Reason and Revelation: F. W. J. Schelling's Freiheitsschrift in the Context of Pierre Bayle's Theodicy

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F. W. J. Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift* in the Context of Pierre Bayle's Theodicy

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Those who are seeking to discover where evils come from —
whether they belong among beings in general or to a particular genus
of beings — would be making an appropriate start to their search if
they first offered a hypothesis as to what evil is, that is, what its nature is.[1]

- *Plotinus* (204–270)

[1] In Lloyd P. Gerson ed., "On What Evils Are and Where They Come From," in *Plotinus: The Enneads*, trans. George Boys-Stones et al. (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 1.8.1.1-5.

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Aims and Structure

The following paper situates Schelling's *Freedom Essay* within a broader historical framework by interpreting it in the context of its philosophical novelties and how these relate to Bayle's lemmas on 'Spinoza' and 'Manichaeans'. In analysing the *Freedom Essay* both philosophically and historically, I defend the central thesis that Schelling's *Freedom Essay* should be considered beyond a mere episode of German idealist philosophy and, through Bayle, must be understood within a broader context of Western philosophy concerning the problem of evil.

The relationship between Schelling and Bayle, as well as Schelling's relation to the history of theodicy in general, has been significantly overlooked in Anglophone scholarship. Only in the introduction to the English translation of the *Freedom Essay* do we find Love and Schmidt mentioning this gap in Schelling studies. According to them, Schelling's *Freedom Essay* is "a remarkable synthesis of Pascal's *esprit de géometrie* and *esprit de finesse*, that seeks to transform the Leibnizian notion of theodicy left in ruins by Kant's critical project", thus relating Schelling's ideas to two early modern thinkers in one breath.[2] Furthermore, Love and Schmidt state that the "theodical perspective on Schelling's consideration of evil has received less intensive treatment in most of the important recent interpretations of the *Philosophical Investigations* [*Freedom Essay*]."[3] Hence, my study precisely aims to embed itself in such an interpretation.

In his works, Schelling exhibits a notable engagement with the ideas put forth by early modern philosophers; therefore, it can be inferred that he had a considerable understanding of their issues at stake.[4] Considering early modern theodical thinking, it is clear that Schelling's *Freedom Essay* embeds itself into this tradition, which is especially present in his usage of sources and his overarching engagement with answering the questions outlined in early modernity. With that in mind, we will approach Schelling's philosophy accordingly and examine how his *Freedom Essay* relates particularly to the questions raised by Bayle. This

[2] Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt, "Schelling's Treatise on Freedom and the Possibility of Theodicy," in *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Love and Schmidt (SUNY Press, 2006), ix.
[3] Love and Schmidt, "Schelling's Treatise on Freedom and the Possibility of Theodicy," ix.
[4] Later in his life, in the 1830s, Schelling lectured in Munich on the "history of modern philosophy". In these lectures, Schelling presents an overview of the history of Western philosophy from Descartes and Bacon onwards. For example, Spinoza, Leibniz and Wolff are extensively dealt with. See F. W. J Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Bowie (Cambridge University Press, 1994).

paper aims not to associate Schelling's ideas as a mere reflection of Bayle's thought but rather to understand the importance of Schelling's *Freedom Essay* in a much broader context through a deeper historical understanding of the issues at stake, thereby regarding the *Freedom Essay* as resolving these issues. Schelling is not just a link in the development of German Idealism; as we will see, his significance extends much further into history, as the relation to early modern philosophy, particularly Bayle's, will demonstrate. The *Freedom Essay* must be regarded as a groundbreaking solution to centuries of philosophical inquiry concerning the problem of evil. In that sense, Schelling's significance concerning the problem of evil can be rehabilitated, and consequently, Schelling can be regarded as an authentic philosopher beyond the neo-Kantian tradition.

To convincingly argue for Schelling's rehabilitation in the history of Western philosophy, this paper builds upon the ideas presented in Schelling's *Freedom Essay*. To scrutinise the *Freedom Essay*, sections 2, 3, and 4 respectively study the tension between i) reason and revelation, ii) how Schelling's transformation of Spinoza's pantheism into a novel conception of identity accounts for the possibility of theodicy, and iii) how this relates to Pierre Bayle's earlier critique of Spinoza and his theodicy. I am asserting that this threefold assessment most determinately presents Schelling's *Freedom Essay* as philosophically groundbreaking and historically relevant.

In section 2, I argue that Schelling's oscillation between reason and revelation aids him in accounting for the shortcomings of our understanding of the first cause, and subsequently, supports his concept of the revelation of *being* as the first cause. I argue that Schelling's idea of revelation and its comprehension of existence are at the heart of his anthropology and its relation to God. Additionally, as section 2 presents, his concept of existence is significant for his divergence from the philosophical paradigm of his time. This section supports my central thesis, as Schelling's concerns with the problem of evil, already within the context of his time, establish his ideas as authentic and unconventional within German idealist philosophy.

In section 3, I continue to develop my argument for Schelling's original understanding of existence (i.e., *being*). Through his critique of Spinoza in the *Freedom Essay*, Schelling successfully reshapes Spinoza's system into his novel understanding of identity, in which the human is autonomous. Furthermore, I argue that Schelling's understanding of identity and its functioning in propositional knowledge, our personhood, and discursive human rationality is constituted. This personhood leads to an impossibility of a homological relationship with God. I argue that real evil occurs when the human *will* detaches itself from the communal order and self-centredly strives to attain its self-interested ends; thus, acting as if one is equal to an

omnipotent God. Through an understanding of these philosophical foundations, I present how Schelling embeds himself in the tradition of theodicy through his engagement with Leibniz (and Leibniz's engagement with Bayle), which facilitates an understanding of how Schelling's theodicy is rooted in this early modern debate.

With my argument set up in sections 2 and 3, I present in section 4 how Schelling likely engaged with Bayle through his studies and engagement with Leibniz's theodicy. Additionally, I argue that Bayle's critique of Spinoza resonates with Schelling's particular understanding of an internally split identity. For Bayle, this split is primarily found in the fact that Spinoza's attributes of extension (being) and thought (thinking) are inherently different. These attributes do not comprise an absolute identity. I argue that this particular critique by Bayle is foundational to modern theodicy and shaped the content of Schelling's Spinoza critique, which is central to Schelling's theodicy. Furthermore, A similar suspicion regarding *reason* led Bayle to question the meaning of existence. As I argue in section 4.2, Schelling's similar questioning and corresponding use of concepts appear to be an essential aspect of Schelling's relation to Bayle's theodicy, and, consequently, we must understand Schelling's theodicy as an answer to Bayle's questions.

In the end, the theoretical intersection of Schelling's *Freedom Essay* with Bayle's lemmas substantiates my central claim, namely, that Schelling's *Freedom Essay* must be regarded beyond an episode in German idealist philosophy and must be understood within a broader context of the history of Western philosophy concerning the problem of evil.

The prologue, in the following sub-section, serves as a brief historical and philosophical introduction to the theoretical matters addressed in sections 2, 3, and 4. The prologue presents the overall intersection and stakes of Schelling's and Bayle's theodicy. By setting the stage in a more general sense, we can delve into the philosophical intricacies of the subsequent main sections.

1.2 Prologue

It is widely acknowledged that throughout his life, F. W. J. Schelling (1775–1854) was deeply influenced by the philosophy of Spinoza (1632–1677). In the preface to *Presentation of My System of Philosophy* (1801), Schelling proudly mentions that he uses "Spinoza as model here, since I thought there was good reason to choose as a paradigm the philosopher whom I believed came nearest my system in terms of content or material and in form […]."[5] The *Presentation* marks the beginning of Schelling's identity-philosophy—a philosophy which sought to synthesise his earlier nature-philosophy and transcendental idealism; unifying being and thinking. Although Schelling is indebted to Spinoza, he succeeds in reshaping a system which quite distinctly moves away from Spinoza's substance monism: a system infamously conceptualising God as "that eternal and infinite being we call God, or Nature" (*Deus Sive Natura*).[6] Spinoza's God is indistinguishable from nature; it is the one substance that expresses all that *is*, hence *pan* (all is) *theos* (God). Accordingly, God is immanent in His creation. This identification of God with nature appears problematic when attempting to explain the manifestation of evil. Because why would God allow evil to exist in Himself? In transforming Spinoza's pantheism into his understanding of *identity*, Schelling's metaphysics reinstates the possibility of theodicy—the problem that Spinoza could not solve within his system. The question regarding the problem Spinoza could not answer is: Why is there evil when an omnibenevolent and omnipotent God exists?

In 1809, Schelling published his *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom and Matters Connected Therewith*, also known as the *Freedom Essay*.[7] This text is Schelling's attempt to answer this question by reshaping his earlier identity-philosophy. According to Schelling, evil manifests itself because humans have the capacity to *choose* between good and evil. This very choice marks the essence of human freedom. This choice is not found in God; God does not have to make any choices as His *being* encloses the past, present, and future. God is an infinite entity consisting of all possible predicates. His *being* is the unity of being and thinking, and His omnibenevolence does not allow the ontological existence of evil.[8]

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[5] F. W. J. Schelling, "Presentation of My System of Philosophy (1801)," in *The Philosophical Rupture between Fichte and Schelling: Selected Texts and Correspondence (1800-1802)*, ed. and trans. by Vater and Wood (SUNY Press, 2012), 145.

[6] Benedictus de Spinoza, "The Ethics," in *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works*, ed. and trans. Curley (Princeton University Press, 1994), 198.

[7] In German: *Philosophischen Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände*, also known as the *Freiheitsschrift*.

[8] In instances where clarity may be obscure, I have emphasised being in italics.

Schelling's *Freedom Essay* is part of his lifelong endeavour to locate the absolute unconditional (*das Unbedingte*), i.e., a substance needing no other substance to exist—a substance which causes itself. If we look at Spinoza's first definition in his *Ethics* (1677), we see why Schelling chose him as the philosopher who came nearest to locating this absolute "in terms of content", the first definition states: "By cause of itself I understand that whose essence involves existence, *or* that whose nature cannot be conceived except as existing."[9] For Spinoza, this substance is God, and humans, as expressions of God, are unable to self-cause their activity. On the contrary, Schelling does not insist on understanding humans as uniform to God, as this would establish a homology between God and humans. Love and Schmidt argue that a "homology between God and man must not be possible; to the contrary, such a homology would be the highest expression of evil itself."[10] It is only if we *act* as if we were God, as if we are the *centre* of the universe, that we lose the realisation of our embeddedness in human reality, and then evil emerges. But how did Schelling come to these conclusions?

In early modern philosophy, theodicy reemerged in intellectual debate; in fact, the term "theodicy" originated from Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716). These theories concern vindicating (*diké*) God (*theos*). Leibniz's *Essays on Theodicy* (1710), is an essential inspiration for Schelling's theodicy because the presumptions on which Leibniz's theodicy was formed, namely, that the world is a pre-established harmony, did not suit Schelling's affirmation of individual life with all its struggles, which he desired to rehabilitate in the *Freedom Essay*. Additionally, Leibniz still viewed evil as *privatio boni*. In regarding evil as the privation of the good, it becomes relegated to non-existence. For Schelling, this is problematic, since it also devaluates the reality of (God's) goodness, because the good can only be regarded as good if it is confronted with its radical opposite.

More importantly, Leibniz's theodicy is a direct response to the questions concerning the problem of evil raised by Pierre Bayle (1647–1706): *le philosophe de Rotterdam*. Bayle became especially known for his fierce critique of Spinoza in the eponymous lemma in his *Historical and Critical Dictionary* (1st ed. 1697; 2nd ed. 1702), the longest lemma in the *Dictionary*. Bayle's critique of Spinoza is comprehensive and intricate. One of the most critical objections outlined in his lemma concerns Spinoza's substance monism.[11] Bayle's problems with Spinoza's monism are similar to those of Schelling: Bayle's difficulties with Spinoza are

[9] Spinoza, "The Ethics," 85 (I, D1).
[10] Love and Schmidt, "Schelling's Treatise on Freedom and the Possibility of Theodicy," xxvii.
[11] Jacob van Sluis, "Inleiding," in *Pierre Bayle: Over Spinoza*, ed. Krop and Van Sluis and trans. Hoffman, Van Der Meer and Willemsen (Damon, 2006), 41.

mainly found in the fact that the infinite substance and the finite things coincide. Therefore, God becomes relegated to an inferior *being* identified by the natural world's constraints and imperfections. But more importantly, all personal beings and individual things are nullified as a finite *modi* of God. This is troublesome in two ways. Like Schelling, Bayle finds Spinoza's implications erroneous that God and humans might be homologically powerful. For Bayle, God will never degrade Himself to any finite thing. Second, if God and the world are the same, then evil is part of God; however, this is not the case for Bayle, as revelation teaches us that there must be an autonomous principle of evil and that God's goodness and his *being* as the first cause are not attainable by *reason* alone.[12] Through *reason*, we can only argue for the metaphysical foundation of the substantive dual existence of extension and thought.

According to Bayle's metaphysics, this dualism is grounded in a higher principle in which there is an inherent dual opposition between evil's positive origin and God's omnibenevolence—a metaphysical dualistic opposition through which creation was made possible. This matches the claim by Love and Schmidt that Schelling's theodicy should be understood by Schelling's dynamic metaphysics, in which "God's creation unfolds in constant struggle, in an unrelenting, unstable tension between opposed ways of bringing a world into being that is the pure combat of becoming."[13] In the *Dictionary*, Bayle claims that *reason* is insufficient for acquiring the ends to vindicate God, as according to Bayle, *reason* leads humans to logically argue that God is accountable for the positive reality of evil, as he saw in Spinoza. Similar to Schelling, Bayle emphasises revelation as a means to acknowledge God's unity and infinite goodness. Through revelation, humans can understand the shortcomings of *reason* and realise that evil is a manifestation of us.

It is striking that Schelling's and Bayle's critique of Spinoza plays a pivotal role in their constitutive theories of theodicy. Schelling begins with the problems posed by *reason* and arrives at a revelation of *being,* which enables him to substantiate his transformation of Spinoza's pantheism. Similarly, Bayle begins by examining the problems with rationalism as the foundation of Spinoza's substance monism, to justify a revelation of the light of an infinite God, which transcends *reason*. Both culminate in an understanding of evil as part of, and actualised by, the personal individual. Given the general outline of the philosophical stakes and historical relation, we can delve into the formation of these ideas, ultimately helping us to understand the *Freedom Essay* in a broader historical context.

[12] In instances where clarity may be obscure, I have emphasised reason in italics.
[13] Love and Schmidt, "Schelling's Treatise on Freedom and the Possibility of Theodicy," x.

2. The Primacy of Being over Thinking

To understand Schelling's *Freedom Essay* (*FS*)[14] in the context of the problem of evil, we must first look at Schelling's position within the development of German Idealism. In this section, I examine Schelling's philosophical foundations, which are reflected in the *FS*. To understand these foundations, I will discuss how Schelling deviates from earlier German idealist philosophy and how this leads him to oscillate between reason and revelation. Section 2.1 primarily engages with the general philosophical context of the *FS* and what is at stake in this text. I will present how Schelling's original thinking stems from the divergence of Kant and Fichte. In section 2.2, I examine how Schelling established himself as an authentic thinker by asserting that his revelation of existence leads him to conceptualise the interrelatedness of human and divine existence. Consequently, I claim that Schelling's primacy of being over thinking opens the way to argue for the reality of evil in the human world, which shapes his theodicy, and is essential for understanding how Schelling relates to Bayle's insights regarding theodicy, which will be presented in section 4.

2.1 Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift* in the Context of German Idealism

The intellectual climate of Schelling's formative years was entirely under the spell of the revolutionary critical philosophy from Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). In his *Critique of Pure Reason* (*KrV*) (1781), Kant argued that freedom is not a concept that can be experienced, because freedom is not part of any object of cognition. Theoretical *reason* is confronted through experience with natural laws and conditioned objects; reciprocally, theoretical *reason* shapes how experience is encountered and understood. These limitations can be understood in the following manner: all experiential knowledge is based on other experiential knowledge, meaning that all knowledge is determined by its preceding parts. However, if we reduce the chain of causes back to a first cause, we must think of something which caused all knowledge, and thus, *is* "absolutely unconditioned," and hence free.[15] In the *Antinomy of Pure Reason* in the *KrV*, Kant claims that this can only be understood as a regulative principle of *reason*: the first cause (or any self-causing entity) is such a principle that *reason* "*postulates* what should be effected by us in the regress."[16] For Kant, "freedom is a pure transcendental idea, which

[14] From this point onwards, the *Freiheitsschrift* will be abbreviated as *FS*.
[15] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. and trans. by Guyer and Wood (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 401 (A 326 / B 382).
[16] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 520–521 (A 509 / B 537) [emphasis altered].

contains nothing borrowed from experience."[17] Thus, in experience, we are not free; everything we think and every act which acts upon a thought *is* conditioned. In that sense, Schelling dismisses Kant's position and establishes the first cause on an experiential principle: existence.

In the *FS*, Schelling will develop this position. The *FS* was initially published in volume 1 of what was to become a series of collected editions of his work. By 1809, Schelling's contributions to philosophy had been so successful and prolific that he could reflect on his career as a leading figure in German philosophy, which the collected editions intended to carry forward. Unfortunately, only the first volume was published, marking the *FS* as Schelling's penultimate philosophical work in print. Four earlier works accompanied the volume in which the *FS* appeared for the first time.[18]

If we follow Schelling in his preface, we must regard the *FS* as exploring and finalising the "concept of the ideal part of philosophy with complete determinateness."[19] Schelling claims that he has "has confined himself wholly to investigations in the philosophy of nature," still, without abandoning the philosophy of nature, the *FS* reestablishes the role of humans as approached from the ideal concept of existence and (human) *being* in nature, which therefore emphasises the ideal part without dismissing nature.[20] In doing so, he reestablishes the spiritual identity of the opposition between nature and spirit.

Schelling was aware that perhaps only Spinoza, who already understood that "everything that is, is in God, and must be conceived through God, and so, God is the cause of all things, which are in him", could be said to have wholly realised the dissolution of the opposition between nature and spirt.[21] In the *FS*, Schelling will follow Spinoza's demonstration of proposition 18 in the *Ethics*, however it is also this thought that sparks Schelling too claim that the chief task of the *FS* is too tackle the problem of the "higher, or rather, the genuine opposition, that of necessity and freedom, with which the innermost centerpoint of philosophy

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[17] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 533 (A 533 / B 561).
[18] Thomas Buchheim, "Einleitung," in *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen dermenschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände*, ed. Buchheim (Felix Meiner Verlag, 2011), ix. These works are: (1) *Of the I as Principle of Philosophy or on the Unconditioned in Human Knowledge* (1795); (2) *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* (1795); (3) *The Treatises in Explanation of the Doctrine of Science* (1796–1797); and (4) an edited transcript of his speech held on October 12, 1807, at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences; *On the Relation of the Fine Arts to Nature*.
[19] F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Love and Schmidt (SUNY Press, 2006), 4. For the German text see F. W. J. Schelling, "Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freyheit und andere Texte (1809)," in *Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, Band I,17, ed. Binkelmann et al. (Frommann-holzboog, 2018), 26. For all references to Schelling's *Freedom Essay*, I first refer to the page number in the English translation by SUNY Press, followed by the page number in the respective Akademie-Ausgabe (AA I,17). For example: 4 (AA I,17, 26).
[20] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 4 (AA I,17, 26).
[21] Spinoza, "The Ethics," 100 (I, P18).

first comes into consideration."[22] Thus, paving the way for real freedom while respecting the independence of nature, contrary to Spinoza's claim that God (or Nature) is "the cause of all things".

For Schelling, freedom must be revitalised from and within the absolute. *Reason*, as knowing and thinking, does not properly account for the genesis in which subjectivity is naturally formed as opposed to mechanical objects. As Kant argued in his *Transcendental deduction* in the *KrV*, the pure understanding determines how nature is cognised, and at the same time our experience of nature determines the concepts through which we understand nature; this synthesis happens in theoretical *reason*, therefore the cause of how the object is constituted in-itself in objective reality cannot be accounted for; still, the subject always merges the fragments of representations from within, its cognitions always seeks the complete identity of the object, on which the possibility of the pure understanding lies.[23] The pursuit of combination (identity) "can be executed only by the subject it-self, since it is an act of its self-activity."[24]

However, the cognitions still consist of the "determinate relation of given representations to an object."[25] For Kant, the *being* in-itself resides in the realm of the transcendent. This remains a persistent problem for Schelling. In the *FS*, Schelling attempts to approach the transcendental object by penetrating through the boundaries of *reason*, namely, through revelation. Before we explore the revelation of being as opposed to rationally determined being, we must understand how Schelling's intellectual development influenced the ideas that are featured in the *FS*, which is crucial to understanding his transformation of Spinoza's identity.

There is considerable scholarly disagreement regarding Schelling's intellectual development, as his published and unpublished oeuvre is extensive and spans six decades. Scholars debate whether we can identify distinct phases of Schelling's thought or whether his philosophy comprises consecutive and consistent ideas that build upon one another to form a unified philosophical project. The former usually denotes Schelling as a Protean thinker.[26] On the contrary, as the preface to the *FS* implicates, Schelling self-interprets his philosophy as a continuum in which we must understand the *FS* as part of an uninterrupted thread, beginning with his earliest works, such as *Of the I* (1795), which was accompanied in the volume in which

[22] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 4 (AA I,17, 26).
[23] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, (245–246, B 129).
[24] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, (245–246, B 129).
[25] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, (249, B 137).
[26] Scholars who view Schelling as Protean distinguish five periods: the Fichtean period (1794–1797), nature-philosophy (1797–1800), identity-philosophy (1801–1804), a transitional period (1804–1811), and the late philosophy (1811–1854).

the *FS* appeared. Also, as Grant argues, we must not take Schelling's natural-philosophical endeavours lightly, because Schelling's philosophy of nature is the very "core" of his philosophy throughout his career, and if you regard it as just a phase, then one undermines its threading coherence as absolutely decisive to understand the *FS*.[27] This is also substantiated by the fact that in the first part of the *FS*, Schelling eagerly engages with Spinoza's conception of nature (or God) and its faulty interpretations. In that respect, I follow Schelling in that his earlier endeavours are decisive in understanding the *FS*. Especially the texts *Of the I* and *Presentation* will be considered. So, how did the pre-*FS* philosophy deal with the concepts of being and thinking? To answer this question, we must examine Schelling's earlier texts and influences.

Fichte revolutionised Kantianism, and in early 1794, he started lecturing at the University of Jena. In his *Wissenschaftslehre*, published around the same time, Fichte's deductive understanding of the self and its nihilistic conception of nature lay the groundwork for his anthropological conception, which views the human as an *act* of natural consciousness. Especially at the end of the *Wissenschaftslehre* in the *Foundation of knowledge of the practical*, Fichte explains that by way of this *act* one posits (*setzen*) itself as an absolute 'I' (being free and infinite), however because it is contradicted by the determined not-I it runs into a push back or 'check' (*anstoß*) from which the self is deduced. Hereby, an intelligible limited 'I', which was originally unlimited, is constituted. Even though the self-conscious 'I' understands itself in a limited empirical reality, it knows that its self-activity determines this empirical reality, meaning that nature is just the ideal product of the self.[28] Fichte's primacy of practical *reason* is very prominent, because the first '*act*' is formed through a moral deed (*Tathandlung*): an act based on an unconditioned moral law.

His ideal conception of nature makes it easier for him to dissolve the Kantian dualism, Fichte goes even so far to claim that "as the self is posited, so all reality is posited; everything is to be posited in the self; the self is independent, whereas everything is to be dependent upon it."[29] Fichte's note to this passage in the *Wissenschaftslehre* is a direct reference to Kant, where Fichte claims that Kant must have thought of the human being as absolute, as to make sense of Kant's formulation of the categorial imperative; Fichte demands that only through a posited absolute 'I' we can conform to an unconditional postulate, otherwise even our moral actions

[27] Iain Hamilton Grant, *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling* (Continuum, 2006), 5.
[28] J. G. Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge: With the First and Second Introductions*, ed. and trans. Heath and Lachs (Cambridge University Press, 1982), 218–248.
[29] Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, 230.

would be determined. Said positing opposes the becoming of external existence, as Fichte's concept of life does only exist through its self-positing and annihilates objective existence as independent.[30] In that sense, God also becomes an ideal construction of consciousness. This resonates with Spinoza's substance; however, it is an inverted version, as according to Fichte, everything that exists is produced by the 'I', whereas for Spinoza, everything is determined by the not-I, i.e., God or Nature. Hölderlin, Schelling's earlier roommate, attended Fichte's lectures in Jena and captures this Fichtean 'I' in a letter to Hegel from 1795, writing: "[Fichte's] absolute "I" (= Spinoza's Substance) contains all reality; it is everything, and outside of it there is nothing; hence there is no object for this 'I', for otherwise not all reality would be within it."[31] In the *FS*, Schelling aimed to transform this Fichtean (and thus inverted Spinozist) understanding of reality, as it did not adequately capture the spiritual identity.

Schelling also attempts to engage with this conception of reality; however, he takes it a step further. In Schelling's *Of the I*, we can find his desire for an epistemological monistic system enclosed in an absolute 'I' which "contains a *being* which precedes all thinking and imagining".[32] As we see, already in 1795, Schelling's claim that *being* precedes thinking prefigures the ideas in the *FS* and establishes the first cause on this principle. However, around this time, his epistemology is still Fichtean, as we realise that the objective part of the subject-object relation becomes nullified for the substantive subject, since the subject is the one who produces this knowledge.[33] At this time, his preoccupation with Spinoza is already crucial for the problems engaged with in the *FS*: "Even Spinoza has not proved anywhere that the unconditional could and should lie in the not-I."[34] However, Schelling neither proves this in his earlier works. In the *FS*, Schelling finds the unconditional in the 'I' and the not-I, in the former as a moral principle, and in the latter as existence. His reading of Kant informs Schelling's understanding of this moral principle.

[30] Anthony G. Bruno, '"All Is Act, Movement, and Life": Fichte's Idealism as Immortalism,' in *Life,Organisms, and Human Nature*, ed. Corti and Schülein (Springer International Publishing, 2023), 122–124.
[31] Friedrich Hölderlin, "To Hegel," in *Essays and Letters on Theory*, ed. and trans. Pfau (SUNY Press, 1987), 125.
[32] F. W. J. Schelling, "Of the I as the Principle of Philosophy (1795)," in *German Idealism: an Anthology and Guide*, ed. O'Connor and Mohr and trans. Marti (University of Chicago Press, 2006), 67.
[33] Schelling, "Of the I as the Principle of Philosophy (1795)," 64–69.
[34] Schelling, "Of the I as the Principle of Philosophy (1795)," 70.

Kant already argued that the objective nature (found in the not-I) of the moral law is constitutive for being a self-causing law; according to Kant, every human can self-determine their moral freedom according to something outside of their subjective causes. Kant argued for unconditional moral freedom in his *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), writing:

> The moral law is for them [rational being] an imperative that commands categorically because the law is unconditional; the relation of such a will to this law is dependence under the name of obligation, which signifies a necessitation, though only by reason and its objective law, to an action which is called duty because a choice that is *pathologically* affected (though not thereby determined, hence still free) brings with it a wish arising from *subjective causes*.[35]

For Kant, subjective causes may never lead to moral action, since the unconditional must reside in the not-I. However, this not-I must be present in the 'I'. In adopting this understanding of freedom, Schelling integrates it into a concept of freedom that preserves the self's relationship to nature as well as real self-determination. If we remember that the primary task of the *FS* is the dissolution of "necessity and freedom," we can see how Kant had influenced Schelling. Still, Schelling takes a more radical step in which Schelling's interpretation of the moral law also facilitates evil. In that regard, Schelling overturns Kant. In the *FS,* Schelling finds the unity of necessity and freedom if one is willing to subordinate one's self-will into a life-transfiguring *will*[36] as "a truly particular *will*, yet, in itself or as the centrum of all other particular *wills*."[37] According to Matthews, "the schema for such a possible unity lies in his conception of a *decentred Self* whose consciousness is conceived on the model of productive self-organisation vis-à-vis the wide self-organisation that is nature."[38] In the *FS*, Schelling proclaims that it is through a self-alienating *act* that one moves freely in nature.

Still, before we get there, the problem during the pre-*FS* period remained on the part of nature, if an 'I' is only encountered within the subjective, are we not back to Kant's theoretical *reason*, which is conditioned by the relation between causal-determined nature and determining knowledge of nature? To answer this question, we must fast forward to Schelling's break with Fichtean philosophy around 1800 and see how Schelling diverges from Kant and Fichte and establishes a philosophy beyond German Idealism.

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[35] Immanuel Kant, "Critique of Practical Reason (1788)," in *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Gregor (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 165–166 [emphasis altered].
[36] In instances where clarity may be obscure, I have emphasised will in italics.
[37] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 32 (AA I,17, 134).
[38] Bruce Matthews, *Schelling's Organic Form of Philosophy: Life as the Schema of Freedom* (SUNY Press, 2011), 28 [emphasis altered].

2.2 The Revelation of Being

To understand how Schelling dissolves necessity (theoretical reason) and freedom (practical reason) in the *FS* by still giving nature its due as not being a mere ideal construction of human beings, it is essential to look at his quarrel with Fichte around 1800. Shelling's quarrel with Fichte is crucial to understanding how Schelling establishes an understanding of existence without dissolving the autonomy of either humans or God, which paves the way for Schelling's solution to the problem of evil. Until 1800, Schelling had written extensively on the dissolution of the opposition of spirit (early Fichtean period) and nature (nature-philosophy period). We can clearly distinguish their differences if we consider this opposition and see how Schelling deviates from Fichte. Vater and Wood summarise the break with Fichte in three points: the first relates to the status of *being* in transcendental idealism.

For Fichte, reality is formed through representations floating on a dynamic surface, which are only transformed through our consciousness; only on this ground can objects be established. This means that for Fichte, there is no thing-in-itself and no static being, as everything is a flow of embodied consciousness. Fichte's transcendental idealism relegates the 'thing' (or the being) to a psychological phenomenon and conceptualises a subject that moves everything. On the other hand, Schelling conserves a dualism in which empirical reality exists, situating human consciousness as not entirely transparent towards nature and self-knowledge. Therefore, consciousness can never be the ground on which existence rests. Schelling argues that the absolute can never attain pure objectivity because if it did, it would be an object and, consequently, knowable. Schelling denies Fichte's subjective idealism by still upholding Kant's transcendental object, of which we cannot say what it is. However, we can state that it *is*. Thus, fundamentally, the first cause is a *being*—Schelling's first principle departs from *being* as opposed to Fichte's thinking.[39]

The second disagreement concerned the role of nature in freedom. First, Fichte claimed that the ground of knowing is not deduced from nature but produced by the human self. Humans limit themselves only because of the intersubjective realisation of the moral community. Schelling claimed that our consciousness exists independently and in parallel to nature. Consciousness subtracts nature from itself when it wants to understand itself: thus, constituting *reason* and selfhood, and by understanding our free selfhood, we understand nature.[40]

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[39] Michael G. Vater and David W. Wood, ""The Difference" Between Fichte and Schelling, 1800–1802," in *The Philosophical Rupture between Fichte and Schelling: Selected Texts and Correspondence (1800-1802)*, ed. and trans. Vater and Wood (SUNY Press, 2012), 14–16.
[40] Vater and Wood, ""The Difference" Between Fichte and Schelling, 1800–1802," 16–18.

For this understanding of nature, Schelling adopts Kant's conception of nature as presented in his *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (1786), where Kant proposes his dynamic theory of matter. This dynamic theory of matter will play a crucial role throughout the *FS* and is analogous to the core of Schelling's metaphysical foundations in the *FS.* Kant regarded matter as an equilibrium between contracting and extracting forces, which make it possible for matter to be, and not as this lifeless Fichtean conceptualisation of nature. Matter, and thus nature, is inherently dynamic, with opposing forces constantly at play.[41] However, Schelling transforms and reunites this theory with the spiritual. In the *FS*, the dynamism is prominently present to explain the ground of existence; this is only possible if we depart from the radically opposite of the totality of existence, i.e., particular difference. This, just like Kant's matter, is ontologically present in reality. García-Romero describes Schelling's metaphysics as "resulting from the groundbreaking conception of alterity within unity, the 'inner dualism'", which is critical for explaining freedom while maintaining unity within God. Schelling's internal dualism also vindicates God's infinite ontological status, as it is not estranged from its freedom and its being-for-itself.[42] Thus, Schelling's dualism explains how God can stay infinite while He has a finite (human) part within Himself. However, Schelling does not attempt to take sides with transcendental idealism (subject) or natural philosophy (object). *Being* only arises when we abstract from both. This awareness is formed through a positive approach to this abstraction, which does not ask why something *is*, but identifies that something *is*.

The third and most minor difference is that Fichte's methodology relies on his concept of knowing, grounded in an active and systematic manner. Schelling's methodology, also present in the *FS*, relies on a philosophical form that aims to converge ultimate oppositions by revealing what *is*.[43] Schelling's methodology relies on the realisation that his philosophy needs to be seen as a process of becoming, just as experience itself, whereby the indifference of being and thinking is analogous to that of organic nature, which also comes into *being* due to natural processes. These differences eventually led Schelling to move away from Fichte after 1800.

In 1801, Schelling synthesised these thoughts in his most Spinozist treatise, conceptualising *reason* as the "total indifference of the subjective and the object."[44] He remarks on this definition that "to conceive [*reason*] as absolute, and thus come to the standpoint I require, one

[41] Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, trans. Friedman (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 62–74.
[42] Marcela García-Romero, "Unbounded Being: The Distinction Between Existence and Actuality in Schelling's Ontology of Freedom," in *Schellings Freiheitsschrift - Methode, System, Kritik*, ed. Buchheim, Frisch, and Wachsmann (Mohr Siebeck Tübingen, 2021), 217.
[43] Vater and Wood, ""The Difference" Between Fichte and Schelling, 1800–1802," 18–20.
[44] Schelling, "Presentation of My System of Philosophy (1801)," 145.

must abstract from what does the thinking."[45] This resonates with Spinoza's involatile mind in which no affirmation or negation is possible—if one abstracts from thinking, one becomes in unity with nature and "acts from God's command."[46] Hegel summarises the identity-philosophy in Schelling' *Presentation* in his 1801 *Differenzschrift* were he states that Schelling's concept of *reason* is "the middle term through which identity constructing itself as nature passes over to identity constructing itself as intelligence, is the internalisation of the light of nature, the lightning stroke of the ideal upon the real, as Schelling calls it, its self-constitution as point."[47] The more we regard this self-constitutive point as everything (or nothing), we abstract to the end in which human life is nullified and with that, even worse: God, making Schelling's philosophy feasible for accusations of atheism, just like Fichte's. Melamed describes how, during this period, Schelling transforms Spinoza's God by equating God to *reason*.[48] In 1801, as Melamed presents, this is the case in his earlier identity-philosophy: still, in 1809, Schelling understood that he could not maintain this position because if God *is* everything, our *being* and thinking are merely expressions of God. Conversely, if we only rationally think of God, God can be identified with whatever our transcendental faculties constitute, thus rendering God merely to our thought.

In 1809, through his dynamic metaphysics, Schelling refuted this by conceptualising that God's ground is found in God's nature. Through continuing alterity, *reason's* claim of understanding the first cause can be redeemed with something which constitutes existence before it is being thought. For Schelling, that is revelation. It is only through revelation that we comprehend that the mere fact of *being* (existing) is absolutely unconditional. However, this existence must be grounded in something different from itself, i.e., free beings, otherwise existence's distinguishability would not be present, and everything would be an expression of the one substance, just like Spinoza's substance. Schelling describes his pantheism as follows:

> The procession of things from God is a self-revelation of God. But God can only reveal himself to himself in what is like him, in free beings acting on their own, for whose Being there is no ground other than God but who are as God *is*.[49]

[45] Schelling, "Presentation of My System of Philosophy (1801)," 146.
[46] Spinoza, "The Ethics," 147–151 (II, P49).
[47] G. W. F. Hegel, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Cerf and Harris (SUNY Press, 1977), 170.
[48] Yitzhak Y. Melamed, "Deus Sive Vernunft: Schelling's Transformation of Spinoza's God," in *Schelling's Philosophy: Freedom, Nature, and Systematicity*, ed. G. Anthony Bruno (Oxford University Press, 2020), 93–111.
[49] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 18 (AA I,17, 120).

The process of Schelling's (self-)revelation opposes Spinoza's fourteenth proposition, he writes: "Except God, no substance, can be or be conceived."[50] Here, the problems with Spinoza arise for Schelling because evil is also conceived as existing. The question remains why, when "whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God," evil exists?[51] Schelling's answer to this is already hinted at in a letter to Fichte from 1801. Schelling writes: "Since this absolute identity of thought and intuition is the highest principle, it is, really conceived *as absolute indifference*, necessarily at the same time the highest being, as contrasted finite and determined *being* (e.g., of the individual bodily thing), always expresses a determinate difference of thought and intuition. Here, the ideal and the real reciprocally distort each other."[52] Here, he signals the idea that the totality of *being* (substance) is always distorted by a finite being absorbed by the greater infinite being, which will be expanded in the *FS*. The infinite being, as Schelling states, determines difference, thus allowing itself to split into multiplicity while remaining indifferent to this multiplicity. In this earlier identity-philosophy, the oppositions between humans and nature are not affected because of the indifference of their *being*. This means that Schelling's absolute (highest being) always contains difference within its identity, enclosing a part that is different from itself. Schelling keeps oscillating between reason and revelation to conceptualise this adequately.

In any case, by presenting his earlier philosophical endeavours, it is easier to understand how Schelling set forth a metaphysics in which the possibility of autonomous difference is real. For him, the first cause of existence must be revealed in a revelation of *being*, but this can only happen through a realisation of the limitations of its radical opposite, i.e., human *reason*. Therefore, Schelling cannot entirely dismiss *reason*, as its alteration is necessary for the divinisation of the totality of *being*. Because without *reason*, there is no revelation. The question remains of how Schelling accounts for the possibility of theodicy when the totality *is* the divine. In the next section, I will argue how Schelling develops his conception of difference within the divine totality; this difference supports the personhood of humans, which establishes the essence of human freedom, eventually paving the way for theodicy.

[50] Spinoza, "The Ethics," 93 (I, P14).
[51] Spinoza, "The Ethics," 94 (I, P15).
[52] F. W. J. Schelling, "J. G. Fichte/F. W. J. Schelling: Correspondence 1800–1802," in *The Philosophical Rupture between Fichte and Schelling: Selected Texts and Correspondence (1800-1802)*, ed. and trans. by Vater and Wood (SUNY Press, 2012), 60.

3. Schelling's Dynamic Metaphysics

In section 2, I have argued that Schelling's emphasis on what *is* (revelation) in contrast to why something *is* (reason) explains the fact that *reason* cannot solely account for the absolute. Subsequently, revelation will reveal our position in the world and our relation to the absolute. As argued, humans and nature are indifferent; however, human freedom has a peculiar status within this nature, as its essence is defined by our self-determined actions, while still *being* in God. This self-determination is possible through our difference within the complete identity, i.e., God. These ideas established Schelling's philosophy as authentic, which helps us understand how his philosophy, in the *FS*, moves beyond German idealist philosophy.

In section 3.1, I will argue that Schelling's conceptualisation of this difference informs his departure from Spinoza; consequently, in section 3.2, I will argue how this departure accounts for the reality of evil.

3.1 Difference-in-identity

To understand Schelling's conception of identity, we must first examine Schelling's refutations of some of the problematic interpretations of Spinoza's pantheism. Schelling identifies three interpretations that have been set forth due to a misunderstanding of the meaning of immanence. The first has to do with the fact that most misinterpretations of Spinoza claimed that the sum of all things together constitutes God. Schelling refutes this by stating that the sum of all things can never be equal to God, since the qualitative difference is more potent than quantitative equality.[53]

The second is the problematic interpretation, which Schelling will transform to constitute his understanding of difference within identity; it states that individual things *are* identical to God. However, as the first refutation shows, there is a qualitative difference between God and humans; thus, an infinite God cannot become a finite being. Schelling claims that this has been wrongly interpreted due to a misapprehension of the meaning of the copula, which has incorrectly set forth that there must be an identity between subject and predicate. The latter misapprehension will Schelling use to constitute his understanding of the copula, in which the subject unfolds from the predicate.[54]

[53] Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt, "Notes," in *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, ed. Love and Schmidt (SUNY Press, 2006), 139.
[54] Love and Schmidt, "Notes," 139.

The third misinterpretation of pantheism concerns the notion that things do not truly exist. But as Schelling states, how can they be regarded as *being* in God? And even more problematic, how can one state that a thing (thus acknowledging its ideal or real existence), *be* nothing?[55]

Schelling claims that the second misunderstanding of pantheism leads to "a complete identification of God with things; a blending of creator and created *being* from which yet another set of difficult and *unbearable* assertions is derived."[56] As we see, Schelling is irritated with this misinterpretation, as the word 'unbearable' shows. This irritation leads him further to state that "still more *fatuous* is the conclusion that in Spinoza even the individual thing is equivalent to God."[57] His explicitly present annoyance leads him to rectify the problematic understanding of the meaning of identity. The first and third are easily refuted, as briefly indicated. This section will further focus on the second misinterpretation which Schelling ultimately uses to conceptualise his version of pantheism since "nothing indeed can be outside of God, this contradiction can only be resolved by things having their ground in that which in God himself is not He Himself, that is, in that which is the ground of his existence."[58]

According to Buchheim, the second misinterpretation to which Schelling has strong feelings is a consequence of Bayle's lemma on Spinoza from his *Dictionary*. According to Buchheim's vast critical apparatus, elements of Bayle's lemma are incorporated into Schelling's text.[59] It is striking that Schelling's crucial motivation for conceptualising his system of identity is due to Bayle's (mis)interpretation of Spinoza. Bayle might have been fierce to Spinoza, to which Schelling's annoyance was uttered, but as we will see later, Schelling himself comes much closer to Bayle than one might initially think. Schelling, like Bayle, also moves away from a complete monism (absolute identity); both thinkers rather presuppose some attainable dualism in an unattainable identity in which human freedom is preserved. Even the form of the *FS* comes closer to that of Bayle's *Dictionary*. As Schelling does not systematically present his metaphysics, he instead amply engages with different philosophers and their various positions, much like Bayle does in his *Dictionary*.

For Schelling, Spinoza's *Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata* is at the heart of the problem of system and freedom, as system and freedom cannot be thought together in a deductive and mathematical form. Unless, through a dynamic form, system and freedom can be equally

[55] Love and Schmidt, "Notes," 139.
[56] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 12 (AA I,17, 114) [emphasis altered].
[57] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 13 (AA I,17, 115) [emphasis altered].
[58] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 28 (AA I,17, 130).
[59] Thomas Buchheim, "Anmerkungen," in *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen dermenschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände*, ed. Buchheim (Felix Meiner Verlag, 2011), 95.

present. According to Gabriel, "the decisive difference between Schelling and Spinoza on this score, however, is that Schelling takes his analysis to be an insight into a universal structure with many different instances. Whereas Spinoza restricts his aspectual distinction among the attributes to the singular substance, Schelling maintains that every individual—everything which differs from something else—is such that it can figure in an identity statement."[60] This identity statement is also applied to freedom as *being* autonomously part within a system, therefore "some kind of system must be present, at least in the divine understanding, with which freedom coexists."[61] Schelling's God is thus different from Spinoza's, as Schelling's God does not solely depend on finite beings; this makes Schelling's system compatible with the concept of freedom. This is understood through the sentence: 'freedom *in* the system', where both concepts must be regarded as existing for themselves.

García-Romero describes the internal dualism of the *FS* as follows: "The understanding of 'existence' in the *Freiheitsschrift* is thus related to Schelling's realisation, […], that self-revelation or self-manifestation is only possible if there is an alterity in the absolute unity itself. This 'inner dualism, […], appears in 1809 under the terms 'ground of existence' (*Grund der Existenz*) and 'existent' (*Existierendes*)."[62] What exists always exists due to its correlation with its ground (or cause). Simultaneously, there can be no ground if nothing exists; therefore, the first ground is existence itself. As humans exist, they will reveal *being* through their existence. In that case, life becomes pivotal for the revelation of existence. The primacy of *being* has been shown in section 2.2, but it remains to question what this 'ground of existence' and 'existent' are?

Schelling's disagreement with Spinoza is central to how one has to approach this question, as "the question is whether God has been properly conceived as substance, as the unconditioned, or in the early Schelling's terms, as the absolute," as McGrath puts it.[63] We can see this by contrasting Schelling's approach with that of Spinoza. In his third definition, Spinoza writes: "By substance I understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself, that is, that whose concept does not require the concept of another thing, from which it must be formed."[64] Schelling's approach differs diametrically from Spinoza's third definition; for

[60] Markus Gabriel, "Schelling on the Compatibility of Freedom and Systematicity," in *Schelling's Philosophy: Freedom, Nature, and Systematicity*, ed. Bruno (Oxford University Press, 2020), 139.
[61] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 9 (AA I,17, 111).
[62] García-Romero, "Unbounded Being: The Distinction Between Existence and Actuality in Schelling's Ontology of Freedom," 221–222.
[63] Sean J. McGrath, *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling: The Turn to the Positive* (Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 36.
[64] Spinoza, "The Ethics," 100 (I, D3).

Schelling, one can only understand the *substance* if one approaches it from its opposition. Therefore, we cannot simply approach substance (A) from substance (A) itself, because we, as discursive thinkers, would utter a meaningless tautology stating A = A, which brings us back to a meaningless absolute substance, as found in his earlier *Presentation*. In 1809, he understood that this problem arises because "the reason [*Grund*] for such misinterpretations, which in large measure other systems have also experienced, lies in the general misunderstanding of the law of identity or the meaning of the copula in judgment."[65] Schelling emphasises the word *ground* to allude to an element in his explanation of identity that is primarily concerned with understanding what grounds *being*, and that it depends on something within itself, which is not this *being*. Hence, one must approach substance (A) from whatever determines A to be A, that is, B.

Schelling contests the predicament that one should understand the copula as regarding two things as identical. Therefore, he denies Spinoza's statement that a "concept does not require the concept of another thing". For Schelling, the copula neither means that things are the same; instead, it shows that two ontological states are to be understood by the notion that the predicate is enclosed within the subject, i.e., the consequent only *exists* by *being immanently* defined by the antecedent. Now, if we apply this to 'ground (A) = existence (B)', we can see that it does not mean that ground *is* qualitatively equal to existence, but rather, it means that existence, as a consequence, unfolded itself by way of *being in* ground. In some sense, we can understand it as emerging from the ground. However, we must not understand this in terms of causality. We must see the relationship of antecedent and consequent as a conditional reciprocal relationship, whereby both the subject and the predicate need each other to constitute the substratum on which their existence lies. This dynamic organon cannot be understood if approached from a single perspective; both must be taken into equal consideration, as this ground mutually conditions the unconditioned, i.e., the unfolding of existence.

Schelling claims that this "profoundly meaningful logic differentiated subject and predicate as what precedes and what follows (*antecedens et consequens*) and thereby expresses the real meaning of the law of identity."[66] According to Buchheim, Leibniz also used both terms similarly. Leibniz expresses that the predicate is ultimately contained in the subject, and the truth of the predication follows through the principle of *reason*, which means that for Leibniz, everything that exists can be reasonably explained or refuted. Schelling interprets this view as

[65] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 13 (AA I,17, 115).
[66] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 14 (AA I,17, 116).

introducing an inner progression into every true proposition, in which the subject provides the affirmative or truth-making element, and the predication the affirmed or truth-made element.[67] Love and Schmidt argue that the two should be understood in Kantian terms in which the former, the truth-making element, is understood *a priori*, and the truth-made element is understood *a posteriori*. This ultimately explains the difference between the divine, which has immediate and intuitive knowledge of subject and predicate, and humans, which have discursive knowledge of subject and predicate, in which the former already holds all possible predications and the latter must conceive of these predications in experience.[68]

This leads Schelling, in contrast to Spinoza, not to equate God and nature; the tension between ground and existence establishes a unity that is internally split. García-Romero claims that this dual existence is necessary to conceive of this tension and establish absolute freedom. She states that "being free goes hand in hand with being *actual*, that is, alive and personal"[69]. The problem with early modern philosophy, as Schelling perceives it, is that it has overlooked the personal and living aspect of nature. Schelling further explains his notion of identity through the tension between the ground and existent in the form of the natural phenomena of gravity and light, he writes:

> Gravity precedes light as its ever dark ground, which itself is not *actu* [actual], and flees into the night as the light (that which exists) dawns. Even light does not fully remove the seal under which gravity lies contained. Precisely for this reason gravity is neither the pure essence nor the actual Being of absolute identity but rather follows only from its nature or *is* absolute identity […].[70]

Here, Schelling explains that there can only be existence (light) if it is related to its ground (gravity); the relation of their interplay is crucial for the existence to come into *being*. God can be understood in this manner. God "dwells in pure light," which "drives man more to strive for the light with all of his strength."[71] In this sense, humans are magnetically attracted to the light. That which exists must be understood in relation and cannot be understood by existence itself, because otherwise one falls into Spinozist atheism and Fichtean nihilism. Schelling continues to substantiate this by stating "that which relative to gravity appears as existing also belongs in

[67] Buchheim, "Anmerkungen," 97.
[68] Love and Schmidt, "Notes," 140.
[69] García-Romero, "Unbounded Being: The Distinction Between Existence and Actuality in Schelling's Ontology of Freedom," 222.
[70] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 27–28 (AA I,17, 129–128).
[71] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 29 (AA I,17, 131).

itself to the ground, and, hence, nature in general is everything that lies beyond the absolute *Being* of absolute identity."[72] Schelling here states that even the relative understanding of the opposite of gravity (i.e., light) is also understood in-itself to be ground; therefore, anything in nature lies beyond God, however, still within God's internal dualism, constituting this nature as His ground. Schelling understands very well that only the *becoming* can comprehend this mutual dynamic metaphysics, as there is always God's nature that precedes His existence, an eternal cycle of ground conditioning existence as unconditional existence. By the mere fact of existence, God has allowed himself to be revealed in a self-established ground different from God. God's urge to initiate this in *actuality* "is the yearning the eternal One feels to give birth to itself."[73] Schelling here directly refers to Jacob Boehme (1575–1624), who similarly writes, "the non-ground is an eternal nothing but forms an eternal beginning as craving. For the nothing is a craving of something."[74] This conceptual understanding of the first cause as some craving establishes for Schelling an answer to Leibniz's question: "Why is there something rather than nothing?"[75] Schelling's answer rests on the simple givenness of the revelation of existence.

The yearning for existence's self-revelation is incomprehensible to human understanding. However, humans understand this through their own *will,* as this makes it intelligible for human knowledge. God's self-birth has no logic imaginable to us. However, we know that He has *willed* it, as this is evident in the existence of creation. This original *will* is similar to the human *will*; it is the peak of self-determination. Our *will* to grasp this is the "eternal act of self-revelation."[76] Schelling understands this as the ultimate equilibrium between two separate ontological entities whose *will* is to reveal their ground. God's yearning and our *will* are opposed, but are central to the unfolding anarchy through which the world came into *being*. This struggle in God's self-revelation is the "incomprehensible base of reality in things, the *indivisible remainder*, that which with the greatest exertion cannot be resolved in understanding but rather remains eternally in the ground."[77] Thus, the light of revelation will come into *being* "from that which is without understanding," i.e., existence.[78] Schelling conceptualises the ground (i.e., nature) as longing for something it cannot express; it seeks rational determinations

[72] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 28 (AA I,17, 130).
[73] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 28 (AA I,17, 130).
[74] Jacob Boehme, "Mysterium Pansophicum or Thorough Report on the Earthly and Heavenly Mysterium," in *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Love and Schmidt (SUNY Press, 2006), 86.
[75] G. W. Leibniz, "The Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason," in *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, ed. Loemker (Springer, 1975), 639.
[76] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 29 (AA I,17, 131).
[77] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 29 (AA I,17, 131) [emphasis altered].
[78] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 29 (AA I,17, 131).

as to how existence came into *being* (*geneseos*). However, it will always stray into the unknowable.

As Schelling's engagement with Leibniz's question implies, the *will* to exist is the fact that there is simple existence in the first place. The mere fact of the genesis of *existence* is inexplicable to *reason* due to the infinite regress of the logical causes of existence "into the dark ground," which always has its part in the light of existence, if we remember the law of identity. Only through revelation are we able to realise that God's self-creation occurred, since existence is evident; it must be so.

This self-revelation is the complete opposition of what our understanding is capable of knowing, however our *will* as fundamentally yearning for God's light, makes it easier to comprehend that God's ground is in nature, however His existence contains "in himself an inner ground of his existence that in this respect precedes him in existence; but, precisely in this way, God is again the *prius* of the ground in so far as the ground, even as such, could not exist if God did not exist *actu*."[79] In that sense, the answer to the question raised by Leibniz is the corroboration that God's dynamic nature is real. All the while, this exact understanding of God's inner dualism is the understanding's yearning to actualise itself as autonomous. If both are reconciled, yearning and understanding, "together now become a freely creating and all-powerful *will*."[80]

The *will* is the pivotal force through which our self-determination flourishes. Our *will*, yearning for the highest good (God) and our understanding of God are internally split. So, how does this relate to his Spinoza critique? According to Abe, Schelling's transformation of pantheism appears to be a double-edged sword. Following Leibniz, Schelling critiques Spinoza's pantheism as overly fatalistic and Bayle's scepticism as too extreme. Schelling's internal dualism makes way for his notion of evil; in this sense, I argue that Schelling's transformation of Spinoza's pantheism is a metaphysics that takes into account the problem of evil, thereby embedding himself in this early modern debate. In the next section, I argue that the reality of evil emerges from human action based on propositional knowledge, making Schelling's theodicy an authentic solution to earlier theories regarding evil as *privatio boni*.

[79] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 28 (AA I,17, 130).
[80] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 30 (AA I,17, 132).

3.2 The Will and The Word

To scrutinise Schelling's concept of evil, or at least what the nature of evil is, we must look at Schelling's claims concerning the possibility of evil. As mentioned above, if one, by understanding, has not yet realised that human existence is part of a divine unity, one's *will* is solely "pure craving or desire, that is, blind *will*."[81] This blind *will* participate in an impasse with the understanding that yearns to grasp the light of God. If the being that transforms its blind self-*will* into a universal *will*, then the good is realised. This universal *will,* which aims to alienate from its centre, thus coinciding with the unity, is only visible to us in humans as in "man there is the whole power of the dark principle and at the same time the whole strength of the light."[82] Schelling ascribes a dual potentiality to human existence; humans have the power to transform their *will*, serving God's eternal yearning to reveal Himself. Therefore, humans can change for the better or the worse, while God remains immutable.

For Schelling, our freedom reflects God's *will*. This is supported by the fact that the world exists, which is a result of God's *will to* create. The fact that existence is a result of God's *will* makes it comprehensible to understand the motivation for creation; this *will* is reflected in our actions and deeds. We as humans are in "relation to God a relatively independent principle in himself; but because precisely this principle—without it ceasing for that reason to be dark in accordance with its ground—is transfigured in light, there arises in him something higher, *spirit*."[83] Thus, spirit arises when we acquire God's light, and it is through spirit that God is connected to the human reality.

Schelling's understanding of spirit is decisive for his theodicy: if our *will* egocentrically exploits itself, as if we are the centre of the universe, blindly following our drives and desires, we lose our ability to reach the light. However, if we cease to be the centre, our spirit arises. With the independent spirit acquired, Schelling describes how evil is possible. This possibility arises because our spirit is not entirely pure, as according to Buchheim, God's spirit or 'word' is pure self-sound, whereas the human spirit echoes the word of the dark ground.[84] Human spirit ceases to capture pure existence, as the words which it utters and thinks, remain discursive. It never immediately captures existence.

For Schelling, spirit is actualised God, but because actualisation in human reality is always temporal, it becomes divisible and therefore fragmented from the unity of God. Additionally,

[81] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 32 (AA I,17, 133).
[82] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 32 (AA I,17, 134).
[83] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 32 (AA I,17, 134).
[84] Buchheim, "Anmerkungen," 128–129.

human discursive thinking needs to be heard; consequently, we convey an inherently ruptured ground on which human knowledge is possible. God's pure word is eternally inserted in nature, and the subjects of which nature is composed *are* part of God. This relates to Schelling's understanding of proposition knowledge, stating that the human word is composed of a vowel and a consonant, respectively representing the light versus the dark ground.[85] God's word is without consonance, and human words only resonate through consonants. Buchheim notes that this is an allusion to Boehme's speculation that God's spirit, when actualised and articulated by humans, becomes incomplete and degraded.[86]

In the word God reveals Himself[87], as in all discursive thinking, i.e., in all possible predications, God is found. Here we should remind ourselves of Schelling's understanding of the law of identity, described as "*being* in so far as it exists and *being* in so far as it is merely the ground of existence."[88] Schelling is talking about identity, which contains immanent difference; thus, when uttering a word, we can either unpack the subject as containing all possible predications, or that all possible predications will show themselves in time.[89] The former is already contained *a priori* in human thinking, because the word's subject is pure existence (God's creation). Therefore, it presents God's creation immediately and as truth-made *a priori* knowledge. Through our use of vowels and consonants in uttering God's created subjects, we can find God's spirit within thought. The latter means that a temporal state still has God's eternal spirit within it. In this *a posteriori* form of thinking and speech, which uniquely defines humans, God's spirit finds itself unfolding through time. Since God, as *being* all possible experiential knowledge, is the truth-making element of thinking. By finding the correct predication we see God's true spirit showing itself through time.

In sum, the will and the word, if mirrored according to God's light and truth as found in revelation or according to its dark, blind will and untruths, the possibility of good and evil is found. Nonetheless, Hermanni is critical of Schelling's emphasis on the *will* as a principal concept to explain theodicy, especially when this *will* is something that must direct its actions

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[85] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 32 (AA I,17, 134).
[86] Buchheim, "Anmerkungen," 128–129. Buchheim cites Boehme who writes: "The name of God in the originally purely 'mental' language is IEOUA (= a 'Jehovah' without any obstructing consonants), but for creation it gives itself up in a restrictive and broken articulation with the resounding consonants ('sensual' language); the human names (their spirits) are consequently to be interpreted according to their mixture of vowels and consonants."
[87] John 1:1: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (King James Version).
[88] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 27 (AA I,17, 129).
[89] Love and Schmidt, "Notes," 139–140.

according to God's harmony.[90] Subsequently, our words form the reality on which we base our actions. God's unity is for humans inseparable from the word; therefore, God's spirit always becomes splintered in our reality. However, the inseparability of the word in human discursive thinking and God's pure thought produces the possibility of unification with the light. In terms of identity, our truthful predication unfolds God's existence.

Schelling continues to explore the reality of evil through his emphasis on the concept of personality. According to Schelling, the human spirit is God articulated in words. However, all the different spirits constituted by God separate particular *beings* from God, and this connection determines their personality. This personal *being* is no longer an "instrument of the productive universal *will* in nature, but rather above and outside of all nature."[91] Schelling's emphasis on personal existence leads him to deduce the reality of evil. Hermanni asserts that, according to Schelling, an individual qualifies as a person only when it is recognised as a moral being. Nevertheless, the qualifier 'moral' applies solely to a being that has related itself to its nature as a natural entity. One does not inherently discover oneself as a moral being; instead, one must recognise oneself by distinguishing from one's internal dynamic nature, indicating that personhood is defined by the internal coexistence of good and evil.[92]

From this point onwards, Schelling contrasts his notion of evil with that of Leibniz, who adhered to the impersonal idea that "metaphysical evil [is] mere imperfection" (*privatio boni*).[93] Leibniz merely regards evil as disordered within the pre-established harmony. For him, the disorder is still part of the harmony. Leibniz writes:

> It is true that one often suffers through the evil actions of others; but when one has no part in the offence one must look upon it as a certainty that these sufferings prepare for us a greater happiness. The question of *physical evil*, that is, of the origin of sufferings, has difficulties in common with that of the origin of *metaphysical evil*. But one must believe that even sufferings and monstrosities are part of order; but also that these very monstrosities are in the rules, and are in conformity with general acts of will, though we be not capable of discerning this conformity.[94]

[90] Friedrich Hermanni, *Die letzte Entlastung: Vollendung und Scheitern des abendländischen Theodizeeprojektes in Schellings Philosophie* (Passagen Verlag, 1994), 79.
[91] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 33 (AA I,17, 135).
[92] Friedrich Hermanni "Der Grund Der Persönlichkeit Gottes," in "*Alle Persönlichkeit ruht auf einem dunkeln Grunde": Schellings Philosophie der Personalität*, ed. Buchheim and Hermanni (Akademie Verlag, 2004), 175.
[93] G. W. Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil*, ed. Farrer and trans. Huggard (Open Court, 1985), 411.
[94] Leibniz, *Theodicy*, 276 [edited].

Leibniz claims that humans suffer because of the evil actions of other humans. This is problematic for Schelling, since if we regard evil as something that just happens to us, or as part of a larger divine plan, no human will ever strive to take responsibility for changing their actions for the better. These actions, which Leibniz incorporates into the pre-established order, are never personalised and attributed to human egocentric action. For Schelling, we must not regard these evils as mere external determinations, but rather seek in ourselves the freedom that leads to these actions. At the end of the quote, Leibniz implies that we are not capable of discerning the reason why physical evil occurs. Again, distancing human capability and self-determination from evil. This remains highly problematic for Schelling, as "the simple reflection that only man, the most complete of all visible creatures, is capable of evil, shows already that the ground of evil could not in any way lie in lack or deprivation."[95] In other words, Schelling's evil is personal and existing.

Its reality can be understood through his analogy of disease which must be understood in the context of the *will*: according to Schelling the human *will* is a "bond of living forces," which as long as it remains in union with God's omnibenevolent *will*, the equilibrium of the divine and human is realised.[96] Now, if the humans act upon self-*will*, negating the unity with God, the forces cease to be. Subsequently, the bond of forces now becomes separate forces, each with a particular *will* striving to be its own centre. These particular *wills* strive to sustain their *being* entirely on their own, making itself the centrum of the organism, each organism now becomes self-interested, just like how a parasitic virus first enters a cell and takes advantages of the cell's energy, to consume it all for itself and become the cell's centrum and producing its sick (evil) energy. At a later stage, the self-interested cell eradicates the original cell and replaces it with itself. Eventually, this cell will die because in the totality (of the body), it cannot fight (or live within) the unity of the other living (white blood) cells; these cells did not move from the periphery to become the centrum. Instead, they moved away from the centrum (the body) and participated in the whole producing healthy (good) energy. Every person who remains in the periphery is led to act according to God's benevolence. Our relation to other humans is like healthy cells. This analogy of disease traces disease to be something "which has its freedom or life only so that it may remain in the whole to be *for itself*. As disease is admittedly nothing having inherent *being*, really only an apparent picture of life and merely a

[95] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 36 (AA I,17, 138).
[96] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 34 (AA I,17, 136).

meteoric appearance of it—an oscillation between Being and non-Being—yet announces itself nevertheless as something very real to feeling, so it is with evil."[97]

Schelling's notion of evil is conceptualised as an oscillation between existent and non-existent (non-Being), and its emergence is only due to a "real feeling". In this context, the representation of illness raises the question of how much evil can genuinely serve as a positive force, even though it fundamentally has a parasitic nature. This situation raises deeper inquiries about the extent to which human beings are genuinely free and autonomous, as the decision to *act* evil triggers a divine immunity mechanism. Once individuals begin to assert their individuality, rather than functioning solely as components that exist to benefit the whole, a disease overtakes them. In this regard, we might wonder how free humans are. Voogt proposes that "disease and organic dysfunction do not just illustrate the nature of evil. They provide its ontological schema. The sinful person, perverted by evil, falls prey to annihilation. This is not exactly the same as understanding evil as *privatio boni*—corrupted life or sickness is not the absence of life (viz. death), even though it is undeniably a preliminary stage thereof. Yet it does restrict the level of independence the human person is capable of. A free decision for evil means a freedom misused. It also means a freedom lost."[98] In Schelling's defence, we can interpret this by engaging with Leibniz's theodicy to illustrate that the conception of evil put forward is metaphysical and has real ground in human egoism.

In his engagement with Leibniz, Schelling initiates a radicalisation of the existence of human personhood within divine existence. For his conception of evil as real, Schelling, via his reading of Leibniz, distinguishes between God's understanding and God's *will*, both of which, as I previously presented, reside partly in human discursive thinking and human moral action. For Schelling, Leibniz's claim that "Evil comes from privation,"[99] is problematic since, like Bayle, who, as cited by Leibniz, claims that "that there is a difference between a privation of good and a disorder; between a disorder in inanimate things, which is purely metaphysical."[100] Bayle, in contrast to Leibniz, clearly understands, like Schelling, that the difference between opposites is a metaphysical one, thereby regarding good and evil as part of humans, because creation itself is disordered, and not harmonious. As Ryan notes, Bayle argues "that the laws of the series posited by pre-established harmony are arbitrary […]: namely, that

[97] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 35 (AA I,17, 136).
[98] Ariën Voogt, "The freedom of organs: the corporatism of Schelling's *Freedom Essay*," in *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* (forthcoming).
[99] Leibniz, *Theodicy*, 220.
[100] Leibniz, *Theodicy*, 278.

they violate certain higher order principles that any law governing the natural world must respect."[101]

Accordingly, like Schelling, Bayle opposes Leibniz's conception of creation as a pre-established harmony, which states that "the realm of efficient causes and that of final causes are parallel to each other."[102] Bayle opposes this thesis by stating "that by purely *philosophical meditations* one can never attain to an established certainty that we are the efficient cause of our volitions."[103] Leibniz follows Bayle in this case as he states "that in the course of nature each substance is the sole cause of all its actions," thereby disregarding a pre-established order on rational grounds and prioritising spontaneity of a volatile order.[104] Bayle's comments as cited in Leibniz's *Theodicy* resonate with Schelling's claim that "every essence can only reveal itself in its opposite, love only in hate, unity in conflict," and that these essences will only be revealed outside of *philosophical mediations* (i.e., rational grounds).[105]

Evil arises then when we untruthfully utter God's word on which evil actions rest, as Schelling states "the understanding yields the principle of evil, although it does not thereby become evil itself, for it represents nature as they are in eternal truths: it contains in itself the ground that permits evil, but the *will* alone is directed toward the good."[106] He affirms that evil resides "in that which is most positive in what nature contains."[107] The most positive is existence itself. Vater brings this to clarity stating: "If being spirit—contingent capacity to *will* or determine itself—means that humanity as the unity of matter and light can either make itself into universal *will* or go opaque and obscure the light it carries, then the capacity for good or evil or freedom of decision becomes the fundamental human power or basic mode of being, not just a transient ontic state."[108]

Humans are the ones who decide if they negate their selves like a parasitic virus or choose to live in harmony with other humans; every choice matters, and every choice determines how creation unfolds. It is the ontological distinguishability from God that allows us to make these choices:

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[101] Todd Ryan, *Pierre Bayle's Cartesian Metaphysics: Rediscovering Early Modern Philosophy* (Routledge, 2009), 110.
[102] Leibniz, *Theodicy*, 279.
[103] Leibniz, *Theodicy*, 308 [emphasis altered].
[104] Leibniz, *Theodicy*, 309.
[105] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 41 (AA I,17, 143).
[106] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 36 (AA I,17, 138).
[107] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 37 (AA I,17, 139).
[108] Michael G. Vater, "Being in Centro. The Anthropology of Schelling's Human Freedom," *Lo Sguardo* 30, I (2021): 133.

> Man is placed on that summit where he has in himself the source of self-movement toward good or evil in equal portions: the bond of principles in him is not a necessary but rather a free one. Man stands on the threshold [*Scheidepunkt*]; whatever he chooses, it will be his act: but he cannot remain undecided because God must necessarily reveal himself and because nothing at all can remain ambiguous in creation.[109]

Schelling's criticism of Spinoza's pantheism and Leibniz's pre-established harmony is that it appears to be a lifeless framework, resembling a mechanical progression of modes of attributes that remain beyond our understanding. Agency and personality involve integrating and directing impersonal forces, physical and mental, transforming them into the active moral powers of a living subject, rather than treating them as mere passive occurrences or random movements. For Schelling, nothing can be taken for granted; it is we who, at every conscious and unconscious choice in life, determine our life and with that the world. It is through an understanding of revelation that we uncover our existence integrated into a unified whole, formed through a creation that opposed itself from the beginning. It is in this revelation that we find our essence.

In this section, I presented that Schelling establishes his theodicy within the context of Leibniz's engagement with the questions raised by Bayle. Through his engagement with Spinoza, Leibniz, and Bayle, Schelling embeds his *FS* in this early modern debate concerning the problem of evil. Given this, we should understand Schelling's *FS* in these debates. Until now, we have seen how Schelling transformed Spinoza's pantheism and how this opened the possibility for personal human existence and action, thereby constituting the reality of evil. In the next section, I will argue that Bayle's lemmas address similar problems, which are rooted in his critique of Spinoza.

[109] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 41 (AA I,17, 143).

4. The *Freiheitsschrift* and Bayle's Metaphysical Dualism

In sections 2 and 3, we have seen how Schelling oscillates between reason and revelation to find its metaphysical foothold beyond the comprehensible logical structures of *reason*, concluding that *reason* is insufficiently capable of conceiving the unconditional first cause. God's omnipotence determines nature; subsequently, *reason* leads itself to believe that its volition is null and its thoughts and actions are conditioned. However, as revelatory existence penetrates this mode of reasoning, we realise that we do exist within His creation; however, we (and nature) are equally the ground of His existence. Consequently, Schelling can explain the metaphysical reality of evil as creation from the outset must have been in opposition with itself.

In this section, we will shortly inquire into Bayle's influence on Schelling. Second, we will examine how Bayle's critique of Spinoza, like Schelling's, highlights the flaws and shortcomings of logical rationality as it inevitably leads to a paradoxical understanding of God as not being omnibenevolent. Third, I will argue how Bayle, like Schelling, seeks to challenge these conclusions by emphasising revelation as pivotal to our self-determination and the possibility of theodicy. In doing so, I argue that Schelling's theodicy must be understood in light of Bayle's lemmas, thereby substantiating my central thesis.

4.1 Bayle's Spinoza

Before we look at Schelling's theoretical engagement with Bayle, I want to begin by presenting empirical evidence of Schelling's engagement with Bayle. First, as already presented in section 3.2, Schelling's engagement with Bayle is found in his response to Leibniz's *Essays on Theodicy* in the *FS*, specifically on pages 36–38 of the translation. Also, his diaries of 1809 reveal that Schelling had thoroughly studied Leibniz's *Theodicy,* in which Bayle is discussed almost every page.[110] Thus, Schelling was familiar with Bayle through Leibniz.

Second, Schelling explicitly mentions Bayle while studying Leibniz's *Theodicy*. But this mention is only later in his life, in his diaries of 1846, where he comments on paragraph 183 in Leibniz's *Theodicy*. The diary entry states: "Bayle bei Leibniz sagt: 'C'est une chose certaine que l'existence de Dieu n'est pas un effet de sa volonté. Il n'existe point, parcequ'il veut exister, mais par la nécessité de sa nature infinite," on which Schelling comments: "Was heißt hier il

[110] Buchheim, "Einleitung," l.

existe? Es bedeutet doch nur sein—das Seiende sein."[111] This is the only direct mention of Bayle in Schelling's handwriting. We can see that Schelling's questioning of the meaning of existence, as expressed by Bayle (via Leibniz), with the query "what does *it exist* mean here," has been occupying him long after the publication of the *FS.* According to McGrath, the *FS* marks the beginning of Schelling's positive philosophy.[112] This philosophy engages with the question of what "*it exists*" means, which, as we have seen, he thoroughly explores in the *FS,* and as Schelling's diary entry shows, also occupied Bayle.

Although empirical evidence of Schelling's engagement with Bayle's thought in the period around 1809 is scarce, it must be noted that the reception of Spinoza in late Eighteenth Century Germany, Schelling's formative years, was marked by Bayle's lemma. Förster notes that "[in late Eighteenth Century Germany], Spinoza was a thinker seldom read. Many knew of him only through the defamatory article in Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire Historique et critique* (1697)—an enormously influential work which went through five editions in the course of the Eighteenth Century and was published in German translation between 1741 and 1744."[113] As Schelling's 1846 diary presents, this influence reached much further into the Nineteenth Century.

This is not uncommon, because during Schelling's later years Bayle was not an unforgotten thinker in Germany's intellectual climate, this is mainly present in Ludwig Feuerbach's lecture series on *Pierre Bayle: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Menschheit* from 1842 and in Karl Marx's *Holy Family* (1845), where he explicitly mentions Bayle as the historian writing the chronicle of the demise of metaphysics.[114] Earlier, in Schelling's Jena period around 1800, Bayle was frequently read. As the *Frühromantiker*, with whom Schelling was closely related, read them during their studies.[115] As noted in his diary, Schelling thoroughly wrestled with the concept of existence; he references the passage in Leibniz's *Theodicy* in which, according to Leibniz, Bayle also evidently struggles to conceptualise the notion of existence.

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[111] F. W. J. Schelling, "Jahreskalendar 1846," in *Philosophische Entwürfe und Tagebücher*, Band 12, ed. Knatz et al. (Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998), 141. Translation in Leibniz, *Theodicy*, ed. Farrer and trans. Huggard (Open Court, 1985), 241–242: One thing is certain, that the existence of God is not an effect of his will. He exists not because he wills his existence, but through the necessity of his infinite nature.
[112] McGrath, *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling*, vii.
[113] Eckhart Förster, *The Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy: A Systematic Reconstruction*, trans. Bowman (Harvard University Press, 2012), 75.
[114] Gerhard Sauder, "Bayle-Rezeption in Der Deutschen Aufklärung. (Mit Einem Anhang: In Deutschland Verlegte Französische Bayle-Ausgaben Und Deutsche Übersetzungen Baylescher-Werke)," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift Für Literaturwissenschaft Und Geistesgeschichte* 49, no. S1 (1975): 100.
[115] Gerhard Sauder, "Bayle-Rezeption in Der Deutschen Aufklärung," 100.

To understand how Bayle's metaphysics aids him in conceptualising what existence entails, we will inquire into Bayle's lemma on Spinoza.

The lemma on 'Spinoza' in which Bayle advances his critique of Spinoza's inevitable fatalism will be considered in terms of its similarity with Schelling's critique. According to Bell, Bayle's article on Spinoza was incredibly influential and "more than any single work it was responsible for the common attitude to Spinoza in Germany."[116] It was initially Bayle's accusations "that caused Spinoza to be regarded as the atheist par excellence, so that atheist and Spinozist become synonymous."[117] These fierce accusations, which formed Spinoza's legacy in Germany, may lead us to wonder why Spinoza's philosophy engrossed Schelling. At least we know that Schelling's endeavour to transform Spinoza's pantheism was initiated due to Bayle's (mis)interpretation, as we saw in section 3.1. However, apart from the accusations, Bayle also reinterpreted Spinoza's philosophy to rehabilitate God's absolute identity. To understand how Bayle's critique of Spinoza relates to Schelling's critique of Spinoza, we might wonder, who is Bayle's Spinoza?

According to Ryan, we can pin down Bayle's critique in five arguments. The first argues that each expressed part of Spinoza's attribute of extension is a substance, meaning that all individual extensions become distinct substances. It is due to our rational representation of an object that we conceive of unity; on that account, Spinoza might have argued that everything is one identity. However, Bayle argues that rationality applies unity to the objects; therefore, according to Bayle, the total of all distinct parts makes up the complete identity logically but not realistically. This critique suggests that within identity, there must be a difference that leads us back to understanding identity as nothing can be conceived as pure indifference; otherwise, we would experience the most minor parts, like atoms, as distinct from one another without ever unifying them into a whole. Bayle postulates infinite identity as the culmination of an infinity of finite things.[118] This is similar to Schelling's identity, which absorbs finite beings. However, for both, God does not consist of the finite parts of material reality, as Spinoza argues. Bayle's infinite substance is incomprehensible absolute simplicity, something like Schelling's "indivisible remainder". Finite substances, as found in experience, are the proof that there is a difference in identity, thus opposing Spinoza's substance monism.

[116] David Bell, *Spinoza in Germany from 1670 to the Age of Goethe* (Institute of Germanic Studies, University of London: Bithell series of dissertations, 1984), 3.
[117] Bell, *Spinoza in Germany from 1670 to the Age of Goethe*, 3.
[118] Ryan, *Pierre Bayle's Cartesian Metaphysics*, 118–121.

Bayle's second objection concerns the incompatibility of properties to deny Spinoza's claim "that corporeal substance, insofar as it is a substance, cannot be divided."[119] For Bayle, this is absurd because different properties, such as glass or wood, must exist in a divisible manner. It is evident to Bayle that one can strip parts of a particular object, i.e., break glass. Also, these properties are distinct from other properties, because glass-ness does not contain wood-ness; therefore, as we have seen in the first objection, what we experience as extension must be multiplicity and cannot contain both glass-ness and, at the same time, wood-ness: it cannot be one substance. As Bayle argues, what defines the *res extensa* must be a substance in itself; thus, we, as humans, experience God's creation as split and different, without relegating Him to this exact reality.[120] In a strikingly similar fashion to Schelling, Bayle claims that in propositions, there is not a complete identity between our thoughts and God's thoughts. Bayle states: "God cannot be the subject of the inherence of man's thoughts since these thoughts are contrary to one another."[121] Like Schelling, Bayle argues that propositional knowledge must be an imperfect expression of God's creation. As we see, it is only in human thought that oppositions become known; we can perceive differences, and since God *is* knowing and thinking at the same time, how is Spinoza's identity of extension and thought explained? Bayle answers this question as follows:

> The alloy of thought and extension ought to be an *identity;* thinking and *being* extended are two attributes *identified* with the substance. They are therefore *identified* with each other by the fundamental and essential rule of human reasoning.[122]

As we see, Bayle's critique explains that it is only in humankind that we can conceive of fundamental oppositions. However, there is no way to dissolve them except by identifying them with a higher substance, i.e., God. Concerning Schelling's understanding of the copula, we can similarly regard Bayle's critique in the sense that two opposite concepts "cannot be truly affirmed of the same subject, in the same respect, and at the same time."[123] Therefore, ground and existence can, according to this statement, not be truly the same thing at the same time. Bayle argues, like Schelling, that a subject like *existence* is not due to existence itself;

[119] Spinoza, "The Ethics," 85 (I, P15).
[120] Ryan, *Pierre Bayle's Cartesian Metaphysics*, 121–123.
[121] Pierre Bayle, "Spinoza," in *Historical and Critical Dictionary: Selections*, trans. Popkin (Hackett Publishing Company, 1991), 308.
[122] Bayle, "Spinoza," 308.
[123] Bayle, "Spinoza," 309.

otherwise, it becomes a meaningless tautology stating 'existence = existence'. To the contrary, we must understand that existing-ness is due to which existence unfolds. For Bayle, "Spinozists destroy this idea and falsify it in such a way that one can no longer know where they will be able to find the mark of truth."[124] Because if, according to Spinoza, we consider 'existence = existence', we say 'everything = everything', and we are not able to assess its truth.

For Bayle, like Schelling, every subject applies to a particular substance. As it were, these subject unfold because "all the names that are given to a subject to signify either what it does or what it suffers apply properly and physically to its substance and not to its accidents," he affirms this by arguing that "when we say that iron is hard and iron is heavy, we do not intend to say that its hardness is hard and that its heaviness is heavy."[125] We intend to say that the extended substance of which hardness or heaviness is composed is heavy.[126] The primary conclusion for this argument is that Bayle argues, like Schelling, that humanly assigned predication unfolds immanently through a subject. Furthermore, it presents that extended substances cannot be conceptualised as modifications of God, and God cannot be a multiplicity of substances at the same time. Actions as uttered in propositions, such as 'Bayle is doing evil, and Schelling is doing good', are not the same as 'God is doing evil, and God is doing good'; it is within the substantive attributes that we find the predicates good *or* evil. Because, according to Bayle, it is impossible "that God hates and loves, denies and affirms the same things at the same time."[127]

The first two objections entail that God is an absolute identity which cannot be divided by human extension and thought. The third objection criticises that "Spinoza's unique substance is the subject of all change, which is incompatible with divine immutability."[128] For Bayle, the argument follows from the previous arguments that extension must be substance, which allows for a plurality of substances. Bayle claims that if extension is a substance and is divisible, then we may conclude that Spinoza's substance is divisible. And if division is mutable than (Spinoza's) substance, i.e., God, is mutable.[129] Even more problematic is the fact that, according to Bayle's Spinoza, the expressions of extension, i.e., all *modi*, inhere in the divine substance; according to Bayle, it follows that God's inherence in the *modi* is subject to change, as *modi* change and split. This is problematic because God's identity is indivisible, and it is

[124] Bayle, "Spinoza," 309.
[125] Bayle, "Spinoza," 309.
[126] Bayle, "Spinoza," 309.
[127] Bayle, "Spinoza," 310.
[128] Ryan, *Pierre Bayle's Cartesian Metaphysics*, 126.
[129] Ryan, *Pierre Bayle's Cartesian Metaphysics*, 126.

only through "human reasoning" that we perceive differences, meaning that, for Bayle, *reason* constitutes difference in identity. If personal consciousness would not play a role in our relation to God's identity, than it would follow that God is the cause of all *modi* and personal freedom would be nullified in the process, Schelling captures this as well stating: "If God were for us a merely logical abstraction, then everything would have to proceed from him with logical necessity as well; he himself would be, as it were, only the highest law from which all things flow out, but without personhood and consciousness of personhood."[130] For Schelling, our connection with God is allowed due to God's connection with the *ideal* principle, which must necessarily reside in God and humans and our mutual ground for existence.[131] Nevertheless, this also enables the constitution of freedom on a *real* principle. In a Cartesian fashion, Bayle also emphasises a strong division between the *res cogitans* and the *res extensa,* through which the *res cogitans* receives considerably more weight, and whose properties are indivisible as opposed to extension.[132] However, according to Ryan, Bayle's understanding of the *cogitans* is limited to having "immediate conscious awareness only of its own modifications."[133] Because *reason* will not suffice to comprehend "how one entity might be a state or determination of another from which it is really distinct."[134] This coincides with Schelling's inexplicability of infinite regressing thought trying to conceive of the first cause. Bayle captures this, writing: "It is not only a nature whose existence can begin and end, but a nature that, always subsisting in terms of its substance."[135] For Bayle, any finite being subsists in the infinite God.

The fourth objection concerns Spinoza's indistinguishability of extension and thought: Spinoza conceptualises an identity between principal attributes (thought and extension) which belong to one substance, whereas, for Bayle, and this captures his metaphysical dualism perfectly, thought and extension *are* both substances. Bayle's metaphysics are found on the basis that two inherently principal substances explain the fact that we as humans conceive difference, multiplicity, plurality, compositeness and so forth. If it were not, as Spinoza argues, we would not be able to point out distinct objects, or good as opposed to evil.[136]

This brings us to the last objection set forth by Bayle, which leads us to his concept of evil: if, according to Spinoza, human beings are *modes* of the divine substance, then God is

[130] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 58 (AA I,17, 160).
[131] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 59 (AA I,17, 160).
[132] Ryan, *Pierre Bayle's Cartesian Metaphysics*, 25.
[133] Ryan, *Pierre Bayle's Cartesian* Metaphysics, 27.
[134] Ryan, *Pierre Bayle's Cartesian Metaphysics*, 15.
[135] Bayle, "Spinoza," 308.
[136] Ryan, *Pierre Bayle's Cartesian Metaphysics*, 133–134.

responsible for evil.[137] Ryan notes that Bayle's argument relies on his notion of predicate and subject; for Bayle, "all predicates are truly predicated of substances, properly speaking, it is substances that both act and are acted upon."[138] Thus, individual substance (humans) as opposed to Spinoza's one substance realises evil. Since human beings, as corporeally part of the substantive attribute extension, and mentally part of the substantive attribute thought, we are the ones who self-determinately act, because "How can it be imagined that an independent *being* who exists by himself and who possesses infinite perfections might be subject to all the miseries of mankind?", for Bayle, and Schelling, this is a contradiction which Spinoza's logical reasoning could not resolve, apart from the understanding that human *being* is inherently split between extension and though, so it is divided between good and evil.[139]

We have seen that Bayle's critique is similar to that of Schelling; both formulate a metaphysical tension between opposites, which is not found in God himself but is found in His creation. Therefore, existence is inherently ruptured. In the next section, we will examine Bayle's understanding of existence, which aids his understanding of good and evil. In doing so, I will present how this intersects with Schelling's notion of human essence as the choice for good and evil. Consequently, I argue that Schelling should be understood in light of this intersection.

[137] Ryan, *Pierre Bayle's Cartesian Metaphysics*, 134.
[138] Ryan, *Pierre Bayle's Cartesian Metaphysics*, 135.
[139] Bayle, "Spinoza," 313.

4.2 “Where there is no struggle, there is no life”

The most important article for Bayle’s considerations on the problem of evil is the article ‘Manichaeans’[140], “Marcionites”, and “Paulicians.” These articles deal with “the central themes in Bayle’s writings, which is the invincible conflict between *reason* and faith, especially concerning the *factual* existence of evil in the world, which Bayle presents as being philosophically incompatible with the Christian notion of an all-good, all-powerful, and all-knowing God, and with *any* Christian narrative of creation.”[141]

We will focus on the first article, ‘Manichaeans’. The footnotes and remarks found in this article mainly demonstrate “how hard it would be to refute the Manichaeans without having recourse to the light of revelation,” which is presented in a fictitious dialogue between Melissus of Samos and Zoroaster.[142] Melissus attempts to defend his monism, but ultimately, Bayle’s emphasis on Zoroaster, who explains that Manichaean dualism is superior, leads us to relate Bayle’s position concerning the problem of evil to that of Schelling. Additionally, this is substantiated by recalling that Bayle’s critique of Spinoza stems from his metaphysical dualism, and Schelling’s critique of Spinoza from his dynamic metaphysics.

Bayle’s problems with creation are addressed in the remarks of his article ‘Manichaeans’: his conclusions ultimately lead to “the bankruptcy of *reason* [that] merely point the way towards revelation and faith.”[143] Bayle writes in his article that the “Manichaeans tell us that, since many things are observed in the world that are contrary to one another—light and darkness—therefore there necessarily are two principles, they [Melissus and Zoroaster] argue pitifully. The opposition that exists among these entities, fortified as much as one likes by what are called variations, disorders, irregularities of nature, cannot mate half an objection against

[140] Manichaeism is succinctly explained in Ian A. McFarland et al., “Manichaeism,” in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, edited by McFarland et al., 295–296 (Cambridge University Press, 2011): “Manichaeism was a highly eclectic, radically dualistic religion based upon the teachings of its Persian founder, Mani (216–76),” […] “Manichaean dualism supported an elaborate cosmogony that can be outlined on the basis of three ‘Moments’ or ‘Times’ (Decret, Mani 80). In the Former Time, Light and Darkness occupied separate regions, an uneasy co-existence shattered by the hostile invasion of Darkness. That onslaught precipitated the Present Time, when the commingling of Light and Darkness (through a series of evocations), eventually produced the visible universe and humans.” […] “Manichaean cosmology represents an acosmic perspective strongly at odds with the Christian assumption that creation is fundamentally good—and it was attacked on these grounds by the former Manichaean, Augustine of Hippo. Manichaeism relegated the material universe and bodily existence to the status of mere expedients or necessary evils instrumental in freeing the luminous particles from matter, the hypostatization of Evil.”

[141] Mara van der Lugt, *Bayle, Jurieu, and the Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 32 [emphasis altered].

[142] Van der Lugt, *Bayle, Jurieu, and the Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*, 53.

[143] Van der Lugt, *Bayle, Jurieu, and the Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*, 33.

the unity, simplicity, and immutability of God."[144] Bayle attempts to oppose the Manichaean conception of creation by stating that God never divided Himself in creation, but only in human consciousness; we experience difference. Bayle, like Schelling, believed that God's unity cannot be doubted because, eventually, it is only in human existence that we find inherent rupture.

In contrast to the Manichaean doctrine, Schelling and Bayle adhere to the Christian doctrine of creation, which states that it was an act of God's *will*, because "creation is not an occurrence but an act,"[145] as Schelling affirms. Wirth emphasises that we must be sure that "Schelling is no Manichaean, and he does not rehash tired and neurotic narratives about the epic battle between good and evil."[146] For both Bayle and Schelling, God's omnipotence should not be questioned; to account for evil's origin, we must face its reality as a possibility of human life, as Bayle writes:

> The heavens and the whole universe declare the glory, the power, and the unity of God. Man alone, this masterpiece of his Creation among the visible things, man alone, I say, furnishes some very great objections against the unity of God. Here is how: *Man is wicked and miserable*."[147]

Parallels with Schelling's understanding of evil are evident, evil must not be understood from creation but rather from its reality: "what needs to be explained is not, for instance, how evil becomes actual in individuals, but rather its universal activity or how it was able to break out of creation as an unmistakably general principle everywhere locked in struggle with the good."[148] Schelling also leaves a somewhat miserable conception that the universal reality of humanness is their personal struggle with withholding from evil action and straying away from creation's all-loving intentions.

However, I must state that Bayle, in contrast to Schelling, does not conceptualise evil as metaphysical; Bayle holds only two categories of evil: moral evil (sin) and physical evil (suffering). It was Leibniz who eventually introduced the concept of metaphysical evil, which was to play a crucial role in the *FS*. However, Leibniz presents strong tendencies not to advance a theory of evil that posits its existence, as we have seen above. Because Leibniz's metaphysical

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[144] Pierre Bayle, "Manichaeans," in *Historical and Critical Dictionary: Selections*, trans. Popkin (Hackett Publishing Company, 1991), 145.
[145] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 59–60 (AA I,17, 161).
[146] Jason M. Wirth, "Schelling and the Satanic: On Naturvernichtung," *Kabiri* vol. 2, (2020): 83.
[147] Bayle, "Manichaeans," 146 [emphasis altered].
[148] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 40 (AA I,17 142–143).

evil is not to be experienced, it is only a postulation to rationally account for disorder. However, Bayle's two categories of evil essentially advance more reality to evil than Leibniz's idea of metaphysical evil, as for Bayle (and Schelling), the reality of life is the struggle between good and evil.[149]

At the end of the *FS*, Schelling asks: "in order to define the relation of God as a moral being to the world, general cognition of freedom in creation nevertheless does not reach far enough; moreover, the question remains whether the act of self-revelation was free in the sense that all consequences of it were foreseen in God?"[150] Now to answer this question we will consider Bayle's remark stating "man came from the hands of his creator, he had only the power of self-determination to evil, and that since he determined himself in that way, he is the sole cause of the crime that he committed and the moral evil that was introduced into the universe."[151] Clearly, Bayle argues that humans introduce evil, vindicating God's goodness.

Bayle continues to hypothetically answer Schelling's question, stating that "it appears impossible to foresee what depends entirely on an undetermined cause," alluding to his belief that humans, as the substantive attributes of extension and thought, are causing themselves undeniably.[152] Bayle argues from this that if God foresaw the fall of humans, then he would dissociate himself immediately from humans since his goodness cannot be associated with evil. In that case, Bayle's account of human life is a life that can determine itself according to this principle of evil, if it so wishes; equally, it can determine itself to be good. This self-determined aspect mirrors Schelling's concept of life, which followed from God's creation, as also noted by Bayle: "[God] left in man's soul any power for carrying himself."[153]

Schelling writes that love will always prevail over evil. Because eventually the non-ground (indivisible remainder) "divides itself into the two exactly equal beginnings, only so that the two, which could not exist simultaneously or be one in it as the non-ground, become one through love, that is, it divides itself only so that there may be life and love and personal existence."[154] The concept of love, for Schelling is inherently split, the secret of love, as he continues is "that it links such things of which each could exist for itself, yet does not and cannot exist without the other."[155] Love, or the Good, is always a loving of something.

[149] Mara van der Lugt, *Dark Matters* (Princeton University Press, 2021), 32.
[150] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 60 (AA I,17 162).
[151] Bayle, "Manichaeans," 149.
[152] Bayle, "Manichaeans," 149.
[153] Bayle, "Manichaeans," 150.
[154] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 70 (AA I,17 172).
[155] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 70 (AA I,17 172).

Schelling's concept of love reveals why his metaphysics needs a radical opposition, because this resembles the nature of love, as love always needs to unfold into another.

Bayle's reasoning proceeds in the opposite direction; however, his conclusion is the same. Bayle conceives of the problem of evil as essentially a conflict between evil and God's attributes, as we saw above; these attributes are substances themselves. For Bayle, the most divine substance is God's goodness.[156] This goodness is always in conflict with the inferior human attributes, for Bayle, ultimately, these inferior attributes are what comprise human *existence* itself. Therefore, life is inherently a struggle between good and evil.

This is also found in Schelling's attitude towards existence, as he writes: "All life has a destiny and is subject to suffering and becoming,"[157] because "where there is no struggle, there is no life."[158] Bayle's understanding of "existence is neutral at best, not intrinsically *good*."[159] *Reason* is the principle on which humans are aware of "their own blindness and weakness," because it is not possible to acquire the good through the means of *reason*.[160] The "necessity for another revelation," according to Bayle, leads us to realise "a law of grace."[161] For Bayle, via our Schellingian reading, the goodness becomes only a *real* if we choose for the good, but this happens only through "natural revelation" as *reason* "is a principle of destruction."[162]

Since they both uphold an omnibenevolent unity, we should not regard Bayle or Schelling as Manichaeans. However, we find that within their similar metaphysics, a dualism accounts for the explication of evil as a free *act* of humans. Both authors emphasise our relation to God as necessary and dependent on revelation to turn towards the good. However, human life is defined by its inherent struggles to choose the good. The profound importance of moral self-determination prompts us to reevaluate Schelling's *FS* in light of Bayle's critique of Spinoza and his metaphysical dualism, which led to his ideas on revelation, which I claim inform his approach to the problem of evil.

[156] Van der Lugt, *Dark Matters*, 47.
[157] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 66 (AA I,17 168).
[158] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 63 (AA I,17 165).
[159] Van der Lugt, *Dark Matters*, 83.
[160] Bayle, "Manichaeans," 151.
[161] Bayle, "Manichaeans," 151.
[162] Bayle, "Manichaeans," 151.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, we can confidently assert that Schelling's *Freedom Essay* is a crucial text for examining the history of Western philosophy concerning the problem of evil. Schelling's text is not only an essential development in the German idealist tradition, but it should also be considered in light of its engagement in a debate which spanned numerous centuries. Still, the *FS* is unfortunately marginalised among the writings of Schelling's contemporaries. As my study attempts to demonstrate, Schelling's philosophy should be considered in line with the debate concerning the problem of evil in early modernity. In this regard, we see that Schelling's *FS* is a modern iteration of the questions raised by Bayle. The reasons for Schelling's marginalisation are diverse, but it can be said that the complex nature of Schelling's text and its interpretive challenges do not help his case. In that regard, I hope I have conveyed Schelling's philosophy in an intelligible manner without disregarding or oversimplifying his ideas. I substantiated my central thesis that Schelling's *Freedom Essay* should be considered beyond a mere episode of German idealist philosophy and, through Bayle, must be understood within a broader context of Western philosophy concerning the problem of evil. I have conducted a threefold analysis to defend this claim.

The first analysis concerned Schelling's tension between reason and revelation. This tension erupted from Schelling's quarrel with Fichte. Fichte's primacy of thinking was not sufficient to account for Schelling's long-sought endeavour to conceptualise the absolute realistically. *Reason*, as Schelling argues, is insufficient if it wants to account for the genesis of existence. If it tries to understand genesis rationally, it will descend into an infinite regress of thoughts. Therefore, must approach it from the simple fact that existence *is*. In that sense, we considered Schelling's revelation of *being*.

The second part of my reading concerned Spinoza's fatalist notion of *Deus sive Natura*— Schelling's revelation of *being* led him to oppose Spinoza's rational demonstrations as found in the *Ethics*. Schelling's revelatory account leads him to firmly proclaim that nature, and thus *being,* can never be logically explained; however, *reason* cannot entirely be dismissed. Because if there were no *reason*, then there was no revelation. In this line of thought, Schelling sees the first principle as a dynamic structure. For Schelling, discursive thinking and our will are proof of our inherent dynamic relation to God. Everything *exists* through the unfolding of its opposite. Schelling conceptualises God's absolute identity as containing *difference* within

itself. Consequently, Schelling understands our freedom as the capacity to *act* good or evil; it is our choice, and we must make a decision. These choices mark the essence of life.

In the third section, we related the aforementioned reading of the *Freedom Essay* to Bayle's highly influential critique of Spinoza and his account of the origins of evil. Bayle, like Schelling, criticised Spinoza in numerous ways. In this study, I have presented five critical arguments for refuting Spinoza's substance monism. The gist of Bayle's arguments is found in his metaphysical dualism, in which he conceptualises *difference* as a fundamental quality of human life. According to Bayle, human beings are not a *mode* of God, as God does not relegate Himself to finite beings.

Furthermore, human life is inherently dualistic; Bayle views different attributes as possessing distinct substantive qualities. Extension and thought cannot be dissolved, at least not for humans. What remains is Bayle's metaphysics, which finds itself grounded in this opposite difference. Bayle, like Schelling, recognises a misunderstanding in Spinoza's conception of identity through an analysis of discursive thinking. At last, Bayle's metaphysical dualism and its inherent conceptualisation of life as self-carrying reveal that Bayle understands evil, just like Schelling, as a real possibility of the human being. Creation is and always has been infinitely good; however, human life, with its potential to choose good or evil, always remains in the struggle between these opposites. For both Schelling and Bayle, human existence is defined by this struggle.

The assertion that Schelling's *Freedom Essay* is a modern iteration of Bayle's theodicy may lead to new avenues of exploration regarding Schelling's philosophy. For further study, there are other texts, for example, Schelling's *Ages of the World* project or his later *Philosophy of Revelation*, which may reveal an underappreciated foundation in Bayle. As Schelling studies are still in their early stages, there is much to be discovered, as his text offers a wealth of contemplation on the intellectual inheritance of early modern thinkers, such as Bayle.

For a more comprehensive study, the historical conditions, intellectual climate, and personal developments of both authors should be examined in greater depth. Due to the scope of this paper, the details of Bayle's reception and influence in Germany's intellectual circles have been omitted, particularly the details of the reception of his lemma on Spinoza. This is unfortunate, since Bayle's influence was decisive for the understanding of Spinoza in Schelling's time. This gap presents a fine opportunity for academic discovery in which empirical historical evidence can make the connection more substantial. In any case, I hope I have presented an interesting and enjoyable paper that offers original insights into Schelling's *Freedom Essay*.

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