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F.W.J. Schelling
Translated, with an Introduction, by
Jason M. Wirth

The Ages of the World

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SUNY series in

Contemporary Continental Philosophy

Dennis J. Schmidt, Editor

The Ages of the World

(Fragment)

from the handwritten remains

Third Version (c. 1815)

by

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling

Translated, with an Introduction, by

JASON M. WIRTH

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Contents

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Translator's Introduction

I

An entry in Schelling's diary, dated September 15, 1810, reads: "*Die 3 Weltalter* in d. Nacht [*The 3 Ages of the World* in the night]."[1] And so on that night Schelling embarked on what was perhaps his most ambitious philosophical project. Another entry, dated from the end of that year (December 27), and following shortly after lightening and thunder storms and a "violent hurricane in the night," proclaims that *The 3 Ages of the World* was "begun in earnest" (SP, 216). Schelling was to work on this *magnum opus* over the next two decades of his life, announcing its pending publication several times, but never submitting a completed version.

Schelling's failure to complete this book does not seem to have stemmed from a lack of effort on his part. Schelling composed multitudinous versions of *Die Weltalter*, including numerous versions of the first book (*The Past*). In 1939 Horst Fuhrmans discovered in the cellar of the Library of the University of Munich a large chest, filled with a disorganized mass of many thousands of folio pages, each crammed with writing in Schelling's own hand. Among the sheets were not only the lectures for his late philosophy (*The Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation*, etc.), but also two corrected versions, set but not printed, of the first book of *Die Weltalter*, as well as more than twelve quite different handwritten versions of the first book. Fuhrmans first discussed this material in his 1940 book *Schellings letzte Philosophie: Die negative und positive Philosophie im Einsatz des Spätidealismus*. Unfortunately, however, these manuscripts were all lost in July 1944 when the library burned after three consecutive days of Allied bombing.[2]

However, the 1811 and 1813 versions had been saved from the trunk and were published by Manfred Schröter in 1946. Schelling's son, Karl Friedrich

August, had published a later and much longer version, dating from around 1815, in the eighth volume of *Schellings Sämtliche Werke* in 1861, claiming that it was "the most complete" of the versions found among his father's literary remains. Although all three versions are quite extraordinary in their own ways, I have chosen to translate the third and longest version. It is, in my judgment, the most sustained and developed of the three versions. The second or 1813 version has recently appeared in a good translation by Judith Norman with a thoughtful essay by Slavoj Zizek, in which he argues that it is the strongest of the three versions.[3] I myself do not think that it would be appropriate here to argue for the superiority of one version over another. They all merit a careful reading. The first version is the most dramatic in tone and it is my hope that it too will soon appear in translation.

Frederick de Wolfe Bolman Jr, first translated the third or 1815 version into English in 1942.[4] This edition is not without its virtues and it might be of some benefit to consult it alongside the present translation. *Die Weltalter* is a very difficult text and I have tried to ameliorate these difficulties wherever possible. I have followed Bolman's practice of inserting the page numbers of the original German edition (using the standard pagination) to greater facilitate the possibility of using the German alongside my translation.[5] Not wanting to make the reader an utter prisoner of my reading of Schelling—and all translations are readings—I have attempted to make my translation choices as transparent as possible. I have included an extensive German/English and English/German lexicon at the conclusion of the translation, in part to aid in alerting the curious reader as much as possible as to my plan of reading. As to the further details of my own reading of Schelling, I shall have to defer to a future book. *Die Weltlalter* is Schelling's work and, in respecting that, I do not want to co-opt it entirely to my own purposes. I will resist the temptation to pontificate at length as to why I believe that this is a text fully present to the concerns of contemporary philosophical debates[6] and as to why I think that Schelling was unduly overshadowed by his former roommate Hegel. (This text is, after all, in part Schelling' is first attempt at a response to Hegel's monumental 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*.) I will attempt to refrain from such *hubris* for the time being.

Such restraint was not typical either of Schelling's early career or, as we have seen, of the numerous reworkings of *Die Weltalter*. In the winter semester of 1827, Schelling, who had not offered a lecture course for two decades, offered a course entitled *Das System der Weltalter*, a course he repeated in the summer semester of 1833. Yet, with the exception of a minor work defending himself from a hasty and virulent attack by F. H. Jacobi published in January of 1812, Schelling did not publish anything of significance after the May 1809 publication of his most famous work, *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit/Philosophical Investigations of the Being of Human Freedom*.

This is all the more remarkable considering the meteoric rise of the young Schelling. A prodigy, five years the junior of his Tübinger Stift roommates Hölderlin and Hegel, Schelling was born in 1775 in Leonberg (in Württemberg) and entered the Stift at fifteen years of age. After some precocious writing at the Stift, including a 1794 essay on Plato's *Timaeus*, Schelling published his first major work (*Über die Möglichkeit einer Form der Philosophie überhaupt / Concerning the Possibility of a Form of Philosophy in General*) when he was nineteen. In 1797, at twenty-two years of age, Schelling, who had already published several important works of philosophy, including *Vom Ich als Prinzip der Philosophie/On the I as Principle of Philosophy* (1795) and *Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kritizismus/Philosophical Letters Concerning Dogmatism and Criticism* (1795), and *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur/Ideas toward a Philosophy of Nature* (1797), received the call to assume a professorial post at Jena. Upon assuming his new post, and profiting from the company of the Jena Circle (whose members included the Schlegel brothers and Novalis), Schelling accelerated his philosophical activity, publishing numerous works, including the appearance in 1800 of the *System des transzendentalen Idealismus/System of Transcendental Idealism.* Not long thereafter, Schelling delivered a remarkable series of lectures on the *Philosophy of Art*. In 1804, an essay appeared, *Philosophie und Religion*, in which Schelling first intimated that his negative or formal philosophy (the contemplation of the Real ascending towards the Ideal) would be complemented by a positive philosophy, or the descending history of the Ideal, or Freedom, among the Real. The latter project would occupy Schelling for the ensuing decades of his life (up until his death in 1854), and the *Freedom* essay, as well as *The Ages of the World*, are, in part, transitional works to the positive philosophy. After assuming Hegel's post in 1841, ten years after Hegel's death, Schelling's Berlin lectures on the *Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation* were testimonials to the history of divine freedom announced in *The Ages of the World*.

Yet 1809 marked a turning point in Schelling's zeal to publish. Already Schelling's reputation had been injured by Hegel's unwarranted dismissal of the intellectual intuition as the "night when all cows are black." (In fact, this was a variation of a critique that Schelling himself had made about the misinterpretation of the intellectual intuition. Hegel admitted as much in a letter to Schelling.)[7] More seriously, however, Schelling's wife, Caroline, had become very ill. It is hard to read the *Freedom* essay, published in May 1809, with its analogy between sickness and evil (sickness is to Being as evil is to human being), without thinking of Caroline. In the treatise, Schelling claimed that the "veil of melancholy [*Schwermut*] that is spread out over all of nature is the profound and indestructible melancholy of all life" (I/7, 399). Caroline died on September 7, 1809. Schelling was devastated. In a letter written less than a month after Caroline's death, Schelling claimed that "I now need friends who

are not strangers to the real seriousness of pain and who feel that the single right and happy [*glücklich*] state of the soul is the divine mourning [*Traurigkeit*] in which all earthly pain is immersed."[8] A year later, Schelling began work on *Die Weltalter*, a philosophical poem about the rotatory movement of natality and fatality, pain and joy, comedy and tragedy within God, that is, within the whole of Being, itself. "Pain is something universal and necessary in all life, the unavoidable transition point to freedom. We remember growing pains in the physical as well as the moral sense. We shall not shun presenting even that primordial being (the first possibility of God externally manifesting) in the state of suffering that comes from growth. Suffering is universal, not only with respect to humanity, but also with respect to the creator. It is the path to glory" (335).

II

I would now like to turn to the question of what it might mean to *read* Schelling's self-composing cosmic poem. In the second of his lectures *On University Studies* that Schelling began delivering in 1802, he commented on the need for live instruction. If learning were merely the mastery of the external details, then students could just as well be referred to any one of a number of textbooks written on a given topic. But to really learn something one has to move beyond the appropriation of a discovery's superficial details and somehow acquire a "sure and living feeling" for them rather than live "within his science as though on another's property."[9] It requires the living, so to speak, to foster somehow a living feel for what animates a discovery. Furthermore, many discoveries can only be appreciated if one can somehow rediscover the *spirit*, as it were, of the original discovery. What is needed, then, is a kind of repetition that does not simply imitate the original, but which reproduces it in such a way that what remains otherwise hidden in the letter of the original discovery intimates itself. "Many" of these discoveries "are of a kind whose inner essence can be grasped only by a kindred genius through a rediscovery in the literal sense of the word."[10] What remains hidden, accessible only to the kindred genius, does not belong to the external form of the science. It belongs to its indwelling, manifestly nonmanifesting, yet life-granting spirit. As Schelling articulated this in this version of *Die Weltalter*:

> Whoever has to some extent exercised their eye for the spiritual contemplation of natural things knows that a spiritual image, whose mere vessel (medium of appearance) is the coarse and ponderable, is actually what is living within the coarse and the ponderable. The purer that this

> image is, the healthier the whole is. This incomprehensible but not imperceptible being, always ready to overflow and yet always held again, and which alone grants to all things the full charm, gleam, and glint of life, is that which is at the same time most manifest and most concealed. (283)

If one were to apply this to *Die Weltalter* itself, one could infer that the text itself works against its own letter, endeavoring to intimate the invisible and inaudible within the rigorous orders of the text's own visibility and audibility. The spirit of reading, so to speak, is the call to read the unwritable and follow the movements of *die verborgene Spur der Natur*, the hidden trace of nature.

Schelling spoke of this in his address *Über das Verhältnis der bildenden Künste zu der Natur/On the Relationship of the Fine Arts to Nature*, delivered on October 12, 1807, at the Akademie der Wissenschaften in Munich. Discussing the relationship between the fine arts and nature, Schelling argued that, as with nature, art is "dead" when "you do not bring the spiritual eye to it which penetrates the exterior and feels the active force [*wirkende Kraft*] in it" (I/7, 295). The spiritual eye "feels [*empfindet*]" the sublime (freedom) insofar as it has intimated itself within form. It is not the gaze of the theoretical, which only surveys manifest orders, reducing what is most forceful to a rule-bound appearance. The spiritual eye, rather, intimates the unprethinkable (*unvordenklich*) future in a thing, that is, its "creating life" and its "power to exist" (I/7, 294). However, the spiritual eye glimpses the sublimity of freedom only through the proxy of the beautiful. There is no direct access to the sublime. This would be the way to utter madness and death. Rather, using a phrase that appears with frequency from his earliest works until his final Berlin lectures, Schelling claimed that "we must go through the form [*über die Form hinausgehen*] in order to gain it back as intelligible, alive, and as truly felt [*empfunden*]" (I/7, 299). The prepositional phrase *über etwas hinaus*, literally a going through in order to get beyond, traces the movement (what Schelling called "negative philosophy") of the spiritual eye as it intuits within form that which actively contests form. The aesthetic intuition (the spiritual eye) senses the sublime in "the pain of form" as the artist "seals the power of fire, the lightning of light, in hard stone and the fair soul of tone in strict timbre" (I/7, 304). Only by going though the form can one feel its spiritual life: "Only through the completion of form can the form be annihilated" (I/7, 305). Through this annihilation (through the suspension of the tyranny of the Real without thereby eradicating the Real) lies "the highest beauty without character" in the sense that the "universe would have no determinate measurement, neither length, nor width, nor depth because it contains all with equal infinity. Or that the art of the creative nature would be formless because it itself is subjected to no form" (I/7, 306). Or, to paraphrase another one of Schelling's formulations, the spiritual eye feels the soul's grace in the body. The "body is the form and grace [*Anmut*] is the soul,

although not the soul in itself, but the soul of form, that is, the soul of nature [*die Naturseele*]." Hence the soul is not, as certain traditions within Medieval theology and philosophy would have it, the *quidditas* or the essence of a thing (then soul = form), but rather the deformative force indwelling within all form. The soul is the excess of the form within the form, its animistic life (after all, *anima* is Latin for soul as well as a life principle). The soul is a kind of Dionysian force, squandering its force beyond the ego's capacity to preserve itself. "Panthers or tigers do not pull the carriage of Dionysus in vain" (337). Art emerges in the generosity that is liberated by the suspension of the ego's hegemony. "The soul in the person therefore is not the principle of individuality. Rather, it is that through which one is lifted beyond all selfhood and through which one becomes capable of sacrifice of oneself, of selfless love, and, what is the highest, of contemplation and knowledge of the essence of things and with this, of art" (I/7, 312). Without soul, without "great and general enthusiasm, there are only sects" (I/7, 327). The theoretical eye (always a form of egoism) strives to find the truth in things, taking refuge in the work's hypertrophic status as a thing and partitioning the results of its gaze as *the* truth and *the* good. The spiritual eye, on the other hand, affirms the advent of divine fecundity within the grace and beauty of things. This grace is a prodigality that does not hold the future in reserve, but rather releases it to the nonprecalculable advent of freedom's grace.

For Schelling, then, a complete work of art, of which *Die Weltalter* may have been a candidate, is the work of both genius (the work of the productive imagination, the graceful descent of freedom into necessity, the always ironic self-articulation of the Divine Word) and the work's simultaneous capacity to reflect upon itself as an event of freedom. It is an original work whose theme is the expression of the inscrutability of its own possibility and the inexpressibility of its own ground. It is the Word falling in love with its anterior silence. Spirit (the irreconcilable tension between form and soul, cultural specificity and the void of divine silence) does not proclaim itself. Rather, in the moment of its greatest intensity, it grows silent [*verstummt*]. *Verstummen* is not a mere negative dialectical degeneration into muteness. Rather, in hearing the faint echoes of silence within discourse, discourse falls in love with always being underway toward its own inherent silence—a silence that speaks louder than words but which can only be approached (but never attained) through words.[11] Language attempts, to borrow a phrase from Lyotard's *Le différend*, "to counter Wittgenstein and say the unsayable." As Schelling put it later:

> Just as many people imagine a beginning without any presuppositions at all, they would also not be able to presuppose thinking itself and, for example, also not deduce the language in which they are expressing this. But since this itself could not happen without language, there would

> remain only the growing silent [*das Verstummen*] that the helplessness and faint audibility of language really seek to approach. The beginning would have to be at the same time the end. (II/1, 312)

Art, then, is language in love with itself, affirming both the historical and cultural particularities of its mode of articulation as well as the fecund void of its ground. The complete work of art affirms both poles of its potency: what is externally articulated and what is inwardly inexpressible. Such a tension led Schelling to conclude quite dramatically at the end of this version of *Die Weltalter* that there are three kinds of thinkers and, hence one could say by implication, that there are also three kinds of readers. "Since Aristotle it is even customary to say of people that nothing great can be accomplished without a touch of madness. In place of this, we would like to say: nothing great can be accomplished without a constant solicitation of madness, which should always be overcome, but should never be utterly lacking" (338). At this point Schelling offers the following—quite startling—strategy of assessing people. First, there are the dead intellectuals, devoid of the madness of freedom, relegated to civil service before the letter of the truth. These "sober spirits" have severed themselves from the drunken center and, if one were to apply the language of the *Freedom* essay, they are, despite their apparently harmless pettiness, in a dangerous way physically and morally sick. They are dying on the periphery.

> One could say that there is a kind of person in which there is no madness whatsoever. These would be the uncreative people incapable of procreation, the ones that call themselves sober spirits. These are the so-called intellectuals [*Verstandesmenschen*] whose works and deeds are nothing but cold intellectual works and intellectual deeds. Some people in philosophy have misunderstood this expression in utterly strange ways. For because they heard it said of intellectuals that they are, so to speak, low and inferior, and because they themselves did not want to be like this, they good-naturedly opposed reason [*Vernunft*] to intellect instead of opposing reason to madness. But where there is no madness, there is also certainly no proper, active, living intellect (and consequently there is just the dead intellect, dead intellectuals). (338)

The dead(ly) *Verstandesmensch*, despite her or his intellectual acumen and sobriety, are purveyors of the desiccated spirit (the desert of soulless form). Their thinking ultimately belongs to the realm of *Blödsinn* (imbecility) and idiocy. "The utter lack of madness leads to another extreme, to imbecility (idiocy), which is an absolute lack of all madness" (338–339). The truth of the sick intellectual is precisely that: a truth. But it is an imbecilic truth, a piece of minutia.

The sick, considered as such, can only produce more sickness. If such an argument sounds familiar, it is probably because this was a similar position to the one advocated by Friedrich Nietzsche. Although there is little evidence that Nietzsche read much Schelling or that he had any sympathy with him, Nietzsche nonetheless also argued that the imbecilic "truths" of the herd were part of the poisonous arsenal of the scholar. As Gilles Deleuze eloquently argues this point in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*:

> Stupidity is not error or a tissue of errors. There are imbecile thoughts, imbecile discourses, that are made up entirely of truths; but these truths are base, they are those of a base, heavy and laden soul. . . . In truth, as in error, stupid thought only discovers the most base—base errors and base truths that translate the triumph of the slave, the reign of petty values or the power of an established order.[12]

It does not follow from either Schelling or Nietzsche's argument that they are glibly advocating an utter surrender to madness. This would, in the end, not be essentially different than the ascetic priest's desire to lead the herd into any other kingdom of ethical imperatives. Schelling, for his part, attempted to arouse a kind of theocratic sensibility, a *Gesinnung* or enculturated disposition by which Reason remains at the disposal of madness, enchanted by it, humbled by it, continuously solicitous of it, but not such that this drunken ground annihilates Reason. Rather, madness "animates" Reason.

In addition to an intellectually comatose life devoid of madness, there were "two other kinds of persons in which there really is madness" (339). One kind of person is simply mad, that is, reason has been altogether vanquished by freedom. They have been, to borrow Hölderlin's phrase, "struck by Apollo." This "kind of person is governed by madness and is someone who really is mad. One cannot say, strictly speaking, that madness originates in them. It only comes forth as something that is always there (for without continuous solicitation of it, there would be no consciousness) and that is not now suppressed and governed by a higher force" (339). For the simply mad, the tension between freedom and necessity, madness and reason, has resulted in the incontestable victory of freedom. Freedom without necessity does not suit mortality for it is the way of madness for survivors and annihilation for the rest. The second kind of person copes with madness, preferring a relationship between reason and what remains in excess of reason rather than succumbing either to the slow death of the utterly reasonable life or the catastrophe of reason's complete eclipse. "For in what does the intellect prove itself than in the coping with and governance and regulation of madness?" (338). This kind of person "governs madness and precisely in this overwhelming shows the highest force of the in-

tellect" (339). This marks the mortal love affair with its withdrawn yet prodigally drunken and extravagant center. Schelling wrote not only for such lovers, but to arouse such love in the desert of intellectual sobriety. Schelling implies that only one who already knows the generosity of reading, which is utterly opposed to the sectarian spirit of disciplinary camps, can read *Die Weltalter* in a vital fashion.

III

I spoke above of *Die Weltalter* as a "philosophical poem" and there is a reason for this. When Schelling came to Berlin in 1841 and presented *The Philosophy of Revelation* as his inaugural lecture course, he reflected during the first lecture on the status of his earlier philosophy. He reminded his audience that the negative philosophy was "*only a poetic invention*." "*It was a poem that reason itself poeticized*. For *reason is bound to nothing, not even to the true. Reason excludes nothing, asserts nothing, and perceives everything*."[13] Reason does not invent a philosophical poem for itself. The poem is written, and continues to be written, for reason by a ground other than reason. Who, then, is the author of philosophy? What is the origin of philosophy? Strictly speaking, the origin or the author of philosophy cannot become an object of philosophy. The existence of reason is manifest but the ground of reason is inscrutable, what Schelling in the *Freedom* essay called "*ein nie aufgehender Rest*," an irreducible remainder. Yet, if self-reflection cannot fathom its ground, how does reason think that which it cannot grasp, the remainder that always eludes thinking's capacity to orient itself to its own activity? In the 1820–21 Erlanger lectures, for example, Schelling called thinking's indebtedness to a ground that it cannot conceive but to which it is always beholden, a "knowing not-knowing [*nicht wissendes Wissen*]."[14] In the inaugural Berlin lecture series, Schelling used the phrase *das nichtdenkende Denken* or the "not-thinking thinking." (PO, 126), As Reason introspectively intuits what offers itself at the limits of Reason, it finds that it cannot completely articulate itself. "This infinite potency of Being relates itself" to thinking "as simply the matter of thinking and not as the object of thinking . . . . The true *prima materia* of thinking cannot be the thought as the single form is the thought . . . . It relates itself to actual thinking only as that which is 'not-not-to-think' [*das 'Nicht-Nictzudenkende'*]" (PO, 126). In *Die Weltalter*, the true *prima materia* of thinking is addressed, *inter alia*, as Freedom, that within Being which does not have being, the negating force of the future, the *Überseyende,* God as the superactual, beyond that which has being, and "therefore a sublimity beyond Being and Not-being" (238), "the devouring ferocity of purity" (236), the second potency (the A^2). Schelling also refers to freedom by linking

it to Plato's χώρα, that "wild, unruly matter or nature" (326), or to Plato's μὴ ὄν. The μὴ does not negate Being so much as to suggest a potency otherwise than Being within Being. In a footnote in the *Freedom* essay, Schelling also refers this term to a distinction that Augustine made in his critique of emanationism in *On the Free Will* (*de lib. arb*. L.I, C.2). Augustine argued that nothing could have come out of God's substance before God itself. Therefore, God must have created *ex nihilo*. "This nothing has long been the cross of the understanding. The Scriptures offer a clue in the expression: the person is ἐκ τῶν μὴ ὄντων, created out of that which is not. This is akin to the μὴ ὄν of the Ancients which, like the creation out of nothing, can receive a positive meaning for the first time through the above distinction" (I/7, 373). Hence Schelling claims in *Die Weltalter*: "Precisely that which negates all revelation must be made the ground of revelation" (223).

Not only does the ground of reason elude reason, it contests it. Schelling emphasized this is in the inaugural Berlin lectures. Freedom announces the "overturn of reason" because it can have no positive content: "It is negative because it is just busy with clearing the way [*Wegschaffen*]. What is its content? Only the incessant overturning of reason [*der fortwährende Umsturtz der Vernunft*] and its result: that reason, in so far as it takes itself as the principle, is capable of no actual knowledge" (PO, 152). *Umsturz* connotes not only an utter reversal, a turning upside down, or an overthrow, but it also has political implications, suggesting a *coup d'état* or a *Putsch*. In clearing the way, reason is deposed and its ultimate authority is stripped as it intuits the incomprehensibility of pure possibility. This *coup* reverses the priority of reason and makes it beholden to the superiority of that which, considered in itself, can have no positive content and can result in no completed principle. It opens reason to its Other. Schelling, in the Erlanger lecture series, called this indebtedness and openness of reason, its wonder or amazement [*Erstaunen* or *thaumazein*] before the "unprethinkability [*Unvordenklichkeit*]" of its ground, the "ecstasy of reason" in which it "therefore must leave its place. It must be set outside of itself as that which no longer exists at all. Only in the giving up of oneself [*Selbstaufgebenheit*] can the absolute subject rise up to us as we also glimpse it in astonishment [*Erstaunen*]" (IPU, 39).

Although I may be stating the obvious, it is important to remember that Schelling is not dispensing with reason and the understanding, but rather overturning their presumed authority. Furthermore, in this *Umsturz*, Schelling is not thinking the ground of reason as, *strictu sensu*, the "author" of reason, for the very notion of an author implies an organized and intentional agent. Rather, the unruly is the ground of the ruly and the latter remains beholden to the former. Yet, were there only the unruly, there would be no life, no thought. "There is only life in personality and all personality rests on a dark ground which is therefore also the ground of knowledge. But it is only the understanding that

develops into form [*herausbildet*] that which is contained in this ground as concealed and merely potential and elevates it to *actus*" (I/7, 413–414). Reason, the understanding, indeed, consciousness itself, is the theater in which the divine poem is writing itself, despite the impossibility of its author's actually being an author. Reason is an activity without agency.

Yet reason does find itself caught in the net of the intelligible, although it can ask how it came to be here. "The entire world, so to speak, lies caught in reason, but the question is: How did it come into this net?"[15] This question could serve as a possible ingress to the manner of questioning and thinking that characterizes *Die Weltalter*. Despite the dark night of its past and the obscurity of its future, reason find itself in an intelligible world. Yet the origin of the intelligible, the measurable and discernable world as well as rational self-reflection, is God (freedom, the absolute, the irreducible remainder, pure space) becoming time. Or to put it another way: it is the nonrepresentability of the eternal ironically manifesting or representing itself as time. "The doctrine that God created the world in time is a pillar of genuine faith. The labor of this present work would be adequately rewarded had it only made this thought comprehensible and intelligible. For since there is no time in God itself, how should God create the world in time if there is not a time outside of God?" (307–308). Schelling's answer: the world is intelligible *in time* because freedom presents itself *as time*.

Schelling's solution anticipates, indeed, informs, for example, Søren Kierkegaard's (and later Martin Heidegger's) analysis of the moment (*Øiblikket, das Augenblick*). In *The Concept of Anxiety* Kierkegaard claimed that "Thus understood, the moment is not properly an atom of time but an atom of eternity. It is the first reflection of eternity in time, its first attempt, as it were, at stopping time."[16] The present moment conceals eternity, although eternity associates with the present as what has been lost to the past but as what returns to overturn the present. Hence the future "is the incognito in which the eternal, even though it is incommensurable with time, nevertheless preserves its association with time."[17] The moment holds together irreconcilable forces: presence and its Other.

For Schelling, reason, like the intelligible world, finds itself absent from origin and before an inconceivable future, a relation that Schelling speaks of in terms of intimations, not concepts. "The future is intimated" (199). The intimation, or inkling, *die Ahnung*, is the lost and irrecoverable ground of the past suggesting itself as what is still to come, but in such a way that its coming does not preserve the present but rather overturns it. God, the whole, the cosmos, *das Urwesen*, the A^3, is the living tension of *times* within Being itself. "The explanation as to how the eternal could be conscious of its eternity poses special difficulty for the deeper thinker, although most people pass over it with a spring in their step. No consciousness whatsoever can be thought in an empty, abstract eternity. The consciousness of eternity can only be articulated in the phrase: 'I am the one who was, who is, who will be' " (263). Readers of Kant's *Critique of*

Judgment will recognize this supremely "sublime" thought as the inscription over the Temple of Isis (of Mother Nature).[18] The generativity or procreativity of Being is the generativity or procreativity of time. Nature, Being, is the auto-generativity of absolute space (eternity), manifesting (ironically) as time, as a self-composing poem (the auto-production or *autopoiesis*), writing itself in the theater of thinking.[19] As such, the poem is always alive, irreducible to its present revelations. The ground within existence contests the latter's capacity to take hold of itself:

> As such, it always remains that if one of them has being, then the other cannot have the *same* being. That is, it remains that both exclude each other with respect to time, or that God as the Yes and God as the No cannot have being *at the same time*. We express it intentionally in this way for the relationship cannot be of the kind such that if the posterior, say A, has being, then the posterior, hence B, would be sublimated, or simply ceased to have being. Rather, it always and necessarily abides as having the being *of its time*. If A is posited, then B must just still persist *as the prior*, and hence, in such a way, that they are nonetheless, at the same time, *in different times*. For different times (a concept that, like many others, has gotten lost in modern philosophy) can certainly be, as different, at the same time, nay, to speak more accurately, they are necessarily at the same time. Past time is not sublimated time. What has past certainly cannot be as something present, but it must be as something past at the same time with the present. What is future is certainly not something that has being now, but it is a future being at the same time with the present. And it is equally inconsistent to think of past being, as well as future being, as utterly without being. (301–302)

The ground of presence is what no longer has being and eludes the constitutive workings of the understanding, yet which is also still to come. Again, it is important to emphasize that the whole, the A^3, is not something transpiring *in* time. Hence, Schelling claimed in the first draft of *Die Weltalter* that "because each moment [*Augenblick*] is the *entirety of time*, it could only be asked—not: How much time has already gone by? But—How many times have there already been?" (WA, 80). A being, an existent, both has and does not have Being as a moment. The twinkling of the eye is not a moment *of* time, but a production of the rotatory movement of time, a breathing contraction and intensification of eternity into a time:

> No thing has an external time. Rather, each thing only has an inner time of its own, inborn and indwelling within it. The mistake of Kantianism with respect to time consists in it not knowing this general subjectiv-