



Barbara Hallensleben,
Regula M. Zwahlen,
Aristotle Papanikolaou,
Pantelis Kalaitzidis (eds.)

BUILDING THE HOUSE OF WISDOM

Sergii Bulgakov and Contemporary Theology:
New Approaches and Interpretations

 **Aschendorff**
Verlag

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Abstract

Sergii Bulgakov (1871–1944) is one of the preeminent theologians of the 20th century whose work is still being discovered and explored in and for the 21st century. The famous rival of Lenin in the field of economics, was, according to Wassily Kandinsky, “one of the deepest experts on religious life” in early twentieth-century Russian art and culture. As economist, publicist, politician, and later Orthodox theologian and priest, he became a significant “global player” in both the Orthodox diaspora and the Ecumenical movement in the interwar period.

This anthology gathers the papers delivered at the international conference on the occasion of Bulgakov’s 150th birthday at the University of Fribourg in September 2021. The chapters, written by established Bulgakov specialists, including Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury (2002–2012), as well as young researchers from different theological disciplines and ecclesial traditions, explore Bulgakov’s way of meeting the challenges in the modern world and of building bridges between East and West. The authors bring forth a wide range of new creative ways to constructively engage with Bulgakov’s theological worldview and cover topics such as personhood, ecology, political theology and Trinitarian ontology.



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Bulgakov on Mangodhood—or, Satan after Schelling

Justin Shaun Coyle

I want to draw attention to the satanology of Sergei Bulgakov—and not only because it is so rarely commented upon by his readers.¹ Bulgakov’s satanology deserves attention precisely as an instance of modern satanology that refuses neatly and cleanly to distinguish scriptural exegesis from theological speculation. One way his readers might learn to admire Bulgakov’s refusal is by attending closely to how he adopts and adapts philosophic idioms to interpret scripture’s deliverances on Satan. More narrowly: I propose here to measure Bulgakov’s oft-noted but rarely examined use of F. W. J. Schelling, particularly the latter’s satanology.² That act of measuring yields three points at which Schelling’s Satan stretches his black wings over Bulgakov. I dedicate a section of what follows to each point. Within each section, I not only assay *what* Bulgakov borrows from Schelling but also consider *how* he develops and refines and burnishes it.

-
- 1 Tikhon Vasilyev briefly treats Schelling’s influence on Bulgakov’s *angelology* in “Aspects of Schelling’s Influence on Sergius Bulgakov and Other Thinkers of the Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century” in *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 80.1/2 (2019): 143–59 and more extensively in “Christian Angelology in Pseudo-Dionysius and Sergius Bulgakov” (PhD thesis, Oxford University, 2019).
 - 2 Recently Robert F. Slesinski’s *The Theology of Sergius Bulgakov* (Yonkers: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2017) argues that Bulgakov’s thought “cannot fully be apprized apart from an appreciation of its philosophical roots in German Idealism” (143). But his monograph treats Schelling little—most Anglophone Bulgakov literature runs similarly. Jennifer Newsome Martin’s *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Critical Appropriation of Russian Religious Thought* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015) offers a bit. The best treatment of Bulgakov that takes Schelling seriously remains Brandon Gallaher’s *Freedom and Necessity in Modern Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

I.

Bulgakov begins his mature satanology with one of his most controverted doctrines—that is, the self-positing of created hypostases. Let this, then, serve as the first point of Schelling’s influence. In *The Bride of the Lamb*, Bulgakov writes of “hypostatic spirits” who derive their origin antinomically both from outside themselves *and* from their own act of “self-positing.”³ If each bears its own “mode”—the former “before time” and thus “original” and the second “temporal” and thus “empirical”—they constitute a single act of “self-determination.”⁴

Constitutive of creaturely hypostases, then, is a singular act of self-determination. For Bulgakov, that act comprises two modes: the first transcending the bounds of spacetime, the second falling squarely within it. And both modes together just are for Bulgakov the singular act the self is.

Bulgakov admits that he borrows this concept of radical self-determination from Schelling’s 1809 *Freiheitsschrift*.⁵ Yet here, Schelling himself develops this concept in response to Kant. Whatever freedom means for Schelling, it cannot entail a capacity to choose among options “without determining reasons.”⁶ Against this “common concept” Schelling wields Kant’s. For Kant, Schelling summarizes, free is only that which “acts only in accord with the laws of its own being and is determined by nothing else either in or outside itself.”⁷ Of course freedom of this sort for Kant obtains only in the noumenal *x* of humanity’s *intelligible* being.⁸ Empirically, however, no such freedom exists or could. So runs Kant’s third antinomy.⁹

Schelling admires how Kant discovers an antinomy of freedom’s “absolute beginning” but not how he resolves it. Kant imagines that the antinomy’s thesis and antithesis bear equal claim to truth. Only they apply to different domains. Causal necessity belongs to the realm of appearances. Freedom in turn applies to the noumenal, which Kant tucks safely beyond reason’s reach. We must *postulate* human freedom as a practically justified belief to get on with the business

3 Sergei Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001), 87, my emphasis.

4 Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, 119.

5 Sergei Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy: The World as Household*, trans. Catherine Evtuhov (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 205.

6 I/7, 382/48.

7 I/7, 384/50.

8 I/7, 383/49. See also *KrV* A538/B566.

9 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), A444/B472, 409–15.

of ethics. But we cannot and should not confuse this practical postulate with a theoretical account of freedom. To that last reason cannot attain.¹⁰

Allergic to final contradiction, Schelling refuses Kant's refusal. He does so by denying that freedom and necessity both claim truth in their respective domains. Schelling teaches instead that the very antimony Kant discovered *itself* belongs to the order of appearances. Innocent of spacetime, freedom and necessity brook no antinomy. Rather the intelligible truth of each just *is* their unity. Or, as Schelling has it: "absolute necessity alone is also absolute freedom."¹¹ For Schelling, then, Kant was right to identify the formal essence of freedom with self-determination absent external coercion. But he was wrong to assume that its opposition to necessity does not itself feature among spacetime's appearances.

Schelling is determined to render Kant's failure his own success. Discovering a speculative identity between freedom and necessity suggests to Schelling a much more radical "absolute beginning" than in Kant's conception.¹² Schelling calls that absolute beginning *die intelligible Tat*: an act of self-positing outside spacetime in which of necessity agents freely determine themselves.¹³

This "deed" beggars the imagination not least because it operates wide of choice, consciousness, and the capacity to act. No choice: this would involve time-dependent deliberation or indecision.¹⁴ No consciousness: this would mean the act follows rather than constitutes consciousness. And no capacity to act: certainly not if "the essence (*Wesen*) of the human being is fundamentally his own act."¹⁵ There is neither actor nor capacity 'before' the act. Rather the act constitutes both actor—she is the doing of the eternal deed—and capacity—act precedes potency.¹⁶ Details aside, Schelling's fundamental point is that the human being depends for its existence on its act and not the other way round.¹⁷

10 For Schelling's early criticism of Kant's practical postulates, see his *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* (1795).

11 I/7, 385/50.

12 In fact, Schelling's thinking here combines two aspects of Kant's: the third antinomy of the first critique and the account of "radical evil" in book 1 of *Religion within the Bounds of Mere Reason*.

13 I/7, 386/51–52.

14 Even if choice did not entail time, Schelling rejects a conflation of decision with choice on the grounds that "if freedom is to be saved by nothing other than the complete contingency of actions, then it is not to be saved at all" (I/7, 382/49).

15 I/7, 385/50.

16 I/7, 385/52.

17 I/7, 387/53.

Schelling judges the cost of the doctrine's difficulty worth its double reward. The first is ethical: we remain on this view radically responsible for our own acts. Indeed, it is responsibility that causes Schelling to shirk theological accounts of predestination. If humans are culpable agents, he argues, then it must be we rather than God who determine ourselves.¹⁸ The second reward is metaphysical: it allows Schelling to loosen the Gordian knot of freedom and necessity without Kantian antimony. The eternal deed remains necessary to the extent that we could not be without it. And it remains free to the extent that the act alone determines itself. If for Schelling we are essentially an "originary and fundamental willing," that willing must be ontologically both perfectly free and unavoidably necessary.¹⁹

Bulgakov's *Philosophy of Economy* (1911) adopts Schelling's intelligible deed without adapting it much. Bulgakov variously names its agent the "substantial I" and "human individuals."²⁰ He then uncritically correlates both with "man's ideal preexistence" in the thought of Plato and Origen. By *Unfading Light* (1917), however, Bulgakov translates the doctrine into a more familiar dogmatic idiom. Here, the subject of the intelligible deed is a "hypostasis" (ипостась), now explicitly inclusive of Satan.²¹ With this last Bulgakov targets Schelling, who had rendered both the angelic host and Satan "faceless and uncreated."²² Still, Bulgakov's position remains underdeveloped. However, insofar as he insists that the intelligible deed falls wide of spacetime, Bulgakov often lapses into protological description. The eternal mode of the act almost seems to antecede its temporal mode both logically and chronologically.²³

Fast-forward to *Jacob's Ladder* (1928), where Bulgakov theorizes a Satanic hypostasis who attempts metaphysical suicide only to fail.²⁴ And fail Satan must, since as a creature his eternal I has always consented to being counted among God's creatures. Thus Bulgakov dares a more structural break with Schelling. To be a created hypostasis is now not (as for Schelling) to determine oneself between good *and evil* supratemporally. It is rather to have always already determined oneself for the good alone and so consented to one's own

18 I/7, 385/ 52–53.

19 I/7 385/52.

20 Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy*, 202–04.

21 Sergei Bulgakov, *Unfading Light: Contemplations and Speculations* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2012), 291 and 312.

22 Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, 312.

23 Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy*, 201–05; UL 210, 316.

24 Sergei Bulgakov, *Jacob's Ladder: On Angels* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2010), 108 and 110.

creation outside of time. Good and evil appear as options only in spacetime. By restricting Satan's fall to his temporal mode, Bulgakov renders Satan impotent to place under erasure his own act of co-creation that looms "metaphysically behind" even his depredations here below.²⁵

By *The Bride of the Lamb* (1945), Bulgakov has overhauled Schelling's doctrine to form an entire theology. Creaturely hypostases—differentiated now from mere individuals²⁶—are still antinomic. But their antinomy is now structured christologically rather than platonically. That is, the antinomy lies between uncreated and created rather than eternal idea and temporal instantiation.²⁷ This christological turn allows Bulgakov to ground the supratemporal and temporal modes of the one hypostatic act theandrically in the Virgin's fiat and Christ's two wills.²⁸ It also allows Bulgakov to think the intelligible deed eschatologically—or from the end backward. Where in 1911 Bulgakov alluded to "preexistence" he now denies any temporal seriality.²⁹ And so by 1945 creation's eternal truth before God becomes less anticipation than incorporation—even enhypostatization—into created Sophia, "the all-man, to whom the incarnation and the redemption refer."³⁰

Bulgakov's christological revision of Schelling's intelligible deed affords him another move. It allows him to recast the final judgment synergistically as *self-judgment*. Might we imagine, Bulgakov asks, Judas *the Apostle* as the supratemporal I sitting with Christ in judgment over Judas *the Betrayer* as the temporal I?³¹ Bulgakov extends the same logic to Satan. "Even Satan in his madness," Bulgakov claims, "does not have the power to overcome the fact of his own being, its divine foundation, that is, the sophianicity of all creation, by virtue of which God will be all in all."³² So if "satanism exhausts itself,"³³ it is

25 Bulgakov, *Jacob's Ladder*, 108.

26 Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, 83.

27 *Ibid.*, 85, 95. See also *The Lamb of God* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2008), 140–56 and "The Problem of 'Conditional Immortality'" in *The Sophiology of Death: Essays on Eschatology: Personal, Political, Universal* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2021), 68.

28 For the former, see Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, 179; for the latter, see *ibid.*, 78 and *The Bride of the Lamb*, 143, 496.

29 Sergei Bulgakov, *Judas Iscariot: Apostle-Betrayer* (Mike Whitton, 2017), Kindle edition.

30 Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, 113. See also *The Lamb of God*, 187.

31 *Ibid.*, 476. For more, see Bulgakov, *Judas Iscariot*. Satan's function in this text is much more political than metaphysical, however, as "Luciferism" becomes a cipher for Bolshevism.

32 Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, 517.

33 *Ibid.*, 512.

only because Satan at time's end yields to *his own* supratemporal act of co-creating himself. At length, it seems, Satan too must become who he is. And that for Bulgakov can be nothing less than who he has always already determined himself to be in Christ.³⁴

II.

But time sees Lucifer fall into Satan. How Bulgakov thinks Lucifer-Satan's personality, then, is the next point of Schelling's influence. In *The Bride of the Lamb*, Bulgakov distinguishes within the personality (личность) a "little I" (малое я) and the "big I" (Я) it wishes to become. The "hypostatic fall" of the former is "Luciferian" to the extent that it attempts to conceal its ontological dependence on God but lapses only into "all-devouring [...] hypostatic envy."³⁵ In other places Bulgakov claims that in his fall Satan rages against creation's very purpose, or "overcoming the individual as self-isolating, nonuniversal being in the ongoing sophianization of creation."³⁶ What does he mean?

Here again Bulgakov develops Schelling, particularly his concept of personalization. In his *Freiheitsschrift*, Schelling wonders why the formal essence of freedom as self-determination should spell a real capacity for good or evil. Because, he discovers, only by dissociating can an agent attain self-consciousness and thus personality.³⁷ Yet dissociating need not mean repressing—still less fracturing into good and evil.³⁸ Schelling explains: "personality is founded [...] on the connection between a self-determining being and a basis independent of him."³⁹ All of reality parses along this scission, the two sides of which Schelling most often calls "that-which-exists" (*das Existierende*) and "ground" (*Grund*).⁴⁰ In fact this division rives even God, in whom Schelling locates "two equally eternal beginnings of self-revelation."⁴¹

34 Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, 225.

35 *Ibid.*, 98.

36 *Ibid.*, 149.

37 F. W. J. Schelling, *The Ages of the World* (1811) (Albany: State University of New York, 2020), 128.

38 On which difference see Sean J. McGrath, *The Dark Ground of Spirit: Schelling and the Unconscious* (New York/London: Routledge 2012), 126 ff.

39 I/7, 394/59.

40 I/7, 358/52.

41 I/7, 394/59.

And so god-before-God splits into two wills.⁴² The “will of the ground”—or First Potency—wills only itself in a negative, undifferentiated solipsism.⁴³ But by so positing itself ($A=A$), First Potency betrays its very duality. After all, positing differs from posited ($A=B$). A second will wills only to reflect First Potency back to itself (A^2). As such, it positively and kenotically wills another and so constitutes the “will to love.” First Potency wills to save its own life and loses it ($A=B$), Second Potency wills to lose it for the sake of another and so saves it (A^2). The unity of these wills is Third Potency (A^3), the “connection of the ideal principle [...] with the independent ground [...] the living unity of both is spirit.”⁴⁴ For Schelling, Third Potency is nothing less than the Absolute’s self-consciousness of itself as the mediation of two wills subordinate one to another.⁴⁵ Schelling’s conviction throughout is that only a dissociated Absolute forsakes *Selbstheit* to achieve *Persönlichkeit*.⁴⁶

Not so with creatures. Even if they posit their essence in the intelligible deed, they receive their existence from the Creator.⁴⁷ Like God, creatures too bear a distinction between ground and that-which-is. Unlike God, for creatures these are not “equally eternal” and so always already subordinate one to another.⁴⁸ If “the same unity that is inseverable in God must therefore be severable in man,” creaturely dissociation risks repression.⁴⁹ Evil appears on the scene, then, precisely when ground’s “will to nothing” (*der Wille, der nichts will*) resists that-which-exists’s “will to love.” The structure of surrender now accommodates seizure and sequestration. When surrender yields to seizure, *Selbstheit* resists *Persönlichkeit* by hoarding its “peculiar life [...] through the misuse of freedom.” And so “evil resides,” Schelling concludes, “in a positive perversion.”⁵⁰

For Schelling, reality just *is* the struggle to wrest personality from undifferentiated selfhood (*Selbstheit*). Thinking evil as a “positive perversion” of this process leads Schelling to notice a “second principle of darkness.”⁵¹ About this principle Schelling teaches three points. First, that it is humans who awaken

42 “Before” here is logical, not temporal. Cf. WA (1811), 76; 132.

43 I/7, 375/42.

44 I/7, 394/59.

45 Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 121–22.

46 *Ibid.*, 221.

47 See Thomas, “Freedom and Ground,” 420.

48 I/7, 365/32–33. Cf. Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 112.

49 I/7, 365/33.

50 I/7, 366/35.

51 I/7, 378/44, my emphasis.

and activate the “spirit of evil” and not the reverse. Second, that the spirit of evil is not itself created, but rather develops its curious positivity in creation. And third, that this spirit emerges through a nocturnal parody of Second Potency, “self-doubling [...] as the means to an ever-greater intensification of selfhood and not as a means for freeing oneself from it.”⁵² A later Schelling will name this evil principle *der umgekehrte Gott*—God-in-reverse.

Like Schelling, Bulgakov too thinks reality as process from natural selfhood to personality. Like Schelling too, Bulgakov indexes this process to trinitarian relations. And like Schelling, Bulgakov imagines Satan as parodic antipode to this process. Yet on each point, Bulgakov revises Schelling heavily.

On the first point, Bulgakov insists that the process of personality in question is not a self-overcoming of Schelling’s nondialectical, voluntarist sort.⁵³ For Bulgakov too, this process does not result in a merely individual personality. On the contrary: it is axiomatic for Bulgakov that individuals are *not yet* hypostases.⁵⁴ So whatever the hypostasis’ becoming in time entails, it terminates not in personalization but in *sophianization*. By incorporation into creaturely Sophia, that is—or Christ’s resurrected and so supratemporal human nature—the hypostasis becomes who it always supratemporally is.⁵⁵ But for Bulgakov, it does so only in Christ and with the saints. As in the *trinitas quae deus est*, the hypostatic is always “*multihypostatic*.”⁵⁶

On the second point, Bulgakov undertakes even heavier revisions. First, Bulgakov declines subjecting the Absolute to a process of personalization as had the middle Schelling. “Schelling’s heresy,” Bulgakov reports, “lies in putting the nature of the hypostasis before the hypostasis [...] its being *anhypostatic*.”⁵⁷ For Bulgakov there is no nature—created or otherwise—that is not enhypostatized (even if it seems otherwise to the creaturely, empirical I). Just as subject grounds predicate and Father Son,⁵⁸ so hypostasis grounds nature.

On the last point, Bulgakov agrees that Satan parodies Second Potency’s logic by inversion. Satan is variously “mangodhood” and “antichrist.” Bulgakov

52 Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 158.

53 Cf. McGrath, *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling*, 95–101.

54 Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, 83 ff.

55 Bulgakov, *Sophia, the Wisdom of God: An Outline of Sophiology* (New York: Lindisfarne Press, 1993), 126.

56 Bulgakov, *The Comforter* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2004), 356.

57 Bulgakov, *The Tragedy of Philosophy: Philosophy and Dogma* (Brooklyn: Angelico Press, 2020), 99. See also Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, 183.

58 For Schelling, First Potency is object/predicate and Second Potency is subject; Bulgakov intentionally reverses this order.

concedes also to Schelling that the dissonance between Satan's consciousness of his derivative being and his drive to displace God explain his insanity or "hunger."⁵⁹ Bulgakov wonders, though, whether Schellingian personalization does not bear its own undoing. If personalization promises only self-overcoming for the self rather than incorporation into creaturely Sophia, then Schellingian personalization risks shading into satanization.

Which is why, incidentally, Bulgakov so often renders Fichte an inadvertent theorist of Satan.⁶⁰

Eclipsed in Fichte are theological distinctions among the temporal, empirical I (likeness), the supratemporal I (image), and the Absolute I (Archetype).⁶¹ Not only does Fichte erroneously and impossibly identify the first with the last.⁶² He also renders every other I a *Nicht-Ich*. This in turn indulges an instrumental positing of the *Ich* melting reality's irreducible remainders into a "mirror" reflecting only itself.⁶³ True, Schelling circumvents the first error by horizontalizing Fichte's *Tathandlung* into a process whose beginning is given. But Bulgakov suspects that the result of Schelling's process—the person as individual, self-determined will—bears striking resemblance to Fichte's *Ich*. Sophianization triply mediates the creaturely hypostasis: it is given to itself by God, by other creaturely hypostases, by its supratemporal I. Without such mediation what distinguishes personhood in Schelling from mere selfhood? Personalization from satanization? Godmanhood from mangodhood?

III.

The last point of Schelling's satanology Bulgakov develops concerns evil's curious positivity. In *The Bride of the Lamb*, he teaches of evil both that "one must also recognize its fatal, destructive force in creation [...] as a *positively* and peculiarly *creative* force"⁶⁴ and that it "arises in time [...] *created* by creatures [...]"

59 Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, 508.

60 Ibid., 232.

61 Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, 209; *Tragedy of Philosophy*, 232–33; *The Bride of the Lamb*, 43, 86, 127, 512.

62 For Bulgakov on Fichte, see Joshua Heath's "Sergii Bulgakov's Linguistic Trinity," *Modern Theology* (2021): 1–25. Still, recent literature has downplayed or ignored Schelling's influence to focus instead on Fichte's. But we ought to ask whom exactly Bulgakov has in mind when in *Tragedy of Philosophy*, 234 he writes: "Fichte plus Spinoza—that is the task."

63 Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, 512.

64 Ibid., 147, my emphasis.

actualized nothing becomes *a reality*.⁶⁵ On their surface, these texts seem to contravene two deeply held tenets of Christian theology: that, first, evil is sheer privation and that, second, evil is not a creature. How indeed Bulgakov skirts the otherwise Manichaean becomes clear, however, when we read him against Schelling.

Schelling too found the *privatio* account incomplete. What motivates his critique is as ever his twin preoccupation with freedom and personality. For Schelling the *privatio* account at best cannot explain *why* any person would or could decline the good itself for its lack. At worst it too closely identifies evil with matter and so robs embodied agents of freedom.⁶⁶ In its place, Schelling proffers his own theory. That theory begins with a distinction between general and particular evil.⁶⁷ General evil exists therefore only as pure potency. To exist actually it must be “aroused to actuality” by humans. But first, whence general evil as pure potency? From a parodic “self-doubling” issues “another spirit”—not the kenotic Second Potency but “the reversed god.” As ground becomes “obscenely actual,” this reversed god lives as hunger for being that will never be. Its very striving to conceal the givenness of its ground discloses its failure. Seizure of selfhood stymies its process of personalization: ontologically the reversed god is sheer oscillation between being and nothing.

Schelling does not yet name this other spirit ‘Satan’ until his later *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung* (1831/32), where he embroiders the *Freiheitschrift*’s latent satanology with scriptural exegesis.⁶⁸ Even if he grants that general evil as reversed god is what the tradition calls Satan, Schelling hesitates to hypostatize him. His reasons for hesitating are two. First, Satan’s being precisely refuses the process of personalization by seizing (rather than surrendering) selfhood. Second, Schelling denies that scripture anywhere directly teaches

65 Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, 153, my emphasis.

66 I/7, 368–70/36–37.

67 I/7, 390/54, my emphasis. Schelling takes the Greek from Plato’s *Timaeus*.

68 Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung* (1831/32) vol. 2, ed. Walter E. Ehrhardt (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1992), 615–72. Most of the small literature on Schelling’s satanology focuses on his *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, whether 1831/32 or 1841/42. See Walter Kasper, *The Absolute in History: The Philosophy and Theology of History in Schelling’s Late Philosophy*, trans. Sr Katherine E. Wolff (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2018), 391–403; Malte Dominik Krüger, *Göttliche Freiheit: Die Trinitätslehre in Schellings Spätphilosophie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 206–08; Alexandra Roux, “La majesté du diable dans la philosophie de la révélation de Schelling,” *Revue philosophique de la France et de l’étranger* 2 (2009): 191–205; and Jason M. Wirth, “Schelling and the Satanic: On Naturvernichtung,” *Kabiri* 2 (2020): 81–92.

Satan's creation. Neither creature nor Creator, neither personal nor fully existent, Satan lives as an "evil principle," an "eternal hunger and thirst, eternal seeking [...] for reality."⁶⁹

What then renders general evil particular? For Schelling only a human being can reduce evil's pure potency to 'act,' as it were. When she does—when she seizes rather than surrenders selfhood—she "opens herself to the spirit of lies."⁷⁰ Schelling calls this act "sin." What exactly this sin's anti-personal act emanates can be known, as Plato says of the *χώρα*, only through "bastard reasonings (*λογισμῶ τινι νόθῳ*) [...] seeing that it has not for its own [...] but fleets ever as a phantom of something else (*ἐτέρου φάντασμα*)."⁷¹

Schelling's discovery of evil's curious positivity through sin also explains his later reversal of Genesis 3. There Satan is neither angelic supernova nor serpent, Schelling explains. Rather he is the divine ground illicitly and perversely "made actual" by our first parents. Being impersonal, Satan's "should-not-be-but-yet-is" from First Potency's *Seinkönnen* can emerge only in and through creatures as a sort of "false life" (*falsches Leben*).⁷² And so for Schelling the creation myth depicts externally what always threatens selves internally: the latent dissociation in consciousness gone sideways, the pursuit of a freedom which only enslaves. If Satan be a creature, he is not God's but ours.⁷³

All of which, again, Bulgakov reads and refines.⁷⁴ He learns from Schelling first to trouble the received *privatio* account of evil. If Bulgakov hardly rejects the account outright, he seeks more.⁷⁵ The *privatio* account reckons only evil's *what*—and by abstract negation at that. More often Bulgakov asks after evil's *how*, or its curious positivity. When he does, Bulgakov imitates Schelling in refusing Satan a personality—only for different reasons. If Schelling declines Satan a personality on the grounds that he is no *creature*, Bulgakov declines

69 Schelling, *Urfassung*, 2, 646.

70 I/7, 392/56.

71 I/7, 390/54; *Tim.* 52b–c. For more on Schelling's use of Plato here, see Peter Warnek's "Bastard Reasoning in Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift*," *Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy* 12.2 (2008): 249–67.

72 Schelling, *Urfassung*, 2, 633. By 1831, Schelling has replaced the language of ground/that-which-is/existence-personality for the potencies with Could-Be/Must-Be/Shall-Be.

73 *Ibid.*, 624–34.

74 Though per *Unfading Light* Bulgakov reads the (much shorter) shorter *SW* 1841/42 version.

75 Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy*, 307–08; *Unfading Light*, 270–73; *The Bride of the Lamb*, 147–48.

Satan a hypostasis on the grounds that *he* is no creature.⁷⁶ No, Satan's hypostatic identity belongs properly to *Lucifer*. Distinguishing as Bulgakov does between Satan and Lucifer does not signal, as Balthasar advocates, forgoing speculation by "simply accept[ing]" scriptural vignettes. On the contrary, by revising Schelling's intelligible deed Bulgakov has lit upon new exegetical possibilities.⁷⁷ For Bulgakov, 'Satan' plays temporal I to Lucifer's supratemporal I. Worse: 'Satan' has—"in his insane desire to be God's equal," even to the point of desiring "complete incarnation in humankind"⁷⁸—projected his "little I" into a "cosmic I and considered the whole world its throne."⁷⁹ Only this self is not his, and exactly because 'Satan' is not the name he bears from everlasting. 'Satan' is rather the "hypostatic mask" (ипостасная личина) Lucifer erroneously takes himself to be.⁸⁰ So construed, 'Satan' exists positively only as "a pose, a grimace, the mask of the fallen angel [...] of pretend genius and self-deification."⁸¹

As with Satan, so with us. If Satan be a creature rather than a principle, then Bulgakov has no truck with Schelling's 'general evil'. Evil knows only "emanations" by *particular* creatures. And when humans reduce evil to act and so gift it "creative power," "an imaginary, 'bad' infinity of emptiness is thus created, where [...] a multiplicity of illusory forms reign."⁸² Ontologically, the disintegration of the temporal I into what Bulgakov calls "the little I" parodies the second person of the trinity even more radically than Schelling imagined.⁸³ It is not just that evil seizes itself by self-doubling rather than surrendering to the Father. For Bulgakov evil positively seeks a "complete incarnation in humankind," an inverted sophianization—even a false world.

Within this "kingdom of shadows"⁸⁴ whose prince is Satan, the self no longer distinguishes its emanations (the little I) from itself (the temporal I), let

76 Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, 312, where Bulgakov explicitly takes issue with Schelling's impersonal angels and demons.

77 Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, 154.

78 *Ibid.*, 159; Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, 320.

79 Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, 269.

80 Bulgakov, *Jacob's Ladder*, 74; *The Bride of the Lamb*, 155.

81 Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, 155.

82 *Ibid.*, 157–58.

83 Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, 343.

84 Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy*, 146. In *Unfading Light*, Bulgakov will attribute the construction of this false world to "sui generis hallucination" (428). In *The Bride of the Lamb*, Bulgakov will call the same a "transcendental illusion, a reified fantasy, a supra-reality" (509).

alone its supratemporal I.⁸⁵ Here Bulgakov reminds his readers of the devil's evening call to Ivan Karamazov, who knows not whether he finally speaks to himself.⁸⁶ The self can be cleaved from its "works" or "veils of falsehood" only by the consuming fire of judgment (1 Cor 3:13). That judgment belongs properly to Christ first. But it belongs also and by extension to the supratemporal self who is always already sophianized in Christ.⁸⁷ Thus Bulgakov's arresting (and controversial) conclusion: Lucifer can be saved to realize his own supratemporal freedom only on the condition that the "hypostatic mask" he confected for himself burns unto the ages after the "final division of light and dark, the ultimate unmasking of this shadowy existence."⁸⁸

IV.

That and how Bulgakov adopts and adapts Schelling's satanology to confect his own has been the argument of this essay. But what does it mean for Bulgakov to remember Christian tradition *through* Schelling?

Suppose we isolate just one point of satanology on which Bulgakov refines Schelling. Suppose too we consider the most speculatively stratospheric with the least reference to the Church Fathers: that evil's curious positivity permits creatures (including Lucifer) to "emanate" a shadow-self or false world. Where is this in the Christian tradition's memory? Among the Fathers on this point Bulgakov sources only St Maximus Confessor.⁸⁹ But he might have quoted still more of Maximus's teachings than he does. Maximus's claim that by falling Adam posited "another beginning," for instance.⁹⁰ Or that sins form works "not generated by God."⁹¹ But beyond and before Maximus, this practice of reading scriptural images of alternate selves knows a deep history among ascetics. Remember only Evagrius on imagination's phantasmagoria, Cassian on incarnating "the body of sin," Hesychios of Sinai on "mixing" with demonic fantasy to generate sin, Niketas Stetathos on sin as soul-splitting. As examples

85 Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, 147.

86 Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, 267.

87 Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, 456, 463. At 458: "The judgment of Christ is also every human being's own judgment upon himself."

88 Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*, 146.

89 At least in *Unfading Light*. Pavel Florensky sources more fathers for the same idea in his chapter "Gehenna" in *The Pillar and Ground of Truth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 151–89.

90 Maximus Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 61.7.

91 *QThal* 42.4; 51.19; 61.9.

compound, Bulgakov's speculative Schellingian flights begin to appear rather more like tradition's memories long lost. Determining on what other points of Bulgakov's thought this might also hold true will prove a heavy mantle, if one well worth taking up.⁹²

92 And made easier, really, by the uptick in translations and scholarship on both Bulgakov and Schelling.