

## Satan and the World of Spirits

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Schelling now begins an intriguing discussion of the nature of evil and of Satanology, Demonology and Angelology.<sup>26</sup> The discussion is prompted by the desire to understand Christianity's relationship to the principle of Paganism, for Christianity sees itself as "salvation from the blind power of Paganism". How, then, does Christianity view that blind power?

### A. Satanology

Satan, according to the orthodox explanation of mythology, is "the prince of darkness" and the Head of all evil, especially Paganism. Furthermore, the New Testament describes Satan as the special enemy of Christ and ascribes to him an important role. Schelling therefore feels compelled carefully to investigate the significance of this great power.

### Critique of Conventional Ideas of Satan

The old, conventional Christian view of the origin of Paganism and the birth of Mythology held "that the human race, through the prompting of Satan, drew away from the true God, was filled with representations of false gods, and was led or forced to serve what were by *nature* not gods at all" (VI:633).

Schelling agrees with this theory inasmuch as it regards Mythology not as human invention or accidental error but as the product of a *real* power, a power "independent of the freedom of man, indeed, one which captures this very freedom" (VI:634). But he disagrees with its understanding of Satan as "an individual, created Spirit, powerful but by no means unlimited, an originally good angel who arrogantly attempted to rise above God and oppose him; thrown out by God and abandoned to his own perversity; and now, as renegades are wont to do, exerting himself to the utmost in order to draw others away from God, especially mankind, and make them independent of him" (VI:634). Schelling disagrees with this view not because he wants to dispute Satan's reality or detract from his dignity, but because, on the contrary, he wishes to "ascribe to Satan an even higher reality and significance". The conventional view will appear "inadequate and petty" beside the true one (VI:635).

First, Schelling points out that "Satan" is a general term. In Hebrew, it simply means *adversary* (*Widersacher*) in general. "With the article, of course, it means a definite adversary (Hebrew: שָׂטָן), the adversary *par excellence*." This latter suggests a "personality" or "spirit", but not necessarily "an individually *created* spirit who in his own way is endless." שָׂטָן is "quite correctly translated by the Greek ὁ ἀντικείμενος." Furthermore, in Hebrew, Satan is used quite generally to mean "aufhalten", i.e., to oppose a movement or put obstacles in its way. The Hebrew substantive became *διαβολος* in Greek (German: Teufel), "from *διαβαλλειν* which simply means: *interjicere se ad obsistentum*." "Originally the Greek word was used quite generally and even abstractly of any *contrario*, of anything by which somebody is deceived or led astray" (VI:635f).

### Satan is neither a Creature nor an Eternal Principle of Evil

(VI:636-639)

Nowhere, insists Schelling, does the Bible say the Devil was *created*. To say that he "becomes" only in the course of events is not inconsistent with saying he was uncreated. The view that Satan is "a created Spirit" seems to rest on the general assumption that "everything that is *actually* outside God must be a creature, a being created by God" (VI:636). But Christ was "*outside* God without being a creature" when he was in that "middle state" earlier described by Schelling. Why

could not Satan, Christ's special enemy, be similarly outside God yet not a mere creature?

If Christ in that conflict is not a *creature*, should the one who is opposed to him be a creature? Or should he not rather be something outside and above the creaturely? For only then would it be a true *power* on whose account it would be worth the effort to do and to suffer such great and extraordinary things as Christ did and suffered. Clearly we must have a more worthy opponent for Christ. Christ and Satan are so related to one another that the *Bogomilen* even call Satan the older brother of Christ (VI:637).

Biblically and philosophically, Schelling believes, there is no necessity to think of Satan as a creature. But Biblical thought is also opposed to any suggestion that Satan is an *eternal evil principle*.

An evil principle would be one which is evil by nature, one which is opposed to God by nature, i.e., originally. Such a thing was assumed by the Manicheans and, at least according to the usual view, was also affirmed in the Persian system. An evil *principle* would be a principle which is *eternal* like God (*Deo coaeternum*). Now both Old and New Testaments most decisively oppose this" (VI:637, cf. 666).

The true understanding of Satan shall therefore lie "in the middle between these two definitions", but before proceeding with the positive part of his inquiry, Schelling refers to certain scriptural passages which support the above two points, namely, that Satan can be *neither* a creature *nor* an eternal principle of evil.

In Rev 12:7, for example, Satan is said to rule a Kingdom just as Christ rules a Kingdom. In this sense, he is placed "on the same level as Christ", but as the Adversary, of course, "whose Kingdom and whose works are come to destroy Christ. Now "if the power of Satan were a creaturely power, there is *no* reason ... for Christ, a decidedly supra-creaturely nature, to subject himself to suffering in order to conquer it. Surely there are other ways of going against a merely *created* spirit." Furthermore, the orthodox view of Satan as a presumptuous, rebellious and fallen spirit, is quite out of harmony with the dignity and majesty (*Erhabenheit*) of Satan in this passage. It is also out of harmony with 2 Cor 4:4, where Satan is called the *God* of this world (*ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου*), and with Hebrews 2:14, where

Satan is said to have the power of death (*τυ κρατος του θανατου εχειν*). Such things cannot be said of a mere creature, an individual and concrete spirit - although they could be said of that principle Schelling has called B (VI:638).

If, for example, Satan is understood to be that *Will* which was again aroused in the creation by the guilt of man; and which, in its being overcome and made subject to a higher will, is the foundation of creation and of human consciousness; but which, for that very reason, when it emerges anew in its limitlessness, threatens to *destroy* human consciousness - if by Satan we are to understand this Will of whose existence, most real activity, and power over human consciousness we have had sufficient occasion to persuade ourselves throughout this whole investigation ... if by Satan we are to understand this Will - but every will = spirit, hence, *this Spirit* - then that expression ('he has the power of death') is not too strong, but is perfectly appropriate to the Subject (VI:638f).

### **Satan is a Principle in the Divine Economy (VI:639-643)**

In many New Testament passages Satan is described as "author of evil and therefore enemy of God", but he also appears in some passages as "a principle which belongs to the divine economy itself." Schelling begins to present this positive view of Satan by recounting the conversation in the prolog to the Book of *Job*. Here, he claims, Satan is presented not as himself evil but as "an instrument of God himself insofar as God wills that nothing remain hidden."

Now how does Satan appear here (in *Job*)? As a power whose inclination is to put man's basic character (*Gesinnung*) in question and hence to put to the test. In other words, he appears as a power which is necessary, so to speak, if the uncertain is to become certain, the undecided decided, and character proved genuine. Here you see how far back the idea of Satan goes, right back to the first beginnings, for he is the power which, without himself being evil, nevertheless brings forth to the light of day the hidden evil in order that it not remain hidden under the good. Satan is gladdened by the sight of evil brought forth or brought out into the open because it represents confirmation of his doubt and because, by its becoming revealed, his purpose is achieved. This power can even be called *jealous*, just as Aristotle said

of Nemesis that it is displeased with, i.e., jealous of, the undeservedly lucky ones.

All those sinister beings which in Hesiod are born from noisome night - Thanatos (Death), Momos (the universal Fault-finder - indeed, Satan is represented as such here in the book of Job), Contention, and especially Ate, goddess of ruin, who is conceived as authoress of all precipitate transactions and the evil arising therefrom - all these sinister essences seem to come together in the idea of Satan and assign him a high place and function in the Creation without him himself really being a creature (VI:640f, cf. 652).

As in this encounter with Job, so in the seduction of the first man (Adam), Satan's role is to raise doubts about motives and put inner attitudes to the test. He is not himself evil even though, in confronting the primeval parents, "he anticipates evil and delights in drawing it forth" (VI:641, 653).

It seems clear to Schelling, therefore, that the "original idea of Satan is completely different from what the later period has made of him." "Toward the end of the struggle, Satan is always experienced as himself evil." But this is natural and understandable, for "he is an historical being, different at different times" (VI:641).

The personalities in that higher history with which we are here concerned are not static or unmoving, and therefore their concept is itself a fluid one. So with Satan - the author of contradiction, the universal disuniter, by whom death, discord and evil itself first entered the world - Satan is one thing in his beginning and another in his end. Yet I must say that the end always reminds one of the beginning, just as the last book of the New Testament recalls once again that representation of Satan as the one who casts suspicion, the one who places in doubt, the Accuser (Rev 12:9 ... 'the accuser of our brethren has been cast down, who accuses them day and night before God') ... (This is consistent with what on occasion I said earlier about justification. There is something in man which always says to him that his whole life is displeasing in God's sight. What he does accuses him constantly before God.) Whoever accuses another in the presence of a third, seeks to separate him from this third. Satan is the one who constantly seeks to separate man from God. That aroused Principle is, so to speak, the continual accuser (*Ankläger*) of man with God.

Unceasingly he reminds God of the guilt of man (VI:641f).

But in that time of which the Apocalypse speaks, this principle is broken through by Christ and destroyed. The Kingdom of God and Christ begins. The share which hitherto the Accuser had in the state of the world and of things is taken from him. The world is purely God's and his anointed, i.e., God now has all power with his anointed. Hence, up until that final end when Christ shall destroy all sovereignty and power and when all his enemies are put under his feet - up till then Satan is a principle which belongs to the divine economy itself. It is his task to maintain the opposition, the curse, the dissension, the division, so that the victory and final triumph - in which is completed the plan (*Sache*) of God, continuously put in doubt by the spirit of contradiction - is so much the more glorious. Then, when all doubt is destroyed, and the cause (*Sache*) of God is clear, manifest and decisive, Satan's work is done, and his mission - and with it his power - is at an end (VI:642f).

#### **Satan serves the final purposes of God (VI:643-647)**

As the last paragraph points out, Satan continues, right up till the final victory of Christ's Kingdom, as a great power who is "necessary for the final glorification of God." Hence Satan is not to be slandered or despised (as 2 Pet 2:10 warns; cf. Jude 8). St. Paul, to be sure, declares the Christian's "freedom from every cosmic force", but this doctrine of freedom, Schelling fears, may be "fatal to weak souls" and lead them to re-entanglement with the cosmic powers, so that "their last state is worse than their first". Even the angels do not dare to defame these "glorious ones", these majestic anti-divine powers, but leave the judgment of God. (So Schelling's interpretation of 2 Pet 2:11, 20 and Jude 8) (VI:643f).

Thus Satan is the principle on which the glory and sovereignty of God rests, and is to be considered a kind of divine Majesty (a *κυριότης*). This could never be said of a mere creature or of an unconditionally evil principle, but it could be said of a principle which is necessary to the divine world-rule. Schelling observes that this is a completely Jewish idea and cites, *inter alia*, the Book of Sirach: "he who curses Satan is called an irreligious man; it is said that such a one curses his own soul" (VI:645).

The Satan is the B posited by the divine Unwill. He is the great power

of God in the fallen world, which even so high a power as Michael dare not look down on or condemn. The judgment on him is reserved to God alone, and this fully agrees with the fact that this principle is the real mystery (*Mysterium*) of God which he posits, and which he can annul, and which no creature may dare to call in question (VI:644).

Such an estimate of Satan helps us to a much better understanding of the story of Christ's Temptations. There is "a divine law that wants everything put to the test and proved." Hence, even Christ *had* to be exposed to one of equal rank and power.

A mere creature, a creaturely spirit, which in comparison with Christ could have been no true *power*, would not have been able to get near *him* with temptations. On the other hand, it is quite understandable that the *prince* or God of this world, the *universal* principle which held all the world captive, could come close to the consciousness of Christ ... If Satan is a *mere* creature, then the words are absurd when he says to Christ: All this power and sovereignty is mine, I give it to whom I will ! But if Satan is a principle, one who feels that soon only the external world-kingdom will belong to him (more on this later), then these words are perfectly in order (VI:646).

For man, too, the real battle is not against flesh and blood, but against "the *αρχας*, the *εξουσιαι* ... the *κοσμοκρατορας*, the cosmic forces, the world-rulers who rule in the darkness of this age, the spiritual principles of evil whose region is not the limited earthly world but the universal world, heaven" (VI:647, cf. Eph 6:12). Hence Schelling sees Satan as an ever-present, constant and direct influence on man. As a universal, cosmic principle, Satan is able constantly to insinuate himself into man, indeed, he is "*in man*."

### Satan Originates in and with the Fall of Man (VI:648-654)

Schelling now attempts to explain the origin and meaning of Satan in terms of his metaphysical analysis of the potencies of being, i.e., in terms of the presuppositions of the Philosophy of Revelation. As we have learned, B is the *principle* of the beginning which lies at the basis of the whole of Nature and of human consciousness. It is the first potency (-A) now understood as a principle of historical change, and therefore designated as B. B is not itself a creature, but that out of which all creatures come ("the ultimate *hupokeimenon* of the creation").

Satan, however, is not the pure or absolute B.

But just this B is the object to be overcome in the whole of creation - strictly speaking, an infinite being posited out of himself, out of his original limits, who is to be brought back again through the creation into the limits of potency (*Könnens, Potenz*) as A. Now this B posited as A - since it is neither original A nor mere B - is, *as such*, a creature, and indeed, the highest of all creatures, i.e., man. (I ask you to note this well: neither the original A, the pure power-to-be, nor the pure B, that out of which all things come, is to be called a creature, but only the A which is brought back out of B into A is to be so-called.)

In this moment (which, of course, can be conceived only as a moment), the B is again in its original clarity and purity, it is again = A, as *before* the creation (for in the creation B was *different* from itself, that which was posited outside *itself*). This moment in *our* development corresponds to the moment assumed in the other theory when Satan, that is, that which is Satan later on, is conceived as still pure, as *not* fallen, as in uncreated sovereignty. *Within* the human consciousness and surrounded with the limits of the same, that principle is therefore actually a creature. Man, however, has himself, by immemorial deed, again destroyed these limits. But since the principle was creaturely only within those limits, it now emerges again (as a result of man's act) from its creaturely role.

And this principle which as a result of the creation was in creaturely limits but is now again emerged from these limits, by reason of the guilt of man, this principle is now again, as itself limitless and *opposed* to all concrete being, pure spirit. It is itself a general, universal principle. It is a life of its own kind, a false life, to be sure, one which *should not* be but one which *is* anyway; and once aroused, it cannot be brought back again, at least not immediately. Of this principle, which now lives in its own limitlessness and which is become most real, we can say nothing other than: it is a *spirit*. It is spirit because its nature is opposed to everything concrete, but it is a *spirit* because it is a specific spirit, i.e., not an original spirit, of course, but one which merely *became* (hence not a principle in the Manichean sense). 'It is a spirit which became', i.e., a spirit which was aroused by man and comprehended originally in human consciousness, but is now a spirit which goes beyond it, indeed, which threatens to destroy it. This

principle (as thought out through all these moments) is the Satan ... (VI:648-650).

Of Satan, therefore, it can be said: "he is a creature" (since he presupposes the creature) and "he is not a creature" (since he is now a limitless spirit) (VI:650). Satan "becomes" only in and with the Fall of man.

A powerful objection to this theory is now considered. Did not Satan precede and cause the Fall? How then can Schelling say he originates with the Fall? To overcome this objection, Schelling distinguishes the *real* power of Satan from his *ideal* power:

The existence (*Dasein*) of Satan as such can only mean this much: his *real* power over man. This, of course, he attained only through the Fall. But the power and strength to lead man astray - which is not *real* if man does not allow it to become real - this still *ideal* power (so to speak) must have been attained by him in some other way than through the Fall. The matter is rather as follows: That principle of the beginning, which is the ground of creation and precedes it, was *subjected* to man ... But though given into the power of man, this principle cannot get rid of the original ambiguity - the duplicity of its *nature*. In the last analysis, Satan belongs completely to the category of nonexistence (*nicht Seienden*) ... The creation, to be sure, is based on the fact that this principle emerged out of this non-being (*nicht-Sein*), out of the In-Itself (*An-sich*), and became existent. But the *final* meaning of the whole creation is precisely to explain it *as* the non-existing, and *as* this it is explained in man. For man *arises* only when that principle has become nonexisting but which, for this very reason, becomes the one which posits the highest (that which really should be) ... But it cannot get rid of the ambiguity of its nature. Always the possibility remains that it will again arise, emerge ... Therefore, the same principle which in the sequel is recognized as enemy, as adversary, as Satan of man; exists already *before* the transgression as the one who occasions it, as the one who, by deception, by false magic, wins over to his side the will of man (VI:650f).

The difference between this view and the common view, is that Satan is not seen here as a spirit who fell before the Fall of man. He tempts man not because he is evil, but because it is his *nature* to tempt.

It is its nature to be the ambiguous being and to represent itself to the

human consciousness, to which it is subjected, as power to be (*sein Könnendes*), as possibility, which is nothing for itself, of course, and shall be actual only when the human will goes over to it - here, therefore, that principle, without being fallen, for it is its nature, is tempter and the one who leads men astray (VI:653).

There is a great difference, says Schelling, between thinking of the Tempter as "a mere creature who is already cast forth from heaven" before the Fall, and seeing him as "a principle which is necessary for divine revelation, even for creation itself, and in whose nature, which absolutely does not exclude, lies a doubleness" which can be conquered only by "a *series* of catastrophes and restoration."

It makes a big difference whether a malicious creature, as some assume, is permitted to draw man, created innocent, with him into his corruption, or whether God permits this to a principle whose only function is to place in doubt what is dubious in itself, to bring to decision what is undecided, and in this way to precipitate a crisis which God himself must want, since he cannot will that the evil remain concealed. Precisely because of his holiness, he *must* want evil to be revealed and not hide itself under the good posited by him (VI:654).

### **The Biblical View of Satan as Tempter and Deceiver (VI:654-661)**

Having rejected the old "fallen angel" theory, Schelling now finds Biblical support for his own understanding of Satan as the Principle which tempts man and leads him astray. As such, for example, Satan is already present as the serpent in Paradise (Gen 3:1) and as the "ancient serpent" of Revelations 12:9 (VI:654, 656).<sup>27</sup> Of course, this is a *mythological* way of presenting the principle, but for Schelling this means, as we know, that the "serpent" is no product of poetic fancy but a necessary manner of appearance in consciousness. The Biblical story of the Fall presents "a purely inner process as an external one" and "contains pure, divine truth", but it has necessarily expressed itself in a mythological way.

[Gen 3] has grasped most profoundly the nature of that principle which leads man astray, precisely in presenting it as a serpent (i.e., mythologically) ... The whole state of human consciousness out of

which this story arose at that time permitted no other kind of presentation (VI:656, 657).

We shall include here a summary of Schelling's exegesis of three New Testament passages: Revelations 12:9, 1 John 3:8, and John 8:44.

Revelations 12:9 says that the great Dragon, that ancient Serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, was thrown down to earth with his angels. Schelling follows Grotius who suggested that the double name refers to Paganism and Judaism; the Devil is Tempter of the Pagans and the Satan is Antagonist of the Jews. The two together, therefore, corrupted the whole earth, Jews and Gentiles. The meaning of Satan's expulsion from *heaven* is to be understood in the light of that victory of Christianity in which Satan lost his "religious" meaning. His being "thrown down to *earth*" signifies not that he lost *all* power, but that his power "acquires from now on an earthly meaning." "A new theatre of the activity of Satan is opened up; it is nothing less than the bloodied stage of modern history" (VI:655f).

1 John 3:8 says "the Devil has sinned from the beginning", which means that for him no other movement is possible than that of sinning. "He must either not move at all, or he can only sin", i.e., deny God. For this principle, "the positing of God is not in the act but in the non-act - not insofar as it moves, but insofar as it does not move." As soon as it moved - "from the beginning" - it sinned, i.e., denied God. That principle of the beginning should "remain in the center, but it deviates from the middle point because it has from the beginning, as a result of its nature, the propensity to become active again." Hence it "sins" in the original meaning of *αμαρτανειν*, viz., "to go astray", "to miss the mark". Not yet really, but ideally, from the beginning, this principle is not *eo loco quo esse debebat*, but an *aberratio a scopo* (VI:658f).

John 8:44 declares "Your father, the Devil ... was a murderer from the beginning", i.e., "he was *by nature* the threatening principle which seeks to bring about the death of man or of the human consciousness in which alone man's life is found." "He did not abide in the truth", i.e., "he did not remain in his true relation". He is called "the father of lies", the principle of the non-existing, the one who deceives by his very nature. "When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own (*εκ των ιδιων*)", i.e., "out of his own nature and because he cannot do otherwise, because he cannot truly - in truth - be." The lie, as far as man is concerned, is in Satan's suggestion that man will be "lord of the principle" if he will but help Satan to *be*. In actuality, however, man "becomes its slave" (VI:660).

For man, that principle, as soon as it wills *to be*, is only untruth and deception. The purpose it serves in the eyes of God we shall not discuss here. As far as man is concerned, it has only a hostile relationship, one of deception and fraud. On that subjective standpoint rest all the passages in John. Moreover, it is impossible to speak more incisively, indeed, more philosophically, about the true nature of Satan, than Christ does in John. Satan is, in the last analysis, the one who, as such and in his nature, does not exist. He is the one who can yearn to be the one who exists, only by deception and false pretence. For this reason he deceived from the beginning, even before he attained actual being (VI:661).

### **Satan's Relation to Mankind and to the Individual Man** (VI:661-667)

Satan is "the spirit which came forth from man" and has a *general* relation to the human race. "Christianity sees the whole pre-Christian time as the time of the acknowledged lordship of this principle. He is the prince of this world, indeed, the God of this aeon, this world-time." Christ stripped it of its irresistible power, but "inexhaustible in its nature it *changes* its role as, defeated on one side, it jumps up on another." This principle passes through various mutations, but through its changes it remains "the spirit out of whose inspiration arose the whole of Paganism which, in its very ground, is a religion hostile to man." In various forms, this general relationship continues till the end of time (VI:661f).

Christianity, however, gives to Satan a special relationship to the individual man. Since the Fall, everyone is born under the influence of this spirit. This is what is meant by such phrases as "original sin" and "the radical evil of human nature" (VI:662). Like Kant, Schelling recognises the ambiguity and duplicity of and in human experience:

experiences like those of a cordial goodwill which yet permits us to observe that there is in the misfortune of our best friends something which does *not* displease us; of a secret duplicity in our most intimate friendships which makes it prudent to moderate confidences between even the best of friends; of the tendency to hate those to whom one is obligated - as when he who is in a position significantly to assist another person can be almost certain to have gained in him a secret, but therefore so much the more dangerous, enemy ... That Spirit is in

possession of man, but before the latter is aware of it or knows it. And being in himself infinite possibility, that Spirit, which is never completely actualized, assumes all forms and colors and shapes, but is never capable of doing anything for himself. Always he needs man. Therefore he seeks to move the latter to actualize the possibilities contained in him, to *perduciren ad actum*.

As the inexhaustible source of *possibilities* which are ever different, new and changing according to circumstances and situations, this Spirit is the perennial stimulator and mover of human life. Without this Principle the world would go to sleep, and history would come to a standstill and stagnate. This is the correct philosophical idea of Satan. Because on the one hand his nature is inexhaustible in possibilities and because, on the other, it is impotent, this Spirit is like an internal hunger after actuality. For this reason the Apostle compares him to a hungry lion who goes around seeking whom he may devour in his eternal craving, his insatiable need to actualize, through human willing, that which is in himself mere possibility. Hence the will of man is constantly besieged by Satan who ceaselessly lies in wait, ready every moment to make the most of every weakness, to seize every opening through which the human will permits him access into itself (VI:662f).

Satan, therefore, is the eternal, inexhaustible source of possibilities (= spirits) of evil. With "a relative omnipotence", he knows how to entrap man and detect every possibility in him. Plato said of Hades, "he is the great Sophist", and Satan, adds Schelling, must be called the Sophist par excellence. Everyone who enters the world must face a life of inner struggle against this universal Adversary. Hence St. Paul warns: "Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to *stand* against the wiles of the Devil" (Eph 6:11). And Christ commands that we be "as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves" (VI:663f).

At the same time, Satan is a necessary principle in relation to man, indeed, the necessary moving principle of all history.

Satan is a principle which is necessary for the production of the perfect and indubitable truth of creation, for the creation has no perfect truth so long as *each* opposed possibility has not manifested itself and, by becoming manifest, at the same time been overcome ... Hence Satan appears in John ... not as a principle which is absolutely cast out by

God, but as one who is tolerated by God and belongs to His household ... (VI:666).

Thus Satan exhibits a double aspect, a two-sided nature. He is, in fact, "*the nature of whom a double representation is not only possible but necessary*" (VI:667). He is (a) the one who constantly opposes, originates discord and division, and calls forth contradiction and evil. And he is (b) a principle permitted and willed by God - at least as a means to the Divine end.

### **Why Christ sees Satan only as the Evil Spirit (VI:667-670)**

How is it, then, that we find "no trace of this irony, this double representation" of Satan in the words of Christ? Why does Christ always see Satan simply as "the evil, the hateful, the undivine, even the anti-divine Spirit?" Schelling's answer is that Christ came "in order to do away with the works of the Devil." Therefore "Christ is the *direct* antithesis of Satan, and Satan the direct adversary of Christ." Christ's task is not to explain Satan but to defeat him! And that Christ sees his confrontation with Satan in this way is clear from such passages as John 16:11, John 14:30 ("the prince of this world is coming, but he has no power over me"), John 12:31 ("now shall the prince of this world be cast out") and Luke 10:18 (where Christ predicts Satan's fall from heaven) (VI:667f).

This struggle against Satan was no merely external battle as in Paganism, but a struggle "against the very life of the principle, its inner being, its root." And the attacked principle reacted - even physically! The mere approach of Christ called forth pathological outbreaks, especially by those who were demon-possessed. "You are come to destroy us" they cry in the Capernaum synagogue (see Mk 1:23ff and parallels). In fact, these demoniacs usually appear "in those regions inhabited by pagans, bordering Tyre and Sidon, Galilee and Samaria". And Schelling sees this sickness as "the convulsions of the dying Paganism", although he is aware that such phenomena persist till the present time (VI:668f).

Demons are to the Jews pagan potencies, for everything pagan is to them demonic. Pagan elements carried over into Judaism and the boundary between the two was shaken by Christ ... So the stories of the demoniacs at the time of Christ and in his presence, prove to be nothing but Jewish representations to which Christ has accommodated

himself. These disease phenomena have real significance. It was natural that the battle Christ was destined to wage with Satan, i.e., with the real principle of Paganism, should be ushered in by external and physical phenomena ... (VI:669).

Christ was not battling against merely a substantial principle, but against a *will*. Satan "stood as a *will* over against a *will*", and Christ, completely man, saw Satan simply as "the enemy of God and man", who must be "vanquished for the salvation of mankind." Now that Christ has broken his real power, we are privileged to view this principle no longer one-sidedly, but from all sides with complete spiritual freedom (VI:670).

## B. Angelology

### Angels are Potencies, Pure Possibilities (VI:671-674)

Since the Bible mentions both angels of Satan and angels of God, Schelling feels impelled to investigate the general idea of "angels" and "to fathom the meaning of that peculiar ... world of angels which, in Revelation, has the closest analogy with mythology" (VI:671).

Confessing a special interest in discovering connections with his earlier concepts, Schelling sees the angels not as little creatures but as potencies: "they are just pure potencies, pure possibilities."

Perhaps analogs to the concept of angels ... were given to us in the *αρχαῖς* (rulers), and *ἐξουσιαῖς* (authorities), the potencies and powers, of which we spoke earlier when it was said: Christ has been raised above every ruler, authority and power. Hence the question is how angels are related to these rulers and authorities. On this matter, however, a passage in 1 Peter (3:22) leaves no doubt. There it says Jesus Christ has gone to heaven to the right hand of God and that angels, authorities and powers are subject to him. Thus the angels are here placed on the same level as the authorities and powers (*δυναμεις* expresses our concept of potencies even more emphatically than *ἐξουσιαῖς*). Christ is raised above all. It is even said: he is clothed with divine glory; for God is the Cause who is above all potencies, since he is the Existent (*das Seiende*) prior to all potencies. Here is illuminated for the last time the great significance of the concept from which the Positive Philosophy set out, the concept of the Existent which is prior to all potencies, the immediately Existent. Only because God *is* before

all potencies is he Lord of the potencies. That the angels were considered to be like potencies is found also in Hebrews 1:3f ... (VI:671f).

Nowhere does the New Testament say the angels were *created*. (Col 1:16 is no exception for Schelling). Rather do the angels presuppose the creation, as Satan does.

Were there no creation then, of course, there would be no opponent of creation - that is, as Satan was created in and with the creation, so the creation is indisputably a presupposition of angels, i.e., *without* a creation there would be no angels. But this is far from meaning that angels themselves were *objects* of creation. Strictly speaking, only that is to be called *creature* which is the object of a free and intentional production. Angels, therefore, cannot be said to be created in this sense, because they are just pure potencies, pure possibilities. But mere possibilities are not *created*; only that which is actual, i.e., only the concrete, is created. To be sure, along with each actual thing, possibilities are also admitted (I say 'admitted' i.e., they are not *objects* of creation)" (VI:673).

Angels are thus the possibilities to which the creation gives rise. They "emerge *after* the creation." "At the moment creation is posited, there is also given a vast number of possibilities, potencies."

Just as the being of the world as such is merely a possible one and is actual only by virtue of the divine will - hence 'accidental' in this sense - so, it should be noted, are all things that are antithetical to this being admitted as so many possibilities. We can make this clear from the following example. With the existence of the State are posited innumerable opposing possibilities, i.e., a vast number of possible crimes (against the State) which no human understanding can create or calculate ahead of time. In the same way, when the creation became an actuality, all things opposed to it were admitted as possibilities, as potencies ... (VI:573f).

### "Good" and "Evil" Angels (Spirits) (VI:674-679)

Good and evil angels represent human possibilities of good and evil respectively. Man was made by God and given dominion over all the works of creation (Ps 8:6, Heb 2:7f). Before the Fall of man, none of the

potencies or possibilities posited with the Creation became manifest, for everything was then subject to man and united under him as "the head of creation." With the Fall of man, however, these possibilities became "evil spirits."

When man is relieved of his sovereignty (and the Fall of man is nothing but the loss of his sovereignty), then all those subordinated possibilities, potencies and spirits are able to rise up, and man now falls into their power whereas previously they had been in his. Indeed, insofar as those potencies were posited by the creation only as possibilities - to this extent they were all right, they were *good* (and in this sense one can speak of an original pure and good state of the angels). But when, by virtue of the guilt of man, the divinely posited unity, in which everything was to be comprehended under one head (man), is broken up and lost, the potencies come forth with a power and force which they were not destined to have, one which they should not have, and they appear as *evil* spirits (VI:674).<sup>28</sup>

Diseases, plagues and pestilence are seen by Schelling as "angels of destruction", i.e., "aroused potencies which seek to realize themselves at the cost of the present state of things and of the human race." "Driven as by hunger toward actuality", such evil spirits or potencies seek to devour mankind (cf. 2 Sam 24:16 and Ps 91). But all such emerge only as a result of the release and elevation of "the Urpotency which is the ground of *all*." All those particular potencies are like offspring of the Urpotency, hence "individual evil spirits are represented as children and as angels, i.e., servants, of Satan" (VI:676).

*Evil* angels, then, are "potencies which no longer stand under the sovereignty to which they were subject." They are those potencies which *should not be* but which, nevertheless, *are* actualized as a result of man's Fall. *Good* angels are also mere potencies, but in the opposite sense, i.e., they are the possibilities which *should be* but which *are not* actualized for the same reason, i.e., because of man's Fall. Good angels are all those possibilities of good which, because of man's fallen nature, have remained mere possibilities (VI:679).

... every good angel is that which, according to the divine intention, should be *actual* but is now instead, because of the guilt of man, posited as *mere* potency or possibility, as not actualized. Hence these good angels are, *as* angels, i.e., as mere potencies, also not created ...

As a result of that agitation which was transmitted to the world - when man, through the Fall, cut himself off from his angels and posited that which he really should be as a potency outside himself - everything has experienced a metastasis, a displacement, and is not what it should be, does not conform to its idea, and therefore has its original idea outside itself. This is the reason for the vast number of good angels according to the representations of the Jews, just as Christ also speaks of legions of angels which his Father could send him (VI:676f).

The good angels are good by nature, concludes Schelling, and therefore they are will-less. Poetic fiction has understood them as creatures, but treated this way they are "infinitely preposterous and tiresome" (VI:677). The fact is that they are "will-less spirits because they *are* nothing but what they should be." Because they have no wills of their own, they are called "ministering spirits" (Heb 1:14) tempting man to obtain salvation.

Man, in this life, is quite literally situated "right between his good and evil angels, as Orientals and especially Jews taught." All that this means in Schelling's interpretation, is that man is constantly confronted with, and equally tempted by, ever new possibilities of good and evil. "The good angel cannot part from man", and follows him even into his estrangement from God. Hence Christ says of young and innocent children, "their angels in heaven always beheld the face of my Father" (Mt 18:10), i.e., they have not yet departed.

The good angels, although they are excluded from actuality, are not beings separated from the creation; although excluded from it, they do not cease to be present there. Every angel is the potency - idea - of a definite creation or individual (hence, since peoples are considered to be individuals, every people also has its angel, its spirit). The relation which man has to his good angel is the only connection left to him in his estrangement from God. Hence the good angels are called God's messengers (VI:678).

Before Christ's coming, "the good angels were the only connecting links between the human and the divine worlds." At the time of Christ, the Jews "believed that the law of Moses had been given through the intervention of angels" (although "it would have flattered their pride far more" if they could have believed it came directly from

God). The New Testament confirms this conviction (as in Heb 2:2, Acts 7:54, Gal 3:19), which must surely have its basis in a "real feeling." In the Old Testament God spoke "especially through angels," but in the New Testament He spoke through Christ "who was to be raised above all angels."

Before Christ's birth the angels were restrained and excluded from actuality. Then with Christ's birth they emerged from this state of concealment. At Christ's birth, Luke has a host of angels appear and chant: 'Glory be to God on high'. And at the beginning of his teaching Christ says to the first person who recognized him as the Son of God, as the Messiah: From now 'you will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man', i.e., between him and God you shall see a continual, never-ceasing communion (VI:678f cf. Jn 1:52).

#### Angel Mythology in the New and Old Testaments (VI:679-684)

How is it, asks Schelling, that the Apostles were so "full of the idea of those rulers, authorities and powers, those potencies and angels, which are so completely strange to us?" (VI:679). The explanation lies in the fact that the Apostles experienced something "of which *we* no longer have any experience", namely, the historic transition from natural to free religion. They stood "right on the boundary between the blind and the liberated consciousness." "Their representations are derived from the crisis itself, which they experienced, and in which those powers (of evil) were stripped of their objective strength" (VI:682).

When a ruling potency is unchallenged and is operating uniformly and equably, its power is "felt least of all". But the moment it is attacked, its power is most vividly experienced. Hence, in their life and death struggle with the powers of evil (with Satan, the potency of Paganism, and his cohorts), Christ and the Apostles were keenly aware of the immediacy and objective reality of the enemy.

This mythological element, especially in the Apostles' references to evil spirits, can be clearly seen in Jude 6. Here it is said that the angels "who did not keep their own beginning" (i.e., their state of potency, "for every beginning is above all a potency"), but "left their proper dwelling" (i.e., the place given them by the creation, the place of possibility), "have been kept by God in eternal chains in the nether darkness" (= "potentiality") "until the judgment" (i.e., "their

uncreated potentiality is also their limitation", they are in the realm of non-being, the nether-gloom, "to which they are secured with bands unbreakable - 'unbreakable' because based upon their nature." Escape can come only if man by his will delivers them) (VI:681).

Still more mythological are the statements in 2 Pet 2:4 ... 'God did not spare the angels which had sinned', i.e., those who *departed* from the place which was supposed to be their center ... by virtue of their tendency to rise out of potency and seduce the human will - God did not spare them but (what is natural and necessary consequence shall be looked upon as a punishment) he has bound them with shackles of darkness in Tartaros in order to keep them till the last judgment ... In this passage it would be foolish to deny the mythological character of the statements ... The Apostle Peter had not read Hesiod's Theogony and yet he speaks in very similar terms (VI:681f, 680).

Such mythological expressions used by the New Testament writers - especially those referring to evil spirits and angels - are cited by Schelling as support for "the reality and truth" of his interpretation of Paganism and of the real and objective tension between Paganism and Christianity experienced long ago so powerfully by the earliest Christians (VI:682).

The Old Testament is also full of "innumerable appearances of angels" and theophanies, and the analogy between these appearances and mythological events is too obvious to be denied. They cannot be appearances of the deity as such, or preliminary appearances of the Son of Man (for note that "*three* men come to Abraham to announce the birth of Isaac"). They can be understood only as a result of that "mythological tension which affected all mankind".

The same mythological tension which mediated the representations of the gods, becomes here the medium of actual divine appearance, just as the gifts of the first community are gifts of the Holy Spirit but the medium through which he operated was provided by a state of consciousness which later ceased and was lost. The same potencies which mediated the mythological representations are those which could be, in the Old Testament theophanies, the medium of an actual appearance of the deity. Just as Mythology and Revelation, as we explained earlier, are not distinguished by substantial content, so, in

the theophanies of the Old Testament, the substantial potencies are the same ones which operate in Mythology (VI:683).<sup>29</sup>

### **The Concept of a Literal World-of-Spirits**

Schelling felt compelled to discuss Satan and the good and evil angels because "they penetrate so deeply into the whole content of Christianity." But he also had a more general purpose, namely, to introduce a concept "until now quite strange to philosophy", the concept of an actual World of Spirits (*eigentlichen Geisterwelt*). This does not mean "the spiritual world" in which man already exists, or is supposed to exist, but "another world outside this one."

The consciousness of his connection with such a world, the consciousness of being still a universal essence whose weal and woe is shared even outside *this* world, raises man above the earth, even above nature, which *itself* becomes more intelligible in its limits when it has another world outside itself.

Fifty years ago, Kant believed he had covered and fully treated the whole domain of human cognition ... But for us these lectures have opened up a world of which (they) knew absolutely nothing and which they could not take up into the circle of their concepts without distortion .. The fact of a Philosophy of Revelation shows now that there was a whole world which was not embraced by previous philosophy (VI:684f).

Now, Schelling believes, he has provided all that is necessary to understand Revelation "in a formal and in a material way". His Philosophy of Revelation has not gone into practical matters, it has not discussed the morality of the Christian life, but it has confined itself to theoretical considerations and given an explanation of Christianity in terms of its higher-historical context.

A final task will be to "effect the transition out of this higher and inner history into external history." "This transition is mediated by the Church to which the completion of the work of Christ is entrusted." So Schelling will now investigate the history of the Christian Church, and establish the leading ideas in terms of which its development is to be understood (VI:685).

