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Schelling's Narrative Philosophy and Ankersmit's Narrative Logic – Is There Any Philosophy to Narrative?

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Abstract: This paper considers the problem of a narrative philosophy according to F. W. J. Schelling and narrative logic according to Franklin Ankersmit. Referring to these examples, I ask whether there is any philosophy to narrative at all. First, I discuss Schelling's views from his unfinished work "The Ages of the World," as well as his later dialectics of mythology of revelation from the system of the ages of the world. I focus on a dialectics of figurative and speculative order, which is at the core of Schelling's project to tell philosophy in the form of poetry and demonstrate the origins of Schelling's narrative philosophy in his early, transcendental thought. Next, I juxtapose my findings with Ankersmit's analysis of historians' language. I also consider whether, and how, some of these ideas can be applied in contemporary narrative research.

Keywords: narrative philosophy, F.W.J. Schelling, German idealism, Franklin Ankersmit, narrative logic

1 Introduction

Although Schelling, along with Kant and Fichte, is considered one of the most prominent representatives of transcendentalism, his philosophy is in fact irreducible to the typically systematic, negative thought that is characteristic of thinkers in this school. In his second, positive period, which began in 1809 with the famous treatise devoted to human freedom, he passed into the position of a so-called living system. This system is not deduced from the original concept, but is developed from the living principle – that is, from the internal life of God, the creator of the universe. In 1811, Schelling wrote the first version of his "The Ages of the World." In this unfinished work, and in its three successive versions from 1811,

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1813 and 1814–1815, Schelling introduces the idea of telling a philosophy (viz. the knowledge of the very beginnings of all things) in the form of the poem of the oldest past. In fact, this is the sort of a mythopoetry or mythopoetical history, as according to Schelling's own declaration (2019/1995) it directly refers to "the memory of the primordial beginning of things" (p. 62/p. 220), that is to say to this very original period which precedes both science and dialectics and in which all knowledge still has a living, "free and vibrant" character. Therefore, the narrator of such a story concerning this past age has only to present a living picture of what happened and has "no need to recall the details" of his research (p. 62/p. 220). In short, this is a discourse which has to combine dialectics in one simple story, compared to that of "the divine Plato" (p. 62/p. 220) and the living "presentation of knowledge, identical with history according to both its content and the original meaning of its word" (p. 62/p. 220), so that the final utterance will "take on the form of a straightforward historical narrative" (p. 62/p. 220) which makes visible the events "from the holy dawn of the world" (p. 65/p. 222). According to Schelling, the philosopher is identified with a historian who tells such a story of the beginnings of the whole being in the form of a poetical epopee. Furthermore, he can do this because "the human soul has a participatory knowledge (*Mitwissenschaft*) of creation" (Schelling 2019/1995, p. 57/p. 216).

According to both Xavier Tilliette and Manfred Schröter there is a difference between the first version of „Weltalter" from 1811 and the second version from 1813. For instance, the first version is naïve, too pictorial, and contains too many mythical and symbolic images (Tilliette 1970, p. 585), while the second version is "much more conceptual" (p. 585), and the third version only accentuates such a conceptual structurization (p. 585). This process culminates in the late, positive philosophy which is heavily inspired by Aristotelian thought. To conclude, the project to tell philosophy in the form of a historical epopee turns out to be internally aporetical, for philosophy that has a highly speculative and critical character is neither history nor poetry, and Schelling finally gives up his previous object of creating such a hybrid discourse. It turns out that philosophy which is based on logical rules, speculative terms and has a reflective character, has very little, if anything, to do with historical epopee, which uses poetical language, ambiguous metaphors and the art of "placing before eyes" or "making visible" (Ricoeur 1985, p. 186) rather than explaining or making understandable. However, the project of a narrative philosophy is continued in a transformed form in the system of the ages of the world and in the dialectics of mythology and revelation that are characteristic of Schelling's late thought. As Xavier Tilliette (1970) puts it, in this "slow fall (*la chute lente*) of *Weltalter*" one can observe "a secret mutation of a thinker and the unstoppable resurgence of a systematist and a theorist, which once again separates him from the historian–poet with whom he was in dialogue" (p. 595).

In this paper, I ask whether there is *any* philosophy to narrative. What does it exactly mean? I simply analyze the possibility to consider narrative also from a philosophical point of view. In brief, this is the question of its cognitive value, its internal logic, its relation to the logical values of truth and falsehood, or its possible relationship with a philosophical, speculative type of description in which abstract terms and rules of logic are the most essential. I will discuss this question on the basis of Schelling's *narrative philosophy* and Ankersmit's *narrative logic*. However, before I move on to a more detailed analysis of the presented problems, I will give a brief explanation of how I will define the terms. What is narrative? There are various definitions of 'narrative,' based on various criteria which often "tend to provide conflicting views," as various researchers "single out different features as constitutive of narrativity" (Herman et al. 2010, p. 345). In my current research, I will refer to the most intuitive and basic feature according to which a narrative is a story or a description of a series of events. However, as both in Schelling's and in Ankersmit's case the problem of narrative is in various ways related to history and historical discourse, I would like to add two important elements – I will refer this intuitive meaning to issues such as history and plot. In short, I propose to apply an improved version, supplemented with Ricoeur's views presented in his famous work "Time and Narrative" and based to some extent on the Aristotelian theory of mimesis. Such an enlarged definition should better explain the discussed problems, as history also emphasizes the notion of historical events and human agency (Little 2007). Narrative is "an account of how and why a situation or event came to be" and is "intended to provide an account of how a complex historical event unfolded and why" (Little 2007). Therefore, history has a narrative character. Yet, we are able to understand any particular event only as a part of a greater whole and in consequence within the framework of such historical research, the story must have a plot, that is to say the sort of mental configuration (Herman et al. 2010, p. 437) which "draws a unified and complete story from a variety of incidents" (Ricoeur 1985, p. 8).

Furthermore, although such terms as narrative and story are to some extent synonyms, and I will apply them interchangeably, from the point of view of narrative theory a story refers directly to a given sequence of events or to the action itself, while narrative is related to the events, but as represented in a discourse, so that it always presumes "the combination of story and discourse" (Herman et al. 2010, p. 347). In short, narrative has a more general meaning while story is more particular (for instance, as a concrete example of narrative). Therefore, in the current paper I focus on the issue of whether there is a philosophy to narrative, not to a story.

Why is this question noteworthy and what does it mean exactly? First of all, I would like to stress that this is a significant contemporary problem, as narrative

and narrative discourse has become very popular in practically all fields of our social, cultural and political life in recent decades. As Martin Kreiswirth (2000) put it, since the narrativist turn, “we seem to be more interested in narrative’s representational status” as “this turn has widened, deepened, and accelerated, encompassing a broader range of disciplinary forms of storied information – public policy analysis, medical diagnosis and education, and social work, for example” (pp. 296–297) as well as, for instance, sociology, law, natural sciences, economics, therapy – various fields that definitely do not have a fictional character and aim to truthfully depict reality. If so, a problem arises – how can such a conflated, impure discourse, one that uses a figurative language, is based on the process of emplotment, and is in fact a mimetic construct, be credibly applied to non-fictional purposes without contradiction? Therefore appears a necessity to analyze and better conceptualize its status and to rethink the mutual relationship between its elements, that is to say between story on the one hand and dialectics on the other.

In order to do this, I will refer to Schelling’s and Ankersmit’s works. First I will discuss Schelling’s ideas from “The Ages of the World” and show their origins in his early, negative philosophy. I will focus on the problem of the dialectics of seeing and understanding – that is of figurative order (viz. pictorial, metaphorical, or, as Schelling (2019/1995) put it, presenting “a living picture of what happened” (p. 62/p. 220)) and speculative order (viz. based on abstract terms and subordinated to the rules of logical thinking), which is in the core of Schelling’s project to tell philosophy in the form of poetry or history. Second, I will juxtapose my findings with Ankersmit’s analysis of historians’ language, which he considers as a hybrid discourse based on a very particular connexion of figurative and referential factors. I will also consider whether some of Schelling’s ideas have methodological potential that can be applied, for instance, in narrative research to analyse stories that aim to tell the truth by means of narrative patterns (such as historical writing).

2 Schelling’s Narrative Philosophy: Sources of the Concept in Schelling’s Early Thought

I begin with a presentation of the main assumptions of Schelling’s so-called *narrative philosophy*. Schelling himself does not apply this particular phrase, although he emphasizes that the “philosopher finds himself in essentially the same situation as any other historian” (Schelling 2019/1995, p. 59/p. 217). He claims this is so as the philosopher’s task is in telling the story of the “primordial beginning of things” (p. 62/p. 220) in the form of a historical narrative in which

everything is “vivid and true and alive” (p. 60/p. 218) and there is no longer “a gap separating the world of thought and the world of actuality” (p. 63/p. 221). The term “narrative philosophy” was first proposed by contemporary francophone researchers, such as Marc Maeschalck (1991), in his work “L’anthropologie politique et religieuse de Schelling” (p. 171), or Emilio Brito (1987) in “La création selon Schelling” (p. 162), and thus this concept has a rather interpretative character.

Maeschalck (1991) introduces the term to determine the very particular form of a discourse of various versions of “Weltalter” in which, according to him, “Schelling establishes a continual circulation of symbols for reflection” for he is trying to “let the creative will explain herself (*s’expliquer*) in the book of the world” (p. 184). As he puts it, “Narrative philosophy is a manner of telling about divinity, beginning from inside, beginning from its own freedom, as a part of the drama of creation” (p. 184). Therefore, this is a sort of mystical fable (*la fable mystique*) which emerges from “the constant exchange of (...) two orders of seeing (*schauen*) and understanding (*verstehen*)” (p. 175). As I will try to demonstrate in the remainder of this paper, the dialectics of two heterogeneous factors is crucial not only to Schelling’s project of creating a living philosophical system presented in “The Ages of the World,” but seems to be to some extent essential to all concepts of narrative philosophy – that is, to all efforts to combine narrative and speculative thought, in any form or discourse. However, I will take a short step back to show the origins of this idea in Schelling’s work, starting from its very beginning – that is, his transcendental philosophy.

Before I move to deeper analysis of this problem, I would like to make one remark concerning the form of Schelling’s work as a whole. Xavier Tilliette (1970) characterises his thought as “a philosophy in the making” (*une philosophie en devenir*), as this thought does not have a purely systematic character, and is divided in many successive parts that are sometimes entirely different, at least at first glance. According to the most popular classification in Schelling’s philosophy, one can distinguish a negative and positive period, or according to another view, early, middle and late phases. In reality, though, this question is more complex, as practically none of the stages mentioned above is purely homogenous.¹ Schelling begins as Fichte’s and Kant’s apprentice and as one of the most important representatives of transcendentalism. This stage in his own philosophical development

¹ There are also other suggestions of how to categorize various periods of Schelling’s thought. For instance, Barbara Loer (1974) proposes applying the terms “rational absolute” (*das vernünftige Absolute*) (p. 146) and “historical absolute” (*das geschichtliche Absolute*) (p. 189). Although these terms are to some extent similar to the distinction of negative and positive philosophy mentioned above, she emphasizes that they “must not be misinterpreted as a periodisation of Schelling’s philosophy,” as they only help to achieve “a greater clarity of the course of thought” (p. 146).

ends in 1800 with “The System of Transcendental Idealism.” He then moves to the positions of the so-called philosophy of identity, which lasts until 1804, or according to other researchers, even “sometime before the 1809 ‘On the Essence of Human Freedom’” (Bowie 2001). In that period, he writes works including the “Philosophy of Art” (1802) and the treatise “Philosophie und Religion” (1804). At the same time, he remains interested in the philosophy of nature, sometimes treated as the second, real part of his transcendental system, though Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* has a somewhat independent character. With the 1809 treatise on human freedom, 1810’s “Stuttgart lectures,” and his three successive versions of “The Ages of the World,” Schelling gradually passes to the second (and last) so-called positive phase of his philosophy, which lasts till his death in 1854 and in which he is concerned, among other, with the philosophy of mythology and philosophy of revelation.

Although with no doubts there are differences between various periods and systems of Schelling’s philosophy, there are also countless similarities and a deep, secret tie which gives the basis to all of them and is responsible for the common character of the whole “philosophy in the making.” In fact, Schelling’s philosophy is composed of several motifs which appear in various phases and which often are repeated in later ones, although in a form that is transformed to some extent. The concept of narrative philosophy, though first introduced in the mature form only in 1811 in “The Ages of the World” also has its origins in the former stages of Schelling’s thought.

In fact, Schelling’s philosophy from its very beginnings shows a strong interest in topics such as the origins of humankind, myths, and philosophy of the oldest ages, combined with a heavy dose of inspiration from Plato’s works. Harald Holz (1977) even describes young Schelling as possessed of a “platonic syndrome” (*das Platonische Syndrom*; p. 19). Those early fascinations heavily influence practically all “philosophy in the making,” its critical and negative as well as positive stage, and appear in various forms in many of Schelling’s works. For instance in one of his earliest works, the treatise “Ueber Mythen, historische Sagen und Philosopheme der ältesten Welt” (Myths, Historical Legends, and Philosophemes of the Oldest World), written in 1793,² Schelling discusses the issue of the oldest, mythical history in which “no occurrence had been put down in writing yet, but had only been propagated only orally” (Schelling 1856, p. 43f.). In consequence “the oldest legends of all people (*Völker*)” are the “daughter of ears and narrative” (*Töchter des Ohrs und Erzählung*) (1856, p. 44). The wisdom of the oldest ages was conveyed in the form of myth and oral narrative. In this golden age of human history, when

² During his studies in the seminary in Tübingen, where he developed friendships with Hölderlin and Hegel.

people did not have a well-developed culture and were children of nature, stories were told by fathers to their sons. Telling and hearing remained the only method of raising, and so sound and the narrator's voice were to some extent crucial, as they had power to inspire others to act and to change reality.

According to Schelling, this oldest knowledge has a mythical and living character. He says that a son of nature never speaks "without lively movements of the body," and that "everything that occurs in his soul, expresses itself through his body; everything he narrates he imitates (*bildet er an sich selbst nach*) through gestures and movements of his body, vividly presenting it before the listener's eyes" (1856, p. 45). Schelling comes back to the idea of such mythical and poetical knowledge, animated by imagination in his later works, for instance, in the concept of art as the highest potentiation of an absolute spirit and the organ of philosophy from "The System of Transcendental Idealism" (1800). Yet this concept also appears a few years earlier, in "The Oldest Systematic Program of German Idealism" from 1796 – the unfinished text assigned to Schelling, Hegel and Hölderlin. This text was considered one of the most uncanny manifestos of German idealist thought. In this short passage we find, in fact, all of the problems that appear both at the end of Schelling's systematic *opus magnum* from 1800 and in his narrative philosophy in "The Ages of the World." For instance, the author of this text is convinced that an aesthetic act is "the highest act of reason" (Bykova 2020, p. 226), and therefore the philosopher "must possess just as much aesthetic power as the poet" (2020, p. 226). He confers "a higher dignity" on poetry and foresees that at the end of humankind, when there is no longer either philosophy nor history, poetic art "becomes again (...) what it was in the beginning – *teacher of (history [of]) the human race*" (2020, p. 227). At last, he postulates the so-called "new mythology" of reason, which according to him "must (...) stand in the service of ideas" (2020, p. 227) and must be one and the same with the religion of spirit, sent from heaven and identified with "the last work of the human race" (2020, p. 227). He claims that in order to establish such a higher spiritual unity, philosophers must work on joining philosophical order of ideas and aesthetical order of myth – they must produce a discourse in which ideas will be visible to, and therefore understandable for all people:

Until we make ideas aesthetic, i.e., mythological, they hold no interest for the *people*, and conversely, before mythology is reasonable, the philosopher must be ashamed of it. Thus finally the enlightened and unenlightened must shake hands; mythology must become philosophical, and the people reasonable, and philosophy must become mythological in order to make philosophy sensual (2020, p. 227).

Those early ideas are significantly deepened and developed in "The System of Transcendental Idealism" (1800), especially in the concept of a so-called universal

ocean of poetry introduced in the sixth and final chapter of this work. There, Schelling (2001/1800) discusses the problem of deducing the final notion of the system in which all the terms, separated during the process of the objectivisation of the absolute self – that is to say freedom and necessity, consciousness and unconsciousness, subject and object and so forth – are unified anew in the intuition of the absolute art-product. In the conclusion, we find the following passage:

Philosophy was born and nourished by poetry in the infancy of knowledge, and with it all those sciences it has guided toward perfection; we may thus expect them, on completion, to flow back like so many individual streams into the universal ocean of poetry from which they took their source. Nor is it in general difficult to say what the medium for this return of science to poetry will be; for in mythology such a medium existed, before the occurrence of a breach now seemingly beyond repair. But how a new mythology is itself to arise, which shall be the creation, not of some individual author, but of a new race, personifying, as it were, one single poet – that is a problem whose solution can be looked for only in a future destinies of the world, and in the course of history to come (pp. 232–233/ pp. 477–478).

This figure of a collective poet who in future will shape a new mythology is well anchored in Schelling's ideas from the transcendental period. We also find similar ideas in "The System of Transcendental Idealism." In the fourth chapter of this work, in which Schelling passes to the system of practical philosophy "according to the principles of transcendental idealism" there appears a discontinuity which perhaps entirely changes the character of his transcendental system. Schelling begins with a typically speculative, transcendental deduction, which remains in perfect accordance with our expectations of negative thought, reduced to a purely conceptual development of the original principle. Yet, towards the end of the fourth chapter, he gradually introduces various metaphorical motifs which with no doubt are not the same as typical abstract concepts. Those motifs clearly indicate the second, parallel principle of the whole system of knowledge, and finally lead to the poetical closure, culminating in the figure of the universal ocean of poetry that contains the poetical matter of all sciences and discourses.

An emergence of this poetical mutation is related to the deduction of many individual wills that mutually limit each other according to the rules of a pre-established harmony. Schelling introduces here the main assumptions of his practical philosophy, considered by him as having its origins in the history of mankind. History is hard to deduce from the principle, as it presumes that individuals act in a free manner, which is not determined by the Hegelian logic of concept. Therefore, Schelling (2001/1800) proposes to "think of history as a play in which everyone involved performs his part quite freely and as he pleases," but

a rational development of this muddled drama is conceivable only if there be a single spirit who speaks in everyone, and if the playwright, whose mere fragments (*disjecta membra poetae*) are the individual actors, has already so harmonized beforehand the objective outcome of the whole with the free play of every participant, that something rational must indeed emerge at the end of it. But now if the playwright *were to exist* independently of his drama, we should be merely the actors who speak the lines he has written. If he *does* not exist independently of us, but reveals and discloses himself successively only, through the very play of our own freedom, so that without this freedom even he himself *would not be*, then we are collaborators of the whole and have ourselves invented the particular roles we play (p. 210/ pp. 436–437).

To conclude, this particular mutation in a transcendental deduction has a pluralistic character, as there are many wills which utter themselves through the medium of a drama of history. This pluralism of wills clearly indicates the presence of the material factor in Schelling's thought and reveals the second, real principle of the allegedly critical, negative system of knowledge. Although it is quite far from the positive phase, as Schelling still considers himself as a transcendental thinker and we do not have clear proof that he even thinks about such ideas as combining in one discourse pictorial and speculative order, such metaphysical pluralism introduces narrative schemes of thinking. In fact, we already have here practically all the elements which are constitutive for narrative philosophy from "The Ages of the World," such as two principles – one ideal, notional, formal or speculative, and the second real, material, poetical or figurative. The speculative deduction takes the form of a historical drama or a historical poem, or the idea of a God who expresses himself in the history of the world through the medium of many particular wills (many creative potencies in Schelling's late philosophy of mythology and revelation).

However, when we return to the very principles behind the whole deductive chain, it appears that Schelling's transcendental philosophy was neither purely negative, nor critical, practically from its very beginnings. Notably, Schelling's early philosophy is heavily influenced by Kant's and Fichte's transcendental deductions that seem to have a critical and therefore negative character, at least at first glance. However, this question is more complex. For instance, the original activity of the principle of deduction of Fichte's Theory of Science (*Wissenschaftslehre*), that is to say "a reflexive self-generation of knowledge" which has its beginnings in the activity of an absolute, is undoubtedly not of a purely critical nature. Therefore, "[r]eading Fichte is really reading a reflexive self-generation of knowledge (...). The form of philosophy is henceforth a knowledge capable of autonomous self-generation, starting from an intellectual intuition of the activity of the self" (Dumont 2014, pp. 241–242). In fact, Schelling goes further than Fichte, as his position is practically avowedly metaphysical even in the earliest works of

his transcendental period. As Chelsea C. Harry (2015) proves, in *Abhandlungen zur Erläuterung Idealismus der Wissenschaftslehre* (Treatises Explaining the Idealism of the Science of Knowledge), one of Schelling's lesser-known treatises written in 1796/1797, he proposes to defend the critical position, yet his final conclusion "shows it ultimately to be unfounded" (p. 331), as it rests "on the false premise (...) that form and material are separate entities" (p. 331) and that "we can know the original conditions and originations of the two" (p. 331). This is not surprising, as at this early stage Schelling is an adherent of the romantic, organic conception of the identity of spirit and nature which "for the early Schelling, is not mindless material awaiting the synthesizing powers of subjectivity to give it sense and structure but spirit in its undeveloped potency for consciousness" (McGrath 2010, p. 74).

In consequence, the principle of transcendental deduction does not have an entirely conceptual character. It is not a pure concept of the self, but the original identity $A = A$. This original identity does not simply denote identity in the analytical sense of the term, but instead the original indifference (*Indifferenz*) of the opposite terms in the absolute: knowledge and being, the ideal and the real, freedom and necessity, unity and plurality, the form and the matter, and so forth. Therefore the self is able to produce "the world of hard external necessity" as it is produced "by something in the I which is not dependent upon its *will*, but rather upon its (therefore unconscious) *nature* (...)" (Bowie 2003, p. 109). Furthermore, Schelling distinguishes two general activities that determine both the character of the original self and its objectivisation through the process of shaping the nature and history of the world. As he puts it, "The self is nothing else but a *producing that becomes an object to itself*, that is, an intellectual intuition" (Schelling 2001/1800, p. 28/p. 52). Therefore, at its deepest and the most original level the original self must assume the original dialectics of two basic and "absolutely opposed" rules: "The one that originally reaches out into infinity we shall call the *real, objective, limitable* activity; the other, the tendency to intuit oneself in that infinity, is called the ideal, *subjective, illimitable activity*" (2001/1800, p. 49/p. 97). In fact, practically from the very beginning, Schelling's thought is strongly inspired by tendencies such as Spinozian pantheism. But unlike Spinoza, Schelling's transcendental philosophy presumes some primacy of the ideal factor over the real one. As he puts it, an ideal, illimitable, subjective activity is never entirely transformed into object in the process of intuition: "in the production itself there lies a ground whereby the ideal activity of the self that is involved in producing is driven back upon itself, and is thereby led to transcend the product" (2001/1800, p. 94/p. 194). To conclude, this is an original dialectics of the subject and the object that is, at the same time, the most crucial rule. This rule is responsible for the whole deduction: in the process of an intellectual intuition, the original self partially limits its own ideal activity by producing some being in which it intuits itself as

limited – as an object (for instance matter, nature, the organic and so forth). Yet, this process is infinite, as the ideal, illimitable activity can agree with the real activity only in the completion of the whole system of knowledge – in the art-product.

A similar scheme of thinking is repeated in practically all phases of Schelling's thought. For instance, he tries to address how the absolute being can because of the empirical one: of nature and of all the finite world with all particular entities. According to Schelling, we can explain this phenomenon only when we assume that the original principle itself has a character that is to some extent mixed, which contains both ideal and real factors. In short, there is an ideal absolute, yet there is also a real absolute, which is identified with the so-called *basis* (*Grund*), the nature in God first introduced in his 1809 treatise concerning human freedom.

To sum up, in Schelling's thought from its very beginning and within the limits of the intelligible being functions such a second, hyletical or maternal principle (*mütterliches oder hyletisches Prinzip*; Holz 1977, p. 41). This principle is already emerging in Schelling's very early, transcendental and critical phase – in "The System of Transcendental Idealism" (1800). According to my thesis, this is the factor responsible for the polyphonic and narrative potential of Schelling's philosophy in his later works, such as "The Ages of the World" (1811). As Barbara Loer (1974) put it,

While Schelling still specifies and develops structural theory of the absolute (*Strukturtheorie des Absoluten*) in 1810's "Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen" ("Stuttgart Lectures") (...), his starting point did not fundamentally change, though in the three versions of "Weltalter" from 1811, 1813 and 1814/15 he increasingly focuses on the question of how duality-producing and reality-producing mediation (*Vermittlung*) of both principles could arise from the originally identical absolute (pp. 200–201).

Therefore, in this later period he very often recalls those early, poetical and mythological motifs from "The Oldest Systematic Program of German Idealism" (1796) and "The System of Transcendental Idealism" (1800). For instance, in the introduction to "The Ages of the World" (1811), which "is virtually identical in all three published drafts" (Schelling 2019, p. 55; footnote), Schelling (2019/1995) presents the most important philosophical and methodological assumptions of the project of sharing the knowledge of philosophy in the form of the story "from the holy dawn of the world" (p. 65/p. 222). He expresses a belief that realizing his narrative postulates in philosophy gradually brings us to "the anticipated golden age when truth again becomes fable and fable truth" (p. 57/p. 216).

Furthermore, in this middle phase, Schelling (2019/1995) also distinguishes two principles of the living system: one, divine which "dwells freely (...) in its original lucid purity" (p. 57/p. 216) and the second, narrower, in contrast dark and

unaware, and “obscures the higher principle with which it is connected” (p. 57/p. 216). In this original state of primordial indifference, they reside “without distinction, simultaneously, as one” (p. 58/pp. 216–217). However, their mutual relationships in fact have a dialectic character. For instance, “higher realizes that it has been bound with its inferior not in order to stay bound. Instead, it has been given this other so that it itself has something in which it can contemplate, express, and grow to understand itself” (p. 58/p. 216). In short, they can be explained as transformed versions of the limitable and illimitable activity from “The System of Transcendental Idealism” (Schelling 2001/1800, p. 49/p. 97). As Schelling (2019/1995) puts it,

both principles strive equally for division (...): the higher, in order to return home to its original freedom and be revealed to itself; the lower, so that it can be impregnated by it, in order that it too, if in an entirely different way, might come to know (p. 58/p. 217).

In consequence the role of philosopher consists in the “inner art of dialogue” (p. 58/p. 217) in which those two main factors or, as Schelling (2019/1995) puts it, “two beings, one that questions and one that answers, one that knows – or is knowledge (*Wissenschaft*) itself – and one that, not knowing, always struggles for clarity” (p. 58/p. 217) remain in constant exchange. Yet, this dialectics of two principles is to some extent crucial for the whole living system both in the early phase, from 1811 to 1815, and in the very mature period, in the philosophy of mythology and revelation. For instance, in “The Ages of the World” Schelling comes back to the early, transcendental idea of a construction of successive stages of objective being. Although the original self was replaced by the original living being, and the whole deduction is presented in the form of a narration concerning the very beginnings of the universe, Schelling keeps thinking within the frames of the dialectics of two activities. He also describes these as “two equally eternal wills, different in nature and even opposed to one another” (2019/1995, p. 77/p. 231): one, primary, identified with love, or “the true heart of reality” (p. 78/p. 232) and the second, equally divine, yet from the very beginning subordinated, identified with “the ground of its existence” (p. 78/p. 232).

In fact, the first version of “The Ages of the World” introduces all the motifs that form the basis of Schelling’s later thought: dialectics of two original principles, as well as trinitological dialectics of the system of times, a difference between being (*das Seyn*) and something that actually is (*das Seyende*), and so forth. Yet in this early phase, Schelling thinks within the framework of mythopoetical categories, and it seems that he really believes that he is able to create a new type of philosophical discourse which according to him will open the path to the “objectivity of philosophical science” (2019/1995, p. 63/p. 220). In this paradigm,

philosophical knowledge will gain the obviousness and vividness of a new mythology or “a straightforward historical narrative” in which knowledge is presented in a “free and vibrant” form (p. 62/p. 220).

In his later philosophy, Schelling finally gives up the idea of telling philosophy in the form of poetry, and philosopher wins with the narrator of a cosmic epopee. In successive versions of the system of the ages of the world, Schelling admittedly does not persist in combining speculative and metaphorical order into one discourse. Nonetheless, he still thinks within the framework of a dialectics of two factors and two main processes: mythology and revelation. The first factor has a productive character and can be explained as an iteration of the process of cosmic creation in human consciousness, in which mythical images are produced with the necessity similar to the natural one. Thus, mythological ideas are neither arbitrary nor contingent, and contrary to enlightenment interpretations, cannot be explained in a rational manner, for they are not reduced to the terms of speculative thinking. This first type of consciousness shapes the basis of all mythological (heathen) religions, and according to Schelling, it must be overcome, spiritualized and subordinated anew to the ideal principle in the process of revelation, which he identifies with the message conveyed in the Old and New Testaments.

In short, in this later phase, Schelling in fact takes up eschatological positions, as he slightly alters the character of the highest principle of his philosophy. The eternal absolute being takes the form of God, who “successively but never fully and finally reveals himself in history” (Buijs 2016, p. 374). Yet, throughout the whole process in which, as Manfred Schröter (1971) puts it, God actualizes himself “in the world set through him and from him” (p. 105) original forces of creation and potencies of revelation remain in constant exchange. This seems to be conditioned by the internal logic of the system, which in this positive phase repeats, though in a somewhat transformed form, some main assumptions of the transcendental deduction from “The System of Transcendental Idealism,” according to which some being must first be created in order to eventually come to consciousness. To sum up, creation and revelation mutually condition each other. Myth is “an early but essential stage of the religious consciousness” as “At a first stage of religion, the sacred is not yet clearly differentiated from the nonsacred. It is followed by a long period of polytheism, indispensable for preparing the idea of one God inclusive of all reality” (Dupré 2007, p. 3).

For the late Schelling this polytheistic, polyphonic, and in consequence, narrative factor in the system of the ages of world is also present in the biblical concept of God. According to the principles of the philosophy of revelation, biblical monotheism in fact presumes a dialectics between one Jehovah and many Elohim, and therefore is conditioned by polytheistic element that is characteristic for natural religions of the nations of Near East. Schelling explains this problem

referring to the well-known biblical story of God asking Abraham to make a sacrifice of his son Isaac. He states that in giving this order to Abraham God pretended to be someone else and had to use “the principle which was not himself, yet which was in him” (Schelling 1992, p. 485). In brief, he did so through the medium of those “many Elohim,” that is to say through the medium of some polytheistic factor in himself (Schelling 1992, pp. 486f.). It seems that Schelling comes back here to the idea of a basis (*Grund*) in an absolute being (viz. a nature in God). In other words, in this process God acted as cosmic, creative potencies identified with the natural or real element in himself. However, it is worth reminding that in Schelling’s early philosophy the God-poet from “The System of Transcendental Idealism” also expresses himself in the history of the world through the medium of many individual wills.

3 Franklin Ankersmit: Narrative Logic

To sum up, Schelling’s narrative philosophy has its origins in a double structure of the absolute being and is determined by a dialectics of two factors or two (usually) separated orders that remain in constant exchange: the ideal and the real, the concept and the being, the subject and the object, unity and plurality, mythology and revelation, and finally image and concept, or seeing and understanding. Such a dialectic scheme can be found also in other concepts of narrative philosophy, such as Franklin Ankersmit’s narrative logic. Ankersmit is one of the most important contemporary philosophers of history, and a representative of the linguistic turn in historical theory (Icke 2010, p. 551). In his numerous works he focused, among others, on historical representation, on the role of metaphor in historical discourse, as well as on the relationship between language and historical experience overall (see for instance Ankersmit 2005, pp. 69f.). His works are particularly interesting from the point of view of my current research not only because of his interest in the form of historical discourse and whether and how it refers to past events or experience, but also because Ankersmit considers history as a narrative discourse that must be analyzed from a philosophical perspective.

In the preliminary remarks to the “Narrative Logic. A Semantic Analysis of the Historian’s Language,” Ankersmit (1983) declares that “this book will be concerned with the logical structure of historical narrative” (p. 7). However, he admits that although these are just historical representations of the past, which are crucial for his work, his concept in fact it is not limited to this particular type of discourse and “has (...) considerable bearing upon *all* narrative (...) use of language as we find it for instance in novels, journals, textbooks and so on” (p. 7). As he further claims, “historical language is the prototype of all narrative *genres*:

only after human beings had acquired the ability to speak about their personal or collective past did myth, poetry and fiction become possible" (p. 7). Therefore "the philosophy of history, and, more specifically, narrativist philosophy will also be of fundamental importance for linguistics and the study of literature and fiction" (p. 7).

It seems to be quite different approach than Schelling's standpoint, at least at first glance, for in "The System of Transcendental Idealism" we deal with the chronological and ontological superiority of poetry and mythology over history and all other types of discourse. However, there are several similarities between those two versions of narrative philosophy. First, in his project to share philosophy in the form of poetry, presented in "The Ages of the World," Schelling privileges the role of historical discourse. For instance, he claims that from the old, Platonic point of view according to which philosophy is "more a striving to know than knowledge itself" (Schelling 2019/1995, p. 59/p. 217) as it "first begins as the struggle to regain awareness" (p. 59/p. 217) the philosopher is "in essentially the same situation as any other historian" (p. 59/p. 217). Historians must be critical toward their sources and "received records" (p. 60/p. 217) in order to "distinguish true from false" (p. 60/p. 217), in the same way philosophers do. Furthermore, the philosopher must "seek to free himself from the concepts and foibles of his own time" (p. 60/pp. 217–218), hence "be able to critique himself" (p. 60/p. 217) or be self-reflective.

Ankersmit obviously distinguishes narrative logic – a philosophy of historical discourse – from history itself. Yet he also claims that according to the point of view of a narrative idealist (for instance, himself) historical narrative includes a figurative and metaphorical factor that does not refer directly to the past events and that critical analysis is required to fix what is true and what is false in such a story. In consequence, historical discourse is never entirely transparent and fully reducible to such type of sentences which are characteristic for exact sciences. As Peter Icke (2010) emphasizes, "Historical writing, seen as a coherent whole, is therefore an internally referenced imaginative product of an aesthetic kind and as such cannot possibly be subject to validation on the basis of truth claims at the level of the singular statement" (p. 558). In discussing the past, historians use so-called *narrative substances*, which in fact have a double meaning or, as Ankersmit (1983) puts it, "'eat away' the statements of a sentential universe in order to form a logical entity in another, narrativist, universe" (p. 135).

What is narrative substance? Ankersmit (1983) calls it "the third logical entity" after subject and predicate (p. 102). It is responsible for the metaphorical power of historical discourse, and as such cannot be explained within the framework of classical sentential logic. This is some peculiar property of a historical narrative, related to the particular character of the object of historical research which (almost) never exists in the time in which a given historian is studying. Therefore,

the past is available only through the medium of traces – documents, photographs, testimonies of eyewitnesses, and so forth. According to Ankersmit (1983) “We do not ‘see’ the past as it is, as we see a tree, a machine or a landscape as it is; we see the past only through a masquerade of narrative structures” (p. 88). In consequence, contrary to the representatives of exact sciences, the historian does not start but only ends with a “seeing as...” (p. 88) or, putting this in another words, the historian does not have any portable mode of “seeing as” which can be treated as a starting point of the inquiry and he must only invent it. In order to do this someone who prepares a narrative account concerning the past creates narrative substances, that is to say “the ‘image’ or ‘picture’ of the past which the historian wants to present to us” (p. 97) and which is the true subject of the narration. Thanks to this, a historical description functions on two overlapping levels: it refers to past events, such as the French Revolution, the rise and fall of the Soviet Union or Napoleon’s life, and at the same time refers to this “image” of the past, which reflects the point of view of the historian giving the account.

According to Ankersmit (1983) this “double function of narrative statements can also be claimed for metaphorical statements” (p. 209) which, within the framework of historical narrative, can themselves be considered on two different levels. On the first, they can keep some elements of a descriptive function, as they can be paraphrased to a sentence with a literal meaning that, for instance, “asserts something on the historical personality” (p. 209) that could be confirmed or “falsified by empirical findings” (p. 210). Yet, on the second level they definitely do not have any descriptive meaning as they do not contain empirical claims, nor they are “even a rule for the formulation of empirically controllable statements” (p. 210) and their only role “is to define or to individuate a point of view” (p. 210) from which we, the readers, should see, for instance, the actions of a given historical personage.

In short, they are fictional in the Ricoeurian sense of the term. In a manner similar to narrative substances they open “the kingdom of (historical) as if” (see Ricoeur 1984, p. 64), at least to some extent, and enable us to participate in some vision of the past created by a historian. Nonetheless, their aim obviously remains descriptive, even referential, and in that sense they are not created or purely constructed as they are not fictive. According to John Zammito (2005), “no matter how subjective the inspiration for its construction, or original and unique the viewpoint, the account proposed aims at objectivity, at intersubjective acceptability” (p. 179). However, it seems that this is the connection of figurative and descriptive factors that is crucial both in the case of metaphor and narrative substance and which lets us consider Ankersmit’s proposal as a particularly interesting example of narrative philosophy in the Schellingian sense of the term.

In fact, there is one more reason to do this and we can find it in Ankersmit's analysis of historical representation. As he puts it in his article on the subject of "presence" and myth, "much of contemporary philosophy of history has dwelled at length on this notion of historical representation and on how a historical text can properly be said to represent part of the past" (Ankersmit 2006, p. 329). He begins with a definition of the term "representation" which he understands as "making something present again" (p. 328) in such a way that a given subject must first be absent in order to be made present by the act of representation. Yet, while "in the case of pictorial and political representation the represented has a logical priority to its representation, in the case of historical representation (...) the represented – that is, the past – depends for its (onto-)logical status on its representation" (p. 328) to the extent that from the present point of view the past no longer exists and therefore there is no past without its representation.

According to Ankersmit, there are two possible ways in which a historical text is able to make the past present again. Most philosophers of history simply presume that it may be a substitute for the past. However, there is also another possibility, as we may ask "whether the past can actually be carried into the present by historical representation, in much the same way that one may carry a souvenir from a foreign country into one's own" (2006, p. 329). Although it may sound a little bit fantastical, at least at first glance, it is in fact a real and serious problem related to "the limits of what can be historicized" (p. 333), or to the transcendental conditions of possibility of history and historical writing themselves. As the author claims, "there is often, perhaps even always, a limit to what we succeed in historicizing, and what we do not succeed in historicizing is what we are compelled to repeat" (p. 333). He discusses this issue on the example of the Srebrenica massacre during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995, considered as "the greatest mass murder in Europe since the Nazi regime" (p. 330), where "7500 Muslims were slaughtered by the Serbs under the nose of a Dutch UN battalion" (p. 330). As Ankersmit states, in order to avoid political investigation and analysing such "an unbearable present," the responsible politicians immediately remitted the case to the historians of the Netherlands Institute of War Documentation (p. 331).

As the author proves, in their faithful and detailed report, researchers in fact "copied the behaviour of the politicians and of the military authorities" (p. 331) as this report was prepared in such a way that "it effectively barred any further discussion" (p. 331). For Ankersmit (2006), this is an excellent model of such kind of representation which is not a typical imitation of reality but rather "a repetition or re-enactment of a previous action" (p. 332). In short, in this type of representation "there is a *continuum* between the representation and what is represented" (p. 332), so that we, the readers, are not aware of "the picture frame" (p. 332) which

seems to be absent in such sort of reading. According to Ankersmit (2006), here we find the linkage to myth, as myth also “brings us back to the beginning of historical time, to that sublime moment when history came into being” (p. 333), and therefore to the limits of the process of historicization.

As Ankersmit (2006) emphasizes, although the historians knew very well what happened in Srebrenica, due to this partially unconscious gesture of copying the politicians’ behaviour, they revealed a blind spot in their research report, that is “the myth lying at the origin of the subconscious beliefs and convictions of a civilization, a nation, or an institution” (p. 335). They trespassed the boundary between history and myth by demonstrating that “there was a limit to what they succeed in historicizing” (p. 334). Like Schelling who believed that at the end of history all discourses will be transformed into a new mythology, Ankersmit expresses here a conviction that “myth is to be found at the end, as well as at the beginning, of all historical writing” (p. 335). However, Ankersmit (2006) ends up with the idea that it is practically impossible to fully grasp the meaning of such a mythical “presence,” yet “the urge to get hold of this meaning is irresistible” (p. 336). In other words, although historians sometimes repeat the Platonic gesture and apply myth when they are not able to explain something in a more rational manner, the myth as such does not explain anything, and therefore we need dialectics in order to interpret it and to understand its proper sense. In consequence, although Ankersmit emphasizes the importance and the irreducibility of the figurative and metaphorical factor in historical discourse, classical logical categories of true or false, and the notion of reference or philosophical theories of truth also play very significant roles within his framework. In fact, we are dealing here with dialectics of image of the past or a narrative substance and the concept, or a sort of constant dialogue of “presence” (that is of myth) and meaning, as those two levels of historical discourse – referential, or critical, and figurative, or metaphorical – overlap and are in constant exchange. Therefore, what we are offered as an explanation of, for instance, the French Revolution according to Jules Michelet, is an effect of an interplay of those two orders within the framework of a given historical work.

4 Conclusion: Is There any Philosophy to Narrative?

I return to our starting problem of whether there is any philosophy to narrative. Do Schelling’s and Ankersmit’s narrative philosophies provide us with any help with this question and deliver us at least partial solution of this dilemma? Although

there is not much room here to give a complete or at least partially exhaustive answer, I will highlight some ideas that seem to be the most fruitful for such research.

As I sought to demonstrate above, there are several similarities between Schelling's project of sharing a philosophy in the form of historical poem "from the holy dawn of the world" (Schelling 2019/1995, p. 65/p. 222) and Ankersmit's narrative logic. In both cases we must deal with the same dialectics of figurative and conceptual factors that overlap each other, and the truth of the whole discourse results from their constant exchange, as some vivid picture of the past events subsequently becomes the object of philosophical reflection. For instance, according to Schelling's narrative philosophy, truth emerges as an effect of the permanent dialectical exchange of seeing and understanding, or an effect of the dialectics of the process of mythology and revelation in which the real principle or the original matter of all discourses is subordinated anew to the highest, ideal, spiritual principle and therefore we are able to comprehend the ultimate sense of all cosmic drama of creation. In Ankersmit's concept of narrative logic, we do not operate with such "universal" perspective which situates us within the framework of the mythical beginnings of mankind or divine principles of all things, as his research interests focus mainly on empirical history. However, the scheme of thinking is quite similar, as according to him, when creating narratives about the past, historians often use various metaphorical images which need to be analyzed in order to provide any cognitive value for us. Furthermore, they sometimes unconsciously apply purely mythical ways of presenting past events, and those myths also require reflective rethinking in order to be able to explain us anything.

Of course, as clearly demonstrated in the three unfinished versions of "The Ages of the World," the project of connecting philosophy and narrative has its own internal limitations. Philosophy is neither history, nor poetry, hence it is in fact impossible to share a philosophy in the form of narrative in which the poet-philosopher is conscious of his own act of creation. However, this does not mean that we cannot methodologically profit for instance from the second, critical version of this idea from Schelling's late thought, in which the element of understanding prevails over the poetical factor. Ankersmit's proposal, which is based on a similar dialectical scheme, clearly shows that this is in fact a valuable method which can help us better analyse and understand narrative discourse.

To conclude, when trying to address the question of whether there is any philosophy to narrative, we must focus on the mutual relationship between seeing and understanding. The most crucial task is to rethink explanatory potential of this dialectics for all types of discourse that include both metaphorical and conceptual order. In fact, such a dialectical exchange of image and concept takes place in all stories that use narrative techniques to convey real knowledge. From this

perspective, a defeat of Schelling's project to tell a philosophy in the form of poetry gains entirely new meaning, and may turn out to be methodologically productive for contemporary narrative research.

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