

the being that is (*das Seyende*) belongs as subject and the being that it is (*das Seyn*) as object. These three are in one another and simply indistinguishable.

[E]

THE HORROR OF DIVINE SOLIPSISM

The highest life will be unable to remain in the present moment. Indeed, it least of all can stay put. For even God is no more (34) than the husk of divinity. The truly existent in and throughout everything, as hidden as this might be, always remains the lucid purity of the most primordial beginning. The first active will is really never more than the ground of its existence. Intrinsically neither subject nor object, it is posited by the active will as both. But in truth it always remains in itself the essential unity as such. As much as it might take passing joy in a life that has become capable of feeling and of being felt (such pictorial language must occasionally be allowed us), it will nonetheless soon enough begin to feel the unity of its own nature (*Wesen*). Indeed, it will do so in a deeper and sharper way, for its own nature contradicts the opposition into which it has been placed. What it now feels is the mildness of its original nature in opposition both with the severity of the contracting will and with its own emerging subjectivity. Still truly unity, it is now something very different from the quiet and gentle unity that simply flows forth. Instead it is a unity that acts and contracts. It stands now in marked opposition to the being that it encounters as an active duality, a being that brings with it a strong sense of real repugnance. As much as it flows outward and spreads itself forth when following its own nature, it now finds itself cramped and closed away.

For this reason, furthermore, it demands to be neither subject nor object, but rather to be free of both. Only by departing from them can it recover itself as the gentle, quiet unity it once was.

This is the dire fate of all life, that to become comprehensible to itself, it seeks constriction, demanding narrowness over breadth. But after constricting itself and discovering what it feels like to be, it demands once again to return into openness. Indeed, it finds itself longing to return back into the quiet nothing it once inhabited. This, however, is impossible; to do so, it would have to abolish the life it has given itself.

In this way, even lucid purity,⁷⁵ once it has been lured into existence by the first active will, demands again to be released. The active will has brought subject and object together into one being and, with that act, existence has been established. There thus arises a quiet demand for the scission of these two that now refuses to leave the active will in peace. The will is not simple in its being, but is instead a (35) double-being, in which love and wrath have equal weight. Insofar as it feels love within it and makes it the object of its will, it too seeks scission. But no sooner does this happen than the opposed will, that other will that seeks always what is its own, draws back in terror as it feels the forces start to divide. Afraid it might lose its existence, it coils itself together again.

The actively existing will cannot let go of this other will that coils into itself, for it has reality only to the degree that it constitutes the middle between the two primal wills. Conflict thus arises within it, a back-and-forth (*Wechsel*) of expansion and contraction that begins with love seeking scission on the one side and the particular pulling everything together on the other side. In the battle of the conflicting wills at war within it, the actively existing will loses its own freedom and becomes, so to speak, the first throbbing point and beating heart of divinity. In incessant systole and diastole, it seeks rest without ever finding it. The more it gains a sense of need and repulsion, the more it too demands freedom and salvation from necessity.

In the moment of expansion, being, together with the conflict internal to it, breaks from unity (*Einheit*) and leaves it free. But in the moment of union (*Einung*), unity is continuously held tightly so that it can never escape. It is fixed securely and drawn over and over back into being, while at the same time it also posits itself ever anew as one that actively is (*als seiendes*). It is an involuntary movement that, once begun, always remakes itself from itself. With every contraction, the active will is again made responsive to the call of love as the original will. But as division (*Scheidung*) is thereby renewed, the other will, as the desire for existence, is for its part continuously stimulated. And because the actively existing will is not able to let go of it, given that its own

75. A *Lauterkeit* that makes demands is of course now even further removed from the pure *Lauterkeit* of eternity itself. Its transparency is now the transparency of seeing and feeling. It has, in other words, been transformed into consciousness. It is no longer the initially subdued consciousness that takes joy in its quasi-nonbeing, but instead the heightened consciousness of one who, perhaps in a dream of falling, has been suddenly jarred wide awake.

existence rests on being *both* wills, expansion gives way immediately to contraction. There is no way out.

Insofar as the conflict breaks from unity, the two original forces will find that they too have been separated and granted a moment of mutual independence. Or, even more, because within objective being it is only the affirmative and expansive force that behaves passively, it is this force that freely seeks (36) to escape its constraints. Only insofar as being is called back to its unity with that which is, and is thereby posited once again as being, are the two forces in their turn forced to search for a common being in which they are newly held together and made real.

There is, in other words, also within objective being a back-and-forth between scission and union. Or, more precisely stated, it is the division within objective being that conditions the primary division between being and that which is. Both divisions collapse into one.

As the forces within being separate from one another, they become free and give rise thereby to the first real life within the objective as such.

This earliest self-rousing life is the most primordial eternal nature of God, ever pronounced, ever recanted. It has its life only in this constant back-and-forth of inhalation and exhalation.

Insofar namely as the will of love calls forth the life that is proper to being by dividing the forces, the other will—the one filled with wrath—loses its right to be. Meanwhile, by virtue of the scission, freedom goes forth like a thunderbolt. Once, however, the other will calls back the forces from their flight, it is love that loses its right to both of them.⁷⁶ The open point is once again closed. In this way (and in this moment) the life of eternal nature is only a constant back-and-forth between life and death. It alternately comes to life in the one will while then dying in the other. It alternately abandons unity to assume a being of its own, while then losing its being all over again. At this stage there is no question of anything left standing. The entire production is like a divine spectacle that, born out of contradiction, is neither able to become anything enduring nor able to produce anything enduring.

Expansion is spiritualization while contraction is embodiment. Thus matter too comes in this moment a step closer to achieving its finite form. For in the original condition of quiet peacefulness, when being is

76. Schelling seems to be suggesting in these last two sentences that at the very deepest level, the will that has no right to be nonetheless possesses the freedom to act. When tyranny asserts itself in this way, it is the spirit of love that finds itself besieged.

one with the being that is, there was no conflict between these qualities: the bodily was spiritual and the spiritual was bodily. Here, however, matter finds itself in a condition of indecisiveness and finds itself, as it were, in an active struggle between the spiritual and the corporeal.

(37) Whereas the sphere of what is objective showed itself in the previous moment as a spiritual-bodily being, it now reveals itself as more specifically corporeal. This is so emphatically the case that we shall have to concede within the being of the original primal being the active production of a dark and closed matter that is directly opposed to anything spiritual. The force of contraction that is actually what makes the bodily here becomes active in open opposition to the spiritualizing force. Activated in this way, it can only produce matter in opposition to spirit, although, here too, we cannot think in terms of any abiding birth.

The middle condition between scission and union, since it cannot come to a decision for the one or the other, is struggle. Within the initial condition of being, the two original forces constituted a harmonic play of peaceful and mutual stimulation. But now that they are continuously being separated from one another, while just as quickly being called back together, they cannot but ignite into an ever-more-violent conflict. Torn out of every new union until they finally experience intense repugnance for one another, they now seek one another not for the sake of union, but for a fight. The negative force is always on the side of an imposed union, while the positive force affirms difference and is benefited by it. Neither force wins an enduring victory. Each sometimes wins; each sometimes loses.

It is essential that we recognize here too different moments in the development. For in the beginning of the conflict, contraction has been so little overcome that it outweighs expansion within the whole. The conflict still has not exploded into its fullest violence. As it keeps returning, the force of scission gains more and more power until its strength equals and ultimately surpasses that of contraction. In the instant this line is crossed, the constantly renewed struggle between a scission that grows more powerful with its every return and a contraction that always offers less and less resistance reaches its breaking point. Matter, as the middle, stands between the two until it is finally torn completely apart. It is shattered into even the smallest parts, so that in the end the once-closed unity of being has been dissolved into chaos.

(38) One might also look at the struggle between scission and union as a struggle between two dimensions. The primal force of contraction posits the first dimension insofar as it constantly draws everything together

into a middle point, by virtue of which a manifold of mutually free and independent things becomes impossible. Here unbroken unity prevails until necessity subordinates every last detail. The second dimension arises only through the intervention of an opposing force that breaks the compulsion of the first force and crosses through it. This makes distinctions between things possible, giving rise in the end to a life of free and independent organs mutually interacting within one whole. The force that opens outward frees itself from the contracting force that still clings to it. In the end, union is resisted and torn apart in all directions, constituting an open field of purely individual centers that retreat on all sides from the middle point, while still being held up by the force of contraction. Driven by forces that contend with one another, these new centers develop unique and independent lives of their own.

What is conspicuous in all of this is that, in nature as a whole, every independent life begins with a movement around a middle point, either its own or a point external to it. This can be seen in things great and small, both in the revolving wheel of the planets, in which the deeply concealed unity of the world first shows itself, and in the rotating movements of microscopic organisms, scarcely visible to the eye, that appear as the seeds of organic nature as a whole. Compulsive circular movement shows itself as the first form and revelation of any unique, separate life. It would not be the worst way of seeing things to directly compare the divine chaos of wandering stars, each spinning with incomprehensible speed around its own axis and middle point, with the aquatic chaos of algae and other infusoria. Blood still retains this ancient form of circulatory movement that governs great and small. It too is a chaos, posited internally but still subject to higher powers. Nature, always seeking to attain an ever-greater level of rest, appears to want nothing more than to find a way of escaping this movement and separating the forces that always contend with one another. (39) In the miracle of articulation that no one really understands, it has begun to do just this: finding a way successfully to hold the contending forces apart, subordinating them to a system of free movement, whereby muscles, carefully opposed to one another, stretch outward and bend back together, like divining rods rendered obedient to the will. While in a sense they too follow a rotating movement, they do so by dividing the task, with certain muscles straining forward and others pulling back in.

Within that revolving wheel that moves always back into itself, matter receives its final and complete preparation. For through their ever-repeated separation and reunification, forces progressively attain the

capacity for mutual sensation of one another. The force of contraction, which by its nature should be nonactive and subordinate, assumes more and more a spiritual and active quality through its opposition with the other force, which, in its turn (and despite its intrinsically spiritual nature) is drawn ever deeper into a passive and subordinate position. In this way, and without end, the one force forms the other and lays the foundation for both of them to attain the capacity for sensation and representation.

For now, however, the appearance of all corporeal qualities has to be understood as something that merely flickers forth. For in the same way that both forces are united in being, both the being that is (*Seyndes*) and the being that it is (*Seyn*) are in turn called back into unity and posited as one. As a result, one could say that the objective sphere is continuously poised to spring into external appearance without ever really being able to do so.

In this way the struggle within the objective can be regarded as the struggle between the spiritual and the corporeal. The parallel struggle between that which is and the being that it is can be seen as a struggle between interiority and exteriority.⁷⁷

77. The question of inwardness is decisive. Schelling's entire argument is based on the recognition of an ontological difference *within* anything that is. To see this, however, one has to break the habit of looking at things from the point of view of objective (and objectivizing) science, which is always simultaneously the point of view of detached subjectivity. Once the subject has been methodically detached from the observable phenomena, all we are left to see is the external shell it happens to turn toward us. We lose any sense that the thing we observe possesses its own internality. To get Schelling's point one has to exercise one's imagination enough to see that, from the vantage point of the thing itself, it is what it is internally while simultaneously showing itself externally as what it happens to be. Long before there were scientists examining things in the world, there were those things themselves, each in itself as that which it was, and each manifesting itself in one way or the other to the things around it. The "that which is" (*das Seiende*) is thus the inside of a thing. Its "being" (*das Sein*) is the external shell it turns to those who encounter it from the outside. This tension is internal to the whole of nature. We know what it means to the degree that we ourselves (beings who experience their own interiority) have come up out of it. To the degree that the brain scientist is looking at a brain, he or she can declare that minds are nonexistent for the simple reason that they are nowhere evident in the observable phenomena. But without the mind, the brain scientist cannot make the reflection that leads to the statement that there are no minds. Were that in fact true, there would be no science. It would be convenient if the world of experience could so painlessly be wiped away, but this is of course impossible. The distinction between *Sein* and *Seiendes* remains standing, always subject to new development.

But now the time has come to go back to the inner life of the being (*Wesen*) that exists within this conflict.⁷⁸

Given the constant exchange between separation and unification, the inner life of this being must be as riddled with contradiction as the outer, (40) just as happens when organic forces are torn by violent and chaotic movements until the inner life of the whole organism is made to suffer as well.

The consequence of the development of all life is that, by virtue of its own contradiction with being (*Seyn*), it throws out of balance the primordial harmony of life. This is why what is alive is handed over to suffering and pain. We might remind ourselves of the illnesses that punctuate the development of a human life, both physically and in the moral understanding. Pain is something necessary and universal, the unavoidable point within the passage to freedom. We will not shy away from portraying even the primal living being, insofar as it too arises developmentally, in a condition of suffering. Suffering is universally the path to glory, not only with regard to human beings but also with regard to the creator. He leads his creature through no other path than the one he himself also had to traverse. Suffering comes only from being. And because every being must first enclose itself in objective being in order to transfigure itself by breaking through its darkness, it is proper that even the divine being not be understood as free of all pain. It too must first suffer before it celebrates the triumph of its liberation.

Over and done with is the peaceful harmony of the primal being with its existence (*Einheit des Wesens mit seinem Daseyn*), which we discerned in the first moment (and which constitutes everywhere the first condition of life). The originally harmonic forces are split apart in being. The more soulfully inward the fusion of what is with its being, the more that the existing one (as that which is) comes to participate in the growing rift within being. Here too there are moments that have to be distinguished from one another. Within the interiority of the primal being, as in its outer life, the initially gentle movements give way to increasingly violent ones. As long as the contracting force maintains its predominance over the expanding force, it will be stimulated by the emerging conflict, initially dull and muted, to act in a blind and unconscious way. Much like the play of forces within a dream, strong, powerful, and

78. [Schelling's *marginal note*: "Let us dare now to look inward."]

monstrous births erupt, unrestrained by unity.⁷⁹ If the rational soul does not exert an influence, then these forces act for themselves. No longer (41) in that original condition of soulful inwardness and clairvoyance, where interiority seems to be filled with light and where, in those who are blessed, prophetic visions flicker forth, the primal being, entangled in conflict, now finds itself brooding as if over oppressive dreams that come up from a remote past. Soon, however, as the conflict grows stronger, wild fantasies pass through its inner life, making it feel all of the terrors of its own nature. The sensation that now takes command is anxiety, the condition of a being that is torn in competing directions, not knowing whether to go in or out. Meanwhile, the dissolution proceeds and separates the forces more and more until the force of contraction begins to fear for its life. The more strength the force has, the more blindly the existing will acts out. As the forces strive to come together, they do so obsessively, blindly and without understanding. To the degree, however, that the forces within being separate so that the gap between being and the beings that are (*Seyn und Seyendes*) widens, freedom or the essence of primordial lucid purity breaks forth in a searing radiance.⁸⁰ This resembles what happens in the production of electricity. When separated forces are first rubbed up against one another and then torn apart (*in der Scheidung*), their combustion appears with a flash. In contrast <<to the <blind>⁸¹ violence of the existing will>>,⁸² lucid purity is that essential unity in which freedom, spirit, understanding, and differentiation dwell. <The will within the contraction>⁸³ would thus like to grasp and appropriate

79. It helps to remember that this entire passage corresponds to the age of Cronus and the Titans. The births that erupt constantly, because they are regarded as threats, are quickly swallowed up and destroyed. The foundational mood is fear of the dangerous other.

80. In this passage, one will notice why the purity of *Lauterkeit* is not simply lucid, but lucent. Not only does it shine, but it sears. Because the movement by which the primal essence comes to be always unfolds in relationship to its underlying purity, it is constantly being purged of its impurities. The German word *Lauterkeit* is closely related to the word *Läuterung*, which means purification (or catharsis). What Schelling is describing in this first book of the *Weltalter* is the hell out of which God had to climb in order to be God. Insofar as he made that ascent (as evidenced by the relative stability of a world that is not simply stuck in the past), the hell in question was not really hell (from which an ascent is unthinkable), but purgatory, that which purges and cleanses, preparing the soul for a better life.

81. [drop from the text]

82. [to the violence of the blind, negating force]

83. [The blind force in its action]

the flash of freedom for itself,⁸⁴ to thereby become freely creating and conscious will, released from confusion and opposition. <This will>⁸⁵ would also like to communicate to its creations the essential unity of lucid purity that is understanding and spirit. But the blind will cannot grasp freedom, for it is incomprehensible, overwhelming spirit. For this reason the will (42) takes fright at its appearance. (It is afraid of lucid purity, in which it recognizes, as little as it would like to do so, its own true nature. It somehow senses, moreover, that this purity is stronger in its gentleness than it itself is in its severity.) As it catches a glimpse of spirit, it grasps at it blindly, unconscious of what it is doing. In everything it produces, it tries to copy it, as if in this manner it could hold onto it. But its own understanding functions like that of a stranger, hovering between a completely dark night of consciousness and a spirit that knows itself. It is a kind of madness, the last state of the highest possible internal strife and contradiction.

It is not for nothing that the ancients spoke of divine madness.⁸⁶ <For so>⁸⁷ we too have observed that visible⁸⁸ nature <which is only the external image of inner nature>⁸⁹ becomes ever more frenzied the closer it comes to spirit. For all the things of nature are admittedly in an insensate state. Those creatures, however, that belong to the last epoch of the battle between what severs and what unites, consciousness and unconsciousness, appear wandering about in a condition close to drunkenness, <as if they were>⁹⁰ driven by⁹¹ insanity. Not for nothing was the wagon of Dionysus pulled by lions, panthers, and tigers, for it was in this wild frenzy of enthusiasm that nature lost itself <over the>⁹² in the inner vision of the primal being. This is what was celebrated in Bacchic

84. [for while it is true that it has been elevated into activity against its will, and while it should and must be something affirming, it would still like to make itself free. It is therefore that it tries to seize for itself the flashing forth of the affirming essence,]

85. [This force]

86. [which they attributed to poets and others in whom a force shows itself that accomplishes more than it understands. So]

87. [drop from the text]

88. already pacified

89. [drop from the text]

90. [as if]

91. [a lacerating]

92. [by the]

orgies in the nature religion of archaic peoples caught up in the spirit of divination.⁹³ In contrast (*Wogegen*)⁹⁴ there is that wheel⁹⁵ of primordial <nature>⁹⁶ turning insanely upon itself, together with the <powerful>⁹⁷ and terrible forces of its circular drive. These forces are reproduced in the horrific pageantry of other ancient customs for worshipping the gods, such as the insensate, crazed dances that accompanied the profoundly shocking parade of the Mother of all things, riding on her (43) wagon with iron wheels, accompanied by raw and thunderous music that alternates between merely dazing and ripping its hearers apart. Because sound and tone appear to arise solely in the struggle between the spiritual and the corporeal, music alone can provide an image of primordial nature and its movement. The entire essence of music consists in a circular movement, proceeding from a basic tone that then undergoes extravagant variations before finding its way back to where it began.

We have not derived our description of this condition from any special forces within the primal being. Instead, we have described the general fate of a nature that develops itself out of its own forces and lives entirely for itself. For man helps man; even God helps him. But nothing can assist the primal being, lost in its terrifying solitude. It has no choice but to fight through its chaotic condition alone and by itself.

The greatest confirmation of the truth of our description lies in the fact that even now what is most interior to all things is constituted by that erratically spinning wheel of birth, that wild self-lacerating insanity. It is only brought under control and, as it were, proclaimed to be something good by the light of a higher understanding that is the real force of nature and of everything she brings forth.

93. [lamenting as it were the demise of the old and pure things of nature]

94. The wheel that turns insanely on itself stands in contrast to the spirit of divination. Yes, nature becomes frenzied when brought face to face with spirit. Even so, a moment of inner vision is accomplished. In accord to Schelling's general dialectic, understanding is set free when darkness gathers into itself. Just how and why this occurs is something that still has to be explained. One thing, however, is clear: understanding is not limited to the law of causality. It is not, as Schelling emphasized in his introduction to the work, simply a development of its own thoughts. Quite the contrary, its condition involves the surrender of precisely these kinds of expectations.

95. [the horrific pressure of the force of contraction]

96. [birth]

97. [active]