The Self-Evidence of Illusion

*Alternative Truth by Schelling and the Gospel of Mark 16:1–8*

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**Abstract**

The question of verity in our day’s discourses within society, culture and religion challenges philosophy in the face of fake news, manipulations and the virtual. This paper addresses, via an exploration of the later philosophy of F.W.J. Schelling and the Gospel of Mark, whether the illusionary of history ought to be recognised as a form of truth. In his “Positive Philosophy”, Schelling claims that history is characterised by a loss of meaning that cannot be compensated for by philosophy, morality and sciences, and which is caused by a thinking-mode of “presentness”, that knows no true past and future. As a contrast, he proposes the “illusion” of eschatological-utopian thinking, as paradigmatically laid down in the biblical idea of kenosis. The Gospel of Mark also refers to the traumatic character of history, and in its final chapter imparts the notion of a possible counter-history.

**Keywords**

Schelling – Gospel of Mark – positive philosophy – eschatology – counter-history – alternative truth

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So in reality there are two states of mind [...] The one is content to be exact and sticks to the facts; the other is not content with that, but always looks at the whole and derives its knowledge from so-called eternal and great truths. The one thereby gains in success,
and the other in scope and dignity. It is clear that a pessimist could also say that the results of the one are worth nothing and those of the other are not true. For on the Last Day, when human works are weighed, what do you begin with? Three treatises on formic acid, even if it were thirty of them?! On the other hand, what does one know about the Last Day if one doesn’t even know all what can become of formic acid until then?!

1 Preliminary Remark

This article examines the topics explored at the congress entitled “The Illusion of the Self-Evidence. Rhetoric and Pragmatics of the Strategic Use of Truth and Reliability in Times of Political and Social Crisis” (Bonn, 14 November 2020). The political background of such a conference is undoubtedly coloured by the world’s experience of Donald Trump’s presidency, wherein many concealed developments of the last decades became more apparent. Truth has come to be perceived as neither a primarily personal truthfulness nor the description of reality, but rather indicated by degrees of financial success.

1.1 The Catholic Truth and Power

On the Catholic side, Pope Benedict’s pontificate was particularly dedicated to truth. Truth functioned as eternal, immutable truth – transmitted through Church tradition via its Clerus – against which secular and temporal claims to validity had to be measured. The politically ingenious representative of Wojtila and Ratzinger in Italy, Cardinal Ruini, established how truth would be perceived within the Italian political realm – he called it “valori non negoziabili”

Musil, Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften, p. 248: „Es gibt also in Wirklichkeit zwei Geistesverfassungen [...]. Die eine begnügt sich damit, genau zu sein, und hält sich an die Tatsachen; die andere begnügt sich nicht damit, sondern schaut immer auf das Ganze und leitet ihre Erkenntnisse von sogenannten ewigen und großen Wahrheiten her. Die eine gewinnt dabei an Erfolg, und die andere an Umfang und Würde. Es ist klar, dass ein Pessimist auch sagen könnte, die Ergebnisse der einen seien nichts wert und die der anderen nicht wahr. Denn was fängt man am Jüngsten Tag, wenn die menschlichen Werke gewogen werden, mit drei Abhandlungen über die Ameisensäure an, und wenn es ihrer dreißig wären?! Andererseits, was weiß man vom Jüngsten Tag, wenn man nich einmal weiß, was alles bis dahin aus der Ameisensäure werden kann?!”
(non-negotiable values) – and validated the political parties accordingly. This eventually came to mean, however, that the only truly non-negotiable value would be subordination to Catholic doctrine, within which is contained the Roman claim that truth essentially expresses an entitlement to power held by the Catholic Church. This kind of hegemonial claims is also apparent in the actions of many “cultural warriors”, of which striking examples can be found amongst the participants of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, who counter the “truth” of secular self-determination with the “eternal truth” of the revealed faith, without which, they claim, the world order would perish.

1.2 Truth and the Broken Sense

We currently live in a morally charged world, in which the interpretative sovereignty over reality is at stake. This is nothing new, of course, but this struggle is accompanied by a considerable erosion of the institutions behind it, leading to a crisis of representation. Political parties, religious communities, trade unions, media, states, civil society institutions and even universities are massively challenged as guardians of secular truth, as conspicuously exemplified these days in the discourse concerning the Covid vaccine.

In this context, it must be remembered that the connection between truth and meaning has become gradually weakened over the course of recent history. An example of how the belief in a teleological sense of history was shaken, can be seen in the aftermath of Auschwitz. If this shaking initially served to deconstruct imperial claims to validity and to anchor truth in truthfulness towards the victims of history, world history as a whole eventually came under the suspicion of being illusory and nonsensical. Currently, in the wake of the Frankfurt School and postmodern French philosophy, truth claims are deciphered as power claims, but the inference is often that universal truth claims constitute impermissible encroachments on personal truths. Self-determination, which is another pillar of modern thought, is no longer understood as moral self-determination in the sense of universal validity, but as the personal truth of the self. The only remaining and final truth is thus that of one’s own self, but even this is subjected to the suspicion of being illusory. If, after the loss of trust in church, party and university, also the truth of the self falls, only illusion remains.

This illusoriness of reality is expressed perhaps most prominently in the all-encompassing virtualisation of our lives. We live from TV series to TV series and our real truth is played out in the fates of the main characters in series like “Game of Thrones” or “Westworld”. Simultaneously, the searches for new narratives to bring truthfulness into our individual and social existences are flourishing. The market of new narratives is inhabited by sciences, religions,
cultural events and even philosophy: Do these resulting narratives sufficiently serve the respective bubbles in which their recipients find themselves, or are there universal approaches? At least among the bourgeois youth of the first world, the truth of the moral obligation to save the climate is gaining strong support. Notably, however, a parallel grand narrative is also gaining momentum in the bourgeois-academic strata, namely that of the increasing entropic extinction of our world in cosmic cold death, i.e. a nihilistic narrative that has led some cynics to question the commitment to the climate, since ultimately everything would amount to nothing anyway. In addition, in the industrialised societies of Europe and North America, but increasingly also in other parts of the world, there is, as indicated, the “mantra” of self-determination, which, however, very often amounts primarily to a self-determination by means of consumption.

1.3 The Threat of the Apeiron

Even if one no longer trusts philosophy to reveal the great truths, if there ever were any, it is perhaps worthwhile to take a look at the relationship between truth and illusion as it has been presented in some of the grand philosophical treatises of the last centuries. For even if the great ideational conceptions of philosophy (and of course also of theology) are anchored in social and cultural constellations, philosophical ideas do themselves simultaneously shape the dynamics of the world. If one considers the relationship of truth to the question of illusion in this context, one might first think of the great master of masks, Friedrich Nietzsche, who denied the logicality of the world and its being guided by one principle. For him, the world was a game of masks behind which nothing was hidden; the logos was thus illusionary.

A yet more thorough critique of the opposition between truth and illusion than that of Nietzsche can be found in a philosopher who, perhaps at first glance is not associated with the question of an “illusion of the self-evident” despite his “Philosophie der Weltalter”, in which truth is tied back to the possibility of a lost, or forgotten, sense of history. This philosopher is Schelling, who in his writings increasingly tried to expose the traumatic core of a reality which had lost its logos. Schelling, especially in his later philosophy, was concerned with the detrimental influence of what he described as a demonic apeiron (unboundedness) contained in the self, which cannot be overcome by logos and moral self-determination, i.e. by theoretical and practical reason. Insofar as it in our times is no longer primarily the threat of the limit that is felt, but rather the threat of boundlessness – one has to think of the apocalyptic

2 On Nietzsche and the masks, see Capozza, Im Namen der Treue zur Erde.
mood pervading many of the current films, TV series, and discourses, wherein an indefinable and boundless element threatens the entire symbolic order – Schelling’s philosophy ought to attain renewed interest.

Throughout his life, Schelling developed a comprehensive ontology through ever new attempts at bringing together nature and freedom, metaphysics and transcendental philosophy, the limited (peras) and the unlimited (apeiron). In his later philosophy, namely at the transition from the so-called Negative to the so-called Positive Philosophy, he increasingly becomes aware that the conception of being that underlies our understanding of reality might be of an illusory character. Thus, he anticipates motifs ranging from Nietzsche to Adorno, but incorporates these into a comprehensive critique of knowledge, which includes a critique of Kant’s three great ideas of reason, namely God-world-ego, as well as a critique of Hegel’s conception of “the progress in the consciousness of freedom”.

1.4     Hegel and the Illusion of the Self-Evident

Kant (in the wake of Hume) determines the world as appearance and thus takes a step towards the illusion of the self-evident. Hegel poses the problem even more radically: In the Phenomenology of Spirit, he shows how the ego fails to locate itself in the world it encounters. Neither through theoretical nor through practical reason does it attain self-knowledge; rather, the path of the ego is one of despair, in which it must absolve itself of the representations it thought it had attained through knowledge. With the loss of its world, language also takes on a different character: It no longer represents being, but attains a radically negative function as the suspender of the object world. This negative character culminates in the comic consciousness, in which language no longer denotes reality, and furthermore in revealed religion, where absolute substance itself is separated within itself and in which the metaphysical God, who, as Agamben rightly notes, vouches for the denotative dimension of language, has died.3 Hegel also examines this thought at the end of his Encyclopaedia, where three positions of thought on objectivity are formulated, each of which expresses a certain relation between consciousness and reality: The first expresses the metaphysical position that language and world coincide, i.e. truth is capable of language. The second corresponds to critical thinking (Kant, Hume), in which consciousness and reality are separate and there is at best an approximation of reality. The third expresses Hegel’s view: language manifests the rupture between consciousness and being, it does not

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3 See Agamben, Il tempo che resta.
have a directly denotative function. One could therefore say that Hegel elucidates how the self-evident, or that which can be represented by means of language, is an illusion. There is no direct access to reality that is not broken in itself; only the dialectical suspension of the object world remains.

Schelling’s position adds another dimension to the position presented here: instead of an illusion of the self-evident, one could speak of a self-evidence of the illusion. Only the illusion is capable of truth, according to Schelling. In the following chapter, this particular point of Schelling’s Positive Philosophy will be examined by means of a few fundamental outlines.

2 Schelling’s Self-Evidence of Illusion

2.1 The Question of the Saving God as the Pivot of Schelling’s Philosophy

At the end of the Darstellung der reinrationalen Philosophie (Presentation of the Philosophy of Pure Reason), Schelling makes the following remark regarding Hegel:

For the Contemplative Science leads only to the God who is the end, therefore, not the real one, only to that which is God in its essence, not to the actual one. With this merely conceptual (ideelle) God, the I would be able to calm down if it could remain in contemplative life.

The “conceptual God” is the God of “Contemplative Science”, i.e., the God of the philosophers and, as asserted in the Philosophie der Offenbarung (PhdO – Philosophy of Revelation), the God of the mysteries. He is not the true God who is able to save, but the God of human thought or human self-insurance. He is not the God who redeems from death and the effects of the Fall of Man, i.e., evil and deception; he rather conceals both death and the reality of evil, which makes attainment of truth impossible. The starting point of Schelling’s problem indicated here is expressed very insistently in the Einleitung in die Philosophie der Offenbarung (Introduction to the Philosophy of Revelation):

4 See Appel, *Das Dieses ist ein Baum ist ein Baum*.
5 See the note by Franz, *Philosophische Theologie*, pp. 209–211.
6 Schelling, XI, p. 560: „Denn die contemplative Wissenschaft führt nur zu dem Gott, der Ende, daher nicht der wirkliche ist, nur zu dem, was seinem Wesen nach Gott ist, nicht zu dem aktuellen. Bei diesem bloß ideellen Gott vermönchte das Ich sich etwa dann zu beruhigen, wenn es beim beschaulichen Leben bleiben könnte."
7 Schelling, XI, p. 569.
For when I consider the deeds and effects of this freedom on a large scale [...] this world of history presents such a desolate spectacle that I completely despair of a purpose, and, therefore, of a true reason for the world. [...] It is precisely he, man, who drives me to the last desperate question: Why is there anything at all? Why is there not nothing?

Here, Schelling takes up Leibniz’s central question. But whereas Leibniz’s problem was still to be understood against the background of the question of human freedom – only a world sufficiently founded on God’s love is capable of establishing human freedom – Schelling’s horizon shifts: The question no longer arises from a supreme commitment to human freedom in the sense of “contemplative reason” but becomes a despairing question of the meaning of a broken world, which has also lost – with the loss of God as sufficient reason – its truth.

2.2 The Idea in Individuo

Schelling’s point of departure in his God-Thought (Gott-Denken), on which the possibility of truth depends, is Kant’s definition of the Highest Being. God is Idee in individuo (Idea in individuo) and as such, absolute Subject, absolute activity, absolute will. One could say that God is the absolute self-positing I. God = God would be the “equation” in which the thought is expressed that the Idee in individuo as omnitudo realitatis (the totality of being) is absolute mediation (Vermittlung) in the sense of Leibniz’ totality (Monas Monadum), i.e., absolute Subject, absolute Object and absolute Subject-Object. Theologically, the consequence would be that creation results in a tension, a difference – what Schelling calls Potency in God¹⁰ – which brings us to the core of Schelling’s Theory of Potency (Potenzenlehre). As absolute Subject, God is the pure ability (das Könnende, das rein Seyende) to which the absolute Object (Seyn) has always corresponded, whereby the copula between the two determinations is the absolute Subject-Object. In this stadium, God is posited as Trinity circling within itself. It should be noted that this absolute activity, the pure Actus, does not signify an Act-Potency relation, that is, not a being necessarily passing from

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8 Schelling, XIII, p. 7: „Denn wenn ich die Thaten und Wirkungen dieser Freiheit im Großen betrachte [...] diese Welt der Geschichte bietet ein so trostloses Schauspiel dar, daß ich an einem Zwecke, und demnach an einem wahren Grunde der Welt vollenndes verzweifle. [...] Gerade er, der Mensch, treibt mich zur letzten verzweilungsvollen Frage: warum ist überhaupt etwas? warum ist nicht nichts?“. See also Pareyson, Ontologia della libertà, p. 464.
9 See also Pareyson, Ontologia della libertà, p. 464.
10 See also Meier-Hamidi, Transcendence, pp. 256–259.
Potency into Actus. Rather, this pure activity, this pure will, wants “no-thing” and is not directed towards any finite object.

2.3 **Subjectivity as Withdrawal of Being**

However, the “Non-will,” which Schelling describes as pure subjectivity, should be assessed more closely. The “super-existing”\(^{11}\) subject, which Schelling emphasises in his later writings as detached from the potencies,\(^{12}\) only attains objectness (*Gegenständlichkeit*) through its “localisation” in the categorial world, beyond which, however, it always points. Pure subjectivity, which Schelling in his later philosophy contemplates with increasing emphasis and from ever new perspectives,\(^{13}\) is nothing other than negativity, i.e., the withdrawal of all objectivity and, therefore, the “no-thing”.\(^{14}\) “True actual freedom, does not consist in being, but rather in not being, in not being able to express itself [...].”\(^{15}\) With these words, Schelling declares that the pure structure of subjectivity ought to be thought of as an absolute “withdrawal”, as that which precedes every “presence” (which is always in the Potency-Actus relation) in the categorial world. Pure subjectivity does not designate “something”, but rather that which can never be “filled” by a “something”. Insofar as this withdrawal cannot be expressed through any self-relation, pure subjectivity precedes the posit-ing \(I = I\) and is thus that “non-object” which lies before any (re-)presentation. Schelling’s Absolute, and hence true, is “before” any mediation the nothingness of an absence that precedes any presence in the sense of the Potency-Actus relation, and thus the enabling of freedom.

2.4 **The Tension of the Potencies**

However, the selfpositivating subject (first Potency) is able to step out of the super-existing (Überseienden), out of the pure withdrawal of being, and

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12 Schelling also speaks of the *natura necessaria* in the *Andere Deduktion der Prinzipien der positiven Philosophie* (Other Deduction of the Principles of Positive Philosophy).
13 It is a great achievement of F. Tomatis to have elaborated profoundly on the development of Schelling’s late philosophy in continuation of the classical works of H. Fuhrmanns, W. Schulz and X. Tilliette. See Tomatis, *Kenosis*.
14 See e.g. the following sentence of Schelling in the *Presentation (Darstellung)*: “God is really nothing in himself; he is nothing but relation and pure relation, for he is only the Lord; everything that we add above or beyond this makes him mere substance” (Schelling, x, p. 260). “[Gott ist eben wirklich nichts an sich; er ist nichts als Beziehung und latere Beziehung, denn er ist nur Herr; alles, was wir darüber und außerdem hinzuthun, macht ihn zur bloßen Substanz.]”
15 Schelling, *PhD*, p. 29: “Die wahre, eigentliche Freiheit, besteht überhaupt nicht im Sein, sondern vielmehr im nicht-Sein, im nicht sich äußern Können [...].”
to locate itself in the other of itself (i.e., in being). Thus, it sets in motion a peculiar dynamic: if it was previously “beyond” being or “before” being (natura necessaria, super-existing, pure That (reines Daß), “the Spirit free from its being Spirit”,\(^{16}\) Lord, etc.), it now emerges as the tension of the potencies. From the pre-reflexive and unattainable withdrawal, it places itself within the reflexive tension of the self positivating I = I and is thereby divided. It endeavours to reach itself in the other than itself, but fails, since the subject essentially exceeds every limit, every objectivation. Consequently, the subject experiences this failure to find itself in the world of objects as a deprivation of itself and, as Schelling explains in detail in the *Philosophy of Mythology*, primarily as a loss of limit, i.e., as apeiron. The first reaction to this loss of self, and limit, is boundless terror and the madness unleashed by it. Schelling claims mythology as representing the first attempt to master this withdrawing, insofar as the gods are the first embodiments of the apeiron. Later on, the mythological process has given way to more rational attempts at mastery of the apeiron such as science (by means of the theoretical reason) or morality (by means of practical reason).

Perhaps the difficulty in Schelling’s doctrine of God is that he does not develop his idea of God directly, but rather through disgressing into numerous aporias, only at the end of which his actual concept of the Divine formulated. First, he characterises the idea of the transcendental ideal in the sense that this, as absolute Conscious-Being (Bewusst-Sein; unity of thinking and being),\(^{17}\) is absolute Subject, absolute Predicate (object)\(^{18}\) and absolute Subject-Predicate (subjectlike object) and thus the absolute copula. When determining the absolute copula in his later philosophy, however, Schelling, actually goes beyond the transcendental ideal, i.e. the idea of a totality of being. This interpretation had been alluded to in an anticipatory manner when the Absolute was linked to the experience of radical withdrawal, and the impossibility of the self-positing subject to reflect itself in the world of objects.

The subject is not “delimited” by the unity of the Conscious-Being, but is experienced as unlimited, as apeiron or first Potency. In more existential terms, it refers to the (limitless) dismay of a radical loss (of security, limitation, fullness of being, etc.), which results in what can be likened to an experience of death. In contrast to the boundlessness of the first Potency, the second Potency

\(^{16}\) Schelling, *PhDO*, p. 78: „der von seinem Geist sein freie Geist“.

\(^{17}\) Since the transcendental ideal denotes the absolute determinateness of the subject, it is both absolute Consciousness and absolute Being (totality of predicates).

\(^{18}\) Already in Leibniz’s doctrine of the monad, these two determinations coincide. The monad is the subject that reflects the universe in a certain perspective, which is why the entire object world becomes the predicate of the monad.
has a limiting function (that of shaping the apeiron). It is the activity of restoring the unity of the absolute Conscious-Being, i.e., the absolute copula, and of overcoming the tension that has opened up through the effect of the first Potency. This means that its purpose will be to determine the world sufficiently and to unify it. This is only possible by means of sufficient reason, i.e., by integrating everything that exists (which is always characterised by a tension) into the Absolute Being, which has not been irretrievably lost because the second Potency is under the auspices of the third Potency, the *causa finalis*. In other words, the thought of an absolute unity is not lost because it is originated within an indestructible antecedent unity, namely that of the third Potency itself.

In this stadium, one can speak of a creation in God, which is characterised by an interplay of antagonistic forces (which are being removed from and being brought back into the absolute Subject), over which, nevertheless, the third Potency prevails. Creation, insofar as it remains enclosed within God, is the mirror of divine unity, but not yet a mirror of God as a person.

2.5 *The Singularity of God*

In contrast to the idea of God as absolute Being, as developed in the *Philosophie der Offenbarung* (Philosophy of Revelation), Schelling in his later drafts (*Anderen Deduktion der Prinzipien der positiven Philosophie*/Other Deduction of the Principles of Positive Philosophy, *Darstellung der reinrationalen Philosophie*/Presentation of Purely Rational Philosophy, and *Abhandlung über die Quelle der ewigen Wahrheiten*/Treatise on the Source of Eternal Truths), emphasises another idea: God, as absolute individuality and absolute freedom, is the One who is free in the face of every universal, every Concept (*Begriff*). Schelling’s incentive for this further evolvement of the concept of God is twofold: soteriologically, it is about viewing God as a person and thus thinking the moment of singularity; from the point of view of a critique of reason, he seeks to avoid operating below the level of Kant, who convincingly demonstrated that the concept of the transcendental ideal has no (spatiotemporal) existence, which, however, causes the concept of an “epitome (*Inbegriff*)” of the possibility of all reality” to remain either “empty” or “anthropomorphic”. Schelling adheres to this view but adds to this that the Concept (*Begriff*) must be properly placed “outside itself”.

As a consequence, conceptual thinking, at its highest point, turns into a singularity (*Idee in individuo*) that can no longer be attained conceptually.

19 Schelling, XI, p. 563.
Thus, according to Schelling, *philosophy of pure reason* (*reinrationale Philosophie*) has ultimately become *Negative Philosophy*: initially by means of the intellect, it reached the absolute Subject-Object (*Conscious-Being*), i.e., God = God, the self-positing of the Absolute. Schelling applies the following three-part formula to the Absolute: -A (negativity of the absolute Subject, *apeiron*), +A (positivity of the absolute Object, *peras*), -/+ A (absolute Subject-Object), i.e., the necessity of being. Then Negative Philosophy leads, by means of the *Idee in individuo* (the singularity of the Absolute as a result of the totality of the absolute Subject-Object) to the absolute individuality which Schelling calls A₀ ("it has penetrated to A₀ through noetic cognition").²⁰ In the singularity of A₀ there is "absolutely nothing universal, but only the individual exists", in whom "there [is] no What (*Was*), [but only] the pure That (*Daß*)".²¹ It should be emphasised that A₀, as the "super-existent* (*Ueberexistirende*) is not locatable as a conceptually conveyable being. God, as an absolute individual, is neither "(with)in" nor "out(side)" (of) the world, nor even coincides with it, but is rather the absolute negativity of it.

### 2.6 The Self-Positing of the I and Its Consequences: The Fall of Man and Death

In the *Abhandlung über die Quelle der ewigen Wahrheiten* (Treatise on the Source of Eternal Truths), Schelling maintains that "not the idea is the cause of the being of the ideal, but the ideal is the cause of the being of the idea."²² The transition from *Negative* to *Positive Philosophy* occurs as a determination of the individual being, whose first determination is "*that* (*daß*) it is". In this context, it must be remembered that Schelling’s proof of God is "a posteriori":

The proof of this Spirit cannot be given by philosophy, but only through philosophy. Considered in this sense, the existence of the Spirit will only be proven a posteriori. For philosophy can be recognised as both a priori science and as a posteriori science. For it is science a priori in regards to the world, and science a posteriori in regards to the Spirit.²³

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²⁰ Schelling, xi, p. 566: "wiewohl es [das Ich] durch die noetische Erkenntnis bis zu A₀ durchgedrungen."
²¹ Schelling, xi, p. 586: in der "überhaupt nichts Allgemeines, sondern nur Einzelnes" ist, in dem kein "was [ist], [sondern nur] das reine Daß".
²² Schelling, xi, p. 586: dass "nicht die Idee dem Ideal, sondern das Ideal der Idee Ursache des Seins ist".
²³ Schelling, *Phdo*, p. 69 et seq. "Der Beweis dieses Geistes kann nicht von der Philosophie, sondern nur durch die Philosophie gegeben werden. In diesem Sinn betrachtet wird die Existenz des Geistes nur a posteriori erwiesen. Denn die Philosophie kann als Wissenschaft a priori und als Wissenschaft a posteriori erkannt werden. Sie ist nämlich
Philosophy can only reflect on the God of the beginning, whose individuality is expressed by Negative Philosophy (transcendental philosophy) in the sense of a “transcendental ideal”, if God reveals this individuality as historical Self-Proof (Selbsterweis), i.e. if God reveals himself in history as a person, who will have been “all in all (1 Cor 15:28)”. Through this revelation God’s truth will come to correspond with the unveiling of freedom. Creation, according to Schelling, is the tension of potencies as posited in God. As a result, being emerges as absolute Subject-Object, as a sufficiently reasoned world which can recognize its own reason, a world in which Conscious-Being can understand itself as an all-encompassing unity in the power of Spirit. Schelling calls this utopian condition Weltseele (soul of the world) a₀ or the archetypal human being. In Leibnizian terms, it is the central monad that recognises its sufficient reason and is the infinite mirror of the whole world. However, a question then immediately arises: Can an infinite mirror without frame and limitation reflect anything at all or does it instead show “nothing”? What is implied by the archetypal human-being? Is (s)he the being in primordial unity with nature, i.e., the being that knows no withdrawal and thus coincides entirely with the world? This absolute fullness of being would, however, entail the loss of being human. Rather, the archetypal human being can best be interpreted in the sense that (s)he does not subjugate the world to her/his knowledge, but is entirely a reference to the transcendent God. (S)he is a₀, the Weltseele (soul of the world), that is the one who is unity with nature and recognises its sufficient reason and thus its truth by acknowledging in every being the withdrawing, ever greater God.

The soul of the world nevertheless emerges in a first act as self-positing (Fall of Man), whereby it posits itself outside its own sufficient reason and thus outside its truth. Man gains the freedom for the fall from the tension of the potencies, from the negativity, from the apeiron of the first potency. Within this opposition between the self-positing of the ego and being integrated into the unity of the soul of the world, one can speak for the first time of genuine individuality, but the problem is that this first manifestation of individuality constitutes the loss of the truth of the unity of being, i.e., in this beginning of the self, a moment of arbitrariness, disintegration and illusion appears.

This is why Leibniz, Kant, Hegel and Schelling adhere to a “holistic” form of thought. The disintegration of the world would also eliminate the possibility of subjectivity and freedom. Man can only experience himself as a unity if he experiences the world as a unity. Schelling’s concept of a “detachment” of the Spirit offers an indication that “subjectivity”
Human freedom in its immediate form, i.e., in its emergence as self-positing will and thus as individuality, is satanic madness,\textsuperscript{25} which at times comes to be expressed in mythical images of God. These do not represent an “invention” but are objective figures of the apeiron of a displaced Conscious-Being. “Satan” is the first Potency enacted by man, i.e., the will that is not limited by any reason, the \textit{apeiron}. The mythical images are generally figures representing the apeiron of death, but also introduce its first limitation by shaping it. With the Fall of Man and the separation from the infinite being, the Spirit separates itself as an individual F/Act (\textit{Tathandlung}) – in a Fichtean, and voluntaristic self-initiating sense – from the eternal soul of the world (\textit{Weltseele a₀}), and primordial unity of potencies, and posits an extra-divine, i.e., mortal world. The self-positing of freedom locates the whole being outside sufficient reason. First, because in every monad/subject all other monads/subjects are reflected/related, and second, because in the unity of Conscious-Being individual and universal being do not constitute two separate spheres. The opposition of the self-consciousness thus constitutes the antithesis of absolute Being par excellence. It shatters the organic time embedded in the eternity of the potencies – each monad as sufficiently reasoned in the totality of being has its own subjectlike time, each of which is a particular mirror of divine eternity – into a beginningless and endless event, which entails the constant loss of life and truth. This is vividly illustrated in Schelling’s \textit{Weltalterphilosophie} (Philosophy of the Ages of the World).

If then the sufficient reason of the world is not being, but that which is above being, i.e., A₀, which has been interpreted as absolute negativity, as the withdrawal of God, then a special light could be thrown on the Fall of Man: The real problem would be that man fills this withdrawal with his own finite being, something Schelling attempts to express when he writes:

Such a one [human-being], therefore, so irretrievably bound to the world – now that he is free and detached from it, will not be able to let it go and will constantly, yet in vain, long to return to it. In this case, therefore, only unhappiness, restlessness, and a continuous deprivation of a life that he cannot regain, i.e., perpetual death [...] will be the lot of the one who has remained outside his idea [...].\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{25} See Schelling, \textit{PhdO}, p. 439 et seq. The philosophy of revelation also speaks of the fact that the temptation of Jesus (and thus the temptation of man) consisted in “taking being for oneself” (p. 440).

\textsuperscript{26} See Schelling, \textit{EPhdM}, xi, p. 474. “Ein solcher also und so mit der Welt verwachsen wird, nun auch wirklich frei und losgerissen von ihr, nicht von ihr lassen können, und beständig,
The problem of the Fall is that man wants to attain totality and does not recognise himself as withdrawn from himself. He tries to attain totality by “conquering” being, i.e., by filling the void that is the essence of man, with all kinds of phantasms. The expression of this withdrawal is man’s experience of death. This results in absolute misfortune, insofar as man, in the attempt of self-positing, loses the awareness that his life is withdrawn from him for the purpose of his own salvation; because only in this way can man transcend his existence and move towards God (the absolute “withdrawal”). Man now perceives in this detachment from being only the naked loss and the unlimited terror. In his *Philosophische Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie* (Philosophical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology), Schelling describes personality with the term “Spirit”.27 In contrast to the *soul of the world*, which expresses the totality of a necessary world cohesion, the Spirit is that which is “detached” from the world. It is that which withdraws from the total determining context of being and it is therefore the sphere of freedom. As far as man is concerned, however, this sphere is ambiguous: On the one hand, this empty space signifies, in the wake of Kantian morality, independence from a determinate being, thus reformulating the Kantian concept of duty as negative place, detached from being. On the other hand, this freedom is confronted from the very beginning with the temptation to positivise itself, to appropriate “being”. Man is for Schelling the no-thing-ness (negativity) of being, which can be experienced as a blessing or a curse, depending on whether man resists the temptation to appropriate being or not, and depending on whether man manages not to cling to life as his property, trying to overcome death.

2.7  The Ecstasy of Reason

It is precisely at this point that the transition from Negative to Positive Philosophy – as signified by God’s self-proof (*Selbsterweis*) through the redemption of man’s subjection to death (*Todesverfallenheit*) – manifests itself as the ecstasy of reason (*Ekstasis der Vernunft*). What is meant here is an attempt to master death (*Todesbewältigung*). Schelling writes about this ecstasy, which cannot “proceed from reflection”:

> It must be a will from which the expulsion of Λ₀ from reason, this last crisis of the science of reason, proceeds, a will that demands with inner

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necessity that God is not simply an idea. We speak of a final crisis of the science of reason: for the first one was that the I was expelled from the idea, whereby the character of the science of reason changed, but it itself remained; the great, final and actual crisis now consists in the fact that God, who has been found last, is expelled from the idea, the science of reason itself thus being abandoned (rejected, verworfen). Negative Philosophy, thereby, arrives at the destruction of the idea [... or at the result that the true being is only that which is outside the idea, and is not the idea, but is more than the idea [...].

The first will was the will for the self-positing of the I by putting itself in the place of God. By this act, it attempted to overcome the withdrawal of being from its own existence and, thereby, placed itself and the world outside of God. The second “will”, contrastingly, involved the sublation of the human will insofar as this will wanted its own ego, i.e. the reversal of its own self-positing and of the attempt to install its own ego in the place of the withdrawn divine being. The second will is one that no longer wants itself as a will, that does not seek to appropriate being either by theoretical means or through practical self-realisation, and which, therefore, settles neither in the sphere of theoretical nor in the sphere of practical reason. On the contrary, it must be recognized as a radical loss and withdrawal. It should therefore be characterised as a will that no longer wants to be master of death and master of being. Schelling thinks, in a visionary fashion, of a will radically emanating from God, yet as a non-heteronomous dynamic, since God can never be located in the sphere of the being.

2.8 Kenosis of the Logos and God as U-topia of Being
To be able to elucidate the ecstasy of reason, we need to look at the Philosophy of Revelation. It has demonstrated that man, because of the Fall, had posited the divine potencies as “extra-divine”, i.e., outside sufficient reason. Schelling
claims that the potencies are connected by a metaphysical bond, namely the Spirit. Thus, the Logos (the extra-divine posited second Potency) is not severed from the bond with God but reconnects it through history. This reconnection occurs through an increasing limiting of the limitless, mad, illogical first Potency, whose madness – integrated into the second Potency – manifests itself as creativity. In this context, one could speak of an increasing rationalisation of the world. The ultimate expression of the Logos, the second Potency, which definitively overcomes the first Potency manifests itself in Jesus of Nazareth, who reverses the self-positing of subject in the Fall of Man through an act of self-emptying or self-renunciation (kenosis). In the kenosis the Logos (second Potency) finds its sufficient reason, and thus its subject, not in itself, but in the Spirit (third Potency). It is crucial that the Logos, as manifested in Jesus, renounces world control in the sense of an absolute power over the world. The Logos is not the appropriation of limitless power, i.e., the attempt to utilise the withdrawing God. Rather, it reveals the spiritual bond between the Father (first Potency) and the Son (second Potency) by handing over to the Father everything, including its own existence. It does not try to tie his “detachment” (Losgelöstheit) from the world of objectification to the necessity of being (Seinsnotwendigkeit) and its worldly desire, but understands the “self-withdrawal” (Selbst-Entzogenheit) as the withdrawal (absoluteness) of the Father and thus true freedom. In relation to the ecstasy of reason, two things should therefore be noted:

Firstly, the ecstasy of reason is neither an act of intellectual appropriation of the world nor a moral self-positing, but a radical release of the I from itself (or a being released from itself), which takes place as the ultimate act of faith. The subject of ecstatic reason is the transcendent God who has expressed himself in the kenosis of the Logos. Existing as person means being “detached” from being, but not in the sense that the Self could seize this being from an external position or that it acts autocratically, but in that it understands to that it be withdrawn from itself. Therefore, the self does not belong to itself, but to the absolute withdrawal of being, hence to the “super-existing” (Ueberexistirenden), to God.

Secondly, the transition to Schelling’s Positive Philosophy is not the transition from a philosophy of principles to a historical philosophy, but the transition from a philosophy of “presentness” (präsentische Philosophie), under the hegemony of chronological time that presupposes God as being, to a u-topical philosophy that envisions God as future (advenient, Zu-Kunft).

For God reveals himself as the Ab-Solute, i.e., as the detached non-place (u-topos), especially in the third Potency (Spirit), which as “posited in the
future” (das zukünftig Gesetzte)\textsuperscript{29} forms the propulsive force of an undeductible future.

Schelling’s notable assumption is that of a “withdrawal”, which opens up the meaning of “detachment” from the being (Seyenden). Inability to locate itself entirely in being causes the primordial tension (Ur-Spannung) under which the Self stands as Conscious-Being, in which it points beyond itself to the Absolute. This withdrawal is initially perceived as the horror of the apeiron of the first Potency. The second Potency overcomes this terror in the self-revelation as “Son” of God in the kenosis. Its meaning is the renunciation of “being”, i.e. of filling the withdrawing negativity of the Divine with mythological,\textsuperscript{30} intellectual or moral compensations and in this way to endure the withdrawing. The third Potency, i.e. Spirit, is living from the never-present non-place (u-topia) in which the spiritual existence of the Self and consequently of Conscious-Being, manifests. God, therefore, does not signify a totality of being, which Kant convincingly exposed as a transcendental illusion; rather, through the Divine the fundamentally inaccessible (unverfügbar) nature of being is expressed, whereby it is only in this unfillable lacuna and openness of being that freedom and personality arise. The temporal expression of this openness, more “fundamental” than any being, is the primacy of the future, i.e. the u-topia.

Schelling draws strong attention to this with his conception of time: he emphasises that our world’s being in its gapless connections is only one element of time:

\[ \ldots \text{ that with the creation past, present and future – beginning, middle and end – are posited first and together; but it does not follow that no time is before the world or the creation, and in this respect one can indeed say: the world arose in time – it is, as it were, only a component of a time. The past is a time which goes beyond the world – the future is a time which will go beyond the world.}\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{29} Schelling, PhD, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{30} K. Heinrich shows in his book Parmenides und Jona that the core idea of myth is genealogy. This is the attempt to overcome death through the succession of generations, whose continuity would fill the void of the withdrawing. The modern transformation of genealogical thinking replaces the relationship between father-son with that of cause-effect. Both thoughts tried to avoid the lacuna of the subject and to occupy it. Schelling’s attempt at a “philosophy of mythology”, however criticisable it may be for its details, recognises the significance of the genealogy and its modern transformation for mythology (and sciences) and the necessity to sublate them.
\textsuperscript{31} Schelling, PhD, p. 138: \ldots\text{ daß mit der Schöpfung zuerst und zugleich Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft – Anfang, Mitte und Ende – gesetzt ist; aber es folgt nicht, dass keine Zeit vor der Welt oder der Schöpfung ist, und insofern kann man allerdings
In creation, God posits himself as the eternal past and u-topian future of the present, and thus of the temporal (world time). He creates a system of times, consisting of the mythological past of “what it was to be”, the present temporal and the u-topical future. Eternal past and u-topical future are thus inseparably intertwined in the unity of God and constitute an anterior future as transcendence of the purely present(able) temporal (world time). The content and the meaning that Schelling attributes to God as “detached” can therefore be understood more profoundly: The U-topos of God is the ad-venient (Zu-Kunft) of being, in which God will have been “all in all” (1 Cor 15:28). This is not to be understood in the sense of a totality that sublates freedom. According to Schelling, it is a matter of giving God space by no longer withholding being by means of an appropriation. It must be understood in its temporality, i.e., as a “passage” in which man cannot definitively locate himself. Here the concept of freedom opens up. It is not an absolute F/Act (Tat-Handlung); for this step towards individualisation, as an endeavour to give oneself being, is the Fall of Man and, in its final consequence, madness, insofar as the repressed withdrawing makes itself felt as the limitless horror of an absence. Nor is freedom determined in being, since being is merely a “passage” in the system of times. Rather, it has its foundation in the detachment of the God who withdraws, i.e., in a u-topian moment that being never reaches.

2.9 The Transition to Positive Philosophy as a Transition to the Eschaton

God is, therefore, “more” than everything. He reaches beyond the world-immanent time as U-topos and ad-venient (Zu-Kunft). He is the absolute person detached from the world, non-locatable, neither “inside” nor “outside” the world, yet its freedom and withdrawal. The beginning of time, therefore, lies in the absolute ad-venient (im Zukünftigen):

The starting point of philosophy is, thus, what will be, the absolutely ad-venient (das absolut Zukünftige): it is therefore our task to penetrate the essence of the absolutely ad-venient.32

Here lies the core of Schelling’s critique of Hegel: the latter remains attached to the present, he is a “pantheist” because the time of the world and the time of God coincide. The transition from Negative to Positive Philosophy – which

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32 Schelling, PhdO, p. 24: „Der Ausgangspunkt der Philosophie ist also das, was sein wird, das absolut Zukünftige: es ist also unsere Aufgabe, in die Wesenheit des absolut Zukünftigen einzudringen.“
F. Tomatis rightly believes to be the heart of Schelling’s philosophy— is not, as suggested in many contemporary comments on Schelling, the transition from a purely rational to a historical philosophy. If this was the case, it would make it hard to explain why Schelling did not write a noteworthy philosophy of history similarly to that of Hegel. Instead, Schelling wants a leap from history into the U-topos of eschatology. This cannot be achieved voluntaristically, as it is God himself who is the ecstasy of Conscious-Being and the “leap” of being in which it reaches its true destination. In a passage of the *Introduction to the Philosophy of Revelation*, Schelling draws attention to God as existent in a verbal sense. This truth, which leads onto the trail of a biblical understanding of God, alludes to the eventfulness (Ereignishaftigkeit) of God which manifests itself in such a leap, when man no longer perceives himself as departing from his ego, but from the pre-original revelation of the kenosis and the Trinitarian God, which man can trace rationally, but never himself posit.

### 2.10 *Logos and Second Myth*

More than any other philosopher, Schelling considers mythology a path leading to the truth of the condition of man. It is “truer” than history insofar as it deals with a loss, namely that of the future as an independent temporal dimension to which freedom and hope can be attached. This was accompanied by the loss of the real past – the pre-origin of freedom – which does not exist in itself, but can only enter the horizon from the transcendent future.

Mythical figures are expressions of the loss of origin, which, as has been shown, is connected to the loss of the negative, elusive (transcendent) divinity which enables freedom through its withdrawal. Schelling insists that a rational re-appropriation of divine transcendence must fail. Man’s ultimate horizon is the possibility of omnipotence – which the Son would have attained as the second Potency in overcoming the first Potency –, yet only to take leave of it in an act of kenosis. Therefore, even if man were to attain omnipotence, it would only be a hopeless power over present, i.e. *präsentische Zeit*, not the entry into true transcendence.

Schelling’s philosophy of history, therefore, contains a radical point: not only myth is a delusion, but also “real” history as it is reconstructed in the Logos of historiography, philosophy and the sciences. The former at least knows of the loss of the Absolute, the latter, on the contrary, believes it can arrive at the origin by means of reason. But seeking the so-called reality of our world, and its past, presence and future, is an unrewarding quest, insofar as it expresses

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33 See Tomatis, *Kenosis*.
34 Schelling, XIII, p. 156.
a history separated from God, and therefore does not differ substantially from mythical delusion.

For Schelling, the truth of history only exists in connection with the redeeming, revealing God. It is linked to the kenosis of the Logos. Schelling makes the remarkable claim that “the Old Testament is preferably the time of Revelation”.\textsuperscript{35} For throughout the biblical salvation history, an increasing recognition of the person of God develops, which comes to expression by redemption, personalisation and future becoming definitely attainable to man. From this point onwards, Schelling’s theology of history marks a shift away from a history that is placed in the sign of the self-positing will of the Fall of Man. According to Schelling’s critique, Hegel’s philosophy of history reconstructs and deifies precisely this history in the sign of the Fall. In contrast, the crucial focus ought to be the leap from history (the necessity of deadly time of presentness) into salvation history (the freedom of future), at the centre of which is not the Logos which comprehends (begreift) the world, but kenosis. Kenosis eludes scientific appropriation and direct linguistic representation and is only accessible through a revealed eschatological narrative, which introduces a second salvation-historical myth. Since the Logos of the second Potency is in an eschatological connection with the Father and God has thus never completely abandoned world history, this second myth is not only accessible to a philosophical relecture, but is the starting point for a new Logos. Its measure is not the representation of self-reflective being, but the performance of the kenosis of the subject. In his late philosophy Schelling tries to operate within this kind of new logos. \textit{True history is thus the passage from world history into the eschatological history of salvation as expressed in the Bible}. The Bible, therefore, contains a Logos that precedes the world and transcends it.

2.11 \textit{The Future Anterior and the Delusion of World History}

Schelling’s passage from Negative to Positive Philosophy is the passage from an understanding of time under the primacy of the (linear, positivisable) presence to an understanding of time under the primacy of the (non-positivisable) future or the anterior future. Accordingly, history must be narrated from the point of view of the eschatological kenosis that brings salvation, and all natural and historical events need to be reinterpreted from the point of view of this eschatology. Paradigmatically, the transition from history to eschatology is completed in the Bible, which, following Schelling’s focus on the kenosis, has Jesus as the verbalisation of the name of YHWH. The name of Jesus, as the key to the eschaton, verbalises itself through the transformation of unredeemed

\textsuperscript{35} Schelling, \textit{PhdO}, p. 492.
futureless history (of being), represented either chronologically (historiographically) or mythologically, into the history of salvation. Thus, the past is transformed and redeemed through the discipleship of Jesus, i.e., in a turning of the subject towards its kenosis. The time corresponding to this discipleship is expressed through the entry into a second myth of salvation history, i.e., a salvation history as actualised in discipleship and philosophical reinterpretation (Positive Philosophy). In this process, both the first myth and the Logos – which, respectively either, processed the withdrawal of the subject by means of figurations of the apeiron (death) or sought subjugation of death through omnipotence – are left behind.

2.12 The Biblical Text

It is not by chance that Schelling (and with him his great successor Pareyson)\textsuperscript{36} refers to the biblical text in his philosophy of revelation: The Bible, and its – to Schelling – most central dimension, the kenosis of YHWH in Jesus’ cross, outlines an alternative world, a text in which the regularities of our (present) world have been displaced. Its content is not a denotable and presentable being, but an open one, that gives itself, that subverts the boundaries of space-time as well as the boundlessness of death and withdraws from them, a being, in other words, in which the boundaries of our space-time world are limited without falling into the apeiron. According to the categorial-causal paradigm of our society, this is an illusory world. However, to Schelling, the truth of space-time is only actually true when it is also represented through the completed artistry of a text in the power of the third potency, i.e. the spirit. For the text, just like the work of art, is able to point beyond categorical limitations and thus beyond an eternally perpetuating present. Within an understanding of time that knows only the horizontality of the present, this must remain illusionary. But from the point of view of the spirit, i.e. the third potency, occurring in the (anticipated) future, the “illusion” of a world, in which the future of God will have rendered inoperative a present dominated by death, will be deemed true. For without a real “illusionary” future there would be no freedom and no personhood, which always carry with them an indeducible moment and a promise, namely that meaning will have been.

\textsuperscript{36} Pareyson, Ontologia della libertà.
3 Epilogue: Mark 16:1–8: The Gospel as an Alternative Noetic World

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus’ body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, “Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?” But, when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’” Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid (Mark 16:1–8; New American Standard Bible).

From the outset, this whole scene depicts an alternative world. The three mentioned women set out for the tomb, the symbol of death, on the first day, Sunday, in the morning, i.e. on day one of creation, at the hour of the birth of the new world. Biblical time knows three kinds of time, namely evening time, with its moving towards death, interruptive night and morning, with its new creation. This is expressed in the structure of day one, the first day of creation, Sunday, which begins with the evening and, after the nightly interruption, ends in the morning (Gen 1:5b), yet also in the theologumenon of the resurrection of the third day, which is precisely this representative of the third time, i.e. of new creation. The early morning hour on the first day of the week thus points to a new creation, just as the first day of the week, Sunday, is also the third day, if one counts away from the day of Jesus’ death, Friday.

These temporal significations contrast with that of the locus: it is the grave of a condemned criminal and in this respect not only the place of death, but also a dangerous place that would have been considered a subversive act to visit. In the first chapter, Mark has focused all hopes on the long-awaited and finally arrived Messiah. The day of YHWH promised by the prophets seemed to have dawned in Jesus. At the end of the book (Mark 15), this expectation is literally buried. The hope of human history seems to be at an end, for the Messiah has not come, or if he has, then in vain. The going to the tomb, moreover, of

37 B. Standaert, in his magnificent commentary, situates the place of the performance of the Gospel in the counter-world of the celebration of the Easter Vigil of the Roman community and in the entry of the catechumens into full communion with Christ through baptism. See Standaert, Marco.
women, whose names are given only at the end of the book, providing con-
trast to the demise of the name of God (Jesus = YHWH saves), seems other-
worldly. The paradox expressed by this is even intensified in what follows: the
women come to anoint Jesus. What kind of anointing is it? From Mark 14:8,
the reader of the Gospel knows that Jesus has already been anointed for burial
by a woman who is not named. Moreover, it is of course strange to want to
anoint a corpse that is already decaying. So, the anointing does not seem to
be intended (only) at the anointing for burial, but involves a kind of inverted
royal anointing. The world has died and Jesus is the King of the dead\(^{38}\) or to
put it more dramatically: He is the King of the murdered and of the people of
perished hope.

That this world is closed by a stone is no longer surprising. The question:
“Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb?” implies intense
drama, since this question – at first sight – seems to culminate in nothingness
because of the definite absence of the Messiah, who could overcome such a
stone. The narrative remains locked. The fact that the women “looked up”, i.e.
look towards heaven, is, like the anointing, a completely counterfactual action.
The stone that is rolled away represents a turning point and directs the gaze
towards a young man in a white robe. This corresponds to the baptismal gar-
ment, indicating putting on the name of Christ and referring to a new creation.
The place where Jesus’ body, tortured to death, was placed, is recognised as
empty. The objects of the categorical order cannot display the eschaton. At the
centre of the event is the absent body of God, which cannot be represented,
not even by death and emptiness. However, this moment of absence must be
perceived in order to take the step towards the eschaton. In relation to the
thematically raised in this paper, it should be emphasised that the presence of
an immediately denotable symbolic order forgets precisely this moment of
absence and thus remains illusory. The true symbolic order, on the other hand,
is built around the elusive body of the Absolute.

After the witnessing of the absent body, the women have to leave, i.e. move
out of the symbolic order of a world that finishes in the tomb. They are told
to again go to Galilee, the region where Jesus first appeared. The mention of
Galilee, to where the Messiah goes ahead of them, refers directly to the text
of the Gospel: the spatio-temporal order ended at the tomb and there can
be no return to it. Therefore, by Galilee is not meant the geographical order,
but the beginning of the text in terms of content: In Mark 1:14 Jesus begins in
this region – after the “delivering” of the last of the old prophets, namely the
Baptist – with the proclamation of the Gospel. The women, and with them the
reader of the Gospel, thus no longer find the true symbolic order (expressed by

\(^{38}\) See Standaert, Marco, p. 871.
“Jesus”) in the categorical world (in the geographical Galilee), but in the text itself (which begins with Galilee). This becomes the new point of reference and its central logos starts with Galilee, from which the path to the cross and thus the kenosis begins.

Mark’s reflection on the new textual symbolic order, however, leads even deeper: the women flee from the tomb and are gripped by fear. The Fear of God refers to the shattering and abolition of the previous symbolic order, which can no longer be expressed in the former categories. The most enigmatic moment, however, is the statement that the women “said nothing to anyone”. For of course, the question immediately arises as to why we find a corresponding account in the Gospel at all. Did the women remain silent for a while and then break their silence? Or did they chat a little after all? The significance seems to be something else: The new symbolic order eludes representation in the Word and therefore the Gospel incl. Mark 16:1–8 is not a representation of the event but the genesis of its non-representability.

The text is therefore precisely not a denotation of an objectifiable event, but the denotation of its unspeakability. It is true because it expresses the illusion of the categorial objectifiable truth. The text is the only truth of the occurrence, behind which there is no deeper hidden truth, but a truth that only represents the withdrawal of the event itself. It makes a promise, namely to find the Messiah in Galilee, i.e. in the text, but this promise will never be fulfilled in the mode of the present, but in the anticipated reading and succession as a future anterior.

The reader of Mark thus stands exactly at the point that Schelling tried to reach: The Gospel is the story of the traumatic core of the self and deals with a rupture of the symbolic order. This is connected with a change of subject, in which the text takes the place of the narrator and now itself assumes the position of the illusory subject. True is the illusion of the text which carries out precisely this change of subject, all the other truths lead to the grave, which will have been a starting point after all.

**Biography**

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