

DE GRUYTER

*Tyler Tritten*

# BEYOND PRESENCE

THE LATE F. W. J. SCHELLING'S CRITICISM  
OF METAPHYSICS

QUELLEN UND STUDIEN  
ZUR PHILOSOPHIE

DE  
|  
/

# Beyond Presence

The Late F. W. J. Schelling's Criticism  
of Metaphysics

by

Tyler Tritten

De Gruyter



ISBN 978-1-61451-211-0

e-ISBN 978-1-61451-155-7

ISSN 0344-8142

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

A CIP catalog record for this book has been applied for at the Library of Congress.

*Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek*

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2012 Walter de Gruyter, Inc., Boston/Berlin

Printing: Hubert & Co. GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen

∞ Printed on acid-free paper

Printed in Germany

[www.degruyter.com](http://www.degruyter.com)

## Acknowledgements

For someone to whom everything came easily, at least everything I thought worthwhile, this work is the first of what I hope will be many future endeavors that do not come easily. In this enterprise I have learned that not only do the greatest accomplishments require great effort, but also that they cannot be accomplished alone. First of all, then, I need to thank Dr. Martin Moors, one of the most prolific and, perhaps most importantly, humble professors I know. I must also express my gratitude to De Gruyter Publishing for their professionalism and cordiality in this project.

The individual who has assisted me the most in the sometimes trying times of attempting to “close the deal” has been my lovely wife Dr. Danielle A. Layne – a great wife, mother and philosopher. Her greatest asset is her willingness not to permit me to separate philosophy as an occupation or discipline from a way of life. She is the most passionate philosopher I know.

My parents, Mike and Shannon Tritten, also need thanking; for, despite some outside voices who suggested that they should try to dissuade me from travelling overseas nearly seven years ago now, they trusted me with the freedom to use those seven years on a project whose reward is far from certain. Sometimes it is better to be lucky than good, but to the credit of my parents they refuse to believe that my successes have ever been the fruits of luck. I would be remiss if I did not also thank my sister, Noelle, who despises the prospects of having to talk shop with me, and my grandparents, Don and Donna, who have always reminded me whence I came. I remember once during a game of Pinochle, finally having descended from my ivory soap box after having delivered yet another eloquent philosophical discourse, D.R. said to me, “Son, what about plain old common sense?” How very G.E. Moore of him! I also do not wish to let this opportunity pass without expressing my fond memories for those family members who helped to raise me but are no longer laboring with me.

From the closest family and friends to the *intelligentsia* who have inspired in me a love of academia, I am indebted. Let me then conclude by mentioning Squirrel, who has shown me that the loftiest philosophical

questions come from the lightest hearts. This little one, well before the age of reason, has precociously posed to me all of the following questions: “Why do we call corpses dead bodies and not dead persons?” “Isn’t nothing something?” “Ty, why can’t Christian ethics be virtue ethics?”

## Abbreviations Used in References and Notes on Translations

References to Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling's *Sämtliche Werke* are given in the following form:

II/1, 257, "Darstellung": II/1 = the volume number, the entirety being divided into two divisions, the first running from I/1 through I/10 and the second from II/1 through II/4; 257 = the page number(s) of the reference; "Darstellung" = the first identifying word in the title of the specific work printed in that volume. Note that often this word would be the same for many texts, e.g. "Philosophie," "Philosophische" and "Einleitung," necessitating that a following word or, as is often the case, the first word of the subtitle or second title is given. In the example given above the entire title is "Philosophische Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie oder Darstellung der reinrationalen Philosophie" and so the first identifying word of the secondary title has been used.

Works by Schelling that do not occur within his collected works or editions besides those found in the collected works follow the same format as other secondary literature. If not already indicated in the body of the text the author's last name will be given, followed in italics by the first identifying word of the title and lastly by the appropriate page number. In some cases it may be necessary to have the "References Page" at one's disposal in order to identify with certainty the text referenced.

If a work has been translated and the reference is for an English edition, then I have used that translation. For the most part, however, the primary sources in German, French and in one instance Dutch have been translated by myself. In all such cases the quotation or otherwise necessary reference is given in the original language in a footnote. If the text has been referenced but not actually quoted in the body of the text, then it is likely that the original is also not given in a footnote. In my own translations I have attempted neither to render everything into as fluid English as possible nor to translate everything as literally as possible, but I often oscillate between the two as the situation requires in order to stress the point at hand as poignantly as possible. At no point, however, have I altered the original text or proposed a translation I know to be inadequate.

# Contents

Acknowledgements .....	V
Abbreviations Used in References and Notes on Translations ....	VII

## Part I Crisis and Method

Chapter 1 The Contemporary Crisis of Meaning .....	5
1 The Crisis: Meaning and Presence .....	5
2 The Crisis and Contemporary Culture .....	11
3 The Crisis and Schelling .....	18
4 Structure of the Text Arranged According to Epochs .....	28
Chapter 2 Positive Philosophy as Both Method and Object: A Methodological Analysis .....	30
1 The Phenomenological Criterion .....	31
2 <i>Denken</i> and <i>Nachdenken</i> .....	35
3 <i>Daß Es Ist</i> and <i>Was Es Ist</i> ; That It Is and What It Is .....	40
4 Positive and Negative Philosophy: Progression and Regression	47
5 Wanting, Believing and Knowing .....	52
6 Empiricism: Subjective, Objective and Scientific (Abduction)	54
7 The Prior and the Posterior .....	64
8 Historical Philosophy: Truth and Falsification .....	66
9 Freedom: Novelty, Difference and Presence .....	75
10 Experience: <i>Aesthesis</i> .....	81

## Part II The Past: Eternity

Chapter 3 Timelessness: The Potencies at Rest .....	91
1 Parmenides' Statement .....	92
2 The Different and the Identical: <i>Duas</i> and <i>Monas</i> .....	94
3 Copulation .....	103
4 The Potencies .....	114

4.1	The First Potency . . . . .	116
4.2	The Second Potency . . . . .	118
4.3	The Third Potency . . . . .	119
4.4	The Concatenation and Simplicity of the Three . . . . .	121
5	Who Is <i>das Seinkönnende</i> , the Effusive One? . . . . .	126
6	Who is God? . . . . .	128
7	The Law of Decisiveness and the Interstice . . . . .	137
Chapter 4 The Time of Eternity: The Potencies in Act . . . . .		152
1	Generation and Creation . . . . .	152
2	The Act of Creation . . . . .	165
3	The Causes . . . . .	177
4	The Holy or God's Withdrawal from the Created . . . . .	188
5	The Ideas as Visions . . . . .	199
6	The Idea . . . . .	205
Chapter 5 Intermittence . . . . .		217
1	The Separation of Times . . . . .	218
2	<i>Aesthesis</i> , Memory and History . . . . .	221
3	Historical Time as Contemporaneity or Simultaneity . . . . .	224
Part III The Present: Historical Time		
Chapter 6 The Philosophy of Mythology . . . . .		229
1	From Lordship to Divine Sufferance . . . . .	229
2	What are Myths? . . . . .	232
3	The Co-Originality of the Myth and the Consciousness Thereof . . . . .	242
4	Polytheism and Monotheism . . . . .	251
5	The Types of Monotheism . . . . .	255
6	Schelling's Historiography of Mythology . . . . .	265
7	Tautegory . . . . .	274
8	The Objective Meaning of the History of Mythology . . . . .	284
9	Considerations of the Philosophy of Mythology for the Philosophies of History and Religion . . . . .	293
10	Ruminations on a Future Mythology . . . . .	297



Chapter 7 Language is Faded Mythology: On the Origin and Essence of Language .....	299
1 Language is not an Invention of Consciousness .....	299
2 The Tower of Babel .....	300
3 The Case of China .....	302
4 China and the Language of Humanity .....	308
5 Music and Causal Efficacy .....	316
6 The Copula Revisited in Light of Supplementation .....	320

## Part IV The Future: Advent

Chapter 8 Intimations of the Future and Concluding Remarks ..	325
1 The Man-God as Exemplary Repetition/Copulation .....	327
2 Difference and Identity .....	332
3 The World Law Revisited in Light of the Transcendentals ..	337
4 Time and the End of History .....	341

Schema of the Doubled Temporal Relations of the Creation and  
Mythology with Reference to the Corresponding Gods and Peoples 351

References .....	355
Author Index .....	365
Subject Index .....	367

Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.

What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?

One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever.

The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose.

The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits.

All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.

All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.

There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.

I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity.

I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?

I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.

I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards:

I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits:

I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:

I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:

I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.

So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.

And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.

Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done.



Part I  
Crisis and Method



# Chapter 1

## The Contemporary Crisis of Meaning

### 1 The Crisis: Meaning and Presence

The Leibnizian question, which found its champion in F.W.J. Schelling a century prior to Heidegger, as to why is there is something, anything at all, and not rather nothing stems from the human being's quest for meaning. What *difference* does it make that the human being is rather than not? Why am *I* here? What is the meaning of being here? Do actions have any real significance or is everything merely vain and arbitrary? In these formulations meaning is not restricted to a relation of signifier-signified or sign-event, but the question seeks significance in general. 'X' may signify 'Y' or 'Y' be attributable to 'X' and yet this entire signification may be utterly void of significance as vain, banal, profane, trivial and/or obscenely superfluous without any relevance to reality. In a system each signified may acquire a sense according to its context while one may still deem the entire system and its requisite senses utterly senseless, i. e. without significance or meaning, without making a difference.<sup>1</sup> Not all significations matter, i. e. make a difference; not all significations are significant, not all meanings are meaningful. The question of significance asks if anything is worthwhile, justified or even holy. Capitalistic mass production, for example, has the problem of justifying its own production. The production has a sense or content, i. e. a "what," but not a "what for." One contemplating suicide can still use language and recognize sense and predication in the world, but she is unable to see what justifies why sense or predication should be at all. The concern with a justifying end is not about the function or utility of something for some use, but it rather concerns the ultimate whence and whither of things. The question as to why there is something and not rather nothing is fundamentally existential and personal rather than cosmological or teleological. It arises from the experience of the threat of meaninglessness, i. e. nihilism.

---

1 Is this not Levinas' criticism of structuralism? Sense may reside in the realm of the Said, but its significance stems from the Saying.

Why is there something rather than nothing? To speak with a Heideggerian tongue, one may say that to think Being is to think that in which beings are un-concealed, i. e. to think the original clearing (*Lichtung*) that can only be called  $\alpha$ -λήθεια, not in order to think and explain beings but for the sake of thinking Being and its clearing. As Heidegger himself writes, "... (T)he metaphysical question of Being, which asks about the Being of beings, and the question that inquires more primordially; that is, inquires into the truth of Being and thus into the relationship of the essence of Being with the essence of man. Metaphysics itself refuses to question this essential relationship" (*Nietzsche* Vol. III., 217). Metaphysics, for Heidegger, represents the thinking of *presence* or onto-theo-logical thinking, which only interrogates Being in order to ground beings and consequently the aim is always ontic. What is first of all noteworthy, and confirms the hypothesis of this work on Schelling, is the stated connection between the relationship of the essence or meaning of Being and the meaning of being human. If one poses the question of Being on account of a genuine crisis and not merely as a theoretical exercise, then it must have an essential relationship with the meaning of being human, because only the human being questions and only for her is the question significant. Only for human persons is nihilism a threat.

Not just why, but what is the *meaning* of the fact that there is something rather than nothing? Heidegger calls the line of questioning that would take Being as merely an explanatory ground and first cause for beings metaphysics in opposition to that investigating its relation to the meaning of being human. In doing so, Heidegger unfortunately brandishes the term "metaphysics" with cumbersome and unnecessary baggage while he really disparages only a certain form of metaphysics as onto-theo-logy or metaphysics that interprets Being only as presence. If the question of Being is not just academic but a confrontation with the crisis of meaning, then it must be investigated with regard to its existential significance and not merely cosmologically as the first cause of beings. Any answer to the existential crisis of meaning must also originate from beyond an egoistic center and its arbitrary positing of values. Meaning – not value – must originate from without; it must be objective. If there is meaning rather than meaninglessness, it cannot arise from the locus constituting the very crisis: the human being. Heidegger also writes, "Meaninglessness is the lack of the truth (clearing) of Being" (*Nietzsche* Vol. III, 174). A questioning of Being that only interrogates according to the assumption of presence is no longer valid given the current strain

of contemporary philosophy that stands in Heidegger's shadow. The assumptions of presence are inadequate as responses to the crisis of meaning.

The initial task, then, is to provisionally eliminate the traditional assumptions of presence as inadequate. Only then will one be able to see why the latest Schelling and his positive philosophy of mythology and revelation does not begin from this assumption. But what is the assumption of presence? So-called philosophies of presence have quite a dirty list of corollaries: subjectivity and objectivity, essence and essentialism, beings or the ontic, representation, self-reflection, reason or logocentrism, logic, permanence, substance, the same etc. Has presence an identifiable inner core? Heidegger, who made the surpassing<sup>1</sup> of presence fashionable, identifies it with onto-theo-logy.<sup>2</sup> Ontology is the study of being qua being (What is *Seiendes* qua *seiend*?) and for Heidegger philosophies of presence surrender Being to beings, thus (for modernity at least) to subjectivity and objectivity. Philosophies of presence can only see beings and their representation, implicating a subject-object dichotomy insofar as everything is either an object representing/portraying a subject or a subject presenting an object/predicate/attribute. There are only beings and their representation, which means there are only ontic validities with an essence or *ousia*, a word that is synonymous with presence for Heidegger. Theology then, according to Heidegger, can be nothing more than thinking the

- 
- 1 An attempt will be made to avoid the phrase "overcoming of presence/traditional metaphysics" in place of the word "surpassing." Surely not all representation, logic, reasoning, identity and thought on essences must be overcome, i.e. disbanded, but rather what must be shown is that while this thinking has its place it certainly does not occupy the fundamental and original place. Reason, for example, must not be destroyed but itself is in need of explanation. Why is there reason and not unreason? Should reason be unable to ground itself, then reason is problematic and must be grounded instead of doing the grounding. However, when this is not a surpassing but a destruction, the word "overcoming" will be used. In Heidegger's case the demand is not for the destruction, dismissal or denial of metaphysics – *Destruktion* is not *Zerstörung* – but for a move *beyond* or, better yet, *before* metaphysical thinking. Heidegger's project was an uncovering of the fundamental assumption of Western metaphysics (presence) but not its annihilation.
  - 2 Kant first used the term "ontotheology" when he wrote that it was "cognizing that existence (God) through mere concepts, without the aid of even the least experience, and (this) is called *ontotheology*" (*Pure*, 584). For Kant, it was thinking God's *existence* and not just His essence on the basis of reason alone. This work will show that if a thinking of God is possible, it can only be achieved experientially and not *a priori*.



ground for subjective and objective beings and their essence. This, of course, is accomplished by positing a first cause or first essence, in short, a first ontic being, even if the greatest, most benevolent and most potent one – the greatest *subjectum* – whose dignity is factually unsurpassed but who nevertheless lives as a being amongst inferiors. This first cause is still a being amidst other beings. The third part of the term “onto-theo-logy,” λόγος, indicates that medium by which beings are represented and grounded. This element seizes beings as an essence and grounds them, only able to apprehend beings as stable and permanent ontic entities with an essence. Λόγος is the manner according to which beings are apprehended and the dominance of Being by λόγος reduces Being to the permanence and stability of beings and the purely logical.<sup>3</sup> Because the representation of beings only occurs by means of the λόγος and the logical, so the apprehension of beings rests on the bases of reflection and the rational. Reflection always means self-reflection. Subjectivity is always self-representation or presence to self and objective beings are always the self-same in their identical and perpetual representation by subjectivity. All of the listed corollaries of presence relate to Heidegger’s view of metaphysics as presence or onto-theo-logy, but is there an underlying identity permitting their unified denomination as presence? Must a critique of presence systematically discredit each and every corollary in order to surpass this type of thinking?

A large number of other contemporary thinkers also attempt to surpass metaphysics as presence. Derrida explicitly grapples with the issue and views the presupposition of presence as meaning 1) that something only really is if it can present itself to a subject in thought or intuition and 2) that the subject only really is if it is self-presence. As he wrote in *Speech and Phenomena*,<sup>4</sup> “(B)eing as *presence*: the absolute proximity of self-identity, the being-in-front of the object available for repetition, the maintenance of the temporal present, whose ideal form is the self-presence of transcendental *life*...” (99). Levinas too is concerned with surpassing the philosophy of presence as evidenced by the title of his book, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. He and Derrida both at-

3 Actually, for Heidegger, the default of Being is responsible for the primacy of beings over itself.

4 In this text Derrida attempted to expose Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology as a philosophy of presence. He attacked the notion of intentionality saying it renders the material signifier arbitrary and incidental with respect to the signified.