the differentiae having collapsed in themselves (7, 406). It has no proper predicates, only nonaffirmability can be affirmed of it. Its inner structure is that of negation, difference, grounding, but all as counting for nothing, not so much suppressed as not yet made express. It is like a chaotic field of linguistic utterances, all possible predicates, before the invention of syntax, i.e., before the structure of utterance itself.

There are obvious flaws in this mode of explanation. The claim that a logic of nondifference grounds the sense of things founded upon difference leaves the sense of "logic," "grounding," and "principle" vertiginously near collapse. Schelling confuses the priority of a principle with the temporal-causal precedence of a ground, and in his search for a ground of grounding postulates a being whose whole being is not-to-be-a-ground. The indifferent *Abgrund* is difference prior to itself, i.e., a unitary principle of senselessness grounds the doublefold principles of ground and existent whereby anything makes sense. Schelling further compounds the confusion by saying that this attempt to think experienced duality back to a "neither-nor" justifies and grounds the ultimate factual character of that duality. Ground and consequent somehow immediately break forth from the indifferent "neithernor" (7, 407).

But Heidegger's objections are not, like the above, merely on the logical plane. The reversal or confusion of logical and temporal

priority we have noted is to him only symptomatic of a deeper error, failure to attend to the ontological difference, failure to think through being and beings differently. Schelling's persistent questioning after a ground to grounding signals a relapse into metaphysics, into a theory of being which would remove the unhealed duality from grounding, thus remove the duality of the grounding relation itself from the meaning of the world and establish the timeless governance of "principles" over being.

Heidegger himself adopts Schelling's language of "ground" and "groundlessness," but holds it in its purity. Guided by the leading thought of the ontological difference—the difference between being and beings, between being and the *Seiendheit* of beings—Heidegger refuses conceptually to turn the ungrounded character of being itself, the *Abgrund* or ultimate lack of grounding, into a ground, an ultimate explanation of some sort. Only beings are grounded, and if our whole categorial scheme is based on the difference of ground and existent, if our whole comprehension is based on a logic of grounding, we have no proper logic for being itself, no concepts readily available for it, no language to enunciate it. Only silence or such language as can be fashioned by those ordained to specially suffer being, the poets. Says Heidegger, in a passage crucial for understanding his notion of being,

Being and ground belong together. From its coherence with being as being the ground receives its essence. Conversely being as being takes its rise from the essence of the ground. Ground and being ('are') the same—but not identical, as the differentiation of the names 'being' and 'ground' already shows. Being 'is' in essence: ground. Being thus cannot have a ground which it in turn should have to ground. Accordingly, the ground falls away from being. Ground remains apart from being. In the sense that such a ground is lacking to being, being is the *Abgrund*, the abyss. Insofar as being as such is grounding, it is itself groundless.<sup>36</sup>

Heidegger's objection to Schelling's indifferent absolute, then, is that to formulate a ground for grounding is to destroy the essential togetherness of being and grounding. When grounding is conceptually lifted out of finite being and made a transcendent explanation, the sense of being as grounding beings and the sense of grounding itself equally perish. And Heidegger objects not only to this attempt to think

the groundless character of being into a transcendent ground *for* being, but to Schelling's further attempt to fit finite being and its "*grundartig*" character<sup>37</sup> inside a framework processive yet atemporal, to locate being in between an origin and an end. For Schelling supposes his indifferent *Abgrund* is not only the absolute, a healing over of the doublefold in being, but an origin for being, the point from which differentiation breaks forth, from which being as will heads for division. This move to insert the emergent character of being into a quasi-eternal frame is destructive of the essential finitude of being, a deracination of being from history, a denial of being as will.

The *Investigations'* concept of an indifferent primal ground for differentiation is the ghost of the absolute of the Identity System. In that earlier static system the indifferent absolute was a *field* of differentiation, an encompassing structure within which every being was directly comparable with every other because it was a specified or differentiated instance of indifference. The *Investigations* is quite a different system, a philosophy of spirit, an attempt to systematize being from the basis of freedom. Whereas in the earlier system difference was a quantitative or structural matter, here it is emergence into decisiveness, a matter of process and history. Hence Schelling no longer conceives the indifferent as absolute in the sense of all-encompassing and all-founding, but only as a point of origin. The indifferent is not *the* absolute; it is merely the primal basis for what may emerge as the absolute, an ultimately unifying act of spirit.

The essence of the ground as well as of the existent can only exist as prior to all grounding. It is the absolute, viewed simply, the unground. It cannot be in any other fashion-as we have proved-than by splitting into two equally eternal beginnings. It is not both *at the same time*, but both *in the same way*, the whole or self-same being in each. The unground divides itself into two equally eternal beginnings in order that the two which could not be one or exist simultaneously in it as the groundless come to be one through love. It divides itself only that life and love might come to be, and personal existence (7, 407-08).<sup>38</sup>

Indifference, then, is not the absolute character of being, but only one of its postures, the origin over against which being becomes fully personalized in the course of history. It is a "neither-nor" of difference only so that difference may break out in acute form, in the doublefold

structure or *Seynsfuge*, and come to fully spiritualized integration in love. The grounding structure of being is but being underway, the transit from indifference to integration. In Schelling's mind this integration is clearly apocalyptic and universal. It is a cosmic decision and the fulfillment of the history of nature; it is the rejection of the intractable selfhood of the ground, the integration of ordered and spiritualized selfhood into the principle of personality or God. This integration is clearly envisaged as the overcoming and the purifying of the doublefold character of finite being, as a transcending of the ambiguity of a structure of being based on nothing more lucid than grounding, than emergence from one state into another.

In short, there is for Schelling an absolute indifference of ground and existent, a ground for grounding, only in opposition to an absolute *te/os*. Indifference is the equanimity of the cosmos before creation, before differentiation. The apocalyptic end is final differentiation, the separation of personal deity from the pantheistic totality or the ground as refined (7, 408). The processes of finite being in between origin and end take on the significance, in the last analysis, only of an in-between. There is no ultimate significance in the process, only in its terms, in origin and end, in benign indifference and divine aloofness. The doublefold of finite being whose whole meaning, as the *Investigations* most of the time strains so hard to establish, is in process, in grounding, in being as emergence, is in the end disvalued. Schelling's bold view that the decision of being involves human freedom, good *and* evil, disappears in the subtle weavings of theodicy; the ambiguity of the shifting states of finite being, symbolized by the "and," is resolved. "Good *and* evil" is made a temporary state, an imperfect form of differentiation to be completed in apocalypse. If the "decision" in *human* freedom is always, as Schelling indicates, ambiguous decision, the outbreak of double possibilities of selfhood, then there must be an ultimate cosmic decision which is truly divisive, which will decide one thing over another, resolve the ambiguity into monocular clarity.

It is this framing of the structure of being with its unhealed duality and its burden of ambiguity between origin and end which Heidegger cannot accept. The move is metaphysical; that it comes at the very end of the *Investigations* shows the lure of the forgetfulness

of being, reveals our typical discomfort in the face of the ambiguous uncoverings of being. It is interesting not as a particular mistake, but as a symptom of the general movement of thought. The more Schelling struggles against his discovery of the indefinite duality, tension, or ambiguity at the heart of being, the more he tries to *unite* (identify) the moments of the structure of being, the more they fall apart and the more he is forced to repeat the mistakes first made in the beginning of Western thought. Because Schelling essentially uncovered the doublefold or essentially finite character of being, says Heidegger, his final failure is all the more poignant. Poignant but also productive, for it forces upon us the urgency of trying a "second beginning" in the history of being, or opening up a nonmetaphysical *seynsgeschichtlich* grasp of being.<sup>39</sup>

The Greek mistake must be avoided, namely, the attempt to explain the elusive and dialectical character of being in terms of beings, to explain its *situatedness between* the mortal and the divine, between openness and hiddenness in terms of object-like components, origin and *telos*, themselves exempt from process and situation. Such finalizing principles cannot be principles of being; at best they are principles *over* being, principles which are only principles, in no sense the origin and ordering movement within the doublefold structure of being. Origin and end deprive *logos*, the unification and articulation of being invented by finite spirit's standing within being, of its sense; as supposed principles they violate the sense of what they are to explain and order—even if, as Schelling maintains, the origin is merely the nullity or indifference point of all the strife and division being exhibits and the *telos*, a love which reconciles differences while preserving their autonomy. Taking with utmost seriousness Schelling's doctrine that the origin must be the nullity of all the tensions the doublefold of being brings to light, Heidegger points out that it cannot be an origin for *being*:

Absolute indifference is nothing in the sense that in contrast to it every assertion of being is nothing, but not in the sense that the absolute is null, purely worthless. But here Schelling does not see the necessity of a central step. If in truth being cannot be predicated of the absolute, it follows that *the essence of all being is finitude* and that only the finite existent has the

privilege and the pain of standing in being as such and experiencing the true as a being.<sup>40</sup>

The "nothing" of finitude is the heart of being, the thrown freedom which makes man a *Wesen der Ferne*, which makes him the open in-between of the hiddenness and the revelation of being.<sup>41</sup> It is neither mere nothingness nor nothing as a thing. Nor is it Schelling's transcendent nothingness or indifference upon which all differences, hence all finite characters of beings, break and burst asunder. The nothing of the in-between is indicated only in terms of situation, of tension between extremes; it cannot be formulated in terms of the unity of things and principles.

At the heart of being is an ambiguous duality. It is a duality, and so cannot be comprehended by unitary principles; it is an ambiguous duality, and so resists simplification to a definite opposition formulable in terms of two principles. Thus we have named it generically "the doublefold." Heidegger maintains that if we refrain from reifying the structure of being experienced in human freedom and grasp thrown responsibility in its full tension—the inner dialectic of "place" and "project"—the fragile doublefold may be preserved in its delicacy. Ontology must live within being's essential equivocation and, avoiding single meanings (prose) and single principles (metaphysics), learn to speak equivocally. Being as grounding is abysmal, *ab-gtundig*. He who would speak out (ultimately the poet, if anyone) must go into the abyss, must renounce the comfort of the single meaning and the single vision which the horizon of the everyday offers. He must seek apartness, for apartness is spirit and gathering power.<sup>42</sup> Gathering power is *logos*, the gathering of being, and the poet's speaking, worked out in the listening of apartness, becomes the "house of being" only because poetry is not so much invention as preservation and repetition. The poetic word brings apartness itself to a stand and rings out the fragility of being in all its necessary equivocations. It takes its stand in ambiguities, faithful to what is, and this faithfulness is central to its claim to replace metaphysics, to its position as the second beginning in the history of being.<sup>43</sup>

The doublefold of being, found in apartness as the in-between or the precarious dialogue of the divine and mortal, of the world and the human, allows of no healing. Being is radically finite, that is, not

fenced in from without but uncertain, divided, and ambiguous within. Grounding, or the sense of things, is groundless; one cannot find a "reason" to explain why possibilities present themselves, bases open up and causes preserve the sense of things for us. There is no transcending the finitude of "sense"; on the contrary, being breaks out, shows its transcendence, only within this finitude. The "because" finally loses itself in the play of being, a play which is only play, which plays because it plays. The "why" drops out of being experienced in any depth or profundity, and to attempt to fit being into the limits of the "why," as Schelling ultimately does, is only to mutilate what sense it has, to destroy its contingency and fragility, to close over its open texture and mute its sharp divisions with a logic of closure and completeness which is fictional rather than poetic.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>*Schellings Abhandlung über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit*, herausgegeben von Hildegard Feick (Tübingen, 1971). Hereafter called *Schellings Abhandlung*. Passages quoted in this article are my own translations and appear with the permission of Northwestern University Press which will publish a translation by Joan Stambaugh in 1974.

<sup>2</sup>The full title of the work is *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom and the Things Systematically Dependent on It*. The translation from which I quote goes under the name *Of Human Freedom*, translator James Gutmann (Chicago, 1936).

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in *Schellings Abhandlung*, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup>*Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit* (Bern, 1947), p. 50.

<sup>5</sup>All Schelling references are to the *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. K. F. A. Schelling, 1856 f., reproduced in the Munich Jubilee Edition, ed. M. Schröter, 1927. The first number indicates the volume—there are 14, published originally in two series—the second number the page.

<sup>6</sup>*Schellings Abhandlung*, p. 62.

<sup>7</sup>*Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>8</sup>*Vom Wesen des Grundes*, 4th ed. (Frankfurt a.M., 1955), pp. 53-54.

<sup>9</sup>*Schellings Abhandlung*, p. 79.

<sup>10</sup>*Nietzsche*, vol. II (Pfullingen, 1961), pp. 209-10.

<sup>11</sup>*Identität und Differenz* (Pfullingen, 1957). pp. 58-61.

<sup>12</sup>*Schellings Abhandlung* pp. 28-29.

<sup>13</sup>*Der Satz vom Grund* (Pfullingen, 1957), p. 184.

<sup>14</sup>*Schellings Abhandlung*. p. 34.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 31.

- <sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 41.
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 39.
- <sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 77.
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 55
- <sup>20</sup>*Der Satz vom Grund*, p. 186 f.
- <sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 188.
- <sup>22</sup>*Sämtliche Werke*. Nachlassband, ed. M. Schröter (Munich, 1946), p. 5.
- <sup>23</sup>*Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen, 1954), pp. 149-50.
- <sup>24</sup>*Identität und Differenz*. pp. 31-32.
- <sup>25</sup>Though the English "ground" carries the same basic sense of the German "Grund," the term is not philosophically established in English and some of Heidegger's usages may sound odd. The German term is a generic name for the existence of a precedent and explanatory state of affairs. It expresses continuity of sense across difference or the logical validity of "following upon." Specifically a ground may be either the possibility of something, or its cause, or its reason. Cf. *Vom Wesen des Grundes*. pp. 49-50.
- <sup>26</sup>*Schellings Abhandlung*, p. 129.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 130. Cf. Schelling, *Werke*, 7, 358.
- <sup>28</sup>*Der Satz vom Grund*, p. 43.
- <sup>29</sup>*Vom Wesen des Grundes*, p. 53.
- <sup>30</sup>*Schellings Abhandlung*, p. 152; *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen, 1967), p. 33.
- <sup>31</sup>*Vorträge und Aufsätze*, pp. 150-51; *Vom Wesen des Grundes*, pp. 43-44.
- <sup>32</sup>*Schellings Abhandlung*, p. 195.
- <sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 185.
- <sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 187. On the "binding play," the Heraclitean *logos* which founds the sense of things, into which all grounding and explanation sinks, cf. *Der Satz vom Grund*. pp. 186-88.
- <sup>35</sup>*Vom Wesen des Grundes*, p. 53; *Der Satz vom Grund*, pp. 92-93.
- <sup>36</sup>*Der Satz vom Grund*, pp. 92-93.
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 90.
- <sup>38</sup>Translation mine.
- <sup>39</sup>*Schellings Abhandlung*, p. 194.
- <sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 195, emphasis mine.
- <sup>41</sup>*Vom Wesen des Grundes*, p. 54; *Holzwege* (Frankfurt a.M., 1950), p. 104.
- <sup>42</sup>*On the Way to Language*, tr. Peter Hertz (New York, 1971), p. 185.
- <sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 192.