JYU DISSERTATIONS 195

Olli Pitkänen

# The Possibility of a Metaphysical Conception of Evil in Contemporary Philosophy

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES

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# ABSTRACT

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Since the 1990s, the concept of evil has gone through a philosophical "renaissance". In contemporary philosophy of evil, the eliminative naturalism typical of the earlier twentieth century is usually rejected, and evil is conceived of as an irreducible concept essential for understanding human moral life in practice. In this study, I trace the roots of contemporary thought on evil to Immanuel Kant, who worked out his theory of "radical evil" at the end of the eighteenth century. According to Kant's theory, taking our moral agency seriously requires not only philosophical justification of freedom from the causality of nature and the ability to present moral duties to ourselves, but also an innate propensity to subordinate those duties to our selfish will, that is, a propensity to do evil. Kant introduced an anti-naturalistic conception of evil, which is also free from theological presumptions. In this study, I refer to this kind of view as "a purely moral conception of evil". I argue that a purely moral conception of evil is vulnerable to Friedrich Nietzsche's genealogical and moral psychological critique, in which the idea of evil is judged as subjective, historical, and ultimately based on will to power.

As an alternative to a purely moral view of evil, I take up Friedrich Schelling´s metaphysical theory of evil. In Schelling's pantheistic framework, nature is characterized as the interplay of two opposite "directions" of God's will: lawful, teleological, and unifying "existence" and its "ground", which is described as blind, selfish craving. According to Schelling, human will is a specific open bond of these two principles, which makes evil possible as a free decision to subordinate existence to its unruly ground. My central argument is that Schelling´s metaphysical theory of evil can provide a wider understanding of evil than purely moral theories of evil, and also a better reply to Nietzsche's naturalistic critique.

This study consists of four chapters. In Chapter 2, I explore the development of the dominant modern narrative on evil and outline the essential ideas of the central philosophers discussed in the following chapters. In Chapter 3, I discuss at length Kant's critical philosophy, with a specific focus on his theory of radical evil. Chapter 4 is dedicated to Schelling and his metaphysical theory of evil. In Chapter 5, I compare the strengths and weaknesses of metaphysical and purely moral theories of evil, and argue that despite the strong presuppositions of the metaphysical approach to evil, it at least deserves more attention. I also take up the attempt of some so-called "new realists" to combine the most appealing aspects of both metaphysical and purely moral theories of evil, but I will show that it involves a major risk of falling prey to the problems of both approaches.

Keywords: Kant, Schelling, evil, pantheism, esotericism

# TIIVISTELMÄ (ABSTRACT IN FINNISH)

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Pahan käsite on käynyt läpi 1990-luvulla alkaneen filosofisen ”renessanssin”. Nykyisessä pahaa käsittelevässä filosofiassa pahan käsite ymmärretään tyypillisesti ihmisen konkreettiseen moraalisen elämismaailman väistämättä kuuluvaksi ideaksi, jota ei tule pyrkiä eliminoimaan naturalistisin menetelmin. Jäljitän tämän ajattelutavan juuret Immanuel Kantin 1700-luvun lopulla kehittämään ”radikaalin pahan” teoriaan, jonka mukaan moraalisen toimijuutemme ottaminen vakavasti edellyttää filosofista perustelua paitsi kyvyllemme asettaa itsellemme velvollisuuksia luonnon kausaliteettiin nähden vapaasti myös sisäsyntyistä taipumusta asettaa itsekäs tahtomme noiden velvollisuuksien yläpuolelle, toisin sanoen taipumusta pahaan. Kant esitti anti-naturalistisen käsityksen pahasta, joka on myös vapaa teologisista taustaoletuksista. Viittaan tutkimuksessani tällaiseen näkemykseen ”puhtaasti moraalisena käsityksenä pahasta”. Argumentoin että puhtaasti moraalinen käsitys on altis Friedrich Nietzschen ”genealogiselle” ja moraalipsykologiselle pahan käsitteen kritiikille, jossa pahan idea nähdään subjektiivisena, historiallisena ja pohjimmiltaan vallantahtoon perustuvana.

Esitän vaihtoehdoksi puhtaasti moraaliselle käsitykselle pahasta Friedrich Schellingin metafyysisen pahakäsityksen. Schelling tulkitsee luonnon panteistisessa viitekehyksessään Jumalan tahdon kahden vastakkaisen ”suunnan” yhteisvaikutuksena; toisaalta olemassa olevana lainmukaisena, teleologisena ja asioita toisiinsa yhdistävänä järjestyksenä, toisaalta tuon järjestyksen ”perustana”, jota Schelling kuvaa sokeaksi kaipaukseksi olemassaoloon. Schellingin mukaan ihmisen tahto muodostaa erityislaatuisen vapaan sidoksen näiden kahden periaatteen välillä, mikä mahdollistaa pahuuden vapaana päätöksenä alistaa olemassa oleva järjestys sen kaoottiselle perustalle. Keskeinen väitteeni on, että metafyysinen pahakäsitys kykenee puhtaasti moraalista pahakäsitystä laajempaan tulkintaan pahasta sekä puolustautumaan paremmin Nietzschen esittämää kritiikkiä vastaan.

Tutkimus koostuu neljästä pääluvusta, joista ensimmäisessä käyn läpi pahan käsitettä koskevan yleisen narratiivin kehitystä uudella ajalla sekä esittelen tutkimuksen kannalta keskeisiä ajattelijoita. Toisessa pääluvussa perehdyn kokonaisvaltaisesti Kantin kriittiseen filosofiaan sekä erityisesti hänen teoriaan radikaalista pahasta. Kolmas pääluku on omistettu Schellingille ja hänen metafyysiselle pahakäsitykselleen. Viimeisessä pääluvussa vertailen metafyysisen ja puhtaasti moraalisen pahakäsityksen heikkouksia sekä vahvuuksia ja esitän, että metafyysisen pahakäsityksen vahvoista taustaoletuksista huolimatta tarvittaisiin vähintäänkin lisää keskustelua aiheesta. Tutkin myös joidenkin niin sanottujen uusrealistien pyrkimystä yhdistää metafyysisen ja puhtaasti moraalisen pahakäsityksen houkuttelevimpia puolia, mutta osoitan, että tässä pyrkimyksessä on pikemminkin suuri riski juuttua molempien käsitysten ongelmallisiin puoliin.

Keywords: Kant, Schelling, paha, panteismi, esoteria

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Olli Pitkänen

## CONTENTS

# 1 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background and presuppositions

As Sami Pihlström (2014, 289) notes, referring to William James´ early essay "The Sentiment of Rationality", no one talks about "the problem of good". By contrast, the problem of evil is one of the most extensively discussed topics in the history of philosophy and theology. The reason for this asymmetry is relatively trivial, but the conclusions to be drawn from it are not. When life goes on normally with its moderate joys and sorrows, few people feel a great need to explain and understand why that is the case. Outstanding evil, by contrast, is something that violently demands attention and forces to seek explanations for what has happened. After World War II, Hannah Arendt declared that "the problem of evil will be the fundamental question of postwar intellectual life in Europe" (Arendt 1994, 134). The atrocities of totalitarianism have been widely discussed since then, but a systematic philosophical discussion emphasizing the irreducible meaning of the concept of *evil* had to wait until the 1990s. In general, the reasons for this reluctance to speak in terms of evil in the philosophical climate of the twentieth century can be traced back to the idea that the concept of evil was conceived of as "a holdover from a mythical, Christian worldview whose time was already past", as Lars Svendsen (2010, 9) puts it. Not only would it be, it was argued, more precise and less mystical to talk about injustice, sickness, and other such problems rather than evil, but the very idea of evil was also seen to demonize entirely human motives and feelings, such as greed, envy, and hate.

However, at the end of the twentieth century a significant body of philosophical studies on evil appeared within a decade. The field is very diverse, and there is no consensus of how evil should be understood; this concerns both the methods and the conclusions. There are numerous, quite distinct problems, such as whether evil differs quantitatively or qualitatively from mere wrongness, whether there are evil people or only actions may be deemed as evil, whether evil

can be committed merely for the sake of evil, whether there are evil feelings in contrast to evil actions, whether there is something incomprehensible in evil (and, if yes, what this incomprehensibility results from), and so on. Each of these questions and many others like them have been debated for at least twenty years. The most influential book length studies on the topic include: Richard Bernstein's *Radical Evil: A Philosophical Interrogation*, Claudia Card's *The Atrocity Paradigm: A Theory of Evil*, Susan Neiman's *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy*, Lars Svendsen's *A Philosophy of Evil* and Arne Vetlesen's *Evil and Human Agency: Understanding Collective Evildoing*.[1] To my knowledge there is no comprehensive summary of the recent philosophical discussion on evil. I will leave this task as well, as it would require a book-length study of its own.

When I first began studying the concept of evil for my Master´s thesis around the year 2008, I was particularly fascinated by the idea of "pure evil", evil supposedly perpetrated merely for the sake of evil without any "petty" selfish motivations. Back then, I had a strong intuition that if the existence of this kind of evil is denied, moral action in general becomes philosophically superfluous. My argument was something like this: genuine moral worth requires that good acts must be chosen without any conscious or hidden self-interest as a determining factor, and, consequently, the opposite of good, evil, must be possible in an equally pure form. However, I soon came to the conclusion that the argument I had in mind does not require the existence of so-called "pure" or diabolical evil but only presupposes evil as an irreducible positive principle, an active choice of its own, which does not consist of a mere failure to be good. While the idea of "pure" evil remains somewhat fascinating to me, I am now relatively convinced that it has mainly psychological and aesthetic relevance. It was after familiarizing myself with the late works of Immanuel Kant (on the recommendation of my first supervisor, Jussi Kotkavirta) that I began to formulate the question which culminated in this study: is evil a purely moral notion or also a metaphysical concept?

At the end of the eighteenth century, Kant argued that "freedom of the power of choice has the characteristic, entirely peculiar to it, that it cannot be determined to action through any incentive *except so far as the human being has incorporated it into his maxim*" (Rel 6:23-24; 2005, 49). Kant (Rel 6:35; 2005, 58) explicitly argued against the possibility of evil deeds committed for the sake of evil. However, as sound as his argument seems to me (I will return to this issue in subchapter 3.5.3), the possibility of this kind of evil is also affirmed by many scholars in contemporary discussions about evil (see, for example, McGinn 1999, 63–65). The relatively indisputable part of Kant's argument consists in the claim that if the idea of objective moral good and the distinction between "incentives" and actual moral choices are accepted, it follows that immoral choices cannot be understood in terms of mere failure but are wilfully executed. Consequently, evil

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1 See also Barry (2014), Bernstein (2008b), Card (2011), Cohen (2005), Cole (2006), Dews (2008), Gaita (2004), Kekes (1990), McGinn (1999), Morton (2004), Russell (2014), Svendsen (2010), Vetlesen (2009), and compilations edited by Copjec (1996), French & Wettstein (2012), Grant (2006), Hirvonen & Porttikivi (2011), Lara (2001) and Schrift (2005).

cannot be understood as mere lack of goodness; rather, it is rather an active negation of goodness, which does not yet imply the idea of evil committed for the sake of evil.

As will be shown in more detail in subchapter 5.2.1, contemporary theories of evil generally take more or less for granted the broadly Kantian idea that the idea of evil is a practically necessary and irreducible part of human social life. In its most simple form, the argument goes like Arne Vetlesen puts it: "My hunch is that we, simply as human beings with some experience with others (and with ourselves), know what evil is; we know, that is, what it means to intentionally inflict pain and suffering on someone else. This knowledge is experiential; it is practical not theoretical." (Vetlesen 2009, 3.) Similarly, Lars Svendsen stresses that "evil is not first and foremost a *theoretical* concept, but rather a *practical* problem" (Svendsen 2010, 29). Svendsen describes his approach to evil as "phenomenological" in the sense of a "consideration of how evil manifests itself" (Svendsen 2010, 28). A similar distinction between practical and theoretical is the very foundation of Kant's transcendental philosophy and especially of his conception of evil. Instead of taking a stance in the metaphysical debates of his time (and the problem of theodicy, in particular) Kant questioned the practical meaning and epistemic legitimacy of such debates. For Kant, theoretical knowledge is bound to possible sensuous experiences, and metaphysical claims are therefore devoid of epistemic legitimacy. On the other hand, because ideas related to the human will, such as freedom or morality, are not possible objects of theoretical truth claims, they cannot be theoretically refuted either, which gives them a practical justification as immediate and irreducible parts of human social action.

When it comes to the concept of evil, Kant's argument was directed not only against traditional metaphysics but, even more importantly, against modern naturalism, which Kant recognized as a rising force. Even if Christian theology and modern naturalism are generally conceived of as quite opposite standpoints, they share an important continuum in their approaches to the idea of evil. In both Aristotelian scholasticism and Neoplatonism, evil does not exist as a positive principle of its own but only negatively as a lack of good. For example, a usual argument has been that evil exists only from a limited human perspective; from God´s point of view, all the seeming evils serve some greater good. Similarly, in mainstream modern naturalism, evil does not "really" exist; there are sufficient biological, psychological, and sociological explanations for "evil" acts, which allegedly make the conception of evil superfluous at best and detrimental at worst. In recent discussions on evil, it is usually emphasized, to the contrary, that the idea of evil is an ineliminable part of human social reality. Referring to the Stoics, Spinoza, and modern naturalism, Kant scholar Allen Wood sums up this contemporary spirit in the following manner:

> None of these views, namely, is anything that we human beings could ever unite with our reflective experience of human life. They are philosophical views suited only to gods, or perhaps rather to robots. […] I will take for granted, therefore, that there really is evil, that we are right in asking what it is and why it occurs and wrong to think that

> it is the part of reason to rise above these questions or dismiss them as meaningless. (Wood 2010, 146–147)

The argument is essentially that even though naturalistic explanations for evil actions are often sound in their own scientific context, they cannot actually say anything about the evil itself in those acts. However, it is philosophically quite unsatisfactory simply to take for granted the dualism between self-justifying practical conceptions of human action and theoretical – nowadays most often naturalistic – explanations of the same acts. Kant offered a powerful and detailed justification of this dualism, but this justification is not without its problems, as was already noticed by many of his immediate followers. From a contemporary perspective, the way Kant justifies traditional Christian ideas such as God and immortality of the soul as "postulates of pure practical reason" is particularly problematic. As will be shown in subchapter 3.6, what Kant calls the radical evil of human nature brings him back to Christian faith in a stronger sense than his transcendental project can fully justify.

I share the starting point of the majority of contemporary philosophers of evil, according to which it is practically necessary to accept the idea of evil as an irreducible part of our moral life. However, not always recognized in contemporary discussions is that it is far from trivial whether the originally metaphysically and theologically charged concept of evil can be ultimately revised into a purely moral concept. Therefore, the main research question of this study concerns the manner in which the concept of evil should be conceived and justified philosophically. The transcendental approach introduced by Kant was already outlined above. It will be studied in detail in Chapter 3 and discussed throughout the other chapters as well. Kant´s transcendental approach to evil is of great importance on its own merits, but also because it exemplifies some of the most central tenets of today´s philosophical studies on evil. I henceforth refer to this kind of hegemonic contemporary approach to evil, in which evil is understood as an irreducible human moral conception, as a *purely moral approach to evil*. The problems related to this purely moral conception of evil will be taken up in subchapters 5.2.2–5.2.4. In general, the same dualism between the theoretical and the practical, through which a purely moral conception is justified, can also be seen as a source of fundamental difficulties.

The naturalistic approach typical of the twentieth century has the merit of simplicity: in simply eliminating the idea of evil, it avoids the complications related to the theological burden of the concept. However, the most challenging form of naturalism is not necessarily to scientifically explain away the idea of evil. The Kantian argument against this kind of naturalism is very strong. Even if scientific naturalism has the theoretical advantage of non-dualism, it represents a practically impossible form of non-dualism: the same kind of naturalistic explanations by which the idea of evil is allegedly eliminated threatens to eliminate all moral conceptions in general. The Kantian dualism between the theoretical and the practical is hardly more problematic than assuming that a fundamental aspect of our lived reality is actually an illusion. However, there is another kind naturalism, most famously associated with Nietzsche, which also

profoundly challenges the idea of evil (and the idea of objective good as well) without eliminating morality in general. Naturalism in this sense is not concerned with reducing the subjective lived social reality to objective scientific explanations but with the historically and culturally contingent nature of this lived reality itself. Given that different people and especially different cultures in different times have had quite different views on what is good and what is not, it is quite reasonable to argue that none of the different moral ideals have any absolute and objective basis. Morality can still be conceived as an irreducible human capability, which only varies indefinitely in relation to physical, psychological and social conditions.

Many defences of objective morality against relativism have been written from a moral realist standpoint (see, for example, Shafer-Landau 2004). However, these defences rarely take the concept of evil as a central problem. In contemporary philosophical studies, evil is usually understood as the most extreme type of moral wrong (Russell 2014, 17–19). For example, Marcus Singer takes up an extreme crime that took place in Nevada in October 1978. A man named Lawrence Singleton offered a 15-year old girl, Mary Vincent, a lift from Berkeley to Los Angeles. However, Singleton took Mary to a remote canyon, ripped off her clothes, raped her several times, chopped off her both arms at the elbows, and finally left her bleeding in a culvert. According to Singer, evil is the only word which properly conveys the monstrosity of this kind of act. (Singer 2004, 193–196.) Even if the concept of evil is not reserved only for this kind of extreme behaviour, it betrays absolute condemnation; evil is something that simply ought not to have happened. Nietzschean naturalism immediately strikes at this vital point. From a Nietzschean perspective, an attitude which absolutely rejects some essential aspect of life (at least implicitly) denies life as a whole: "Did you ever say Yes to one joy? O my friends, then you said Yes to *all* Woe as well. All things are chained and entwined together, all things are in love; if you ever wanted one moment twice, if ever you said: 'You please me, happiness, instant, moment!' then you wanted *everything* to return." (Nietzsche 1971, 331–332.)

Nietzsche obviously does not mean literally that one cannot condemn anything while appraising other things. It is the *absolute* condemnation implicit in the concept of evil which Nietzsche conceives as life-denying. It is not essential for Nietzsche's argument if all things are actually intertwined or not. The crux of Nietzsche´s argument is that something essential and permanent happened to the idea of evil when Christian faith began to lose its hegemonic status in the Western culture. In Christianity, the evils of this world were justified by an afterlife governed by an omnipotent and benevolent God. After this kind of metaphysical foundation was gone, evil, something that absolutely ought not to be became overpowering and poisoned life. While Nietzsche explains already the birth of Christianity in terms of "ressentiment", a grudge towards life as it is here and now, Christianity at least offered a story in which evil is finally overcome. It will be argued in subchapters 2.5.3 and 5.2.4 that Nietzsche's critique of the life-denying character of the idea of evil is not primarily directed against Christianity but against modern philosophers like Kant (and, even more so, Schopenhauer),

who want to retain the idea of evil without the metaphysical machinery that once gave a promise – or at least hope – of overcoming evil. This critique is as topical as ever in the contemporary discourse of evil as a purely moral concept, and it is surprisingly rarely taken up in this context.

An idea that Nietzsche never gave much thought to is that it could be possible to conceive of evil in the context of an alternative metaphysics and theology which would provide different tools for justifying the idea of evil and for living with it, compared to the mainstream Platonic-Christian-humanistic tradition that Nietzsche vehemently attacks. This possibility is also rarely considered in contemporary discussions on evil. The main argument of this study is that by introducing what I call a *metaphysical theory of evil*, Kant's immediate follower F.W.J. Schelling presented a serious alternative both to naturalism and to Kant's purely moral approach to evil. Even though Schelling's theory can be characterized as theological, it diverges in many respects from the theological tradition criticized by Nietzsche. As will be argued in subchapter 5.2.4, there are actually several elements in Schelling's thought that anticipate some of Nietzsche's central ideas. I will present a modest defence of Schelling's metaphysical approach to evil as a middle ground between naturalism, which attempts to eliminate the idea of evil, and the purely approach to evil, which understands evil as human moral action detached from nature.

Schelling's complex theory will be briefly introduced in subchapter 2.3 and more thoroughly discussed in Chapter 4. At this point, it suffices to note that Schelling's theory has important structural similarities to Kant's theory of radical evil but operates in a completely different philosophical – and even meta-philosophical – framework. For Kant, evil consists of in the wrong subordination of "maxims" based on subjective desires and what Kant calls the categorical imperative, and objective moral law based on reason itself. In Kant´s view, singular choices are grounded in a general propensity towards evil, which must also be conceived as freely chosen in the sense that it cannot be explained by natural causes; consequently, "there cannot be any further cognition of the subjective ground or the cause of this adoption [of the propensity to evil]" (Rel 6:25; 2005, 50). In another words, the Kantian purely moral conception of evil justifies itself by a radical irreversible gap between pre-moral nature and human moral activity.

Schelling also emphasizes radical freedom in the choice between good and evil, and understands evil as the wrong subordination of the singular and the universal. However, in the essay *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*, Schelling builds both his theory of nature and morality on the dialectic of metaphysical principles of "existence" and its "ground". In this essay, nature is conceived as pantheistic, holistic organism, within which Schelling draws a fundamental dualism between the actual teleological and lawful order of nature and its unruly ground. The ground is responsible for all productivity and movement but completely senseless in itself. Existence with its lawful structure, on the other hand, would be a mere lifeless formula without the animating ground. In the human being, these metaphysical principles take a form that is

roughly analogical to the Kantian distinction of subjective desires and objective moral reason. For Schelling, moral evil consists in the unique possibility of the human being to willingly subordinate objective moral obligations to one's singular self-will; on the other hand, unlike in the purely moral approach to evil, the possibility of evil is traced back to the basic structure of nature. In this way, Schelling avoids both naturalism concerning evil, at least in any commonly used sense, and also softens the Kantian sharp dualism between nature and humanity. Moreover, the motivation of Schelling's theory of evil is not limited to a philosophical justification of the idea of evil but has important practical implications as well, some of which will be discussed in subchapter 4.5.

Evil is generally conceived as the diametrical opposite of good; in perfect goodness there is nothing evil and vice versa. Schelling, however, is committed to what S.J. McGrath (2012, 23) calls "Neoplatonic logic", according to which all opposition is based on a common ground which can never become fully articulated in the opposition. According to Schelling, opposition is not simple difference, as opposites are dialectically related (McGrath 2018, 6–7). When it comes to the opposition of good and evil in particular, Schelling writes, "the Good is the Evil – by which is meant: Evil has no power to exist in itself; that which is real in it, considered in itself, is good" (SW7, 341; 1992, 13). For Schelling, good does not consist in total exclusion of evil, but the possibility to engage in evil is that which also makes actual good choices possible. Evil, on the other hand, does not consist in mere lack of good but in misplacement of that which also energizes good action. A famous analogy of Schelling´s view of evil is cancer, by means of which the division of cells – the condition of life in general – becomes exaggerated and loses the order it has in a healthy body (Snow 1996, 174). In this sense, Schelling can be read as philosophically systematizing the meaning of the phrase "evil is the exaggeration of good". The practical meaning of Schelling's dialectic of good and evil will be further illuminated in subchapter 4.5 through examples of "Schellingian" deep ecology, psychoanalysis, and cultural anthropology.

A final important introductory remark is that the contemporary discussion on evil is generally quite analytical in style and method, even though most authors would agree with Richard Bernstein that there is "something about evil that resists and defies any final comprehension" (Bernstein 2008a, 7). In the discussions the ideal seems to be to say as clearly as possible all that which can be said with sufficient clarity, and, following Wittgenstein's famous advice, be silent on the rest. It is not clear, however, if this is the most fruitful approach when it comes to the idea of evil. As Paul Ricoeur puts it: "The virtue in formalism was in transforming what was at first only an immense and confused emotion into a philosophic problem [of evil]. But what has been gained in rigor has been lost in richness and depth" (Ricoeur 1986, 81). Both Kant and Schelling were deeply aware of the limits of rational philosophy in understanding evil, but they adopted opposite strategies in dealing with this limitation. As will be shown in subchapter 5.3, one way to put the essential difference between Kant's purely moral theory of evil and Schelling's metaphysical theory is that while both affirm

that philosophy encounters its limits in understanding evil, Kant locates this limit in human understanding, while Schelling also holds the basic structure of reality itself as paradoxical.

Contemporary purely moral theories of evil represent the Kantian approach, which emphasizes a critical epistemological attitude. The limits of rationality are understood as stemming from the fact that the human standpoint is limited, and there is no epistemologically plausible way to transcend it. The result is that the birth of human spontaneity, and with it the propensity to evil, becomes an anomaly to reason. The origin of evil cannot be attributed to nature but must be understood as a spontaneous free decision with no further explanation. A purely moral approach to evil usually leans today towards an atheistic world view, but since Kant it has also been aligned with a fideistic form of religious faith in which reason and faith are strictly separated, and God is understood to be completely beyond words and reason, possibly beyond all human experience as well. On the contrary, Schelling's approach to evil can be characterized as pantheistic, speculative, and metaphysical. In this kind of approach to evil, human reason is a limited perspective on a constitutively teleological and meaningful cosmos. Unlike in the Kantian view, there is no strict distinction between the human constitution of the world and that which remains outside it, but the human perspective is a part of the cosmos, which is conceived of in terms of different "potencies" of will and meaning. From Schelling's viewpoint, there is no need to separate philosophy and faith in a strict manner, as human reason is rooted in both animal and divine modes of consciousness. Evil remains anomalous also for Schelling, because there can never be a final explanation for why the world is structured in such a way that evil becomes possible. While I am more sympathetic to Schelling's approach to evil, it seems to me that there is no decisive argument in favour of either view (or a decisive argument beyond practical moral conviction to rule out Nietzschean naturalism either). The primary aim of this study is simply to create a serious discussion on the possibility of a metaphysical approach to evil, and through it, on the possibility of pantheistic metaphysics in general.

Before moving on to the structure of the study, I will summarize its central assumptions and goals.

(1) I shall omit traditional Christian theology as well as other denominational religions as comprehensive approaches to evil. While there is crucial symbolic and historical value in each religion, I take it as a warranted point of departure today that no particular religion is able to provide sufficient revelation to make philosophical analysis secondary. Together with the majority of contemporary philosophers of evil, I assume that the concept of evil is practically necessary. However, the practical necessity of the idea of evil is contestable, and eliminative strategies may be theoretically so appealing that a deep gap between practical experience and theoretical reasoning appears. In this respect, scientific naturalism does not pose the most fundamental problem. It is Nietzschean genealogy that I am more concerned with. While it is no doubt possible to provide a plausible answer

to Nietzsche from the standpoint of a purely moral approach to evil, I would argue that Schelling's metaphysical approach offers a less problematic way of justifying the idea of evil, and better resources to deal with evil in practice.

(2) In this study, I mainly discuss moral evil insofar as it appears in the *form* of the will in contrast to the consequences of its acts, because this is the standpoint adopted by both Kant and Schelling. I also assume that the human world is a shared world: any actual motivation of a human being is in principle intelligible to others (although actual understanding might be hard, for example, in the case of severe schizophrenia). Following from this, I deny that there exists any particularly inhuman form of evil that cannot be understood at all.

(3) On the other hand, I presuppose that the idea of evil is associated with a certain ambiguity and even paradoxicality. Both Kant's moral theory of evil and Schelling's metaphysical theory are ultimately different and partially opposed existential theories of the paradoxical place of human being at the same time within nature and above it. A systematic study of evil is necessarily also a study of the relationship between reason and faith, the place of the human being in the world.

(4) As Kant was the first to assert evil independent of theological and metaphysical presuppositions and to sharply distinguish moral human nature from pre-moral nature, I take his theory of radical evil as a prototype of any purely moral theory of evil. I also argue that most contemporary philosophers of evil have not systematically gone as far as Kant in asking what evil is and what follows from taking the conception of evil seriously, which has led to a partial disregard of the severity of Nietzschean naturalism. However, there is no room for extensively dealing either with contemporary philosophers of evil or thinkers I regard as post-Kantian. Consequently, I have to be particularly cautious in attributing to Kant as central a role as I do. On the other hand, I limit the discussion of metaphysics of evil to Schelling alone for three reasons. First, Schelling has presented both theoretically and practically the most fruitful metaphysical theory of evil I am aware of. Second, Schelling´s theory forms a natural continuum from Kant´s approach to evil, which is also highly central for this study. Third, Schelling´s theory of evil has already been recognized to some extent as innovative in contemporary discussions on evil, but the full implications of Schelling´s thought have not been satisfactorily dealt with.

## 1.2 The structure of the study

Chapter 2 serves as a historical introduction with a twofold purpose.[2] First, it works as a systematic narrative of how the concept of evil has been understood in different phases of modernity. Second, the most central thinkers who will be discussed in the later chapters are briefly introduced here.

Subchapter 2.1 begins with the classical metaphysics of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Leibniz coined the term "theodicy", which means, quite literally, justifying God's goodness in the face of all the evil in the world. Leibniz also made explicit the idea of "metaphysical evil". While its exact meaning has remained a source of controversy for scholars, this concept is evidently meant to distinguish a more abstract and general form of evil from concretely suffered or perpetrated evil. Both evil as a metaphysical concept and the idea of theodicy were implicitly taken for granted in scholastic theology. The fact that Leibniz made these concepts explicit implies that they posed a specific problem for him. Consequently, Leibniz can be read from two perspectives. On the one hand, he brought the heritage of scholastic metaphysics to a culmination; on the other hand, he cleared the way for new approaches to evil, in particular those of Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schelling.

Subchapter 2.2 moves on to Kant, who can also be read from two perspectives. Within contemporary philosophy of evil, Kant is known as the first to have formulated evil as a secular concept, as a matter of human will independent of any metaphysical or theological basis. On the other hand, thinkers such as Nietzsche and Heidegger have read Kant as someone who transformed the essential ideas of Christian theology into a form more in line with modern epistemology. Stripped from the theodicy question, let alone demons and the devil, evil for Kant became a practical problem of human morality. The separation of the idea of evil from theology but also Kant´s argument against naturalism made him a highly influential figure in contemporary philosophy of evil. However, Kant's sharp distinction between theoretical and practical reason, which was the basis of his theory of evil, was already found problematic by his immediate followers, in particular F.W.J. Schelling.

Subchapter 2.3 briefly introduces Schelling's metaphysical theory of evil, which comprises the main topic of this study. Schelling's motivation for a new metaphysics of evil (or, rather, a new appraisal of the marginalized tradition begun by Jacob Boehme) begins with a critique of both classical Christian theology and modern naturalism, as well as Kant's transcendental philosophy. In Schelling's view, classical Christian theology with its omnipotent and perfectly good God was unable to make sense of the productivity of nature and the existence of evil in an adequate manner. As Schelling puts it, "absolute causal power in one being leaves nothing but unconditional passivity for all the rest"

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[2] Apart from direct quotations, references will be omitted in this subchapter and given in the following chapters dealing with the issues introduced here.

(Schelling 1992, 11). In particular, it is hard to see how the ability to choose evil could be innate in the human being without evil having its origin in God himself. According to the common interpretation of Leibniz, the origin of evil was not God's will, which is perfectly good, but God's understanding, which necessitates a certain amount of evil even in the best of all possible worlds. Echoing this distinction, but driving it further to the extent of fundamentally transforming the idea of God, Schelling attributes the origin of evil to what he calls God's "ground".

In subchapter 2.4, I discuss a figure who represents both historically and substantially the continuation of Kant and Schelling, namely, Arthur Schopenhauer. Like Schelling, Schopenhauer was a follower of Kant who was dissatisfied with Kant's dualisms. Most likely influenced by Schelling, Schopenhauer takes the will as the point at which the Kantian dualism between things in themselves and appearances is overcome. But while for Schelling God's chaotic will of the ground is subordinated to his actual will of love, for Schopenhauer there is no cosmic meaning in life at all. Schopenhauer conceives of nature throughout in terms of something like Schelling's conception of the ground. For Schopenhauer, the final aim of the will is only to preserve itself: "No possible satisfaction in the world could suffice to still its craving, to set a final goal to its desiring and fill its heart's bottomless abyss" (Schopenhauer 2011, 637). If radical evil posed a profound existential threat for Kant, for Schopenhauer, there is not much hope to begin with. Kant's strategy to save ethical and religious ideals by justifying them as practical concepts distinct from theoretical knowledge can be seen as bleak, but Schopenhauer attempts to actually demonstrate the supposedly illusory nature of these ideals. Schopenhauer presents a profound anti-theodicy. For him, evil, both in the moral and in the (meta)physical sense, is nothing but an essential aspect of how nature ruthlessly operates without caring about human hopes and ideals. In this sense, Schopenhauer was a forerunner of naturalism, which became the dominant approach to evil in the twentieth century.

Subchapter 2.5 discusses three different forms of naturalism concerning evil. In subchapter 2.5.1, I take up what could be called a positivistic approach to evil. The central idea in this line of thought is that evil is a mythological concept which does not help in any way to explain human action. To the contrary, scientific explanations should be provided. Social-psychological explanations have been particularly popular in explaining behaviour generally conceived of as evil. It has been shown by several experiments that most people are capable of monstrous acts when they have gotten into a sufficiently dire situation. Philip Zimbardo (2004, 40), the author of the famous Stanford Prison Experiment, sums up the idea: "The Evil Situation triumphed over the Good People."

Subchapter 2.5.2 deals with Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis, which once offered a revolutionary perspective on human behaviour. Influenced by Schopenhauer, Freud pointed out in a more empirical manner, that the human mind cannot be conceived of only, and not even primarily, in terms of a self-conscious ego. The animal heritage of blind, selfish drives is an inescapable part of humanity. In many cases, these pre-conscious and pre-moral drives can lead

to destructive action. According to Freud, moral and religious regulations have the crucial function of restraining our primitive impulses. When social prohibitions are internalized as commands of what Freud calls the superego, they become socially more efficient compared to the direct use of external force. On the one hand, Freud explains actions characterized as evil in terms of pre-moral biologically-based drives. On the other hand, he explains the function of the *concept* of evil as a function of the superego.

In subchapter 2.5.3, I take up what I consider the most profound challenge to the legitimacy of the idea of evil, namely, the genealogy and moral psychology of Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche points out that the idea of evil, as it has been commonly understood in Christian and post-Christian humanistic thought, did not exist in earlier antiquity. According to Nietzsche, evil has to be understood historically as an idea which once had a function but now has become questionable. Nietzsche offers both a moral psychological argument for why he regards the idea of evil as detrimental to humanity and a genealogical explanation of how the idea came into existence. The key concepts in the former argument are "ressentiment" and "denial of life". According to Nietzsche, what is called "evil" is an ineliminable part of life, but the concept of evil implies that life should be something other than it is, which is psychologically dubious from Nietzsche's point of view. In his genealogy, Nietzsche explains the birth of the dualism of good and *evil* as a reaction of "slave morality" to the earlier "noble" proactive dualism of good and *bad*. In brief, according to Nietzsche, those who lacked power, and therefore did not enjoy life, coined the idea of evil in order to turn the proactive self-affirmation of the strong into guilt, which enabled the weak to gain more power.

Subchapter 2.6 ends the historical introduction with Hannah Arendt, who can be seen as an early proponent of contemporary philosophy of evil. After World War II, there was a deep pessimism and even despair in the air, and the intellectual community used a lot of resources to make sense of what had happened. The dominant approach to the idea of evil was a positivistic attempt to find biological, psychological, and social explanations for why the evils of the war had happened. Arendt, who had carefully studied such philosophers as Kant and Heidegger, found this kind of scientific approach to evil insufficient. She wanted to take the idea of evil seriously and continue Kant´s approach to evil as a fundamental aspect of the human condition, which should be understood primarily from the first-person perspective. Influenced by Augustine, Kant, and Heidegger among others, but also in critical spirit to all earlier accounts of evil, Arendt coined the idea of "the banality of evil", a form of evil which takes place when modern mass society turns into a totalitarian order. Banal evil results from a societal situation that not only makes possible but even promotes and normalizes atrocities such as mass murder. In this kind of society, it often becomes difficult for an individual to authentically reflect on who he or she is, and what is morally right. Even though Arendt´s insights must be understood primarily in the specific context of her theory of totalitarianism, her extensive

discussion on evil had an essential role in the rise of the ongoing "renaissance of evil".

Chapter 3 is devoted to Kant´s critical philosophy with a focus on his thoughts concerning the concept of evil. In subchapter 3.1, I explain the basic theoretical starting point of Kant´s transcendental philosophy, that is, his critique of metaphysical knowledge claims. Kant´s refutation of metaphysics works at the same time positively as the foundation of his practical philosophy, which is the topic of subchapter 3.2. Because theoretical knowledge-claims can be based legitimately only on possible sensuous experiences, the practical legitimacy of conceptions such as freedom of will, duty, or moral worth can be saved from naturalistic elimination; they are not objects of possible theoretical knowledge, and therefore it would be a category mistake to deny the reality of these ideas. In his well-known main works of practical philosophy, Kant draws a close relationship between what he calls "pure practical reason", will, and moral good. The basic starting point is that freedom of the will cannot be understood only negatively as freedom from the causal determinism of nature, as there has to also be a positive "causality of reason". According to Kant, this positive determination of freedom is based on the ability of the human will to form a law for itself. This law is called the moral law, which in the presence of desires takes the form of categorical imperative, an unconditional duty to subordinate one´s subjective desires to objective moral demands.

Towards the later stages of his career, Kant began to pay increasing attention to the fact that insofar as moral worth consists of obeying a *duty*, there is always the possibility and even inclination to neglect this duty. Moreover, because moral choices are free in the sense that they cannot be fully conceived in terms of naturalistic explanations, the decision to neglect moral duties is also an equally active positive choice, compared to obeying them. In subchapter 3.3, I explain Kant's theory of the radical evil of human nature, which essentially states that there is a universal yet freely chosen propensity to evil in mankind, that is, a propensity to subordinate the moral law to one's subjective maxims. Subchapter 3.4 continues to a more holistic understanding of Kant´s critical project, and of the theory of radical evil in particular. Kant's philosophy of history and religion are an integral part of the overall coherence of the critical project. Ideas of "the highest good", the union of dutiful action and the happiness it deserves, and God as the ground of its realization, are present in Kant's works throughout the critical project, but gradually they begin to play a more and more central role for him. These ideas also go through a transformation from a transcendent form to a more immanent one. First, the highest good played for Kant largely the same role as Heaven in traditional Christianity; it was understood as an otherworldly justice, which compensates for the injustice of this actual life. Later, the highest good became more directly associated with the orientation of good will itself; Kant understood it as the telos of all moral action without which singular moral acts would be left isolated without any persisting project. I will argue that radical evil should be understood as a negative counterpart of the highest good; radical evil is a self-willed fundamental hindrance to the realization of the highest good,

which ultimately forms a "breaking point of reason" for Kant and leads to a religious faith that cannot be fully grounded philosophically.

In subchapter 3.5, I take up six different critiques of the theory of radical evil. The idea of radical evil has been criticized in different ways for being trivial, too limited, queer or incoherent. I will show that each of the critiques is largely based on a misguided reading of what radical evil is about. The theory of radical evil, I argue, is not primarily a normative theory of evil but rather a metaethical justification of the concept of evil by means of transcendental philosophy. When this broader context of Kant´s project is properly taken into account, the sharpest edge of the critiques is diminished. However, there is a fundamental tension in the theory of radical evil, or rather in Kant´s philosophical project as a whole, which can be seen as a profound problem. In subchapter 3.6, it is demonstrated that despite the secular starting point of Kant´s theory of evil, it ultimately leads back to Christian faith, not only in the form of postulates of practical reason but also as classical fideistic faith. While in the late stage of Kant´s critical philosophy, the highest good is the unifying telos of moral will itself, radical evil must be understood as freely willed as well, and this results in a practical as well as theoretical contradiction in the heart of human will. Not only is God needed as an ideal of human reason, when it comes to the irreversible radical evil of human nature, Kant ultimately ends up with a purely religious faith in "cooperation from above" (Kant 2005b, 71).

Chapter 4 is similarly devoted to F.W.J. Schelling´s philosophy and its influence on contemporary thought, again with a focus on Schelling's theory of evil. In subchapter 4.1, I give a summary of the different phases of Schelling´s thought and his influence in general. In contrast to the classical reading of Schelling as a thinker who never finished anything properly and constantly rushed to explore new ideas, I agree with Heidegger that "there was seldom a thinker who fought so passionately ever since his earliest periods for his one and unique standpoint" (Heidegger 1985, 6). This standpoint, which Schelling constantly approached from new perspectives, was his critique of both straightforward monism (often associated with Spinoza) and Kantian dualism. In subchapter 4.2, I focus on one particular work, *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*, known as the "Freedom Essay", in which Schelling discusses evil most extensively. The Freedom Essay begins with the dilemma between system and freedom, between nature governed by laws, and freedom, which seems to be incompatible with nature understood as a system, but nonetheless operates within it. While Kant´s solution to this problem was to impose a strict dualism between the causality of nature as the third-person viewpoint and the causality of freedom as the first-person viewpoint, Schelling embraces what could be called paradoxical monism. Schelling conceives of will not merely as a human capability distinct from the causality of nature but as the most fundamental aspect of nature itself. However, Schelling´s monism of the will immediately takes the form of an "ontological double principle", which appears in the concepts of "existence" and its "ground", essentially two opposite "directions" of divine will.

In subchapter 4.3, I clarify the background of Schelling´s peculiar metaphysics by taking up his influences from the esotericism of Jacob Boehme. Subchapter 4.4 focuses on Schelling´s theory of evil. Schelling understands evil as a wrong subordination of the principles of lawful existence and its chaotic ground. When it comes to human moral evil in particular, Schelling´s view of evil is structurally similar to Kant´s theory of radical evil, but the metaphysics of will underlying it leads to completely different strengths and challenges, compared to Kant. In subchapter 4.5, I take up three different contexts in which Schelling´s ideas on evil have been or could be interpreted. Subchapter 4.5.1 presents Schelling as a deep ecological thinker who sees implicit evil in the modern dualism between the human being as an active subject and nature as a passive object. In subchapter 4.5.2, I view Schelling as a psychoanalytical thinker who can be seen as a forerunner of both Freud´s and Jung´s, as well as Lacan's, central ideas about the unconscious, psychosis, and neurosis. Finally, in subchapter 4.5.3, Schelling´s theory of evil is interpreted in a societal context in terms of the dialectic of what Benjamin Barber calls "Jihad" and "McWorld".

Chapter 5 is the culmination of this study, in which I compare and assess the respective strengths and weaknesses of purely moral and metaphysical approaches to evil. Schelling's metaphysics of evil has rarely been discussed in comparison to contemporary purely moral theories of evil, and therefore it is not often explicitly criticized either. In subchapter 5.1, I construct some likely critiques, and in answering them also clarify the relationship of Schelling´s metaphysics of evil to the purely moral approach to evil. In subchapter 5.2, I present three interrelated critiques against the prevalent consensus of evil as a purely moral concept. In subchapter 5.2.1, I begin by demonstrating the Kantian origin of the contemporary "renaissance of evil". Some contemporary authors explicitly acknowledge their debt to Kant, but those who never mention Kant by name have also widely accepted a strategy of justifying the concept of evil against naturalism, which can be seen as Kantian. All the critiques I take up in the next three subchapters are based in one sense or another on the fact that this kind of purely moral approach to evil radically separates evil and human action in general from the rest of nature. Even though problematic in other aspects, Schelling's metaphysical theory of evil avoids this radical dualism and, therefore, is less vulnerable to naturalistic attacks.

Subchapter 5.2.2 deals with pre-categorical experiences of dread, which, according to psychologist Fred Alford's empirical study, are the most common thing that people generally associate with evil. A purely moral approach to evil obviously cannot take these experiences seriously in terms of *evil*, but has to adopt a similar naturalistic approach, which it fiercely opposes, when it comes to evil as a moral concept. In subchapter 5.2.3, I discuss Susan Neiman´s argument of the idea of evil as a central driving force behind the development of modern philosophy. As Neiman points out, the division between moral and natural evil became prominent only in Leibniz´s time. This fact should evoke the question about the historical nature of the idea of evil as a purely moral concept. Can it be justified as *the* valid conception of evil, since it is clear that the idea of evil has,

historically speaking, quite recently undergone a fundamental change? Subchapter 5.2.4 culminates in the critiques of Nietzsche´s naturalism. Nietzsche offers an explanation of how and why the concept of evil was born, paying specific attention to the Kantian turn through which evil became a purely moral concept. According to Nietzsche, the idea of evil inhibits affirmation of life, since it belongs to the nature of life that it will always include unbearable suffering and ruthless use of power without any compensation. From Nietzsche's point of view, the intoxicating effect of the idea of evil only becomes stronger when evil is taken as a purely moral concept without Christian theology, which provides hope of an otherworldly demise of evil. In subchapters 5.2.2–5.2.4, it is argued that a metaphysical theory of evil is in a better position to answer the critiques than purely moral theories of evil, since it does not separate the idea of evil from nature and does not need to explain why the current understanding of evil as a moral concept should not be naturalized while other conceptions should.

In subchapter 5.3, I proceed to the different (often opposing) presuppositions behind metaphysical and purely moral approaches to evil. I also take up the possibility, most famously advanced by Slavoj Žižek, of using the hermeneutic potential of Schelling's theory without commitment to its factual metaphysical presuppositions. Subchapter 5.3.1 compares the different underlying conceptions of nature grounding metaphysical and purely moral theories of evil. For Kant, nature as an ordered whole is a human construction, based on the synthesizing action of theoretical reason on possible sensuous experiences. For Schelling, by contrast, nature is a constitutively teleological organism, which nonetheless has also the element of the chaotic ground. I will also argue that, in this respect, Žižek and likeminded "new realists" are much closer to Kant than to Schelling: they conceive of nature in itself as a formless chaos that is structured into a meaningful whole by human subjectivity.

Subchapter 5.3.2 moves on to the different relationships the two approaches to evil have to religiousness, or spirituality. Kant begins his philosophical project from a secular and purely rational standpoint but ends up defending Christian faith in a twofold sense. On the one hand, Kant transforms the traditional Christian ideas of God and the divine kingdom into practically necessary ideas of human reason. On the other hand, as argued in subchapter 3.6, Kant ultimately falls back to philosophically ungrounded faith when it comes to the oppressing facticity of radical evil. For Schelling, by contrast, reason and religious feeling are intertwined from the beginning. From the viewpoint of Kant's critical philosophy and the contemporary purely moral approach to evil, this partly ruins the legitimacy of Schelling's philosophy. From Schelling's point of view, however, pantheistic metaphysics allows a more balanced relationship between reason and faith than Kant´s critical philosophy. New realists, on the other hand, interpret Schelling's ideas about nature and evil in an explicitly atheistic manner, thereby attempting to avoid both Kant's strained position and Schelling's "mysticism". I will argue that it is contestable whether they coherently succeed either in utilizing Schelling's creativity or in transcending Kant's problematic relationship to religion.

In subchapter 5.3.3, I finally assess the strengths and weaknesses of purely moral and metaphysical approaches to evil. The advantage of a metaphysical approach to evil is that it provides a framework that brings together themes as different as ecology, psychoanalysis, and cultural recognition, and it does not separate human action from nature, as a purely moral approach to evil does. A purely moral approach to evil, on the other hand, is not committed to strong metaphysical presuppositions apart from anti-naturalism. Ultimately, the differences between the two lines of thought are shown to stem largely from different conceptions of what philosophy in general is about. New realist interpretations of Schelling aim at combining the attractive elements of both moral and metaphysical approaches to evil, but the downside is that such a stance easily appears to be an attempt to have one´s cake and eat it, too. Subchapter 5.4 sums up the investigation by repeating the strengths and weaknesses of the four lines of thought on the concept of evil discussed in this study: (1) (Nietzschean) naturalism, which attempts to eliminate the idea of evil, (2) the purely moral conception of evil, (3) the naturalization of the metaphysical conception of evil, and (4) the actual metaphysics of evil.

# 2 CHAPTER TWO: A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE CONCEPT OF EVIL

## 2.1 Leibniz and the Scholastic tradition

Scholasticism essentially unified leading the ideas of Plato and Aristotle with the Christian faith. God of the ancient philosophers was transformed into the Christian personal God, who was conceived not only as the most perfect being but also as the creator of the world. In particular, the Platonic problem of metaphysical perfection was transformed into the theodicy problem: how can an omnipotent and benevolent God allow the existence of evil? There are three types of solutions to the theodicy problem: either God's omnipotence or goodness can be denied, or it can be argued that from the divine viewpoint alleged evils ultimately exist for a greater good. The first two possibilities have been generally held to be heretical, so the theodicy problem has usually been solved by providing justification for God´s creation of the evils in the world. Evil is seen, one way or other, as a necessary "side-effect" of the most perfect possible world being created.

Lars Svendsen divides theodicies into four categories: privation, free will, Irenaean and totality theodicies. Svendsen traces privation theodicies back to the Neo-Platonist Plotinus, who equated evil with matter. In neo-platonic cosmology, the most perfect form of existence is the unknowable, perfect One, and reality as we know it forms a hierarchy of "emanations" from this primal source. Matter contains the least perfection and is therefore associated with what is called evil. Later, Thomas Aquinas developed what is properly known as the privation theory of evil. For Aquinas, evil does not consist in a general lack of perfection but only in "privations", that is, lacks in the ideal nature of a being. For example, it is not an evil for a human being to lack wings but for a bird it is. Free will theodicy is first associated with Plato and Augustine, and subsequently developed by Aquinas as well. The argument is that even though free will makes

evil choices possible, the world would be significantly less perfect without beings capable of free choice. Irenaean theodicy is named after Irenaeus who lived in the second century AD. This type of theodicy is also known as "soul-making" theodicy, for the idea is that without suffering and evil humans could not develop their selves to their full potential. Finally, totality theodicies justify the existence of evil by the claim that all evils ultimately contribute to the good of the whole. (Svendsen 2010, 46–59.)

Contemporary Christian philosophers usually advocate for a *defence* instead of a *theodicy*, that is, rather than offering an explanation why God allows evil to appear, they merely argue that the theodicy problem is not a decisive reason to abandon Christian faith, although it may pose a serious challenge to it (van Inwagen 2006, 6–7). However, in the early modern period most of the influential philosophers were concerned with theodicy. The birth of modern rationalism enhanced the need to justify Christian faith by means of rational philosophical arguments. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz can be seen as a philosopher in whom the continuum of scholasticism and early modern rationalism culminated, especially in terms of the theodicy problem. In Leibniz´s main work *Theodicy*, the free will argument (2007, 192), the totality argument (2007, 132), the privation argument (2007, 284), and the soul-making argument (2007, 206) are all at work. The term 'theodicy' itself, which is derived from Greek *theos* (God) and *dike* (justice), was coined by Leibniz (Nadler 2010, 89). According to Steven Nadler, a prominent scholar of early modern philosophy, "throughout his philosophical career, Leibniz was occupied, even obsessed, with the problem of evil" (Nadler 2010, 89).

In section §21 of *Theodicy* Leibniz introduces his famous typology of evil: "Evil may be taken metaphysically, physically and morally. *Metaphysical evil* consists in mere imperfection, *physical evil* in suffering, and *moral evil* in sin." (Leibniz 2007, 139.) Physical evil is obviously evil that is suffered, while moral evil consists in evil action, but the meaning of metaphysical evil is much less clear. Leibniz never defines metaphysical evil more precisely, be it in *Theodicy* or any other work in his 50-year-long career, although the concept of metaphysical evil is evidently central for the construction of his theodicy (Latzer 1994, 8).

Based on a passage just before the above typology, commentators since Bertrand Russel and C.D. Broad have generally equated metaphysical evil with the necessary imperfection that any created being bears when compared to the perfect God (Latzer 1994, 1–3). Namely, in section §20 Leibniz asks what is the ultimate origin of evil and argues "that there is an *original imperfection in the creature* before sin, because the creature is limited in its essence; whence ensues that it cannot know all, and that it can deceive itself and commit other errors" (Leibniz 2007, 138–139). According to Michael Latzer, the equation of metaphysical evil and original imperfection is still misguided, for it would imply that evil is metaphysically necessary. As Latzer (2004, 14) notes, contrary to such a view, Leibniz is actually quite straightforward in asserting that God could have created a world without evil: "For one must confess that there is evil in this world which God has made, and that it would have been possible to make a world without evil or even not to create any world, since its creation depended upon

the free will of God" (Leibniz 2007, 380). The original imperfection of beings is metaphysically necessary, but following the Augustinian-Thomist tradition, Leibniz does not equate evil with imperfection as such but with privations. God chose the best of the possible worlds, but even the best possible world contains evil. It follows that evil, in Leibniz's view, is *causally* but not *metaphysically* necessary, and this sharply distinguishes Leibniz from the neo-platonic tradition and Spinoza in particular. (Latzer 1994, 3–6.)

In Latzer's view, metaphysical evil plays two roles for Leibniz. Primarily it means physical or moral evil taken metaphysically. Even if imperfection in general is not evil for Leibniz, all evils are imperfections, albeit imperfections which are required in order to attain the most perfect world overall. For example, moral evil can be approached as metaphysical evil when it is seen not as a positive act but as a failure in the realization of the ideal nature of the human being. Yet, Leibniz also seems to treat metaphysical evil as a category of evils separate from physical or moral evil. In this sense metaphysical evil refers to imperfections in some being´s ideal nature, which do not cause suffering or consist of wrongdoing. For example, many deformities in humans or animals belong to this category. Leibniz also considers as evils apparent irregularities in the order of nature, such as comets and sunspots, for they do not seem to serve any purpose, and God has created everything for a purpose. (Latzer 1994, 8–13.) In the long run, however, Leibniz cannot allow anything that would contradict God's will:

> One must believe that even sufferings and monstrosities are part of order; and it is well to bear in mind not only that it was better to admit these defects and these monstrosities than to violate general laws, as Father Malebranche sometimes argues, but also that these very monstrosities are in the rules, and are in conformity with [God´s] general acts of will, though we be not capable of discerning this conformity. (Leibniz 2007, 279)

Therefore, Latzer (1994, 11–12) concludes that Leibniz´s notion of metaphysical evil is "bound to be a fairly imprecise one and, to some extent, a function of human misperception".

Maria Rosa Antognazza also finds two key roles of metaphysical evil in Leibniz´s theodicy. First, the notion is designed to capture what is today understood as "natural evil". Second, in explicit opposition to Latzer´s interpretation, Antognazza identifies metaphysical evil with the original imperfection of creatures. (Antognazza 2014, 117.) Antognazza points out that, for Leibniz, physical evil does not refer to all suffering but only to human suffering which results from sin. Leibniz explicitly equates his conceptions of physical evil and moral evil with the scholastic notions of *malum poenae* and *malum culpae*, respectively; evil suffered as a result of sin and evil as committing the sin. (Antognazza 2014, 124.) Metaphysical evil, on the contrary, covers both the suffering of non-intelligent beings and human suffering which cannot be conceived as a result of sinning. On the other hand, metaphysical evil as the original imperfection of beings contributes to the central argument of Leibniz´s

theodicy; metaphysical evil explains why even the best possible world contains evil.

It would require a separate study to fully delve Leibniz´s thought which forms a complex web of logics, metaphysics, and theology. According to Antognazza, "the notion of metaphysical evil will appear to be a complex mix of indebtedness to tradition and bending of received doctrines into something significantly different" (Antognazza 2014, 117). As a result, within the limits of this study there are two essential issues which Leibniz invokes. From a backward-looking perspective, Leibniz stands at the culmination point of Christian theology, at least when it comes to the theodicy problem. In scholasticism, it was taken for granted that evil is a metaphysical concept, as we would today put it. According to Susan Neiman, it was Rousseau who first distinguished moral and natural evil in the way we today associate the conceptions with; moral evil as human choice and natural evil as morally neutral natural events (Neiman 2004, 39). During the Enlightenment, it was still generally taken for granted that physical evils exist as punishment for sin; moral evil was conceived to be far more problematic than physical evil when it comes to justifying God´s ways (Neiman 2004, 38). Leibniz was the first who used the notion of "metaphysical evil" (Antognazza 2014, 117). If Antognazza´s interpretation is correct, one function of this conception was to make room for suffered evil, which appears to have no justification. In allowing the existence of such evil, however, Leibniz´s theodicy runs into difficulties which are hard to resolve within the requirements of the modern rationalism Leibniz was committed to. As someone who coined the explicit conception of metaphysical evil and combined fundamental elements from the Augustinian-Thomistic privation tradition and the neo-platonic tradition, Leibniz had already used the philosophical resources of Christian metaphysics. In Leibniz´s philosophy, the theodicy problem begins to mark the endpoint of Christian metaphysics, at least within the limits of rational philosophy.

From a forward-looking perspective, Leibniz opened the way to different approaches to the idea of evil. One alternative was redeemed by Kant, who will be discussed in the next subchapter and in more length in Chapter 3. By means of his transcendental turn, Kant eliminated the theodicy problem as a theoretical metaphysical problem but reintroduced it on another level, which he conceived as purely religious. Another possibility is to think of evil in an alternative theological context, which breaks with the traditional Christian idea of an omnipotent and perfectly good God. In this study, F.W.J. Schelling´s pantheistic metaphysics represents this possibility. Schelling´s metaphysical conception of evil will be discussed in subchapter 2.3 and in Chapter 4. Finally, the concept of evil can be seen as an outdated remainder of Christian theology to begin with. The kind of naturalistic approaches typical of the twentieth century will be taken up in subchapter 2.5.

## 2.2 Kant and the transcendental turn

Kant began as a follower of Leibniz and Christian Wolff who essentially popularized Leibniz´s system. Like Leibniz, Kant was also highly concerned with the theodicy problem at his pre-critical stage. After the critical turn, the existence of God and the theodicy problem in particular obviously had to be thought through completely anew. In his essay "On the Miscarriage of All Philosophical Trials in Theodicy" Kant takes up the theodicy problem in the critical stage of his career. Kant makes a distinction between "doctrinal" and "authentic" theodicy. By doctrinal theodicy, Kant means theodicy in the traditional sense, offering a rational explanation for why all the seeming evils in the world are ultimately planned for the best by God. On the contrary, authentic theodicy is theodicy only in the negative sense from the viewpoint of rational explaining. It merely addresses that there is no way to show that the world is not governed by divine goodness and understanding. Authentic theodicy "is not the interpretation of a *ratiocinating* (speculative) reason, but of an *efficacious* practical reason which, just as in legislating it commands absolutely without further grounds, so it can be considered as the unmediated definition and voice of God through which he gives meaning to the letter of his creation" (Theo 8:264–265; 2005 24–25). Kant is here referring to his central distinction between theoretical and practical reason, which will be clarified in Chapter 3. In short, theoretical reason concerns the third-person viewpoint regarding the world, which is associated with fact claims. Practical reason, on the contrary, is the innate logic in the use of will. According to Kant, theoretical reason can neither confirm nor refute theological questions, but practical reason can justify the faith in divine benevolence as an innate, morally grounded experience of the first-person perspective.

Only two years later in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Kant adopts an even more critical stance on classical theological metaphysics. In this essay, Kant takes the consequences of the basic assumptions of his moral philosophy to the logical conclusion. According to Kant, the capacity of free moral action separates humanity from the rest of nature. However, given that good actions cannot be conclusively explained in a naturalistic fashion (for example, by benevolent emotions), the same must apply to evil actions. Henry Allison (1990, 39–40) has dubbed this Kant's incorporation thesis. As Kant puts it: "Freedom of the power of choice has the characteristic, entirely peculiar to it, that it cannot be determined to action through any incentive *except so far as the human being has incorporated it into his maxim*" (Rel 6:23–24; 2005, 49). Even though various natural facts play a huge role in explaining someone´s moral choices, there is, according to Kant, an absolute gap between the sum total of these explanations and the spontaneity of any actual moral choice.

In *Religion*, Kant develops the theory of radical evil, according to which there is a universal propensity in mankind to make choices contrary to what the moral law obligates. On the other hand, the origin of this propensity cannot be explained any further, for such an explanation would sever the freedom of the

will. According to Kant, human moral agency is inconceivable without the propensity to evil, for the moral worth of good acts would diminish without the temptation to choose contrary to the moral law. As will be shown in more detail in subchapter 3.6, Kant´s conclusion is that the same practical reason which is identified with the ability to recognize the unconditional moral law is always already stained with the propensity to evil, and yet this propensity is fully imputable to us. Kant (Rel 6:19; 2005, 45) calls this conflict "the radical evil in human nature". The universal propensity to evil as a condition of human moral agency not only makes it inconceivable that evil would be eradicated from the world, but it also makes human will itself internally and fundamentally inconsistent; the same will which legislates the moral law to itself also chooses a propensity to evil. As Joël Madore puts it, radical evil "marks the breaking point of reason" (Madore 2013, 47). Consequently, Kant finally has to trust in "cooperation from above" (Rel 6:52; 2005, 71) without rational justification.

Kant was almost 200 years ahead of his time in addressing evil as a purely moral concept. Even though he defends Christian faith, Kant defines moral evil without theological or metaphysical presuppositions. He also provides a strong defence against a naturalistic reduction of evil, similar to the way the idea of evil is often justified today. Eve Garrard and David McNaughton (2012, 1–2) have distinguished three typical critiques of the use of the concept of evil. They call the first challenge *metaphysical*. In traditional theology the concept of evil was often associated with sinister supernatural entities. Although belief in such entities is no longer a norm, many people still believe in human monsters. If an evil person is conceived of as being completely unlike the rest of us in terms of their mental life, he is practically not a citizen of mankind but a monster in human disguise. The second challenge is *epistemic*. "He was evil" is not actually as much an explanation for someone´s acts as it is often an end to search for explanations. The third challenge is *moral*. If we call someone immoral, we are reproaching him and demanding that he should become better. But when we call someone evil, in effect we create a deep moral gap between ourselves and the one we are condemning.

The first and third critiques completely miss Kant's argument. For Kant, the propensity to evil consists in prioritizing one´s selfish desires before the unconditional obligation of the moral law. Understood in this way, evil obviously does not refer to any kind of unintelligible monstrosity or moral otherness, but it is something all too familiar to everyone. The critique that Kant´s theory of evil does not explain anything will be discussed in subchapter 3.5.1. In subchapters 3.5.2–3.5.6, other critiques of radical evil will be taken up, and it will be argued that Kant´s conception of evil is still a viable candidate for a secular moral theory of evil. In subchapter 5.2.1, it is also shown that contemporary theories of evil are often based on essentially the same basic premises as Kant´s theory of radical evil. However, in subchapter 3.6, I argue that the religious conclusions Kant draws from his theory are not peripheral to his transcendental project; Kant comes surprisingly close to a thinker like Kierkegaard, instead of the thoroughly rationalistic Enlightenment thinker he is generally known as. It is far from clear

if contemporary theories of evil can avoid either the theological burden of the idea of evil. However, it also possible to conceive of evil as an openly metaphysical theological concept in the context of an alternative tradition compared to mainstream Christian theology and its secular continuations.

## 2.3 Schelling's metaphysics of evil

Schelling began his philosophical career at the time when Kant published *Religion*. Since his earliest essays, Schelling was highly influenced by Kant but also opposed Kant´s rejection of metaphysics. For Schelling, the transcendental paradigm severs humanity from the rest of nature by making the order of nature structured by human subjectivity. *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom* is often regarded as the most revolutionary and original of Schelling's works, and it is the only work in which Schelling discusses evil at length. Instead of choosing the Kantian option of justifying the concept of evil by making a sharp distinction between human subjectivity and the processes of nature, Schelling traces the origin of evil to nature itself. For Schelling, evil again becomes a theologically and metaphysically loaded concept but in quite a different way than that seen in mainstream scholastic and early modern philosophy.

Schelling´s theory of evil is based on his distinction between God insofar as he actually exists and God´s ground, which Schelling describes "the longing which the eternal One feels to give birth to himself" (SW7, 359; 1992, 34). The idea that God who grounds everything else must also have a ground is not new as such; the scholastic notion of *causa sui* is employed to this end. According to Schelling, in general, "all philosophies say this, but they speak of this ground as a mere concept without making it something real and actual" (SW7, 357–358; 1992, 32). In short, Schelling is seeking a way to conceive of nature itself as productive instead of a mere product of God, and at the same time to ground human freedom in this productivity. In traditional Christian theology it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that God alone is ultimately the only productive being. As Schelling puts it, "absolute causal power in one being leaves nothing but unconditional passivity for all the rest" (SW7, 339; 1992, 11). On the other hand, in Spinoza´s monism, which can be seen as a predecessor of modern naturalism, every operation of the human will, like all events in nature in general, "must be determined by some other thing, which in turn is determined by another, and so forth endlessly" (SW, 349; 1992, 22). In Schelling´s view, this kind of naturalism is unable to make sense of the productivity of nature and human freedom.

Schelling agrees with Kant's transcendental philosophy in that the mere practical experience of freedom proves that it is at least inconceivable to think of acts of will as mere events in a causal chain. However, because Schelling wants to think of human freedom as a part of the whole of nature, the Kantian solution is not a possibility for him; a new kind of metaphysics is needed. While Kant conceives of will as a specifically human faculty, according to Schelling, "in the

final and highest instance there is no other Being than Will" (SW7, 350; 1992, 24). Human will as a part of nature becomes conceivable for Schelling because will is present in all nature in different "potencies", as Schelling puts it in his later unfinished work *The Ages of the World*.

For Schelling, God is not personal in the sense of a distinct being who creates the order of nature out of nothing. Although Schelling does not explicitly identify himself as a pantheist, he does not deny this once notorious title, and he explicitly argues that Spinoza´s fatalism has nothing to do with his pantheism (SW7, 349; 1992, 22). For these reasons, I conceive Schelling as a pantheist, even though, as explained in subchapter 4.3, panentheist could be a more exact term. In Schelling's pantheism, God´s will is present in everything, but a proper understanding of the productivity of nature and human freedom in particular requires a more complex conception of this will, compared to the most fundamental starting point of traditional Christian theology, namely, an omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good God. Schelling´s God is in a state of constant becoming, and because the ground against which this becoming takes place must also be in God, "this contradiction can only be solved by things having their basis in that within God which is not *God himself*, i.e. in that which is the basis of his existence" (SW7, 359; 1992, 33). God's actual will structures nature teleologically but in God´s ground the will is still in the form of blind longing: "the world as we now behold it, is all rule, order and form; but the unruly lies ever in the depths as though it might again break through, and order and form nowhere appear to have been original, but it seems as though what had initially been unruly had been brought to order" (SW7, 359; 1992, 34). Sean McGrath aptly describes Schelling´s conception of the ground as God's unconscious (McGrath 2012, 151).

While the question why an omnipotent and good God allows the existence of evil, haunted classical Christian theology, the concept of the ground makes the reality of evil in Schelling´s metaphysics immediately conceivable. The root of evil is in God himself, for in his ground God is still blind self-will, which is deaf to morality. Schelling´s God is simply not omnipotent or perfectly good, at least in the traditional Christian sense. The will of the ground is not evil as such; it is the vitality understood separately from rationality and morality. God´s ground is the raw productivity abstracted from the lawful order of nature, in which alone productivity can actually take place. Evil in the proper sense of the word appears only in the human being, who alone in nature possesses spirit, the free jointure of self-will of the ground and the universal will of love (SW7, 363–364 1992, 39). Evil, according to Schelling, consists in the wrong subordination of these two vectors of will. The ground in the human being represents the non-rational, but it should also be characterized as one´s "ownness" in opposition to morality and rationality, which are concerned with the other and with the general. Moral evil can only take place in a being who is self-conscious, moral and rational, and who lets these characteristics become subordinated to the blind self-will of the ground. In this respect, Schelling comes close to Kant; both characterize evil as free choice

of the wrong subordination between one´s egoistic inclinations and concern for the other.

Both the structural affinity and the opposite metaphysical frameworks behind Kant´s and Schelling´s theories of evil will be analysed in Chapter 5. It will be argued that Schelling´s theory avoids many of the difficulties of the Kantian approach, but there is an obvious reason why it has not often been taken up in contemporary discussions about evil. The most distinctive source of Schelling´s metaphysics in the Freedom Essay is Jacob Boehme´s theosophy, which is based on traditions most adequately associated with Western esotericism. Esotericism, as I argue in subchapter 4.3, has been marked as "the Other" of rational thought especially since the Enlightenment. Although Schelling has had a huge influence on numerous more or less theologically inspired philosophers such as Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Levinas, Derrida, and Tillich, his reputation has been largely overshadowed by Kant and Hegel. At least a partial reason why Schelling was never followed by a commonly acknowledged legacy, and why he is mainly known as a mere predecessor of Hegel, is that he brought forward a tradition that was – and still is – suppressed in the Western intellectual history. However, Schelling´s actual influence is entirely another story. To offer one important example, Schelling is a crucial mediator between the esoteric undercurrents of Romanticism and what later became known as psychoanalysis (Ffytche 2013, 7–9; McGrath 2012, 21). I will next move on to Arthur Schopenhauer who is more commonly associated as the predecessor of the psychoanalytical world view. Schopenhauer was heavily influenced by Schelling´s metaphysics of the will, but transformed it into a more naturalistic direction, which makes Schopenhauer the link between Schelling´s alternative theological metaphysics and the naturalistic critiques of mainstream Western metaphysics presented by Freud and Nietzsche.

## 2.4 Schopenhauer – between metaphysics and naturalism

The most famous characteristic of Schopenhauer´s philosophy is its thorough pessimism. In the Christian scholastic tradition culminating in Leibniz, it was argued that ultimately all the evils in the world are rationally designed by God for the realization of a greater good. Enlightenment humanism has also had an overall optimistic view of humanity, or at least the possibilities of its development. Schopenhauer denied both that life is purposeful in the cosmic sense and that humanity is developing towards greater rationality and harmony. The spirit of Schopenhauer´s philosophy is quite well demonstrated by his half serious inversion of Leibniz's theology of the best possible world. According to Schopenhauer, this world is actually the worst possible one, which "is arranged as it had just barely to be in order to persist: if it were a little bit worse, it could no longer persist" (Schopenhauer 2011, 649). In Schopenhauer's view, there is just the minimum of harmony in the world, so that it does not fall apart and is able to continue its ailing existence into an unknown future (Neiman 2004, 196–198).

To give an example of Schopenhauer´s almost poetic lamentations about the nature of life being essentially cruel, deceptive, and meaningless:

> Awakened to life from out of the night of unconsciousness, will finds itself as an individual, in an endless and boundless world, among countless individuals, all striving, suffering, erring, and as if through a troubled dream, it hurries back to its old unconsciousness. Up to this point, however, its desires are limitless, its demands inexhaustible, and every satisfied desire gives birth to a new one. […] Everything in life gives notice of the fact that earthly happiness is destined to be thwarted or recognized as an illusion. For this, the grounds lie deep in the essence of things. […] The comparatively happy are usually only seemingly so, or else, like the long lived, rare exceptions for which a possibility had to be left over – as decoys. Life displays itself as a continual deception, in matters small as well as great. If it has promised, it does not keep to it: unless it be to show how little desirable was the desired. Thus now we are deceived by hope, now by what was hoped for. If it has given, it was in order to take. (Schopenhauer 2011, 637)

In modern philosophy nature has usually been regarded as open to a rational understanding of its laws, and the human being has been understood as basically rational and good. Schopenhauer denies both of these optimistic premises. According to Schopenhauer, nature in its most fundamental essence is not open to rational analysis, and the same applies even to human self-consciousness. The key to Schopenhauer's critique is that, according to him, neither nature nor the human being should be primarily conceived in terms of rational laws but in terms of irrational will:

> Everything presses and drives toward existence, if possible toward *organic* existence, i.e., *life*, and thereafter to its highest possible enhancement; in animal nature it then becomes obvious that *will for life* is the keynote of its essence, its only immutable and unconditioned property. Just consider this universal press for life, just look at the infinite readiness, ease, and opulence with which, in millions of forms everywhere and at every moment, by means of fertilizations and seeds, and where these are lacking, by means of *generatio aequivoca*, the will for life presses vehemently into existence, seizing every opportunity, greedily appropriating any material capable of life, and then cast a glance at its horrific cry of alarm and wild uproar when it is to be withdrawn from existence in any one or other individual phenomenon, especially where this occurs with distinct consciousness. (Schopenhauer 2011, 399–400)

At the most fundamental level, the will is a metaphysical principle for Schopenhauer, as it was for Schelling. In animal kingdom, the will takes the form of drives, and in the human being it finally appears in the form of conscious goals. However, beneath consciousness the will remains in its basic form as blind, endless craving. In Schopenhauer´s metaphysical pessimism, the will ultimately uses consciousness as its vehicle. Many human goals are based on animal drives in a more or less obvious way. According to Schopenhauer, however, even the highest expressions of human values and goals can be reduced to the endlessly self-generating activity of the will. Religious and moral ideals form no exception, but they are "designed" by the will for the purpose of creating the illusion of a possible better world, either in a future life or some transcendent realm, which effectively helps people to strive more intensively in this moment. According to Schopenhauer, acknowledging the omnipresent nature of the will does not provide any tools for transcending the futility of life either. On the contrary,

increased awareness only makes suffering more intense. Even suicide is not an effective solution, because it is still an act of will; suicide destroys only the vehicle of will (the body), not the will itself (Schopenhauer 2008, 426).

At this point, evil becomes a central issue for Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer divides moral action to three different categories: good, bad, and evil. In Schopenhauer´s view, good will is based on what he calls "compassion" (*Mitleid)*, recognizing that not only human beings but all sentient beings are "victims" of the purposeless metaphysical will, and cannot help their situation. Ordinary egoism does not count as evil for Schopenhauer. Given the nature of the will, egoism is the most common principle one should expect from human beings. Blindly submitting to the dictates of the will is what Schopenhauer conceives as merely bad. For Schopenhauer, as for Kant and Schelling, evil is associated with the special character of the human being rather than animal drives as such. In Schopenhauer´s view, evil refers only to the kind of willingly destructive and oppressive behaviour, sometimes referred to as "diabolical evil", which cannot be explained by egoism in any simple sense of the term. Through evil acts the perpetrator does not gain any profit himself, but only wants others to suffer. (Dews 2008, 131–133.)

According to Schopenhauer (2011, 196), evil consists in "pushing of the ills of the moment from oneself to another". Unlike simple badness, both good and evil are characterized by an intense experience of the world as will, and the suffering it causes. A good person cultivates affinity with other beings, who are equally tormented and humiliated by the endless whims of the will. An evil person, however, attempts to alleviate the pressure of the will by making others suffer, in this way conceiving of himself as the one who masters the will rather than being its puppet. As Peter Dews (2008, 133) notes, this kind of conception of evil clearly anticipates a psychoanalytical perspective. In subchapter 5.2.2, I take up an empirical study on evil conducted by the contemporary psychoanalyst Fred Alford. Alford´s central finding is that people most often conceive of evil as an experience of pre-categorical dread. According to Alford, moral evil consists in inflicting this dread on others, which creates an illusion of mastering the dread. Both Schelling and Schopenhauer share a similar moral psychology of evil, and they also provide metaphysics that grounds it.

However, Schopenhauer is not always quite consistent, and his interpretations of other philosophers are sometimes clearly misguided. For example, he equates Kant's conception of the *phenomenal* with the Eastern idea of *maya*, and the Absolute of the German idealists with the Aristotelian first cause (Schopenhauer 2008, 325; 2011, 50). Schopenhauer (2011, 183–184) explicitly rejects religion and explains it by fear of annihilation of the self and the need to believe in an afterlife, which springs from this fear. On the other hand, he regards an impersonal God as an empty conception, a kind of philosopher´s self-deception, which fails to provide even the false hope inherent in a more literal faith (Dews 2008, 120). Yet, Schopenhauer (2008, 438–462) engages in a lengthy discussion of the possibility of an ascetic denial of the will, which he finds at the core of all major religions, both Eastern and Western. As Dews (2008, 136) notes,

Schopenhauer is ultimately unable to give up the idea that there is some kind of redemption from the ruthless, meaningless, and all-encompassing dominion of the will. Finally, Schopenhauer explicitly argues, very much in line with the Platonic-Christian tradition, that behind appearances, on the level of the will itself, there is no injustice and suffering: "the *moral* world order actually enters into direct connection with the force bringing forth the phenomenon of the world. For the character of *will* must exactly correspond to its *phenomenon*: on this rests the account of *eternal justice*". (Schopenhauer 2011, 659.)

Given these ambiguities, Schopenhauer´s view of evil is also ambivalent. Depending on the perspective, it can be interpreted in a naturalistic, purely moral, or metaphysical way. Consequently, there are three directions in which to proceed from Schopenhauer when it comes to the idea of evil. The first possibility is to emphasize the specific character of human subjectivity and the moral responsibility associated with it. In this way, the will as a metaphysical conception becomes a metaphorical, morally neutral description of nature on biological and cosmological levels, and the meaning of evil is consistently reduced to the sphere of human action. Second, it is possible to develop Schopenhauer´s metaphysics of the will into a consistently naturalistic position, in which both the conception of evil and the phenomenon to which it refers are explained as functions of the will. Finally, if the will is understood in an explicitly pantheistic way, it leads back to the kind of metaphysics of evil presented by Schelling. In the next subchapter, three overlapping but in some respects different types of naturalism concerning evil will be taken up. Schopenhauer had an essential influence on the last two of these, namely, Freudian psychoanalysis and Nietzsche´s genealogy of morals. It will be argued that Freud was caught up in essentially the same ambivalences as Schopenhauer, and it is therefore Nietzsche who developed Schopenhauer´s pessimistic ideas most consistently into naturalism.

## 2.5 Naturalist approaches to evil

### 2.5.1 Scientific explaining of evil

It is usually thought, that from a scientific viewpoint, no such thing as evil exists. Especially in the twentieth century it was generally argued that after taking into account the available scientific explanations for human thinking, feelings, and actions, the concept of evil has no use in secular philosophy. There are social problems, mental illnesses, destructive emotions, and bad political structures, but no need for the concept of evil. Aside from its alleged explanatory impotence, thinking in terms of evil has often been the cause of actions described as "evil"; most atrocities in the history of mankind have been perpetrated exactly because some group of people has been condemned as "evil", which has resulted in dehumanization of those people (Cole 2006, 236; Svendsen 2010, 123). The idea of "evil" can become an excuse for not even trying to understand actions that

evoke horror and are hard to understand (Morton 2004, 5–6.) Recently, this line of thought has been expressed most famously by Philip Cole:

> It´s all very well to 'play' with such mythological characters in fiction, but this fiction has a devastating effect when it invades and dominates conceptions of reality. And I do not accept the validity of the discourse of evil when it comes to mere *description* of people´s character or motives or actions, or the consequences of their actions, as proposed by John Kekes and others. Nor do I accept that the idea of evil, while it does not explain anything, is nevertheless an indispensable part of the moral description of the world, helping us to *understand* that world, as suggested by Raimond Gaita. On the contrary, the idea of evil does not help us to understand these things at all; rather, it takes on the role of the *satan* of the Hebrew Bible: it *obstructs* our understanding, blocks our way, brings us to a halt. 'Evil' is a black hole concept which gives the illusion of explanation, when what it actually represents is the failure to understand. (Cole 2006, 236)

One example of scientific explaining of evil is *dispositional*, which explains human behaviour in terms of individual psychological tendencies. This approach is emphasized by Roy Baumeister in his influential book *Evil – Inside Human Violence and Cruelty* and his article "Four Roots of Evil" (co-authored with Kathleen Vohs). Baumeister traces "evil" behaviour to four root causes in individual psychology: instrumentalism, egotism, idealism, and joy in hurting.

Instrumentalism is the most straightforward root of destructive action to understand. It means basically that someone desires a particular subjective good and does not care if other people get hurt in the process. Human beings have varying capacities for empathy, their background and education have an enormous effect on moral decisions, and sometimes a personal desire can be so overwhelming – this is the case for almost anyone – that it is hard to properly take other people into account. Because aggressive behaviour is often very effective in achieving one´s ends in the short run, it tends also to reinforce similar behaviour in the future. (Baumeister & Vohs 2004, 91.) The second root cause is egotism. Against the common idea that low self-esteem causes violent behaviour, it has been shown that people with low self-esteem "are generally shy, reluctant to take risks, slow to call attention to themselves, uncertain about which action to take, and prone to give in to what others say" (Baumeister & Vohs 2004, 92). Most persons with high self-esteem are not prone to violent behaviour either. However, the combination of high self-esteem and constant external critique creates a risk for violence. A contradiction between one´s exaggerated self-image and others´ opposing opinion creates a continual need to defend one´s ego, which easily leads to aggression towards others. (Baumeister 1997, 143–148.)

Idealism as the third root cause of "evil" can be largely summarized by the principle "the end justifies the means". It is an inevitable fact, that many of the greatest large-scale evils from the Crusades to the atrocities of the twentieth century, have been committed in the name of some great good *against* evil. Idealistic evil also accumulates in a group. Moreover, there is a phenomenon called the *discontinuity effect*: an evil done by a group is experienced greater than the sum of individuals´ acts in the group would be, which easily leads to increasing conflict between different groups. (Baumeister 1997, 176–197.)

According to Baumeister, the fourth root cause, joy in hurting, is the most uncommon of the four root causes, although it is perceived as the most common one in victims´ reports. Humans generally feel visceral repugnance towards hurting other people, but this can be overcome. Baumeister compares the repugnance to hurt others to that which we feel naturally towards free-falling. The latter can be turned into positive excitement, as the example of many bungee jumpers proves. It is the same with hurting others. Baumeister explains the phenomenon by the example of the homeostatic process of the body. When the body experiences a state of panic, it has to balance that state later. Normally the balancing process is much slower and less intense than the panic, but through repetition one can cause it to occur much faster and with a kind of euphoria. Some people are more prone to this kind of excitement than others, and together with other factors it makes these people prone to sadism. (Baumeister & Vohs 2004, 96–97.) Moreover, Fred Alford´s findings, presented in subchapter 5.2.2, suggest that sadism is actually quite common, but people hide it from others and also from themselves because it provokes strong social aversion.

There are also certain universal and unavoidable cognitive biases in human observation of the actions of other humans. In studying behaviour conceived as evil, *the fundamental attribution error* is a highly important conception. The fundamental attribution error means a tendency to overemphasize the role of personal characteristics and to underestimate the role of situational factors in explaining the behaviour of other people. As a result, when someone does something reprehensible, the reason for the action is more likely sought in relation to the perpetrator´s personality than from situational factors. In the case of extreme atrocities, this leads easily to the myth of "pure evil"; the perpetrator is seen as displaying an "evil character", which cannot be understood in terms of "normal" human motivation. It may be impossible to eradicate the fundamental attribution error in humans, but by acknowledging its existence we can diminish its most tragic effects. In particular, we should understand that "evil" is rarely intended by anyone, being in the eye of the beholder. (Morton 2004, 6; Zimbardo 2004, 24–26.)

The fundamental attribution error is closely associated with what Baumeister has named *the magnitude gap:*

> A central fact about evil is the discrepancy between the importance of the act to the perpetrator and to the victim. This can be called the *magnitude gap*. The importance of what takes place is always much greater for the victim than for the perpetrator. When trying to understand evil, one is always asking, 'How could they do such a horrible thing?'. But the horror is usually being measured in the victim´s terms. To the perpetrator, it is often a very small thing. (Baumeister 1997, 18)

The cognitive biases of the perpetrators of various atrocities have been studied for a good while, but it is a relatively new insight that also the victims´ perceptions are systematically biased. In her work *Atrocity Paradigm: A Theory of Evil*, Claudia Card has elaborated on the idea of the magnitude gap in the following way: while perpetrators tend to underestimate the harm they have done, victims are likely to exaggerate the reprehensibility of the perpetrators´

motives. Therefore, victims and perpetrators not only see the harm at different levels of magnitude but they also see the same act from completely different angles. This is an essential insight, because most of the studies concerning atrocities have been based solely on victims´ testimonies. The experiences of victims must not be dismissed, of course, but in order to understand the causes of atrocities it is also necessary to take into account also the perspectives of the perpetrators. (Card 2005, 9–10.)

More than personal traits, the social situation often determines both perpetrating the "evil" action and the way it is judged. When social psychologists began to investigate the causes of the atrocities of the twentieth century, "situationism", which explains human action by the social roles people adopt in different situations, was the hegemonic approach (Vetlesen 2005, 3–6). Two particular studies have gained an almost paradigmatic position: Stanley Milgram´s *Obedience Experiment* and the Stanford Prison Experiment, directed by Philip Zimbardo.

In July 1961, Stanley Milgram arranged his first obedience experiment, which was intended to reveal if it would be possible to explain the atrocities that had taken place in World War II in terms of obedience to authorities. The test subjects were told that they had the role of the "teacher" in an experiment, that would investigate if learning could be improved by punishment for wrong answers. The teacher asked the "learner" questions, and if his answer was wrong, the teacher would deliver an electric shock. The shocks would be gradually intensified with every wrong answer up to 450 volts, which would be fatal. In reality, the shock generator was not real, and the learner was instructed to purposefully answer wrong at times. When the teacher turned to the experimenter and showed insecurity or unwillingness to continue, the researcher demanded that the experiment be continued, promising that the shocks would not cause any damage, and assuring that he would take all the responsibility. (Milgram 1974, 1–26.)

Before publishing the results, psychiatrists, college students, and randomized middle-class adults were interviewed to determine how they would predict the results of the study. For example, psychiatrists guessed that only one out of a thousand people would continue up to 450 volts. However, in the basic set-up of the study, in which the teacher could only hear but not see the learner, 65% of participants went all the way to the end. (Milgram 1974, 27–33.) The first experiment was followed by 17 different modified set-ups with changes in the physical proximity of the teacher and the learner, the environment of the experiment, the physical closeness to the researcher, the social status of the researcher, testing women instead of men, two researchers giving contradictory instructions, and so on. The results varied surprisingly little, and only altering the legitimacy of the authority of the researcher gave significantly different results. Milgram´s (1974, 72) interpretation was that the will to inflict pain was not a significant factor in his experiment, but sadistic behaviour can be easily produced in an appropriate social situation when a legitimate authority demands it.

In the Stanford Prison Experiment, 24 out of 100 people – deemed to be the most mentally healthy and "morally good" (according to a personal history report, in-depth interviews, and five different psychological tests) – were chosen to participate in the experiment. The 24 participants were randomly divided into two groups: guards and prisoners. The circumstances in the experiment were made in every respect as close to an authentic prison environment as possible: the prisoners were taken to the "prison" after a surprise arrest in co-operation with a local police department, both guards and prisoners had real uniforms, guards "worked" in 8-hour shifts while the prisoners did not have any free time, and so on. The experiment was supposed to last for two weeks without any interruption in the natural behavior that the prisoners and guards adopted in their roles. However, after only six days the experiment had to be ended. Not only did the participants adapt to their roles so "well" that guards were soon acting inhumanely and many of the prisoners were showing clear signs of emotional breakdown, but the director of the experiment also marked on alarming signs in his own thinking and acting. In addition to the role of "Principal Investigator", he had become a "Prison Superintendent", who thought and acted as if the experiment surroundings were "his prison". (Zimbardo 2004, 39–40.)

Zimbardo´s and Milgram´s experiments demonstrate that in certain social situations, behaviour conceived of as evil is the norm rather than an exception. Zimbardo (2004, 40) refers to his experiment in an ironic tone: "The Evil Situation triumphed over the Good People." Unlike situationists themselves often think, however, social psychology has not and cannot provide a plausible argument against the legitimacy of the concept of evil. The Kantian justification of the concept of evil as a *practical* idea, which has a primacy to *theoretical* explaining of human action, is quite solid. The fact that human behaviour can be explained to a significant degree by social mechanisms does not render moral conceptions superfluous. At most, the social psychological studies discussed here demonstrate that *moral optimism*, the view that humans are basically morally good, is a dubious stance (Frierson 2010, 33–38). There are, however, other types of naturalistic critiques of the idea of evil, which require separate discussion.

### 2.5.2 Freud and the psychoanalytic view of evil

Sigmund Freud, the founder of the psychoanalytical school, did not have a very high view of philosophy. Freud conceived of himself as a scientist pure and simple; for him, psychoanalysis was a logical continuation of his earlier profession as a neuroscientist. It is beyond doubt, however, that Freud´s invention of the idea of the unconscious is fundamentally indebted to Schopenhauer´s metaphysics of the will. (Dews 2008, 132; Young 2014, 65.) Schopenhauer argued that reason is far less sovereign, both theoretically and practically, than philosophers have traditionally thought. According to Schopenhauer, it is rather irrational will, that should be elevated as the central conception of philosophy. In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud similarly asserts that the *unconscious* is the central concept of psychoanalysis:

> The division of mental life into what is conscious and what is unconscious is the fundamental premise on which psychoanalysis is based; and this division alone makes it possible for it to understand pathological mental processes, which are as common as they are important, and to co-ordinate them scientifically. Stated once more in a different way: psychoanalysis cannot accept the view that consciousness is the essence of mental life, but is obliged to regard consciousness as one property of mental life, which may co-exist along with its other properties or may be absent. (Freud 2010, 271)

Before taking a closer look at the affinities between Freud and Schopenhauer, I will clarify the three basic constituents of Freud´s theory of mind, *id*, *ego*, and *superego*. Freud coined these conceptions in order to supplement – and in some respects replace – his earlier simple distinction of consciousness and the unconscious. Ego includes the conscious part of the mind, which makes decisions, "controls the approaches to mobility, i.e. to the discharge of excitations into the external world", and "regulates all of its own constituent processes" (Freud 2010, 273–274). The id, on the contrary, is that part of the mind, which represents the animal in the human being; it is pre-moral and irrational, and there is no logical structure in it. While the ego makes rational decisions, the id is associated with instincts and passions. In contrast to his earlier conception of the *censor,* which "censors" the movement of too-threatening elements from the unconscious into consciousness, Freud suggests that it is the ego itself which represses these elements back into the unconscious. (Freud 2010, 274–279.)

Freud´s theory of the mind gets more complicated with the idea of the superego. The role of the superego is best explained by a "scientific myth" Freud presents in his work *Totem and Taboo*. For the rest of his career Freud himself often referred to this work. According to Richard Bernstein, it contains the most important insight of Freud´s psychoanalytical theory: the explanation of the "origins of social organization, morality, politics and religion" (2008, 135). The myth begins with a band of brothers oppressed by a strong father, who keeps all the females of the tribe for himself and exiles all the young males. The brothers decide to join forces and kill their father, after which they devour the father´s body as a totem feast. By doing this, each of the brothers feels as if he has acquired a portion of the father´s strength. However, once the father is gone, sympathetic feelings towards him also arise among the brothers. They feel guilty for what they did, and the father´s figure becomes even stronger when he is no more concretely present. The brothers recognize that the absence of their father´s authority does not enable the freedom they had dreamt of; each brother has a will of his own, which is constantly in contradiction with the wills of the others. Law is still needed in order to prevent anarchy. In this way the father´s authority is transformed into an internal voice of conscience, the superego, which prohibits murder and incest more efficiently than the father himself could. (Freud 1995, 882–887.)

Freud conceives of the taboo against incest present in all civilizations as a repetition of the experience of the brothers´ ambivalence towards the father – the father is obviously not only hated but also admired. According to Freud, every human being goes through a phase of what he calls the Oedipus complex, consisting of the child´s sexual attraction to the parent of the opposite sex and the

wish to murder the parent of the same sex as a rival. When the child grows older and finally becomes an adult, the incestuous desire does not vanish but is repressed into the unconscious. The ambivalent feelings inherent in the Oedipus complex form the basis of the ambivalences found in all forms of cultural life. (Freud 1995, 895.) For example, moral prohibitions – the central function of the superego – always appear with an inclination to violate them (Bernstein 2008a, 139). Freud also conceives of the Christian ideas of God and Satan as appearances of the ambivalence felt towards the father (Bernstein 2008a, 134).

Another theoretical tool which Freud uses to describe the ambivalence of the human condition is his theory of instincts. For a long time, Freud attempted to explain human behaviour ultimately in terms of the "pleasure principle", namely, aspiring to pleasure and avoiding suffering. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, however, he was forced to revise this conviction because of the observation of many of his patients´ strong tendency to re-experience past traumatic events "which include no possibility of pleasure" (Freud 2010, 229). Freud replaced his earlier dualism of ego-instincts and sexual instincts with the dualism of the *life instinct*, "which seeks to force together and hold together the portions of living substance", and the *death instinct*, which strives to return back to an inorganic and lifeless state, from which life once was born (Freud 2010, 260–261).

In each of Freud´s theoretical models, the conscious human subject is torn in different directions without any intellectually warranted hope of reconciliation. The superego has the function of enabling relatively safe societal life, which would be impossible if the amoral impulses of the id were not held in check, or if each individual was motivated only by a separate ego without common "higher" ideals. Yet the commands of the superego and the instincts of the id are contradictory as such, let alone when it comes to their relationship with the ego. The superego constantly demands more perfection in aspiring to different ideals, and it suppresses compelling desires. The id, on the other hand, often desires contradictory things, as rationality is foreign to it. (Bernstein 2008a, 149.) As Philip Rieff famously puts it, the ego is "goaded on by the id, hemmed in by the super-ego and rebuffed by reality" (Rieff 1959, 62). In light of the theory of instincts, the situation is similar. The life instinct drives one to have children and to interact with other people in general, while the death instinct drives one to solitude and to antisocial behaviour.

R. K. Gupta finds several affinities between Freud and Schopenhauer in their views of life and the human position. Both Schopenhauer´s conception of the will and Freud´s id are irrational, non-moral, and impossible to fully satisfy in their purposeless craving, and they represent a more profound level of the human being than reason and consciousness. Both Schopenhauer and Freud also assign profound theoretical value to sexuality. Freud´s tendency to ultimately find sexual motivations for almost all human actions is well known, but Schopenhauer also regards genitals as "the real *focus* of the will" (Schopenhauer 2008, 386) and the sex drive as "the decisive, strongest affirmation of life" (Schopenhauer 2008, 385). Further similarities include an assessment of

repression as the primary cause of mental illnesses, emphasis on the importance of childhood for later development in one´s life, and a pessimistic, disillusioned view of life in general, together with a negative judgment of religiosity. (Gupta 1975, 721–727.) The main difference between Freud and Schopenhauer is their different style and method of writing. While Schopenhauer is holistic and intuitive, even poetic, Freud writes in an analytical – if not monotonous – style, and conceives of himself as a down-to-earth rational scientist. It could be argued that Freud and Schopenhauer approach the same questions with the same motivations, but from opposite angles. As Gupta puts it: "While Schopenhauer may be said to have psychologized philosophy, Freud may be credited with having philosophized psychology" (Gupta 1975, 728).

Freud also shares the same essential philosophical ambivalences with Schopenhauer, especially concerning the idea of evil. Although Freud does not often explicitly discuss *evil*, one of his central motivations is clearly to understand behaviour conceived of as evil and the genealogy of the concept of evil. As Freud always put hermeneutic usefulness before philosophical clarity and coherence, his thoughts on evil are open to different interpretations. Perhaps the most natural way is to read Freud as a naturalist who attempts to explain the idea of evil away by his theory of the development of the superego. According to Freud (2001, 128), the feeling of guilt is directly based on the child´s ambivalent feelings towards the father. The father is both an object of love and an authority who is able to ultimately deny the child´s instinctual satisfaction by means of brute force. The fear of external punishment and the loss of love of the father are later transformed into the fear of an internal judge, the superego. According to Henry Staten (2005, 21), the value of Freud is found in his actual naturalistic explanation of the birth of the conscience; conscience – and consequently, the idea of moral evil – consists of fear of punishment and loss of love.

At times, however, Freud speaks as if moral conceptions belong to a completely other register than naturalistic explanations. Freud himself possibly did not even recognize the question of the philosophical status of conscience and other moral conceptions in his theory. According to Jussi Kotkavirta (2004, 86), Freud can be read as basically Kantian. As will be shown in subchapter 3.4, Kant´s conception of "unsociable sociability" also provides a naturalistic explanation of the origins of morality. For Kant, there is no contradiction in speaking about unsociable sociability in a naturalistic tone and, on another level, to speak of "radical evil", which is the same phenomenon viewed as an irreducible moral conception. Had Freud philosophically problematized his central findings, it is possible that he would not have conceived of himself as a full-blown naturalist but more as a Kantian.

There are also metaphysical undertones in Freud´s late theory of instincts, which Freud never problematizes in relation to his outspoken strictly scientific methodology. The life instinct "seeks to force together and hold together the portions of living substance", and the death instinct strives "to return to the inanimate state" (Freud 2010, 260–261). These formulations betray speculation about an organic relationship between biological life and inanimate matter, that

is, metaphysics which strongly resembles Schopenhauer´s idea of the will. As in Schopenhauer´s case, it may be possible to interpret these conceptions as heuristic descriptions of purely psychic phenomena, but if the idea of the life and death drives is taken at face value, it leads Freud close to Schelling. A theory of evil based on life and death drives, understood metaphysically, necessarily results in a metaphysical theory of evil.

### 2.5.3 Nietzsche´s genealogy

Naturalism concerning the idea of evil is usually motivated by commonly shared moral ideals; the goal is to prevent the kind of action that has been called evil. It is argued that using the concept of evil is not only theoretically problematic but also sometimes a cause of moral atrocities. In this kind of critique, it is the specific concept of evil, with its metaphysical and theological burden, which is found to be futile or even harmful in our post-Christian era, not the practical idea that there are actions which absolutely ought not to be committed.

Nietzsche´s critique differs in two ways from the mainstream scientifically oriented naturalism of the twentieth century. First, at least it is not Nietzsche´s primary concern – and possibly not his view at all – that morality should be approached by means of rational scientific investigation. He refers in this context to "positivists" or "philosophers of reality" as "hodgepodge philosophers", who are "capable of injecting a dangerous mistrust into the soul of an ambitious young scholar" (Nietzsche 2000, 313). Indeed, Nietzsche finds the same "slavish" characteristics in an overly scientific attitude, which he criticizes in Christian and humanistic morality. These characteristics of the "scholar" include, for example, "patient acceptance of his place in rank and file, evenness and moderation in his abilities and needs, an instinct for his equals and for what they need" (Nietzsche 2000, 315). Second, for Nietzsche, it is not only the metaphysical and theological underpinnings of the concept of evil which he finds dubious, but, more importantly, the idea of objective and absolute moral condemnation. In another words, while many naturalists take our present fundamental intuitions about good and evil for granted when it comes to moral and societal practice, the tip of Nietzsche´s critique is precisely to question the practical value of morality as it is generally conceived in today´s post-Christian society. I argue that Nietzsche would find contemporary theoretical naturalism as the self-deception intellectuals, which conceals the real question at hand: what to *do* after the death of God?

As Robert Solomon explains, philosophers usually argue "that the content of an ethical analysis should not include the motives of those who practice (let alone create) an ethics" (Solomon 1994, 97). Nietzsche, by contrast, offers a "genealogical" account of the birth of morality in the sense that it has been understood since Christian values were established in the West. However, Nietzsche´s genealogy is not (at least primarily) meant as an actual description of the historical development of Western moral conceptions. Instead, it is an argument about different psychologies underlying different conceptions of morality, or, more exactly, even different aspects in a single human being, which

Nietzsche (2000, 394) calls "master" and "slave" moralities. As Solomon puts it, Nietzsche´s genealogy is "first of all, a thesis about the motivation of morality" (Solomon 1994, 97).

It would be circular reasoning from Nietzsche to make a moral thesis about the value of morality in general. When Nietzsche talks about the value of "morality", he means a particular set of moral values introduced to some extent already by Socrates and Plato, and established during the reign of Christianity. Morality is necessarily based on opposites of what is morally desired, that is, good and that which is to be avoided. Nietzsche´s genealogy begins with the remark that the dualism of good and *evil* is a different one than good and *bad*. It is the former dualism which Nietzsche finds dubious and attempts to overcome by his genealogical argument of its birth:

> Whoever begins at this point, like my readers, to reflect and pursue his train of thought will not soon come to the end of it – reason enough for me to come to an end, assuming it has long since been abundantly clear what my *aim* is, what the aim of that dangerous slogan is that is inscribed at the head of my last book *Beyond Good and Evil*. – At least this does *not* mean "Beyond Good and Bad. (Nietzsche 2000, 490–491)

In his work *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche takes up the theory of the "English psychologists" of his time, which, according to him, was the only serious attempt so far to explain historically the birth of morality. According to these psychologists, the idea of moral good was born when some people acted out of non-egoistic motives (such as a feeling of sympathy) and those who were acted on in this way found it useful and began to conceive of such action as "good". According to Nietzsche, however, the psychologists began from the wrong end:

> Now it is plain to me, first of all, that in this theory the source of the concept 'good' has been sought and established in the wrong place: the judgment 'good' did *not* originate with those to whom 'goodness' was shown! Rather it was 'the good' themselves, that is to say, the noble, powerful, high-stationed and high-minded, who felt and established themselves and their actions as good, that is, of the first rank, in contradistinction to all the low, low-minded, common and plebeian. (Nietzsche 2000, 461–462)

Instead of being an object of benevolent action, Nietzsche attributes the origin of the idea of good to the proactive self-assertion of ancient "nobles". These nobles valued characteristics such as beauty, courage, and strength, which they found in themselves, and then began to refer these values in general as "good". However, values obviously can exist only in opposition to disvalues, which became referred to as "bad":

> The signpost to the *right* road was for me the question: what was the real etymological significance of the designations for 'good' coined in the various languages? I found they all led back to the *same conceptual transformation* – that everywhere 'noble', 'aristocrat' in the social sense, is the basic concept from which 'good' in the sense of 'with aristocratic soul', 'noble', 'with a soul of a high order', 'with a privileged soul' necessarily developed: a development which always runs parallel with that other in which 'common', 'plebeian', 'low' are finally transformed into the concept of 'bad'. (Nietzsche 2000, 463–464)

Those who were "bad" obviously had a different perspective on morality, because it was not possible for them to realize the values of the aristocrats. From their perspective, the aristocrats were oppressive, not good. The oppressed created their own conception of good, which consisted of values such as pity, humility, and kindness. From Nietzsche´s point of view, the interesting turn is that only the oppressed could invent the idea of *evil*. According to Nietzsche, the idea of evil is based on negation; it is that which absolutely ought not to be. In contrast to the nobles, who first affirm their positive values, the slaves begin from that which ought not to be:

> While every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is 'outside', what is 'different', what is 'not itself'; and *this* No is its creative deed. This inversion of the value-positing eye – this *need* to direct one´s view outward instead of back to oneself – is of the essence of *ressentiment*: in order to exist, slave morality always first needs a hostile external world; it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all – its action is fundamentally reaction. (Nietzsche 2000, 473)

The slaves create their positive value out of the negation of the aristocratic values. However, their conception of good is not a simple opposite of the good of the nobles. Instead, it disguises their true motive, the wish to overcome the oppressors:

> When the oppressed, downtrodden, outraged exhort one another with the vengeful cunning of impotence: 'let us be different from the evil, namely good! And he is good who does not outrage, who harms nobody, who does not attack, who does not requite, who leaves revenge to God, who keeps himself hidden as we do, who avoids evil and desires little from life, like us, the patient, humble, and just' – this, listened to calmly and without previous bias, really amounts to no more than: 'we weak ones are, after all, weak; it would be good if we did nothing *for which we are not strong enough*'; but this dry matter of fact, this prudence of the lowest order which even insects possess (posing as dead, when in great danger, so as not to do 'too much'), has, thanks to the counterfeit and self-deception of impotence, clad itself in the ostentatious garb of the virtue of quiet, calm resignation, just as if the weakness of the weak – that is to say, their *essence*, their effects, their sole ineluctable, irremovable reality – were a voluntary achievement, willed, chosen, a *deed*, a *meritorious* act. (Nietzsche 2000, 482)

Nietzsche associates the birth of the idea of evil with "ressentiment", the grudge towards the nobles and towards life in general, as life generates inequality:

> They are all men of *ressentiment*, physiologically unfortunate and worm-eaten, a whole tremulous realm of subterranean revenge, inexhaustible and insatiable in outbursts against the fortunate and happy and in masquerades of revenge and pretexts for revenge: when would they achieve the ultimate, subtlest, sublimest triumph of revenge? Undoubtedly if they succeeded in *poisoning the consciences* of the fortunate with their own misery, with all misery, so that one day the fortunate began to be ashamed of their good fortune and perhaps said one to another: 'it is disgraceful to be fortunate: *there is too much misery!* (Nietzsche 2000, 560)

Because the slaves lacked the means to challenge the nobles directly, they had to adopt a hidden strategy: to make the nobles adopt the conceptions of good and evil, and thereby to make them feel guilty for their use of power. It should be once more kept in mind that Nietzsche is not so much offering here an actual

historical description of the development of Christian morality as something like Freud´s "scientific myth" of the murder of the father. Compared to Freud, Nietzsche´s strength is that the ontological status of his historical myth does not become a pressing question. Unlike Freud, Nietzsche does not attempt to explain the emergence of moral conceptions out of our non-moral, animal nature, but seeks only to illuminate the psychological mechanisms underlying two different kind of moralities, which often exist simultaneously even in a single person. Nietzsche´s argument is not primarily concerned with the actual past but with our present and future moral and existential condition. In this context, I agree with Richard Bernstein´s argument of ressentiment as the key conception of Nietzsche´s critique of the idea of evil (Bernstein 2008, 104). Through the conception of ressentiment, Nietzsche´s genealogy of morality is linked to an even broader psychological-philosophical critique of the concept of evil.

As was argued in subchapter 2.1, a specifically moral conception of evil is a relatively new development, which first appeared around Leibniz´s time. Before that point, evil primarily referred to anything that absolutely ought not to be; it included all the aspects that Leibniz distinguished as physical, moral, and metaphysical evil. According to Nietzsche, the central motive of Christianity was to posit another more fundamental reality beyond this immanent one, in which the evils of this world are compensated for by an omnipotent and just God. Thus, ressentiment is not only directed towards the noble and their power but towards life as a whole, insofar as it contains suffering – intense and *meaningless* suffering, to be more precise. In other words, Christianity, and to a lesser extent Platonism before it, used unjust suffering as an argument against life as it is here and now. If immanent reality is not just, slave morality posits a transcendent reality governed by an omnipotent and good God, and the question becomes: why does God allow evil to appear on earth only to compensate for it in heaven. As with morality, Nietzsche is not interested in the theodicy problem as such but only in its psychological foundations.

The sharpest edge of Nietzsche´s critique is not yet directed towards Christianity. Even though based on ressentiment, as long as people were convinced of the central metaphysical premises of the Christian doctrine, faith gave life a meaning in the midst of suffering, and slave morality was associated with great transformative power. Indeed, the slaves actually managed to implant their values in the nobles, and in this way they had power over them – to "poison their consciences", as Nietzsche (2000, 560) puts it. In this sense, developing slave morality was a just rationale of those who were oppressed. Something like that was the smartest strategy in the lack of direct power. Ressentiment becomes problematic in the full sense only in late modernity, after the metaphysical presumptions which promised the eradication of evil in the afterlife were no longer seen plausible. (Neiman 2004, 216). Nietzsche did not live long enough to see the collapse of secular promises of constant development towards a better world, such as Marxism, but he clearly anticipated it, as can be seen in his critique of Kant. From a Nietzschean perspective, the Kantian transformation of Christian theology into "postulates of pure practical reason" was essentially ressentiment

losing its creative power and unveiling its true nature as denial of life. In his aphorism "Kant´s joke", Nietzsche mocks Kant for writing "against the scholars in support of popular prejudice, but for the scholars and not for the people" (Nietzsche 1974, 205). According to David Cartwright, Nietzsche means that while Kant thought to provide a rational clarification and justification of substantially correct popular intuitions about morality, in reality he only offered empty philosophical jargon to hide the fact that after God´s death there is nothing else than common sentiments to justify slave morality (Cartwright 1984, 83n).

Like Freud, Nietzsche was highly influenced by Schopenhauer´s thought. Nietzsche began as an admirer of Schopenhauer, and long after abandoning Schopenhauer´s morality of pity he still conceived of Schopenhauer as his most important teacher (Breazeale 2012, 76-80). In this critical phase, Schopenhauer´s importance for Nietzsche consists above all in the argument that Schopenhauer explicated the denial of life inherent in slave morality more completely than Kant. Even if he was not finally able to do so consistently, Schopenhauer made an honourable attempt to think of reality as completely indifferent to human will and human will itself as largely ignorant of its most fundamental motives. From Nietzsche´s point of view, Schopenhauer stepped back just at the critical point. If irrational will is the fundamental nature of reality, what theoretical or practical justification is there left for what Nietzsche calls slave morality? Schopenhauer understands pity as a kind of heroic gesture in the face of a hostile reality; for him, morality justifies itself even more strictly than for Kant. However, Schopenhauer´s conception of the will makes the idea of Kantian autonomy implausible, which robs the theoretical justification of morality. According to Nietzsche, Schopenhauer is simply unable to accept his own conception of life as an endless, pointless movement of the will, in which there is no place for morality understood as something that transcends the selfishness of the will.

Today, when not only Christianity but also its secular descendants have fallen into doubt, Nietzsche´s critique of the idea of evil is as timely as ever. If the idea of evil used its main transformative resources during the reign of Christianity, what is the function of the concept today? From Nietzsche´s perspective, there is nothing else left than denying life as it is, with all its evils. The idea of evil betrays the uttering of an absolute "No" without prospects for change. Nietzsche suggests that the time is ripe for thinking of morality anew, for an age after the death of God. As Susan Neiman puts it: "For morality, the existence of suffering is a condemnation of life itself. Nietzsche suggested we try the other alternative. Humankind became sick by letting suffering serve as an argument against life. Why not let life serve as refutation of suffering?" (Neiman 2004, 216.)

The concept of evil was actually widely abandoned in twentieth century-thought. However, the reasons for this critical attitude were different – and in some senses even opposite – from Nietzsche´s argument. There is a deeper and practically more important question about the concept of evil than whether or not it is an adequate explanatory concept of moral action. At the most basic level, evil is something that absolutely ought not to be. Nietzsche asks the question,

what happens to psychological and philosophical consistency when evil nevertheless persists, and both religious and secular theodicies have come into an end? Nietzsche´s critique and prospects for answering it will be further discussed in subchapter 5.2.4. Before properly addressing the central ideas of the most important forerunner of contemporary moral theories of evil, Immanuel Kant, another more recent historically important thinker will be taken up.

## 2.6 Arendt on totalitarian evil

As explained in the introductory chapter, after the naturalistic atmosphere of the twentieth century, the concept of evil has recently gone through a renaissance. The most outstanding predecessor of this development and probably the most extensively discussed philosopher of evil today is Hannah Arendt. After World War II, Arendt famously declared that "the problem of evil will be the fundamental question of postwar intellectual life in Europe" (Arendt 1994, 134). While the war and the atrocities committed in Nazi death camps in particular indeed provoked extensive study of human destructive behaviour (such as the Milgram and Zimbardo experiments described in subchapter 2.5.1), it took several decades for *philosophical* analysis of the idea of *evil* to appear in any significant measure. Arendt herself was also first and foremost concerned with the political reality of the totalitarian regime she had lived through, which has resulted in significant of controversy when it comes to her understanding of evil on a purely philosophical level.

It has been customary but probably misguided to divide Arendt´s thought on evil into two sharply distinct phases. In the supposed first phase, most famously presented in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt talks about "radical evil", which "can no longer be deduced from humanly comprehensible motives" (Arendt 1976, ix) and which "confronts us with its overpowering reality and breaks down all standards we know" (Arendt 1976, 459). Arendt asserts radical evil as something quite distinct from Kant's conception, for, according to her:

> It is inherent in our entire philosophical tradition that we cannot conceive of a 'radical evil', and this is true both for Christian theology, which conceded even to the Devil himself a celestial origin, as well as for Kant, the only philosopher who, in the word he coined for it, at least must have suspected the existence of this evil even though he immediately rationalized it in the concept of a 'perverted ill will' that could be explained by comprehensible motives (Arendt 1976, 459)

From these passages naturally arises an impression that Arendt advocates something similar to the Manichean position, in which evil forms its own positive essence opposite to and equally fundamental as the good. The radical evil of totalitarianism unfolds in three steps: (1) eliminating all the juridical rights of the victims, (2) eliminating their possibility to make morally good choices by creating situations in which even the possibility of martyrdom is precluded by an immediate and total erasing of remembrance and threats to one's significant

others, and finally (3) eliminating the possibility of any spontaneous action at all, reducing human beings to cogs in a totalitarian machine. (Formosa 2007, 718–719.) The peculiar characteristic of the radical evil of totalitarianism is that it makes humanity in general superfluous: "the manipulators of this system believe in their own superfluousness as much as in that of all others, and the totalitarian murderers are all the more dangerous because they do not care if they themselves are alive or dead, if they ever lived or never were born" (Arendt 1976, 459).

In the alleged second phase of her work on evil, Arendt coins the term "banality of evil" and begins to talk about evil as something boringly trivial, lack of thought. The book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* is a kind of case study of the trial of the Nazi criminal Adolf Eichmann, who was responsible for the logistics of the deportation of Jews from Eastern Europe to the concentration camps.[3] While most people, Arendt included, were expecting a thoroughly vicious person would appear before the court, Eichmann was instead the embodiment of ordinariness. Besides an apparent lack of any malicious intentions, according to Arendt, "except for an extraordinary diligence in looking out for his personal advancement, he had no motives at all" (Arendt 2006, 287). The insight that the most extreme form of evil can be perpetrated by the most ordinary people and based on the shallowest motives has often been conceived as mutually exclusive from Arendt's earlier descriptions of radical evil.

However, as Paul Formosa (2007, 717–718) argues, Arendt's conceptions of radical evil and banal evil are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Formosa points out that the misconception of two entirely different ideas of evil in Arendt's thought has sprung primarily from the frequent quotation of a single passage from her private correspondence. In a letter to her friend, the mystic and philosopher Gershom Scholem, Arendt explains:

> …you are quite right: I changed my mind and do no longer speak of 'radical evil' […] it is indeed my opinion now that evil is never 'radical', that it is only extreme, and that it possesses neither depth nor any demonic dimensions. It can overgrow and lay waste the whole world precisely because it spreads like a fungus on the surface […] The moment it [thought] concerns itself with evil, it is frustrated because there is nothing. That is its 'banality'. Only the good has depth and can be radical. (quoted in Formosa 2007, 723)

Based on this passage alone, it indeed seems that Arendt strictly separates the conception of radical evil found in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and her later characterization of the banality of evil. The first allegedly attributes some kind of incomprehensible Satanic depth to totalitarian evil, while in the latter the incomprehensibility of extreme evil results simply from its existential meaninglessness, the absolute disparity between the petty motivations behind evil and the scale of suffering it causes.

However, as Arendt (2006, 287) herself makes clear in the postscript of the *Eichmann* book, and as the subtitle of the book already suggests, the phrase

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[3] In recent scholarship it has been argued that Arendt was misguided in assessing Eichmann's motives as mainly trivial and non-vicious. However, I am here concerned only with the *idea* of banal evil that Arendt discusses, using her view of Eichmann as an example, not the factual personality of Eichmann himself.

"banality of evil" was designed only to *report* the particular kind of evil Arendt saw in Adolf Eichmann and which, according to her, played an essential role in the totalitarian regime. Arendt does not claim that evil in general is always or even usually banal. Formosa (2007, 723) is certainly correct in maintaining that even if Arendt seems to say something different in a single passage of a private letter, more textual weight should be given to her actual works. Furthermore, the postscript of the *Eichmann* book is not the only place where Arendt makes clear that the banality of evil is not a general theory about the nature of evil but more of a report; the same point is explicitly made, for example, in *The Life of the Mind* (Arendt 1978, 3).

If banal evil consists in "lack of thought", it must be asked what Arendt precisely means by thinking, for every human being obviously thinks in some sense of the term. For Arendt, thinking is, briefly put, silent dialogue within one's mind (Arendt 1978, 189). As Formosa puts it, "thoughtfulness is required for a genuine faculty of judgment to operate, as it is thinking that creates the (genuine) conscience that authentic moral judging requires" (Formosa 2007, 722). Arne Vetlesen traces Arendt's talk about thinking back to St Augustine – a highly important source for Arendt's teacher Heidegger as well. Vetlesen links the conceptions of conscience and thought in Arendt's reflections on evil. According to Vetlesen, Arendt is significantly influenced by Augustine's idea of evil as silencing one's personal conscience in the face of public habit. (Vetlesen 2001, 1–4.) In a similar manner, Coline Covington offers a psychoanalytical interpretation and conceives of banal evil in terms of the ego ideal. A common understanding of evil is that evil consists in surpassing the moral ideals inherent in the super-ego. In a totalitarian regime, however, people can arguably not only quiet the commands of the superego but replace the superego itself with the commands of totalitarian ideology (Covington 2012, 1230). Referring to the Nazi governor Hans Frank, Arendt claims that a new categorical imperative had taken place in the Nazi regime: "Act in such a way that the Führer, if he knew your action, would approve it" (Arendt 2006, 136).

Arendt was highly influenced by Kant, but she also criticized his understanding of evil. However, as Henry Allison argues, Arendt seems to have completely misinterpreted Kant's theory of radical evil. Possibly perplexed by Kant's terminology and her own identical term, Arendt seems to take Kantian radical evil as a characterization of some particularly extreme form of evil. (Allison 2001, 87.) In his article "Reflections on the Banality of (Radical) Evil", Allison argues that Arendt's description of the banality of evil is not only compatible with Kantian radical evil but Kant's theory adds a transcendental basis to Arendt's more phenomenal observations. The main issue for Arendt is that Kant allegedly ignores the possibility that evil does not always consist in egoism in the face of moral demands, but in its most radical form one's conception of what is moral can be fundamentally disfigured. As will be argued in subchapters 3.5.2–3.5.3, Kant clearly acknowledges both that one can fool oneself as being extraordinarily moral while committing the worst possible deeds and that a malevolent motivation, in which the agent's intention is to cause

distress to others without gaining any profit, is possible. It is the first type of worry which Arendt is mainly concerned about. At times, Arendt seems to argue that Eichmann was absolutely incapable of genuine moral judgment, and his conscience was completely occupied by Nazi ideals. If this kind of evil action is possible, then Kant's theory is at odds with it. According to Allison, that is not necessarily the case.

By giving self-deception a central role, Allison takes Kantian radical evil and Arendt's banal evil as complementary descriptions of the same phenomenon. Arendt is interested in the political and psychological aspects of the kind of evil perpetrated by Eichmann. It appears that Eichmann did what he did by only acting on what he was expected to do in the Nazi regime. By substituting Nazi ideals for genuine moral reflection, Eichmann was not only able to silence his conscience but also replace it with a new one. However, it is another question if Eichmann was really incapable of thinking morally. Kant's theory of radical evil functions on a purely philosophical level, stating that however strong one's urges are, or however deeply one has engaged in self-deception, human beings cannot entirely destroy their moral nature. (Allison 2001, 96–99.) It is hard to know if Arendt would still oppose Kant had she understood radical evil in this way. In any case, I argue that it is best to follow Allison here, for it is difficult to think of an absolute lack of moral reflection without destroying the basis for moral responsibility.

Given that Kant's radical evil and Arendt's banal evil are the two most commonly discussed conceptions of evil in contemporary philosophical discourse, Allison's thesis that they accompany each other is quite important. I will argue in subchapter 5.2.1 that most contemporary discussions of evil are consciously or unconsciously based on broadly Kantian presuppositions. If Allison's argument above is sound, Arendt's conception of banal evil can be conceived of as an empirical, politically important manifestation of Kantian radical evil. The next chapter as a whole will be devoted to Kant´s highly influential conception of evil.

# 3 CHAPTER THREE: KANT AND THE MORAL VIEW OF EVIL

## 3.1 Kant´s theoretical philosophy

The foundational work of Kant´s critical philosophy, *Critique of Pure Reason*, is generally regarded as one of the most important works in the history of modern philosophy. Although this work, from now on referred to as the First Critique, is evidently the main work of Kant´s theoretical thought, it should be kept in mind from the start that in Kant´s view, theoretical philosophy must always be ultimately subordinate to practical philosophy:

> Essential ends are on this account not yet the highest, of which (in the complete systematic unity of reason) there can be only a single one. Hence they are either the final end, or subalternate ends, which necessarily belong to the former as means. The former is nothing other than the entire vocation of human beings, and the philosophy of it is called moral philosophy. (KrV A840/B868; 2009a, 695)

However, Kant asserts *methodological* priority to theoretical philosophy. After Hume had famously questioned knowledge claims concerning almost anything, Kant became distressed about the philosophical grounding of practical truths: if even the lawfulness of nature can be seriously questioned, what happens to the alleged truths of morality and religion? (Walsh 1997, 1–2, 7.) With this practical motivation, Kant laid out the most fundamental question of theoretical philosophy in the First Critique: "What can I know?" (KrV A805/B833; Kant 2009a, 677). Kant´s answer to the question has two aspects, one direct and one indirect (but all the more important). On the one hand, Kant wants to establish epistemological grounding for empirical knowledge claims which could respond to Hume´s sceptical challenge. Even more importantly, on the other hand, by defining philosophical grounds for knowledge Kant also defines the limits of what in principle it is possible for human beings to know. By defining the limits of knowledge,

Kant intends to save the practical truths of ethics and religion from naturalistic criticism. That which transcends the boundaries of empirical investigation, remains a matter of faith: "The transcendental ideas therefore serve, if not to instruct us positively, at least to negate the impudent assertions of *materialism*, *naturalism*, and *fatalism* which constrict the field of reason, and in this way they serve to provide moral ideas with space outside the field of speculation" (P 4:363; Kant 2018, 114).

Kant conceived of earlier empiricist and rationalist philosophy as dogmatic, since it was generally taken for granted in these traditions, that objects of knowledge exist outside the subject, independently of the subject´s perception. This tacit assumption immediately raises the concern, how can we trust that objects are represented correctly in the subject´s mind? To avoid such scepticism Kant declared a "Copernican revolution" and redefined instead the subjective conditions that must exist for any experience of objects to appear. (Gardner 1999, 38–39.) According to Kant, objects do not reside "out there" in themselves, but the human subject actively constructs the world of objects. Consequently, if there are universal subjective conditions for the formation of human experience, human experience and knowledge are limited by these conditions. The central thesis of Kant´s transcendental idealism is that we can know the world only as it *appears to us*, not as it is *in itself* independent of us. However, in Kant´s view, transcendental idealism is, somewhat paradoxically, the only way to justify empirical realism philosophically. Scepticism regarding the world of objects arises immediately if it is assumed that objects as such exist independently of our experience. If it can be shown, to the contrary, that the world we experience is constructed by us, no room is left for this kind of scepticism. (Gardner 1999, 88–90.)

According to Kant, there are exactly two conditions for the construction of experiences of objects: "But there are two conditions under which alone the cognition of an object is possible: first, **intuition**, through which it is given, but only as appearance; second, **concept**, through which an object is thought that corresponds to this intuition " (KrV A92–93/B125; 2009a, 224). Intuition is the direct mental correspondent to a sense perception, but in order for an intuition to become thought, the capacity to form concepts is also needed. Kant calls this capacity understanding: "Objects are therefore given to us by means of sensibility, and it alone affords us intuitions; but they are **thought** through the understanding, and from it arise concepts" (KrV A19/B33; 2009a, 155).

Kant also makes a conceptual division of the form and matter of experiences. In the first chapter of the First Critique, "Transcendental Aesthetic", Kant aims to show that when everything conceptual – and after that everything particular that can be sensed – is abstracted from experience, space and time still remain as the *a priori* forms of any possible sense experience. In Kant´s terminology, space and time are "pure intuitions", which means that they do not yet contain anything sensuous, but they are the forms in which any possible sense perception must appear. (KrV A20–21/B34–35; 2009a, 156.) Even though Kant´s philosophical project requires the conceptual division of experience into passive

sensuous intuitions and active discursive understanding, in practice neither can appear alone, as they are inseparable in concrete experience. In Kant´s own famous words: "Thoughts without content are empty; intuitions without concepts are blind" (KrV A51/B75; 2009a, 193–194). Sensuousness alone does not contain anything capable of becoming conscious, and concepts alone would be mere abstractions if they lacked any material content.

In the "Transcendental Analytic" (often deemed as the most difficult and dense – and also the most important – part of the First Critique), Kant´s aim is to provide the most basic conceptual elements of possible experiences, which he calls the "categories of understanding". As Sebastian Gardner (1999, 115–116) explains, this task is much more complicated than the one in the "Transcendental Aesthetic". Space and time can be directly located as the fundamental elements of sensuousness simply by abstracting them from all particular experiences. But there is no obvious way to find the most fundamental *conceptual* elements in experience, because no set of concepts is directly given as necessary and sufficient for the constitution of possible experiences. Kant (KrV Axvi; 2009a, 103) himself confesses that the subchapter "Of the Deduction of the Pure Conceptions of the Understanding", in which the categories of understanding are justified, was the most arduous in the whole First Critique.

The list of categories – those concepts which are both necessary and sufficient in unifying sense perceptions into coherent experiences – is divided into four sections, each containing three categories, in the following way: quantity (unity, plurality, and totality), quality (reality, negation, and limitation), relation (inherence and subsistence, causality and dependence, and community), and modality (possibility, existence, and necessity) (KrV A80/B106; 2009a, 212). According to Kant, these, and only these, are the fundamental conceptual elements of all possible experiences. The list of categories has obviously provoked a great deal of criticism about both the necessity and sufficiency of this particular set of elements, but the importance of Kant´s central idea can be demonstrated, for example, by the way in which he responds to Hume´s sceptical challenge concerning the causality of nature. According to Kant, causality must not be sought from the objects of nature in themselves, because in this way scepticism cannot be avoided. To the contrary, the category of causality can be shown to be a necessary condition for us to have any coherent experience of nature in the first place.

However, intuition and understanding seem to be an entirely different types of faculties; one is sensuous and immediate, while the other is conceptual and discursive. Yet, they must somehow be inseparably intertwined in concrete experience. Kant (KrV A137/B176; 2009a, 271) recognizes that "in all subsumptions of an object under a concept the representation of the former must be **homogenous** with the latter, i.e., the concept must contain that which is represented in the object that is to be subsumed under it". There must be something "between" intuitions and conceptions by which they are unified in concrete experiences. Kant calls the capacity of uniting intuitions under concepts "judgment": "If understanding in general is explained as the faculty of rules, then

the power of judgment is the faculty of **subsuming** under rules, i.e., of determining whether something stands under a given rule or not" (KrV A132/B171; 2009a, 268). Judgment works with "schemas", which are intended to be the missing link between intuitions and concepts; they are "**intellectual** on the one hand and **sensible** on the other" (KrV A138/B177; 2009a, 272). For example, five successive dots (…..) comprises the schema between the concept of the number 5 and the sense perception in which there are five distinguishable objects (Gardner 1999, 168; KrV A140/B179; 2009a, 273).

The theory of schematism is often held to be generally unsatisfying (Walsh 1997, 65–67; Gardner 1999, 170–171). There is a foundational reason for this in the general logic of transcendental idealism. Nicholas Rescher has aptly noted that Kant is always "preoccupied with what he sees as essential distinctions: analytic-synthetic, a priori-a posteriori, formal-material, efficient-final, knowledge-belief, theoretical-practical, means-ends, moral-prudential, categorical-factual – the list goes on and on" (Rescher 2000, 1). Transcendental idealism is based on this kind of analytical distinctions of actual lived experience. Kant´s challenge is to synthesize these distinctions again into a coherent whole in a satisfying way. The risk is that he ends up being "in war with himself", as Richard Bernstein (2008a, 11) puts it. I will argue in subchapter 3.6 that the dualistic conceptions inherent in transcendental idealism result in a strained position most painfully in Kant´s theory of radical evil.

Before exploring the fourth "highest" faculty of human mind, reason, there is an important point to stress. Kantian conception of intuition is always sensuous. This means that everything directly intuited in consciousness must be based on sense impressions whose cause is outside our mind. An intellectual intuition, which intuits facts without the media of senses, could, according to Kant, be attributed only to God or angels. (KrV B147; 2009a, 254–255.) Consequently, understanding, although an intellectual faculty, is also bound to sensuousness, because categories without the material content given by the senses would be mere empty abstractions. However, *reason* is a faculty which transcends human sensuousness in the sense that it creates ideas for which there is no correspondence in possible experiences. (KrV A308/B365; 2009a, 392.) Reason has a theoretical use and a practical use. The theoretical use of reason still concerns facts, but it "never relates directly to an object, but solely to the understanding and by means of it to reason´s own empirical use, hence it does not **create** any concepts (of objects) but only **orders** them and gives them that unity which they can have in their greatest possible extension" (KrV A643/B671; 2009a, 590–591). Practical use of reason, to the contrary, concerns that which *ought* to be. It is not speculative, but the active, motivating factor in human consciousness. Practical reason will be discussed at greater length in the next subchapter.

According to Kant, the experience of a somewhat stable and coherent world presumes that concrete sense experiences have to be arranged into wholes. For this task, theoretical reason creates *ideas* such as "infinity", which do not have a basis in sense experiences. For example, it is not possible to experience infinite

space or time, but the idea of infinity is still necessary for transcending immediate experiences and thinking space and time in general. However, a "transcendental illusion" appears when ideas of reason are directly applied to experience instead of being used merely as regulative principles in arranging experiences. According to Kant, the transcendental illusion is not a "logical illusion, which consists in the mere imitation of the form of reason", and, "entirely disappears" as soon as it is exposed to be a fallacy (KrV A296–297/B353; 2009a, 386). A transcendental illusion, "on the other hand, does not cease even though it is uncovered and its nullity is clearly seen into by transcendental criticism" (KrV A297/B353; 2009a, 386). Even the greatest philosophers have constantly fallen prey to it, for example, when they have tried to prove the existence of God as a theoretical fact. The most extensive section in the First Critique, the "Transcendental Dialectic", concerns this misuse of theoretical reason.

Few arguments in Kant´s critical philosophy are as widely accepted today as the rejection of the traditional proofs of God´s existence. The most fundamental of these false proofs is, according to Kant, the ontological proof, where the existence of God as an absolutely necessary being is derived from the mere concept of God. The argument runs as follows: because God contains all possible predicates, he also contains existence; therefore, God exists. However, the ontological argument fails, because "the concept of an absolutely necessary being is a pure concept of reason, i.e., a mere idea, the objective reality of which is far from being proved by the fact that reason needs it" (KrV A592/B620; 2009a, 563). No concept alone can demonstrate that something in reality corresponds to the concept in question. The cosmological proof instead, which aims to deduce God´s existence from the necessity of a "first cause" in causally determined nature, is dependent on the validity of the ontological proof (KrV A605–607/B633–635; 2009a, 570–571). And the "physico-theological" proof (today known as argument from design) in turn relies on the cosmological proof (KrV A629/B657; 2009a, 582).

A more constructive argument about the misuse of theoretical reason in the First Critique can be found in the chapter "The Antinomy of Pure Reason". In this chapter, Kant takes up four "antinomies"; these are pairs of opposite, mutually exclusive knowledge claims, in which neither the thesis nor the antithesis can be accepted. The first two antinomies are "mathematical antinomies". In the first antinomy, the thesis claims that the world has a beginning in time and limits in space, and the antithesis denies these claims. The thesis of the second antinomy is that "composite substance" consists ultimately of "simple parts", and the antithesis denies this. The third and the fourth antinomies are "dynamical antinomies", which concern the freedom of the will in causally ordered nature and the existence of "absolutely necessary being" respectively. (KrV A426–455/B454–483; 2009a, 470–491.) The antinomies are meant to demonstrate that reason leads itself into unsolvable paradoxes when it is drawn by its tendency to make knowledge claims beyond the boundaries of experience.

According to Kant, transcendental idealism offers quite a simple way of *dissolving* the mathematical antinomies. The formulation of these antinomies requires that space and time are taken as real characteristics of the world independent of our perception. But if space and time are conceived of as forms of our intuition, it becomes nonsensical to ask whether space and time are limited or not:

> Nothing seems clearer than that between the two, one of whom asserts that the world has a beginning, and the other that it has no beginning but has existed from eternity, one of the two has to be right. But if this is so, then because there is equal evidence on both sides, it is impossible ever to ascertain which side is right, and so the conflict drags on as before, even though the parties have been directed by the court of reason to hold their peace. Thus no means is left for ending the dispute in a well-grounded way and to the satisfaction of both sides, unless through the fact that they can do such a fine job of refuting each other they are finally won over to the view that they are disputing about nothing, and that a certain transcendental illusion has portrayed a reality to them where none is present. (KrV A501/529–530; 2009a, 516)

Theoretical reason necessarily forms ideas of totalities, such as "infinite space". While there is nothing wrong in this, a philosopher must not take these ideas as claims about the factual constitution of the world but merely as regulative principles needed in systematizing our experiences into wholes.[4] While the mathematical antinomies can be dissolved by pointing out that both the thesis and the antithesis are false because they are not legitimate knowledge claims at all, the same does not apply to the dynamical antinomies. The third antinomy in particular is central for understanding Kant´s thought. In Kant´s view, it is inconceivable to deny that the world is causally determined, because the category of causality is required for the constitution of an intelligible world in the first place. On the other hand, freedom from the causality of nature is also practically necessary, because denying it would render moral claims meaningless and sever genuine human choices in general:

> Now that this reason has causality, or that we can at least represent something of the sort in it, is clear from the **imperatives** that we propose as rules to our powers of execution in everything practical. The **ought** expresses a species of necessity and a connection with grounds which does not occur anywhere else in the whole of nature. (KrV A547/B575; 2009a, 549)

However, there is not necessarily any contradiction in simultaneously assessing nature to be causally determined and our will to be free. The question must only be looked at from two different viewpoints at once by means of transcendental idealism. Freedom of will cannot be conceived to be a part of the phenomenal world we observe simply because freedom is not something that could possibly be observed as a fact in nature. This does no mean, however, that freedom is an illusion. The same acts that must be conceived as parts of causal chains from the

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4 It is, however, highly contestable that there is no other solution to the antinomies than the one provided by transcendental idealism. For several critiques and a defence of Kant´s reasoning at this point, see Allison 1983, 40–61.

theoretical viewpoint can at the same time be seen as free from the practical viewpoint. (Allison 1990, 25–27.)

There are two main lines of interpretation of Kant´s transcendental idealism. The first, more popular reading is the "two aspect" interpretation, put forward by Henry Allison. According to this interpretation, the phenomenal and noumenal "worlds" are actually two different viewpoints on the same reality. According to the classical "two world" reading – still supported for example by Paul Guyer (2006, 67) – the phenomenal and noumenal worlds are, to the contrary, conceived literally as two distinct "realms". There is also the tradition of "positivistic" reading of Kant. According to this line of interpretation, Kant´s conception of noumena, or "thing in itself" is merely a formal unconceivable "x". In this reading, the noumena outside our conceptual-sensuous capacities is merely a necessary conceptual counterpart of phenomena. For example, according to P. F. Strawson (1975, 155–156), Kant´s constructive arguments for religion and morality (dealt with in the next subchapters) are at best "considerably clouded in the outcome". Strawson and many others read Kant primarily as an epistemologist, whose aim is to refute scepticism of our everyday knowledge and fundamentally question the possibility of metaphysical knowledge in general (Gardner 1999, xiii). However, it is evident that Kant´s aim was not simply to dismiss traditional metaphysics but also to offer an epistemologically justified reconstruction of the practical ideas inherent in religion and metaphysics. Although we cannot *know* about things in themselves, it was evident to Kant that it is possible and necessary to *think* a good deal about them.

## 3.2 The foundations of Kant´s moral philosophy

As argued in the previous subchapter, the intention behind Kant´s Copernican turn was not to question the central ideas of classical metaphysics and theology but rather to provide a new epistemological justification of both empirical knowledge and moral-religious faith in the face of the sceptic's critique. The argument in Kant's foundational work of moral philosophy, the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, follows a similar logic with the First Critique concerning the relation between every day intuition and philosophical grounding. In the *Groundwork*, Kant claims that although we do not need "any penetrating acuteness to see what I have to do in order that my volition be morally good" (Gr 4:403; 2008, 57–58), moral philosophy is in serious need of a new clarification and justification of what morality in general is about. In short, "the supreme principle of morality" (Gr 4:392; 2008, 47) must be found. According to Kant (KpV 5:39; 2008, 172), all previous theories of morality had sought the justificatory foundation of morality in the wrong place, namely, outside the will of the moral subject itself.

The *Groundwork* begins by presupposing "an everyday unreflective awareness of the rational standards Kant thinks anyone must use in moral

deliberation and judgment" (Wood 1999, 19–20). Some preliminary grasp about what "good" means, for example, must be taken for granted, because all concepts can only be clarified by other concepts, and one must start somewhere. Kant´s intuition about the meaning of "good" can be quite clearly seen already in the famous first sentence of the *Groundwork*: "It is impossible to think of anything at all in the world, or indeed even beyond it, that could be considered good without limitation except a **good will**" (Gr 4:393; 2008, 49). It remains yet to be explained what Kantian good will is, how Kant justifies its existence, and the precise meaning of "without limitation".

H. J. Paton gives a simple answer to the third question: "good without limitation" means, that the goodness of a good will is not in any way dependent on any context; it is always good in every imaginable respect (Paton 1963, 34). But what does good will consist of, and can it actually be good without limitation? At the beginning of the *Groundwork* Kant claims that if there is to be anything good without qualification in the world, a good will is the only possible candidate. Kant grounds this statement by excluding other candidates that might be thought of as good without limitation. First he suggests "talents of mind", such as "intelligence, wit and judgment", and "qualities of temperament", such as "courage, resolution and perseverance" (Gr 4:393; 2008, 49). Kant admits that these characteristics are often good, but it is clear that they can be also used as a means to evil, so they are not good without limitation. For example, self-control is usually a virtue, but "the coolness of a scoundrel makes him not only far more dangerous but also immediately more abominable in our eyes" (Gr 4:394; 2008, 50). The same applies to "gifts of fortune", including "power, riches, honour, even health and that complete well-being and satisfaction with one´s condition called *happiness*" (Gr 4:393; 2008, 49). Happiness must be taken as a special case, however, since also in Kant´s view happiness is good without limitation in the sense that it is good in itself, though in a non-moral sense. Still, happiness is not good without limitation in the sense explicated by Paton. Almost everyone agrees that happiness in inflicting pain on others is not morally good. For Kant, therefore, happiness is good only on the condition that one is worthy of happiness. (Allison 2013, 76–77.)

However, if there cannot be any other good without limitation than good will, it does not follow from this that good will is good without limitation either. It might be the case in some situation that even if a person acts from good will, the act must be judged as bad. Clearly this is often the case if good will is taken in its broad and unspecific common meaning. We might say that a parent violently punishing his child has "good will", but at the same time we condemn the act as bad. But Kant has another more specific meaning for good will. (Paton 1963, 39–41.)

What, then, is Kant´s definition of good will? The argument in the first of the three chapters of the *Groundwork* is that if good will is to be good without limitation, it has to be based on a law "which must determine the will, even without regard for the effect expected from it" (Gr 4:402; 2008, 56). This condition

results in what Kant will later in the *Groundwork* find as the sought-after "supreme principle of morality":

> Since I have deprived the will of every impulse that could arise for it from obeying some law, nothing is left but the universal conformity of actions as such with universal law, which alone is to serve the will as a principle, i.e., *I ought never to act except in such a way that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law*. (Gr 4:402; 2008, 56–57)

By "maxim", Kant means a subjective principle of volition. A specific sort of maxim is "the objective principle (i.e. that which would also serve subjectively as a practical principle for all rational beings if reason had complete control over the faculty of desire)", which Kant calls "the practical law" (Gr 4:401; 2008, 56). If good will without limitation exists, the maxim of such a will must obviously be a practical law, because a merely subjective maxim can, by definition, be good only from one´s subjective point of view. However, it is not possible to conceive of a maxim with a concrete end that would always be good in all possible situations. Therefore, the maxim of good will without qualification must be good merely by the virtue of its form. Its goodness is constituted neither by what it causes nor by what it seeks to cause but merely by the formal principle it follows. It also does not suffice if an act conforms with the practical law; but the act must also be committed from duty towards the law alone. For example, a shopkeeper who does not overcharge inexperienced customers acts in conformity with duty, but he may do so not because it is the right thing to do but because it ultimately benefits himself (Gr 4:397; 2008, 53).

In the beginning of the second chapter of the *Groundwork*, Kant (Gr 4:406; 2008, 61) recognizes that so far it has not been guaranteed by any means that it is actually possible for a real empirical human will to act from duty alone in the given sense:

> Though much may be done *in conformity with* what *duty* commands, still it is always doubtful whether it is really done *from duty* and therefore has moral worth. Hence there have at all times been philosophers who have absolutely denied the reality of this disposition in human actions and ascribed everything to more or less refined self-love. (Gr 4:406; 2008, 61)

Acknowledging the epistemological boundaries of his theoretical philosophy, Kant admits that:

> In fact, it is absolutely impossible by means of experience to make out with complete certainty a single case in which the maxim of an action otherwise in conformity with duty rested simply on moral grounds and on the representation of one´s duty. It is indeed sometimes the case that with the keenest self-examination we find nothing besides the moral ground of duty that could have been powerful enough to move us to this or that good action and to so great a sacrifice; but from this it cannot be inferred with certainty that no covert impulse of self-love, under the mere pretense of the idea, was not actually the real determining cause of the will. (Gr 4:407; 2008, 61)

While it impossible to know whether a single act done solely from duty has ever occurred, according to Kant (Gr 4:409; 2008, 63), it suffices to show that it is always *possible* to act from duty alone. In Kant´s view, the idea of good will

without limitation is already present in "common moral cognition", even if people do not generally recognize moral duty in the form of a clear and distinct formal principle. Before attempting to show in the third chapter that good will without limitation is actually possible, Kant makes a preliminary argument in the second chapter. At this point, Kant aims to show that if there actually is a qualification of good will, it must be based on the principle of being able to will my maxim to become a universal law (Wood 1999, 48–49).

In the First Critique, Kant had argued that although from the phenomenal point of view everything in nature is causally determined, from the noumenal point of view our will can be conceived of as free, which means that the will follows "a causality in our power of choice such that, independently of those natural causes and even in opposed to their power and influence, it might produce something determined in the temporal order in accord with empirical laws, and hence begin a series of occurrences *entirely from itself*" (KrV A334/B362; 2009a, 535). However, Kant also argues that mere freedom *from* the determinism of nature cannot constitute a phenomenologically meaningful conception of freedom. In the First Critique, therefore, Kant (KrV A444/B472; 2009a, 484) talks about *causality* through freedom, which can determine nature but which cannot be determined by nature. In Kant´s view, human willing without a principle that the will follows is inconceivable: "Everything in nature works in accordance with laws. Only a rational being has the capacity to act *in accordance with the representation* of laws, that is, in accordance with principles, or has a will. Since *reason* is required for the derivation of actions from laws, the will is nothing other than practical reason." (Gr 4:412; 2008, 66.)

Theoretical reason merely arranges experiences into coherent wholes. Practical reason, on the contrary, is the ability to be motivated to act by reasons. A reason to act, according to Kant, is always present to the will in the form of a general principle, and "insofar as it is necessitating for a will, [it] is called a command (of reason), and the formula of the command is called an **imperative**" (Gr 4:413; 2008, 66). It remains somewhat unclear what the difference is between "the formula of the command" and the command itself.[5] However, Kant generally speaks simply about "imperatives". According to Kant, there are two kinds of imperatives, hypothetical and categorical:

> Now, all imperatives command either *hypothetically* or *categorically*. The former represent the practical necessity of a possible action as a means to achieving something else that one wills (or that it is at least possible for one to will). The categorical imperative would be that which represented an action as objectively necessary of itself, without reference to another end. […] Now, if the action would be good merely as a means *to something else* the imperative is *hypothetical*; if the action is represented as *in itself* good, hence as necessary in a will in itself conforming to reason, as its principle, *then it is categorical*. (Gr 4:414; 2008, 67)

Hypothetical imperatives do not require any philosophical explanation, for there is nothing philosophically problematic in striving for happiness or some other morally neutral end. Categorical imperatives, by contrast, immediately raise a

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5 For an attempt at clarification, see Allison 2013, 156.

question: can any imperative actually be categorical (Gr 4:417; 2008, 69–70)? No empirical observation can prove that categorical imperatives are possible. On the contrary, "it is rather to be feared that all imperatives which seem to be categorical may yet in some hidden way be hypothetical" (Gr 4:419; 2008, 71). Before the third chapter of the *Groundwork*, in which Kant argues that a categorical imperative is indeed possible, there is an important preliminary argument. According to Kant, it can be deduced from the mere concept of the categorical imperative, that if there are categorical imperatives, there can actually be only one categorical imperative, and it must the principle that the will follows when it is good without limitation (if such a will is possible for humans):

> When I think of a *hypothetical* imperative in general I do not know beforehand what it will contain; I do not know this until I am given the condition. But when I think of a *categorical* imperative I know at once what it contains. For, since the imperative contains, beyond the law, only the necessity that the maxims be in conformity with this law, while the law contains no condition to which it would be limited, nothing is left which the maxim of action is to conform but the universality of a law as such; and this conformity alone is what the imperative properly represents as necessary. There is, therefore, only a single categorical imperative and it is this: *act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law*. (Gr 4:420–421; 2008, 73)

Since hypothetical imperatives, by definition, require a specific end for the will to act, they are unsuitable candidates for the form of a will that is good without qualification. If such a will is possible, it must follow a categorical imperative instead.

Another distinction closely related to that between categorical and hypothetical imperatives is Kant´s formulation of the autonomy and heteronomy of will. Kant defines autonomy as "the property of the will by which it is a law to itself (independently of any property of the objects of volition)" (Gr 4:440; 2008, 89). To the contrary, " if the will seeks the law that is to determine it *anywhere else* than in the fitness of its maxims for its own giving of universal law – consequently if, in going beyond itself, it seeks this law in a property of any of its objects – *heteronomy* always results" (Gr 4:441; 2008, 89).[6] The will is autonomous if its choice is based on its own inherent principle instead of a maxim determined by some contingent end. An autonomous will, therefore, is not only negatively free *from* the laws of nature but also free *to* follow its own law of reason. A heteronomous will, on the contrary, submits itself to the laws of nature in the sense that before first directing itself by an inner law, it already has a particular end in mind, and the realization of this end is obviously determined by the laws of nature. It is now clear that only an autonomous will can be good without limitation, because there can be no end that would be in every possible instance the object of a morally good will.

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[6] Autonomy is defined as the opposite of heteronomy. At the same time, however, Kant seems to understand autonomy not as a property of human will, as he explicitly defines it, but as a principle that is freely chosen. This issue will be further discussed in the next subchapter.

At this point, Kant has created the conceptual machinery he saw as sufficient. If there is anything good without limitation, a good will is the only possible candidate. If there is will that is good without limitation, the principle from which it acts cannot be derived from any determinate end, since there is no such end that would always be morally good to pursue. Because a will that lets an end determine its maxim follows a hypothetical imperative, good will necessarily follows a categorical imperative. But, when "I have deprived the will of every impulse that could arise for it from obeying some law, nothing is left but the universal conformity of actions as such with universal law" (Gr 4:402; 2008, 56), which is to say that there can be only this one categorical imperative: "*I ought never to act except in such a way that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law*." (Kant 2008, 20). The ground of morality is in the autonomy of will, that is, in the idea that human will can be motivated to act by its *a priori* law of reason alone, which determines the moral value of all particular end-based maxims.

In Chapter Three Kant, takes up his final task in the *Groundwork*: justifying that human will can actually act autonomously (i.e., be motivated solely by its internal law of reason independently of sensuous inclinations). However, even the most sympathetic commentators such as Henry Allison (1990, 227–229; 2013, 329–330) and Allen Wood (1999, 171) generally judge the final stage of Kant´s argument as a failure. Kant himself abandoned the strategy of proving the possibility of an autonomous will three years later in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. In this work (from now on referred as the Second Critique), Kant simply begins with the assumption that moral law is immediately obliging for humans, although not everyone recognizes this obligation in the form of a distinct imperative. However, in order for genuine moral action to be possible human will must be free. In the First Critique, Kant had already provided a negative argument regarding the freedom of the will. In the *Groundwork*, he adds a positive definition to freedom by means of the concept of autonomy. After the attempt to prove the real possibility of an autonomous will had failed, Kant changed his strategy in the Second Critique. Instead of an actual proof, Kant now asserts freedom of the will as a "postulate of pure practical reason" – a conception to be discussed at greater length in subchapter 3.4. Before moving on to Kant´s theory of an evil will, a common criticism of Kantian ethics should be taken up.

Probably the most obvious criticism of Kant´s ethics is that it is all too formal and foreign vis-à-vis actual ethical life. The criticism is not entirely without merit but in many cases, it is based on a one-sided reading of Kant´s practical philosophy, if not a clear misinterpretation of it. To begin with, Kant completes the "law formulation" of the categorical imperative with two other formulations of at least equal worth. The second formulation of the categorical imperative commands the following: "*So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means*" (Gr 4:429; 2008, 80). The third formulation obligates: "All maxims from one´s own lawgiving are to harmonize with a possible kingdom of ends as with a kingdom of nature" (Gr 4:436; 2008, 86). According to Kant, the three formulations express the very same imperative but from different viewpoints. Only the law

formulation expresses the mere form of the categorical imperative. The second formulation expresses its end, which is obviously not any material end but "humanity" in general, which, according to Kant, is an a priori notion given by pure practical reason. The third formulation is meant to unify the form and the matter of the categorical imperative; it expresses a "noumenal" kingdom in which every will obeys the moral law, and consequently no one is ever treated merely as a means but always as an end in itself.

According to Burkhard Tuschling, especially the "kingdom of ends" formulation not only suggests that Kant´s moral philosophy "has" a social aspect, but that it is intersubjective to its core (Tuschling 1991, 181–182). Although the categorical imperative is an a priori principle, it can be meaningfully understood only in a socially shared reality, where the moral worth of one´s material maxims is evaluated against the categorical imperative. Kant´s account of the ground of morality is analogical to his theory of the formation of experience, in which experience is formed by a priori categories but only with the support of sensuous intuitions as the material of this formation. (Schneewind 1994, 314–318.) Furthermore, the *Groundwork* and the Second Critique are mainly intended as the metaethical *foundation* of Kant´s moral philosophy. Without taking into account Kant´s simultaneous and later practical works in political and educational philosophy, "pragmatic anthropology", and philosophy of history and religion, the view of Kant´s practical thought remains fundamentally incomplete and more or less distorted. (Wood 1999, 8–13.)

A complementary defence of the foundation of Kantian ethics is provided by Lacanian scholars, who have found Kant´s metaethical formalism in the *Groundwork* and Second Critique not only plausible within the context of the critical project but precisely the strongest point in Kant´s moral philosophy. The categorical imperative obliges only that "you must do your duty"; it does not inform anything about the content of duty in specific situations. For example, according Joël Madore (2013, 36–37), this is a serious problem of Kantian ethics, because it follows that we have an absolute duty to follow a maxim which we can never know for sure to be a genuinely moral one. However, let us for a moment consider an *unconditional* duty with concrete content. This kind of conception of duty is an essential element of totalitarian ideologies, a particularly striking example being the unconditional orders of the Führer in Nazi Germany. Kant´s idea of the categorical imperative exactly prohibits strictly this kind of conception of duty. In its merely formal character, it always leaves the full responsibility of one´s material maxims only to oneself individually, and it frustrates the attempt to refer to tradition, authority, or "historical necessity" as the source of duty. Adolf Eichmann´s appeal to Kantian ethics, therefore, is completely misguided, unlike some critics have suggested. (Porttikivi 2011, 215–217; Žižek 2007, 168–173.)

## 3.3 Radical evil

Kant´s discussion of the relation of morality and freedom in the *Groundwork* leaves a crucial question. If autonomy as the positive element in the freedom of will is defined as "that property of will by which it is a law to itself (independently of any property of the objects of volition)" (Gr 4:440; 2008, 89), and an autonomous act is equivalent to the only kind of morally worthy act – an act done out of respect to the moral law alone – how can heteronomous acts be considered as free? Probably because of this problem, Kant later distinguished two aspects of the human will in the *Metaphysics of Morals*: *Wille* and *Willkür*:[7]

> Laws proceed from the will [Wille], *maxims* from choice [Willkür]. In man the latter is a free choice; the will [Wille], which is directed to nothing beyond the law itself, cannot be called either free or unfree, since it is not directed to actions but immediately to giving laws for the maxims of action (and is, therefore, practical reason itself). Hence the will [Wille] directs with absolute necessity and is itself *subject to* no necessitation. Only *choice* [Willkür] can therefore be called *free*. (MS 6:226; 2008, 380)

Actual human will is obviously a unity, and it can only be considered properly free when taken as such, but in order to solve the aforementioned problem in the *Groundwork´s* account of freedom as autonomy, a conceptual distinction is needed. There is a "legislative" aspect of will called *Wille*, which dictates the moral law, and an "executive" aspect of will called *Willkür*, which freely chooses the maxims for action, either out of respect to the moral law or by rejecting it in the face of maxims based on one´s sensuous inclinations.

*Willkür* is further divided into *arbitrium brutum* and *arbitrium liberum*. The first of these can be found in the animal kingdom as well as in humans, and it means the capacity to act based on sensuous impulses. *Arbitrium liberum*, on the contrary, can only be found in the human being: it "is affected but not determined by impulse" (Allison 1990, 132). *Willkür* as a whole represents the negative aspect of freedom, freedom *from* the causality of nature. *Wille* instead represents the positive aspect of freedom, the will´s ability *to* form its own causality. Because autonomy is defined in the *Groundwork* as "that property of will by which it is a law to itself (independently of any property of the objects of volition)" (Gr 4:440; 2008, 89), *Wille* as that property of will which dictates the moral law can clearly be equated with autonomy. However, because autonomous will is also equated with good will, the question arises, how can evil acts be conceived of as genuine free acts rather than "mere bits of behavior" (Allison 1990, 95)?

According to Henry Allison, this dilemma can be solved when it is realized that Kant actually uses the term "autonomy" in the *Groundwork* in two different senses without making it explicit. Autonomy is explicitly defined as a *property* of the will, which assesses the moral validity of one´s subjective maxims against the

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7 Although the distinction between Wille and Willkür is presented explicitly first time in *Metaphysics of Morals*, according to Henry Allison (1990, 129), the idea was "already operative in the *Critique of Practical Reason* and plays a major role in *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*".

objective a priori principle, the categorical imperative. However, when Kant contrasts autonomy with heteronomy, he treats autonomy as a *principle* of the will – the principle the will obeys when it actually decides to direct its action only by maxims that the categorical imperative allows. (Allison 1990, 105–106.) The *Wille-Willkür* distinction retrospectively explicates Kant´s account of the relation between morality and freedom in the *Groundwork*. Even when *Willkür* chooses against the principle of autonomy given by *Wille*, the immoral choice can be seen as entirely free and imputable, because autonomy understood as a property of the will remains. Unlike animals, the human being never acts directly from desire but always first "incorporates it into his maxim", and then freely decides to act based on that maxim:

> Freedom of the power of choice has the characteristic, entirely peculiar to it, that it cannot be determined to action through any incentive *except so far as the human being has incorporated it into his maxim* (has made it into a universal rule for himself, according to which he wills to conduct himself); only in this way can an incentive, whatever it may be, coexist with the absolute spontaneity of the power of choice (of freedom). (Rel 6:23–24; 2005, 49)

In this passage, Kant lays out what Allison (1990, 39–40) calls the "incorporation thesis". Together with the "imputability thesis" and the "inscrutability thesis", the incorporation thesis forms the basis for Kant´s theory of radical evil, presented in the essay *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. The imputability thesis argues that our choices are always imputable to *us*. Although our natural properties are simply given to us, and those properties significantly influence our choices from the empirical point of view, an evil choice can never be excused by any given characteristic or situation. According to the inscrutability thesis, there can never be a final explanation why someone makes a good or an evil choice. It is a part of the meaning of the freedom of will that no full causal explanation can be given for a free act; in Kant´s view, there is always an element of absolute spontaneity in human action. (Card 2010, 76.)

In the *Groundwork* and the Second Critique, Kant´s focus is in defining good will and justifying the possibility of genuinely good acts. This focus on the moral status of singular choices in Kant´s most famous works easily leaves an impression that Kant sees moral choices as isolated acts independent of any psychological structure of the agent. However, this is a misguided interpretation of Kant´s ethics as a whole. According to Kant, free choices are always based on reasons, even though complete explanation, why a particular maxim was chosen instead of some other maxim, is impossible. (Allison 1990, 136.) When a choice is made, the reason for the choice is found in a maxim, which, when further interrogated, is justified by a more general maxim, which in its turn is justified by a still more general maxim, etc. For example, I hit a nail with a hammer in order to build a roof. I build a roof in order to get shelter. I want a shelter in order not to get cold, etc. (Caswell 2006a, 193.)

When relentlessly seeking the justification for our maxims, there are, according to Kant, ultimately only two possible fundamental maxims for human

beings: the maxim of morality and the maxim of self-love (Muchnik 2009, 97).[8] The ultimate justification for moral action is always either "because it was right" or "because I wanted so". However, a maxim based on one´s desire might also be in accordance with the maxim of morality. No material maxim as such is morally right; the fundamental maxim of morality consists in evaluating all material maxims against the moral law: "Hence the difference, whether the human being is good or evil, must not lie in the difference between the incentives that he incorporates into his maxim (not in the material of the maxim) but in their *subordination* (in the form of the maxim): *which of the two he makes the condition of the other*." (Rel 6:36; 2005, 59.)

There is, for example, nothing wrong in a maxim of providing shelter for oneself. The maxim of providing shelter for oneself is based on the fundamental maxim of self-love only if it overrides others´ equally justified needs. Because the subordination of self-love and morality is always a free choice of an actual human being, and not an isolated incident of behaviour, the choice must be based on an "enduring character or disposition of an agent" (Allison 1990, 136). The maxim of morality is obviously based on the consciousness of the moral law. But the maxim of self-love cannot be based merely on the existence of desires, because the incorporation thesis requires that the subordination of moral law to desires is always a free active choice. Therefore, Kant introduces in the *Religion* the concept of moral character (*Gesinnung*). Evil choices are based on an evil *Gesinnung*, which Kant defines as "the first subjective ground of the adoption of [evil] maxims" (Rel 6:25; 2005, 50). According to Allison (1990, 153), the evil character can be equated with what Kant calls a propensity to evil: "By *propensity* (*propensio*) I understand the subjective ground of the possibility of an inclination (habitual desire, *concupiscentia*), insofar as this possibility is contingent for humanity in general." (Rel 6:29; 2005, 52.)

As contingent characteristics, Kant distinguishes propensities from predispositions, which are constitutive of humanity as its analytically necessary characteristics. According to Kant (Rel 6:26–28; 2005, 50–52), there are three predispositions to humanity. The first one is called "animality", which refers to drives that do not require rational reflection: self-preservation, sexual drive, and the need for company. The second predisposition is "humanity", obviously understood in a different sense than humanity containing all the three predispositions. The narrower meaning of humanity as the second predisposition seems to be equivalent to practical reason, that is, the ability to consciously establish goals and use reason to find means to achieve these goals. The third and the "highest" of the predispositions is personality. It can be equated with the possession of *pure* practical reason, that is, the capability of evaluating maxims against the a priori law of reason, namely, moral law. In other words, the predisposition to personality is the capability to be obliged by moral law. (Allison 1990, 148–150.)

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8 The plausibility of this dualism is assessed from slightly different angles in subchapters 3.5.2 and 3.5.6.

While predispositions belong to human beings by nature, propensities are always acquired, although they may still be universal. Consequently, the propensity to evil cannot be thought of as given by nature (it is not a predisposition to evil); like singular evil acts it must be thought of as freely chosen. However, at this point a fundamental problem arises. If all our moral choices are based on our moral character, how can that character itself be conceived as freely chosen? Kant explains:

> Nothing is, however, morally (i.e. imputably) evil but that which is our own deed. And yet by the concept of a propensity is understood a subjective determining ground of the power of choice *that precedes every deed*, and hence is itself not yet a *deed*. There would then be a contradiction in the concept of a simple propensity to evil, if this expression could not somehow be taken in two different meanings, both nonetheless reconcilable with the concept of freedom. (Rel 6:31; 2005, 54–55)

The propensity to evil grounds all our evil choices, but, on the other hand, the propensity to evil itself must be conceived as a result of free choice. Kant solves this paradox by conceiving of choice in two different senses, based on his doctrine of transcendental idealism:

> Now, the term 'deed' can in general apply just as well to the use of freedom through which the supreme maxim (either in favor of, or against, the law) is adopted in the power of choice, as to the use by which the actions themselves (materially considered, i.e. as regards the objects of the power of choice) are performed in accordance with that maxim. The propensity to evil is a deed in the first meaning (*peccatum originarum*), and at the same time the formal ground of every deed contrary to law according to the second meaning, [i.e. of a deed] that resists the law materially and is then called vice (*peccatum derivativum*); and the first indebtedness remains even though the second may be repeatedly avoided (because of incentives that are not part of the law). The former is an intelligible deed, cognizable through reason alone apart from any temporal condition; the latter is sensible, empirical, given in time (*factum phenomenon*). (Rel 6:31; 2005, 55)

Because the propensity to evil is the ground of all singular evil choices, it must be considered to be chosen in the "noumenal realm" as a non-temporal choice preceding all temporal evil choices.[9] The choice of the propensity to evil is "posited as the ground antecedent to every use of freedom given in experience (from the earliest youth as far back as birth) and is thus represented as present in the human being at the moment of birth – not that birth itself is its cause" (Rel 6:22; 2005, 47). The term "radical" does not, therefore, refer to any especially horrific type of evil but to the way in which evil is rooted in human will (Allison 1990, 147; Wood 1999, 284). In Pablo Muchnik´s words, "it is a *spatial* metaphor, not one of intensity or magnitude" (Muchnik 2009, 45). In desires as such there is nothing that could be called evil, for only a *chosen* maxim based on a desire can

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9 It will be argued in subchapter 3.5.5 that despite Kant´s terminology, the theory of radical evil is not committed to a strange idea of a choice made outside of time in the "noumenal realm". In the context of the two-aspect interpretation of transcendental idealism, it can be understood as an attempt to conceptualize the birth of morality and human subjectivity in general.

be held as morally accountable. On the other hand, Kant claims that pure reason itself cannot be corrupted; the moral law always presents its unconditional obligation no matter how wicked a human being is. (Rel 6:35; 2005, 58.)[10] Therefore, it is human *Willkür*, the power of free choice, that is stained by the propensity to evil down to its core.

As a consequence, Kant was far more pessimistic than his reputation as a characteristic Enlightenment thinker might suggest. Enlightenment has been generally associated with the idea that the improvement of political structures will one day result in perpetual peace. However, Kant was extremely cautious of this kind of optimism, which he dubbed "philosophical chiliasm", conceiving of it as "sheer fantasy as much as *theological chiliasm*, which awaits for the completed moral improvement of the human race" (Rel 34; 2005, 57). Even though education, societal structures, and other empirical factors significantly influence the moral behaviour of people, the theory of radical evil implies that there will always be evil that springs from human will itself, regardless of the level of civilization of society. According to Kant, the propensity to evil cannot be eliminated from humanity by any conceivable means, because every single human being has freely chosen the propensity already at his birth as a timeless noumenal choice: "This evil is *radical*, since it corrupts the ground of all maxims; as natural propensity, it is also not to be *extirpated* through human forces, for this could only happen through good maxims – something that cannot take place if the subjective supreme ground of all maxims is presupposed to be corrupted" (Rel 6:37; 2005, 59).

However, because the propensity to evil is a result of an imputable (although timeless) choice, it renders the human being evil, regardless of the life one lives. Given that the propensity to evil is also universal in mankind, Kant is led to his notorious claim that "the human being is evil by nature" (Rel 6:32; 2005, 55).[11] Kant is also a self-proclaimed moral "rigorist"; for him, every moral act is unequivocally good or evil.[12] Either one chooses his maxim out of respect to the moral law or he subordinates the maxim demanded by the moral law to some arbitrary maxim based on a desire; there are no alternatives in between. According to Kant, the same applies to human nature in general. The human being is evil by nature, because the moral law obliges *unconditionally*, but in choosing the propensity to evil the human being allows himself the opportunity of not following the moral law. (Rel 6:22–25; 2005, 47–49.) Although Kant strictly opposes the idea of inherited evil in any sense (because moral responsibility requires free choice), he explicitly asserts the theory of radical evil as a modification of the Christian doctrine of original sin (Rel 6:40–41; 2005, 62–63). Like original sin, radical evil "corrupts the ground of all maxims" (Rel 6:37; 2005, 59).

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10 The critique that freedom of will allegedly requires the possibility of choosing evil merely for the sake of evil and not because of any desire is discussed in subchapter 3.5.3.

11 Kant's argument of the universality of the propensity to will be discussed in subchapter 3.5.4.

12 Kant's rigorism will be taken up in subchapter 3.5.6.

Before moving on to various critiques of the theory of radical evil, I will place the theory in the broader context of Kant´s practical philosophy through which, I believe, it is possible to answer most of the critiques adequately.

## 3.4 Teleology and Kant´s philosophy of history and religion

In the Canon chapter of the First Critique, Kant (KrV A805/B833; 2009a, 677) asserts three major questions for his critical project to answer: "(1) What can I know?, (2) What should I do?, and (3) What may I hope?". The first question is already answered in the First Critique: we can gain knowledge only within the limits of possible sense experiences, that is, our sensuous intuitions synthesized by the categories of understanding. The second question is answered in the *Groundwork* and the Second Critique: I always ought to act out of respect to the moral law and subordinate my subjective desire-based maxims to it. Classical commentaries have often focused almost solely on these questions. Kant is read primarily as a revolutionary epistemologist who questioned the legitimacy of traditional metaphysics and established his own theory of knowledge based on what he dubbed the Copernican revolution. On the other hand, the idea of morality as autonomy, which does not need any ground outside itself, has been widely recognized as equally revolutionary. Much less attention has been traditionally paid to the question "what may I hope?". It is impossible, however, to do full justice to Kant´s thought without taking seriously the systematic nature of the critical project, in which the first two questions necessarily give rise to the third question, to which Kant attempts to answer by his teleological conception of history. (Rossi 2005, 19–20.)

Kant´s explicit ideas about teleology and religion in his philosophy of history and religion are often simply neglected as an embarrassing lapse, or regarded as quite secondary compared to his epistemology and moral philosophy (Yovel 1980, 29–30; Rossi & Wreen 1991, ix–x). Only during the last few decades has the *Critique of Judgment*, the Third Critique, been recognized as having at least equal importance as the first two critiques and the *Groundwork* (Anderson-Gold 2001, 13–14). Kant´s main motivation in the Third Critique is to connect the central results of the first and second critiques together in a holistic way. The question "what may I hope?" is not as innocent as it sounds. It does not concern a trivial psychological wish but a specific Kantian "need of reason". More specifically, the question is: can we rationally hope that there is a non-accidental connection between how the world factually is and how it should be? For Kant, this question is ultimately a question of the coherence of reason itself. If theoretical and practical reason, when followed in earnest, produce results that cannot be rationally integrated, the outcome is a desperate and absurd situation: reason, which is our only reliable guide in the world, contradicts itself. Although theoretical reason cannot by any means provide knowledge that coincides with the demands of practical reason, there must be a rational hope that it is possible. Otherwise the two different aspects of the same reason would point in

contradictory directions instead of one aim approached from two different angles. (Neiman 2004, 65–66; Rossi 2010, 16–21.) In the Third Critique, Kant (KU 5:195–197; 2009b, 80–82) seeks to ground this common direction by means of the teleological nature of reason common to both its theoretical and practical aspects. According to Yirmiahu Yovel, teleology is implemented in critical philosophy to such an extent that Kant "considered it a feat almost as new and revolutionary as the original Copernican revolution" (Yovel 1980, 156).

To begin with, already in the First Critique Kant (KrV A643–649/B671–677, A679–681/B707–709, A686–689/B714–717; 2009a, 590–593, 610–611, 614–615) constantly argues that although the idea of teleology cannot be constitutive of knowledge, it is nevertheless necessary as a "regulative principle", even for a purely theoretical use of reason in systematizing our experiences into a coherent meaningful whole. For example:

> The highest formal unity that alone rests on concepts of reason is the **purposive** unity of things; and the **speculative** interest of reason makes it necessary to regard every ordinance in the world as if it had sprouted from the intention of a highest reason. Such a principle, namely, opens up for our reason, as applied to the field of experience, entirely new prospects for connecting up things in the world in accordance with teleological laws, and thereby attaining to the greatest systematic unity among them. (KrV A686–687/B714–715; 2009a, 614)

In Kant´s view, it is a necessary working principle for scientific investigation of the world that the laws of nature ultimately cohere into one systematic whole. From the practical perspective, teleology becomes an even more central idea. The question, "what may I hope?", is for the first time addressed at length in the Dialectic section of the Second Critique. In Kant´s view, moral worth is uncompromising; no desire whatsoever is ever an excuse to neglect one´s moral duty. However, according to Kant (KpV 5:93, 5:107–108; 2008, 214–215, 228–229), the human being is also practically necessitated to long for happiness and must, therefore, be justified for it, as long as moral duty always comes first. Although morality is the supreme good for Kant, it is not yet the whole good (KpV 5:110; 2008, 228 ). Pure practical reason necessitates the idea of the highest good, "happiness distributed in exact proportion to morality" (KpV 5:110; 2008, 229), which can be seen as an epistemologically refined version of Leibniz´s conception of the best possible world:

> Now inasmuch as virtue and happiness together constitute possession of the highest good in a person, and the distribution of happiness in exact proportion to morality (as the worth of a person and his worthiness to be happy) constitutes the *highest good* of a possible world; the latter means the whole, the complete good, in which, however, virtue as the condition is always the supreme good, since it has no condition above it, whereas happiness is something that, though always pleasant to the possessor of it, is not of itself absolutely and in all respects good but always presupposes morally lawful conduct as its condition. (KpV 5:110–111; 2008, 229)

The concept of the highest good forms an essential link between Kant´s moral philosophy and his philosophy of religion. According to Kant, the connection of happiness and morality in the concept of the highest good is necessary *a priori* (KpV 5:113; 2008, 231). Because human beings are not only moral-rational beings

but also beings with sensuous needs, an impartial (that is, purely moral-rational) spectator, would judge that insofar as we act morally, also our sensuous needs should be satisfied. To the extent we use the capacity of pure practical reason, we are like this impartial observer. But because we are also limited and sensuous beings, we are never able to tell with absolute certainty if someone has acted morally or not, and this also concerns our own acts. It is even more impossible for us to make the world such a place that the highest good could actually be possible. (KpV 5:124; 2008, 240.) The result is the following situation: (1) pure practical reason demands unconditionally that we obey the moral law, even though there is no guarantee that the world actually becomes a better place by our action, (2) it is impossible to dismiss the question of whether happiness ultimately coincides with morality, for we are not only moral-rational but also sensuous beings, and (3) theoretical reason, when followed honestly, cannot provide anything that would guarantee that the world ultimately develops towards the vision our pure practical reason forces us to believe. Therefore, according to Kant (KpV 5:132–133; 2008, 246–247), pure practical reason necessarily asserts three "postulates". These postulates are ideas which cannot be justified as fact claims, but which are required in order to rationally hope that the highest good is possible:

(1) The freedom of will. The consciousness of the moral law is accompanied by the feeling of free will, and it is necessary to postulate the reality of the freedom of will in order to make sense of moral responsibility. However, it cannot be proved theoretically that the feeling of free will is not "a mere phantom of the brain" and that the will is actually free from the causal mechanisms of nature.
(2) The immortality of the soul. If our moral consciousness is destroyed at the moment of death, then we necessarily always remain morally imperfect and, consequently, cannot either rationally hope for the realization of the highest good.
(3) The existence of God. We are incapable of both knowing whether we really have acted morally or not in any given situation, and making this phenomenal world a place in which virtue and happiness might coincide. The realization of the highest good requires the existence of God both as a judge who can see into our hearts and as the ontological ground that makes the highest good possible.

The postulate of freedom is generally seen as quite legitimate among sympathetic commentators, even if the compatibility of a causally determined nature and the freedom of will is far from trivial. The postulates of the immortality of soul and the existence of God are often conceived as much more problematic – if not outright incompatible – with Kant´s basic assumptions in his epistemology and moral philosophy (Anderson-Gold 2001, 6; Caswell 2006a, 184–187). The problem is not merely the theological nature of these postulates, but Kant (KpV 5:113; 2008, 231) also states that the highest good is a *morally* necessary idea.

Lewis White Beck has argued, that the idea of the highest good "cannot be held, in consistency with his [Kant´s] settled views, to be logically or ethically necessary as a motive to genuine morality" (Beck 1963, 244). According to Beck, if Kant were to think consistently, the duty towards the moral law must alone suffice as the ground of moral action. Beck argues that if the idea of the highest good can be derived analytically from the idea of unconditional moral duty, then it has no philosophical significance, because the moral law alone already contains the idea implicitly. If, on the other hand, the idea of the highest good is needed in addition to the moral law, then heteronomy of the will results, because an autonomous will chooses solely out of the duty to the moral law. (Beck 1963, 242–245.) Several other commentators before and after Beck have seen the highest good (and Kant´s philosophy of religion in general) as a lapse from the otherwise sober-minded critical project. On the other hand, some commentators have similarly deemed the idea of the highest good to be incompatible with the basis of Kant´s ethics, but they have welcomed the highest good as a needed fundamental change in Kantian ethics, bringing substance to ethical life in place of the merely formal categorical imperative. Some have also tried to secularize the idea of the highest good in order to eliminate the difficulties there seem to be in its compatibility with autonomous morality. (Caswell 2006a, 185–187.)

Before assessing the validity of Beck´s critique and looking more closely at the idea of the highest good, I will take a look on how teleology appears in Kant´s writings on philosophy of history. The central idea in many of Kant´s lesser known works is the "cunning of nature" – an idea not unlike what Hegel (1978, 38) more famously dubbed the "cunning of reason". The cunning of nature consists in "nature´s plan" of using misfortunes such as catastrophes, diseases and wars for the use of progress towards the greater good. This idea is most strikingly present in the essays "Toward Perpetual Peace, Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim" and "Conjectural Beginning of Human History".

In the *Idea*, Kant already presents an argument that is more systematically discussed in the Third Critique. Given that human beings have various motivations for their actions, most of them more or less selfish, how is it possible that an ordered society and a somewhat just legal system have arisen from such chaos? While Hobbes and Locke, for example, hypothesized a collective rational decision to avoid "war of all against all" from which no one would benefit, Kant offers a different kind of explanation. Although Kant read Hobbes and Locke and used the rhetoric of a "contract", he explains the development of society not by rational calculation but by what he the calls "unsociable sociability". (Yovel 1980, 148.) Unsociable sociability is the condition of the human being on the one hand simply as a natural being and, on the other hand, as a being who recognizes the obligation of the moral law:

> The means nature employs in order to bring about the development of all its predispositions is their **antagonism** in society, insofar as the latter is in the end the cause of their lawful order. Here I understand by 'antagonism' the unsociable sociability of human beings, i.e. their propensity to enter into society, which, however, is combined with a thoroughgoing resistance that constantly threatens to break up this society. […]

> The human being has an inclination to become socialized, since in such a condition he feels himself as more a human being, i.e. feels the development of his natural predispositions. But he also has a great propensity to individualize (isolate) himself, because he simultaneously encounters in himself the unsociable property of willing to direct everything so as to get his own way, and hence expects resistance everywhere because he knows of himself that he is inclined on his side toward resistance against others. (I 8:20–21; 2013, 111)

The basis of Kantian ethics is that the ground of morality cannot be derived from what human beings factually are, but only from recognition of what ought to be. The capacity of morality can yet be actualized only in actual social relationships. Viewed empirically, the origin of morality is found in the fact that an individual can recognize himself as a self-conscious rational human being only by simultaneously recognizing others like him. On the other hand, recognizing the humanity of others not only gives rise to sympathy and equality but raises in countless ways the need to conceive of oneself as an exception compared to others. Therefore, sympathy, gratitude, love, and everything benign in humanity is necessarily always more or less accompanied by its opposite. Most fundamentally, it is not material resources that cause people to fight against each other but the threat that others pose to one´s will. (Yovel 1980, 148.)

Kant understands unsociable sociability as the means by which nature ensures that human beings do not form society only to attain pragmatic goals but to develop their inherent predisposition to morality – and this development can take place only with the temptation to follow one´s selfish desires. However, the cunning of nature is not limited to the "micro-level" of social relationships within a society; it also takes place on "macro-level" between the relationships of different societies.

In *Perpetual Peace*, Kant views war paradoxically as nature's means of guaranteeing the development towards moral perfection. Kant is astonished how nature has not only made it possible for humans to live in almost every corner in the world – in extreme heat and cold, draught and humidity – but through constant wars has also actually forced them to inhabit these corners (PP 8:363–365; 2008, 332–333). The title "perpetual peace" should not be understood temporally as eternal peace. Rather, it refers to "true peace", a peace that results from moral development instead of mere political conditions which do not make war desirable. (Yovel 1980, 187.) In terms of unsociable sociability, according to Kant, different societies are related to each other much in the same way as individuals in a single society. On the one hand, societies are dependent on each other because of trade and other pragmatic connections, on the other hand, they often wage war against each other. Because wars ultimately cause suffering for all sides, however, societies are forced towards actual morally based recognition of other societies instead of mere prudential calculations. (PP 8: 365–368; 2008, 334–337.)

In the "Idea" and *Perpetual Peace*, Kant approaches the cunning of nature from the viewpoint of "history of reason", that is, he describes how the cunning of nature affects to humans as we now understand humanity. In "Conjectural Beginning of Human History", the focus, on the contrary, is on reason´s "pre-

history", that is, the human being before the time of humanity in the full moral-rational sense. The language of the essay is metaphorical, and it borrows considerably from Genesis in the Bible. Kant´s peculiar use of language in this essay is not a strange stylistic choice. When nature before humanity is discussed, it is the current moral-rational human being who discusses nature through his lens of conceptual understanding and theoretical reason. By using metaphorical biblical language, Kant stresses the point that we are talking about a stage in the history of the human being to which we have no longer any phenomenological access. (Yovel 1980, 190–191.)

The essay begins with the state of paradise, in which there was not yet any sin. This refers obviously to a purely animal state when there was no knowledge of right and wrong. After eating the forbidden fruit, the animal-human "fell" to its current properly human stage. It is not possible to return to the merely animal state in which we acted immediately following desires. The emergence of reason started a process of development through various stages, which finally led to the present stage in which the human being is properly able to transcend nature in the sense of acting from pure practical reason alone. Kant stresses that evolving requires leaving the familiar behind, and it is therefore always a frightening and painful experience. For this reason, nature has not only enabled the development of the human being, but it also pushes development forward by various hardships. (MA 8:121–123; 2013, 173–175.)

Given the basic epistemological limits of the critical project, it should be noticed as strange how Kant several years after the First Critique still seems to be committed to a "pre-critical" idea that nature works teleologically. In Yovel´s (1980, 127–128) view, it is probable that Kant simply was not fully systematic, and occasionally crossed the boundaries of the critical epistemology, especially in essays supplementing the main corpus. Even in the *Groundwork* there is a famous controversial passage about the cunning of nature, in which Kant argues that "in a being that has reason and a will, if the proper end of nature were its *preservation*, its *welfare*, in a word its *happiness*, then nature would have hit upon a very bad arrangement in selecting the reason of the creature to carry out this purpose" (Gr 4:395; 2008, 50–51). Yovel´s (1980, 158) argument is that the Third Critique had to be written precisely because of this residual ambivalence between Kant´s Leibnizian ideas and the epistemological limitations of the Copernican revolution. According to Yovel (1980, 128, 161), it was not until the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* that Kant could adopt the cunning of nature as a systematic element of the critical project.

In a Kantian context, the idea of teleology necessarily takes place even in the theoretical use of reason, because when objects are constructed as the unity of sensuous intuitions and the categories of understanding, "we are bound to discover in them an *additional* kind of unity and organization that cannot be reduced to mechanical laws alone" (Yovel 1980, 159). According to Kant, various phenomena in the world can appear intelligible only if they are thought of as purposive. Yovel (1980, 162–168) lists four different areas in the Third Critique where Kant discusses teleology:

(1) Aesthetics. When something is judged to be beautiful, the object´s beauty "depends upon a purposeful correspondence between the components of the object and the free play of mental faculties it is likely to arouse in me, in a way that produces disinterested pleasure" (Yovel 1980, 162). There cannot be beauty without the idea that the components of the beautiful object are related to each other in a specific way to make the object beautiful.
(2) Biology. The nature of living organisms is such that their action cannot be understood on a merely mechanistic basis. We necessarily attribute ends to the actions of organisms, even if it is a theoretical possibility that, ultimately speaking, living organisms are merely mechanical, like inorganic nature.
(3) Scientific knowledge. The development of scientific knowledge can take place only through the assumption that a new phenomenon is an instance of some general law, and that all laws will further cohere with each other, although it cannot be proven that the world is actually a coherent, lawful whole.
(4) The cunning of nature. The vast and chaotic collection of all the historical data can form the totality called history only when singular events are linked together by an a priori principle that gives a direction to history. The cunning of nature is the way in which various human intentions can be understood under single historical process towards moral perfection.

The difference in Kant´s teleological ideas between the Third Critique and the essays mentioned above is that while in the latter Kant assumes a factual teleological structure for nature itself, in the Third Critique teleology is conceived transcendentally as a property essential to human cognition. For Kant, teleology has a function of intermediating between the theoretical and practical aspects of reason. In particular, the cunning of nature makes intelligible how nature can be theoretically seen in such a way that it is compatible with – and even supports – the purely practical conception of the highest good. Before taking up the centrality of the highest good and the cunning of nature in Kant´s system, it must be argued against Beck that the idea of the highest good is in the first place compatible with the idea of autonomy of the will.

The first apparent problem with the idea of the highest good is that it seemingly asserts happiness as a necessary motive for moral action. However, Kant does not spuriously argue that I can act morally only if I can be convinced that eventually I will be rewarded for my action. Paul Guyer correctly makes the point that the idea of happiness inherent in the conception of the highest good is a *general* hope that the relation of morality and happiness is not ultimately arbitrary in the way it often seems to be in this phenomenal world. Consequently, the hope that happiness and morality will meet in one´s own moral striving is inherent in the idea of the highest good, but it is a consequence of a general principle, not a selfish wish. (Guyer 2002, 175.) Happiness as an end of a moral maxim is not problematic as such. Even though Kantian morality cannot be philosophically grounded in anything external to autonomous will, all actual

maxim is not problematic as such. Even though Kantian morality cannot be philosophically grounded in anything external to autonomous will, all actual maxims, including the morally worthy ones, intend to bring about some change in the world. The difference between moral and immoral maxims is that moral maxims are legitimized by impartial pure reason. Kant himself makes this point clear in the Second Critique:

> The moral law commands me to make the highest possible good in a world the final object of all my conduct. But I cannot hope to produce this except by the harmony of my will with that of a holy and beneficent author of the world; and although the concept of the highest good, as that of a whole in which the greatest happiness is represented as connected in the most exact proportion with the greatest degree of moral perfection (possible in creatures), *my own happiness* is included, this is nevertheless not the determining ground of the will that is directed to promote the highest good; it is instead the moral law (which, on the contrary, limits by strict conditions my unbounded craving for happiness. (KpV 5:129–130; 2008, 244)

However, Beck´s argument is not that the hope for the highest good is secretly selfish. The argument is the following: given that Kant´s justification of morality is strictly based on the idea of autonomy – the idea that moral will does not need anything outside itself – how can Kant argue that the idea of the highest good, in which happiness is an essential non-moral element, is a necessary idea for morality in general? Similar critiques were familiar already to Kant himself. In the beginning of the *Religion*, Kant provides an answer to his critics:

> But although on its own behalf morality does not need the representation of an end which would have to precede the determination of the will, it may well be that it has a necessary reference to such an end, not as the ground of its maxims but as a necessary consequence accepted in conformity with them. For in the absence of all reference to an end no determination of the will can take place in human beings at all, since no such determination can occur without an effect, and its representation, though not as the determining ground of the power of choice nor as an end that comes first in intention, must nonetheless be admissible as the consequence of that power´s determination to an end through the law (*finis in consequentiam veniens*); without this end, a power of choice which does not (thus) add to a contemplated action the thought of either an objectively or subjectively determined object (which it has or should have), instructed indeed as to *how* to operate but not as to the *whither*, can itself obtain no satisfaction. (Rel 6:4; 2005, 34)

Although Kant defines the ground of morality – namely, autonomy – as that property of will by which "it is a law to itself (independently of any property of the objects of volition)" (Gr 4:440; 2008, 89), and morality must not be grounded in anything other than this inherent law of our willing, it does not follow from this that there cannot be a final end to which all moral action is directed. The moral law alone must be the sufficient motive for all moral action and the principle determining the moral value of every act, but all moral maxims also necessarily have an end which they attempt to realize in the world. As it was argued in the previous subchapter, however, at the most general possible level there are only two morally relevant maxims: the maxim of self-love, which places one´s own happiness as the ultimate end, and the maxim of morality, whose ultimate end is general happiness in right proportion to virtue without any partiality, that is, the highest good. According to Kant, the moral law alone must

be the motive for moral action and the sole indicator of the moral worth of an act, but the highest good is the necessary ultimate end on which action based on the moral law is focused.

Kant describes the highest good as "a special point of reference for the unification of all ends" (Rel 6:5; 2005, 35) in the sense presented above. However, as Matthew Caswell notes, "if the highest good were *merely* a focus point for moral action […] it would turn out to be a rather superfluous element of moral theory, and this result would imperil the moral religion Kant will shortly use the highest good to justify" (Caswell 2006a, 189). In order to understand the centrality of the highest good in the critical project, it is necessary to take it up together with the theory of radical evil. In what follows I base my reading of Kant on recent commentators Gordon Michalson, Jr, Pablo Muchnik, Sharon Anderson-Gold, Philip Rossi and Matthew Caswell, who all, despite their many disagreements, share a common ethos: (1) the critical project should be read as a whole and as a systematically developing process, (2) the systematization of teleology in the Third Critique is a highly important step in the critical project, as it makes the highest good a goal that mankind must strive to actualize, but (3) this turn gains its full meaning only when understood together with the most fundamental threat to the realization of the highest good, the radical evil of human nature presented in the *Religion*.

Pablo Muchnik has traced two major changes in Kant´s conception of the dualism between nature and freedom found in the *Religion*. Muchnik calls these changes the "radicalization" and "naturalization" of freedom. While in the *Groundwork* free choice was presented as taking place between autonomous and heteronomous action, in the *Religion* Kant explicitly "radicalizes" his conception of freedom from the mere selection of singular maxims to the choice of one´s use of freedom in general. On the other hand, Kant also "naturalizes" his conception of freedom in the sense that it concerns not only the individual but the whole human species. The propensity to evil becomes a fundamentally social matter belonging to "human nature". (Muchnik 2009, 43–47.) In the *Religion*, Kant stresses that to choose an immoral maxim is not simply to fail to act morally; rather, it is always an active refutation of the moral maxim in favour of a desire-based one. The radicalization of freedom means that the propensity to make evil choices cannot be taken as the condition of the human being given by nature; it must also be thought of as freely chosen, albeit as a non-temporal noumenal choice. Given that the propensity to evil is still universal in mankind, the relation between the ideas of human freedom and the cunning of nature becomes strained.

Before Kant introduced the theory of radical evil, there was no absolute obstacle for the realization of the highest good. Although the teleological development towards the highest good cannot be stated as a knowledge claim, it is a practically necessary idea which cannot be refuted theoretically either. Gordon Michalson, Jr calls this faith Kant´s "metaphysical trust", from which it follows that "in Kant´s own idiom, the possibility that virtue and happiness will *not* be correctly proportioned may be a sheer 'logical' possibility, but it evidently never looms as a 'real' possibility" (Michalson, Jr 2008, 25). This metaphysical

trust is evidently present in Kant´s writings on philosophy of history, in which the cunning of nature explains how everything that is seemingly counter-purposive (disasters, wars, and the general vices of human nature) ultimately contributes to the realization of the highest good. For example, in the absence of general antisocial tendencies such as envy and greed "all talents would, in an arcadian pastoral life of perfect concord, contentment and mutual love, remain eternally hidden in their germs; human beings, as good-natured as the sheep they tended, would give their existence hardly any greater worth than that of their domesticated beasts; they would not fill the void in creation in regard to their end as rational nature" (I 8:21; 2013, 111–112).

There is a notable similarity between the idea of unsociable sociability of human nature presented in the *Idea* and the theory of radical evil in the *Religion*. The similarity is indeed so striking that Allen Wood (1999, 287–289) has largely equated radical evil with unsociable sociability. According to Wood, "Kant explicitly attributes the corruption of human nature to the *social* condition of human beings, and more specifically to the concern over comparative self-worth that characterizes people whenever they live in proximity to one another" (Wood 1999, 288). However, as Caswell (2006b, 656) and Muchnik (2009, 56–57) have convincingly argued, Wood is mistaken here. Although Kant´s conception of evil is no doubt social in the sense that socialization is a condition for becoming a moral being, the propensity to evil is a result of a free noumenal choice. On the contrary, unsociable sociability is given to us by nature. Therefore, unsociable sociability should be equated with the empirical manifestation of radical evil, while the choice of propensity to evil belongs to the noumenal.

When Kant discusses the unsociable sociability caused by nature, it is not to be conceived in terms of *evil*, but as nature´s means of pushing human beings to greater good. What happens in the radicalization and naturalization of freedom in the *Religion* is that "the plan stepmotherly nature has set up for us must be interpreted now in terms of a *voluntary exercise* of transcendental freedom on our part" (Muchnik 2009, 44). Thus, "nature´s plan, in a word, must become *our own*" (Muchnik 2009, 44). The problem, however, is that the voluntary exercise of transcendental freedom now not only justifies and makes it practically necessary to view history as if it was a teleological process towards the highest good but at the same time it is the cause of the radical evil of human nature. Practical reason both asserts the telos of history and makes it impossible to achieve this telos by choosing the propensity to evil.

Highlighting the significance of the theory of radical evil, Matthew Caswell argues that conceiving of the highest good merely as the focus point of moral action cannot answer Beck´s critique, because in this case the highest good would not play any philosophically significant role in Kant´s project (Caswell 2006a, 189). In Caswell´s view, the above-mentioned problem that radical evil brings to Kant´s system justifies the necessity of a specific moral faith in the highest good which does not follow directly from the categorical imperative alone. The theory of radical evil entails that we are in a sense fundamentally evil; we have freely chosen a propensity to defy the *unconditional* moral law. As Caswell explains

"virtue, which for Kant always denotes a strength in resisting temptation which is won through struggle, is unintelligible without the notion of the natural propensity to evil, which gives rise to temptation and the obstacles to morality which must be struggled with in the first place" (Caswell 2006a, 203). However, precisely because we are not purely moral beings, we cannot ignore our natural need for happiness in our striving to become virtuous. But the theory of radical evil entails that we have *chosen* to make our desires an obstacle to morality, and as long as this is the case, we cannot justify the hope for happiness. Therefore, the fundamental evil *Gesinnung* must be replaced with another fundamental maxim. As Caswell argues, the only possible candidate for the new *Gesinnung* is the highest good, because the highest good as a fundamental maxim does not ignore our need for happiness but still correctly subordinates happiness to morality. (Caswell 2006a, 203–204.) This reading justifies the central role that Kant gives to the highest good without undermining autonomy.

Yet, changing of one´s fundamental maxim is close to an impossibility in the Kantian framework. Kant himself is ambivalent on the question of whether it is even virtually possible to change one´s *Gesinnung* simply by one´s own will. Given that the propensity to evil is not chosen in time, and it grounds all our empirical use of freedom, it seems reasonable to give more weight to the passages where Kant explicitly argues that the propensity to evil cannot be undone merely by human forces, such as the following:

> This evil is *radical*, since it corrupts the ground of all maxims; as natural propensity, it is also not to be *extirpated* through human forces, for this could only happen through good maxims – something that cannot take place if the subjective supreme ground of all maxims is presupposed to be corrupted (Rel 6:37; 2005, 59)

> According to moral religion, however (and, of all the public religions so far known, the Christian alone is of this type), it is a fundamental principle that, to become a better human being, everyone must do as much as it is in his powers to do; and only then, if a human being has not buried his innate talent (Luke 19:12-16), if he has made use of the original predisposition to the good in order to become a better human being, can he hope that what does not lie in his power will be made good by cooperation from above. (Rel 6:51–52; 2005, 71)

Since it is our unconditional duty to overturn the evil *Gesinnung* but this task seems impossible without "cooperation from above", it can be concluded that Kant´s ethos to limit the range of reason in order to make room for faith is nowhere as evident as in the theory of radical evil. The ideas of the highest good and radical evil are the two central points in Kant´s holistic system. Consequently, the plausibility of Kant´s overall project depends on the question whether or not it is possible to interpret radical evil and the need for God´s grace in overcoming it in a way that does not require literal divine intervention (unless one is happy with such a result). Examining this question will be the task of subchapter 3.6.

Before assessing how deep the threat posed by radical evil is to Kant's critical project, I will take up six common criticisms of the theory of radical evil, which, I argue, can be answered in Kant´s favour regardless of the problem discussed above.

## 3.5 Critiques of radical evil

In his article "Evil Everywhere: The Ordinariness of Kantian Radical Evil", Robert Louden defends Kant´s theory of radical evil, and its internal consistency in particular, against four familiar criticisms constantly appearing in literature: the explanatory emptiness of the notion of radical evil, Kant´s equation of evil with self-love, his denial of "diabolical evil", and the universality of the propensity to evil. In this subchapter my aim is to support Louden´s defences. I will also answer two other criticisms concerning Kant´s "rigorism" and the alleged metaphysical obscurity of transcendental idealism, especially concerning the theory of radical evil.

### 3.5.1 Explanatory impotence

The theory of radical evil is partly a continuation of Kant´s formal meta-ethics. In the *Groundwork* and the Second Critique, Kant's aim was to find the most general principle of morality. In the *Religion*, Kant similarly provides the general form of an evil will. It is presumably this abstract nature of the theory of radical evil which has invoked the criticism of explanatory impotence. It is argued that Kant´s theory of radical evil does not actually tell us anything about evil; it only tells us the trivial fact that we often do not fulfill our moral duties but deviate from them. Louden (2011, 95) refers to Gordon E. Michalson, Jr and especially Richard Bernstein as recent advocates of this criticism. According to Michalson, Jr: "Ultimately, the net effect of the things Kant does not explain to us is to put in question the explanatory power of his concept of the disposition [Gesinnung]. Kant´s use of the metaphor of ´ground´ in his depiction of the subjective disposition turns out to be especially unhelpful and misleading, since it simply begs the question of the ´ground´ of the ´ground´." (Michalson, Jr 2008, 61.)

Similarly, Richard Bernstein launches his critique of Kant:

> Presumably, the introduction of the concept of radical evil is intended to explain *why* (from a practical point of view) we deviate from the moral law. We do not always follow the moral law *because,* as human beings, we have an innate propensity to evil. Our wills are corrupted at their root. But does this ´because´ really explain anything? Does it do any conceptual work? I do not think so. When stripped down to bare essentials, it simply reiterates the fact that human beings who are conscious of the moral law sometimes (freely) deviate from it. (Bernstein 2008a, 33)

According to Bernstein and Michalson, Jr, Kant tries – and also should try – to provide an explanation for why human beings choose the propensity to evil. However, the theory of radical evil is precisely not meant to explain *why* we are evil by nature, but only *what* the nature of moral evil is (Louden 2010, 103). As Louden (2010, 96) points out, "for Kant it is quite clear in starting that his doctrine of radical evil is in no way intended to explain *why* human beings choose to adopt evil maxims". Kant (Rel 6:21, 6:25, 6:31–32, 6:42–43; 2005, 47, 50, 55, 64) stresses several times in the *Religion* that the subjective ground for choosing the evil

Gesinnung, which is the ground of all empirical evil choices, must ultimately be inscrutable. For example:

> But this subjective ground must, in turn, itself always be a deed of freedom (for otherwise the use or abuse of the human being´s power of choice with respect to the moral law could not be imputed to him, nor could the good or evil in him called ´moral´). Hence the ground of evil cannot lie in any object *determining* the power of choice through inclination, not in any natural impulses, but only in a rule that the power of choice itself produces for the exercise of its freedom, i.e., in a maxim. One cannot, however, go on asking what, in a human being, might be the subjective ground of the adoption of this maxim rather than its opposite. For if this ground were ultimately no longer itself a maxim, but merely a natural impulse, the entire exercise of freedom could be traced back to a determination through natural causes – and this would contradict freedom. (Rel 6:21; 2005, 46–47)

A central aspect of Kant´s theory of radical evil is the argument that no possible theory of evil can provide a natural explanation for the emergence of evil without reducing human freedom. According to Louden (2011, 98–99), there is nothing particularly controversial in Kant´s anti-reductionism concerning evil. On the contrary, it has been a common position in philosophy of evil at least since St Augustine. Louden argues that actually "the explanatory impotence criticism will only persuade hard determinists who, because they assume that every event in the universe is caused by antecedent causes, conclude that a complete and accurate causal account of every human action is in principle always available and that moral responsibility is therefore impossible" (Louden 2010, 98.) Louden (2011, 97) also points out that Bernstein actually undermines his own criticism. Contrary to the explanatory impotence critique, later in the same work Bernstein seems to understand the inscrutability of the choice of the propensity to evil precisely as a virtue of Kant´s theory: "*The ultimate ground for the choice between good and evil is inscrutable*. We initially encountered this thesis in Kant´s reflections on radical evil, when he claimed that the ultimate subjective ground of the adoption of moral maxims is inscrutable. I consider this to be one of Kant´s most profound and important insights about morality." (Bernstein 2008a, 235.)

It might yet be argued that Louden is not entirely fair to Michalson, Jr and Bernstein, for they are not asking for a *complete causal explanation* of evil. More likely, they are asking simply for some substance in addition to Kant´s merely formal definition of evil. No doubt, it would be quite disappointing if all Kant could say about the origin of evil was that it is inscrutable. However, this is not the case. Like most ideas in Kant´s critical philosophy, the theory of radical evil must be understood in the context of Kant´s transcendental idealism. The inscrutability around the choice of the propensity to evil concerns the transcendental viewpoint. As Bernstein (2008a, 235) himself also admits, it is impossible to *explain* the precise reason why we choose the propensity to evil without reducing freedom to natural facts or falling into an infinite regress.[13]

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13 Kant puts this point clearly in the following: "That the first subjective ground of the adoption of moral maxims is inscrutable can be seen provisionally from this: Since the adoption is free, its ground (e.g. why I have adopted an evil maxim and not a good one instead) must not be sought in any incentive of nature, but always again in a maxim; and, since any such maxim must have its ground as well, yet apart from a

However, as Wood has convincingly shown in his article "Kant and the Intelligibility of Evil", Kantian evil is *intelligible* from the empirical viewpoint in the sense that evil choices are always in principle psychologically and socially understandable. Even if Wood´s interpretation on the whole might threaten to naturalize the transcendental aspect of Kant´s theory (see, for example, Muchnik 2009, 2, 56–57), he is certainly correct in arguing that because evil choices are made by concrete human beings in a common social reality, evil is nothing mysterious in the sense that it could not be understood at all (Wood 2010, 159–163). On the contrary, Kantian evil is entwined in ordinary human social life down to its core.

When it comes to the propensity to evil from the empirical point of view, Kant´s philosophy of history and his "pragmatic anthropology", especially the idea of unsociable sociability, illuminate the empirical genesis of evil – even to the extent that without Kant´s continuous reminding of the transcendental argument one could adopt the view that Kant aims at a full naturalization of evil. On the other hand, the transcendental aspect in Kant´s analysis of evil is anything but trivial. The theory of radical evil is based on several curious assumptions (in addition to the controversial basic assumptions in Kant´s transcendental idealism and moral philosophy) like the rigorist account of good and evil, the claim that the human being is universally evil by nature, and that the propensity to evil is yet freely chosen as "an intelligible deed, cognizable through reason alone apart from any temporal condition" (Rel 6:31; 2005, 55). Rather than being trivial, Kant's theory could be accused of being confused – if not outright contradictory. The rest of this subchapter is dedicated to critiques of this kind.

### 3.5.2 Self-love

In the *Religion* Kant (Rel 6:45; 2005, 66–67) famously asserts that "self-love, which, when adopted as the principle of all our maxims, is precisely the source of all evil". It is often claimed that the motivation of evil acts cannot always, especially in the most disturbing cases, be reduced to selfish desires. An obvious example would be a religious terrorist who sacrifices even his own life for his ideals. Most famously, Hannah Arendt has strongly insisted on this point when discussing the Holocaust:[14]

> When the impossible was made possible it became the unpunishable, unforgivable absolute evil which could no longer be understood and explained by the evil motives of self-interest, greed, covetousness, resentment, lust for power, and cowardice; and which therefore anger could not revenge, love could not endure, friendship could not forgive. Just as the victims in the death factories or the holes of oblivion are no longer

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maxim no *determining ground* of the free power of choice ought to, or can, be adduced, we are endlessly referred back in the series of subjective determining grounds, without ever being able to come to the first ground." (Rel 6:21; 2005, 47n.)

[14] As it was explored in subchapter 2.6, Arendt later abandoned her view of "radical evil" as absolute and incomprehensible, and introduced the idea of banal evil. However, her critique of Kant´s conception of evil arguably did not significantly change in this turn.

> 'human' in the eyes of their executioners, so this new species of criminals is beyond the pale even of solidarity in human sinfulness. (Arendt 1976, 459)

However, in Kant´s technical jargon, "the motive of self-love" is something much wider than just selfish motivation in the ordinary sense of placing one´s own advancement before that of others. Kant´s conception of "self-love" is based on his theory of moral agency, in which good acts must be autonomous, that is, committed out of respect to the moral law alone. According to Kant, any heteronomous act in which the maxim obliged by the moral law is subordinated to a maxim based on an arbitrary subjective desire is unequivocally evil, regardless of the possibly "good" content of the maxim in question. As Louden (2010, 102) puts it, "the main problem with self-love, according to Kant, is simply that it does not recognize the supremacy of the moral law". Consequently, a maxim based on self-love is evil by Kant´s definition, because it does not obey the moral law which is *unconditional*. For Kant, evil is not a matter of the qualitative content of one´s maxim. On the contrary, the evil of "self-love" consists in the arbitrariness of heteronomous maxims. A person with a naturally beneficent temperament often does what duty prescribes, but had he another kind of temperament, he might act in a completely different way. According to Kant, the duty towards the moral law is something that everyone recognizes, however, no matter what his subjective desires happen to be. (Paton 1963, 40–41.) It depends on the subject´s desires – whose content is, for a large part, beyond his control – whether in refuting the moral law he performs acts of sadistic violence or sympathetic generosity, or anything in between.

Even if acting from a maxim based on "self-love" cannot be considered genuinely moral, there is another quite urgent question. Louden does not discuss in his article about the question of whether it is reasonable to follow Kant in calling all such maxims *evil*, when it is the case that they cover even the motivation of "souls so sympathetically attuned that, without any other motive of vanity or self-interest they find an inner satisfaction in spreading joy around them" (Gr 4:398; 2008, 53). I will provide at least a partial answer to this critique in subchapter 3.5.6, in which I discuss the critique of Kant´s "rigorism".

### 3.5.3 Diabolical evil

Even though Kant conceives of self-love as the ground of all evil, it is important to remember that he is committed to the incorporation thesis, namely, the argument that a desire is never a sufficient explanation for our acts. Unlike animals, we are never directly moved by desire but we always first freely decide that the desire in question is a good reason for us to act. (Allison 1990, 5.) On the other hand, if the moral law was a direct cause of our acts, we would possess a "holy will", which necessarily acts always according to the law. Human morality, on the contrary, requires the freedom of choice between the maxim obliged by the moral law and maxims based on one´s desires. Consequently, Kant rejects the possibility of a "diabolical will", which does not defy the moral law motivated by one´s desires but solely for the sake of evil as such:

> *Sensuous nature* therefore contains too little to provide a ground of moral evil in the human being, for, to the extent that it eliminates the incentives originating in freedom, it makes of the human a purely *animal* being; a reason exonerated from the moral law, an *evil reason* as it were (an absolutely evil will), would on the contrary contain too much, because resistance to the law would itself be thereby elevated to incentive (for without any incentive the power of choice cannot be determined), and so the subject would be made a *diabolical* being. Neither of these two is however applicable to the human being. (Rel 6:35; 2005, 58)

Many commentators have claimed that Kant is not consistent in his rejection of the possibility of a diabolical will. If evil is freely chosen, it is argued, the will must also be free to "elevate the resistance for the law to an incentive", namely, to choose evil for no other reason than violating the moral law. The argument is that if for an evil will there must always be some natural desire, which is incorporated into one´s maxim instead of the maxim obliged by the moral law, then human will cannot be called properly free; in order to be free from nature, one must be able to choose evil only for the sake of defying the moral law without any natural desire. Bernstein has put this critique in the following way:

> Even if we accept his [Kant´s] claim that human beings as a species are not devilish, and that no matter how wicked a person may be, he cannot avoid acknowledging the authority of the moral law, this does not address the issue of whether an *individual* can repudiate the moral law in the sense of freely choosing to defy it. I want to argue that this is not only possible, but also that, on Kant´s own analysis of *Willkür*, it *must* be possible. (Bernstein 2008a, 39)

However, as Louden (2010, 106) correctly explains, this argument is based on a misunderstanding of Kant´s terminology of freedom and the moral law. For a diabolical will to be possible, human freedom should be understood in a completely different way than seen by Kant. To begin with, freedom cannot be reasonably conceived as total "freedom of indifference", the ability to choose without the choice being grounded on any reason, however clouded and irrational that reason may be. Reasons to act, on the other hand, are always a part of the agent´s broader motivational space. As explained in subchapter 3.3, for Kant, there are only two possible morally relevant motivations on the most general level: the maxim of morality and the maxim of self-love. As also explained in the previous subchapter, the meaning of "self-love" in Kant´s terminology is simply the neglect of the impartial and obliging pure practical reason.

The ability to incorporate the defiance towards the moral law as such into one´s maxim would actually mean that the moral law no longer binds one´s will. For Kant, it is indeed possible to "repudiate the moral law in the sense of freely choosing to defy it" (Bernstein 2008a, 39). This is exactly what radical evil is about. But the moral law cannot be repudiated *for the sake of repudiating it*. This kind of rebellion would make sense only if the moral law was analogous to civil law – something given to the human being from outside. Instead, the moral law is simply the logic of pure practical reason innate to the human being as a being possessing autonomous will. The rejection of diabolical will is actually just a thesis about the limits in relation to which moral responsibility can be conceived

at all in the Kantian context (Wood 2010, 153–155). If there are creatures with diabolical will, they cannot be held morally responsible for what they are, because, by definition, they do not *internally* recognize the duty set by the moral law: "such a being would have to be regarded as an unfortunate product of nature, lacking the defining characteristics of personality" (Allison 1990, 150). A diabolical being could only formally recognize what the moral law prescribes, but it could not be actually obligated by it.

The critique of Kant´s rejection of diabolical evil seems to be motivated by the fact that Kant does not discuss much the moral psychology of evil. Kant conceives of pragmatic selfishness as the paradigmatic case of evil; consequently, it is easy to get the impression that he completely ignores more "vicious" forms of evil in which the perpetrator does not necessarily aim at any profit for himself. However, Kant does recognize non-instrumental forms of evil in which the harm of the victim is the principal motive. In the *Religion* Kant mentions "diabolical vices" such as "envy, ingratitude, joy in others´ misfortunes" (Rel 6:27; 2005, 51), which, as Wood notes, "look like 'evil for evil´s sake' if anything" (Wood 2010, 154). According to Wood (2010, 155), "far from denying the possibility of 'doing evil for evil´s sake', Kant´s account of evil yields precisely the correct account of what this is". What Kant denies is that in this kind of evil the resistance to moral law alone would be incorporated into one´s maxim. As Wood argues, the theory of radical evil does not include any kind of psychological limitation of the possible motivation of an evil will. It only asserts the limits within which moral responsibility is conceivable. Moral evil consists in defying the authority of the moral law, and this defiance can only take place by choosing a definite maxim at odds with the categorical imperative.

### 3.5.4 Universality

The last critique discussed by Louden is Kant´s (Rel 6:32; 2005, 55–56) claim that *the human being as a species* is evil by nature. Louden (2010, 109–110), as well as other sympathetic commentators (see, for example, Allison 1990, 154–155; Kotkavirta 2004, 82–83; Muchnik 2009, 55), readily admit that Kant´s justification for the universality of the propensity of evil is not formally valid. In Chapter 3 of Part 1 of the *Religion*, Kant first treats the universality of the propensity to evil as an unproblematic inductive generalization: "We can spare ourselves the formal proof that there must be such a corrupt propensity rooted in the human being, in view of the multitude of woeful examples that the experience of human *deeds* parades before us" (Rel 6:32–33; 2005, 56). However, a few pages later he makes the opposite claim, that the universality of evil needs a formal proof:

> But even though the existence of this propensity to evil in human nature can be established through experiential demonstrations of the actual resistance in time of the human power of choice against the law, these demonstrations still do not teach us the real nature of that propensity or the ground of this resistance; that nature rather, since it has to do with a relation of the free power of choice (the concept of which is not empirical) to the moral law (of which the concept is equally purely intellectual), must be cognized *a priori* from the concept of evil (Rel 6:35; 2005, 58)

Finally, in the last footnote of Chapter 3, Kant (Rel 6:39; 2005, 61n) claims that he has already provided the needed proof in the previous chapter. In over two hundred years, scholars have not been able to detect where the alleged proof lies.

Some commentators have concluded that because Kant never presents a plausible a priori proof of the universality of the evil propensity, the proof must be constructed for him.[15] However, an alternative way of justifying the universality of the evil propensity is to abandon the idea of a formal proof and to rely on the "woeful examples that the experience of human *deeds* parades before us" (Rel 6:33 2005, 56). This is the path Louden takes. Louden emphasizes Kant´s "pragmatic anthropology", which concerns what the human being "as a free-acting being makes of himself, or can and should make of himself" in contrast to "physiological anthropology", which investigates what "*nature* makes of the human being" (A 7:119; 2013, 231). Pragmatic anthropology is based on the assumption Louden (2010, 112) calls the "*cosmopolitan* conception of human nature". According to this view, it is plausible to talk about a universal "human nature" as a background for all the various cultural and historical differences in mankind. Such a conception is justified by Kant´s view of the "aprioricity" of history, the claim that history of mankind as a totality is conceivable only in the light of an *a priori* teleological framework (Yovel 1980, 141). Human nature as the object of *pragmatic* anthropology concerns not that which is given to us by nature but that which is the result of our own activity. Therefore, the cosmopolitan conception of human nature allows Kant to make universalistic claims about humanity, which are not universal in the strict sense of word, like the moral law, which concerns all logically possible rational beings, but which are nevertheless universal in this actual mankind. (Louden 2010, 113.)

The key to understand Kant´s argument of the universality of the propensity to evil is the conception of unsociable sociability:

> Here I understand by 'antagonism' the *unsociable sociability* of human beings, i.e. their propensity to enter into society, which, however, is combined with a thoroughgoing resistance that constantly threatens to break up this society. […] The human being has an inclination to become *socialized*, since in such a condition he feels himself as more a human being, i.e. feels the development of his natural predispositions. But he also has a great propensity to *individualize* (isolate) himself, because he simultaneously encounters in himself the unsociable property of willing to direct everything so as to get his own way, and hence expects resistance everywhere because he knows of himself that he is inclined on his side toward resistance against others. (I 8:20–21; 2013, 111)

As argued in subchapter 3.4, unsociable sociability and radical evil can be seen as two sides of the same coin. The meaning of unsociable sociability is that human sociality, from an empirical point of view, seems to be bound with antisocial tendencies; social recognition of other subjects takes place together with the

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15 Allison (1990, 155–156) tries to deduce the propensity to evil from the finitude of human will. However, finitude alone cannot explain the *free choice* of the propensity to evil (Kotkavirta 2004, 83; Muchnik 2009, 57–58). Muchnik (2009, 72–74) has constructed an alternative "quasi-transcendental" proof based on the distinction between the evil *Gesinnung*, which, according to him, applies to individuals, and the propensity to evil, which applies to the species. For a brief summary and commentary of other proof attempts, see Muchnik 2009, 80.

antisocial tendency to recognize oneself as a unique subject who deserves priority over others. The idea of radical evil, on the other hand, argues on the transcendental level that morally worthy action is possible only on the condition that there is an inclination to refute the moral obligation. In other words, unsociable sociability is the empirical appearance of the noumenal choice of the propensity to evil.

When Kant was writing the *Idea*, in which the concept of unsociable sociability is presented, he was still separately working on the one hand with the formal basis of his moral philosophy and, on the other hand, with empirically oriented issues such as anthropology. According to Pablo Muchnik´s (2009, 129–130) interpretation, the *Religion* is an essential work especially because it brought Kant´s critical project to a new, more unified level; in the *Religion*, Kant´s formal moral philosophy of the *Groundwork* and the Second Critique were synthesized with the empirical studies in pragmatic anthropology into comprehensive "moral anthropology". As discussed in subchapter 3.4, Muchnik (2009, 45–46) boils this synthesis down in two theses concerning Kant´s thinking on freedom: "radicalization" and "naturalization".

Already in the *Groundwork* Kant discusses a similar idea under the conception of the "natural dialectic":

> The human being feels within himself a powerful counterweight to all the commands of duty, which reason represents to him as so deserving of the highest respect – the counterweight of his needs and inclinations, the entire satisfaction of which he sums up under the name happiness. Now reason issues its precepts unremittingly, without thereby promising anything to the inclinations, and so, as it were, with disregard and contempt for those claims, which are so impetuous and besides so apparently equitable (and refuse to be neutralized by any command). But from this there arises a *natural dialectic*, that is, a propensity to rationalize against those strict laws of duty and to question their validity, or at least their purity and strictness, and, where possible, to make them better suited to our wishes and inclinations, that is, to corrupt them at their basis and to entirely destroy their dignity – something that even common practical reason cannot, in the end, call good. (Gr 4:405; 2008, 59–60)

As Muchnik (2009, 50) explains, the process of radicalization and naturalization of freedom can be illuminated by comparing the passage above and the following passage in the *Religion*:

> The moral law moved forward in the form of *prohibition* (Genesis II: 16–17), as befits a being who, like the human, is not pure but is tempted by inclinations. But, instead of following this law absolutely as sufficient incentive (which alone is unconditionally good, and with which there cannot be further hesitation), the human being looked about for yet other incentives (III: 6) which can be good only conditionally (i.e. so far as they do not infringe the law). And he made it his maxim – if one thinks of action as originating from freedom with consciousness – to follow the law of duty, not from duty yet, if need be, also with an eye to other aims. He thereby began to question the stringency of the command that excludes the influence of every other incentive, and thereupon to rationalize downgrading his obedience to the command to the status of the merely conditional obedience as a means (under the principle of self-love), until, finally, the preponderance of the sensory inducements over the incentive of the law was incorporated into the maxim of action, and thus sin came to be (III: 6). (Rel 6:42; 2005, 63–64)

The difference between the "natural dialectic" of the *Groundwork* and the above passage in the *Religion* is that in the latter passage the "natural dialectic" itself is presented as freely chosen. By taking together these two aspects of Kant´s theory of evil, the universality of evil becomes quite plausible, if not formally proven. It would be difficult – if not impossible – to think of a human being not entangled in what Kant calls the natural dialectic or the unsociable sociability. The incorporation thesis, on the other hand, entails that nature is not to blame for our propensity to evil, but the capability to make evil choices is also a result of a free noumenal choice. At this point, it should be explicated how this kind of peculiar "noumenal choice" should be understood.

### 3.5.5 Metaphysical peculiarity

Kant´s transcendental idealism seems to be committed to a strange metaphysical dualism between the phenomenal world we know through experience and the mysterious noumenal realm by which Kant justifies his claims about freedom, morality and the existence of God. However, there is today a widespread acceptance of the so-called two-aspect or two-perspective reading of transcendental idealism. According to this reading, "the contrast between empirical and intelligible character is not between two ontologically distinct characters, which are somehow causally related, but between 'two points of view', representing two models of agency, in terms of which the activity of a rational agent can be construed" (Allison 1990, 138). Rather than attributing to ourselves two distinct "selves" – the causally determined empirical one and the free noumenal one – it suffices to consider two different points of view regarding our acts: the third-person viewpoint, which concerns that which observably happens, and the first-person viewpoint, which concerns that which we will to happen. There is no need for a dubious metaphysical dualism between "two worlds"; a dualism of properties suffices.

However, as Allison (1990, 138), the forerunner of the two-aspect reading, notes, the theory of radical evil seems to imply a special challenge for the two-aspect reading. The choice of the propensity to evil is described as a timeless noumenal act which grounds our empirical use of freedom in general. There are no "two viewpoints" in any obvious sense in the choice of the evil character; it appears that there is noumenal choice that results in phenomenal, singular evil choices. According to Allison, "Kant certainly seems to be committed to something like a full-fledged doctrine of noumenal agency, that is, to the conception of a merely intelligible subject that creates its own character, together with its phenomenal manifestations, through an unconditioned timeless activity" (Allison 1990, 138). If the theory of radical evil is the systematic outcome of Kant´s basic assumptions of transcendental idealism, as argued in subchapter 3.4, the plausibility of the idea of radical evil becomes the pinpoint of the overall plausibility of Kant´s thought on freedom. As Philip Rossi puts it, radical evil is located at "the juncture of nature and freedom" (Rossi 2005, 7).

How is Kant´s claim that the propensity to evil is freely chosen "apart from any temporal condition" then to be interpreted (Rel 6:31; 2005, 55)? According to

Allison (1990, 143–144), the "timelessness" of the choice of the propensity to evil can be conceived as a conceptual tool. By arguing that "the first subjective ground of the adoption of the maxims, can only be single one, and it applies to the entire use of freedom universally" (Rel 6:25; 2005, 50), Kant did not necessarily mean that we have made a singular choice in the noumenal realm, which determines our use of freedom in this sensuous reality. To the contrary, the choice of the propensity to evil can be conceived as "timeless" in the sense that it precedes all singular moral choices. There is no first moment when we gain moral consciousness and become entangled in unsociable sociability. In this sense, the propensity to evil is always already there. However, the propensity to evil must also be seen as freely chosen in the sense that nature does not cause it; our social condition is the result of our own activity.

Wood´s (2010, 162–153) claim, that evil is always intelligible although it cannot be fully explained, applies not only to individual moral acts but also to the general propensity to evil. As Jussi Kotkavirta (2004, 74–79) has correctly noted, there is even a prominent resemblance between Kant´s theorizing on the empirical genesis of morality and the thought of Nietzsche and Freud:

> According to Kant, also morality has born from this sociability peculiar to humans. Also the starting point of morality is in how each of us controls his own desires and the desires of others – especially the desires of others – by behaving moderately in front of them. The birth of morality is therefore closely entwined in attempts to control mutual desires, and at the same time to gain and maintain acceptance, esteem and respect in one´s own eyes and in the eyes of others. Exactly this makes people to adjust their desires in common habits and customs, as well as to keep in secret that which they are ashamed of. (Kotkavirta 2004, 78)

However, transcendental idealism allows Kant to argue at the same time that morality ultimately escapes natural explanations:

> How and why morality is born, is not, however, the whole picture about morality. Moral action covers also morality itself, the questions concerning the normative validity of morality, which, according to Kant, cannot be understood by investigating the forms and paradoxes of sociability peculiar to humans. (Kotkavirta 2004, 78)

When placed correctly in the context of the two-aspect reading of transcendental idealism, Kant´s "moral anthropology" succeeds at the same time in justifying meta-ethical anti-naturalism and in making intelligible how morality (and evil in particular) is born from the empirical point of view. Transcendental idealism itself, of course, is a controversial doctrine, and radical evil is the point at which this becomes the most evident. It is still easy to agree with Allison (1990, 249) that it is not easy to find a better theory of freedom and freely chosen evil which is compatible with the viewpoint of the natural sciences than Kant´s transcendental idealism.

### 3.5.6 Moral rigorism

Even if there is nothing metaphysically dubious in the theory of radical evil, it can also be objected to on purely moral grounds. Because the moral law obliges

*unconditionally*, Kant is necessarily committed to his notorious moral "rigorism", according to which every moral act is unequivocally good or evil – and there are no alternatives in between. This applies both to singular moral acts and to human beings in general:

> Now if the law fails nevertheless to determine somebody´s free power of choice with respect to an action relating to it, an incentive opposed to it must have influence on the power of choice of the human being in question; and since, by hypothesis, this can only happen because this human being incorporates the incentive (and consequently also the deviation from the moral law) into his maxim (in which case he is an evil human being), it follows that his disposition as regards the moral law is never indifferent (never neither good nor bad). Nor can a human being be morally good in some parts, and at the same time evil in others. For if he is good in one part, he has incorporated the moral law into his maxim. And were he, therefore, to be evil in some other part, since the moral law of compliance with duty in general is a single one and universal, the maxim relating to it would be universal yet particular at the same time: which is contradictory. (Rel 6:24–25; 2005, 49)

As has been stressed several times, in his theory of radical evil Kant makes it explicit that a heteronomous act is never merely a lapse of morality, but, given the incorporation thesis, it is always an active choice of an evil maxim. Also, when Kant says that man is evil by nature, he means it literally, not that man is both good and evil. Even if one never chooses an evil maxim in his life, he nevertheless reserves for himself the possibility of doing so in the form of the universal propensity to evil, which makes the human being unequivocally evil in the face of the *unconditional* moral law. This kind of strict dualism between good and evil is undoubtedly against common sense, and Kant himself is also fully aware of this:

> *The human being is* (by nature) *either morally good or morally evil*. It will readily occur to anyone to ask, however, whether this disjunction is accurate; and whether some might not claim that the human being is by nature neither of the two, others, that he is both at once, that is, good in some parts and evil in others. Experience even seems to confirm this middle position between the two extremes (Rel 6:22; 2005, 47)

As Claudia Card has argued, for example, there are many reasons to oppose a view that an act or a person could be absolutely good or evil. (Card 2010, 74–92; 2011, 40–46). Besides, not only there are no moral intermediaries between good and evil in Kant´s theory of radical evil, Kant seems to conceive of all evils as equally evil, as Bernstein complains:

> So, following out the logic of Kant´s rigorist analysis, there does not seem to be any way to avoid the conclusion that a benign sympathetic person (who gives the incentive of sympathy priority over the moral law in his maxim), Hitler, and even Eichmann (whose maxims presumably did not give priority to respect for the moral law) are *all* morally evil. (Bernstein 2008a, 19)

In subchapters 3.5.2 and 3.5.3, it was demonstrated that Kant´s equation of evil with self-love does not by any means exclude "unselfish", non-instrumental forms of evil. A more serious problem is how Kant defines evil will in the first place. The first thing to notice, which, I argue, both Bernstein and Card do not sufficiently take into account, is that the theory of radical evil cannot be properly understood outside the context of Kant´s transcendental idealism. Kant´s

rigorism concerns the transcendental level, not the empirical-psychological level on which Bernstein and Card seem to place it. If Kant really claimed that a human being acting from the incentive of sympathy is evil in completely the same sense as someone like Hitler, he would hardly say that the sympathetic man "deserves praise and encouragement, but not esteem" (Gr 4:398; 2008, 53). Contrary to how Card (2010, 79n) interprets Kant, the theory of radical evil is not a theory of different "quantities" of evil – the ordinary and the radical – but it is a formal theory about what is common to all evil acts. Counterintuitive as it is, in Kant´s view, it is legitimate to conceive of something at the same time as psychologically praiseworthy and philosophically evil.

This leads to the fundamental question presented at the end of subchapter 3.5.2: for what purpose does Kant defines evil in the first place in the technical and unintuitive way he does? I agree with Michalson, Jr (2010, 71), Muchnik (2009, 2) and Wood (2010, 159–163) that the theory of radical evil can be properly understood only within the social and teleological context of the mature phase of Kant´s critical philosophy. As explained in subchapter 3.4, the evilness of radical evil becomes plausible only against the telos of morality, the highest good. When we act out of duty to the moral law, we promote the realization of the highest good. On the other hand, when we subordinate morality to self-love, we promote what Muchik (2009, 31) has dubbed "the jungle of means", everyone acting according to their subjective desire-based principles instead of a common objective one.[16] The jungle of means can be a tolerable place to live, but only insofar as people´s desires happen to coincide in a tolerable way. In reality, this is rarely the case, as frequent cruelties everywhere around the world demonstrate. What is evil in radical evil is not, therefore, primarily the fundamental corruption of individual moral wills, but the insurmountable hindrance that radical evil creates for realizing cosmopolitan morality.

To gain a proper understanding of evil from a moral psychological or societal point of view, one does not find many resources in Kant's theory of evil. In its formality, however, the theory of radical evil is often compatible with different more substantial arguments about the nature of evil, such as Arendt´s thesis of the banality of evil discussed in subchapter 2.6. The motivation of Kant´s rigorism is not to provide a rich theory of evil on an empirical level but to contribute to his meta-ethical foundation of human moral life. Rigorism is a consequence of the incorporation thesis; given that moral good is based on the innate, spontaneous freedom to be obliged by the moral law, moral evil must be based on a similar spontaneous capacity of choosing the maxim of self-love. In other words, rigorism is ultimately an argument against views which attempt to explain evil as a mere failure to be good.

16 The jungle of means is an ironic inversion of the conception of the kingdom of ends in the third formulation of the categorical imperative.

## 3.6 Radical evil and God´s grace

As argued in previous subchapters, the theory of radical evil is the crux of Kant´s moral philosophy, his anthropology, philosophy of history and religion, and even his political philosophy. As Caswell puts it:

> The conception of virtue as requiring the pursuit of moral perfection, the doctrine of the ethical commonwealth as a morally necessary ideal of a public moral community, the view of the indirect moral function of aesthetic judgment, the doctrine of the obligatory status of the highest good defined as a union of perfect virtue and complete happiness, the teleological conception of history, and the connection of moral religion and rational faith all may prove to have deep connections to Kant´s conception of evil as the central problematic of the human moral condition. (Caswell 2006b, 663)

According to the holistic reading of Kant´s critical project put forward by Yovel and developed by Anderson-Gold, Michalson, Jr, Rossi, Caswell and Muchnik, among others, the question of how to interpret Kant´s philosophy of religion determines for a large part how plausible Kant´s thought on evil can be seen today. In the broader context of contemporary philosophy of evil, Kant is unproblematically revered for his insistence that "on its own behalf morality in no way needs religion" (Rel 6:3; 2005, 33). For Kant, however, "morality thus inevitably leads to religion, and through religion it extends itself to the idea of a mighty moral lawgiver outside the human being in whose will the ultimate end (of the creation of the world) is what can and the same time ought to be the ultimate human end" (Rel 6:6; 2005, 35–36). After framing the problem in secularizing Kant´s theory of evil, I present two recent attempts at this kind of secularization: Gordon Michalson, Jr's narrative reading of Kant´s theology and the reading of Sharon Anderson-Gold, who attempts to explain Kant´s theological ideas as emergent characteristics that the social community produces over the individual.

As Michalson, Jr (2010, 62) has noted, the theory of radical evil poses a special challenge for using Kant´s thought as a ground for secular philosophy. The crux of the problem is quite simple. According to Kant, the propensity to evil is freely chosen (though "not in time"), and, therefore, the human being is fully responsible for it. However, the choice of the propensity to evil cannot be undone by another choice, because radical evil means precisely that "the subjective ground of all maxims is presupposed to be corrupted" (Rel 6:37; 2005, 59). Still, because an unconditional duty that cannot be fulfilled would be a catastrophe for Kantian ethics, "it must equally be possible to *overcome* this evil, for it is found in the human being as acting freely" (Rel 6:37; 2005, 59). It remains a mystery, how exactly the propensity to evil is to be overcome, if it already grounds all temporal choices. Kant´s answer to this problem seems quite disappointing from the perspective of contemporary secular thought:

> According to moral religion, however (and, of all the public religions so far known, the Christian alone is of this type), it is a fundamental principle that, to become a better human being, everyone must do as much as it is in his powers to do; and only then, if a human being has not buried his innate talent (Luke 19:12-16), if he has made use of

> the original predisposition to the good in order to become a better human being, can he hope that what does not lie in his power will be made good by cooperation from above. (Rel 6:51–52; 2005, 71)

Michalson, Jr begins his defence of Kant by noting that there is no logical contradiction between radical evil and the moral rebirth in question (Michalson, Jr 2008, 76–77). The need for God´s grace in eradicating radical evil does not violate the idea of autonomy, because the human will is limited in any case. For example, it is not possible to know for sure whether we have actually acted morally or if there has been a "covert impulse of self-love, under the mere pretense of duty", which has been "the real determining cause of the will" (Gr 4:407; 2008, 61). Autonomy requires only that it is always possible to act morally, not that it is possible to undo the consequences of our earlier moral choices, be they ordinary empirical choices or the "timeless" choice of the propensity to evil. The problem, however, is that in the *Religion* Kant apparently abandons his conception of God as a postulate of pure practical reason, and, to the contrary, postulates God as an actual metaphysical force. The postulates of pure practical reason gain their meaning and force through our own moral action, but taking up the issue of "cooperation from above" (Rel 6:52; 2005, 71) undeniably seems to refer to an actual divine power outside our own will, which is supposed to be able to affect our moral condition itself.

Yet, Michalson, Jr attempts to show that there is a possibility to read Kant in such a way that he does not lapse back into traditional theological metaphysics:

> One implication here is that we confront in a fresh way the truly profound nature of an evil that is radical. It is so profound that the depiction of overcoming it requires special means. Another implication is that biblical imagery provides Kant with what his concepts cannot, which is a way of rendering moral change over time. The bible provides Kant a means of depicting the chronological features of the moral life, badly needed in the crucial account of moral conversion yet impossible to frame in purely Kantian terms. Since the biblical element in question thus functions as a needed *narrative* feature in Kant´s effort to depict the transition from depravity to virtue, his use of the Bible is potentially suggestive of the idea of a "shared" narrative that might animate or otherwise inspire the moral community as it endeavors to grapple with the historical realities of a fallen world. (Michalson, Jr 2010, 58–59)

In Michalson, Jr's interpretation, Kant´s biblical references in dealing with overcoming radical evil can be understood as having a narrative function, which does not engage in actual metaphysical claims. The aim of this reading is to avoid both a classical metaphysical Christian account of grace and the reduction of religious language to morality, which would outright contradict Kant´s argumentative strategy. Michalson, Jr (2010, 67) compares the function of Kant´s language of God´s grace in the *Religion* to the theory of schematism in the First Critique. Because understanding and intuition are fundamentally different faculties of the mind, and yet they produce experiences together, Kant was forced to think of something that mediates these faculties, namely, the "schemes". According to Michalson, Jr, Kant´s biblical terminology in the *Religion* has a similar role in mediating empirical reality with its temporal evil choices and the "noumenal realm" with the "timeless" choice of the propensity to evil:

> In the *Religion*, Kant adapts his teaching about schematization through several appeals to what he calls the 'schematism of analogy' (R6: 65n). The schematism of analogy provides Kant with a means of 'representing' what otherwise remains purely rational and non-empirical, enabling us 'to make supersensible characteristics comprehensible to us' without actually moving 'outside' the 'boundaries of mere reason' (R6: 65n). (Michalson, Jr 2010, 67)

Temporal evil choices and the noumenal choice of the propensity to evil belong to fundamentally different conceptual spaces. As discussed in subchapter 3.4, Kant uses biblical language in "Conjectural Beginning of Human History" to describe the state of the human being before the choice of the propensity to evil was made. According to Michalson, Jr, Kant´s biblical language in the *Religion* also has the function of describing the supposedly possible moral conversion which would eradicate the propensity to evil. This kind of angelic state is phenomenologically inaccessible to the current human being, similar to the animal stage that precedes humanity proper. Therefore, the only way to talk about it is through metaphors. However, the theory of radical evil implies that such a fundamental transformation of the human nature must be possible, and as Michalson, Jr points out, the capability to *imagine* moral change is the first step in bringing about it" (Michalson Jr. 2010, 59). For example, the figure of Jesus stands as a moral example of a human being who is not necessarily free from the propensity to evil, but is worthy of the extra-personal divine assistance in overcoming it, whatever this assistance actually consists of in Kant´s critical philosophy (Michalson, Jr 2010, 67).

Michalson, Jr is certainly correct in maintaining that "the capacity to imagine and relate a story about moral change constitutes the condition of the possibility of bringing about that change" (Michalson, Jr 2010, 72). However, the fundamental problem of Kant´s system remains. Kant´s critical project is profoundly based on his rejection of metaphysics, the ontological proof of God´s existence in particular; it does not follow from being able to think of something that this something actually exists. Even if the biblical narrative offers a way to *think* of the recovery from radical evil, it does not help in any way in terms of conceiving how that could *actually* happen without assuming God as an actual metaphysical agent.

Another attempt to answer the same problem is provided by Sharon Anderson-Gold, who focuses on the social dimension of radical evil. The key to Anderson-Gold´s interpretation is her critique of Yovel´s reading of Kant´s transcendental argument for the practical necessity of postulating God´s existence. According to Yovel (1980, 89), the argument implicitly consists in two parts. First, Kant argues transcendentally for the necessity of postulating merely an ontological "something", which grounds the connection between nature and morality that is needed for the realization of the highest good. After this, he argues psychologically that human beings conceive of this something as the Christian God. In a similar manner as Caswell´s (2006a, 204) interpretation, discussed in subchapter 3.4, Anderson-Gold argues that the challenge with the idea of the highest good is not primarily in providing a systematic connection between human morality and the working of nature, but in radical evil. It does

not suffice that God is understood as the ontological ground of the possibility of the highest good, because the propensity to evil renders the human being as unworthy of the highest good, and the human being cannot overcome the propensity to evil without God´s help. According to Anderson-Gold (2001, 51), a plausible reading of Kant requires an interpretation of Kant´s philosophy of religion, which is able to meet the challenge posed by radical evil.

Throughout her work *Unnecessary Evil: History and Moral Progress in the Philosophy of Immanuel Kant*, Anderson-Gold correctly stresses that Kant´s conception of radical evil cannot be reduced to individual morality, but it is most importantly a profoundly social idea. According to Kant, radical evil cannot be understood apart from social community. It is the community which enables both virtuous and evil dispositions:

> Envy, addiction to power, avarice, and the malignant inclinations associated with these, assail his nature, which on its own is undemanding, *as soon as he is among human beings*. Nor is it necessary to assume that these are sunk into evil and are examples that lead him astray: it suffices that they are there, that they surround him, and that they are human beings, and they will mutually corrupt each other´s moral disposition and make one another evil. (Rel 6:93–94; 2005, 105)

Radical evil – from the empirical viewpoint – is nothing else than unsociable sociability, the ambivalent nature of the human being as a social and rational creature. Anderson-Gold (2001, 51) argues that Kant also conceives of God – in the *Religion* implicitly and in *Opus Postunum* explicitly – as nothing else than the social community´s emergent power over the individual, which comes to the individual "from outside". In a somewhat Durkheimian fashion, Anderson-Gold argues that God, understood in this way, does not become reduced to the conceptions of pure practical reason, but in an important sense actually exists, though not as a separate metaphysical entity. As long as people collectively believe in God, the community has powers that transcend the sum-total of all its individuals. For Anderson-Gold, God is an "Absolute Person, through whose continuous presence the moral law abides while our commitments waver, who is the necessary object of this moral faith" (Anderson-Gold 2001, 51). In this way, Anderson-Gold argues, God fulfils the role of helping the human being in the struggle against the propensity to evil without the need for classical theological metaphysics:

> Although Kant´s universalization of evil may be discouraging when viewed from an individual perspective, the radicalness of evil opens insights into levels of social interconnectedness that can in turn offer new avenues to freedom. Evil is generally viewed as a corruption pertaining to the isolated individual whose sole hope lies in an external, nonhuman source of aid. But once evil is viewed as embedded in our social condition, neither the problem nor the solution is adequately addressed in this way. (Anderson-Gold 2001, 41)

According to Anderson-Gold, both the formulation and the solution of the problem that radical evil poses for Kant´s critical project should be understood on a collective social level. In her interpretation, taking radical evil as a problem for an individual human being leads only to "moral fetishism", constantly

contemplating the "the 'purity' of [one´s] own intentions" (Anderson-Gold 2001, 41).

However, there is a fundamental difficulty in Anderson-Gold´s interpretation of Kant. First of all, the idea of God as an emergent power of the social community does not actually explain how the moral transformation of the human being could take place. The same human sociality which produces "God" is also the source of radical evil, and it is difficult to think of either aspect alone except as a conceptual abstraction. As Joël Madore explains, the emergent powers of the social community as "God" cannot ultimately help an individual to overcome his propensity to evil, because the effect that the social community has over the individual is empirical, but the propensity to evil has a transcendental origin. Moreover, the transcendental aspect of radical evil has a logical priority over its empirical manifestation, which Kant discusses under the name of unsociable sociability in his philosophy of history; "hence, the historical works uncover a wickedness that appears coeval to society only *because it was already there*" (Madore 2013, 134).

Rather than providing an explanation of how the propensity to evil can be overcome, Anderson-Gold´s interpretation emphasizes an additional collective aspect of the problem. Despite the importance of the social aspect of Kant´s thought, there is also a profound existentialistic dimension in the theory of radical evil. The intersubjective nature of evil does not erase the responsibility that each individual contends with in confronting the propensity to evil, which hinders the possibility of the highest good both individually and collectively. For this reason, Madore conceives the *Religion* as the most existential of Kant´s works. According to Madore, "it is also, arguably, the most problematic and controversial, for the whole realm of evil and salvation appears to lay *beneath* the world of clear concepts and unequivocal imperatives, perhaps even outside the sphere of transcendental philosophy altogether" (Madore 2013, 47). The *Groundwork* begins by arguing that knowing the difference between good and evil in one´s actual moral life is at the same time obvious and impossible to express exhaustively in philosophy. In the *Religion,* Kant comes to the conclusion that the reality of evil leads to religious faith, which is similarly a deeply personal issue that transcends the boundaries of philosophy.

As Madore explains, "on the one hand, evil escapes the grasp of theoretical reason" (Madore 2013, 47), which is obvious, because evil is an object of practical reason. But evil also "*frustrates* practical reason" (Madore 2013, 47). Pure practical reason legislates the moral law, which we are unconditionally obliged to obey and, in the Kantian context, are also always able to obey. In addition, pure practical reason justifies the idea of progress towards the highest good, the union of morality and the happiness it deserves. However, the theory of radical evil implies that we have "noumenally" chosen the propensity to evil and cannot undo this choice by our own forces. The propensity to evil renders the highest good a futile hope. It follows that human will freely chooses to ruin the ultimate end it sets for itself. Consequently, for Kant, "evil, it seems, marks the breaking point of reason" (Madore 2013, 47).

Even if Kant is known as a characteristic advocate of the rationalism and optimism of the Enlightenment, this is only half true at best. The conception of "pure practical reason" could more accurately be called moral faith. Commentators generally agree that Kant could never prove rationally that an autonomous moral will is possible. The theory of radical evil leads Kant to conclusions which even bring him close to such thinkers as Kierkegaard. For Kant, the human condition necessitates faith which cannot be rationally accounted for. Kant´s optimism is limited to the teleological conception of history, in which, however, the human being ruins everything by his radical evil. Kant is also a rationalist only in terms of philosophical argumentation, not in the sense of a more thorough world view. Rather, Kant´s intention is to secure the purity of both rationalistic argumentation and religious faith by keeping them strictly separate.

In the next chapter a philosopher with a completely opposite ethos will be taken up. In his metaphysical theory of evil, Friedrich Schelling aims at a holistic and organic view of the issues Kant preferred to approach by means of sharp dualisms. Consequently, Schelling´s definition of evil and the role it plays in his philosophical system differ in many important respects from Kant´s critical philosophy.

# 4 CHAPTER THREE: SCHELLING AND THE METAPHYSICAL VIEW OF EVIL

## 4.1 Schelling´s philosophy and its influence

Schelling has traditionally been introduced as a mediator between Fichte and Hegel. According to the traditional reading, Schelling pointed out the fundamental problems in Fichte´s highly subject-based idealism, and with his object-based philosophy of nature he paved the way for Hegel´s absolute idealism, in which the opposite standpoints of Fichte and Schelling are supposedly merged into one comprehensive whole. (Lawrence 2005, 13; Norman & Welchman 2004, 1; Ostaric 2014, 3.) For instance, John Watson concludes bluntly in his commentary on Schelling from the year 1882 that "the best fruit of the study of Schelling is the hold it enables us to have over the infinitely richer and fuller system of his successor Hegel" (Watson 2004, 251).

Challenging this classical view of Schelling began after a conference held in his honour on the centennial of his death (1954) at his dying place in Switzerland (Norman & Welchman 2004, 5). A year later Walter Schulz´s (one of the main speakers at the conference) highly influential work *Die Vollendung des deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings* was published. Martin Heidegger´s 1936 lectures on Schelling´s "Freedom Essay" had already paved the way for Schelling´s reappraisal in Germany as well. However, in the English-speaking world it was not until the 1980s – and '90s in particular – when Schelling was taken seriously as a relevant thinker on contemporary issues on the same level as Kant, Hegel, or Nietzsche. In fact, during the last few decades, Schelling has been recognized as someone who challenged in a fundamental way the central teachings of Kant and Hegel long before such figures as Heidegger, Foucault, and Derrida (Wirth 2005, 4–6). The originality of Schelling´s thought has been recognized in fields as varied as ontology of nature (Grant 2008, 2–3; McGrath 2012, 83–106; Žižek 2007, 220–231), deep ecology (Bernstein 2008b, 92; Hösle 1992,

166–197; Pylkkö 2004, 214–215), psychoanalysis and moral psychology (Bowie 2006, 96–97; Fenichel 2019, 3; Ffytche 2013, 4–7; Kosch 2014, 158; Marquard 2004, 13–29; McGrath 2012, 1), and cultural anthropology (Habermas 2004, 43–89; Lawrence 2004, 167–189), just to name a few examples.

Schelling has traditionally been described "as a protean thinker, never sticking with a view long enough to develop it" (Norman & Welchman 2004, 2). There are obvious reasons for this view, for Schelling did constantly change his explicit commitments, even the most central ones, and his various philosophical systems never got even close to Kant or Hegel in terms of systematic clarity. However, it is a fundamental mistake to read Schelling as if he was attempting in the first place to form a system like Kant´s or Hegel´s. On the contrary, as I will argue, Schelling was an early critic of philosophical systems understood as final, unchanging, rational models for reality. Yet, Schelling was no doubt systematic in a certain sense. As Heidegger argues in his famous commentary on Schelling, "there was seldom a thinker who fought so passionately ever since his earliest periods for his one and unique standpoint" (Heidegger 1985, 6). Schelling did not constantly change his fundamental project; on the contrary, he "had to give up everything again and again, and again and again to bring it back to a new ground" (Heidegger 1985, 6). Textual evidence for the systematic nature of Schelling´s philosophizing can also be found from a sketch from the year 1796, long attributed to Hegel, in which Schelling outlines a philosophical system that includes clear traces of his nascent ideas, even up to his late philosophy of mythology (Brown 1977, 17).

Sean McGrath argues that there are three constantly recurring "leitmotifs" in Schelling´s philosophy. The first of these is polarity. According to McGrath, "Schelling remains convinced, from his earliest treatises to his last lectures, that all intelligible structure, mental or material, physical or metaphysical, finite or divine, is characterized by polarity, opposition, and the creative and dynamic tension between incommensurables, a tension which must not be abrogated in a spurious logic that presumes to deny the principle of contradiction (Hegel´s)" (McGrath 2012, 2). The second motif suggested by McGrath is the finitude of human experience and reason, the "crucifixion of thought against the real" (McGrath 2012, 3). Though Schelling consistently opposes Kant´s argument against the possibility of metaphysics, he argues that the metaphysical knowledge a philosopher can hope for is always tied to a limited perspective. The third motif is contingency. A teleological conception of nature is a recurring theme in Schelling´s oeuvre, but he also does constant work to find room for a proper conception of human freedom within nature. Schelling´s intention to conceive of human freedom as a part of nature leads him to think of contingency as an actual metaphysical characteristic of nature instead of mere human limitedness in predicting the processes of nature. (McGrath 2012, 3–4.)

When it comes to the various means that Schelling attempted to use to systematize his driving ideas, there are several ways of dividing his career into different periods. Actually, it could be argued that each of Schelling´s major works forms its own period. In this study I follow Lara Ostaric´s (2014, 3) division

of four periods: (1) early transcendental idealism and philosophy of nature (1794–1800), (2) identity philosophy (1801–1809), (3) the system of freedom (1809–1827), and (4) positive philosophy (1827–1854).[17]

The first two of Schelling´s essays, "On the Possibility of an Absolute Form of Philosophy" and "Of the I as the Principle of Philosophy or on the Unconditional in Human Knowledge", are generally conceived to be quite similar to Fichte´s philosophy of the same period.[18] Fichte´s early philosophy is usually read largely as a response to Kant´s transcendental idealism, not least because at times he explicitly identifies himself as a Kantian who does not attempt to challenge Kant´s fundamental ideas but seeks only to correct some of Kant´s formulations (Grant 2008, 114). In his attempt to philosophically ground both empirical knowledge and moral-religious faith, Kant established several dualistic settings. According to Fichte, there is a central point behind Kant´s dualisms, which demonstrates a dogmatic presumption underlying his critical philosophy. In justifying the epistemic validity of knowledge claims as the synthesis of sensuous intuitions and a discursive understanding in the guidance of ideas of reason, Kant takes for granted "the transcendental unity of apperception", self-consciousness, which makes it possible to be conscious of experiences as *my* experiences. In Fichte´s view, the empirical I, in which something fundamental remains identical in different times and situations, cannot be taken as an unquestionable starting point, but it must be grounded in the *act* of the "absolute I". In this act, two opposite structures are posited: the empirical I and the not-I, that is, subjectivity in its ordinary sense and the external reality it faces. The foundational act of the absolute I obviously cannot be cognized in the ordinary sense of the word, because it is the ground of cognition in both its theoretical and practical aspects. (Bowie 2006, 18–19.)

Together with Fichte, Schelling was disappointed about the dualistic positions Kant´s critical project had established, and he attempted to overcome Kant´s dualism in a somewhat manner similar to Fichte. According to Andrew Bowie, however, Schelling saw Fichte´s strongly subject-oriented viewpoint as too limited already in his first essays. In "Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism", Schelling´s primary challenge is not the Kantian/Fichtean question – namely, what are the conditions of there being a cognized world? – but, on the contrary, how there is any separate being to ask such a question in the first place. As Andrew Bowie puts it, the question is not "'thinking that was objectively determined in such and such a way', but the fact that there is thinking at all" (Bowie 2006, 25). Even though Fichte problematizes the empirical subjectivity Kant takes for granted, he never seriously takes up its genesis but

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17 A similar division is advocated by Andrew Bowie (2006, 13–14) and Judith Norman & Alistair Welchman (2004, 2–4). Following Manfred Schröter, McGrath (2012, 38) suggests, to the contrary, that only three periods should be distinguished (identity philosophy is counted in Schelling's first phase), and that the most remarkable change is Schelling´s turn from his earlier thought to the system of freedom.

18 In his article "The Early Schelling on the Unconditioned", Eric Watkins has contested this interpretation, arguing that it was primarily Kant who influenced Schelling at this point. Watkins (2014, 11) also points out that scholars have detected crucial influences from Hölderlin, Jacobi and Reinhold as well.

ultimately reduces nature to the "not-I", merely a necessary opposition within the absolute I, which makes it possible that the subject faces an object and can become self-conscious by reflecting itself in something external to itself (Grant 2008, 60; Kosch 2006, 72–73).

From Schelling´s point of view, Fichte does not succeed in eliminating Kant´s "thing in itself"; he merely radicalizes Kant´s doctrine. For Fichte, the "not-I" plays essentially the same role as the "thing in itself" does for Kant; it is the self-posited limitation of the absolute I, which is required so that the empirical subjectivity that we experience can take place. (Bowie 2006, 19.) Because of this dissatisfaction with the Kantian-Fichtean idealistic point of view, Schelling begins to develop his philosophy of nature, which aims at "taking nature seriously", conceiving of nature as *productive* instead of a mere passive limitation of subjectivity. According to Schelling, nature is an active organism, whose productivity does not depend on human cognition, but which, on the contrary, has produced the human subject.

At first glance Schelling seems to be arguing that the thinking subject cannot be the ontological starting point of philosophy, because physical nature precedes human subjectivity and conditions its existence, and, therefore, human subjectivity must be explained in naturalistic terms. However, as Iain Hamilton Grant notes, "in many ways, Schelling´s naturalistic realism offers a counterpoint to the eliminativist strategy in contemporary neurophilosophy" (Grant 2008, 188). In *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, Schelling argues:

> But let it be the case that I am a *thing*, which is itself caught up in the series of causes and effects, and is itself, together with the entire system of ideas, a mere result of the manifold effects which impinge upon me from without; in short suppose I am myself a mere piece of mechanism. But what is caught up in mere mechanism cannot step out of the mechanism and ask: How has all this become possible? (SW2: 11; 1988, 13–14)

Schelling clearly refutes the view that Grant (2008, 62) calls somatic conception of matter – the standard modern view of matter as inert "stuff" moved by forces. According to Schelling, there is no absolute divide between inorganic and organic nature, not because life can be ultimately explained mechanically but because there is no "lifeless" matter in the first place. In a famous passage, Schelling asserts the mission of his philosophy of nature: "Nature should be Mind made visible, Mind the invisible Nature" (SW2: 64; 1988, 42). The idea of living nature is so central to Schelling's thought, that according to Grant (2008, 2–3), philosophy of nature is not only a phase for Schelling but the core of his philosophy in general. A similar interpretation is suggested by Andrew Bowie (2006, 34.) and McGrath (2012, 23).

However, Schelling´s thought must not be confused with the vitalist school of his time. In contrast to the vitalists, who assume a "life force" that animates all matter, Schelling deems the life force to be "a completely self-contradictory concept" (SW2: 55; 1988, 37). In short, the problem for Schelling is that the concept of life force is coined in order to vitalize a view of nature that is basically mechanistic (Bowie 2006, 35). Schelling also contests Kant´s view of teleology as a regulative principle and asserts nature as *constitutively* teleological. For Kant,

all the seemingly purposeful characteristics of nature are ultimately imposed on it by human subjectivity. According to Schelling, to the contrary, purposiveness "is also found to a lesser degree in matter, which can and must be considered in some sense a subject in its own right" (McGrath 2012, 13).

The key concept in Schelling´s understanding of nature is "productivity". According to Schelling, empirical sciences study "products" of nature, but productivity itself can be studied only by philosophy. However, products are ultimately theoretical constructions, and everything in nature is in a state of constant becoming. Science is a human practice by means of which we are able to observe a particular product only by limiting the endless and formless productivity of the whole of nature to a limited and well-defined context by means of concepts. Schelling (SW3: 289; 2004, 206) explicates this idea by a metaphor: we conceive of an eddy in a river as a constant "product" of nature even if nothing actually remains the same in it for a moment. To use another example, every molecule in a human body is replaced every few years, but yet we conceive the body as a stable "product". (Bowie 2006, 36.)

Because productivity is movement and becoming, it has to be conceived of in terms of forces. In contrast to the vitalist conception of one life force, according to Schelling, it is impossible to conceive of a force without an opposing force that limits its influence. The fundamental polar forces grounding Schelling´s view of the productivity of nature are "expansive" and "contractive" forces, of which "the former is the source of the energy and mobility of nature, the latter, the source of the subsistence and concrete particularity of natural entities" (McGrath 2012, 85). The structured universe is possible only as the interplay of these forces; without the expansive force everything would be reduced to mere products, and actual living nature would have never taken place, but without the contractive force no concrete particular thing would be possible.

In the second main work of philosophy of nature, *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*, Schelling prepares a synthesis of his early Kantian-Fichtean essays, which approach nature from the standpoint of its formation in human subjectivity, and philosophy of nature, which approaches human subjectivity as a product of nature:

> Now if it is the task of transcendental philosophy to subordinate the real to the ideal, it is, on the other hand, the task of philosophy of nature to explain the ideal by the real. The two sciences are therefore but one science, differentiated only in the opposite orientation of their tasks. Moreover, as the two directions are not only equally possible, but equally necessary, the same necessity attaches to both in the system of knowledge. (SW3: 272–273; 2004, 194)

This synthesis is actual worked out in the culmination work of Schelling´s first period, *System of Transcendental Idealism*. In the *System*, Schelling (SW3: 612; 2001, 219) presents art as the "universal organ of philosophy". In this work, Schelling in a sense evaluates art as being superior to philosophy, since art can reveal directly what philosophy can only point at. As Paul Guyer explains:

> Schelling argued that the laws of nature on the one hand are the product of unconscious thought and the laws of human knowledge and action (including institutions)

> on the other hand are the product of conscious thought, while only art, as the product of both unconscious and conscious thought, reveal the unitary and active character of the thought that underlies all reality (Guyer 2014, 78)

According to Schelling, philosophy can show that the conscious and the unconscious must be thought of as identical, but philosophy always "manifests more the conscious than the unconscious aspect of thought" (Guyer 2014, 78). Even if conscious thought can study every object in nature, it always chooses one particular aspect at a time at the cost of excluding all other aspects. On the contrary, with art it is possible to retain openness vis-à-vis virtually infinite different perspectives at once, because in art the duality of subject and object is transcended. On the one hand, art manifests the unconscious productivity of nature; on the other hand, it is also conscious intellectual practice. (Bowie 2006, 53; Guyer 2014, 82.) As McGrath puts it more poetically, "the artist becomes the shaman of the absolute", and "like a somnambulist, she knows what she is doing without knowing what she is doing and her activity is unhampered by the reflection that splits the absolute self into subject and object" (McGrath 2012, 14).

After the *System*, Schelling breaks with the idea of beginning simultaneously from transcendental idealism and philosophy of nature in order to show that ultimately subject and object are identical. On the contrary, in *Presentation of My System of Philosophy* Schelling begins right away from "the total indifference of the subjective and objective" (SW4: 114; 2001b, 349). During this period of "identity philosophy", Schelling refutes all types of "reflective" arguments, as they presuppose the opposition of subject and object. Consequently, the accurate term for his philosophical method during this period is "construction". As Breazeale explains, Schelling´s conception of construction is most easily understood by a reference to the mathematician´s construction of geometrical objects:

> Schelling describes his own philosophical constructions not as proofs, derivations or deductions, but as 'demonstrations' in the geometrical sense: *ostensive* rather than *discursive* proofs. Such constructions all share the same goal and strategy: to *make visible* or *self-evident* the ultimate unity of reality, to *exhibit* or to *display* the particular in the universal, to *demonstrate* the unity of the one and the many – and to do so in the manner of a geometrical proof that 'exhibits' in a particular figure a necessary and universal truth about all such figures, *directly and self-evidently*. (Breazeale 2014, 98)

Because the "self-evident" realization of the unity of subject and object cannot be shown by discursive argumentation, Breazeale contends that it can only be sensed by the "organ" of intellectual intuition, by which "the absolute *can*, according to Schelling, be *cognized directly* – not simply as *thought of* as possible, but *intuited* as *real*" (Breazeale 2014, 99). Michael Forster argues similarly that Schelling advocates here a "dogmatic" position, which relies ultimately on intellectual intuition understood as immediate realization of the oneness of everything (Forster 2014, 32, 39).

According to Daniel Whistler, to the contrary, these readings are based on a common misunderstanding about the intellectual intuition in identity philosophy. In his work *Schelling´s Theory of Symbolic Language: Forming the*

*System of Identity* Whistler emphasizes Schelling´s "symbolic" theory of language. While symbols were widely discussed as a source of immediate knowledge about nature during the Romantic period, Schelling´s conception of the symbol differs remarkably from other Romantic accounts of the symbol, and other theories of the symbol in general. For Schelling, language in general is symbolic, which for him means that the signified is identical to the signifier; there is no ontological gap between meaning and being (Whistler 2013, 39). There are no qualitative leaps in reality, but all differences follow from different degrees of intensity of the identity present in everything. According to Whistler, commentators have not often fully understood Schelling´s uncompromising monism. When the dualism of discursive reason and immediate intuition is also broken down, intellectual intuition ceases to be special knowledge about the Absolute; on the contrary, it must be conceived of simply as the most intensive form of producing the identity of meaning and being (Whistler 2013, 169).

Regardless of how Schelling´s identity philosophy is interpreted it is certainly based on thoroughgoing monism, in which the standpoint of everyday experience and reasoning about reality is misguided. After intensively developing identity philosophy for only a few years, Schelling underwent what S.J. McGrath (2012, 38) calls "the personalist turn", arguably the most fundamental change in Schelling´s whole career. The exact timing of this turn is disputed, but at the latest in *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom* Schelling approaches the idea of philosophical system in a fresh way.[19] The system of identity was at a dead end: it could not really move anywhere from its starting point, the unity of subject and object. If the perspective of limited temporal human subjectivity is conceived of in terms of illusion, human freedom and moral choices in particular must also be seen as illusory (Bowie 2006, 88). Apart from this obvious practical problem, there is also the theoretical difficulty of explaining how even an illusion of separation from the Absolute becomes possible if the unity of subject and object is taken as the self-evident starting point of philosophy. Because of these problems, Schelling abandons the system of identity, in which the sensible world of "appearances" was seen as "less real" than the original unity of all, and develops a new metaphysics of the will.

The driving idea of Schelling´s middle period, "the system of freedom", is that the "fall" from the Absolute is real; evil and human freedom must not be explained away by a greater unity, which the finite human mind is unable to comprehend. While in Spinoza´s system, for example, God was equated with such an all-encompassing unity, Schelling now develops a more complex pantheistic account in which an essential role is given to a peculiar conception of God´s "ground". In a philosophical system every conception, including God, is grounded in something. But if God is that which grounds everything else, God´s ground cannot be separate from him: "as there is nothing before or outside of God he must contain within himself the ground of his existence" (SW7: 357; 1992, 32). According to Schelling, "all philosophies say this, but they speak of this ground as mere concept without making it something real and actual" (SW7: 357–

19 From now on, this is referred to as the Freedom Essay.

358; 1992, 32). Schelling´s idea of God´s ground is not merely a conceptual necessity in explaining God as his own cause. Rather, God´s ground is materiality as such, something that even God´s understanding cannot fully possess: it is "the incomprehensible basis of reality in things, the irreducible remainder which cannot be resolved into reason by the greatest exertion but always remains in the depths" (SW7: 360; 1992, 34).

The ground is that element in the cosmos which makes it possible that anything genuinely new is produced in it. In opposition to what Schelling understands as a "dead conceptual inclusion of things in God", he argues that "the concept of becoming is the only one adequate to the nature of things" (SW7: 359; 1992, 33). But since the ground is that against which the becoming of things takes place, it is "that within God which is not *God himself*" (SW7: 359; 1992, 33). Formally taken, the concept of the ground asserts contingency as a real metaphysical characteristic of the universe instead of mere limitation of human ability to investigate its laws. In theological terms, Schelling describes the ground as "longing which the eternal One feels to give birth to itself" (SW7: 359; 1992, 34). Making this formulation more intelligible, Sean McGrath has innovatively equated the ground with "God´s unconscious" (McGrath 2012, 151). In the next subchapter, the concept of the ground will be discussed at further length. In the later subchapters it will be argued that the practical motivation of Schelling´s metaphysic lies, for a large part, in finding a conception of evil which does not explain evil away but neither collapses into Manichean dualism.

Even though Schelling´s active career continued until his death in 1854, the Freedom Essay remained his last completed work. For approximately the next two decades, Schelling continued to develop similar ideas without ever arriving at anything he considered worth publishing. However, the three drafts of a work called *Ages of the World* are generally seen as an important continuation of the Freedom Essay. There are significant differences in the drafts, but in all of them Schelling creates a theory of the "potencies" of God, being different modalities or aspects of God´s will. The first and second potencies largely correspond to the "ground" and "existence" of the Freedom Essay respectively, and the third potency to their fusion in actual reality (Dobe 2014, 173; McGrath 2012, 14–15).

The last phase of Schelling´s thought, "philosophy of mythology", which he began to develop in the early 1830´s, contains three sections: grounding of positive philosophy, philosophy of mythology, and philosophy of revelation (Rush 2014, 218). Schelling´s late philosophy has generally received a very critical response. In many ways Schelling turned from his earlier revolutionary ideas back to more traditional Christianity and political conservatism. When Hegel´s philosophy began to reveal its well-known political impacts, soon culminating in Marxism, the Prussian king himself offered Schelling a professorship with the explicit wish that he could help restore people´s faith in Christianity and monarchism (Rush 2014, 216–217). Several recent commentators agree that late Schelling´s critique of Hegel, despite some of its arguable reactionary aspects, was ground-breaking (Bowie 2014, 189–194; Rush 2014, 237; Wirth 2003, 12–23; 2005, 5).

In brief, Schelling´s argument is based on a distinction between "negative" and "positive" philosophy. Negative philosophy can be largely equated with traditional Western metaphysics (including Schelling´s own earlier philosophy), "understood as inverting the relationship between thinking and being by making the truth of a being a necessary consequence of thinking" (Bowie 2006, 143). For Schelling, the most advanced example of negative philosophy is Hegel´s all-encompassing system; according to Schelling, it is only able to deal with necessary relations of ideas and cannot say anything about that which actually exists. To explicate the argument, mathematics forms the most evident example of a rational "perfect" system, but it can never explain why it works. Even in the simplest possible logical deduction, A=A, it is necessary first to intuit that there *is* A in the first place. (Bowie 2006, 144.) According to Schelling, this primacy of the brute "given" implies that negative philosophy must be supplemented by positive philosophy, which studies that which could also *not* be, and whose existence must be taken simply as given prior to any general logic (Bowie 2006, 148).

According to Bowie, "the project of Schelling´s later philosophy is to make Christianity into a philosophically viable religion" (Bowie 2006, 141). Schelling´s motivation for positive philosophy was at least partly theological; he abandoned his earlier theosophical ideas and sought to defend the classical view of the Christian God as a self-sufficient being prior to the world, who freely decides to create the world out of love and who could as well sustain creation. That is, Schelling wishes to conceive of creation as a radically contingent act. Few commentators argue that the project of positive philosophy finally succeeds. For example, according to Fred Rush, "in the end Positive Philosophy seems to be negative" (Rush 2014, 237). It is hardly surprising, therefore, if Schelling ultimately fails to provide a philosophical argument of the necessity of faith in the Christian God. However, even if the constructive part of positive philosophy fails, its critical part has been highly influential. According to Bowie, the crucial factor in Schelling´s critique of negative philosophy "is the refusal to accept that the *theory* which attempts to resolve difference into identity, in consensus, can rely on a basis which the theory itself can circumscribe" (Bowie 2006, 188). Schelling´s main target was Hegel, but as Bowie (2006, 184–185) notes, similar ideas of reason being fully open to itself in reflection can also be found in later more "metaphysically modest" conceptions of reason such as Jürgen Habermas´ communicative theory of reason, and Schelling´s critique may apply to those theories as well.

## 4.2 The system of freedom

The Freedom Essay in 1809 marks a decisive turning point in Schelling´s career, and, as Dale Snow (1996, 181) points out, possibly represents the beginning of the end of German idealism in general. In the Freedom Essay, Schelling seriously takes up the task of developing a new kind of basis for a philosophical account

of human freedom. Schelling appraises the idealists of his time (Kant and Fichte) in overcoming a "one-sidedly realistic or dogmatic system" and thereby giving "the first formally perfect concept of freedom" (SW7: 351; 1992, 24). However, a mere formal view of freedom – "self-determination on the basis of concepts of ends" (Kosch 2014, 147) – does not suffice for Schelling, for "as soon as we seek to enter into the doctrine of freedom in greater detail and exactitude, it nonetheless leaves us helpless" (SW7: 351; 1992, 24). Like Kant, Schelling recognizes that a proper substantial view of freedom must be able to make sense of how it is possible to choose evil without explaining away the choice as somehow pathological and, therefore, not "genuinely free". In Schelling´s view, however, Kant´s theory of radical evil never gives a satisfying account of substantial freedom, because "Idealism itself is, after all, nothing less than a finished system" (SW7 :351; 1992, 24).

From a formal viewpoint, idealism is able to present freedom in a plausible way without reducing human action to the causal mechanisms of nature, but from a concrete, practical viewpoint, freedom cannot be enclosed in *any* system. The very notion of freedom entails that it must be conceived of as something more than a stable element in a finished philosophical system. However, a free act obviously takes place in a larger whole; "for individual freedom in some manner or other has a place in the universe, it matters not whether this be thought of realistically or idealistically" (SW7: 337; 1992, 8). The insistence on a holistic philosophical system cannot be given up, for "reason which strives towards unity […] is ever denied only by an arbitrary assertion which prevails for a while but at last gives way" (SW7: 337; 1992, 9). This dilemma between the needs for a philosophical system and for a living conception of human freedom forms the explicit starting point of the Freedom Essay. The two horns of the dilemma seem to be impossible to fit together in a plausible way, yet, according to Schelling, "the connection between the concept of freedom and a total world view will always remain the subject of an inevitable problem which, if it is not solved, will leave the concept of freedom ambiguous and philosophy, indeed, totally without value" (SW7: 358; 1992, 9).

To open the complex argument of the Freedom Essay, it might be good to say something about the historical context in which the essay was written. In the previous subchapter, Schelling´s relation to his predecessors Kant and Fichte was briefly addressed. Boiled down, Schelling perceived these idealists to be adorable in many ways, but at the same time he criticized them for being one-sidedly idealist. In the idealist way of thought, the *real*, nature outside the subject´s construction of it, is essentially reduced to a necessary conceptual counterpart of subjectivity. For Kant, beyond subjectively construed nature there is only the "thing in itself", which does not have any positive meaning in Kant´s epistemology, though Kant uses it to justify his arguments in practical philosophy. For Fichte, nature, which the subject faces as external reality, is the "not I", the result of an original act of the "absolute I". The problem of idealism, according to Schelling, is that nature loses genuine productivity, in particular, the ability to produce the human being who cognizes nature.

The Freedom Essay is obviously motivated by an influential dispute known as the pantheism controversy, the starting point of which was the "scandalous claim that the theologically liberal Enlightenment star Lessing had been a dreaded Spinozist" (Wirth 2003, 33). In the latter half of the eighteenth century, Spinoza had become a notorious figure. Spinoza´s name was associated with "atheism, fatalism, nihilism, and moral decadence" (Wirth 2003, 34). According to Spinoza´s pantheism, all beings belong to God, and because God is the highest totality of everything, everything derives from God with absolute necessity. It was claimed by traditional Christian authors, first and most famously by Heinrich Jacobi, that pantheism is actually equivalent to atheism and fatalism, because in pantheism there is no difference between God and created beings. Jacobi´s worry was that, if God is equated with nature, he is no longer the transcendent source of freedom and morality. In Jacobi´s view, the only logical consequence is that there is ultimately nothing but blind causal processes of nature at work. (Wirth 2003, 34.)

As an admirer of Spinoza, Schelling was obviously in Jacobi´s sights.[20] Schelling begins his argument by claiming that if freedom is to be possible at all, pantheism as such – the view that God is everything – cannot render freedom impossible. Actually, according to Schelling, the classical Christian conviction that Jacobi defends is the first one to be rejected in order to find a vital conception of human freedom, for "absolute causal power in one being leaves nothing but unconditional passivity for all the rest" (SW7: 339; 1992, 11). Also, "to say that God restrains his omnipotence so that man can act, or that he permits freedom, explains nothing; for if God withdrew his power for an instant, man would cease to be" (SW7: 339; 1992, 11). Pantheism, on the contrary, is not directly tied to the denial of human freedom. As Schelling notes: "That the fatalistic point of view can be combined with pantheism is undeniable; but that it is not essentially tied to it is made clear by the fact that many are driven to this pantheistic outlook precisely because of the liveliest sense of freedom" (SW7: 339; 1992, 10).

Spinoza´s pantheism, which Schelling takes as representative of a fatalistic form of pantheism, is not fatalistic because it allegedly equates God and beings. Actually, according to Schelling, in Spinoza´s pantheism "things are not different from God merely in degree or because of their limitations […] but they differ from God *toto genere*" (SW7: 340; 1992, 12). Spinoza does not deny the difference of things from God, but his deterministic system leaves no room for a living conception of freedom. "The lifelessness of his system, the harshness of its form, the bareness of its concepts and expressions, the relentless austerity of is definitions" (SW7: 349; 1992, 22) follow from Spinoza´s mechanistic conception of nature. In other words, the problem in Spinoza´s view of the freedom of will, is that "he treats the will, too, as a thing, and then proves, very naturally, that in every case of its operation it must be determined by some other thing, which in turn is determined by another, and so forth endlessly" (SW7: 349; 1992, 22).

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20 As Lewis Ford (1965, 81–82) has shown, it was actually Schelling who first vehemently attacked Jacobi. For Jacobi, Schelling was just one of the misguided philosophers who had lost their simple faith in Christian orthodoxy. Jacobi directed a specific critique at Schelling only after his attack.

Despite his critique, Schelling actually treats Spinoza more as a tragic hero than an enemy. According to Schelling, "the true conception of freedom was lacking in all modern systems, that of Leibniz as well as that of Spinoza" (SW7: 345; 1992, 17). Schelling pays specific attention to Spinoza, because, in Schelling´s view, he demonstrated most systematically where rational philosophical systems in general lead to. Schelling completely agrees with Jacobi that "all philosophy, absolutely all, which is based on pure reason alone, is, or will become, Spinozism" (SW7: 348; 1992, 21). The conclusion of Jacobi, which Schelling wants to avoid, is that one must rely ultimately on faith alone in order to avoid lifeless determinism.

In contrast to the idealism of Kant and Fichte, Schelling appraises Spinoza´s realism for conceiving of the human being as a product of nature. According to Schelling, however, nature itself must be understood as productive instead of a collection of things under causal laws. In other words, Schelling argues that Spinoza´s system can only make sense of products of nature, but it is unable to value productivity itself. As it was explained in the previous subchapter, in Schelling´s philosophy of nature, the laws of nature are not taken as the most fundamental idea through which nature is understood but as something derivative; it is possible to think of laws of nature only when the productivity of nature is reduced to mere products under a scientific gaze. The productivity itself, to the contrary, must be conceived as a fusion of the forces of expansion and contraction, which is developed in the Freedom Essay to the dualism of the principles of "existence" and its "ground" (McGrath 2012, 180). This conceptual distinction is Schelling´s most important tool in justifying a pantheism which leaves room for a living conception of human freedom.

After an introduction which contains the general ideas presented above, Schelling begins a deeper analysis from the most abstract level. He argues that the law of identity, A=A, has been completely misunderstood in modern philosophy, while "the profound logic of the ancients distinguished subject and predicate as the antecedent and the consequent" (SW7: 342; 1992, 14). According to Schelling, the law of identity does not express a philosophically trivial tautology. On the contrary, he observes:

> If one says: A body is body; he is assuredly thinking something different in the subject of the sentence than in its predicate. In the former, that is, he refers to the unity, in the latter to the individual qualities contained in the concept, body, which are related to the unity as the *antecedens* to the *consequens*. (SW7: 342; 1992, 14)

Schelling´s claim is that a statement of identity is never, even in the most simple case, A=A, a trivial equation. There must be some sense of difference within the identity, by means of which it is possible in the first place to judge that there are *two* things that are identical. As Heidegger discusses the matter in his famous commentary on Schelling, "identity is the belonging together of what is different in one; still more generally expressed, the unity of a unity and an opposition" (Heidegger 1985, 77). According to Bernard Freydberg (2008, 20–25), Schelling´s view of identity is based on Plato´s conviction that even the most abstract and emotionally calm reasoning is not without an erotic element. Asserting an identity is not an automatized mechanical process but an active *deed*. Even in a

tautology *two* things are joined together in a creative act (Freydberg 2008, 23). These reflections on the nature of the law of identity serve as the formal ground of most of Schelling´s major arguments in the Freedom Essay. One central consequence of "modern logic", which Schelling dismisses (in contrast to "ancient logic"), is the split between the active human subject and the passive natural object. As McGrath puts it, "modern philosophy cleaves being into two opposed structures, subject and object, without indicating why the distinction is necessary or showing what makes it possible" (McGrath 2012, 24).

Schelling, to the contrary, follows "Neoplatonic logic", in which identity and difference cannot be asserted without each other (McGrath 2012, 23). In Neoplatonic logic, "opposition is not only disidentification, it is also a mode of relation: the one is related to its other as to that which it is not, and all such relations are only possible on the supposition of commonality" (McGrath 2012, 24). For example, the subject-object distinction is grounded in a third factor, which is common both to subject and object, and which, for this reason, is impossible to think of as such. As McGrath argues, "its inscrutability is essential to its explanatory power" (McGrath 2012, 24–25).

Neoplatonic logic covers all the essential questions of the Freedom Essay: the relation of subject and object, good and evil, freedom and necessity, God and beings. To begin with, the reading of pantheism as a simple equation of the sum total of all beings and God is based on "modern logic" which is unaware of the deeper meaning of the identity claim "God is everything". In Schelling´s view, "God is everything" means first of all that there is nothing outside God, not that God and the totality of nature are trivially equated. The key to the opening question of the Freedom Essay – how can there be freedom in a totality in which everything has its determinate place? – is Schelling´s unique conception of God´s ground. Philosophers in general have argued that "as there is nothing before or outside of God he must contain within himself the ground of his existence" (SW7 :357; 1992, 32). However, according to Schelling, "they speak of this ground as a mere concept without making it something real and actual" (SW7 :358; 1992, 32).

Schelling´s argument is that the ground of God has been traditionally conceived of as a mere logical necessity similar to the thing in itself in Kant´s epistemology. Schelling accuses traditional conceptions of God´s ground for the inability to conceive of how anything genuinely new could be produced in nature if nature is seen as an unfolding of God´s ready-made plan or as a mere totality of things and their causal relations. In order for anything properly new to appear, things have to *become* instead of just *existing*. For Schelling, the ground is the basis against which this becoming takes place:

> First, the concept of immanence is completely to be set aside insofar as it is meant to express a dead conceptual inclusion of things in God. We recognize, rather, that the concept of becoming is the only one adequate to the nature of things. But the process of their becoming cannot be in God, viewed absolutely, since they are distinct from him *toto genere* or – more accurately – in eternity. To be separate from God they would have to carry on this becoming on a basis different from him. But since there can be nothing outside God, this contradiction can only be solved by things having their basis

> in that within God which is not *God himself*, i.e. in that which is the basis of his existence. (SW7: 358–359; 1992, 33)

Through his conception of the ground, Schelling revises the old distinction between *natura naturata*, the observable lawful empirical nature, and *natura naturans*, nature as the real which exceeds conceptual human understanding. God´s actual existence and his ground correspond to the distinction between *natura naturata* and *natura naturans*: "This ground of his existence, which God contains [within himself], is not God viewed as absolute, that is insofar as he exists. For it is only the basis of his existence, it is *nature* –in God, inseparable from him, to be sure, but nevertheless distinguishable from him." (SW7: 358; 1992, 32.) God´s ground as nature means nature insofar as it escapes scientific study, which presupposes nature as a ready-made whole of objects under given laws. According to Schelling, the manifold reality of nature is so great that it can never be perfectly captured within scientific understanding of it. Most importantly, however, the idea of God´s ground as nature is not merely about the limits of the human ability to explain nature; rather, it implies that nature cannot be enclosed in *any* rational system even in principle. Not even God´s infinite understanding can unify the ground as a static part of the existing order. For this reason, the ground can also be called God´s unconscious (McGrath 2012, 151).[21]

It is important to note that Schelling does not understand the ground as a specific area in reality which reason cannot reach. This would mean conceiving of the ground as an unknown cause of the rationally comprehensible reality. Through his conception of the ground, Schelling, on the contrary, attempts to avoid the idea of a first uncaused cause:

> In the cycle whence all things come, it is no contradiction to say that that which gives birth to the one is, in its turn, produced by it. There is here no first and no last, since everything mutually implies everything else, nothing being the 'other' and yet no being being without the other. God contains himself in an inner basis of his existence, which, to this extent, precedes him as to his existence, but similarly God is prior to the basis as this basis, as such, could not be if God did not exist in actuality. (SW7: 358; 1992, 33)

Unlike Schopenhauer, for example, who conceives of reality as ultimately irrational, being totally foreign to human intellectual and other needs, Schelling sees nature as rationally constituted, but even reason itself contains an irrational element, its ground. This idea can be illustrated by an example of the most unequivocally rational system: mathematics. Gödel´s incompleteness theorem has shown that there are always true mathematical propositions that still cannot be proved from any given set of axioms. McGrath (2012, 150) interprets this to support Schelling´s view of the ground as "the irreducible remainder". Even though mathematics is a perfectly rational system – all its proofs are apodictically certain – it has to begin from axioms which are simply assumed. And in these assumptions – for example, taking for granted what a point or a number is – a step outside purely formal relations to something at least minimally substantial

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21 Influenced by Schelling, Maurice Merleay-Ponty shared a similar idea in the 1950s, and he even called his late philosophy "psychoanalysis of nature" (Wirth 2013, 3).

is already taken. According to Schelling, everything is in principle rationally comprehensible, but rationality is not everything about everything.[22] Because of the very fact that reason attempts to make reality intelligible to it, it is quite reasonable to argue that there is an essential element in reality which is foreign to reason; the very concept of reason does not make sense if there is nothing non-rational against which the light of reason can appear and which it attempts to understand. Moreover, because reason *attempts* or even *strives*, it has this non-rational element already within itself.

Of the various metaphors in the Freedom Essay that Schelling uses to illuminate the relation between ordered existence and its chaotic ground, the most central – and probably the clearest – is the metaphor of light and gravity: "Gravitation precedes light as its eternally dark basis which is itself not *actual* and flees into the night when light (which truly exists) appears. Even light does not completely break the seal by which gravity is held." (SW7: 358; 1992, 32.) It is impossible to think of light without something that limits the influence of light. Yet, darkness swallows light only when light has appeared. Instead of speaking about mere darkness as the absence of light, Schelling speaks about gravitation. The idea is familiar already from the polarity of expansive and contractive forces in Schelling´s earlier philosophy of nature: it is impossible to think a force without another force opposing it, because otherwise the effect of the force would be infinite, in which case no cognizable world could exist. In this sense, Schelling conceives of light as a force to which gravitation is the opposing force, which swallows light.[23]

According to Dale Snow, however, the three most central metaphors of the Freedom Essay are birth, personality and disease (Snow 1996, 148). Metaphors of birth describe the necessary irrational and unconscious ground of everything rational and conscious: "Man is formed in his mother´s womb; and only out of the darkness of unreason (out of feeling, out of longing, the sublime mother of understanding) grow clear thoughts." (SW7: 360; 1992, 35) Even the greatest individuals have once been completely mindless and helpless creatures. Because the ground is not to be conceived of primarily in a causal-temporal sense, it is always present in the human being as what later became known as the unconscious. As Schelling puts it, "the unruly lies ever in the depths as though it might again break through, and order and form nowhere appear to have been original, but it seems as though what had initially been unruly had been brought to order" (SW7: 359–360; 1992, 34).[24] Similarly, a plant can become an actualized grown individual only against the ground that nurtures it and on which it is

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22 In Schelling´s later "positive philosophy" this insight is the core of his critique of Hegel. According to Schelling, Hegel´s system may perfectly describe reality as rational, but as long as it does not properly take into account the non-rational ground of the rational, it cannot make sense of how anything at all actually exists and thus remains in the sphere of ideas (Bowie 2006, 163, 167–168, 190).

23 Evidently influenced by Schelling, Heidegger conceived of the centrality of metaphors of light and sight in the history of Western metaphysics as symptomatic of its overly rationalistic character.

24 The essentially psychoanalytical nature of Schelling´s thought will be discussed in subchapter 4.5.2.

always dependent: "Or it is as in the case of the plant which escapes the dark fetters of gravity only as it unfolds and spreads its powers, developing its hidden unity as its substance becomes differentiated" (SW7: 361; 1992, 36). In general, birth and expansion are impossible without death and contraction: "All birth is a birth out of darkness into light: the seed must be buried in the earth and die in darkness in order that the loveliest creature of light should rise and unfold itself in the rays of the sun" (SW7: 360; 1992, 35).

A more obscure analogy, that probably comes originally from Kabbalistic sources, is Schelling´s (SW7: 363; 1992, 39) equation of existence with vowels and the ground with consonants. According to Jason Wirth, the German words for vowel and consonant (*Selbstlauter* and *Mitlauter* respectively) already indicate how their relationship is analogical to that of existence and its ground. Like light which can be recognized as such but only against the background of darkness, a vowel can be spoken aloud in itself (*selbst*), while consonants can be properly articulated only with (*mit*) vowels. Similarly, the lawfully structured nature becomes an actual living whole only when it includes an element of the chaotic ground, which cannot exist by itself. (Wirth 2005b, 88.)

There are numerous analogies in the commentarial literature as well. For example, McGrath compares existence to a building which can resolutely reach towards the sky only if it is simultaneously embedded in the ground (McGrath 2012, 148). Most crucially, however, analogies in general are central to the metaphysics of the Freedom Essay; for Schelling, analogies are not only heuristic means to clarify ideas which would be hard or impossible to clarify analytically, but they reveal an actual connection between the analogical things. Analogies of birth do not merely illuminate the idea of the ground; all life is *de facto* based on the ground.

I will next move on to an often neglected part at the end of the Freedom Essay, which Schelling asserts as "the highest point of the whole inquiry" (SW7: 406; 1992, 86). At this point, Schelling asks "what is to be gained by that initial distinction between being insofar as it is basis, and being insofar as it exists?" (SW7: 406; 1992, 86). The inquiry cannot be left to a mere assertion of the dualism of God´s actual existence and his ground, for this would result in another ungrounded dualism, which Schelling opposes. On the other hand, existence and its ground cannot be simply unified in a higher totality, because it would amount to the classical Western metaphysics that the concept of the ground was supposed to criticize:

> For either there is no common ground for the two – in which case we must declare ourselves in favor of absolute dualism; or there is such common ground – and in that case, in the last analysis, the two coincide again. In that case we have one being in all opposites, an absolute identity of light and darkness, good and evil, and all the inconsistent consequences which must befall any intellectualistic system and of which this system too, has indeed been accused for quite some time. (SW7: 406; 1992, 86–87)

Schelling´s "Neoplatonic logic" implies that opposites can be opposites only against a common background which is not reducible to either of the opposites. Consequently, the dualism between existence and its ground is grounded in what

Schelling (SW7: 406; 1992, 87) calls "the primal ground", the "Unground", or "the groundless". According to Heidegger´s famous interpretation, Schelling merely creates a new unity behind existence and its ground: "Here system is attributed to only one factor of the jointure of Being, to existence. At the same time, a higher unity is posited and designated as 'life'." (Heidegger 1985, 161.)

When Schelling stresses that "in divine understanding there is a system; God himself, however, is not a system but a life" (SW7: 399; 1992, 78), Heidegger sees "in it nothing more than a recursion to onto-theology" (McGrath 2012, 122). Heidegger´s critique is that after coining the ingenious concept of the ground, which fundamentally questioned the dominant tendency of Western philosophy to reduce the manifold of being into One, Schelling allegedly makes the same reduction himself. Consequently, according to Heidegger, "Schelling falls back into the rigidified tradition of Western thought without creatively transforming it" (Heidegger 1985, 161). What is "the highest point of the whole inquiry" (SW7: 406; 1992, 86) for Schelling becomes the lowest point of the inquiry for Heidegger. More recently, for example, Alan White has also judged that "Schelling does not acknowledge that his account of the Unground as indifference is either unclear, incomplete, or incoherent" (White 1983, 133).

However, Schelling´s Unground is not the greatest sum total of everything, in which all contradictions are resolved into One. On the contrary, the Unground comes closer to what Heidegger himself has posited as Being. Schelling describes the Unground in the following way:

> As it precedes all antitheses these cannot be distinguishable in it or be present in any way at all. It cannot then be called the identity of both, but only the absolute indifference as to both. Most people, when they reach a point of view at which they must recognize the disappearance of all antitheses, forget that these have now really disappeared, and predicate the same distinctions of the indifference which, however, arose precisely through their total cessation. Indifference is not a product of antitheses, nor are they implicitly contained in it, but it is a unique being, apart from all antitheses, in which all distinctions break up. It is naught else than just their non-being, and therefore has no predicates except lack of predicates, without its being naught or a non-entity. (SW7: 406; 1992, 87)

Schelling´s Unground is not oneness in the simple sense of resolution of all oppositions; it is rather "primordially paradoxical", as Pauli Pylkkö (2004, 171) puts it. As Dale Snow argues, "White´s claim that Schelling has conflated the logical and the psychological meaning of indifference […] fails to recognize the difficulties that necessarily attend the attempt to move beyond existing models of thought" (Snow 1996, 177). The more that serious effort is put into reaching a holistic philosophical system, the more a fundamental paradox begins to appear in the heart of the system. As the paradox is inevitable, Schelling values different philosophies to the extent they are able to deal with the paradox. According to Schelling, the attempt at unequivocal clarity at the most central point of a philosophical system leads only to rigidity. Rigidity, on the other hand, ultimately leads to outright contradictions instead of a fertile paradox. (Pylkkö 2004, 171.)

In contrast to Heidegger´s dismissal, the idea of the Unground has been taken up seriously by several commentators during the last few decades. The new interest in the idea of the Unground was pioneered by Wolfram Hogrebe, and more recently re-assessed, for example by Markus Gabriel. The leading idea in these interpretations is that the Unground explains why there cannot be a total and final self-reflective understanding of how everything is. Hogrebe interprets the Unground as "non-predicative being" preceding the duality of existence ("predicative being") and its ground ("pronominal being") which together constitute "propositional being". Hogrebe´s argument is that any determinate being as a fusion of something singular and something universal can only take place against a background of pure non-predicative being. In his work *Why the World Does Not Exist*, Gabriel offers several metaphors to illustrate this anti-Hegelian argument. For instance, if we suppose that the absolute totality of the world is captured in a camera shot, then the shot can never contain the camera itself, and another camera shot has to be thought of in order for it to be included, which leads to an infinite regress (Gabriel 2016, 132). Reflection can never reflect itself without a remainder, for not only everything determinate that is reflected depends on that which is left outside reflection, but the whole process of reflection takes place against non-predicative being or the Unground.

Both Hogrebe (1989, 11) and Gabriel (2015, 168) recognize that their interpretation formalizes and secularizes Schelling´s theological metaphysics. Though these interpretations no doubt catch the formal aspect of Schelling´s theory, it is far from clear how much of Schelling´s insights can be retained this way. This question will be taken up in subchapter 5.3.3, particularly concerning Schelling´s theory of evil. However, in order to approach Schelling´s peculiar ideas of the ground and the Unground properly, I will next take a closer look at Schelling´s theology and the influences behind it.

## 4.3 Schelling´s esotericism and his conception of God

When Schelling talks about God in the Freedom Essay, it is far from clear what he precisely means. In Schelling's time, Western culture was still firmly based on Christian faith, and the Church was closely associated with all the powerful societal institutions. Explicit atheism had established itself as a possibility, albeit one with a very bad reputation; because of severe social consequences, very few wanted to be associated with atheism. Consequently, most philosophers reserved a central place for God in their systems, but this fact did not entail much information about the actual religiosity of these thinkers.

Schelling's early philosophy is generally not regarded as particularly religious, though it already includes some elements of mysticism and esotericism – themes to be discussed in this subchapter. By contrast, Schelling's late philosophy of mythology and revelation is explicitly concerned with supporting a traditional Christian ethos against modern political and moral ideas. The Freedom Essay falls somewhere between these two standpoints. The language of

the essay is thoroughly theological, and Schelling often refers to biblical characters and events. At the same time, however, most of Schelling´s central ideas are quite distanced from traditional Christian theism. As shown in the previous subchapter, Schelling criticizes Spinoza's pantheism only insofar as it is committed to a mechanistic view of nature (SW7: 349; 1992, 22). When it comes to pantheism as such, according to Schelling, many thinkers have been driven to it "precisely because of the liveliest sense of freedom" (SW7: 339; 1992, 10). Schelling does not openly endorse pantheism, but neither does he refute it. Given the bad reputation of pantheism in his time, Schelling would hardly have been ambiguous on the matter had he not sympathized with it.

Authors who read Schelling from a Christian point of view generally distinguish pantheism from *panentheism* and associate Schelling with the latter. The difference is that while in pantheism God is equated with the universe, in panentheism the universe is within God but God also transcends it in some sense. In his work *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers from Plato to the Present* John Cooper provides an extensive historical survey of philosophers and theologians whom he conceives as panentheists, and a polemical defence of a variant of classical Christian theism against all forms of panentheism. Although Cooper admits that "Christian panentheism is not necessarily an oxymoron" (Cooper 2007, 345), he deems it the least favourable theological option for a committed Christian. According to Cooper, "classical theism is adequate for providing a biblically faithful, philosophically sound articulation of Christian theology, salvation history, and the Christian worldview" (Cooper 2007, 342). In particular, Cooper judges Paul Tillich's strongly Schelling-inspired panentheism as incompatible with genuine Christianity, which "must affirm that God's active presence in the incarnation, atonement, resurrection, and the reign of Jesus Christ is the central cause of the salvation of the world, not just a symbol of a more general, universal process" (Cooper 2007, 345).

It is ambiguous whether Schelling would actually qualify as a Christian thinker from Cooper's viewpoint. According to Robert Brown, Schelling's conception of God in his Stuttgart Private Lectures of 1810 "combines the virtues of both pantheism and theological orthodoxy, without their deficiencies" (Brown 1977, 164–165). In Paola Mayer's (1999, 211) analysis, by contrast, in the works of his middle period Schelling openly endorses the view "that God needs his creation to manifest himself", which is certainly far from conventional Christianity. In this study, I neither defend Schelling's unconventional ideas from the standpoint of Christian doctrine nor argue that these ideas render Schelling's work incompatible with Christian faith. However, as I will explain in Chapter 5, the theological nature of Schelling's metaphysics (Christian or not) is essential to the plausibility of his central ideas and to his theory of evil in particular. My main interest is in the way Schelling that grounds both his conception of evil and the means of facing it in his metaphysics of nature, which allows him to develop a metaphysical position beyond traditional theism, Kantian transcendentalism and "disenchanted" naturalism. For the sake of simplicity, I call Schelling a pantheist unless the context demands a more specific characterization.

There are several possible explanations of what caused Schelling to abandon his earlier, more conventional philosophical systems and go through the "personalist turn" solidified in the Freedom Essay. At least one highly significant factor was Schelling's acquaintance with what is generally known as Western esotericism, and the theosophy of Jacob Boehme in particular (McGrath 2012, 47). Esotericism is a fluid conception with many different meanings. My understanding of esotericism in this study can be illuminated by two famous definitions. Probably the most substantial and illustrative categorization of four intrinsic and two extrinsic characteristics of esotericism comes from Antoine Faivre, who has gained the status of a pioneer in the study of esotericism:[25] (1) secret correspondences (systematic connections between things belonging to different orders, such as metals, plants, and parts of the human body), (2) living nature (the whole of nature understood as a conscious, willing organism), (3) imagination and mediations (direct intuitive understanding, in contrast to discursive reason), (4) the experience of transmutation (the experience of transforming into a completely new kind of being, often divided into three phases: purgation, illumination, and unification), (5) concordance (the presupposition of a common truth behind different religious traditions), and (6) transmission (a continuous line of masters and disciples).[26] Another useful definition comes from Wouter Hanegraaff, who begins from the observation that "esoteric" is today generally used as a pejorative term, roughly similar to "magical" or "superstitious", meaning something unreasonable or unworthy of being taken seriously. According to Hanegraaff, esotericism with its various distinctive traditions (such as alchemy, Hermeticism, and Kabbalah) is dumped into "a conceptual waste-basket for 'rejected knowledge', and it has kept functioning as the academy´s radical 'Other' to the present day" (Hanegraaff 2013, 221). For Hanegraaff, esotericism is everything that has been actively pushed outside "proper" theology, philosophy and science since the Enlightenment.

Arguably some esoteric traits are already present in Schelling's earlier philosophy. For instance, according to Werner Marx (1984, 61), early on Schelling received influences from the writings of Friedrich Christopher Oetinger, who was familiar with the Church mystics, the Kabbalah, Paracelsus, Emmanuel Swedenborg, and Jacob Boehme. However, Schelling's thought began to show predominantly esoteric undertones only after he got in contact with Franz Baader, an enthusiast of Boehme's theosophy. Boehme, a self-learned mystic and

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25 There were obviously notable studies on esotericism already before Faivre: see, for example, Yates 2001, 2002a, and 2002b.

26 Kocku von Stuckrad (2005, 5) has criticized Faivre's definition as an ideal type definition; according to von Stuckrad, Faivre first chooses a certain relatively limited set of movements, which have been traditionally conceived of as esoteric, and then, based on these movements, defines esotericism in general. Von Stuckrad (2005, 10) does not attempt to find common denominators of different "esoteric movements" but talks merely about discourses in which something appears as esoteric. Therefore, von Stuckrad highlights the classical Greek meaning of esoteric as hidden and known only by few in contrast to exoteric, that is, publically and generally known. For a brief discussion of the different definitions of esotericism, see Faxneld (2017, 25–27).

philosopher who wrote his numerous works in the early seventeenth century, was widely appropriated by early Romanticism. As Paola Mayer has convincingly argued, instead of Boehme's actual thought it was rather his legendary reputation that was mainly adopted for the purposes of Romantic writers and philosophers. Few thinkers apart from Schelling were actually familiar with Boehme's works in any detail (Mayer 1999, 11–15).

In his work *The Later Philosophy of Schelling: The Influence of Boehme on the Works of 1809–1815*, Robert Brown argues that Schelling's "unusual philosophical theology is in large measure based on a detailed appropriation and reinterpretation of the thought of Jacob Boehme" (Brown 1977, 14). According to Brown (1977, 264–265), there are six central ideas in the Freedom Essay that Schelling has evidently adopted from Boehme: (1) the idea of the will as ontologically more fundamental than being, (2) the idea of God's ground in the sense presented in the Freedom Essay, (3) the idea that evil does not consist in mere lack of goodness but constitutes an independent positive principle, (4) the idea that there are two "centres" in God, the dialectical opposition of which fuels God's self-realization, (5) the idea that the human being is not only a *microcosmos* but also a *microtheos* (that is, that God, nature, and the human being all have the same ontological structure), and (6) the idea that the creation of the world is contingent as such, but that its structure is determined by God's structure. Here I will concentrate only on the first of these assumptions, as it grounds the others and makes them more intelligible.

According to McGrath (2012, 22), Faivre's four essential characteristics of esotericism can actually be reduced to the idea of living nature. "Reduction" might be a somewhat strong expression, but the idea of living nature certainly grounds the other traits of esotericism in the sense that without the idea of living nature they would be completely unintelligible. The idea of living nature entails that there is no absolute qualitative difference between inorganic and organic nature or between organic nature and human rational nature, but that all nature is willing and conscious to different degrees. Schelling advocated this idea in different forms throughout his career (McGrath 2010, 74–75).[27] However, in the Freedom Essay and in the activity that followed it, Schelling draws specifically from Boehme's theosophy and its central idea of the will as the most fundamental aspect of reality (McGrath 2012, 138).

In *The Ages of the World*, Schelling's unfinished project succeeding the Freedom Essay, the ground of God, his actual existence and their fusion as life are respectively developed into God´s three "potencies". The first potency roughly corresponds to the concept of the ground of God in the Freedom Essay, "the longing which the eternal One feels to give birth to itself" (SW7: 359; 1992, 34). It is a fundamentally contradictory willing that seeks nothing else than itself to be and thereby makes its own being impossible, since individuality can exist only in relation to general structures. The first potency, therefore, represents

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27 In contemporary philosophy, the idea of living nature is defended in a more analytical fashion by panpsychists such as David Chalmers (2010, 138–139), Thomas Nagel (2014, 66), and Galen Strawson (2008, 53–57).

blind willing without reason. As McGrath, puts it, referring to Boehme, it is a will that *wills* nothing, as there are yet no objects of will: "God awakens a hunger in himself that can be nothing other than hunger for itself" (McGrath 2012, 144).

The second potency, on the contrary, is "the will that wills *something*" (McGrath 2012, 146). If the first potency wills only itself, the second potency gives itself completely to the other. While the first potency contracts into itself, the second potency expands outwards. In logical terms, the second potency is the universal in things, while the first potency is their irreducible singularity. Neither of the first two potencies alone can produce an actual world; the first potency is only blind longing towards actuality, which on its own would collapse into its own impossibility, and the second potency, taken separately, lacks the capability to bring forth any *particular* being. Only the third potency can form a fusion of universality and particularity, and thereby the actual living nature. As McGrath puts it: "The third potency brings about a return to the unity of the unground, but unity in a new sense: the impersonal unground – non-dual, unrelated, and therefore unconscious – has become a personal God, self-mediated, self-related and self-conscious" (McGrath 2012, 15).

The second analogy that Snow (1996, 148) highlights in the Freedom Essay, personality, is illuminating here. Schelling calls the actualized God "personal", by which he means essentially that God has a ground: "It is also certain that God's personality can only be based upon the nexus between him and nature, as the God of pure idealism as well as the God of pure realism is, by contrast, necessarily an impersonal Being, for which the Fichtean and Spinozistic conceptions are the clearest evidence" (SW7: 395; 1992, 74). According to Schelling, God is something analogous to a human person in the sense that personality is an organic fusion of two opposing principles which Schelling calls actual existence and its ground. Human personality is a fusion of conscious and unconscious elements. Similarly, God as living nature cannot be understood merely as an unchanging transcendent essence (as in idealism) or as the determinate totality of all things (as in realism) but as the process of becoming against his ground, which is foreign to himself.

At this point, the idea of the Unground presented in the previous subchapter becomes crucial. While the first two potencies are opposite "directions" of God's will, and the third potency their productive fusion, God as the Unground "neither renounces nor affirms the possibility of creation; it is indifferent to both options" (McGrath 2012, 143). Even though the Unground is described as a will that wills nothing, it is still conceived of in terms of will. Will, on the other hand, is always teleological to some extent:

> But the groundless divides itself into the two equally eternal beginnings only in order that the two which could not be in it as groundless at the same time, or there be one, should become one through love; that is, it divides itself only that there may be life and love and personal existence. For there is love neither in indifference nor where antitheses are combined which require the combination in order to be; but rather (to repeat a word which has already been spoken) this is the secret of love, that it unites such beings as could each exist in itself, and nonetheless neither is nor can be without the other. Therefore, as duality comes to be in the groundless, there also comes to be

> love, which combines the existent (ideal) with the basis of existence. (SW7: 408; 1992, 89)

Even though the unground is pre-predicative, the formalistic reading of Schelling completely sidesteps the point that the Unground further divides itself into the existing order and its ground *in order* "that there may be life and love and personal existence" (SW7: 408; 1992, 89). Schelling´s metaphysics is based on the esoteric idea of living nature; for Schelling, there is neither "lifeless" matter nor pure nothingness; even the Unground is understood in terms of will, albeit a completely latent and indifferent will. Metaphysics of the will, stemming from the esoteric idea of living nature, is the sole basis of the works of Schelling´s middle period. As I will argue in subchapter 5.3, it is far from evident if Schelling's theory of evil can be consistently utilized without taking this metaphysics seriously.

## 4.4 Schelling´s metaphysical theory of evil

In nature as a whole, the relation of existence and its ground is fixed; there is a universal order, and its chaotic ground remains merely as the ground. If this was not the case, nothing determinate could exist, which is actually to say that nothing conceivable at all could exist (Gabriel 2013, 67). Order alone is incapable of producing anything while the ground can exist only as an integral driving element in order. However, the human being as a unique self-conscious entity has become conscious of the principles of existence and its ground, which is to say that he can invert the subordination of these principles in his will. According to Schelling, only this kind of possibility can repeat the absolute indifference of the Unground in the richer form of an articulate conscious will. The Unground is indifferent to the subordination of the principles of existence and its ground, because the split has not yet taken place in it, but human freedom is indifferent in the sense that it can freely choose between the two possible subordinations of the principles. For Schelling, human freedom has to be understood through these general metaphysical principles. On the other hand, even God can only actualize himself through the kind of freedom which is possible only for humans:

> God is not a God of the dead but of the living. It is incomprehensible that an all-perfect Being could rejoice in even the most perfect mechanism possible. No matter how one pictures to oneself the procession of creatures from God, it can never be a mechanical production, no mere construction or setting up, in which the construct is naught in itself. Just as certainly, it cannot be an emanation in which that which has flowed forth remains the same as its source, thus lacking individuality and independence. The procession of things from God is God´s self-revelation. But God can only reveal himself in creatures who resemble him, in free, self-activating beings for whose existence there is no reason save God, but who are as God is. (SW7: 346–347; 1992, 19)

> Only in him (in man) did God love the world, - and it was this very image of God which was grasped in its center by longing when it opposed itself to light. By reason of the fact that man takes his rise from the depths (that he is a creature) he contains a

> principle relatively independent of God. But just because this very principle is transfigured in light – without therefore ceasing to be basically dark – something higher, the *spirit*, arises in man. For the eternal spirit pronounces unity, or the Word, in nature. But the (real) Word, pronounced, exists only in the unity of light and darkness (vowel and consonant). Now these two principles do indeed exist in all things, but without complete consonance because of the inadequacy of that which has been raised from the depths. Only in man, then, is the Word completely articulate, which in all other creatures was held back and left unfinished. (SW7: 363–364; 1992, 38–39)

> For if God, as spirit, is the indivisible unity of the two principles, and this same unity is actual only in man´s spirit, then if it were just as indissoluble in him as in God, man could not be distinguished from God at all; he would disappear in God and there would be no revelation and no stirring of love. For every nature can be revealed only in its opposite – love in hatred, unity in strife. If there were no division of the principles, then unity could not manifest its omnipotence; if there were no conflict then love could not become real. (SW7: 373–374; 1992, 50)

As Werner Marx (1984, 16) points out, already in the *System of Transcendental Idealism* Schelling (SW3: 601–603; 2001, 210) describes history by a metaphor of a play in which God is the playwright, but the actors (human beings) are co-authors as well, through whom God´s freedom can be actualized. At this stage Schelling did not yet possess the conceptual machinery of existence and its ground, and his argument was left solely on the stage of metaphor. In the Freedom Essay, however, it becomes absolutely central that God is not an immutable transcendent being, who decides to create nature and to add the human being as its crown, but God himself becomes properly actualized only through a being who has freedom resembling God´s own: "If, now, the identity of both principles were just as indissoluble in man as in God, then there would be no difference – that is, God as spirit would not be revealed. Therefore that unity which is indissoluble in God must be dissoluble in man – and this constitutes the possibility of good and evil." (SW7: 364; 1992, 39.)

In the Freedom Essay, Schelling also begins to emphasize the connection of freedom to the possibility of good and evil. The creation of a self-conscious free being, who actualizes God´s will, also "constitutes the possibility of good and evil" (SW7: 364; 1992, 39). In connecting the essence of human freedom to good and evil, Schelling´s theory of evil in many respects resembles Kant´s idea of radical evil. Both begin from the practical necessity of assuming that our will is free (without immediately specifying how they understand freedom), and then address the problem how there can be freedom in causally ordered nature. Both attempt to solve the problem essentially by arguing that will is not a thing: even though all our physical and psychological processes can be seen as parts in a causal continuum, that does not exclude the possibility that from another perspective our actions are free in the sense that they are autonomous, that is, determined by ourselves and not by something external to us. Both philosophers then understand the positive aspect of freedom in its intimate relation to good and evil. They also understand good and evil as the two possible subordinations of self-will and will for the other. Moreover, both Kant and Schelling stress that even if the propensity to evil grounds all empirical choices, it must nevertheless be understood as freely chosen.

The essential difference between Kant´s and Schelling´s theories of evil stems from the major metaphysical difference of their philosophies in general. Kant´s transcendental philosophy begins from the argument that knowledge claims beyond possible sensuous experiences are philosophically unfounded, while Schelling begins from Fichte´s argument that the transcendental conditions Kant gives to experience must still have metaphysical conditions; this insight gave birth to the philosophizing Markus Gabriel (2013, 1) calls "transcendental ontology". Consequently, the only valid philosophical approach to evil, in Kant´s view, is to study how we necessarily conceive of certain kinds of moral actions as evil, and what precisely makes an act evil: evil means subordinating the unconditional obligation of the categorical imperative to an arbitrary subjective, desire-based maxim. The metaphysical question concerning the origin of the propensity to evil is excluded from philosophy. Because the propensity to evil is already a transcendental condition of our moral consciousness, transcendental philosophy cannot venture any further.

Similar to Kant, Schelling conceives of evil as a wrong subordination of two principles. In Schelling´s case, evil consists in the subordination of the universal lawful structures to the chaotic self-will of the ground, which should remain as an animating force serving the whole. The main difference of Schelling´s theory compared to Kant´s is that, for Schelling, the principles of existence and its ground are metaphysical principles, which concern nature in general. Consequently, the subordination of these principles, which determine the moral worth of an action, cannot be understood only in terms of the subordination of maxims. In this sense, Schelling´s theory is a metaphysical theory of evil, and not a moral one. Schelling does not primarily intend to give a normative theory explaining what kinds of acts precisely count as evil, but his metaphysical account of evil is, on the contrary, a holistic framework which contains metaphysical, theological, and moral-psychological elements as well as meta-ethical ones.

Without creating the self-conscious human being, God himself could not be actualized. But the essence of self-consciousness is to be able to separate the principles whose subordination is fixed in God as a whole, and this constitutes the possibility of evil. Schelling´s motivation is to approach the classical theodicy problem in an alternative way. While the predominant solution has been to deny the reality of evil one way or another, Schelling, on the contrary, questions God´s omnipotence. This idea is already present in the leading idea of the Freedom Essay, namely, that God also necessarily has a ground:

> All existence must be conditioned in order that it may be actual, that is, personal, existence. God´s existence, too, could not be personal if it were not conditioned, except that he has the conditioning factor *within* himself and not outside himself. He cannot set aside the condition, for if he did he would have to set aside himself; he can only subdue it through love and subordinate it to him for his glorification. In God, too, there would be a depth of darkness if he did not make the condition his own and unite it to him as one and as absolute personality. (SW7: 399; 1992, 79)

For there to actually exist anything that can be called good, it must be accompanied by the possibility of evil. Otherwise good would lose its meaning. So far, nothing has been said about actual evil: "We expressly say – 'the possibility of evil', and for the present seek only to make comprehensible the divisibility of the principles. The reality of evil is the subject matter of quite another inquiry." (SW7: 364; 1992, 39.)

A pessimist like Schopenhauer would press Schelling with the following question: why must God become an "absolute personality" if this necessarily brings forth the possibility of evil? Would it not it be better if there was simply nothing? To this objection, Schelling gives the following answer:

> But the question why God did not prefer not to reveal himself at all, since he necessarily foresaw that evil would at least follow as an accompaniment of Self-revelation, this question really deserves no reply. For this would be as much as saying that love itself should not be, so that there could be no contrast to love; that is, the absolutely positive should be sacrificed to that which has its existence only as a contrast; the eternal should be sacrificed to the merely temporal. We have already explained that God´s self-revelation should be regarded not as an unconditioned, arbitrary act, but as an act morally necessary, in which love and goodness triumphed over absolute inwardness. Thus if God had not revealed himself on account of evil, evil would have been victorious over goodness and love. (SW7: 402; 1992, 82–83)

According to Schelling, the world should appear because otherwise evil would triumph. Evil consists in elevating the ground above existence, but this kind of attempt is self-contradictory because the ground is that which does not exist but only strives to exist. There is a Nietzschean undertone in the Freedom Essay in the sense of giving a central meaning to the question whether a philosophical theory hinders or enhances life (McGrath 2012, 71; Norman 2004, 90–93). Both Nietzsche and Schelling conceive of will as the most fundamental element of reality; this results in their relatively similar stances concerning the "affirmation of life".[28] If will is the most fundamental element of reality, the will that nothing should be contradicts itself. The will cannot consistently will itself not to be because willing itself is the essence of being.

However, there is nothing dubious in contradictory will as such; the ground is precisely a will that wills only itself, and as such it is essentially an irrational contradictory will. But when a contradictory will is consciously raised as an allegedly rational principle, it becomes self-defeating – and this is precisely Schelling´s definition of evil. At this point, Schelling´s argument is more moral-psychological than metaphysical or theological. Life necessarily contains suffering, which in a sense is evil in itself. However, moral evil is often closely associated with willing non-existence over existence through the allegedly moral reason that in non-existence there would be no suffering.

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[28] This issue will be taken up in subchapter 5.2.4. It will be argued there that Schelling's metaphysical view of evil is in a better position to answer Nietzsche's critique of the "life-denying" attitude inherent in the concept of evil than purely moral conceptions of evil. The essential difference between Schelling and Nietzsche, of course, is that they understand "life" quite differently. Nietzsche, like most modern thinkers, would never take seriously Schelling's theosophy-driven idea of the inherent teleology of nature.

While evil has traditionally been associated with non-being and finiteness as such, Schelling relates it to willing that nothing should be, finiteness that asserts itself as infinite. To will that universal principles should conform to one´s self-will is actually to will that the universal order should not exist, because within a universal order one necessarily has a limited determinate place in it. This is obviously something that authors such as Kant and Hegel argue as well. However, Schelling stresses that while evil will is inconsistent and self-defeating, it is also far from a mere lapse, failing to be good. On the contrary, the evil of the human being manifests the highest powers in nature:

> For the mere consideration of the fact that man, the most perfect of all visible creatures, is alone capable of evil, shows that this basis can by no means consist of insufficiency or deprivation. According to the Christian view, the devil was not the most limited but rather the least limited of creatures. Imperfection in the general metaphysical sense, is not the common character of evil, as it often manifests itself united with an excellence of individual powers which much less frequently accompanies the good. The basis of evil must therefore not only be founded on something inherently positive, but rather on the highest positive being which nature contains. This, indeed, is the case in accordance with our views since it lies in the manifested center or primal will of the first basis. (SW7: 368–369; 1992, 44–45)

According to Schelling, the problem in traditional metaphysics of evil is that it does not do justice to our actual experience of evil. Doing evil is not generally associated with a lack of capacities but more often with a certain kind of perverse strength. For instance, an "evil mastermind" is a classical character in literature and entertainment. From the phenomenological first-person perspective, evil shows itself to be a self-standing presence rather than a mere absence of good (Sprague 1951, 561). Schelling is motivated by taking this immediate experience of evil seriously into account without lapsing into a full-blown dualism of good and evil, understood as independent forces eternally fighting against each other. Schelling (SW7: 369; 1992, 45) is obviously aware of the arguments of metaphysicians such as Leibniz to explain the seeming reality of evil. A famous analogy refers to the force of freezing water, which breaks even cliffs, while in fact the water only loses its heat energy. However, Schelling argues that "since deprivation is nothing in itself and, in order even to become noticeable, requires something positive in which it becomes apparent, the difficulty now occurs of explaining the positive factor which must after all be assumed in evil" (SW7: 369; 1992, 45). In Schelling´s view, analogies which attempt to demonstrate that evil is finally only a lack of goodness break down, because, as Kant already explicated in his theory of radical evil, the value of moral good requires that there is a temptation to choose evil. If evil was merely about failing to be good without an active imputable choice of a principle in opposition to good, such a failure would not be morally accountable at all.

Essential for Schelling´s theory of evil is his account of the law of identity, his "Neoplatonic logic", as McGrath puts it. Because of the very reason that evil is the opposite of good, it has a very close relation to it, even to the extent that "the Good is the Evil – by which is meant: Evil has no power to exist in itself; that which is real in it, considered in itself, is good" (SW7: 341; 1992, 13). At first sight

it seems that Schelling is committed to the Augustinian idea he claims to oppose: that there is nothing real in evil and evil consists merely in the lack of good. However, Schelling´s theory of evil must be understood in the context of his metaphysics of will. The ground as such cannot exist as an actual order, precisely because it is the ground of the existing order. As was argued above, an evil will is thus at war with itself and with reality in general, because if it was possible for it to be entirely successful, reality (including the evil will itself) would cease to be. Evil is parasitic on good; its existence requires that which it opposes. This is what Schelling means when he argues that "Evil has no power to exist in itself; that which is real in it, considered in itself, is good" (SW7: 341; 1992, 13). The positive force behind evil – that is, the irrational ground of existence – is also required for good will (Marx 1984, 75). There is nothing real in evil in the sense that evil is not an independent substance. That which evil will uses as its resource is, taken in itself, an essential element of good will as well. In contrast to the Augustinian tradition, Schelling understands evil as a positive principle of its own; it is an active inversion of the good. Self-defeating as it is, evil if anything is a genuine expression of the human spirit, even to the extent "that whoever has no material or force for evil in himself is also impotent for good" (SW7: 400; 1992, 81).

Like the idea of the ground, evil is also illuminated by several analogies, both by Schelling and by his commentators. Undoubtedly the most central and oft-quoted of them is the third metaphor that Snow (1996, 148) emphasizes, disease:

> The most appropriate comparison is here offered by disease, which is the true counterpart of evil and sin, as it constitutes that disorder which entered nature through a misuse of freedom. Disease of the whole organism can never exist without the hidden forces of the depths being unloosed; it occurs when the irritable principle which ought to rule as the innermost tie of forces in the quiet deep, activates itself, or when Archaos is provoked to desert his quiet residence at the center of things and steps forth into the surroundings. (SW7: 366; 1992, 41–42)

As Snow points out, "Schelling´s metaphor of disease conveys both the parasitism and secondary nature of evil, as well as recognizing the reality of evil" (Snow 1996, 166). Disease can be a disease only as a part of the whole of the body, whose ordinary holistic condition is health. Consequently, if disease is successful in entirely destroying the order of the body it inhabits, it destroys itself as well. In this sense evil is parasitic and secondary to good. As Schelling himself puts it, "the end of disease is death, and no single tone makes a discord by itself" (SW7: 371; 1992, 47). On the other hand, the metaphor of disease takes into account that evil is felt as a presence and it forms a principle of its own. Disease is not merely a lack of health but an order of its own. According to Snow, it is this positive nature of evil that explains "why we are horrified by evil in a way that we are not horrified by mere weakness or impotence, which at most inspire pity" (Snow 1996, 166). This feature of evil can be found even more graphically in David Robert´s analogy of a "malformed animal in which the parts are all there, but they have been put in the wrong places or grotesquely deformed" (Roberts 2006,

16). Also in the Kabbalistic "tree of death", the highest manifestation of evil, corresponding to the highest sefirah Kether in the tree of life, is symbolized by two monstrous heads growing from the same body yet engaged in eternal war against each other (Karlsson 2007, 71). As Schelling puts it: "If evil consists in strife between the two principles [existence and its ground], then the good can only consist in their complete accord" (SW7: 392; 1992, 70).

Of all diseases, cancer in particular has been noted as a particularly illuminating analogy (McGrath 2012, 72; Roberts 2006, 15; Snow 1996, 174). With cancer, cells begin to multiply uncontrollably, resulting in grotesque tumours and often eventually death. Schelling conceives of disease as "hidden forces of the depths being unloosed", which "occurs when the irritable principle which ought to rule as the innermost tie of forces in the quiet deep, activates itself" (SW7; 366; 1992, 41–42). Biological life itself is based on cell division; when the division stops, death occurs. In cancer, however, this process runs out of control and turns against the cohesion of the whole, which is essential for life. This is a perfect metaphor for Schelling´s conception of evil. The ground is required for all life, but when it is elevated above the ordered existence, only monstrosities (such as tumours and deformities) occur. However, scientists are also researching cancer cells in order to find new efficient treatments for other diseases. That which makes cancer such a terrible disease can also, taken in itself and used for another purpose, be turned to great good. Similarly, according to Schelling, "evil has no power to exist in itself; that which is real in it, considered in itself, is good" (SW7: 341; 1992, 13).

After Schelling has given an account of the possibility and actuality of evil, the following question naturally arises: if evil is self-defeating and yet not merely a lapse from good, why does anyone choose it? Kant evidently recognizes the same question in his doctrine of radical evil, but the basic commitments of transcendental idealism do not allow him to say anything about the choice of the propensity to evil, save from the empirical viewpoint (biology, psychology, and sociology). On the contrary, Schelling´s metaphysical stance even forces him to investigate the origin of evil beyond our moral consciousness:

> There is, therefore, a *universal* evil, even if it is not active from the beginning but is only aroused in God´s revelation through the reaction of the basis, and indeed never reaches realization, but is nonetheless constantly striving towards it. Only after recognizing evil in its universal character is it possible to comprehend good and evil in man too. For if evil was already aroused in the first creation and was finally developed into a general principle through the self-centered operation of the basis, then man´s natural inclination to evil seems at once explicable, because the disorder of forces once having entered creatures through the awakening of self-will is already communicated to man at birth. Indeed the dark ground operates incessantly in individual man too, and rouses egotism and a particularized will just in order that the will of love may arise in contrast to it. (SW7: 380–381; 1992, 58)

The possibility of evil is a necessary condition of a manifest world, since manifestation essentially means the split between existence and its ground. The possibility of evil becomes actualized when nature produces a being that possesses spirit, by which it is able to decidedly invert the subordination of these principles. In asking how an actual evil choice takes place, the starting point is to

remember that the ground is not rational; the essence of the ground is simply to drive everything forward. As Schelling reminds us, we "cannot remain in indecision" (SW7: 374; 1992, 50) but the irrational and overwhelming pressure of the ground forces a choice between the two possible subordinations of the principles. Despite its ultimately self-defeating nature, evil has always its fascination, for the blind self-will of the ground does not ask for rational inferences:

> It is God´s will to universalize everything, to lift it to unity with light or to preserve it therein; but the will of the deep is to particularize everything or to make it creature-like. It wishes differentiation only so that identity may become evident to itself and to the will of the deep. Therefore it necessarily reacts against freedom as against what is above the creature, and awakens in it the desire for what is creature – just as he who is seized by dizziness on a high and precipitous summit seems to hear a mysterious voice calling him to plunge down, or as in the ancient tale, the irresistible song of the sirens sounded out of the deep to draw the passing mariner down into the whirlpool. (SW7: 381; 1992, 58–59)

However, it can be asked further why a certain person chooses evil and another similar person does not. Schelling, similar to Kant, conceives of the choice between good and evil as ultimately inscrutable – otherwise it could not be free. To give a full causal explanation for why someone becomes good and another evil would destroy human freedom entirely. Schelling, however, makes a strong link between freedom and necessity. In fact, for Schelling, freedom and necessity are identical, like good and evil, in the sense of Neoplatonic logic:

> The intelligible being, therefore, insofar as it acts absolutely and with full freedom, can as certainly only act according to its own inner nature. Or the activity can follow from its inner nature only in accordance with the law of identity, and with absolute necessity which is also the only absolute freedom. For only that is free which acts according to the laws of its own inner being and is not determined by anything else either within it or outside it. (SW7: 384; 1992, 62)

First, Schelling dismisses "the usual conception of freedom" (SW7: 382; 1992, 59), that is, "freedom of indifference", and concludes (by a similar argument as Leibniz and Kant) that "if freedom cannot be saved except by making actions totally accidental, then it cannot be saved at all" (SW7: 383; 1992, 60). Next, he takes up the equation of freedom with determinism understood in the sense of "the empirical necessity of all actions on the ground that each of them was determined by motives or other causes which lay in the past and which are no longer in our control at the time of the action" (SW7: 383; 1992, 61). In Schelling´s view, however, the advocates of both freedom or empirical determination "are alike ignorant of that higher necessity which is equally far removed from accident and from compulsion or external determination but which is, rather, an inner necessity which springs from the essence of the active agent itself" (SW7: 383; 1992, 61). In terms of Neoplatonic logic, both freedom and necessity can be understood only as grounded in something that cannot be reduced to either of them, which Schelling here calls "the higher necessity".

The argument has similarities with Kant´s solution of the third antinomy (the antinomy of freedom of will and the causality of nature), which Schelling

obviously acknowledges. According to Schelling, he merely affirms "the Kantian conception not exactly in his words but in just such a way as, we believe, it must be expressed in order to be understood" (SW7: 384; 1992, 61). While Kant understands freedom through the moral law and the obligation it sets for the finite human subject, in Schelling´s view freedom cannot be based on the idea of duty; rather it must be understood as the necessity that springs from one´s character:

> He is not conscientious who, in a given case, must first hold the command of duty before himself in order to decide to do right because of his respect for it. By the very meaning of the word, religiosity allows no choice between alternatives, no *aequilibrium arbitrii* (the bane of all morality) but only the highest commitment to the right, without any choice. […] Thus it was in the soul of Cato, to whom an ancient writer ascribes such an inward and almost divine necessity of action, in saying that he was most like virtue, in that he never did what was right in order to do so (out of respect for the command of duty) but because he simply could not have done otherwise. (SW7: 393; 1992, 71–72)

> Thus, the undeniable necessity of all actions notwithstanding, and though everyone must admit, if he observes himself, that he is in no wise good or bad by accident or choice, yet a bad person, for instance, seems to himself anything but compelled (since compulsion can only be felt in becoming, not in being) but performs his acts willfully, not against his will. That Judas became traitor to Christ, neither he nor any creature could alter; nonetheless he betrayed Christ not under compulsion but willingly and with full freedom. The same thing is true of a good man – namely that he is not good by accident or choice, but nonetheless is so little under compulsion that no coercion, indeed not even the very gates of hell, would be capable of overpowering his disposition. (SW7: 386; 1992, 64)

The moral character Schelling discusses here is obviously not to be understood in the ordinary empirical sense, but as "the act which determines man´s life in time does not itself belong in time but in eternity" (SW7: 385; 1992, 63). Schelling acknowledges that his view is "beyond the grasp of common ways of thought", but he also maintains that "there is in every man a feeling which is in accord with it, as if each man felt that he had been what he is from all eternity, and had in no sense only come to be so in time" (SW7: 386; 1992, 64). This feeling of necessity is fundamentally accompanied by the feeling of freedom, for "who perhaps to excuse a wrong act says: 'Well, that´s the way I am' – is himself well aware that he is so because of his own fault, however correct he may be in thinking that it would have been impossible for him to act differently" (SW7: 386; 1992, 64–65).

The "timeless choice" of one´s moral character comes close to Kant´s theory of radical evil, but Schelling works in a different metaphysical background and with a different motivation in exploring evil. Unlike Kant, Schelling does not specify at any point which kinds of acts precisely are good or evil. Michelle Kosch, who esteems Schelling for offering a substantial theory of evil (compared to Kant´s purely formal account), argues that "in the process of telling us a more convincing story about why we can sometimes do other than we ought, he has rendered himself incapable of telling us what we ought to do and why" (Kosch 2006, 101). However, it could be argued in Schelling´s favour, that we know already without philosophy what we ought to do and why. To the contrary, it is anything but obvious how to conceive evil as a positive principle instead of

merely failing to be good. In addition to offering such a theory, Schelling´s metaphysics contains many hermeneutic resources for understanding evil in practice in different contexts.

As Joseph Lawrence (2013, 49) points out, Schelling´s conception of evil illuminates several aspects of evil: it is at the same time an abstract general theory and an easily applicable framework to various practical contexts. In particular, the Freedom Essay contains a fruitful dialectic between two opposite forms of evil, which Schelling himself does not explicitly address. Evil understood as an attempt to elevate the irrational ground above the actual existing order brings first to mind letting one´s immoral drives rule one´s life without caring about morality or even rationality. However, this is not the only sense of elevating the ground above existence. The ground in human personality represents self-will, which can operate only in the existing universal order, but which, taken in itself, does not recognize any such limitations. Evil is irrational in the sense that it is self-defeating, but not necessarily in the narrower sense of not being systematic. On the contrary, as Lawrence (2004, 175) stresses, Schelling clearly also recognizes a form of evil which is rigid systematicity itself, the attempt to be able to understand everything rationally without remainder. This kind of evil could be described as the denial of the irrational ground of reality. Such evil still consists in elevated self-will; the need to understand everything rationally springs from a need to control, and need to control can spring only from an experienced thread to one´s self when reality does not fully bend to its conceptions.[29] These two forms of evil – direct and indirect elevation of one´s self-will above the existing order – will be illuminated by three different practical contexts in the next subchapter.

## 4.5 Contemporary interpretations

### 4.5.1 Deep ecology

The first theme to be discussed is deep ecology, which is generally understood in the following way. "Shallow environmentalism", as Arne Næss has dubbed it, stresses that if the current population growth, pollution, etc. continues, it will lead to major catastrophes and possibly the extinction of the human race, and even the end of all life on earth. From a deep ecological viewpoint, the shallowness of common environmentalism consists in the fact that it merely analyses in causal terms why the environment is being ruined and what could be done in order to shift the course. Deep ecology, to the contrary, seeks to dig deeper and ask why it is the case that the human being and modern Western culture in particular are ruining the earth. The main problem of modern thought,

[29] In my article "(Pathologies of) Recognition in Schelling´s Thought on Evil" I took up the dialectical relation between the two opposite forms of evil but I never stressed that they can both ultimately be seen as forms of elevating the ground above existence, which might have caused some confusion.

according to deep ecologists, is that nature is not attributed intrinsic value but is always ultimately understood from the standpoint of human interests.

Schelling´s metaphysics in the Freedom Essay can be quite naturally interpreted in the light of deep ecology, even though his point of departure is not the intrinsic value of nature but the theological and metaphysical questions addressed in the previous subchapters. In short, Schelling criticizes modern thought for its understanding of nature merely as a passive object that confronts active human subjectivity; nature is seen as something stable and lawful that is acted on and understood by the human being who alone is free and conscious, and therefore able to *act* in the proper sense of the word. Such an objectifying way of thought is necessary for scientific explanation, and Schelling does not question the epistemological validity of scientific facts, but according to him, the scientific mode of thought has far exceeded its legitimate realm and started to dominate our relation to nature. When it comes to explaining ecological catastrophes, Schelling would stress that nature is not only an endlessly complex whole. First and foremost, he would note our inability to fully understand it does not result merely from our limited cognitive and material resources; even in principle it is impossible to capture the productivity of nature in rational understanding. It follows directly from the view that there is nothing in nature which human reason cannot in principle understand that the value of nature is also assessed from the point of view of human interests.

In a famous passage of the Freedom Essay, the ground of existence is explicitly equated with nature: "This ground of his existence, which God contains [within himself], is not God viewed as absolute, that is insofar as he exists. For it is only the basis of his existence, it is *nature* – in God, inseparable from him, to be sure, but nevertheless distinguishable from him." (SW7: 358; 1992, 32.) When nature is juxtaposed with conceptual human understanding, it is usually understood simply as something that lacks the essential characteristics of humanity: consciousness, intentionality, morality, and feelings. Animals certainly have feelings, and perhaps all organic nature is conceived of as intentional in some sense, but inorganic matter is generally thought to be devoid of any attributes save those that are used in scientific explanation. Physical reality is conceived as irrational in the sense that it is completely foreign to the human phenomenal world. For the same reason, the modern understanding of nature is in another sense rationalistic. It is assumed that, in principle, it is possible to understand everything about physical nature because there is nothing else in it to understand than what the physical sciences encounter. In Schelling´s philosophy of nature, to the contrary, the empirically observable order of nature is a result of the interplay of metaphysical forces of expansion and contraction. In the Freedom Essay, the contractive force is transformed into the idea of the ground of existence, which is equated precisely with that element of nature which scientific explaining cannot reach; it is "the irreducible remainder which cannot be resolved into reason by the greatest exertion but always remains in the depths" (SW7: 360; 1992, 34).

The deep ecological elements of the Freedom Essay have not been left unnoticed. According to Jason Wirth, Schelling provided in his philosophy of nature "what could now be called something like a deep ecology" (Wirth 2005a, 2). Commentators often refer to Vittorio Hösle´s (1992, 166–197) analysis of the "metaphysics of the ecological crisis". Žižek links Hösle´s analysis to Schelling´s theory of evil in particular. As Richard Bernstein puts it, the main idea is that "human beings pose a serious threat to the rest of nature because their natural animal egotism can be elevated and 'spiritualized' into a principle for exploiting nature" (Bernstein 2008a, 92). Žižek recognizes that Schelling´s emphasis of the human being as the "centre of creation", who alone is able to invert the relation of existence and its ground, would be generally judged as "an old-fashioned anthropocentric attitude out of touch with our times, which demand a more 'cosmocentric' view" (Žižek 2007, 88). In Žižek's view, Schelling turns the accusation of anthropomorphism upside down: "For Schelling, however, it is the very fact that man is the 'being of the Centre' which confers upon him the proper responsibility and humility – it is the ordinary materialist attitude of reducing man to an insignificant species on a small planet in a distant galaxy which effectively involves the subjective attitude of domination over nature and its ruthless exploitation" (Žižek 2007, 88). As Mary Midgley (2003, 13) points out, conceiving of nature as "indifferent" is as metaphorical as calling it benevolent or hostile. According to Schelling, the scientific standpoint, which sees nature as a "dead" object completely foreign to the human life-world, cannot be conceived as the most fundamental ontological view of nature, because if the objectivity of nature was something completely different from our subjectivity, it would not be possible to think of it in the first place: "A world of pure objectivity is and will remain inconceivable for Schelling, not least because it could never lead to that which can *think* of nature in even purely mechanistic terms" (Bowie 2006, 40).

The modern "disenchanted" view of nature is usually seen as humble; humanity has grown out of its primitive childhood in which we "selfishly" projected our wishes and fears onto nature. Schelling, however, sees hidden pride in this alleged humility. Indeed, for Schelling, the modern objectifying view of nature represents the less evident of the two forms of evil assessed in the previous subchapter, that is, the denial of the irrational ground rationality. In Lawrence´s words, "from Schelling´s point of view, evil already exists in the epistemological act whereby the knowing subject casts all nature outside of itself, transforming it into an *object* of scientific understanding and technological manipulation" (Lawrence 2004, 175). In Lawrence´s interpretation of Schelling, the basic premise of modern thinking, disenchanted nature, represents a form of illegitimately elevated self-will. Nature is reduced to causal mechanisms in order to make it fully open to rationality. And what is rationally comprehensible can in principle be controlled. As Lawrence puts it:

> The neediness that elevates rationality to the status of a secular religion is intimately bound to the discomforting intuition that reality itself is irrational. How else is the modern prohibition of metaphysics to be understood? If reality were recognized as truly rational, we would encourage the attempt to understand its inner meaning. Of course, if reality were deemed rational, we would also place our trust in it, instead of

> relying as heavily as we do on politics and technology to hold the world at bay. Metaphysical irrationalism is thus the deep premise of modern rationality. (Lawrence 2004, 169–170)

In his commentary attached to the Finnish translation of the Freedom Essay, Pauli Pylkkö with a similar idea in mind reads Schelling primarily as a deep ecologist. According to Pylkkö, Schelling "turns against modernity even before it had properly begun to speed up, that is, to grow exponentially" (Pylkkö 2004, 179).[30] Pylkkö continues polemically:

> And now when the natural environment is being ruined so that we can get moving pictures in our mobile telephones, we are still not able to admit that this dreamy quack, Schelling, who has been deemed paradigmatically reactionary, was perhaps even right about big questions with his mystical speculations about nature and managed to describe the murderous power of technique-science more aptly than Kant, Hegel, or Marx. (Pylkkö 2004, 179)

Pylkkö (2004, 215–218) continuously stresses that the current ecological catastrophe is nothing but a logical consequence of the modern world view, which in its sharp object-subject dualism has lost a living relationship with nature. According to Pylkkö, there is a hidden need for totalitarian control embedded in modernity; it is not only present in science, but also – and perhaps even primarily – in modern ethics:

> According to Schelling, modern time is unable to approach the problem of evil, and he gives us the impression that our culture here practices collective defence: the principle of darkness dwelling in humanity is not acknowledged, because acknowledging it would be at war with the spirit of general humanitarianism, hope, positivity and progress. For Schelling, the human being is an inseparable part of nature, and in nature the irrational, wild, and chaotic forces of darkness operate among the forces of order in inseparable fusion. The destruction of the soil – that is, the poisoning of nature, collapse of the diversity of species, and infinite growth of artificial environment – is a consequence of humans´ reckless self-indulgence and need for security. (Pylkkö 2004, 214–215)

In Pylkkö´s reading of Schelling, the problem in modern ethics is its "humanitarianism", by which he does not refer only to neglect of the ethical relevance of non-human nature. Rather, the dismissal of non-human nature appears parallel to the dismissal of nature *in the human being*. At least since Darwin, the human being has been conceived of as an animal species, among others, in the sense that the "higher" attributes of the human being (those characteristic only of humans) can be explained in terms of the "lower" ones (those that can be found in other animals as well). For Schelling, however, nature in the human being is similar to external nature in that its most fundamental aspect, productivity, escapes the scientific gaze. If anything, science is a characteristically human enterprise. Therefore, approaching the human being only by means of science is the exact opposite of recognizing nature as the dark ground in the human being that defies rational explanations.

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30 All translations of Pylkkö´s works are mine.

While the ethics of indigenous peoples are tied to their concrete and local way of life, their unique environment, and their religious-metaphysical beliefs, modern ethical thinking attempts to formulate universal rational principles. The common factor between modern ethics and technology is that "neither contains anything that would limit their expansion, no wisdom of limiting the scope of one´s own influence" (Pylkkö 2004, 218). It follows that "Western ethics presents itself as universal, and murders without restraints all cultures that do not want to participate in this universality" (Pylkkö 2004, 218). Therefore, Pylkkö goes so far as to claim that "Western ethics is a civilized name for genocide" (Pylkkö 2004, 218).

Pylkkö is certainly correct in maintaining, that from Schelling´s point of view, "only the human being who has separated his spirit from the natural and original unity is able to approach nature as a reservoir stock or recreation area" (Pylkkö 2004, 215). Schelling obviously does criticize the modern scientific world view as well as modern ethics for not recognizing the irrational ground of rationality. Schelling also definitely argues that there is hidden evil in modern rationalism, which presents itself as the only and universal good. Technology that was designed for making human life easier yielded atomic bombs, and the most civilized societies turned into factories of mass murder on a scale never seen before. As Carl Jung (1995, 174–180) later expressed a similar idea, Nazism is the shadow of Enlightenment rationality. However, there is little textual evidence in the Freedom Essay that Schelling sought to completely abandon universalistic ethics. The famous passage in which Schelling criticizes "humanitarianism" runs as follows:

> The notions of our age, which takes a far easier view of this point and carries its humanitarianism to the extent of denying evil, have not even the slightest connection with such ideas. According to current views the sole basis of evil lies in the world of the senses or in animality or the earthly principle, since they do not contrast Heaven with Hell, as would be proper, but with Earth. (SW7: 371; 1992, 47)

Denying nature as the irrational ground of rationality is closely related to denying evil in the proper sense of the word. Lawrence illustrates this in a provocative manner: "Instead of evil, we have problems. And for problems, explanations can be found. […] A given problem (for example melancholy) has a given solution (for instance, Prozac)." (Lawrence 2004, 169.) If nature in principle is fully open to reason, there is no room for evil in it, for if there is a full explanation for everything evil, "evil" becomes a mere problem to solve. Unlike Pylkkö indicates, however, Schelling does not equate humanitarianism with the denial of evil; he merely asserts that they have appeared simultaneously in modern times and that they also have an essential connection. On the contrary, Schelling repeatedly stresses that the self-consciousness of humans places them in a completely unique position in the universe. For example:

> This elevation of the most abysmal center into light, occurs in no creatures visible to us except in man. In man there exists the whole power of the principle of darkness and, in him too, the whole force of light. In him there are both centers – the deepest pit and the highest heaven. Man´s will is the seed – concealed in eternal longing – of God,

> present as yet only in the depths, – the divine light of life locked in the deeps which God divined when he determined to will nature. Only in him (in man) did God love the world, – and it was this very image of God which was grasped in its center by longing when it opposed itself to light. (SW7: 363; 1992, 38)

According to Schelling, it is rather the case that mankind has reached its highest point of development in the modern era, but precisely because of this, the modern era also reveals the highest potential for evil. The problem in modern ethics is not its universalistic conception of good, but its tendency to neglect and even deny the necessary potential to evil that accompanies good. When Pylkkö unconditionally condemns universalism that is characteristic of modernity, he actually comes close to the other, more obvious form of evil in Schelling´s theory: elevating the irrational ground above the universal order. Pylkkö criticizes the Finnish radical deep ecologist Pentti Linkola for inconsistency in stressing deep ecologically the importance of understanding nature as a living whole and simultaneously adopting a biological-scientific conception of nature. However, I would argue that from Schelling´s point of view, Pylkkö´s own account falls to a similar inconsistency.

In stressing that egalitarian values are completely foreign to nature, and should be given up as unrealistic illusions, Pylkkö still retains a sharp dualism between humanity, which can at least create the illusion of such an overarching principle as equality, and nature, which is completely foreign to ethics. Nature as the ground in Schelling´s sense is indeed blind longing, which does not recognize rational ethical standards, but Pylkkö forgets that it is blind longing *towards reason*. Schelling´s metaphysics is founded on a dualism, but "a dualism which at the same time admits a unity" (SW7: 359; 1992, 33n). Even though Pylkkö is generally sensitive to Schelling´s dialectical way of thought, when it comes to universalistic humanism, he seems to neglect the fact that, for Schelling, humanism becomes a form of evil only when it denies its "barbarian" ground. Pylkkö recognizes that "also another conception of freedom can be found in the Freedom Essay, freedom of divine understanding", but he claims that "although the human being can participate in it by giving up his self and resigning himself back to the divine unity, Schelling does not say very much about this other conception of freedom, in particular when it comes to humanity and its history" (Pylkkö 2004, 213). Pylkkö argues that "for Schelling, human freedom means the possibility to evil" (Pylkkö 2004, 213), even though it is stressed in almost every commentary that Schelling´s strongest ethical idea is that "the real and vital conception of freedom is that it is a possibility of good *and* evil" (SW7: 352; 1992, 26, italics mine).

Pylkkö is keen on explicating how Schelling reveals implicit evil in common Western conceptions of good, but in the process he seems to forget that there is also good in good. Considering how vehemently Pylkkö (2013,13–32) attacks Arne Næss´s attempt to unify deep ecology with humanistic ideals, and what he says about Pentti Linkola´s anti-humanistic and thoroughly biological view, it appears that Pylkkö takes humanism to be worse than biologism. For Schelling, on the contrary, humanism brings the possibility of the worst, but this is only because it also brings the possibility of the best.

The remarkable potential in a deep ecological reading of Schelling is that in spite of being sharp in his criticism of modern conceptions of nature, unlike many deep ecologists he does not fundamentally juxtapose the value of nature and human values. Deep ecology has often been criticized for demanding to adopt an impossible perspective of valuing nature through a viewpoint which is not fundamentally human. For Schelling, to the contrary, the human standpoint is the highest manifestation of nature´s own teleological process. Therefore, in the spirit of Schelling´s paradoxical Neoplatonic logic, he might be called an *anthropocentric deep ecologist*. On the other hand, it has to be remembered that Schelling succeeds in the fusion of humanism and deep ecology only by abandoning the most fundamental assumption of modern thought: the split between purposeful human subjectivity and purposeless nature. It will be assessed in subchapter 5.3 whether such an anti-modern metaphysical stance can be plausibly defended today, and if it would be possible to make practical use of the hermeneutic resources of Schelling´s theory without committing to its actual metaphysical claims.

### 4.5.2 Psychoanalysis

It is widely recognized that in developing the foundation of his psychoanalytical school Freud was significantly influenced by various philosophers, especially Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, even though Freud himself tended to belittle the impact of philosophers on his work (Gay 1990, 63, 451). However, the general narrative of the development of psychoanalytical thought still begins unequivocally with Freud, as if Freud took his ideas out of nowhere and no similar conceptions had been presented before. A central fruit of the recent Schelling renaissance has been a questioning of this reading, along with recognition of Schelling as an essentially psychoanalytical thinker. In this respect, Andrew Bowie´s *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy* and Slavoj Žižek´s *The Indivisible Remainder: On Schelling and Related Matters* have been particularly influential studies. (Ffytche 2013, 1–4.)

In his work *The Foundation of the Unconscious: Schelling, Freud and the Birth of the Modern Psyche* Matt Ffytche has further explored Schelling´s role in the development of the idea of the unconscious. Ffytche´s point of departure is "to look beyond the Freudian and Jungian paradigms, let alone the Lacanian or Derridean, to the outlines of a broader nineteenth-century interest in the unconscious for which there is no single logic and no single history" (Ffytche 2013, 7). However, as McGrath (2012, 18–20) argues, despite the successful work that Ffytche has done in investigating the history of essentially psychoanalytical ideas before Freud coined the term, Ffytche´s viewpoint is quite limited, as he views the unconscious merely as a social construction. According to Ffytche, "the unconscious, insofar as it forms the basis for a new science of the individual mind (in part philosophical and transcendental, in part natural-scientific, in part a form of moral self-description) is prima facie not detachable from nineteenth-century attempts to give an account of autonomy, originality and independence in the individual, or the wider desire to find new languages and new conceptions of

human and social order" (Ffytche 2013, 23). For Ffytche, the idea of the unconscious "served to protect the autonomy of the liberal subject against the encroaching determinism of nineteenth-century natural scientific and social political trends" (McGrath 2012, 18). The problem in Ffytche´s argument is that if the unconscious is approached *primarily* as a socially constructed idea, that which is the most essential in the idea of the unconscious is lost, the meaning of the unconscious is that the psyche is actually much wider than its discursive conceptions and conscious actions. As McGrath puts it, "the problem with constructivism is that it generally presupposes nominalism and rules out phenomenological and experiential sources of concepts, instead finding only political motives behind the construction of the stories we tell about ourselves." (McGrath 2012, 20).

Even though the *idea* of the unconscious is obviously culturally constructed, as all ideas are, it is quite plausible to argue that ideas often correspond to something real. Especially in the case of the idea of the unconscious, this means that the idea does not yet fully capture that which it attempts to describe. At this point, the connection between Schelling´s conception of the ground as "the irreducible remainder which cannot be resolved into reason by the greatest exertion but always remains in the depth" (SW7: 360; 1992, 34) and the idea of a dynamic unconscious should already be evident. The unconscious can be seen as the ground of consciousness in Schelling´s sense of "ground". According to McGrath, we are not speaking here about a mere affinity; it is actually the case that "prototypes for three of the of the major models of the unconscious in the twentieth century, the Freudian bio-personal unconscious, the Jungian collective unconscious, and the Lacanian semiotic unconscious, can be traced back to Schelling" (McGrath 2012, 1). Indeed, Schelling´s theory can be viewed as an independent proto-psychoanalytical theory, which has elements of all the three mentioned theories, but also diverges from each of them in some essential respect (McGrath 2012, 181).

To begin with Freud, Freud´s and Schelling´s views of the psyche are isomorphic in the sense that for both, personality is a paradoxical union of two opposite principles, and for both, this union is a reformation of a primordial unity, where the fundamental dualism between subject and object did not yet exist. In all phases of his career Freud operates within the framework of dual principles whose relation constitutes a person in a similar way as for Schelling, who asserts personality as the union of the principles of rationally formed existence and its irrational ground. For example, according to Andrew Bowie, "Freud uses a model close to the *Naturphilosophie*, in that the ego and super-ego are the results of the id directing its forces against itself in the interests of self-preservation" (Bowie 2006, 97). Žižek interprets Schelling´s idea of the Unground and its split into the ground and existence in a similar manner: "The Absolute 'opens up time', it 'represses' the rotatory motion in the past, in order to get rid of the antagonism in its heart which threatens to drag it into the abyss of madness" (Žižek 2007, 31). The central irreconcilable differences between Schelling and Freud, however, become evident in Freud´s purposeless, even mechanistic conception of the

unconscious, and his emphasis on the unconscious as that which is repressed from consciousness.

According to McGrath (2012, 124), Schelling´s model of the unconscious is dissociative but not repressive. The splitting of the Unground into existence and its ground happens for the sake of love and not because something unbearable is repressed: "But the groundless divides itself into the two equally eternal beginnings only in order that the two which could not be in it as groundless at the same time, or there be one, should become one through love; that is, it divides itself only that there may be life and love and personal existence" (SW7: 408; 1992, 89). Psychologically this means that the ground is not inaccessible to rational consciousness because it needs to be repressed in order to keep one´s sanity, but because the appearance of personality requires the dissociation of the two principles. For Freud, a human being is ruthlessly thrown into an inherently meaningless world, and personality is essentially formed as a defense against the unbearable loss of the original unity with the mother. For Schelling, to the contrary, nature is inherently teleological, and personality is born in order for life to become richer and more fully conscious of itself.

Lacan´s model of the structure of the psyche, formally taken, is even closer to Schelling than Freud´s. Unlike Freud, Lacan not only actually read Schelling but he was also aware of the crucial influence of Boehme´s esotericism on Schelling´s metaphysics (McGrath 2012, 1, 28). According to McGrath, Lacan "appears to have grasped the Sophia-figure as a premodern myth that unlocks the secret of Freudian metapsychology" (McGrath 2012, 69). In practice this means that Lacan attempted to systematize Freud's often obscure and inconsistent views into a philosophically viable materialist view of the idea of the unconscious by formalizing and secularizing Boehme's and Schelling's metaphysics. For Boehme, Sophia is the "divine mirror" which reflects God´s blind longing back to himself so that he becomes capable of creation (McGrath 2012, 67). Influenced by this idea, Lacan develops the idea of the "mirror stage" in the child's development, in which the "subject enjoys an identity that differentiates him from other subjects and from the environment, and where language and symbolization put at his disposal endless possibilities not only of expression but of meaning-construction" (McGrath 2012, 69).

However, similar to Freud´s case, Lacan´s fundamental difference from Schelling is in his emphasis on repression and in his non-teleological view of nature. While for Schelling the dissociation of the Unground from itself "effects an *increase* in reality (even if concealment inevitably accompanies the revelation), an entering into functional relation with self (consciousness of the unconscious), for Lacan the mirror facilitates the psyche´s flight into the unreal or the symbolic" (McGrath 2012, 69). For Lacan, subjectivity is constitutively based on the repression of reality; human understanding, which operates by meanings, cannot by any means cognize nature as it is in itself without any meanings, simply because there is nothing to cognize in it (McGrath 2012 32–34). Even though Lacan´s idea of repression is more formal and semantic than Freud´s, both understand human subjectivity to be constitutively based on repression of reality,

while, according to Schelling, dissociation takes place in order that personality and fuller consciousness in nature can be born.

As already discussed in subchapter 2.5.2, Freud did not completely realize the philosophical consequences of his idea of the unconscious. Freud's attitude was closer to a natural scientist than a philosopher, even though – or rather precisely because of this – especially his late conceptions of the life-drive and death-drive verge on the type of nature metaphysics practised by Schopenhauer and Schelling. Lacan, to the contrary, is more systematic in resisting this kind of metaphysical temptation: for Lacan, the unconscious is not a "realm" in nature which has its will and language foreign to consciousness; it is the very foundational act of consciousness itself. As McGrath puts it, "on this view, nature does not precede subjectivity; rather, it comes to be at the precise moment that subjectivity separates itself from its pre-symbolic life; the illusion of a natural order begins with the decision of the subject to be for itself, a decision that can only be made by setting up the in itself as that which the subject is not" (McGrath 2011, 2). Consequently, "Lacan's 'subject' is the Cartesian subject living in a disenchanted world, a subject deprived, by virtue of the structure of consciousness itself, of 'roots' in 'nature'" (McGrath 2010, 79). Žižek (2005, 24) is certainly correct in maintaining that despite his rather obscure reputation, Lacan was a consistent upholder of Enlightenment rationalism, who made considerable effort to think of the paradoxical idea of the unconscious within this framework.

On the contrary, Jung moves in a completely opposite direction from Freud, compared to Lacan. If Lacan is formally the closest to Schelling of the three, Jung is substantially the closest. In opposition to Freud, Jung´s (1998, 228) conception of the libido is not essentially sexual in nature; instead, it is "neutral" energy which can take various forms (for example, art and religiosity, in addition to sexuality). Unlike Freud and Lacan, Jung is here in accord with Schelling´s "Neoplatonic logic", according to which all manifested dualisms share a common ground that remains hidden (McGrath 2012, 94). While as such the Jungian libido cannot appear, it is the invisible driving element behind every form of self-realization. In practice, this kind of view of the libido tends to point to an optimism that is foreign to Freud or Lacan. While for Lacan it is not philosophically plausible in the first place to think about a natural order preceding subjectivity, and for Freud nature's only "purpose" is to reproduce itself, Jung's conception of the unconscious is motivated by the idea that nature is not a hostile "other" to humanity, but all our capacities and ideals are rooted in nature. In his autobiography, Jung contrasts his position against Freud's. He stresses that "for me dreams are a part of nature, and they don´t bear any treacherous purposes but they express their meaning as well as they can, like a plant that grows or an animal that seeks food the best way possible" (Jung 1998, 180).

Both Jung and Schelling conceive of libido teleologically; for them, libido is not only a reaction to the traumatic break in the unity of the infant´s pre-individual stage but it is also oriented towards self-realization (McGrath 2012, 182; Stevens 1990, 41). However, Schelling is not as optimistic as Jung. Jung´s

point of view was obviously psychological and individualistic in the first place. Schelling, who approaches self-realization from the moral and theological-metaphysical viewpoint, naturally becomes more closely acquainted with the negative powers within the individual. In Jung´s view, even psychotic breakdowns are only an extreme form of withdrawing into one´s self in order to find new skills and wisdom to deal with a situation that the old self was too limited to handle. (McGrath 2012, 185.) On the contrary, according to Schelling, the process of individuation can also take a fundamentally (self-)destructive form: the human personality can be "overwhelmed by the unconscious, losing its hold on consciousness and disintegrating from within" or "in its bid to defend itself from the powers operative within it, the I can become rigidly idealized and the understanding, without living contact with the real, ossified" (McGrath 2012, 186–187).

These two forms of evil in Schelling´s theory correspond to what are called psychosis and neurosis in the psychoanalytical tradition. In psychosis, reality – as it is commonly experienced – is distorted to the extent that one can no longer communicate rationally with others. In Schelling´s terminology, this is a paradigmatic case of letting the irrational ground of reality rule over the existing order. However, the world of a psychotic is not literally a world of his own. Despite its attempt to do so, the ground cannot produce a reality of its own; it always operates on the material of the existing order. That there is a close connection between madness and creativity is an age-old cliché, but Schelling´s metaphysics offers a plausible theoretical framework for this connection. To be creative is to cultivate the "madness" of the ground but still to subordinate it to rational control. A neurotic person, to the contrary, is someone who attempts to control the unconscious to the extent that he practically denies its presence. In concentrating overly much to keep unconscious impulses in control they paradoxically gain more power than would be healthy. The result is similar but milder than in psychosis: repetitive and obsessive thought and action, reduction of happiness and control of life, and the subordination of the totality of the personality to one or a few of its aspects.

### 4.5.2 Cultural anthropology

The psychoanalytical aspects of Schelling relate closely to a more collective viewpoint, which could be called cultural anthropological. In his article "Schelling´s Metaphysics of Evil", Joseph Lawrence has interpreted Benjamin Barber´s conceptions of "Jihad" and "McWorld" as collective expressions of the "Schellingian psychosis and neurosis". In brief, McWorld refers to tha liberal capitalistic mindset which tends to make products of almost everything and destroys genuinely local ways of life, while Jihad is a fanatical traditionalist reaction against it. In Barber´s words, McWorld paints the future

> in shimmering pastels, a busy portrait of onrushing economic, technological, and ecological forces that demand integration and uniformity and that mesmerize peoples everywhere with fast music, fast computers, and fast food – with MTV, Macintosh, and McDonald´s – pressing nations into one homogenous global theme park, one

> McWorld tied together by communications, information, entertainment, and commerce (Barber 1996, 4)

On the contrary, Jihad means:

> a retribalization of large swaths of humankind by war and bloodshed: a threatened balkanization of nation-states in which culture is pitted against culture, people against people, tribe against tribe, a Jihad in the name of a hundred narrowly conceived faiths against every kind of interdependence, every kind of artificial social cooperation and mutuality: against technology, against pop culture, and against integrated markets; against modernity itself as well as the future in which modernity issues (Barber 1996, 4)

Jihad as "the irrationally frenzied grip on tradition" (Lawrence 2004, 168) evidently corresponds to the more obvious of the two forms of Schelling´s view of evil, letting the irrational longing of the ground to overcome reason, which in the societal context means subordinating everything universal to a particular tradition. As "the narcosis of a mechanized and endlessly self-duplicating form of reason" (Lawrence 2004, 168), McWorld in its turn represents the more subtle form of evil, attempting to cut the existing universal order from its irrational ground.

Instead of groups, movements, or anything like that, Jihad and McWorld could best be described as mentalities or mindsets. To say that phenomena like McWorld and Jihad have taken place in late modern society is already a cliché, but Barber stresses that to recognize a phenomenon is still not to say much about it: "It is not Jihad and McWorld but the relationship between them that most interests me" (Barber 1996, 5). Jihad and McWorld are not distinct or absolutely incompatible forces fighting against each other, but their relationship is dialectical; "they produce their contraries and need one another" (Barber 1996, 5). On a closer analysis, Jihad can be found already to be operative in McWorld as well as McWorld in Jihad. As Žižek puts it, "Jihad and McWorld are two sides of the same coin – Jihad is already McJihad" (Žižek 2009, 302).

The evil of Jihad is easy to recognize; universal human rights and even rationality are subordinated to irrational, ultimately self-defeating fanatical fervour to a particular religious or political stance. Jihad justifies its destructivity as self-defence against the cultural imperialism of McWorld. In reality, however, it seems evident that Jihad also wants war for its own sake. A good historical example could be the last phase of the Third Reich. National Socialism was allegedly on the side of life, against the corrupting forces of McWorld, but when Germany had practically already lost the war and Hitler could at least have saved thousands of German civilians, he only intensified the extermination of minorities and did not even consider surrendering. Similarly, it is a rhetorical question if the Islamic State today would establish a peaceful and righteous Muslim society if all its enemies were destroyed. In its blind rage, which does not recognize that a particular way of living can exist only in relation to other ways of life, Jihad is ultimately just as imperialistic as McWorld. If humankind as a whole is compared to a human body and a single organ to a particular culture, the analogy of cancer discussed in subchapter 4.4 is again helpful. The body has

countless completely different, relatively independent subsystems, which are still more or less necessary for the working of the body as a whole. Yet, cancer can only keep itself alive by constantly spreading and destroying the integrity of the whole of the body, thereby ultimately foredooming its own survival as well.

On the other hand, McWorld not only produces Jihad, but this production takes place because the fanaticism of Jihad is already hidden in McWorld. As Lawrence notes, "the case of McWorld is harder to assess", because "its cosmopolitan emphasis on toleration and inclusiveness seems to give it a moral advantage – until one realizes that its goal is still domination" (Lawrence 2004, 168). As argued in subchapter 4.5.1, Schelling does not criticize ethical universalism as such, but he senses a dubious existential attitude ingrained in the way this universalism generally takes place in practice. Pylkkö (2004, 218) has an essential insight in tracing a connection between the technological approach to nature and modern ethics, both of which attempt to control and tame that which Schelling calls the ground. As Lawrence points out, this denial of the ground is already inherent in the modern "disenchanted" conception of nature: "From Schelling´s point of view, evil already exists in the epistemological act whereby the knowing subject casts all nature outside of itself, transforming it into an *object* of scientific understanding and technological manipulation. This is the tacit and seemingly innocuous evil of McWorld." (Lawrence 2004, 175.)

As Lawrence notes: "Metaphysical irrationalism is thus the deep premise of modern rationality" (Lawrence 2004, 170). The premise that nature is conceived as completely foreign to humanity motivates the attempt to explain and control it. However, the reduction of nature to a whole set of objects understood by science and controlled by technology is motivated by the fear of nature *in the human being*. On the evil of McWorld, Lawrence continues:

> It is carried to a higher power when it involves the objectification and manipulation of other human beings. Jihad´s emotionally charged loathing, 'the other tribe is filth', is the local and (once televised) highly conspicuous version of what unfolds silently and universally in McWorld´s dispassionate reduction of humanity to 'resource' and 'consumer'. The irony is that the former serves as the ground and justification of the latter: fear of Jihad is the origin of McWorld. (Lawrence 2004, 175)

For McWorld, Jihad is the frightening nature within humanity. In support of Lawrence´s interpretation of Schelling, it seems that there is something more than purely moral condemnation in the strong emotional reactions to contemporary Islamist terror or politics reminiscent of National Socialism. These movements, which are characteristically representative of Jihad, retain a living relation to the irrational ground of existence, even if they have thereby become blind to any universalistic standpoint. This living relation to the ground is precisely that which McWorld lacks and fears to face. However, that which is feared must be controlled. The neurotic control of McWorld is what essentially generates Jihad, such that "fear of Jihad is the origin of McWorld" (Lawrence 2004, 175).

McWorld is closely associated with an often superficial upholding of equality and human rights. According to Žižek, "at first glance, political correctness demands an ultimate sacrifice, the denial of everything racist and

sexist, the endless attempt to purify oneself of even the smallest traces of racism and sexism, an attempt worthy of early Christian saints to dedicate one´s entire life to always digging up ever new sins" (Žižek 2009, 224, translation mine). While Jihad hides McWorld within itself in the unlimited expansion of its rage, McWorld, relying on reason, needs a more sophisticated strategy in self-deception. What Žižek calls political correctness is for a significant part an appearance of McWorld´s will to control, disguised as universalistic morality. McWorld needs an opponent in order to keeps its own evil suppressed. In Žižek´s view, "in this sense, a politically correct attitude is a textbook example of the Sartrean self-deception of intellectuals (*mauvaise foi*): it offers ever new and new answers *only for keeping the problem alive*" (Žižek 2009, 224).

Another way putting the issue is that not only Jihad but also McWorld separates good from evil absolutely in the sense that something is conceived as good, pure and simple, and something other as similarly evil. As Lawrence (2004, 171) notes, Kant´s theory of radical evil also reflects this mentality, even if Kant avoids the most obvious pitfalls of modern rationality. For Kant, human freedom is freedom to engage in good *or* evil. Evil is based on desires and good on pure practical reason, even though it is will alone that can be said to be good or evil, depending on which subordination it orders to reason and desires. In Schelling´s view, to the contrary, human freedom is always freedom to engage in good *and* evil. Good and evil are always tied to each other; good which does not recognize potential evil within itself actually becomes evil, and evil contains hidden resources for good. In the context of the evils of Jihad and McWorld, Žižek argues: "Instead praising the greatness of true Islam against its fundamentalist and terrorist misuse, or complaining that from all the great religions precisely Islam resists modernity the most powerfully, we should rather understand this resistance as an open possibility, as 'unresolvable'" (Žižek 2009, 312–313). According to Žižek, the evil of Jihad must not be separated absolutely from that which is seen as good. To the contrary, by the very fact of its factual evil, it also contains enormous resources for the good:

> Precisely because Islam contains the possibility of "the worst", fascistic answer to contemporary problems, it can become the opportunity for "the best". In another words, yes, Islam is truly not like other religions, but it contains a stronger social tie, and as such it cannot be united with the global capitalistic order – and the mission is to find out, how this ambiguous fact could be utilized politically (Žižek 2009, 312–313)

It is characteristic of liberal "politically correct" attitudes to emphasize that jihadist terror has nothing to do with Islam as such, but this would be as one-sided as to claim that Nazism had nothing to do with the liberal democracy that preceded it.[31] According to Žižek, "political correctness" betrays the will to see everything as virtually compatible with the current neo-liberal global capitalism.

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31 Nazism and radical Islam have no historical connection to each other, and they have arosin in different cultural contexts. However, they are both reactions to Western liberal democracy, and they are both conceived of as "fascistic" from the viewpoint of liberal democracy. As "the other" of liberal democracy, fascism, on the other hand, can be used almost interchangeably with Barber´s sense of Jihad.

This is the essence of McWorld: to conceive of itself without any grounding, as self-evident and unlimited. Jihad, on the other hand, is threatened by any universal standpoint, because such a standpoint would demonstrate the impossibility of a "pure" tradition. Jihad and McWorld both have what the other lacks, but rather than complementing each other they concentrate on destroying what they see as their enemy.

However, the evils of Jihad and McWorld must not be interpreted in popular Hegelian fashion as an incompleteness which is resolved through a dialectical process: "The two may, in opposing each other, work to the same ends, work in apparent tension yet in covert harmony, but democracy is not their beneficiary" (Barber 1996, 6). Schelling´s metaphysics can be described as teleological, but not in the sense of a railway towards an immutable telos. For Schelling, teleology appears in his view of living nature, the view that will is present already in the basic structure of nature. From Schelling´s point of view, the two forms of evil are not one-sided goods which will necessarily complement each other eventually; rather, evil consists in two poles that only together can produce something genuinely counter-teleological. As Lawrence puts it:

> Jihad and McWorld are possibilities that co-exist within reality itself. From a Schellingian point of view, they can be regarded as perverse distortions of the fundamental polarity that goes through all things. […] To understand Schelling is above all to understand that he is not Hegel: ontological polarity can never be resolved in a developmental process. (Lawrence 2004, 168)

Actually, the evils of Jihad and McWorld are closely related to a too straightforwardly teleological interpretation of history. As Žižek notes, "the greatest mass murders and holocausts have always been persecuted in the name of New Man, understood as a harmonic being without antagonistic tensions" (Žižek 2005, 21). In their own ways both Jihad and McWorld are based on this kind of ideal. Jihad condemns modernity as degenerated, and justifies its destructivity by a return to a "pure" practice of tradition. McWorld, to the contrary, conceives of the future in terms of linear progress, and it is therefore equally unable to accept the radical openness of the future. According to Lawrence, Schelling´s strength is that he "makes it possible to be simultaneously politically radical and culturally conservative" (Lawrence 2004, 189). By "conservative", Lawrence means "the realization that the deepest moments of culture can only be comprehended in a response that is so thoroughly creative that it opens up access to the future" (Lawrence 2004, 189). In this study, it has been mainly discussed how an unhealthy relationship to what Schelling calls the ground gives rise to two dialectically related forms of evil. Approached from the opposite viewpoint, however, the ground at the same time enables the emergence of something completely new, and it represents the unfathomable past from which humanity cannot be separated without losing all vitality. On a cultural level, therefore, Schelling´s metaphysics offers a viable way of thinking beyond the age-old dualism of progressive liberalism and backward-looking conservatism.

# 5 CHAPTER FIVE: METAPHYSICAL OR MORAL EVIL?

## 5.1 The critique of metaphysical evil

Most contemporary philosophers of evil do reject the metaphysical view of evil as much as they simply do not recognize it at all as a plausible stance outside the mainstream Christian tradition. For example, in the famous works of Claudia Card (2005; 2011), Adam Morton (2004), Luke Russell (2014), and Arne Vetlesen (2005), one barely finds anything beyond a purely moral conception of evil. All the questions addressed in these works concern different stances and emphases *within* the moral paradigm of evil. At best, it is discussed if the idea of evil is plausible after all, for there are still authors, such as Philip Cole (2006, 21), who reject the idea of evil altogether; according to them, at a closer look it is tied to Christian metaphysics.

Sometimes approaches other than the moral paradigm of evil are recognized, but they are generally sidestepped from the start. For example, Lars Svendsen briefly contrasts his purely moral approach to evil with Heidegger, who, according to Svendsen, "primarily wants to see evil as an ontological, rather than a moral or political problem" (Svendsen 2010, 28). At least Terry Eagleton actually adopts the kind of approach that Svendsen attributes to Heidegger: "evil as I see it is indeed metaphysical, in the sense that it takes up an attitude toward being as such, not just toward this or that bit of it" (Eagleton 2010, 16). Finally, while Eagleton´s stance is metaphysical only in the practical sense that he conceives of evil primarily as existential and not as a purely moral concept, Peter Dews is completely explicit in taking up the possibility of an actual metaphysical conception of evil, even though he does not develop the idea any further: "In general, it is far from clear that the concept of evil can be entirely naturalized and secularized. On the contrary, the revival of interest in this concept may ultimately

bring metaphysical and theological questions which were once assumed to be outdated back onto the philosophical agenda" (Dews 2001, 52.)

I completely agree with Dews, with one caveat. It is not likely that exactly the same Scholastic and early modern questions related to evil, which once dominated Western thought, would reappear on a major scale. Rather, the reason for abandoning these questions was the inability of traditional Christian theology to deal with the practical reality of evil in an adequate way. However, this is not to say that the same concerns all metaphysics and theology. Based on the previous chapter, I argue that Schelling's metaphysical theory of evil can be seen as a viable option today.

Given that metaphysics of evil is generally rejected out of hand or not discussed at all, there are few explicit critiques of it available in contemporary philosophy of evil. In subchapter 5.1, I attempt to construct the likely critiques that defenders of a purely moral view of evil would present. In subchapter 5.2, I move on to critiques of the purely moral view of evil and the strengths of the metaphysical view of evil. Finally, a comparison of these two approaches to evil and the presumptions which ground them is found in subchapter 5.3.

### 5.1.1 The concept of metaphysical evil requires some kind of supernatural actor, like Satan or evil spirits

Sometimes the claim is made that the concept of evil in general is "supernaturally loaded", which means that it is not possible to talk about evil without actually asserting evil as a supernatural force, even if the purpose is to present evil as a secular moral concept (Russell 2014, 10). Philip Cole addresses this line of thought as follows:

> What we have here is a mythology of the evil enemy, such that that enemy possesses the demonic, supernatural powers needed to destroy our communities. This, surely, is a step too far – nobody seriously believes that migrants and terrorists have supernatural powers. But this is *exactly* what happens through the discourse of evil: the migrant and the terrorist, while they are not represented as agents of Satan, *are* represented as possessing demonic and supernatural powers. (Cole 2006, 215)

Even though, for example, G.W. Bush seemed to attribute to evil a demonic force in his famous declaration of the "axis of evil" – at least it represents a morally wrong and intellectually dull use of the concept – this is not how philosophers of evil usually understand the proper meaning of evil (Garrard & McNaughton 2012, 2–7; Russell 2014, 22). There is no consensus about the exact meaning of evil, but something like the three prerequisites for a good theory of evil suggested by Adam Morton (2004, 7–8) is quite generally accepted: (1) a theory of evil must not make evil motivations completely incomprehensible, (2) it must acknowledge that great evils are often committed for trivial reasons, and (3) it must be reflexive: evil is not only in the "other", as one is always vulnerable to being evil himself. In general, it is thought that there is something inscrutable in evil in the sense that evil actions escape a full causal explanation, even if partial explanations are always possible. However, this applies to human freedom in general, and no one

except the strictest physicalists would say that the idea of freedom is supernatural. But because a metaphysical view of evil explicitly attributes to evil an element that cannot be fully understood in terms of human action, the accusation of supernaturalism is not as clearly misguided as the case of mainstream moral theories of evil. Consequently, a separate defence is required.

First, it should be noted that the concept of "supernatural" is actually relatively vague. There are at least two common meanings of supernatural, neither of which applies to Schelling´s metaphysics of evil. Taken literally, the supernatural refers to something that exists outside nature and somehow influences it from outside. One clear example would be the God of the Scholastics, who precedes nature and has created it *ex nihilo*. Although the order of nature God had created was generally conceived as relatively stable, that is, "natural", it was possible for God to use his original *potentia absoluta* and deviate from the order of nature (for example, in the case of "miracles", which were conceived of as "supernatural"). In this sense, the Schelling of the Freedom Essay is clearly a naturalist. Despite his critique of Spinoza´s mechanistic view of nature, Schelling evidently accepts Spinoza´s pantheism, the view that God is nature and there is nothing outside God. According to Schelling, "it cannot be denied that if pantheism meant nothing but the doctrine of the immanence of all things in God, every rational view would have to adhere to this teaching in some sense or other" (SW7: 339; 1992, 10).

The crucial question here concerns how "nature" is understood, because "supernatural" can also be understood as something that is not possible – or is at least highly unlikely to occur – in nature. In this sense, a supernatural claim consists in anything that contradicts long-corroborated scientific knowledge about nature. Schelling obviously does make such claims, especially in his earlier philosophy of nature, at least when judged after more than 200 years of scientific development. However, it is hard to see how metaphysics of will and the theory of evil related to it in the Freedom Essay could be against any possible scientific knowledge, let alone our contemporary knowledge. Science is based on empirical observation, and metaphysics of will is not an empirical theory that could be corroborated or falsified. Using the concept "supernatural" in any stronger sense than that which is against well-established scientific facts requires at least specifying what is actually meant by saying that something is supernatural. The concept of supernatural is most often used in an unspecified pejorative sense, attempting simply to judge something as irrational without pointing out what precisely is irrational in it. In Schelling´s case, it would be more honest to criticize his theory of evil for being theological, which, I shall argue, is correct. This is the topic of subchapter 5.1.6.

### 5.1.2 Conceiving of evil as metaphysical substantializes evil

As Allen Wood (2010, 156–157) has correctly asserted, "evil is not like Platonic form: we do not call something evil only to the extent that it participates in ´evil itself´ - the most extreme kind of evil". Conceiving of evil as a substance leads directly to evident problems, parallel to those of substance dualism in philosophy

of mind: if evil is a substance of its own, how should its relation to good be understood? Like most philosophers regardless of the epoch, Schelling clearly refutes this kind of Manichean dualism:

> If freedom is a power for evil it must have a root independent of God. Compelled by this argument one may be tempted to throw oneself into the arms of dualism. However if this system is really thought of as the doctrine of two absolutely different and mutually independent principles, it is only a system of self-destruction and the despair of reason. (SW7: 354; 1992, 28)

However, Schelling also denies the familiar Augustinian account of evil as privation, or lack of good:

> For the mere consideration of the fact that man, the most perfect of all visible creatures, is alone capable of evil, shows that this basis can by no means consist of insufficiency or deprivation. According to the Christian view, the devil was not the most limited but rather the least limited of creatures. Imperfection in the general metaphysical sense, is not the common character of evil, as it often manifests itself united with an excellence of individual powers which much less frequently accompanies the good. The basis of evil must therefore not only be founded on something inherently positive, but rather on the highest positive being which nature contains. (SW7: 368–369; 1992, 44–45.)

When Charles Mathewes, an Augustinian Christian, ponders how to philosophically understand the terrifying actual presence of evil, he first recognizes two opposite alternatives: "First, one can assume a substantiality to evil, and give evil an ontological primordiality. Second, one can assume a non-reality to evil – indeed identify evil with non-reality, with the absence of existence." (Mathewes 2006, 92.) The first option is the Manichean account: evil understood as an independent substance. This view obviously retains the practical *sui generis* nature of evil, as Mathewes (2006, 92) calls it, but almost all philosophers, Mathewes and Schelling included, reject it, because it is philosophically untenable. The second option, the Augustinian equation of evil with non-being on a metaphysical level also retains the practical inscrutability of evil, essentially arguing that there is nothing to understand in evil. In contemporary thought, this point of view is most famously represented by Hannah Arendt, who, according to Mathewes (2006, 6), is one of the most significant upholders of the Augustinian tradition today. In her letter to Gershom Scholem, Arendt re-assesses her earlier more Manichean understanding of evil, and presents her famous idea of the "banality of evil":

> It is indeed my opinion now that evil is never ´radical´, that it is only extreme, and that it possesses neither depth nor any demonic dimension. It can overcome and lay waste the whole world precisely because it spreads like a fungus on the surface. It is ´thought-defying´, as I said because thought tries to reach some depth, to go to the roots, and the moment it concerns itself with evil, it is frustrated because there is nothing. (quoted in Bernstein 2008a, 218)

Schelling, however, is not satisfied with this kind of reasoning. He attempts to both attribute evil "an ontological primordiality" and at the same time deny its substantiality in the Manichean sense. On the one hand, in Schelling´s view, evil consists in elevated self-will, and as such it cannot be conceived of as simple lack

of goodness, for it forms a principle of its own. As evil is often "united with an excellence of individual powers which much less frequently accompanies the good" (Schelling 1992, 44), "the basis of evil must therefore not only be founded on something inherently positive, but rather on the highest positive being which nature contains" (Schelling 1992, 44–45). On the other hand, because Schelling does not yet conceive of evil as symmetrical with good in the Manichean manner, evil certainly has something to do with non-being also for him:

> This, namely, is the reverse of God, a being which was roused to actualization by God´s revelation but which can never attain to actuality from potentiality, a being which indeed never exists but always wishes to be, and which, like the 'matter' of the ancients, can thus never be grasped as real (actualized) by perfect reason but only by false imagination which is exactly what sin is. Wherefore, since it is not real, it takes on the appearance of true being in mirrored images, as the serpent borrows colors from light, and strives to lead man to folly in which alone it can be accepted and grasped by him. (SW7: 390; 1992, 68–69)

Evil is its own positive principle and cannot be understood merely as lack of good. It is ultimately based on self-deception, because it does not have any coherent telos, but it is always parasitical on good. This kind of theory of evil is quite conceivable once it is grounded in Schelling´s conception of the ground as something that "is not but wills to be". Schelling coins the idea of the ground precisely in order to think of "a dualism which at the same time admits a unity" (Schelling 1992, 33n). This strategy is obviously not limited to finding an alternative theory between the views of evil as an independent substance and evil simply as non-being; as seen in subchapter 4.4, it touches on several practical issues, such as deep ecology, psychoanalysis, and cultural anthropology. In contemporary philosophy of mind, a structurally similar strategy is adopted, for example, by Donald Davidson in his attempt to understand the relation between the mental and the physical (Bowie 2006, 79–80). In summary, since Schelling openly refutes the Manichean view of evil as an independent substance, it can only be argued that his account is incoherent or obscure in balancing between Manichean dualism and Augustinian monism. Whether this kind of "anomalous monism" or "Neoplatonic logic" is a tenable view is another matter, and the paradoxical nature of Schelling´s thought will be dealt with in more depth in subchapter 5.1.5.

### 5.1.3 Metaphysical evil as a condition of moral evil would make us ultimately morally irresponsible

It could be argued that the idea of general metaphysical evil as a ground for human moral evil actually undermines the possibility of a genuine choice of evil. In evaluating this critique, it should first be kept in mind how Schelling understands metaphysical evil. As seen in subchapter 2.1, Leibniz defined metaphysical evil quite vaguely as "general imperfection" (Leibniz 2007, 139). As Maria Antognazza notes, if metaphysical evil is interpreted as the necessary imperfection of all beings in relation to God, "it seems to imply that creatures, simply in virtue of not being gods, are in some sense intrinsically and inescapably

evil, and that this partially but yet necessarily evil nature is the ultimate source of any other evil" (Antognazza 2014, 112). However, regardless of the question how Leibniz actually understood metaphysical evil, evil for Schelling is neither primarily about imperfection nor necessary in the same purely logical sense as the classical interpretation of Leibniz's conception. Yet, there is the worry that the idea of primordial metaphysical evil makes human choice of evil superfluous, as in this scenario moral evil would appear only as one form of a more general evil in nature before the human being.

Even though Schelling is not very explicit in how he interprets Leibniz, he seems to adopt the familiar reading of Leibniz's metaphysical evil as the necessary imperfection of all limited beings. According to Schelling, Leibniz´s view rests "at bottom on the denial of evil as a positive antithesis and its reduction to the so-called *malum metaphysicum* or the negative concept of imperfection of the creature" (SW7: 367; 1992, 43). But what actually is metaphysical evil for Schelling, and how does it differ from his account of moral evil? The only passage in which Schelling explicitly distinguishes his account of metaphysical evil from human moral evil runs as follows:

> There is, therefore, a *universal* evil, even if it is not active from the beginning but is only aroused in God´s revelation through the creation of the basis, and indeed never reaches realization, but is nonetheless constantly striving towards it. Only after recognizing evil in its universal character is it possible to comprehend good and evil in man too. For if evil was already aroused in the first creation and was finally developed into a general principle through the self-centered operation of the basis, then man´s natural inclination to evil seems at once explicable, because the disorder of forces once having entered creatures through the awakening of self-will is already communicated to man at birth. (SW7: 380–381; 1992, 58)

According to Schelling, it is not possible to understand moral evil without thinking of metaphysical evil (here dubbed "universal evil"). Given that the seed of evil "is already communicated to man at birth" (SW7: 381; 1992, 58), it seems a warranted worry that human evil for Schelling is only a realization of a more primordial metaphysical evil. However, Schelling immediately stresses that "notwithstanding this general necessity, evil ever remains man´s own choice; the basis cannot cause evil as such, and every creature falls through its own guilt" (SW7: 382; 1992, 59). How do these claims fit together?

Metaphysical evil in Schelling´s theory is best understood as the general possibility of evil; when the Unground is split into existence and its ground, the possibility of evil is already present, for the will of the ground, by its nature, does not recognize its limitedness but attempts to rule over the whole of existence. It is only the human will that can realize this potential inherent in the ground as actual moral evil. Consequently, metaphysical evil, as Schelling understands it, is clearly not a causal antecedent of moral evil; the role of the ground is similar to the role of natural desires in Kant´s theory of radical evil. The ground is something that makes it metaphysically and psychologically intelligible how humans choose evil, but only the human will itself as a whole can be conceived of as the actual cause of evil. As Schelling puts it:

> It is God´s will to universalize everything, to lift it to unity with light or to preserve it therein; but the will of the deep is to particularize everything or to make it creature-like. It wishes differentiation only so that identity may become evident to itself and to the will of the deep. Therefore it necessarily reacts against freedom as against what is above the creature, and awakens in it the desire for what is creature – just as he who is seized by dizziness on a high and precipitous summit seems to hear a mysterious voice calling to him to plunge down, or as in the ancient tale, the irresistible song of the sirens sounded out of the deep to draw the passing mariner down into the whirlpool. […] Notwithstanding this general necessity, evil ever remains man´s own choice; the basis cannot cause evil as such, and every creature falls through its own guilt. (SW7: 381–382; 1992, 58–59.)

Both Kant and Schelling argue that moral freedom is not made superfluous by natural desires which tempt humans away from morality. On the contrary, both endorse the idea that if good is to be taken as an imputable genuine choice, a choice of evil must be equally possible, even though obviously both good and evil also have their natural basis. The main difference between Kant and Schelling is that while for Kant desires are merely attributes of sentient beings, for Schelling the ground is a general metaphysical principle, which is realized as drives in sentient beings and as self-will in humans.

### 5.1.4 The idea of metaphysical evil does not do any conceptual work; all evil in the world can be understood by the ideas of moral and natural evil alone

Even if Schelling´s conception of metaphysical evil does not make moral evil superfluous, it does not follow from this that it has any significant use either. If evil as a moral concept does not require metaphysical speculation, and it is possible to think at the same time that there is also natural evil (futile suffering that in itself has no value), what need is there for the complexities of Schelling´s metaphysics?

In assessing this argument it is good to start from the fact that the concept of evil in general was most often deemed conceptually futile and even harmful during the twentieth century (Shafer-Landau 2004, vii). Still today, for example, Philip Cole (2006, 5–6) argues that saying "he was evil" is meant to explain horrendous acts, but ultimately the idea of evil fails to offer any plausible explanation for "evil" acts and rather demonizes the perpetrator judged as evil. However, it is generally thought in recent philosophy of evil that the idea of evil does play a crucial role in describing our moral condition, but it is not meant to rival various kinds of causal explanations of human action (Garrard & McNaughton 2012, 6–7; Svendsen 2010, 20–23).

My argument is that there is currently a similar widespread misunderstanding of the metaphysical approach to evil. Metaphysical evil is generally associated with the Manichean folk conception of evil as an independent substance or with Leibniz´s conception, which belongs to the mainstream Christian tradition, in which evil is understood as privation. As was already shown, Schelling conceives of evil neither in the Manichean manner nor as an abstract metaphysical imperfection. As Michelle Kosch (2006, 91) and Alistair Welchman (2013, 36) point out, Schelling´s metaphysical theory of evil is

above all motivated by grounding an adequate understanding of the nature of moral evil. The reason why Schelling found it necessary to ground his view of moral evil in metaphysics is best explicated by comparing him to Kant.

Schelling was obviously inspired by Kant in great measure, but when it comes to evil he does not explicitly speak much about the subject. In discussing freedom, which is intimately linked with evil in Kant and Schelling, Schelling conceives of himself continuing Kant´s spirit while diverging from his letter: "For we are expressing the Kantian conception not exactly in his words but in just such a way as, we believe, it must be expressed in order to be understood" (SW7: 384; 1992, 61). Another passage that sheds some light on the issue suggests that, according to Schelling, in his theory of radical evil, Kant made the right practical observations but was led astray in his theoretical conclusions, because of the anti-metaphysical program of transcendental idealism:

> Only an evil which attaches to us by our own act, but does so from birth, can therefore be designated as radical evil. And it is noteworthy that Kant, who did not in theory rise to a transcendental act determining all human existence, was led in later investigations by sheer faithful observation of the phenomena of moral judgment, to the recognition of a subjective basis of human conduct (as he expressed it) which preceded every act within the range of senses, but which, in turn, had itself to be an act of freedom. (SW7: 388; 1992, 67)

In the *Groundwork*, Kant conceives of freedom in terms of what Henry Allison (1990, 7) has dubbed the reciprocity thesis, that is, the equation of freedom and obeying the moral law. As it was presented in more detail in subchapter 3.3, Kant was later forced to develop the distinction between the legislative aspect of will (*Wille*) and its executive aspect (*Willkür*) in order to make sense of how evil choices can be conceived of as free and imputable. However, this distinction only removes the problem of how an evil choice can be free to the level of the original choice of the propensity to evil. This timeless choice cannot be understood as a free choice of *Willkür* against the law given by *Wille*, because it is precisely meant to explain how the temporal evil choices of *Willkür* are possible. Consequently, according to Welchman (2013, 33), in coining the *Wille*/*Willkür*-distinction and the theory of radical evil Kant thereby either makes no significant improvement to his earlier conception of freedom or he has unintentionally abandoned the reciprocity thesis.

Like Kant, Schelling assumes a timeless choice regarding our temporal moral character, which cannot be explained any further. In Schelling´s view, however, Kant´s transcendental approach in general and the way in which he addresses the question of evil within it in particular are bound to an untenable dualism between non-willing nature and willing humanity, as well as to a too rationalistic conception of moral action. As it was pointed out in subchapter 3.6, the idea of radical evil leads Kant to a "bankruptcy of reason". Radical evil not only prevents the realization of the highest good, but it leads to a fundamental inconsistency of our moral will; the consistency of all moral action is based on the idea of the highest good, and yet we have ourselves always already ruined it by freely choosing the propensity to evil. Ultimately, Kant has to rely on blind

faith in God´s grace, similar to thinkers such as Kierkegaard. From Schelling´s point of view, however, the problem in Kant´s conception of radical evil is not that it is inscrutable but that Kant´s rationalistic philosophy does not ultimately have room for such an inscrutable choice (Welchman 2013, 44). For Schelling, reality itself is based on the irrational will of the ground, which is also operative on the human level of moral action. The ground does not causally explain the choice of the evil propensity but it makes intelligible how a being who has become self-conscious and set up the rational moral law for himself is at the same time irrationally willing against it. In contrast to Kant, who largely equates good with rationality, Schelling understands both good and evil as energized by a fundamentally irrational force. In this way, moral evil is not explained away but neither does it become a complete anomaly when viewed against the non-moral nature. As will be shown in subchapter 5.2.4, the practical value of Schelling´s metaphysics becomes even more evident in the face of Nietzsche´s fundamental critique of universal moral values and the idea of evil as "life-denying" in particular.

### 5.1.5 The idea of metaphysical evil is unclear or incoherent

It still remains quite ambiguous how evil is actually defined in Schelling´s metaphysics. The official definition is that evil consists in the wrong subordination between existence and its ground. First of all, however, Schelling´s peculiar conception of the ground is itself ambiguously defined, and it even has a strong air of paradox to it. Second, his definition of evil does not in any way specify what kind of acts or personalities count as evil in practice. Most of the time Schelling offers mere analogies to explicate his view of what evil is like. An author like Luke Russell (2014, 23–24), who attempts to define evil as precisely as possible by conceptual analysis, would be immediately disheartened by Schelling´s approach.

Contemporary moral theorists of evil, Russell included, obviously also accept that it is very unlikely that evil is ever going to be defined completely unequivocally. However, in this respect, there is a fundamental difference between most contemporary purely moral theories of evil and Schelling´s metaphysical approach. In the former, the difficulties in defining evil exactly are merely a part of the imprecision of natural language; for example, Russell (2014, 24) refers to Wittgenstein and suggests that evil could be thought of as a family resemblance type of concept. Along these lines, it is desirable and even mandatory to a certain extent to aim at defining evil as exactly as possible. In Schelling´s view, to the contrary, the ambiguities of the concept of evil spring from the paradoxical nature of reality itself, and when this is the case, analogies and metaphors are often more illuminating than conceptual analysis to begin with.

For Schelling, analytical clarity is not even an ideal that should be given up to some extent for the sake of hermeneutic richness, but rather the most accurate description of something as fundamental as evil is always paradoxical to an extent, because rationally comprehensible reality itself rests on an irrational

ground. In Schelling´s meta-philosophical approach it is even the case that analytical clarity has a larger role the more concepts in question are peripheral to a fundamental philosophical argument. On the contrary, the more rigorously a concept is taken as the central point of philosophical investigation the more a fundamental paradox relating to it appears inevitable, given that there is a serious attempt to understand holistically the phenomenon in question. As Pauli Pylkkö puts it, "the more a concept becomes well-defined and unequivocal, that is, the more it tries to conceal the primordial paradoxicality belonging inseparably and inevitably to itself, the weaker and more lifeless the concept becomes, and the less it is able to reach the liveliness of the object it describes" (Pylkkö 2004, 171).

In subchapter 4.5, three examples were taken up which illuminate the practical motivation behind coining the ambiguous concept of the ground and the theory of evil related to it in particular. As was shown, Schelling can be read as a forerunner of deep ecology, psychoanalysis, and the kind of dialectical cultural anthropology discussed in subchapter 4.5.3. From a deep ecological perspective, the relation between nature and humans easily becomes very problematic. On the one hand, human beings are obviously a part of nature like everything else, and on this basis it is argued that we must not think that the rest of nature exists for us but instead we should recognize its intrinsic value. On the other hand, however, there is certainly some fundamental difference between human and non-human nature, because no other being in nature is able to posit itself above nature. Similarly, the idea of the psychodynamic unconscious cannot be easily understood in straightforward logic. On the one hand, it is problematic to conceive of the unconscious in solely mental terms, because it lacks the typical characteristics of what is understood as mental: rationality and will in its common meaning. The unconscious instead appears as a force that influences the conscious mind "from the outside", similar to physical changes in the body. On the other hand, however, it is equally problematic to equate the unconscious with the physical, because unlike physical processes in the body, the unconscious seems to operate on the level of meanings.

Schelling´s concept of the ground allows space for such paradoxes, and it even makes them a condition of a fertile approach to fundamental philosophical problems. It is obviously possible to argue that there is no need for the kind of dialectical thinking Schelling endorses. Ecological problems can be seen simply as a result of overpopulation, reckless consumption, and inequality. The existence of a dynamic unconscious can be denied, and the clash between "jihadism" and "globalism" can be analysed in relation to an infinitely complex web of specific political, cultural, and economic conflicts. Yet, accepting a paradox in the heart of these fundamental issues is not necessarily a sign of sloppy thought but of deep scepticism of the range of reason in dealing with its most perennial questions.

In particular, this applies to the criticism taken up in subchapter 5.1.2: Schelling´s paradoxical way of dealing with evil neither as a lack of good nor as a force that is independent of good. From Schelling´s point of view, this

paradoxicality is necessary for a proper encounter with evil, and ultimately it is precisely the inability to accept the paradoxical nature of evil which has led to the deep problems in modern thought, both in relationship to non-human nature and within the cultural sphere. As Joseph Lawrence points out, there are two opposite common reactions to evil: "in times of peace, it is the optimistic assumption that evil is little more than an unfortunate residue of our animal heritage", but "in times of crisis, it is taken more seriously as a demonic force" (Lawrence 2004, 170). This is essentially the old dichotomy of Manichean dualism and the idea of privation. According to Lawrence, the dubious fluctuating attitude between these two accounts results from the shallow conviction that everything can in principle be understood and, consequently, controlled. Lawrence (2004, 175) sees here a direct connection to the difficulty of conceiving of humans as a part of nature but at the same time completely unlike the rest of nature. Either human beings are reduced to nature by means of the scientific gaze or the human ego is conceived of as a self-sufficient centre which cannot be influenced from the outside. Schelling´s option would be to accept our paradoxical situation, that is, to essentially accept that there is evil which cannot be erased either by forgetting it or by destroying it once and for all.

Within the cultural sphere the same paradoxical logic concerning evil is perhaps more direct. As Pauli Pylkkö (2013, 187) repeatedly stresses, upholders of universalistic modern Western ethical ideals such as tolerance and human rights rarely recognize that these ideals themselves could have anything to do with evil. Either progress does not occur because ignorance and material obstacles are in its way or an opposing viewpoint is deemed to be absolutely regressive – in either case the good ideals themselves are deprived of anything evil. Schelling, to the contrary, connects the potential towards good to an equally great potential towards evil. When this connection is not recognized, according to Schelling, a good intention becomes one-sided in way which actually reveals the implicit evil within the good. Unlike Pylkkö (2004, 213) seems to interpret Schelling, however, Schelling does not condemn humanism as such but criticizes it only to the extent that it does not recognize the potential towards evil within itself.

### 5.1.6 Metaphysical evil is inseparably bound with theology

The inherently theological nature is undoubtedly the most valid and fundamental critique of a metaphysical conception of evil. The possibility that Schelling's conception of evil could be interpreted in an atheistic fashion will be addressed in subchapter 5.3.3. At this point I will only discuss Schelling's theory as it is, namely, as an explicitly pantheistic metaphysical theory.

The most well-known form of critique of religion is often called "new atheism", represented most famously by figures such as Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris. The roots of this kind of thought can be traced back to Auguste Comte's positivism, which holds that the intellectual history of the world goes through three stages: religious, metaphysical, and scientific. In the last one, the scientific phase, there is no need for theoretical speculation, for, according to this

view, all meaningful questions can be explored by means of scientific investigation. New atheism interprets religion mainly as a collection of misguided scientific claims. Even though there are culturally and politically influential religious movements to which this kind of critique is valid, especially in the United States, it is quite evident that new atheism is a blatantly one-sided view at best. Religion is not necessarily a rival of science, and the scientific perspective has limited access to actual first-person experiences, including religious ones. However, there are at least four classical major lines of critique of religion which certainly concern more essential aspects in religious thought and experience.

The Marxist line of critique approaches religion as a phenomenon that both arises from societal injustice and prevents the realization of a more just societal order. Marx himself famously described religion as an "opium of the people", as something that they need in order to endure the alienated societal reality. Religion gives people hope and alleviates suffering by giving a feeling of purpose, but, on the other hand, it also numbs their reason and will to fight for change. Through religion, people project their loftiest capacities onto a God above, which hinders their ability to realize these capacities here and now in this actual societal reality.

The psychoanalytical critique treats religion as repercussion of early childhood experiences. The strictest view is represented by Freud himself, who saw religion as a hindrance to the realization of proper adulthood. For Freud (2001, 64–67), the feeling of unity with the world – the "oceanic feeling", as he calls it – is nothing but regression to the infant's experience, in which no distinction between one's self and the world has yet taken place. Similarly, God of the Semitic religions represents the authority of the father, to which a religious individual is still bound in adulthood. Many of the later psychoanalysts adopted a more positive approach to religion, but with the famous exception of Jung, these positions are usually still inherently atheistic. As discussed in subchapter 4.5.2, Lacan even made use of Schelling's metaphysics, but only in order to coin a philosophically coherent atheistic conception of the unconscious by formalizing Schelling's theological elements.

The Nietzschean critique consists both in moral psychological insights similar to the psychoanalytical viewpoint and in highlighting the historical nature of the human position, which religion always attempts to transcend in one sense or another. Nietzsche is not so concerned with the actual metaphysical substance of religious beliefs; for him, the problem in religious modes of thought is the attempt to reduce the multiplicity of life to some alleged underlying unity. As the famous quotation goes, not only is God dead but *we have killed him*. From Nietzsche's point of view, the most essential role of the idea of God was to justify "slave morality", the faith in universal and absolutely grounded moral ideals which highlight the rights of the weakest rather than the excellence of the superior individuals (Nietzsche 2000, 482). In the absence of God as the transcendent bedrock of these values, Nietzsche conceived of secular humanism as equally (if not) more obstructive to genuine human flourishing than traditional

Christian faith. According to Nietzsche, the "life-denying" character of humanism is evident in Kant's strained dualism and even more so in Schopenhauer's utterly pessimistic position.

Finally, the Durkheimian or more generally sociological critique is not actually a critique in the sense of approaching religion as a basically negative phenomenon. According to Durkheim, God indeed exists in a sense when a community believes so. The social impact of the idea of God is emergent to the individual wills who produce it. In Durkheim's view (1980, 396), religiosity springs from the same fundamental source as morality and science, namely, from human sociality itself. Common to all these human capabilities is that a person finds in one's self something that transcends the self and is made possible only by human community. Through religious practice, humans thereby worship their own loftiest achievement, the unique capability of consciously transcending one's self for a greater purpose. However, Durkheim's sociology is obviously critical of religion in the sense that according to it, no actual God is needed to explain the phenomenon of religion or to commit one's self to the ideals to which religion has given birth.

The first thing to note in these classical critiques is that they have been directed first and foremost against mainstream Christian faith. Consequently, it is not exactly clear to what extent they apply to the kind of pantheism Schelling espouses. The greatest difference between mainstream Christianity and Schelling's pantheism, I will argue in subchapter 5.2.4, is that the latter avoids many of the dualistic tensions inherent in the former. Marxist, psychoanalytical, and Nietzschean critiques all seize on Christianity´s tendency to disapprove of immanent life and its fixation on an alleged transcendent reality and unreachable moral saintliness. In Schelling's pantheism, there is no kingdom of heaven or perfect justice to be deserved after the hardships of this earthly societal life, and the possibility of evil always resides in the basis of good will. God's will of love and his will of the ground are both inherent in all nature and find their most intense expression in the human being, who is consequently responsible both as an individual and as a collective for subordinating the will of ground to the will of love – or for failing in that. As shown in subchapter 4.5.2, Schelling's theory has its own conception of the unconscious, which challenges the classical Freudian idea of the unconscious as unbearable to the ego. With his dissociative rather than repressive conception of the unconscious Schelling sides with Jung in conceiving of religious feeling more as a sign of a healthy relationship with the unconscious and nature than as a sign of pathology. Also, as will be argued in subchapter 5.2.4, Schelling's pantheism is actually less vulnerable to the Nietzschean critique of slave morality than many of the atheistic positions from which religion is criticized.

However, it can by no means be argued that Schelling's pantheism is immune to critiques of religion. Even if in Schelling's pantheism there is no blissful transcendent reality or almighty creator, it is quite possible to neglect or, more interestingly, even bear a grudge against the immanent psychological, social, moral, and societal challenges of life merely by the religious feeling of the

"purpose of life". Oppressing societal structures can be neglected and even justified by the law of karma as well as by God's will, and no doubt this risk is present in any religious view with a sense of a "greater purpose", including Schelling's pantheism. It is also relatively common to downplay one´s personal psychological and social challenges by conceiving of them as mere "earthly" issues, compared to more essential "spiritual" questions. Basically, any faith which takes the appearance of humanity and life in general in terms of purpose instead of an irreversible anomaly gives rise to the tendencies described above. However, it is a very loaded viewpoint to explore religion mainly through these negative phenomena, for there is at least an equal amount of positive phenomena associated with the religious mind-set. Even if religiousness can lead to hostility towards the earthly, it also leads to enhanced empathy and energy to deal with life´s practical issues.

Consequently, even if there are undeniable negative aspects associated with religiousness, strong presuppositions must be adopted in order to equate religiousness as such with these pathologies. On the other hand, Nietzsche's critique is not primarily concerned with religiousness as such but with what Nietzsche calls "slave morality". As will be argued in subchapter 5.2.4, Schelling's pantheism actually has a good deal in common with Nietzsche´s criticism of mainstream Christianity and secular humanism. Therefore, the most challenging critiques to Schelling's pantheism stem from the Kantian tradition, with which Durkheim (1980, 396) also identifies himself. As noted above, this approach does not that much criticize religion as a social and psychological phenomenon but questions the need and philosophical legitimacy of the factual metaphysical truth of religious ideas. In this sense as well, Schelling avoids some of the problems inherent in traditional Christianity, but his view of nature as God's potencies is evidently something that is today generally conceived of as anthropomorphic. Before moving to this fundamental question in subchapter 5.3, the next subchapter deals with the challenges that a purely moral view of evil faces.

## 5.2 Critique of the moral view of evil

### 5.2.1 The Kantian origins of contemporary theories of evil

Many prominent contemporary philosophers of evil – for example Richard Bernstein (2008a, 11–45), Lars Svendsen (2010, 110–121), Claudia Card (2005, 73–95; 2011, 36–61), Susan Neiman (2004, 57–83) and Peter Dews (2008, 17–45) – explicitly deal with Kant´s theory of radical evil at considerable length. All of them agree that Kant was the first philosopher to take up evil as a purely moral concept and not as a theological problem, at least in the classical sense. Some contemporary thinkers, such as Card and Neiman, read Kant as a topical figure in some respects, while others attribute mainly historical value to him. My argument is that Kant is much more than a predecessor of contemporary

discourse, in which evil is approached as a purely moral concept. Indeed, I shall argue that most purely moral theories of evil are committed to the most central assumptions of Kant´s theory of radical evil and, consequently, to its most fundamental problems, which stem ultimately from the sharp dualism between purposeless non-moral nature and meaning-constituting moral-rational humanity.

To begin with, many authors who barely mention Kant, if at all, still seem to advocate a basically Kantian position. For example, according to Adam Morton: "A person´s act is evil when it results from a strategy or learned procedure which allows that person´s deliberations over the choice of actions not to be inhibited by barriers against considering harming or humiliating others that ought to have been in place" (Morton 2004, 57). This definition comes very close to Kant´s doctrine of radical evil, even though Morton does not at least explicitly recognize this. What Morton calls "barriers" plays exactly the same role as the obligation set by the moral law in Kant´s theory. The second formulation of the categorical imperative commands never to treat others merely as a means but always as ends in themselves at the same time. Similar to Morton, Kant associates evil with not respecting the duty to recognize others as persons who have equal rights as oneself in a situation in which that kind of consideration should be in place. Moreover, in Morton´s view, an evil act always springs from a "strategy or learned procedure". Likewise, for Kant, an evil act cannot be understood as imputable without grounding it in a general propensity to evil, which must be conceived of as imputable as well.

Second, even authors who intend to criticize Kant often actually end up defending a position that is close to his. One good example is Lars Svendsen´s *A Philosophy of Evil*. While acknowledging that Kant has grasped something essential about what Svendsen calls instrumental evil and the conditions of moral responsibility, Svendsen launches some common criticisms. First of all, according to Svendsen (2010, 122), there is no room in Kant´s theory for "idealistic evil" in which the agent thinks that he is doing the right thing, or "stupid evil" in which the agent simply does not adequately reflect on what he is doing. Svendsen´s claim is that Kant´s theory recognizes only a form of evil, in which the agent deliberately chooses to act immorally for the sake of his own profit. This is the familiar self-love criticism taken up in subchapter 3.5.2. As argued there, the motive of self-interest is Kant´s technical term, which covers an extremely wide range of different psychological motivations many of which are far from deliberate selfishness. One of the merits of Kant´s highly formal theory is precisely that it takes into account very well that evil comes in many guises and is often embedded in various ways of self-deception.

A more fundamental critique that Svendsen espouses is that "Kant traces evil back to an inscrutable and unexamined event in human history, something that – contrary to Kant´s intentions – threatens to undermine the moral responsibility people have for their own evil actions" (Svendsen 2010, 110). According to Svendsen (2010, 115–119), the problem is that radical evil works for Kant as a condition of moral subjectivity (without a propensity to evil, morally

good choices would not be possible either) and yet we have chosen the propensity to evil as already morally responsible agents. In Svendsen´s (2010, 120) view, these difficulties in Kant´s theory of evil stem ultimately from his rigorism, the thesis that every moral act and the human being as a whole are always strictly either good or evil, never both at the same time.

Svendsen´s critique involves the familiar claims of explanatory impotence (subchapter 3.5.1), metaphysical peculiarity (subchapter 3.5.5), and rigorism (subchapter 3.5.6). In general, the claim is that Kant is developing a special theory of moral subjectivity which is both obscure and tied to untenable presuppositions. However, as it was argued throughout subchapter 3.5, much of Kant´s alleged obscurities become quite reasonable when his technical and sometimes even misleading terminology is interpreted in contemporary terms. Read in this light, the theory of radical evil is not primarily a specific theory of evil at all, but rather an attempt to make sense of how it is in the first place possible to understand genuine morality in a world of brute facts (including facts about psychological states), and, in particular, how the consciousness of moral duties is always already somehow accompanied by the propensity to violate those duties. While Kant is no doubt driven to difficult outcomes when dealing with these fundamental questions, this may be an unavoidable fate of any philosophy that seriously takes up these issues.

Richard Bernstein begins his work *Radical Evil* with a highly critical chapter on Kant´s theory of radical evil, in which Kant´s historical value in criticizing both modern naturalism and classical theological accounts of evil is highlighted but otherwise the idea of radical evil is deemed mostly obscure and outdated. After Bernstein provides an analysis of the views of the German Idealists and then proceeds through Nietzsche and Freud to Hans Jonas, Emmanuel Levinas, and Hannah Arendt, he asserts ten criteria that a plausible contemporary view of evil has to meet: (1) interrogating evil is an ongoing, open-ended process, (2) there is a plurality of types of evil with no common essence, (3) evil is an excess that resists total comprehension, (4) evil resists all attempts to justify it, as it resists theodicy, (5) the temptation to reify evil must be avoided, (6) the power of evil and the human propensity to commit evil deeds must not be underestimated, (7) radical evil (in Arendt´s sense of the term) is compatible with the banality of evil, (8) there is no escape from personal responsibility from committing evil deeds, (9) affirming personal responsibility is not enough (after Auschwitz, we must rethink the very meaning of responsibility, and (10) the ultimate ground for the choice between good and evil is inscrutable. (Bernstein 2008a, 225–235.) When read in the light of the recent scholarship discussed in subchapters 3.3–3.6, most of these theses actually cover exactly the same ideas that were central for Kant.

Theses (1) and (2) express the view that evil is not like a Platonic form; there is no pure form of evil from which other kinds of evils could be derived. As has been argued several times, in its formality Kant´s theory of evil is quite in line with this insight, and it covers almost any conceivable form of moral evil, from banal thoughtlessness and instrumental selfishness to misguided idealism and

sheer sadism; there is no "essence of evil" for Kant apart from the formal definition of denial of the authority of the moral law. Theses (3) and (10) are essential for Kant´s criticism of naturalism. Together they express the view that the very idea of evil has something to do with the limits of scientific explaining. There is no ultimate explanation for evil, nor for singular evil choices or the existence of evil in the first place. Theses (4) and (5) concern the attitude towards evil. As Kant´s critical project was supposed to end classical metaphysics, Kant understood evil in terms of free human choice, which cannot be justified by metaphysical means and is neither conceived as a natural fact of human nature. Theses (6) and (8) in their turn are something that Kant quite obviously espoused. It is only in theses (7) and (9) that Bernstein makes an argument that does not directly succumb to Kant´s theory. Most importantly, Bernstein claims that Kant never considers the possibility of radical evil in Arendt´s sense of the term: an evil which eliminates the very human spontaneity, which is a transcendental condition of moral subjectivity (Bernstein 2008a, 232). It is correct that Kant does not accept the existence of evil which completely eliminates the moral subjectivity of the victim or the perpetrator. However, as argued in subchapter 2.6, Kant´s theory can be seen as quite compatible especially with Arendt´s later characterization of the banality of evil.

In general, not only are many of the criticisms of Kant based on misunderstandings, but, even more importantly, the profundity of Kantian questions is not appreciated correctly. For example, in criticizing Kant´s rigorism, Svendsen (2010, 121) sees no problem in asserting that we develop a moral character during our life, which is always partly good and partly evil, and there is no need to postulate an obscure, timeless choice of a propensity to evil. Svendsen does not recognize the painful efforts Kant made in order to justify free moral choices in a world where the same choices can also be thought of as determined from another perspective. When a child can be said to recognize an innate moral obligation for the first time, he already has the propensity to violate what morality requires, for otherwise we could not talk about a duty. This much is beyond doubt. However, given that as moral agents we recognize an innate duty to act morally, whence comes the propensity to violate moral duties, when natural inclinations as such cannot explain choices? Contrary to the rigorism criticism, Kant obviously understood that humans are always both good and evil in their empirical character (with some more inclined to good, others more to evil). The issue for him was how to explain the existence of moral evil in the first place. When naturalistic explanations for moral action are seen as a category mistake, how else can the propensity to evil be understood than in terms of a non-temporal free choice? Strained to the level of desperation as Kant´s account finally is (as argued in subchapter 3.6), he at least took up the fundamental question of how the qualitative leap from non-human nature to morally shaped human nature can be understood. In the following subchapters it will be argued that Schelling´s metaphysics can be seen as a viable alternative to Kant´s theory, and, consequently, to the basic presumptions of a purely moral view of evil.

### 5.2.2 How evil is actually experienced

Psychologist and philosopher Fred Alford has conducted a study, most comprehensively summarized in his work *What Evil Means to Us*, in which he attempts to find out how people actually experience evil. The study is based on depth interviews of particularly notorious prison inmates, their guards and other citizens randomized by age, sex, religion and ethnicity. My argument is that Alford´s findings are very much in line with the kind of metaphysical theory of evil presented by Schelling, while purely moral theories of evil from the outset cannot take seriously these findings in terms of evil.

Essentially, the central thesis of Alford´s study is that people conceive of evil as a fundamental experience of formless dread. Referring to Thomas Ogden's expression, Alford describes this formless dread as a "pre-symbolic, preverbal experience, what he calls the autistic-contiguous position, the fear that the self is dissolving" (Alford 1997, 9). When asked directly about their experiences of evil, many informants cited a specific dream or series of dreams. Often these dreams included a demonic figure which did not necessarily commit any physical violence but evoked unspeakable horror by its mere presence, in many cases related to its inarticulate speech (Alford 1997, 35.) In addition to dreams, informants often reported similar experiences in other altered states of consciousness. For example, one informant described her worst experience of evil as follows: "It was last year, this feeling I couldn´t shake. That I was losing myself, my separate identity, to my boyfriend." (Alford 1997, 10.)

Everyone is familiar with pre-categorical experiences of dread to an extent. It is something a child experiences when descending into a dark cellar – the most distinctive experience of evil of another of Alford´s (1997, 10) informants. The dread may often be associated with an external figure, but already the fact that the figure does not necessarily pose any physical threat points to the idea that the dread is not ultimately about any concrete fear (such as a physical threat) but formless: "in the pre-categorical experience of evil the intensity of the experience dissolves normal distinctions between subject and object, inner and outer" (Alford 1997, 38). Pre-categorical experiences of evil could be interpreted as a negative counterpart of similar yet highly positive religious or aesthetic experiences in which the dualism of subject and object is transcended. As Alford notes, "Not every uncontained experience is evil, of course, only those in which the experience seems boundless, likely to overwhelm the self in tidal wave of emotion. Evil is that which threatens to obliterate the self, overcoming its boundaries. That is what informants were saying." (Alford 1997, 38.) In an evil pre-categorical experience, there is a threat of the self dissolving, while in a positive one it is expanded instead.

According to Alford, the attempt to cut off the pre-categorical level experience from one's life-world is neither possible nor anything to be sought after:

> Pre-categorical thought is neither pathological nor undesirable. All art depends on it, even as art is impossible without access to the frames and forms that define categorical

> thought. Undesirable is how the dread carried in pre-categorical thought may isolate it in the mind, so that it becomes impervious to categorical reflection – that is, morality. Creating a two-way traffic flow between dread and morality may lessen evil, but only if we can find the symbols to embody our dread. In the absence of symbolization, evil gets lodged in the body, acted out rather than expressed in more abstract, less destructive forms. (Alford 1997, 48–49)

Even if evil is most fundamentally felt in pre-categorical experience, practically the most important aspect of evil is obviously the evil we do, moral evil. Recognizing this, prison inmates often described evil as "pleasure in hurting and lack of remorse" (Alford 1997, 21). According to Alford, this kind of moral evil stems ultimately from the pre-categorical experience of dread: "doing evil is an attempt to evacuate this experience by inflicting it on others, making them feel dreadful by hurting them" (Alford 1997, 3). Projecting the dread onto a suffering object that can be controlled creates the illusion of mastering the dread in oneself. Moral evil is a self-defeating attempt to capture the vitality of the pre-categorical experience without being vulnerable to the dread associated with it (Alford 1997, 116). As Arne Vetlesen explains Alford's idea: "Fundamentally, evil is cheating because it involves the agent in an attempt to retain life qua vitality while denying life qua mortality – namely, by seeking to absolutize the former so far as to cancel out the latter" (Vetlesen 2009, 111).

These reflections clearly bring Alford very close to Schelling. Like Alford, Schelling understands moral evil as a distorted relation between conceptual understanding and its pre-categorical ground. Alford´s (1997, 99) note that "'evil' spelled backwards is 'live'" expresses the Schellingian spirit of conceiving of moral evil as misuse of the same primordial life-force which also good is dependent on. Similar to the role of the ground in Schelling´s theory, according to Alford, the pre-categorical level of experience should not be suppressed, for even if it is associated with evil, it is also necessary for the vitality of life: "If autistic-contiguous experience is a source of dread, it is also a source of deepest satisfaction, the meaning of life" (Alford 1997, 99).

The existence of pre-categorical experiences which Alford studies can hardly be denied. The question is whether it is legitimate to conceive of such experiences in terms of evil. As Luke Russell argues, it would be unwise to dismiss folk meanings for unspecific concepts like evil from the start. However, this does not mean that the folk usage of common concepts is always correct (Russell 2014, 25). Conceiving of pre-categorical experiences of dread as evil is no doubt a case where most philosophers would argue that the folk intuition is misguided. [32] Many would be inclined to point out that there are various

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[32] All philosophers of evil agree that various people´s intuitions about evil often differ. Alford obviously does not claim that all people conceive of evil in terms of pre-categorical dread. Also, Alford´s study of how people conceive of evil is probably the only study done on the subject, and future studies may reveal new information. However, the study clearly demonstrates that evil as pre-categorical dread is one wide spread folk intuition about evil. Consequently, if evil as pre-categorical dread is taken seriously, and a philosophical theory of evil can take that into account, in this respect such a theory is superior to theories which exclude evil as pre-categorical dread.

naturalistic explanations for pre-categorical dread; for example, fear of the dark has quite well-known evolutionary roots. Occam's Razor would suggest that there is no need to conceive of pre-categorical dread in terms of evil, as there are sufficient and relatively simple naturalistic explanations available for such dread.

This kind of reasoning is completely viable, but there is one fact that should evoke caution. Until the very end of the twentieth century, the idea of moral evil was generally rejected on similar grounds. It was argued – and still is, for example, by Philip Cole (2006, 23) – that the concept of evil is tied to demonic incomprehensibility, and even if it is not, it does not add anything valuable to naturalistic explanations of destructive actions. In other words, the idea of moral evil was rejected by the same principle of Occam's Razor as pre-categorical dread as evil is currently. Only during the last twenty years has it become hegemonic to argue that naturalistic explanations, though often justified and informative, do not yet concern the *evil* in evil acts but operate on different level of explanation. It is not unthinkable that pre-categorical dread as evil will go through a similar turn. Obviously, pre-categorical experiences of evil can be explained by naturalistic means, but these explanations do not exclude the possibility that pre-categorical dread is at the same time conceived of as evil, albeit not as moral evil. Alford's study suggests that this is indeed the folk view of evil, and as far as there is no decisive argument *against* pre-categorical dread as evil, this idea should be given serious consideration.

### 5.2.3 The historical diversity of the idea of evil

Similar to Alford (1997, 17), Susan Neiman (2004, 1–3) pays attention to the similarities between the discourses that followed the fatal earthquake in Lisbon in 1755 and those about the atrocities of World War II. According to Neiman, both represented in their own time "the collapse of all that gives us trust in the world, the grounds that make civilization possible" (Neiman 2001, 27). In a word, they represented evil in its most stunning form in the context of the time. Today, it would be generally pointed out that we no longer conceive of earthquakes as evil, because evil is something done by morally imputable human agents. Consequently, it would be a category mistake to relate Lisbon and Auschwitz together. However, the conceptualizations of what evil is have changed fundamentally over history. When it is pointed out that what Leibniz called physical evil is generally no longer thought of in terms of evil, it should also be recognized that the distinction between physical and moral evil is itself a relatively modern development (Neiman 2004, 8). These reflections should raise the question, is it well-grounded to take for granted that evil will be conceived of as a purely moral concept in the future?

In her work *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy*, Neiman reads the history of modern philosophy from the perspective of how the idea of evil has been confronted by it. According to Neiman, the problem of evil has played a central role in the development of modern philosophy, and this role cannot be reduced to the theodicy problem. On the contrary, "the problem of evil can be expressed in theological or secular terms, but it is fundamentally a

problem about the intelligibility of the world as a whole. Thus it belongs neither to ethics nor to metaphysics but forms a link between the two." (Neiman 2004, 7–8.) To give a few examples of Neiman's argument, the idea of evil played a significant role even for Descartes, who has been generally read from a purely epistemological point of view. For Descartes, it would be possible that the existence of the external world is a deception created by an *evil* demon, and the reality of the external world is ultimately guaranteed by the existence of a *good* God who does not allow such a deception. In this way, the idea of evil can found at the very fundamental level of Descartes's investigations. In Neiman's words, "Descartes's evil demon is not a thought experiment but a threat" (Neiman 2004, 10). A bit closer to this day, it is not often recognized how central of a role the idea of evil plays in Kant's philosophy. According to Kant, our will is at the same time oriented to realize the highest good – the perfect union of morality and happiness it deserves – and voluntarily submitted to the propensity to evil, which makes the realization of the highest good impossible. As explained in subchapter 3.6, this leads Kant to what Philip Rossi (2010, 13–14), influenced by Neiman, calls "metaphysics of permanent rupture". Even though Kant understands evil as a purely moral conception, the idea of evil becomes the crux of the viability of the transcendental project because it frustrates the vision of a harmonious intelligible world.

In Alford's view, "lacking today is an appreciation of evil as suffering and loss, the passive dimension of evil: evil as what we suffer, not what we do, what the Old Testament called ra$^{c}$" (Alford 1997, 17). In agreement with Neiman, Alford understands evil in its most basic form as "the terror of paralysis in the face of doom" (Alford 1997, 17). Even though evil presents itself to us today primarily in the form of human activity, completely equating evil with human immorality betrays an attempt of taking evil as being in intellectual control. According to Alford, defining evil strictly as human activity is actually a defence against the primordial experience of evil; "It would make the symptom, malevolence as the illusion of controlling one´s doom, into the cause" (Alford 1997, 17).

Despite his completely opposite theoretical framework compared to Schelling, namely, the Augustinian tradition, Charles Mathewes also presents a practically similar argument in his work *Evil and the Augustinian Tradition*. According to Mathewes, modern Western thought is contaminated by "subjectivism", "the belief that our existence in the world is determined first and foremost by our own (subjective) activities – that our sources of power and control in the universe are our acting will and knowing mind, before which the world is basically passive" (Mathewes 2006, 4). In similar manner to Lawrence´s reading of Schelling, Mathewes (2006, 3) argues that subjectivism leads to a strained dialectic of evil: either the existence of evil is denied and "evil" is ultimately reduced to mere problems to solve, or evil is attributed to a demonic "other" which has nothing to do with the judging subject itself. As Lawrence puts it, "The denial of evil assumes two forms. In times of peace, it is the optimistic assumption that evil is little more than an unfortunate residue of our animal

heritage, the survival of aggressive instincts that can ultimately be overcome by reason. In times of crisis, it is taken more seriously as a demonic force, but in a way that still allows us to speak of denial: for the demonic is viewed as abiding only in the other." (Lawrence 2004, 170.)

If Neiman and Alford are correct in arguing that evil is most primordially existential terror, there are two possible ways to understand evil in theory. Neiman herself conceives of evil as that which breaks all theories and leads not only to moral crisis but to the crisis of philosophy itself. In our time, the name "Auschwitz" represents the most horrifying form of evil. However, there is also the possibility of a theory of evil which contains this amorphous and theory-escaping character of evil in itself. Schelling is a figure whom Neiman does not discuss at all but who would be highly relevant for her approach to evil. In Schelling's metaphysics, evil is understood most fundamentally as the wrong relationship of existence and its ground, which allows for the appearance of a virtually endless variety of different forms of evil. A purely moral understanding of evil, to the contrary, cannot take seriously earlier historical conceptualizations of evil as *evil*. However, it is quite bold to claim that the present philosophical hegemony of evil as purely moral concept will not change again in the future.

In subchapter 4.5.2, I supported McGrath´s argument of realism concerning the idea of the unconscious. According to McGrath (2012, 20), conceptions as culturally far from each other as *mundus imaginalis*, *desiderium natural*, *anima mundi*, and Schelling´s ground refer to the same phenomenon, which is today called the unconscious. The same argument applies to the idea of evil, except that the same concept has even been used for the destruction in Lisbon and the terrors of Auschwitz. Today, the concept of evil is conceived of primarily in terms of moral action, but it might be too hasty to argue that this is the whole meaning of the idea to which evil refers.

### 5.2.4 Denial of life

As I argued in subchapter 2.5.3, the most severe critic of the idea of evil in general is Nietzsche. In my interpretation, the core of Nietzsche´s critique is the life-denying mentality implicit in judging something as evil. Even if, according to Nietzsche, Christian theology was based on "ressentiment", at least it promised the overcoming of evil in the afterlife. In other words, Christian metaphysics gave meaning to life and motivation to face evil. When the metaphysical premises of Christian faith were no longer seen to be philosophically plausible, we were left with Schopenhauer´s position of life poisoned by evil without rational hope of anything better.

There is, however, an option that Nietzsche never considered seriously: an alternative theology, which could question a central premise of Nietzsche´s critique, the death of God. I will argue that Schelling´s metaphysics is in a better position to answer Nietzsche´s critique compared to a purely moral view of evil. Not only does Schelling provide theological resources to live with evil, but his central ideas actually bear some affinities to Nietzsche´s. Although Nietzsche never took Schelling seriously, there are important similarities between

Schelling´s and Nietzsche´s critiques of the mainstream Western philosophical tradition, especially in their moral psychology (Norman 2004, 90–91; Wirth 2003, 104–105). Judith Norman takes up four critiques that Nietzsche brings against the Western metaphysical tradition, which are also shared by Schelling: "(1) rejecting history and hating becoming, (2) distrusting the senses and devaluing the body, (3) confusing the first things with the last, deducing the lower from the higher rather than vice versa, and holding that the highest principle must be a *causa sui*, and (4) dividing the true world from the apparent and underrating appearances" (Norman 2004, 90).

First, Schelling charges the philosophical tradition for its lack of ability to properly appreciate living history, contingency and becoming. It is the starting point of the Freedom Essay that philosophy has been unable to create a living conception of freedom. Against "dead conceptual inclusion of things in God", Schelling argues that "the concept of becoming is the only one adequate to the nature of things" (SW7: 359; 1992, 33). Second, already in his early philosophy of nature Schelling provides a material genesis of consciousness, in which the creative potential of nature is stressed above exact scientific explanations. Both Schelling and Nietzsche regard excessive emphasis on scientific facts as a sign of fixation on the ideal and rational rather than a healthy appropriation of the bodily and concrete. The ground is a force, both inside and outside the human being which precedes reason and remains inscrutable to it. Third, together with Nietzsche Schelling criticizes philosophers for deducing the "lower" from the "highest". In explicating the conception of the ground, Schelling argues that even though "the faint-hearted complaints that the unreasonable is in this way made into the root of reason", nevertheless "all birth is a birth out of darkness into light" (Schelling 1992, 35). Schelling rejects the idea of God as *causa sui,* and he espouses a conception of God as becoming, which properly actualizes only in history, in the human being in particular. Fourth, Schelling also sides with Nietzsche in criticizing the division between reality itself and mere appearances. Throughout his career, Schelling was motivated by overcoming the dualisms inherent in Kant´s transcendental idealism. In the Freedom Essay, Schelling also refutes the neo-platonic premises of his earlier identity philosophy and develops a theology in which the actual lived world is not conceived of in terms of privation, but reality becomes constantly richer when God actualizes himself as the living reality we experience.

In general, both Schelling and Nietzsche conceive of will as more fundamental than reason on two levels. Ontologically they conceive of rationally comprehensible scientific facts as derivative, compared to nature as will. The causally ordered whole of nature studied by the sciences consists of products, while nature is most fundamentally productivity itself. Psychologically both Nietzsche and Schelling criticize the view of human reason as transparent to itself. According to them, reason cannot ground itself on itself without remainder, but reason is ultimately a vehicle of the will and not an external spectator and judge of it. (Norman 2004, 92.)

As Norman (2004, 91) notes, the affinity between Nietzsche´s and Schelling´s critique of the tradition of Western metaphysics goes even further. They share a similar conception of "willing one´s own past", and for both this is motivated by an existential affirmation of life. However, there is also a difference in the temporal direction of their accounts. Schelling understands the creation of one´s own past in a backward-looking manner, as a non-temporal act that has always already taken place. As Schelling puts it, although "the act which determines man´s life in time does not itself belong in time but in eternity" (SW7: 385; 1992, 63), "through it man´s life extends to the beginning of creation, since by means of it he is also more than creature, free and himself eternal beginning" (SW7: 386; 1992, 64). In a moral psychological way, this means that however little influence one has over his fate, there is no other constructive way than to affirm one´s life as freely chosen: "that Judas became a traitor to Christ, neither he nor any creature could alter; nonetheless he betrayed Christ not under compulsion but willingly and with full freedom" (SW7: 386; 1992, 64). Nietzsche espouses a similar idea of *amor fati*, loving one´s fate, through the forward-looking idea of eternal recurrence of the same. According to Nietzsche, a person who truly affirms life "has not only come to terms and learned to get along with whatever was and is, but who wants to have *what was and is* repeated into all eternity" (Nietzsche 2000, 258).

However, the difference in the temporal aspect of Nietzsche´s and Schelling´s accounts of affirmation of life reflects a fundamental disparity. The most essential difference between these two thinkers, at least from the perspective of this study, is that for Schelling nature as will is constitutively teleological, even though it is always accompanied by the chaotic longing of the ground. For Nietzsche, to the contrary, nature as will has no moral or teleological characteristics (Laing 1915, 392, 402). Nietzsche´s characterization of the will comes close to Schelling´s conception of the ground, if it was conceived of as the sole essence of life, that is, will to power which ultimately has no other aim than amplifying itself. In practice, the disparity between Schelling and Nietzsche is at its sharpest when it comes to the idea of evil. From Nietzsche´s point of view, there is no evil, either metaphysically or morally conceived, because for the will morality is ultimately a tool. The idea of evil is an invention of slave morality, which denies life in its immanence, and, motivated by this denial, creates the idea of a world without "evil".

Insofar as Schelling does think in terms of good and evil, his philosophy is incompatible with Nietzsche´s. However, the way Schelling deals with the idea of evil differs remarkably from the mainstream Christian and humanistic traditions. First of all, Schelling offers an alternative theological framework in which evil is never completely overcome, but God manifests in history – and in the human being, in particular – as the duty to subordinate the will of the ground to the will of love. Second, Schelling does not actually offer an answer to the theodicy problem, but much like Nietzsche he develops a moral psychological critique of the problem itself. The question why the Unground has to split into existence and its ground if the split is necessarily accompanied by the possibility

of evil becomes psychologically dubious. According to Schelling, to present this question "would be as much as saying that love itself should not be, so that there could be no contrast to love; that is, the absolutely positive should be sacrificed to that which has its existence only as a contrast; the eternal should be sacrificed to the merely temporal" (SW7: 402; 1992, 83). Schelling´s God is not a personal being in the sense of a separate entity who could be judged morally. Schelling´s God can, of course, still be condemned, but in Schelling´s view it amounts to nothing more than the condemnation of life itself. Somewhat similar to Nietzsche, Schelling conceives of life as an argument against evil rather than vice versa.

The obvious difference between Schelling and Nietzsche is that for Nietzsche, the critique of the theodicy problem implies the end of religious faith and all great narratives of constant progress. However, as Carlos João Correia argues, the argument of the death of God "can already be found in the philosophy of Schelling, albeit with a different (and maybe even opposite) meaning from the one we find in Nietzsche´s texts" (Correia 2015, 154). While Nietzsche advocates atheism and the advent of strong individuality which stands only for itself, for Schelling, the death of God "stands for the evanescence of primitive monotheism, thus allowing for the cosmogenic process" (Correia 2015, 165).

From Schelling´s point of view, it could even be argued that Nietzsche himself does not accept life in all its richness, for in his conception of the will Nietzsche reduces life to its vitalizing and immoral potency, which Schelling calls the ground. Something like this is suggested by Alford (1997, 123) who draws an analogy between Nietzsche´s doctrine of affirmation and the social psychological phenomenon known as the *Stockholm syndrome*, namely, the tendency of people who have been kidnapped to develop a strong affinity with their kidnappers. Analogously to this, Nietzsche, according to Alford, adopts Schopenhauer´s bleak vision of life but seeks to overcome Schopenhauer´s pessimism simply by affirming life without any greater meaning, in either a theological or secular sense. In Alford´s view, this is a defence against the view of life Schopenhauer presents; Nietzsche "claims stoic power, identification with fate, as though by becoming his fate he might gain power over it" (Alford 1997, 123). It is questionable if anyone can actually fulfil the condition Nietzsche sets for the affirmation of life, the thought experience of the eternal recurrence of the same. Be it as it may, Schelling presents an alternative metaphysics of life as a teleological whole, while sharing Nietzsche´s critique of a purely moral conception of evil as impoverished Scholastic theology.

## 5.3 Metaphysical or moral evil?

### 5.3.1 Nature

There is a long tradition of "reading Schelling against Schelling". Beginning from Heidegger and Jaspers, followed by Jürgen Habermas, Manfred Frank and

Wolfram Hogrebe, and continuing today most influentially in Slavoj Žižek´s and Markus Gabriel´s thought, Schelling is read as someone who essentially paved the way for the end of German Idealism but did not himself properly realize what he had done. According to this line of interpretation, as McGrath puts it, Schelling´s "undisputed importance for the history of philosophy lies elsewhere than he thinks or intends, respectively in existentialism, in the overcoming of metaphysics, or in setting the stage for Marx´s dialectical materialism" (McGrath 2011, 8). In this and the following two subchapters, I trace where the uneasiness with Schelling's original ideas stems from, and provide an argument that there is no decisive need to refute or radically reinterpret the central commitments of Schelling's metaphysics.

As explained in subchapter 4.1, instead of divergent phases, the whole of Schelling's philosophical project, or at least a significant aspect of it, can be conceived of as philosophy of nature. Modern philosophy has been constantly troubled by the dualism between an active, rational, and self-conscious subject and nature ultimately consisting of inert matter moving according to the laws of physics. The most important turn in mainstream philosophy concerning this question was no doubt Kant's transcendental idealism. By conceiving of the order of nature as a construction of transcendental subjectivity Kant was able to argue that the question of the relation of humanity and nature is misguided to begin with: things as we perceive them are constructed by human subjectivity, and we cannot know anything about things as they are in themselves. Kant's transcendental idealism has had a huge impact on modern philosophy; for example, the positions of the two most influential characters of analytical and continental traditions, Wittgenstein and Heidegger, can be read as radicalizations of transcendental idealism. Even contemporary thinkers who designate themselves as realists in opposition to the transcendental tradition – Quentin Meillassoux, Slavoj Žižek, and Markus Gabriel, to name a few – still retain one important characteristic of transcendental philosophy which Schelling contests: the view of the human as a radically unique being who has emerged from nature, which is completely foreign (*unheimlich*) to his meaning-constituting capacities. My argument in these three final subchapters is that Schelling provides a realist position that is radical enough to avoid from the beginning most of the Kantian dualistic tensions which are at issue in contemporary realism. As I argue in subchapter 5.3.3, Schelling´s metaphysics of the will is in a particularly strong position when it comes to justifying the idea of evil.

The title of Meillassoux's seminal work, *After Finitude*, is quite apt, as it tells what his argument is mainly about. Meillassoux opposes what he calls "correlationism", "the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other" (Meillassoux 2013, 5). Because human capacities are obviously limited, correlationism leads immediately to the claim that humans can know objects only from their own finite standpoint. According to Meillassoux (2013, 3), to the contrary, mathematical properties belong to the objects themselves independent of our capacities of perceiving them, and

through mathematics we are able to reach the infinite. Meillassoux (2013, 10) also aims to justify "ancestral" truths, that is, knowledge claims concerning nature before there was human subjectivity or even organic life. However, apart from mathematical structure Meillassoux conceives of non-sentient nature as completely foreign to the human life-world. According to Meillassoux, nature is most fundamentally "hyper-Chaos", something "for which nothing is or would seem to be, impossible, not even the unthinkable" (Meillassoux 2013, 64). The difference between Kant and Meillassoux is that, for Meillassoux, there is an access to reality beyond the human standpoint, and we can *know* that it is most fundamentally hyper-Chaos. For Kant, the thing in itself remains a matter of speculation, which leaves the possibility that there is ultimately a secret correspondence between the human life-world and its needs and the world beyond it.

Markus Gabriel has dubbed one of his main works *Why the World Does Not Exist*. Gabriel´s argument is essentially that everything we think or experience is thought within different "domains". For example, natural sciences operate in the domain of different kinds of causes and effects, which have very little to do with artistic taste or moral judgment. According to Gabriel (2016, 9), the idea of a domain of all domains is incoherent and, consequently, the world does not exist in the sense of an intelligible whole. For example, the universe defined as the "experimentally accessible object domain of the natural sciences" (Gabriel 2016, 8) does exist, but the world as a whole does not and cannot, since it also includes "governments, dreams, unrealized possibilities, and most notably our thoughts about the world" (Gabriel 2016, 9), and these domains simply do not cohere into one systematic whole, even as a Kantian regulative idea. The basic argument is similar to that of Meillassoux: the human being has access to nature as it is in itself, but at the same time it can be shown that the world or nature does not form any meaningful whole but must be understood as chaotic multiplicity.

Probably the most essential author here is Žižek, however, as he has not only studied Schelling extensively but he is also one of the most influential scholars behind the current "Schelling-renaissance". Žižek´s reading intentionally turns upside down Schelling's "anti-modern" pantheistic assumptions. According to Žižek, "Schelling provides one of the most forceful formulations of the paradigmatic modern notion of man's radical, constitutive *displacement*, of the lack of his or her 'proper place'" (Žižek 2007, 58). In Žižek´s materialist reading of Schelling, "non-human nature appears as a meaningful, harmonious, purposeful totality *only from the standpoint of man as the locus of senseless destruction and purposeless expenditure of forces*: the point from which everything appears as meaningful must itself be the point of the suspension of meaning" (Žižek 2007, 58–59). In particular, as it was pointed out in subchapter 4.5.2, the Lacanian view of the unconscious as nature in the human being, which Žižek has adopted, is the complete opposite of Schelling's more Jungian standpoint.

For Schelling, as for Jung, the unconscious is a part of the natural order, which is not open to reason but still forms an organic whole with rationally

comprehensible aspects of nature. The Lacanian conception of the unconscious, to the contrary, stems from the rationalistic Kantian-Fichtean tradition. From this viewpoint, there is no nature in the cosmological sense before human subjectivity, but the rational human subject constructs a coherent whole from the endless multiplicity of nature. Consequently, for Žižek, the unconscious does not, strictly speaking, represent nature, but it is the completely unintelligible primal act by means of which human consciousness emerges from nature, which in itself remains completely foreign to humanity. (McGrath 2010, 79, 83; 2011, 2.) While for Schelling, human subjectivity is a special free nexus of the forces of existence and its ground, which repeats the indifference of the Unground, Žižek formalizes and absolutizes this special place of humanity in the cosmos and conceives of the human subject as "neither a thing nor a state of things but an *event* which occurs when the symbolic enchainment fails in its endeavour to absorb the Real of the Thing without remainder" (Žižek 2007, 57).

In general, the "new realism" represented by Meillassoux, Gabriel, and Žižek is certainly anti-Kantian in the sense that it is not constructivism; according to these thinkers, the human subject can reach facts about nature as it is in itself. Yet, their motivation to overcome the transcendental paradigm is completely opposite to Schelling´s. Kant's concern was to provide a basis for knowledge in the face of Hume's scepticism, and to save the unique characteristics of human subjectivity from naturalistic elimination. The problem in the transcendental tradition is that it is essentially dualistic; no matter how the Kantian position is developed, as long as there is no access to nature itself, it remains problematic how the relation between the human subject and nature – supposedly constructed by this subjectivity – is to be understood. New realism solves this tension by allowing the access to nature but at the same time conceiving of nature as endless multiplicity, which gains meaning and coherence only by the subject's intervention. Žižek advancess his position in order "to avoid not only the twin strategies of the vulgar-materialist naturalization of man and the obscurantist spiritualization of nature, but also the more 'modern', 'deconstructionist' version according to which 'nature' is a discursive construct" (Žižek 2007, 230). According to him, "the emergence of human freedom can be accounted for only by the fact that nature itself is not a homogenous 'hard' reality – that is to say, by the presence, beneath 'hard' reality, of another dimension of potentialities and their fluctuations: it is as if, with human freedom, this uncanny universe of potentialities re-emerges, comes to light" (Žižek 2007, 230).

Schelling, to the contrary, adopts the position Žižek (2007, 230) pejoratively calls the "obscurantist spiritualization of nature". Schelling solves the dualistic tension of transcendental philosophy by conceiving of nature as inherently spiritual, though in a lower potency. Today, a similar strategy is adopted by panpsychists in the context of the mind-body problem. Most fundamentally, the issue about choosing between two mutually incompatible views of nature. On the one hand, new realism conceives of nature as endless multiplicity, which is divided into more or less coherent "domains" by the subject. Schelling, on the other hand, agrees that nature does not form a closed totality that is fully open to

reason – this is the formal implication of the conception of God's ground – but in Schelling´s metaphysics there is also the volitional and teleological aspect of the ground, which new realists do not generally discuss as a serious possibility for contemporary philosophy. At this point, a general discussion about the relationship of philosophy and religion (understood in a broad sense as "spirituality") necessarily arises.

### 5.3.2 Religion

As argued in subchapter 3.6, Kant´s transcendental philosophy leaves room for religion, and even requires it, but at the same time the relationship between rational philosophy and religion becomes problematic. The same applies to later developments of the Kantian tradition. Taking up what he calls "strong correlationism" (before all, Wittgenstein and Heidegger), Meillassoux is disheartened by the fact that from the correlationist perspective, "religious belief has every right to maintain that the world was created out of nothingness from an act of love, or that God's omnipotence allows him to dissolve the apparent contradiction between his complete identity and His difference with his Son", because, "these discourses continue to be meaningful – in a mythological or mystical register – even though they are scientifically and logically meaningless" (Meillassoux 2013, 41). On the contrary, from Meillassoux´s realist position, religion cannot be defended in this way, because rational thought itself has the access to the absolute, which was left to religion in the correlationist tradition. In contrast to Meillassoux, who still retains a theistic element in his thought in the form of a "virtual God" (briefly discussed in the next subchapter), Žižek explicitly aims at consistent atheism. According to him, a new formalistic and materialistic interpretation of Schelling's metaphysics is a means to genuinely overcome both physicalism and the Kantian tradition, whose inadequate approaches to the relationship of nature and the human being gives rise to "New Age obscurantism". (Žižek 2007, 5–9, 230–231.)

Gabriel seems to be less harsh towards religion than Žižek, as he recognizes a favourable orientation towards a completely unknown "infinite" in religion. In Heideggerian fashion, Gabriel finds the meditation on such complete unknown as a source of praiseworthy openness (Gabriel 2016, 154–156.) While Gabriel admits that religion in its healthy forms is a source of openness to the world, according to him, religiosity is not necessary for this openness, but it can also be accounted for by metaphysical pluralism. The basic motivation for Gabriel´s pluralism is the anti-naturalistic conviction that the characteristics of human consciousness must be philosophically justified as being equally "real" as physical matter. Instead of Kant´s transcendental idealism, Gabriel bases his argument on his domain ontology, the denial of one fundamental substance. According to Gabriel, things are always perceived in different domains, and there can be no domain of all domains that would unify reality into one intelligible whole. Therefore, Gabriel counts physicalism as a form of "fetishism", a bad form of *religion*, which trusts in a Lacanian big other, "an all-inclusive, all-controlling and ordering world principle" (Gabriel 2016, 154), or "the positing of an

anonymous subject of knowledge which takes care of the order […] which we can never fully divest ourselves" (Gabriel 2016, 153). For Gabriel, the positive meaning of religion "lies in its recognition of our finitude" (Gabriel 2016, 182), that is, the recognition that the world cannot be enclosed within a map. According to him, "one could even be a bit provocative and say that the meaning of religion is the insight that God does not exist" (2016, 182). However, this is hardly how religious people usually conceive of what religion is essentially about.

Religiosity is a notoriously ambiguous conception. In this study I understand religiosity broadly, not primarily associated with any church, community, or dogma but with the experience that there is some form of purpose or meaning in reality itself beyond human will and reason. One of the most uniformly accepted and tacit assumptions in contemporary philosophy is that modernity is a "disenchanted" age. The term "disenchantment" can be traced back to Max Weber, who defined it for a quite specific sociological use, but today the term is often used much more liberally. In this general sense, disenchantment means "loss of magic", the separation of human beings as willing active subjects, who form meanings, from nature, which is devoid of any inherent meaning. For example, according to Charles Taylor,

> the process of disenchantment is the disappearance of this world [of spirits and demons], and the substitution of what we live today: a world in which the only locus of thoughts, feelings, spiritual élan is what we call minds; the only minds in the cosmos are those of humans (grosso modo, with apologies to possible Martians or extra-terrestials); and minds are bounded, so that these thoughts, feelings, etc., are situated 'within' them (Taylor 2007, 29–30)

Schelling´s metaphysics is directly at odds with the presumption of disenchantment, which, often implicitly, grounds the majority of modern philosophy and has almost become the definition of modernity in general. According to Schelling, "in the final and highest instance there is no other Being than Will" (SW7: 350; 1992, 24). Schelling's pantheism is in the marginal in a triple sense in today's academic climate: it is religious, it is pantheistic instead of mainstream theism, and it represents a Boehmean esoteric form of pantheism instead of more common rationalistic Spinozism. Despite the differences in the various interpretations of Kant, different positions in the post-Kantian tradition and the anti-transcendental new realism (including the secular reinterpretations of Schelling), all these philosophies ultimately share one essentially Kantian key motive concerning religiousness. As Gabriel puts it, "the human being begins to investigate himself in the form of the divine, without recognizing that the divine that he is searching for outside himself is human spirit itself" (Gabriel 2016, 167–168). From such a viewpoint, Schelling's pantheism represents a paradigm case of anthropomorphism, attributing human characteristics to nature. However, like the idea of disenchantment, the term "anthropomorphism" is quite vague and more a pejorative phrase designed for bolstering an established hegemony than a neutral description of a philosophy like Schelling´s.

An important note is that the philosophical hegemony concerning disenchantment diverges radically from the actual beliefs of people. There is a

significant body of recent sociological work which shows that modernity as a disenchanted age is a narrative of philosophers and social scientists rather than a factual description of how people actually conceive of nature and spirituality (Josephson-Storm 2017, 23; Kripal 2011, 28–29; Partridge 2004, 1; Styers 2004, 8). While faith in the traditional Christian God has remained much more prevalent in the US than in Europe, "alternative spiritualities" and belief in some form of the paranormal are the norm rather than exception regardless of age, sex or level of education in both sides of the Atlantic (Josephson-Storm 2017, 22–34). In America, Gallup conducted annually since 1990 shows constant measure of approximately 75% of the population believing in at least one of ten categories of the paranormal included in the survey (Josephson-Storm 2017, 24). Similar numbers can be found throughout Europe. For example, a German telephone survey in 2000 reported 73% of Germans claiming to have experienced at least one paranormal phenomenon (Josephson-Storm 2017, 32).

As I argued in subchapter 5.1.1, questioning the paradigm of disenchanted nature does not necessarily imply paranormal claims. However, most paranormal beliefs presuppose denying the idea of disenchantment. This brings discussions of the paranormal and "enchanted" nature into the same cultural space. In his monumental two-volume work *The Re-Enchantment of the West*, Christopher Partridge traces the core of contemporary spirituality to the change of collective, ritualistic, and dogmatic forms of religiosity into more individualistic and subjective ones (Partridge 2004, 185–188). Partridge calls this process "re-enchantment", while Jason Josephson-Storm, by contrast, contests this terminological choice. According to Josephson-Storm, the idea of disenchantment is a modern myth to begin with, and, consequently, it makes no sense to talk about *re*-enchantment (Josephson-Storm 2017, 5, 36). Both scholars, however, agree on the basic argument that the decline of the social and political roles of Christianity has not resulted in fading spirituality but in various forms of personal beliefs, which are often at odds with the idea of disenchantment. In Josephson-Storm's view, "if anything, secularization seems to amplify enchantment" (Josephson-Storm 2017, 32).

Until recently, the new forms of individualistic religiosity have been remarkably understudied. The reasons for this neglect are various, but one simple explanation is that religiosity is still first associated with the old institutional religions. This, in its turn, has strengthened the view that religiousness in general is fading in the West, as the old religions have indeed lost much of their social influence, and their younger, more radical heirs can quite reasonably be seen as basically reactive. On the other hand, individualistic spirituality is not as easy to study scientifically as denominational religions with their formally expressed doctrines. Also, "alternative faiths" frequently do not have the same kind of explicit political effects as denominational religions often do. Together these facts easily give rise to the impression that individualistic spirituality is a superficial phenomenon which does not deserve much academic attention. (Partridge 2004, 185–186.)

Interestingly enough, not only the public but scholars themselves quite rarely succumb fully to the idea of disenchantment. In his work *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences*, Jason Josephson-Storm argues in detail how even characteristically irreligious thinkers such as Freud, Adorno, and Carnap have engaged in ideas that are incompatible with the disenchantment paradigm – in their personal lives if not in their theories. According to Josephson-Storm, "it is easy to show that, almost no matter how you define the terms, there are few figures in the history of the academic disciplines that cannot be shown to have had some relation or engagement with what their own epoch saw as magic or animating forces" (Josephson-Storm 2017, 304). Given that Josephson-Storm is even half-correct in his argument, it requires a deeper cultural explanation for why the paradigm of disenchantment stands as strong as it does.

According to Wouter Hanegraaff, the whole narrative of the Age of Enlightenment and the occurrence of disenchantment related to it was possible only by drawing it against a "dark canvas of presumed backwardness" (Hanegraaff 2013, 254). As Hanegraaff puts it, "understood in terms of disenchantment, the core identity of modern post-Enlightenment society and its appointed representatives (such as, notably, academics) *requires and presupposes* a negative counter-category consisting of currents, practices and ideas that refuse to accept the disappearance of incalculable mystery from the world" (Hanegraaff 2013, 254). Hanegraaff points out that "although terms 'superstition', 'magic', and 'occult' have long histories, they were essentially *reinvented* during the period of the Enlightenment, in such a manner that they could serve to demarcate 'the Other of science and rationality'"(Hanegraaff 2013, 154). In other words, "new religiosity" is "the Other" of contemporary secular philosophy in a double sense; while classical institutional religions have been *recognized* as the fading spirituality in modernity, individualistic spirituality as the opposite of both modern disenchantment and the Christian tradition has not been properly recognized at all, for recognizing it would fundamentally interrupt the narrative of modern rationality itself.

This takes us directly to the rejected side of Schelling's thought, for Schelling´s philosophy is based on an "enchanted" view of nature, especially during his middle period. Before the current Schelling-renaissance when Schelling was studied mainly from historical interests, it was widely recognized that the peculiar ideas of the Freedom Essay stem from esoteric traditions (McGrath 2012, 75n). Ernst Benz (2009, 1–3), for instance, traces the key concepts and ideas of German Idealism, and those of Schelling in particular, back to the theosophy of Jacob Boehme and the mysticism of Meister Eckhart. Today, to the contrary, scholars often begin by arguing that Schelling is not a "loopy mystic" or "an antiquated theologian" (Wirth 2005a, 6). In what follows, I will concentrate on Žižek´s interpretation of Schelling as an example of a modern reading which downplays Schelling´s esoteric influences. Žižek in particular is chosen for two reasons. First, compared to other recent commentators, Žižek discusses Schelling´s theory of evil most extensively and, together with Andrew Bowie,

Žižek is also the one who began the current enthusiasm for Schelling in the 1990s. Second, Žižek does not simply sidestep Schelling's esoteric influences; on the contrary, he seems to view a Jungian esoteric reading of Schelling as a serious threat. However, I will argue that he does not ultimately offer a decisive argument for why the only plausible way to read Schelling would be to formalize and secularize his theology.

According to Žižek:

> Therein consists the unique intermediate position of Schelling, his double non-contemporaneity to his own time: he belongs to three discursive domains – he simultaneously, as it were, speaks three languages: the language of speculative idealism; the language of anthropomorphic-mystical theosophy; the post-idealist language of contingency and finitude. The paradox, of course, is that *it was his very 'regression' from pure philosophical idealism to pre-modern theosophical problematic which enabled him to overtake modernity itself.* (Žižek 2007, 8)

Here Žižek specifically emphasizes that it was only after Schelling (influenced by Boehme) coined the esoteric idea of God's ground that he was properly able to overcome, or rather to ground in an adequate way, the dualism of nature and the human being. As explained in the previous subchapter, Žižek attempts to use a formalized reading of Schelling's metaphysics in order to think of a genuine alternative to contemporary naturalism and constructivism. While Žižek conceives of Schelling's pantheism as hopelessly anthropomorphic, he also recognizes that established modern views of nature have not escaped anthropocentrism any better. Either nature is reduced to an object studied by natural sciences or it is conceived as a construct of human subjectivity; in either case it is something in principle fully open to human understanding. But the birth of subjectivity out of nature cannot be open to the subject himself, and yet the subject obviously belongs to nature. Žižek´s Schelling-inspired solution is that nature has to be understood in the first place in such a way that the birth of human subjectivity in it becomes intelligible:

> True 'anthropomorphism' resides in the notion of nature tacitly assumed by those who oppose man to nature: nature as a circular 'return of the same', as the determinist kingdom of inexorable 'natural laws', or (more in accordance with 'New Age' sensitivity) nature as a harmonious, balanced Whole of cosmic forces derailed by man's *hubris*, his pathological arrogance. What is to be 'deconstructed' is this very notion of nature: the features we refer to in order to emphasize man's unique status – the constitutive imbalance, the 'out-of-joint', on account of which man is an 'unnatural' creature, 'nature sick unto death' – must somehow be at work in nature itself. (Žižek 2007, 220)

There is nothing controversial in Žižek´s reading of Schelling insofar as he argues that the "out-of-jointness" of the human being must be understood to be in some sense operative already in nature. The question is how Žižek and Schelling exactly understand this out-of-jointness. For Schelling, it is God´s ground, which implies the idea that the most spiritual being in nature must also be the most "unnatural". According to Schelling, the most fundamental element of nature is will, which appears in different "potencies", and which establishes its most fully articulated and personal form in human self-consciousness. In the human being, the indifference of the Unground is repeated in a personal form, and this

constitutes the fact that the human being is never "in its place" in the same way as the rest of nature. The will of the ground is operative on various levels already in non-human nature, but in the human being it becomes spiritualized, which means that the human being always *decides*, albeit to an essential degree unconsciously, to be who he is.

As already discussed, Žižek, by contrast, formalizes Schelling's key concepts and reconstructs them to serve Marxism and Lacanian psychoanalysis. As the title of Žižek´s book on Schelling already indicates, he reduces Schelling's concept of the ground to its formal aspect of the "irreducible remainder", namely, that which cannot be enclosed in any possible web of discursive understanding. Žižek´s reading has to be valued for at least recognizing Schelling's pantheism as a temptation in an age caught in the dilemma between naturalism and constructivism, even though, for Žižek, it is not yet an alternative to consider seriously. When it comes to Schelling's theological elements, they cannot, according to Žižek, "from our contemporary perspective […] but appear as blatantly 'not true'" (Žižek 2007, 7). When Žižek (2007, 5) discusses a purely Schellingian position, most often referring to Jung, he almost always uses pejorative characterizations such as "New Age obscurantism" or "primordial Wisdom". Ultimately, this is all Žižek offers to justify his categorical denial of Schelling´s esoteric theology. Žižek´s interpretation is a plausible one, for sure, but there are also arguments against it from a pantheistic perspective.

As I explained at the beginning of this subchapter, I associate religiousness primarily with the question of the "place" of the human being in nature. While both Schelling and Žižek agree that both naturalism and constructionism are too anthropocentric, they would still both blame each other of the same mistake of anthropocentrism on different grounds. From Žižek's point of view, Schelling has a "spiritualized" view of nature, or, as Žižek (2007, 5) puts it, a "sexualized cosmology". This terminology of "spiritualizing" or "sexualizing" already implies the accusation of anthropomorphism, the claim that Schelling attributes to nature characteristics that do not factually belong to it. As McGrath (2012, 32) puts it, Žižek "psychoanalyzes" Schelling and argues that Schelling could not face the tragic and atheistic conclusion that his concept of the ground would have logically led to. From Schelling's point of view, by contrast, Žižek is still caught in the dualism of nature and the human being. The only way he can think to rescue nature from anthropocentrism is to conceive of nature as absolutely foreign to the human being. Instead of thinking of nature as an organic living whole and the human being as a part of it, Žižek begins with the human being as the locus of meaning and asserts nature as the completely unintelligible real as the opposite of the human world of meanings. Žižek (2005, 24) himself explicitly asserts Lacan as a systematic upholder of Enlightenment rationalism, conceiving of himself as Lacan´s successor. Given this starting point, it seems that Žižek has not moved far from the Kantian-Fichtean idea of the unconscious as the original act by which subjectivity gives birth to itself. When it comes to philosophy of nature, this alternative may be able to save nature from constructionism, but at the same time nature in itself remains completely inconceivable to human

subjectivity. For Schelling, Žižek´s "transcendental materialist" position would appear needlessly complex at best, when it is also a viable alternative simply to refute the very basic premise of the Enlightenment, the disenchanted nature, and think of nature as inherently willing and meaningful.

The juxtaposition of Žižek and Schelling is essentially the same as the one between Freud and Jung. The famous break between Freud and Jung concerned the theory of libido (Mattoon 1981, 105). As explained in subchapter 4.5.2, for Freud the libido is senseless sexual energy in which there is nothing beyond male-female polarity; the polarity is a natural fact of a blind evolutionary process devoid of any purpose. The Jungian libido is irrational as well but in a different sense. For Jung, the libido is undifferentiated energy which appears in several forms, of which sexuality is one. The Jungian libido comes close to Schelling's idea of God´s ground in that it is metaphysical rather than purely natural and it has the teleological function of driving forward the process of individuation. Formally taken, Schelling and Jung advocate the "Neoplatonic logic", in which opposites are grounded in a third factor which is present in both but remains hidden in itself, while Žižek and Freud prefer Hegel's stance, in which, according to Žižek (2007, 104–105), the "third" beyond the polarity is pure negativity which keeps the polarity in movement. As McGrath explains this Hegelian idea, "there is no assumed point of indifference behind the opposites but only the endless (and senseless) alternating of the one into the other" (McGrath 2012, 32).

Essentially speaking, the difference between the Hegel/Freud/Lacan/Žižek tradition and the Boehme/Schelling/Jung tradition is the question of the limits of philosophy itself concerning the relationship of philosophy and religion. Philosophy is most often understood as a science which requires that all arguments are open to commonly shared rationality. In this sense, philosophy is more or less strictly separated from mysticism, which subordinates logical reasoning to personal preconceptual experiences. Even though the tradition Žižek follows emphasizes the role of the irrational and the impossibility of a fully rational foundation of anything (which has led Lacan and Žižek to utilize Schelling´s idea of the ground), on the level of philosophical analysis Freud, Lacan, and Žižek (and in Žižek´s interpretation, Hegel as well) cut the irrational into its own uncanny sphere completely foreign to human consciousness. In other words, the arguments about the irrational are made within the requirements of rational philosophy. For Schelling, by contrast, the rational and the irrational are merged into each other to the extent that attempting to strictly separate them through the practice of philosophy distances philosophy from actual understanding of life. As a result, Schelling´s philosophy of religion is marginal in two senses.

First, philosophy of religion is predominantly concerned with Christianity. Schelling's pantheism, his positive metaphysical account of evil and his denial of God's perfect self-transparent understanding contests the mainstream Christian tradition, even though Schelling identified himself as a Christian and was heavily influenced by mystical and esoteric currents of Christianity. The most fundamental disparity between Schelling and the mainstream Christian tradition

concerns the idea of disenchantment. In mainstream Christianity, nature is emptied of all "enchanted" characteristics, which are attributed to God alone. For Schelling, by contrast, nature itself is a divine living organism. Second, religious philosophers either present their views as rational conclusions from explicit well-defined premises (as in evidentialism) or they strictly separate the sphere of religion from logical reasoning (in this Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein are the most characteristic examples). In contrast to both of these views, Schelling attempts to unify philosophy and preconceptual religious experience in a manner which should perhaps be called *philosophical religion* rather than *philosophy of religion*. In Schelling´s own words, "God is in us clear knowledge and spiritual light itself" (Schelling 1992, 71). While Schelling's esoteric pantheism can be severely criticized from many different positions, it undoubtedly offers a philosophical systematization of a quite common experience of living nature. As Patrick Sherry polemically puts it, "The world may still be enchanted, for those who have eyes to see, and who have kept fresh the responses of wonder, reverence, and delight" (Sherry 2009, 369).

### 5.3.3 Evil

The final question of this study is, what are the essential differences between the Kantian purely moral approach to evil and Schelling´s metaphysical approach to evil, and what are the strengths and weaknesses of these views? Schelling´s theory of evil is by no means an exact opposite of Kant´s. On a formal level, Schelling's metaphysical theory instead begins where Kant´s transcendental theory ends (Lawrence 2004, 171–173; Wirth 2003, 165–170). Both Kant and Schelling argue against the Augustinian and neo-platonic conceptions of evil as the absence of good, and understand evil positively as a wrong subordination of self-will and universal concerns. Schelling himself even claims to adopt "the Kantian conception not exactly in his words but in just such a way as, we believe, it must be expressed in order to be understood" (SW7: 384; 1992, 61).

Because Kant firmly refuses to locate the origin of evil in sensuousness, he was necessitated to assume a "timeless" free choice of the propensity to evil, which enables him to explain how it is possible in the first place that people violate the moral law. This choice of the propensity to evil, however, cannot be explained further without falling into an infinite regress:

> The disposition, i.e. the first subjective ground of the adoption of the maxims, can only be a single one, and it applies to the entire use of freedom universally. This disposition too, however, must be adopted through the free power of choice, for otherwise it could not be imputed. But there cannot be any further cognition of the subjective ground or the cause of this adoption (although we cannot avoid asking about it), for otherwise we would have to adduce still another maxim into which the disposition would have to be incorporated, and this maxim must in turn have its ground. (Rel 6:25; 2005, 50)

Schelling finds it problematic that Kant "did not in theory rise to a transcendental act determining all human existence" (SW7: 288; 1992, 67). According to Schelling, Kant leaves his moral philosophy unfinished when he does not offer an explanation why people choose the propensity to evil. However, Schelling does

not seem to properly acknowledge how deep his disparity with Kant really is. Unlike Schelling claims, Kant is absolutely consistent in declining to explain the origin of evil beyond human experience. For Kant, theoretical knowledge claims are based on possible sensuous experiences, and moral claims are based on innate practical reason. The propensity to evil is a conception that is necessary in order to make sense of why we do not always follow pure practical reason in our moral decisions but let subjective inclinations determine our action. When Kant argues in the above quote that we cannot avoid asking further about the ground of the propensity to evil, he refers to what he calls "the transcendental illusion" in the First Critique (KrV A295/B352; 2009, 385). The transcendental illusion consists in the constant temptation of the human being to make knowledge claims beyond the boundary of possible experiences. From Kant´s point of view, Schelling´s metaphysics of evil obviously falls to the transcendental illusion. Consequently, what seems half-heartedness from Schelling's point of view is actually the very core of Kant´s transcendental philosophy. For Kant, the concept of evil has only a practical foundation in the human life-world, and attempting to ground it metaphysically not only ruins rational philosophy but also the purity of religious faith.

The strength of the Kantian position is that it justifies the idea of evil without engaging in metaphysical speculation or theology. In other words, Kant laid out the foundation of the contemporary secular purely moral paradigm of evil. What reasons are there then to question this paradigm? The first issue, taken up in subchapters 5.2.2 and 5.2.3, is that a purely moral conception of evil can be seen as too narrow. It can neither take into account current alternative conceptions of evil, such as Alford´s pre-categorical experiences of dread nor justify why the current moral paradigm of evil would be on a firmer ground than historically earlier conceptions of evil, which were once equally hegemonic. By contrast, a metaphysical account of evil is not conceptually limited to moral evil, which does not mean that it would diminish the central meaning of moral evil for human reality. I agree with Gavin Rae, who argues that the importance of Schelling´s theory "lies in bringing to our attention the way in which our moral categories are grounded in conceptions of metaphysics" (Rae 2017, 2).

Most fundamentally, the difficulties of a purely moral theory of evil concern the transcendental paradigm on which it is based. While transcendental philosophy can be criticized by itself, especially the idea of evil becomes problematic for it. In subchapter 3.6, it was shown that for Kant, radical evil marked not only the end of philosophy and the beginning of religious faith but also the breaking point of reason itself. Kant´s conception of reason can well be criticized as too strict, but there is one problematic aspect in his theory of radical evil, which concerns purely moral theories of evil in general. If evil is conceived of as a purely moral concept, evil is a co-product of human moral subjectivity, and the overcoming of evil must take place in relation to purely human resources as well. However, a philosophically grounded faith in the progress of mankind becomes highly problematic without a metaphysics that justifies such optimism. As argued in subchapters 2.5.3 and 5.2.4, Nietzsche was ahead of his time in

understanding the severity of the challenge that the idea of evil poses for moral philosophy, which has resigned from Christian theology.

Schelling´s metaphysics of evil is able to provide solutions to the problems that a purely moral conception of evil faces, at least to the extent that philosophy in general can be expected to help in facing the reality of evil. First of all, a metaphysical theory of evil allows space for aspects of evil which are not purely moral. As discussed in subchapter 5.2.2, the "psychoanalytical" facets of Schelling´s metaphysics come close to Alford´s analysis of evil as pre-categorical dread. According to Alford, the pre-categorical level of experience is a source of dread but "also a source of deepest satisfaction, the meaning of life" (Alford 1997, 99). Similarly, for Schelling, the ground is not evil as such, but rather the source of vitality and the sense of the self. However, the ground is also an untamed force even for God himself, and it is described as "dark longing", "unruly", and "chaotic" (Schelling 1992, 32, 34). If one is not able to form a balanced relation to this primitive aspect of life and the psyche, it "feels him as being consuming wrath, and is driven by the attraction of the depths themselves to ever increasing tension against unity, until it comes to self-destruction and final crisis" (SW7: 403; 1992, 83–84).

More generally, as I argued in subchapter 5.2.3, a metaphysical conception of evil makes it possible to conceive of various different historical conceptions of evil as partial approaches to the same phenomenon. According to Schelling, "there is, therefore, a *universal* evil, even if it is not active from the beginning but is only aroused in God´s revelation through the reaction of the basis" (SW7: 380–381; 1992, 58). For Leibniz, the idea of metaphysical evil, which precedes concrete moral or physical evils and belongs to the basic structure of reality, was a source of fundamental difficulties, as it was challenging to combine it with the existence of an omnipotent and perfectly good God. In Schelling´s pantheism, on the contrary, evil is openly asserted as equally primordial with good. Even though in God as a whole the dark will of the ground is subordinated to the will of love, it belongs to the nature of the ground that it can never be fully subsumed to rational or moral order, and "thence the veil of sadness which is spread over all nature, the deep, unappeasable melancholy of all life" (SW7: 399; 1992, 79).

As a consequence, the most important strength of Schelling´s metaphysical conception of evil, as suggested in subchapter 5.2.4, is its ability to answer, at least to some extent, to Nietzsche´s devastating critique of the idea of evil. The sharpest edge of Nietzsche´s critique is that after the metaphysical premises of traditional Christian theism became untenable, the "life-denying" character of evil became more evident. As a solution, Nietzsche suggests that in a secular age the idea of evil should be abandoned, because it is accompanied by hidden theological motivation. However, Schelling is an openly theological thinker who understands evil as a necessary element inherent in God´s ground, which God himself constantly overcomes. In this way, Schelling both philosophically justifies the reality of evil against naturalistic elimination and provides theological resources for the moral progress of mankind.

The major downside of Schelling´s theory from the viewpoint of both contemporary naturalism and a purely moral approach to evil is obviously its explicitly theological and speculative character. There is little left to discuss if it is assumed – as for example Julian Young does – that "when Nietzsche reported, in 1882, that 'God is dead', he articulated no more than the truth […] that Western culture has ceased to be, either overtly or covertly, a religious culture" (Young 2014, xii).[33] However, as argued in the previous subchapter, notions such as the "death of God" and "disenchantment" are quite vague in their commonly used sense. Once the Cartesian notion of inert matter and the dichotomy between classical monotheistic faith and atheism are questioned, the way is fully open for Schellingian pantheism. However, the question of how plausible such a worldview ultimately is far exceeds the range of this study.

Yet, there is another possibility to be discussed. By formalizing the insights of Schelling's metaphysics, new realists such as Žižek and Gabriel appear to be in a strong position as they can both criticize the purely moral conception of evil from the practical perspective and at the same time reject the actual theological commitments of Schelling's theory, which most philosophers today find unintuitive at best. The downside, however, is that the formalization of Schelling might as well fail in both respects: it may be impossible to coherently retain Schelling's central practical insights about evil while divorcing them from the theology they are based on, and, at the same time, it is not clear if the new realists have been able to properly distance themselves from the conceptions of traditional Christian theology.

Even if it is assumed that the new realists have provided a philosophy of nature which is not trapped in what Meillassoux calls correlationism, the question of evil is a special case in this respect. The problems of the Kantian paradigm concerning evil stem from the idea that the spontaneous founding act of human subjectivity at the same time makes intelligible the idea of evil. In this way, evil becomes defined narrowly as a purely moral concept, and, as Kant puts it in his theory of radical evil, the result is that in the sense of moral imputability we have always already "chosen" the propensity to evil. Meillassoux´s hyper-Chaos, Gabriel´s no-world argument and Žižek´s Lacanian view are all committed to the idea that nature before human subjectivity is basically chaotic and therefore meaningless without human intervention. From the new realist point of view, it does not make sense to think of evil as anything but a purely moral conception. However, Žižek extensively discusses Schelling´s theory of evil, especially its applications in psychoanalytical, deep ecological, and political contexts. According to Žižek, the revolutionary character of Schelling´s theory is

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32 On the other hand, Young finally defends late Heidegger for representing "a form of pantheism", "a God which reveals itself as the world" (Young 2014, 236). According to Young, Heidegger defends a conception of "a God who, unlike the God of traditional Christian theology, is genuinely mysterious and so genuinely 'far away', but one who is also, again unlike the Christian God, 'the nearest of all', immanent in the world, 'so close' to us" (Young 2014, 235). Young´s interpretation of Heidegger may be controversial, but the stance he attributes to Heidegger is certainly close to Schelling. Either Young is incoherent or he makes an argument similar to mine but does not want to associate pantheism with religiosity.

based on "the repudiation of the traditional philosophical *topos* according to which the possibility of Evil is grounded in man´s finitude", and the assertion "that the root of Evil, on the contrary, lies in man´s *perfection*, his advantage over other finite creatures and, on the other hand, in a certain split in *God himself*" (Žižek 2007, 61). Žižek correctly recognizes the split of God into his actual existence and its ground as the basis of Schelling´s theory of evil. However, in formalizing Schelling´s theology in light of Lacanian psychoanalysis, Žižek runs into considerable difficulties, which he does not seem to properly recognize.

As discussed in subchapter 4.5.3, Žižek uses Schelling´s metaphysics of evil to describe a vicious dialectical process between what Benjamin Barber calls "Jihad" and "McWorld". Žižek´s intention is to combine the central humanistic ideas, such as the moral progress of mankind and universal human values, with the pessimistic idea that the potential to greater good is always also the potential to greater evil. However, it is unclear how Žižek is able to justify the more optimistic elements in Schelling´s thought without taking seriously Schelling´s theology in which nature and especially mankind unfold God´s progress. According to Peter Dews, "despite his ostensibly left-wing stance, Žižek gives us no philosophical reason to assume that the dismal cycle of abstract, universalist expansion and particularist contraction should ever be progressively attenuated or overcome" (Dews 1999, 22). In Dews´s view, Žižek essentially repeats the basic argument of conservative *Kulturkritik*, and even though "it is arguable whether this is the inevitable political consequence of Lacan's thought […] undoubtedly, such a conclusion fails to do justice to the complex vision of Schelling" (Dews 1999, 22).

Similarly, in deep ecological and psychoanalytical contexts Žižek´s formalization of Schelling´s metaphysics both robs the theoretical basis of thinking of non-moral evil in terms of evil and turns the historically and psychologically optimistic elements of Schelling into pessimism, similar to that of a thinker like Adorno. The formalization of Schelling's theory renders the ground static; the ground becomes a structural element in humanity, which forever reminds us that we are not at home in nature but have been thrown into an inherently meaningless chaos, which human subjectivity structures into a coherent and meaningful reality. For Schelling, to the contrary, the ground is teleological even though unconsciously; it is a real force in nature, which fuels progress both on individual and collective level. For Schelling, the possibility of evil is never completely overcome, but it can be gradually attenuated. Jung (1990, 297) expresses a similar idea on the individual level; the process of individuation is fundamentally about gradually integrating the shadow in one's ego.

There is also the opposite problem that the new realists do not necessarily get rid of religious ideas. Meillassoux is profoundly concerned with the fate of humanity and all the unbearable injustice and terror that sensuous beings face. Despite criticizing the Kantian tradition for upholding the old religious ideas in a fideistic form, he nevertheless developes his own "God-proof" in the vein of Kant's justification of God as the postulate of pure practical reason. Based on his emphasis of metaphysical contingency, Meillassoux stresses that it is a *real*

*possibility* that a just all-powerful God will emerge in the future. For Meillassoux, this is enough to justify hope in something like the Kantian highest good, even though, according to Meillassoux, Kantian "rational faith" is too much asked (Backman 2017, 49). Gabriel (2015, 124–125) criticizes the common narrative of modernity as a disenchanted age as an anachronistic celebration of rational science over pre-modern superstition, and he uses dozens of pages to defend the practical meaning of religion for humanity. In a similar fashion as Meillassoux, Gabriel argues, influenced by Kierkegaard, that "we encounter God or the divine if we grasp the very idea of a maximal distance from ourselves and find that everything – most notably, a different attitude towards others and ourselves – is possible" (Gabriel 2016, 178).

Henry Staten argues that neo-Lacanians such as Žižek have also been unable to abandon religious conceptions:

> Reduced to its bare bones, there is nothing new about this claim: it is the idea that when human beings stop believing in God, they start to think they are God. In the aftermath of Kant, Heidegger, and Lacan, this claim is restated in a way that preserves the structure of the old claim while volatilizing or hyper-sublating the God-concept into notions like 'the empty place of the Law' and 'the invisible horizon of transcendence (Staten 2005, 23)

As the example of Kant already shows, it is far from trivial to abandon Christian theology and yet retain the idea of evil. In this respect, Schelling´s metaphysics is far less problematic; it operates from the beginning in an alternative theological and metaphysical framework, in which it does not face the questions of how to secularize Christian theism or abandon theology completely.

## 5.4 Four possible alternatives

In this study, four main families of theories of evil have been discussed: naturalistic elimination, the purely moral conception of evil, metaphysics of evil, and new realism. In each of its forms, the virtue of naturalism is theoretical simplicity. Naturalism avoids all the complications that spring from the assumption that the human being with his moral subjectivity is something completely unlike the rest of nature. Conceiving of the human being simply as a part of nature coheres with the intuition of many contemporary philosophers that "human beings are mortal, finite beings and nothing more" (Staten 2005, 23), "nothing more" being understood in the sense that morality does not require a transcendental level of explanation. However, this simplicity and coherence with the natural scientific view of the world may come at too high of a price. On a purely philosophical level, the arguments of Kant, the German idealists, the phenomenological tradition and postmodern constructionism against naturalistic reductions are well known. The concept of evil brings a practical challenge of its own to naturalism. Arguing philosophically against the concept of evil is one thing, while facing actual evil is another. Evil simply seems to be

the only concept adequate for the gravest violations of the common sense of justice (Russell 2014, 37). A naturalistic theory that does not take into account this practical existential aspect of the idea of evil represents a form of quasi-realism, which will hardly prove itself to be a lasting solution to the problem at hand.

For this reason, I have limited the discussion about naturalism mainly to Nietzsche, because Nietzsche´s argument first and foremost takes up the practical inclination to think in terms of evil. Nietzsche´s logic is internally sound, but as his conception of the *Übermensch* already suggests, a being who passes the thought experiment of the eternal recurrence of the same is actually no longer a human being. One way to interpret Nietzsche would be to thin of the *Übermensch* as a healthy ideal rather than something one could actually realize. However, this interpretation would collapse Nietzsche´s conception into a twisted form of the Kantian regulative idea, and Nietzsche´s intention was precisely to overcome the dualism between the actual world and the ideal world. It remains an open question, but Nietzsche´s naturalism appears at best to be a very challenging view to adopt, given that it is taken as an actual philosophy of life and not merely as a theoretical tool to abandon a theoretical idea of evil.

The purely moral conception of evil has the virtue that it is not at odds with the commonly shared humanistic ideas. Also, Kant already provided a plausible anti-naturalistic justification of the concept of evil as a purely moral concept. However, this justification is based on a dualism between non-moral nature and human nature, which emerges from it. Apart from the theoretical critiques that naturalists would point out, the main problem in a purely moral view of evil is that without theological or metaphysical grounding, it lacks the resources to justify the faith in overcoming evil. As Nietzsche has argued, without such a faith it would be more consistent to give up altogether the idea of evil. However, there are at least two possibilities. First, it is possible to accept Kant´s appeal to fideistic faith, in relation to which Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard present more famous examples. According to this view, the idea of evil becomes the place in which rational philosophy ends and religious faith begins. The second alternative is to accept a fundamentally tragic position, advocated most famously by Schopenhauer and Adorno, that it is by no means certain that philosophy can provide a plausible answer to the existential challenge posed by evil. According to this pessimistic stance, the idea of evil is a necessary part of human reality, but there is simply no intellectually honest hope of overcoming it.

New realism seems to promise the possibility of simultaneously accepting the anti-naturalistic justification of the purely moral conception of evil and avoiding the dualism inherent in the Kantian tradition. However, even if new realism avoids "correlationism" epistemologically, it does not give much resources for a new theory of evil. From the viewpoint of a theory of evil, it is irrelevant if the human subject has epistemological access to natural objects which exist independently of human subjectivity. What would be needed is a conception of nature that is co-operative with humanity in overcoming evil. In this respect, new realism gives even less hope than correlationism. Correlationism at least leaves the possibility of fideistic faith, but according to

new realism, it can be *known* that nature beyond the human standpoint of meanings is completely foreign to humanity and its needs. At the same, new realism uses similar anti-naturalistic conceptions as the Kantian tradition in justifying genuine human subjectivity in a natural world. As Henry Staten (2005, 23) argues, it is unclear if new realism in the end gets any further from theology than Kant. On the other hand, it has been argued that even Nietzsche is dependent on the Christian theology he criticizes (Alford 1997, 127; Dews 2008, 146; Kunnas 2008, 193–194).

The final option, Schelling´s metaphysical theory of evil, avoids most of the problems inherent in the other positions discussed in this study. It provides a theoretical justification of the idea of evil, by means of its alternative theology it can answer Nietzsche´s argument about the death of God, and it is highly flexible and illuminating when dealing with evil in different contexts. The main problem in Schelling´s theory is that it is based on theological and metaphysical assumptions, which most philosophers find untenable and even difficult to understand. However, similar to Nietzsche, though with a different world view and motivation, Schelling challenges the limits of philosophy itself. For Schelling, the sharp division between rational philosophy and religious faith is not well grounded. Schelling of the Freedom Essay verges on Western esotericism, which should be conceived of as a form of thought of its own, compared to philosophy, science, or classical religions. Controversial as it is, Schelling´s metaphysics of evil deserves further discussion.

# 6 CONCLUSION

This study began by taking up the recent recurrence of philosophical discussion on the concept of evil. During the twentieth century it was often assumed implicitly if not explicitly that the concept of evil does not play any philosophically significant role, and it may even be morally and politically harmful. The idea of evil was seen more as an excuse to stop finding explanations for atrocious acts than a relevant conception in understanding them. Contemporary philosophy of evil is based on a paradigm shift in this respect. It is now usually thought that different kinds of scientific explanations of evil acts can be helpful in understanding evil, but evil as such is a first-person perspective conception of the practical life-world and operates on a different register than naturalistic explanations.

I have argued that the basic premise grounding this recurring interest in the concept of evil dates back to Immanuel Kant´s transcendental philosophy. Kant is most well known for his critique of classical metaphysics and theology. However, the same critique was directed at naturalism. In Kant´s view, there is a radical gap between theoretical metaphysical or naturalistic explanations and practical first-person human experience. Kant justifies the idea of evil by the practical experience of the freedom of the will. According to Kant, the positive focal point of freedom is the recognition of what Kant calls the moral law. However, moral choices can be considered properly free only if moral duties are accompanied by a propensity to willfully refute these duties. The central argument of Kant´s theory of radical evil for contemporary discussion is the idea that evil cannot be explained away in naturalistic fashion without simultaneously reducing morality in general.

Based on recent body of scholarship (above all, the works of Sharon Anderson-Gold, Pablo Muchnik, Philip Rossi and Allen Wood), I have argued that despite Kant´s technical approach and old-fashioned terminology, there is nothing particularly obscure in the theory of radical evil. First and foremost, the theory of radical evil is a systematic attempt to make sense of human moral subjectivity without theological or metaphysical grounding. According to Kant, there is a universal propensity to evil in mankind, which is still freely chosen in

a non-temporal noumenal act. This weird-sounding claim immediately becomes intelligible, when it is conceived of in the broader context of the critical project and its anthropological-historical aspects in particular. Radical evil is the transcendental aspect of Kant´s fully naturalistic conception of "unsociable sociability". Once we become socialized into human community, we learn to respect the humanity of others, but at the same time we are inclined to place ourselves above others. Kant conceives this tendency as timeless and freely chosen in the sense that moral subjectivity does not begin in any definite moment, and we are responsible of our subjectivity down to its core; nature cannot be blamed for our propensity to evil, even though the propensity can be also be approached from a naturalistic perspective.

The problems with Kant´s account of evil stem from his attempt to uphold the Christian and Enlightenment beliefs of cosmic justice and the moral progress of mankind while giving up the metaphysical and theological premises these ideals were once based on. Kant intends to retain the teleological progress of history towards what he calls "the highest good" and the almighty benevolent God as necessary ideas of human practical reason. However, because radical evil is a result of human spontaneity on an equally deep level, and it ruins the moral worthiness of the human being, evil becomes a complete anomaly for Kant´s philosophical system. Ultimately Kant resorts to fideistic faith beyond philosophical arguments not unlike Kierkegaard did a hundred years later.

Kant´s attempt to retain the central ideas of the Christian faith in the form of practical ideas of reason has often been conceived as antiquated in contemporary philosophy of evil. However, as Kant acknowledged, it is far from trivial simply to detach the idea of evil from its original theological context and take it as a purely moral concept. Nietzsche in particular was deeply aware of the strong inclination to think in terms of evil, and he was also highly critical of the idea of a secular conception of evil. According to Nietzsche, the idea of evil betrays a life-denying attitude; the notion of evil, in contrast to merely bad, implies that the world should be such that there is no evil. In the Christian doctrine, the almighty benevolent God and kingdom of heaven provided the metaphysical backdrop against which it was possible to tolerate evil in this material world. While Kant´s position was already problematic in this respect, Nietzsche reads Schopenhauer as someone who took the secular concept of evil to its logical conclusion, disvaluing life itself. While Nietzsche is a classical thinker in moral philosophy, his argument against the idea of evil in secular thought has gained surprisingly little attention in contemporary philosophy of evil. If left without an answer, Nietzsche´s critique has a devastating effect on the whole contemporary discussion of evil as a purely moral concept.

The main argument of this study is that Christian theology, Nietzschean naturalism, and a purely moral conception of evil are not the only possibilities for a theory of evil. I took up Schelling´s pantheistic metaphysics as a viable alternative to all these more commonly discussed positions. Similar to a purely moral conception of evil, Schelling justifies the idea of evil against naturalistic elimination and asserts it primarily as a practical conception of human action.

However, Schelling´s theory has considerable advantages over the purely moral conception of evil. As an abstract metaphysical theory, it covers various forms of evil, some of which are not purely moral. In this way, Schelling´s theory, in contrast to the purely moral approach to evil, avoids historical and cultural relativism concerning the idea of evil. On the other hand, in its dynamic character it can illuminate various practical fields, such as deep ecology, psychoanalysis, and cultural anthropology. Most importantly, however, a metaphysical theory of evil avoids the spearhead of Nietzsche´s criticism. In contrast to purely moral theories of evil, Schelling provides an alternative theological framework in which the origin of evil is traced back to nature, and in which God as the whole of nature works co-operatively with the human being in overcoming evil. Moreover, the moral psychological aspects of Schelling´s metaphysics anticipate Nietzsche´s critique of mainstream Christian theology and its humanistic descendants.

The biggest downside of Schelling´s metaphysics from the viewpoint of the majority of contemporary philosophy is that it is based on presumptions generally deemed both outdated and obscure. Ultimately, the thought of middle Schelling verges on esoteric discourses, and, depending on the definition of philosophy, it cannot be conceived of as purely philosophical at all. For this reason, I also discussed Slavoj Žižek´s Lacan-influenced interpretation of Schelling, which attempts to utilize Schelling´s creativity within a metaphysical context best described as "new realism". However, I remain sceptical of the prospects of Žižek´s project. While new realism may be able to overcome the transcendental paradigm and provide a realistic conception of nature, the idea of evil must be taken up as a special case. I argued that when it comes to the concept of evil, new realism does not make substantial progress from the problems inherent in Kant´s position. In order to answer Nietzsche´s challenge, new realism would have to provide metaphysical tools for finding hope of overcoming evil. In contrast to such hope, there is more affinity in Žižek´s thought to the pessimism of Schopenhauer, Freud and Adorno.

I have argued that the contemporary discussion on the concept of evil lacks a unified, solid basis. It is usually assumed simply that the practical need to use the concept of evil is a sufficient ground for philosophical discussion. This leaves the whole discourse vulnerable to Nietzsche´s well-known attack. I have shown that Schelling´s metaphysics would provide a fresh way to approach the concept of evil, but also that the disparity between Schelling´s presumptions and those of contemporary prominent philosophical schools is very deep. Schelling´s philosophy is grounded in questioning the very basic modern view of nature as "disenchanted", being something entirely foreign to the human life-world. In contrast to this tacit assumption of most modern philosophers, Schelling understands will as the most fundamental reality. I have argued that far from being a strange idea of a singular philosopher, this kind of thought is not rare in the contemporary world, even among Western academic people, but it is highly marginal in academic philosophy. Instead of ignoring Schelling´s esoteric sources, I argue that the future of Schelling´s theory of evil should be determined by an

open discussion of the most fundamental premises of modern Western philosophy.

# SUMMARY IN FINNISH

Tutkimuksessani osallistun 1990-luvulla alkaneeseen keskusteluun pahan käsitteestä. Lähtökohtani on, että filosofinen keskustelu pahasta irrallaan teologiasta on äärimmäisen tervetullutta. Toisin kuin ennen 1900-luvun loppua tavattiin ajatella, on kaukana itsestään selvästä, että pahan käsite tulisi ymmärtää kristillisen metafysiikan jäänteenä, jolla ei ole rakentavaa annettavaa nykyajattelulle. Päin vastoin, pahaa käsittelevän nykyfilosofian selkein saavutus on vahva näyttö siitä, että pahan idea vaikuttaisi kuuluvan välttämättömänä osana ihmisen elämismaailmaan, riippumatta siitä, kuinka huokuttelevia naturalistiset, pahan käsitteen redusoimiseen pyrkivät argumentit saattavat olla. Tällaisen "moraaliseksi pahakäsitykseksi" nimittämäni ajattelutavan suurin vahvuus on kuitenkin samalla sen suurin heikkous. Lähtiessään liikkeelle siitä, että ollakseen sellainen kuin se on, ihmisten moraalinen ja poliittinen todellisuus edellyttää pahan ideaa, moraalinen pahakäsitys tulee luoneeksi syvän kuilun inhimillisen todellisuuden ja sen ulkopuolisen luonnon välille. Tästä seuraa monia filosofisia ongelmia, jotka saattavat olla yhtä perustavanlaatuisia kuin tarve olettaa pahan käsite perustelluksi käytännön elämismaailman kautta. Luonnollisesti sellainen pahakäsitys, jossa pahan ideaa ei pyritä redusoimaan pois mutta joka ei myöskään synnyttä vastaavaa kuilua ihmisyyden ja luonnon välille, olisi vahvassa asemassa. Tutkimukseni pääargumentti on, että F.W.J. Schellingin teoksessa *Ihmisen vapaudesta* (1809) esittämä "metafyysiseksi pahakäsitykseksi" nimittämäni filosofia tarjoaa juuri mainitun vaihtoehdon.

Tutkimuksen ensimmäisessä luvussa etenen kronologisesti modernilla ajalla vaikutusvaltaisia pahaa koskevia ajatuksia seuraten. Ensimmäisenä käsittelen Gottfied Leibnizin klassista kristillistä metafysiikkaa, joka hioo huippuunsa monet skolastisen perinteen argumenteista, joissa pahan olemassaolo pyrittiin yhteensovittamaan – tai pikemminkin poisselittämään – kaikkivaltiaan ja hyväntahtoisen kristillisen Jumalan kanssa. Leibnizin jälkeen filosofia alkoi enenevissä määrin irtaantua teologiasta, mikä muutti myös pahaa koskevia kysymyksiä. Immanuel Kantin transsendentaalifilosofia loi pohjan sen kaltaiselle ajattelulle, joka on nykyään jälleen vallitsevaa pahan käsitteen suhteen. Kant argumentoi, että vaikka vapaan tahdon tai moraalisen hyvän ja pahan kaltaisia ideoita ei voida tutkia tieteellisesti, niitä ei samasta syystä voida myöskään torjua empiirisillä argumenteilla. Kantin mukaan taipumus pahaan täytyy ajatella ihmisen moraaliseen luontoon väistämättä kuuluvaksi ominaisuudeksi, josta ihminen on kuitenkin täysin vastuussa, sillä pahaa ei voida ajatella luonnon aiheuttamaksi.

Kantin mukaan paha koostuu ihmisen sisäisen universaalin moraalilain vaatimien käskyjen asettamisesta alisteiseksi haluihin pohjaaville toimintaohjeille. Schelling jakoi suurelta osin tämän ajatuksen, mutta ajatteli sekä moraalilakia että haluja koko luonnossa läsnäolevien metafyysisten periaatteiden "olemassaolon" ja "perustan" ilmentyminä ihmisten itsetietoisuudessa. Arthur Schopenhauer jatkoi Schellingiä muistuttavaa tahtometafysiikkaa, mutta siirti sitä kohti modernia naturalismia ymmärtämällä

koko luonnon ja ihmiset sen osana yleisen, kaikessa vaikuttavan sokean tahdon ilmentymänä. Tällöin pahan käsitteestä tulee ambivalentti; sen merkitys riippuu siitä, miten Schopenhaueria tulkitsee. Schopenhauerin jälkeen siirryn varsinaisesti naturalistiseen ajatteluun, josta ensimmäisenä käsittelen sosiaalipsykologisia selityksiä, joissa "paha" pyritään selittämään tiettyjen sosiaalisten tilanteiden sanelemana tuhoavana käytöksenä. Sigmund Freudin mukaan taas hyvän ja pahan ideat voidaan palauttaa varhaislapsuudesta kumpuavien universaalien ja perustavien kokemusten rationalisoinneiksi, joilla on olennainen normatiivinen funktio yksilön mielenterveyden sekä yhteiskuntarauhan säilyttämisessä. Kaikkein perusteellisimpana naturalistina käsittelen Friedrich Nietzscheä, jonka mukaan pahan käsite nykyisessä muodossan syntyi kristinuskon myötä, ja sen olennainen funktio oli rajoittaa vahvimpien yksilöiden valtaa heikompia kohtaan sisäisen "omantunnon" avulla. Nietzschen mukaan erityisesti kristinuskon menetettyä yhteiskunnallisen voimansa, pahan käsitteeseen tulisi suhtautua kriittisesti, sillä siihen sisältyy ajatus, että elämässä sellaisena kuin se on, on jotain perustavasti väärää, jota ei pitäisi olla.

Toisessa luvussa käsittelen Immanuel Kantin filosofiaa kokonaisuutena keskittyen erityisesti hänen "radikaalin pahan" teoriaansa. Myöhäistuotannossaan Kant kiinnittää erityishuomiota siihen, että vapaasti valittu moraalinen hyvä edellyttää taipumusta valita sen vastakohta, paha. Näin ollen transsendentaalifilosofian perusoletuksista seuraa Kantin mukaan, että ihmiset valitsevat universaalisti "noumenaalisena valintana" taipumuksen pahaan, mikä selittää yksilöiden konkreettiset yksittäiset pahat valinnat. Kantin teoriaa on perinteisesti pidetty vanhentuneena ja outonakin, mutta argumentoin, että luettuna yhdessä Kantin antropologian sekä historian– ja uskonnonfilosofian kanssa, radikaalin pahan teoriassa ei ole mitään erityisen outoa. Tulkintani mukaan se, että taipumus pahaan valitaan "ajan ja paikan ulkopuolella" tarkoittaa vain, että ei ole mahdollista osoittaa ajallista alkuhetkeä sille, kun ihminen alkaa tiedostaa moraalilain velvoitteen – ja samaan aikaan taipumuksen vastustaa sitä. Sen sijaan esitän, että radikaali paha johtaa Kantin kriittisen projektin kriisiin, josta voi selvitä vain Kierkegaardin ajattelua muistuttavalla irrationaalisella uskonhypyllä. Monien nykyaikaisten Kant-tutkijoiden mukaan koko Kantin filosofia perustuu teleologiselle kehitykselle kohti "korkeinta hyvää", moraalisuuden ja onnellisuuden oikeudenmukaista suhdetta. Radikaali paha asettaa kuitenkin perustavanlaatuisen esteem korkeimman hyvän toteutumiselle; se ei ole ainoastaan ulkoinen este, jota voitaisiin asteittain ylittää, vaan se aikaansaa ihmisen tahdon sisäisen ristiriidan. Sama moraalinen ihmistahto, joka tuottaa korkeimman hyvän idean, on jo valmiiksi tehnyt sen toteutumisen mahdottomaksi valitsemalla taipumuksen pahaan.

Kolmannessa luvussa käsittelen vastaavasti Schellingin ajattelua ja erityisesti hänen metafyysistä teoriaa pahasta. Aluksi tuon esille viimeisten vuosikymmenien aikana tapahtunutta käännettä koskien Schellingiä; häntä ei enää pidetä Hegelille alisteisena historiallisena kuriositeettina vaan edelleen ajankohtaisena ajattelijana, joka nimenomaan esitti joitain perustavimpia Hegel-

kritiikkejä. Paneudun seuraavaksi Schellingin Vapaustutkielmana tunnettuun teokseen, jossa pahan käsite on Schellingin tuotannossa keskeisimmässä osassa. Vapaustutkielman metafysiikka perustuu ajatukselle siitä, että luonnonlakeja noudattava havaittava järjestys on mahdollinen ainoastaan kaoottista "perustaa" vasten, jota Schelling kuvaa "sokeana tahtona olemassaoloon". Tällainen sokea tahto on läsnä myös ihmisessä, ja pahuudessa on Schellingin mukaan kyse siitä, että tämä tahto nousee paikaltaan perustana ja pyrkii määrittämään olemassaoloa kokonaisuudessaan. Kolmannen luvun lopuksi selvennän Schellingin ajatusta tulkitsemalla hänen metafyysistä pahakäsitystä syväekologian, psykoanalyysin ja kulttuuriantropologian viitekehyksissä.

Neljännessä ja viimeisessä pääluvussa vertailen moraalista ja metafyysistä pahakäsitystä keskenään. Tavoitteenani on osoittaa, että Schellingin metafyysinen pahakäsitys tulisi ottaa vakavasti, ja että se kykenee yhdistämään monia hyviä puolia moraalisesta pahakäsityksestä ja sen naturalistisista kritiikeistä. Aluksi käyn läpi kuusi metafyysiseen pahakäsitykseen kohdistuvaa mahdollista kritiikkiä, joiden osoitan pohjaavan laajalti väärinymmärryksille. Seuraavaksi osoitan, että nykyaikaiset moraaliset pahateoriat ovat huomattavasti enemmän velkaa Kantille kuin yleisesti tunnustetaan. Monet Kantiin pintapuolisesti perehtyneet ajattelijat saattavat kritisoida Kantia mutta esittää itse sellaisten teorian pahasta, joka seuraa hyvinkin tarkasti Kantin ajatusta radikaalista pahasta. Toisaalta, sellaisetkin moraaliset pahateoriat, jotka todella eroavat merkittävästi Kantista, jakavat kuitenkin sen kanssa yhden erittäin merkittävän piirteen: pahan käsitteen oikeuttamisen transsendentaalisella argumentilla. Juuri tämä piirre tekee moraalisesta pahakäsityksestä edelleen alttiin naturalistisille kritiikeille. Käsittelen erityisesti kolmea eri kritiikkiä.

Moraalisessa pahakäsityksessä "paha" on ainoastaan moraaliseen toimintaan liittyvä termi. Käytännön kokemuksessa kuitenkin pahalla on myös muunlaisia merkityksiä, kuten esimerkiksi psykologi Fred Alfordin tutkimukset osoittavat. Alfordin mukaan itse asiassa tyypillisin pahaan liitetty assosiaatio on tietyntyyppinen esikäsitteellinen kokemus, jossa tunne eheästä itsestä hajoaa. Myös suhteellisen läheisessä historiassa pahan käsitteen merkitys oli huomattavasti nykyistä laajempi, mikä herättää kysymyksen siitä, tuleeko käsitys pahasta muuttumaan uudelleen historian edetessä. Kolmanneksi, Nietzschen moraalipsykologinen pahan käsitteen kritiikki koskee erityisesti nykyisiä moraalisia pahakäsityksiä, joissa pahan käsitteelle ei ole teologista perustaa. Argumentoin, että kaikissa näistä tapauksista Schellingin metafyysinen pahateoria selviää näistä kritiikeistä. Schellingillä pahan merkitys ei ole tarkastasti rajattu moraaliseen toimintaan, joten nykyhetkessä tai historiassa laajemmat merkitykset pahalle eivät tuota sille ongelmaa. Toisaalta, Schelling itse esittää Nietzscheä muistuttavaa moraalipsykologista kritiikkiä valtavirtaista kristillistä ajattelua sekä jälkikristillistä humanismia kohtaan. Schellingillä itsellään taas oletus pahasta pohjataan eräänlaiseen teologiaan, mikä voidaan toki itsessään nähdä myös heikkoutena.

Lopuksi tuon esille kuinka laajasti ymmärrettynä "uusrealistiset" ajattelijat Quentin Meillassoux, Markus Gabriel ja Slavoj Žižek ovat hyödyntäneet

Schellingin metafysiikkaa transsendentaalifilosofista paradigmaa vastaan sitoutumatta kuitenkaan Schellingin aktuaalisiin metafyysis-teologisiin oletuksiin. Sovellettuna pahan käsitteeseen tällainen lähestymistapa olisi luonnollisesti houkutteleva, sillä se mahdollistaisi yllä mainitut Schellingin pahan metafysiikkan liittyvät edut ilman sitoutumista niiden taustalla oleviin, usein liian vahvoina nähtyihin oletuksiin. Argumentoin kuitenkin, että vaikka uusrealistit kykenisivätkin luomaan aidosti uudenlaista metafysiikkaa, joka ylittää transsendentaalifilosofian muttei ole sidottu teologiaan, pahan käsite on erityistapaus, jossa teologiasta irtisanoutuminen on huomattavan haastavaa.

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