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Freedom as Ariadne's Thread through the Interpretation of Life: Schelling and Jonas on Philosophy of Nature as the Art of Interpretation

Jesper L. Rasmussen

According to Schelling's 1806 *Aphorisms as an Introduction to Naturphilosophie*, the aim of philosophy should be nothing less than a sort of excitation of further developments of an eternal poem (*Gedicht*) (SW VII: 145f).[1] This type of poem should not just be understood as fictional in the modern sense, i.e., as an opposition to what is actual (*wirklich*). First and foremost, we should interpret the verbs *contrive* or *dichten* (poeticize) in the sense of creation. We should even read the Schellingian term "construction" in the German verb *dichten*. Thereby, the developments of such an eternal poem as the goal of philosophy point towards the act of forming a system. The result of this effort is a collection of internally connected concepts in a condensation (*Verdichtung*). According to this view of development, a true school does not merely repeat the master's philosophy. What takes place in the hands of the student is rather an addition that on the one hand condenses the old, thereby bringing it clearer forth. On the other hand, this condensing shows itself to be something new. Thus, philosophy is thought to be radical, i.e., rooted (*radix*) in and growing out of the old. This, I will show, follows from Schelling's conception of philosophy, as it can be seen in *System of Transcendental Idealism*.[2] Exemplary, here we find

1 F.W.J. Schelling, "Aphorisms as an Introduction to *Naturphilosophie*," *Idealistic Studies* 14 (1984): 244-58, here 248.

2 F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, trans. Peter Heath (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978).

Schelling's development of his predecessor's thoughts in the abovementioned sense. In this system, the rootedness in the old amounts to a grounding and systematization of the preceding systems (Kant's and Fichte's).

More precisely, I will here argue that Schelling's concepts of construction and mythology in his system of knowledge (*System des Wissens*) implicate such a philosophical development. Furthermore, I will point to a structural connection between Schelling and Hans Jonas. Hereby, I aim to contribute to the understanding of the heritage of Schelling in the 20th century philosophy. First, I will outline my understanding of the construction of the system of knowledge in *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Second, I will relate this concept of construction to a concept of interpretation that I mainly read from Benjamin Carl Henrik Höijer (1767-1812). Hereafter, I seek to make probable a relation between the concept of construction and Schelling's concept of a new mythology. Finally, I will forge some connections with Jonas's work. In a manner similar to Schelling, Jonas sought to establish a philosophy of nature, which also necessitated a rational myth, which Jonas briefly sketched. Thus, the somewhat limited treatments of the new mythology by Schelling can find concretion in the thought of Jonas.

The System of Knowledge

In this first section, I will very briefly outline my conception of Schelling's philosophy and field of problems around 1800. I am well aware of the pitfalls and superficiality of such a short outline. My goal is to point to a highly *problematic* aspect of the whole enterprise of Schelling in this period. Doing this, I do not wish to propose to simply discard Schelling's thoughts. Rather, I want to show how these problematic aspects can be read in a fruitful way.

To demonstrate this, I propose to determine the relationship between Schelling's philosophy of nature and his transcendental philosophy as *problematic*: The necessity of a philosophy of nature, at least before the completion of the system of knowledge, cannot be decided.[3] Through the system of knowledge, the philosophy of nature turns from being a, for many readers, dogmatic science, into a possible hypothesis or postulated presupposition. In the course of Schelling's transcendental philosophy, the philosophy of nature gradually gains the status of a necessary science culminating in the end of *System of Transcendental Idealism*, where the philosophy of nature becomes necessary. This seems to be the case in the philosophy of nature in the form given in the *Introduction to the Outline of a System of Natural Philosophy*.[4]

3 Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Riga: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1787), B99f. Later the adjective "problematic" is used in reference to the "I think" as a means to investigate what lies therein. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B405.

4 F.W.J. Schelling, "Introduction to the Outline of a System of Natural Philosophy," in First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature, trans. by Keith R. Peterson (Albany: SUNY

Here, the philosophy of nature is to gain necessity or, in Schelling's terms, to achieve the status of the *a priori*.[5] Schelling determines the status of a sentence specifically on the grounds of how it is known. To have an insight into the necessity of a sentence is to know it *a priori* (SW III: 277ff.).[6] Here, the understanding and construction of systems is suggested to be a more open and experimentally oriented process in persistent confrontation with experience. This process can nevertheless still end up being *a priori*. To construct an object is namely to gain an insight into its necessity. An *a posteriori* knowledge can thus via a construction be transformed into an a priori knowledge, i.e., into a necessary knowledge. I will here argue that this conception of construction is to be understood as an exposition (*Darstellung*) of a postulate, which then can turn out to be necessary.[7] As a starting point I therefore turn to *System of Transcendental Idealism*, which on my interpretation retains a much more conspicuous role in and for the philosophy of nature than often thought.

In *System of Transcendental Idealism*, Schelling considers transcendental philosophy as the one scientific, and hence irreducible, part of a twofold system of knowledge, with the other part being the philosophy of nature. In the *Introduction* as well as in the opening of *System of Transcendental Idealism* Schelling determines the two sciences as one. However, according to their task (*Aufgabe*), they are opposite in direction. Hence, they have different principles, but each respective science tends towards the principle of the other (the object and the subject respectively). Thus, it is often claimed, the sciences are parallel movements of the one science, the system of knowledge (SW III: 342).[8] This is known as the *parallel hypothesis*. Thus, Schelling proclaims two philosophies: one of which *explains* (the philosophy of nature) the other by its reduction to its principle (object); the other (transcendental philosophy) which *subsumes* the first under its principle (subject). In the opening of *Introduction*, transcendental philosophy is said to subsume (*unterordnen*) the real under the ideal. The philosophy of nature, on the other hand, explains (*erklären*) the ideal in juxtaposition from the real. This Schelling understands as an answer to the question of how the ideal arises (*entspringen*) from the real (SW III: 272).[9] Later in the *Introduction*, Schelling clarifies that to explain physically

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Press, 2004) Hereafter referred to in text as *Introduction* and in notes as "Introduction to the Outline."

5 See Schelling, "Introduction to the Outline" §IV.

6 Schelling, "Introduction to the Outline," 193-232, here 197ff. The exact German quote is as follows: "*bloß in Absicht auf unser Wissen* und die *Art* unseres Wissens von diesen Sätzen" (SW III: 278).

7 This is contrary to the geometrical conception of construction from the works of the identity philosophy. See *Further Presentations from the System of Philosophy* (1802) and *Philosophy of Art* (respectively SW IV: 334; SW V: 353).

8 Schelling, *System*, 7.

9 Schelling, "Introduction to the Outline," 193f. Schelling sticks to this model of explaining in the philosophy of nature in §63 of the *General Deduction of the Dynamic Process* (SW IV: 75ff). Hereafter *General Deduction*.

is to lead the *explanandum* back (*zurückführen*) to *explanans*, i.e., to perform a reduction to the origin (SW III: 287ff).[10] This, I claim, must take the form of a construction of the *explanandum*. The task of construction is thus to show how the particular came to be a limited product from the original productivity. In *System of Transcendental Idealism*, however, both sciences equally set out to answer a question of a supervening (*Hinzukommen*) and a coinciding (*Übereinstimmung*).

In the same year as the publication of *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), Schelling seemingly amends the parallel hypothesis at the very end of the *General Deduction of the Dynamic Process* by making the philosophy of nature the logical first science.

> After we have arrived at this point from wholly opposite directions, moving from nature to us, from us to nature, we could thus [hold] that the *true direction* for those, for whom *knowledge* is the highest, is that direction, which nature itself has taken (SW IV: 78).[11]

On my reading, this insight of a logical priority and hence a logically prior principle, however, will first become clear with the *completion* of the system of knowledge. Schelling states this in the passage following the quotation from *General Deduction* above (SW IV: 78). This appears to run contrary to his claim of the two equal, necessary sciences in philosophy, i.e., to the *parallel hypothesis*. However, Schelling seems to anticipate this conclusion in *System of Transcendental Idealism*, when he explicitly states the following in a footnote: "Only upon completion of the system of transcendental philosophy will one come to recognize the necessity of a nature-philosophy, as a complementary science [*ergänzender Wissenschaft*], which only a nature-philosophy can satisfy" (SW III: 343n1).[12] The logical priority or necessity of the philosophy of nature cannot even be stated at the beginning of the system—we are not at any kind of end for the time being. On the contrary, we are at the beginning.

Regarding the parallel hypothesis, Schelling does not seem to have a strict geometrical parallel between two vectors with the same direction in mind. The content of the philosophy of nature shows itself to a large extent in the third main chapter of *System of Transcendental Idealism*. However, it does not here have a principle of its own. Now, the question regarding this seemingly missing content in the philosophy of nature in *System of Transcendental Idealism* becomes pressing. Further, the content from the fourth and sixth chapters of

10 Schelling, "Introduction to the Outline," 204ff.

11 My translation. In German the quote is as follows: "So können wir, nachdem wir einmal auf diesem Punkt angekommen sind, nach ganz entgegengesetzten Richtungen - von der Natur zu uns, von uns zu der Natur gehen, aber die *wahre* Richtung für den, dem *Wissen* über alles gilt, ist die, welche die *Natur selbst* genommen hat." SW IV: 78.

12 Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 7n1.

System of Transcendental Idealism is in no way fully visible in the philosophy of nature, e.g., Schelling did not include the human in the philosophy of nature. He does not even explicitly account for the human as an organic being. It is at best hinted at, if even that. Furthermore, the status of the I seems to change as the transcendental philosophy develops.[13] In this process, the I increasingly comes to experience itself as depending on something other than itself, i.e., nature. Thus, the I seems to acquire a sort of impotence.

Hence, the parallel hypothesis should rather be understood as a preliminary determination of the development of the system of knowledge. This opens up the possibility of the logical priority of the philosophy of nature, which, however, needs transcendental philosophy to gain necessity in the system of knowledge.[14] This priority, I suggest, is of a circular or organic kind, which, at least according to Schelling himself, is the general characteristic of any true system of philosophy. In the language of *System of Transcendental Idealism*, the philosophy of nature lets the subject rise from the object; the transcendental philosophy should then subsume the object under the subject. In giving the philosophy of nature its necessity, the completion of transcendental philosophy should return the system (of knowledge) to its beginning and thus fulfill it. Both philosophies, thus, tend towards the same, i.e., the system of knowledge. However, this subsumption of the object under the subject seems to be exactly what transcendental philosophy cannot achieve completely in *System of Transcendental Idealism*, as it has to rely on the genius for this completion.[15] Consequently, transcendental philosophy itself cannot bring forth the principle

13 One of the problems here seems to be the overarching system of knowledge. Whether the knowledge (*Wissen*) referred to in the science of knowledge from the *Introduction* is meant or not in the same sense as one of Schelling's many uses of knowledge at the beginning of *System of Transcendental Idealism* is not always clear. Indeed, Schelling determines the task of transcendental philosophy as the explanation of the possibility of knowledge in §3 of *System of Transcendental Idealism*. SW III: 346; Schelling, *System*, 10. Here he also treats the system of knowledge (*System des Wissens*) in relation to the completion of the system with its return to its principle. SW III: 349; Schelling, *System*, 12. For an example, see the preliminary determination of knowledge in §1 of *System of Transcendental Idealism* as the supervening of the subjective and objective, which Schelling determines as the I (subject of knowledge) and nature (object of knowledge), respectively. SW III: 339; Schelling, *System*, 5. Schelling hints at placing the task of an explanation of knowledge as a higher task than the one of transcendental philosophy alone, which only should explain the possibility of knowledge. SW III: 342; Schelling, *System*, 6f.. That we are led to the same result, independent of which principle we choose (SW III: 342; Schelling, *System*, 7), seems to me to confuse the matter, at least for my interpretation.

14 What is even more striking, is the fact that Schelling himself first introduces actual directions in the deduction of the dimensions in the third chapter of *System of Transcendental Idealism* in the deduction of matter. (SW III: 445f.; Schelling, *System*, 86ff.). To be fair, this could also be a symptom of confusion or a lack of clarity on the part of Schelling, but I here want to risk an interpretation and take Schelling on his word by interpreting his notions in the best possible way considering them as consistent and intelligible.

15 The unconscious always withdraws in the construction of a product. According to Schelling, only the genius is capable of producing a product consciously, which symbolically represents the unity of the conscious and unconscious.

of the philosophy of nature on its own. Transcendental philosophy must instead let it supervene. This I wish to illustrate with the following thoughts.

Seen from the viewpoint of the philosophy of nature, nature has the power to produce what we know as subjectivity. *System of Transcendental Idealism* can be considered the place where the spirit comes to recognize nature as its own ground. To know ourselves is to know of nature. Now, Kant left the principle and guarantee of knowledge, i.e., transcendental apperception, undetermined as a pure formal concept. In *System of Transcendental Idealism*, Schelling's task is to present exactly this principle, albeit with massive consequences for the conception of the status of the I. The hidden ground of consciousness that would relate man to nature and nature to man is not known, which immediately begs the question: What characteristics should we seek? We are tasked with analyzing an object that is neither given nor known, i.e., an alien object for us. As in the works of Plato, this problem is also ever present for Schelling.[16] The fact that Plato did not give a direct answer to the question of how to know the object in rational terms speaks to his greatness. He gave it in the form of the myth. In this, Schelling followed Plato. For Schelling, we always begin from within, i.e., from consciousness, which exactly is our epistemological—and as a consequence of this, ontological—problem. As Schelling, in *On the True Concept of Philosophy of Nature and the Correct Way of Solving its Problems* (1801), turns to his philosophy of identity, he states that the possibility of the system of nature depends on the ability of a de-potentiating (*Depotenzierung*). This amounts to positing ourselves as the first potency, and from there on constructing the system (SW IV: 85).[17] Although this is interpreted by many as a break with the philosophy of 1800, the idea of a problematization of the status of subjectivity is interesting in this context. The construction of the system rests on the ability to put oneself in another place (*Versetzenkönnen*), i.e., the ability to downgrade our viewpoint to a lower level of producing nature.

This problem was already prominent in *System of Transcendental Idealism*, where this ability to set oneself in another place, i.e., in the other science (the philosophy of nature), is the problem. Here, Schelling relies on transcendental philosophy itself, i.e., on its direction, to allude to another science, which runs in an opposite direction. Transcendental philosophy needs something outside of itself to let the object supervene. Later in *System of Transcendental Idealism*, Schelling suggests that this kind of understanding can take place in the form of the myth. Although this is with respect to the loss of the golden age before the fall of man (and history), Schelling is nevertheless here suggesting another kind of understanding of our origin in the form of the myth. He can then add that history ends for the philosophers with the end

16 E.g., in Plato's *Timaeus*.

17 F.W.J. Schelling, "On the True Concept of Philosophy of Nature and the Correct Way of Solving its Problems," trans. Judith Kahl and Daniel Whistler in *Pli* 26 (2014), 24-45, 27f.

of freedom, thereby returning the philosopher back to the place within which nature had originally placed him (SW III: 589).[18]

Now, my point is that this is one of the things shown in *System of Transcendental Idealism* in relation to the philosophy of nature. If *System of Transcendental Idealism*, as mentioned, is the point at which nature as subject recognizes itself as itself in the human being, then the whole of the unconscious past of consciousness is exactly to be a revealing of something already known. At least, this seems to be the case in chapter 3 of System of Transcendental Idealism, which contains content from the philosophy of nature. When one reads *System of Transcendental Idealism* after having read the development of Schelling's philosophy of nature from 1797-99, one sees that what consciousness learns from—or maybe even sees in—its own unconscious transcendental past is the system of nature. Consciousness sees itself structured *as* nature in its unconscious part. Without the philosophy of nature, consciousness would not even recognize anything in its past *as* its own unconscious past. It would be absolutely separated and alienated from its origin or past.[19]

Again, we see that the relationship between *System of Transcendental Idealism* and the philosophy of nature is a very problematic one. The philosophy of nature is in some sense nonsense, i.e., irrational, before *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Likewise, System of Transcendental Idealism is nonsense before the philosophy of nature. This opposition makes the system of knowledge into a system with interacting and irreducible parts. In short: Schelling needed to write what he could not have written, i.e., the philosophy of nature, before he could write *System of Transcendental Idealism*. On the other hand, a philosophy of nature is needed as an opposite to transcendental philosophy in order for there to be a knowledge to be established at all.

Thus, *System of Transcendental Idealism* and the philosophy of nature seem to fit together, but in a very problematic way: transcendental philosophy depends on a science, which can not be given necessarily, i.e., shown and established with necessity before the completion of transcendental philosophy. My thesis in the following is that the role of mythology could possibly, if not clarify, then at least show us something about the *way* to establish this relationship. According to Schelling and his contemporaries, the myth has not lost its relevance for contemporary times with the birth of reason. On the contrary, the enlightened world needs a new, rational myth. I maintain that Schelling needed to take the detour through myth. As I hope to make clear in the section, the myth is a logical next move from the impotence of the I and construction. Even if it may be an exaggeration on Schelling's behalf, he can therefore write that he has already finished "a treatise *on Mythology*" (SW III:

18 Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 200.

19 According to Jonas, we find this expression in the gnostic elements of and hostility towards nature in dualism and existentialist philosophy. See Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), 211ff.

629n1).[20]

Construction, Interpretation, and Myth

In *General Deduction*, Schelling explicitly states that the task of the natural sciences is to construct matter (SW IV: 3). This is also clear in his review of Höijer's *On Construction in Philosophy* from 1802. From this point on the concept of construction increasingly receives more attention methodically. In this article, I will set the upper limit of my scope to the year 1801 and rather point backwards in time to the importance of construction in Schelling's early philosophy in general, as sketched above. However, I will consider this theme in the light of Höijer's work and Schelling's review of it to highlight the character of construction as an interpretive process.[21] This trait is most clearly seen in Höijer's (and Schelling's) self-proclaimed relationship to Kant. Höijer described this kind of relationship in his book *Treatise on Philosophical Construction as an Introduction to Lectures in Philosophy*.[22] Schelling approvingly reviewed the German translation from 1801. After a couple of remarks on the concept of construction in Schelling's earlier works, I will return to Höijer's *Treatise* and Schelling's review of it.

The status of construction and its limitation to mathematics given in Kant's Doctrine of Method in the First Critique contributed to the prominent place of the concept of construction in the minds of Kant's followers. The fact that Kant in his *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (1786) seemed to allow for a construction of matter further excited the new generation. Along the lines of Schelling, Höijer notes that because Kant is not constructing in pure time and space, as would be the case in a mathematical construction, he

20 Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 232n1.

21 While the creative understanding of construction is rather common, the research on the concept often looks to the years 1801 and onwards for a concept of construction. See for an example H. Ende, *Der Konstruktionsbegriff im Umkreis des deutschen Idealismus* [*The Concept of Construction in Context of German Idealism*] (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1973); Bernhard Taureck, *Das Schicksal der philosophischen Konstruktion* [*The Fate of the Philosophical Construction*] (Vienna and Munich: Oldenbourg, 1975); Daniel Breazeale, "'Exhibiting the Particular in the Universal': Philosophical Construction and Intuition in Schelling's Philosophy of Identity (1801–1804)," in *Interpreting Schelling*, ed. Lara Ostaric (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 91-119; Gian Franco Frigo, "Konstruktion und Anschauung: Der Status des Absoluten in Schellings Identitätsphilosophie" [Construction and Intuition: The Status of the Absolute in Schelling's Philosophy of Identity] *Schelling-Studien* 3 (2015): 89-114. To my knowledge, the interpretation of the concept of construction in the earlier period has not been thoroughly expounded. Cf. Valerio Verra, "La «construction» dans la philosophie de Schelling" [The 'Construction' in the Philosophy of Schelling], in *Actualité de Schelling*, ed. Guy Planty-Bonjour (Paris: Vrin, 1979), 27-47; Jürgen Weber, *Begriff und Konstruktion. Rezeptionsanalytische Untersuchungen zu Kant und Schelling* [*Concept and Construction. Enquiries of Reception from Kant to Schelling*] (Göttingen, 1998).

22 Hereafter, *Treatise*.

already and against his own sayings constructs philosophically.[23] Accordingly, Höijer takes Kant on his word and reads Kant's criticism as a propaedeutic to philosophy. However, as Schelling's critique in his *Introduction* from 1799 states, Kant begins logically too late with an *analysis* of a matter which, from the beginning, is already constructed. According to Schelling and Höijer, Kant presupposes a concept of matter, which he can then seamlessly go on to analyze. Rather than a construction, Kant ends up with a merely static analysis of matter.[24] In short, he neither went back far enough logically nor did he proceed completely dynamically. Thus, Schelling can write that Kant *begins* with the opposition in the product, which he, on the contrary, constructs in the philosophy of nature. In short: Kant begins, where Schelling ends (SW III: 326).[25]

For Schelling, the concept of construction goes back to his contribution to his *General Outline of the Newest Literature*[26] in 1797-98. Amongst other topics, Schelling wrote on self-construction and self-production in relation to the concept of a principle, postulate, and the indeterminacies in Kant's philosophy (SW I: 403ff.). As far as I am aware, this is also the first time Schelling in a published work mentions the concept of "construction." This early work on postulates, which naturally includes the construction, deals primarily with the concept of postulates, denying the limitation of the practical postulates of Kant. However, Schelling includes a discussion of the free act of a self-construction of the I (SW I: 448f.). As in the review, the creative aspect and the division between an original and repeated construction can be found, as well as the comparison with mathematics. Schelling essentially uses this comparison to show that philosophical construction belongs to an even higher realm than mathematics, i.e., to the realm of freedom (SW I: 416ff.). Here Schelling treats the principle of philosophy as a postulate, which needs to be constructed. This postulate is the unity of a theoretical side (original construction) and a practical demand (*Forderung*) (SW I: 446-448.). Seen in relation to *System of Transcendental Idealism*, Schelling does not construct at all in the practical part, but nevertheless maintains the practical side of the postulate, which he

23 Benjamin Carl Henrik Hoyer, *Abhandlung* über *die philosophische Construction, als Einleitung zu Vorlesungen in der Philosophie* [*Treatise on Philosophical Construction as an Introduction to Lectures in Philosophy*], trans. G. A. Silverstolpe (Hamburg: Fr. Perthes, 1801), 6. I read the Swedish version cross checking with the German translation. When I cite Höijer, I do so in my own translation of the Swedish text, but I will refer to the Swedish as well as the German edition of the text in the footnotes. For the Swedish version see B.C.H. Höijer, *Afhandling om den philosophiska construktionen,* ämnad *til indledning til föreläsningar i philosophien* [*Treatise on Philosophical Construction as an Introduction to Lectures in Philosophy*] (Stockholm: Carl Deleen och J.G. Forsgren, 1799), http://litteraturbanken.se/#!/forfattare/HoijerB/titlar/DenPhilosophiskaConstruktionen/info last accessed 24/12/2017, 9. The page numbers are missing in the original edition, which is why I refer to the page number provided on the right-hand side of the webpage cited above.

24 Cf. SW II: 231; Schelling, *Ideas*, 184f.

25 Schelling, "Introduction to the Outline," 232.

26 Hereafter, *Outline*.

associates with the will and necessity. One could thus say that the postulate in theoretical philosophy is answered through a construction; the postulate of practical philosophy with rules (*Gebote*) and task (*Aufgabe*). Nonetheless, they are thought to be dependent on one other.[27] In the *Outline*, we interestingly also get a very brief hint of a similarity between the hidden truth of the mystics (*Mysterien*) and the principles of philosophy as realized in the course of history, culture, and education (SW I: 418). To be sure, further research is needed to establish a well-grounded account of the similarities and differences between the treatments of the concept of construction in *System of Transcendental Idealism* and the *Outline*.[28] However, this comparison opens the possibility for an alternative understanding of philosophical construction, as something that establishes the necessity of the postulate, rather than something that proceeds geometrically with necessity.

To further clarify the concept and function of the construction in the constellation sketched above, I will now cast a glimpse on Höijer's *Treatise* from 1799. Although Schelling's lack of a distancing himself from Höijer in the review does not equal an approval, I will, with some justifications, use parts of Höijer's conception as a key to understanding Schelling's concept.

I begin by focusing on a peculiar part, where Höijer seeks to determine a special kind of relationship between his own philosophy and Kant's. On the one hand Höijer draws on Kant's philosophy, e.g., his concept of construction. On the other, he uses this concept to show the limits of the philosophy of Kant.[29] According to Höijer, the relationship between his and Kant's philosophies is itself established with the concept of construction. Similar to Schelling, Höijer wants to construct the matter, which Kant analyzes. Adding to this, Höijer's understanding of the relationship to Kant's philosophy is as follows: "So far, we are in complete agreement with Kant. All we have done with his theorems consists in that we might have determined them *nearer* and, thus, we have only *interpreted* him."[30] An interpretation of Kant's philosophy consequently

27 Ibid. Schelling keeps this concept of the principle in *System of Transcendental Idealism* (SW III: 376).

28 One difference is the seemingly limitation of the construction to the I in the *Uebersicht* from 1797/98. SW I: 448. Thereby, this work seems limited to the earlier idealistic period before the identity philosophy. Cf. Ende, *Der Konstruktionsbegriff*, 2f.

29 This is also seen in the review, when Schelling accepts Kant's two notions of construction, one as an exhibition of the general in the particular ("*Darstellung des Allgemeinen im Besonderen*") and the other as an exhibition of the particular in the general ("*Darstellung des Besonderen im Allgemeinen*"). To my knowledge, Schelling first uses this description explicitly in the Philosophy of Identity.

30 Hoyer, *Abhandlung*, 55 (my translation of the Swedish version and my emphasis). In the German translation the quote is as follows: "Bisher sind wir mit KANT in vollkommener Übereinstimmung. Was wir mit seinen Lehrsätzen vorgenommen, besteht darin, dass wir sie vielleicht genauer *bestimmt*, und ihn also nur *interpretirt* haben." In the Swedish version from 1799 the quotation, we find the exact same verb (*interpreterat*): "Hittils äro vi i fullkomlig öfverensstämmelse med KANT. Allt hvad vi gjort vid hans lärosattser består deri, at vi til äfventyrs *närmare bestämt* dem, och således blott *interpreterat* honom." Höijer, *Afhandling*, 66

amounts to a limitation of his theorems. Thus, Höijer sees his philosophical contribution as an interpretation of Kantian critical philosophy, whereby Kant's position is made clearer.

In this sense, to interpret is to determine and to delimit a subject matter. In accordance with this, Höijer generally defines construction as an act (*Handlung*) that freely brings about an object, which was not there before the act. Thus, construction is to construct a universal in the particular or vice versa.[31] The activity of construction involves a very important aspect for post-Kantian philosophy: unification. Construction unifies the particular with the universal structure. Further, this act is either a limitation or a composition, of which the former is logically prior to the latter.[32] To construct is in this sense to interpret, i.e., to limit in the sense of determining a subject matter. Construction is showing the way a particular was created or composed (*zusammensetzen*) from the origin. In this sense, construction is the exposition of the genesis of the particular. Hereby, the construction results in an understanding of the place of the constructed particular. Hence, the construction is an explanation in the above-mentioned sense of a reduction. The particular is placed and thus understood logically by virtue of its universal constituents. From Höijer, we thus learn that to construct is to interpret. In this sense, the construction of Kant's starting point is a determination and limitation of Kant's philosophy. This, then, forms Höijer's relationship to Kant: a better understanding of Kant's philosophy through a limitation of Kant's thoughts.

Thus, Höijer relates interpretation and construction. Later, Höijer goes on to define the construction of concepts in a Kantian manner as freely giving an object, i.e., as an intuition a priori to a concept. In the case of constructing a philosophical position (e.g. Kant's), it drastically forms and alters the interpreted position. When the interpretation delimits, i.e., shows the limits of the original position (e.g. Kant's), it thereby shows the need for further interpretation, i.e., construction. It shows the need for a grounding of the constructed position. Höijer seeks to legitimize construction in philosophy as well as the intellectual intuition through a (very Schellingian) critique of the Kantian limitation of construction to mathematics in philosophy. Höijer thereafter goes on to determine philosophy as the freest activity of all the sciences. In fact, philosophy must be considered just as much an art (*konst*) as a science.[33] First, this leads Höijer in the direction of Fichte. However, Höijer quickly goes on to interpret Fichte along the lines of the former's own previous interpretation of Kant, when he shows the limits of Fichte's system and the conception of the Absolute as an I.[34] According to Höijer, Fichte confused

(my emphasis).

31 Höijer, *Afhandling*, 61; Hoyer, *Abhandlung*, 51.

32 Höijer, *Afhandling*, 66ff.; Hoyer, *Abhandlung*, 51ff.

33 Höijer, *Afhandling*, 94; Hoyer, *Abhandlung*, 79.

34 Höijer, *Afhandling*, 178f.; Hoyer, *Abhandlung*, 154f.

the pure I with the original act.[35] This act Höijer implicitly identifies with an original construction, which, as a postulate, philosophy has to construct.[36] In fact, Höijer in some places goes in a Schellingian direction in the search for the original and pure act (*Urhandlung*) and an original construction (*ursprünglichen Construction*). This Höijer understands as the ground or subject of matter. This is the case when Höijer necessitates nature for an understanding of freedom.[37] Furthermore, this search should take the form of a construction towards the pure subject. This original act is not determined as a Fichtean I but, according to Höijer, shows the need for a philosophy of nature. A line of thought Schelling approvingly accentuates in his review (SW V: 140ff).[38]

Schelling however goes on to criticize Höijer. According to Schelling, Höijer is too old fashioned when he turns towards Leibniz and an old conception of the difference between reality (*Realität*) and actuality (*Wirklichkeit*). Herein Schelling sees a Fichtean structure, when Höijer, according to Schelling, necessitates a realm transcendent to the original act (SW V: 143).[39] On Schelling's reading of Höijer, the original act still bears the structure of the absolute I with regards to its form (SW V: 141ff.).[40] However, Höijer, it seems to me, is very clear in his move in the direction of Schelling as he overcomes Fichte.[41] In doing this, Höijer gave the philosophy of nature way more room than it received in Fichte's system. The other way around, Höijer only briefly mentions Schelling and, in concluding his *Treatise*, leaves it for other *connoisseurs* to judge Schelling's philosophy. The historical question of whether Höijer was inspired by Schelling shall not concern us further here.

It is, I claim, the above-mentioned interpretive process Schelling had in mind in his aphorism, when he spoke of the development of his philosophy; that is, his students should construct his system further. This is what he means by "poeticizing": A further grounding of his system. In this sense, Schelling could be said to have interpreted Kant and Fichte by limiting their position on construction in the direction towards pure subjectivity, i.e., nature as subject. That Schelling actually saw his philosophical constructions in the early philosophy of nature, at least to some degree, as an interpretive activity, shall be established by the following quotation. It stems from the preface to the first

35 Höijer, *Afhandling*, 186; Hoyer, *Abhandlung*, 161.

36 Höijer, *Afhandling*, 156f.; Hoyer, *Abhandlung*, 136f. Cf. Höijer, *Afhandling*, 164; Hoyer, *Abhandlung*, 142f.

37 Höijer, *Afhandling*, 137np; Hoyer, *Abhandlung*, 118n*.

38 F. W. J. Schelling, *On Construction in Philosophy*, trans. A. A. Davis and A. I. Kukuljevic, *Epoché* 12, 2 (Spring 2008): 269-288, 181. Cf. SW V: 150f; Schelling, *Construction*, 187.

39 Schelling, *Construction*, 282f.

40 Schelling, *Construction*, 281f.

41 Höijer, *Afhandling*, 105f.; Hoyer, *Abhandlung*, 90. Cf. Höijer, *Afhandling*, 171f.; Hoyer, *Abhandlung*, 148f., Höijer, *Afhandling*, 189ff.; Hoyer, *Abhandlung*, 164ff. That Höijer wants to exclude everything alien (främmanda), seems to be in favor of Schelling's reading of him, although Höijer in the same sentence admits of the possibility of an externality to his system. Höijer, *Afhandling*, 99f.; Hoyer, *Abhandlung*, 84f.

edition of *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*:

> My object, rather, is first to allow the natural science itself to *arise* philosophically, and my philosophy is itself nothing else than natural science. It is true that chemistry teaches us to *read* the *letters*, physics the *syllables*, mathematics *Nature*; but it ought not be forgotten that it remains for philosophy to interpret what is read (SW II: 6).[42]

Construction shows how the natural sciences (and philosophy) emerge out of self-limitations of the original activity. Schelling lets this constructive process be mutually informed by the empirical findings and theories of the different natural sciences.[43] In the philosophy of nature, the natural sciences deliver the particulars to be constructed. Further, a true construction will show itself as a tendency which is not fully articulated in the empirical sciences.[44] Now, to emerge (*entstehen zu lassen*) is to show something before the eyes of the constructor[45]—and by *eye* Schelling means an intellectual as well as empirical eye. Thus, philosophy of nature interprets the natural sciences.

Höijer expresses thoughts of the very same kind in his *Treatise*. Here, he vehemently rejects all philosophical attempts of mimicking the natural sciences or mathematics. People who attempt to do this "presume their terminology, like when one accepts a character or title when one is not in possession of the merit, which these merits should entail."[46] They all need philosophy to construct their ground.[47] Thus, between philosophy and the sciences there is a constructive relationship, i.e., the two interact (*wechselwirken*), although philosophy is prior to the sciences logically. In this sense, there is a most fruitful marriage between philosophy, intuition, and the sciences.

Having established the connection between construction and interpretation, I will now briefly outline a structural relationship between construction and Schelling's concept of a new mythology. In a common view

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42 F.W.J. Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Errol E. Harris and Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 5. Henceforth *Ideas*.

43 Cf. SW III: 277ff.; Schelling, "Introduction to the Outline," 197ff. See further the *Ersten Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie* for an actual use of this method, SW III: 195ff.; F. W. J. Schelling, *First Outline of a System of Philosophy of* Nature, trans. Keith R. Peterson (Albany: SUNY Press), 141. This even seems to continue in the Identity Philosophy with the demand for construction and a complementing demonstration. Paul Ziche, *Mathematische und naturwissenschaftliche Modelle in der Philosophie Schellings und Hegels* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1996), 188ff.

44 Schelling shows this line of thought in *On the World Soul* (*Von der Weltseele*) with the concept of a complete induction. SW II: 464.

45 See for an example SW II: 214; Schelling, *Ideas*, 172.

46 Höijer, *Afhandling*, 16 (my translation of the Swedish). The German translation is as follows: "sie nahmen bloss die Terminologie derselben an, so wie man Würden und Titel annimmt, ohne darum das Verdienst zu besitzen, das sie begleiten sollte." Hoyer, *Abhandlung*, 10f.

47 Höijer, *Afhandling*, 197f.; Hoyer, *Abhandlung*, 172. Here specifically the natural scientists.

of myths, their purpose has often been to explain the genesis of something in a symbolic or allegorical, i.e., a metaphorical and living language. As previously mentioned, we find the need for a new mythology in the closing passage of *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Schelling locates the actual finalization of this new mythology in a prospective point in history (SW III: 629).[48] Here, mythology is the medium (*das Mittelglied*) for the return of science to poetry. If the artwork expresses the highest point and grounding of the system of knowledge, mythology leads the way to this completion of the system. Schelling does not give a more precise description of this mythology. Here I suggest that we can draw on the early studies of myths by Schelling to see if they fit into this picture.

To this end, I wish briefly to point to the following understanding of myth from Schelling's essay *On Myths, Historical Legends and Philosophizing in the Oldest World* (1793).[49] My strategy could seem odd, as his treatment of myth in the Philosophy of Identity is much clearer. My reasons for looking backwards is in short the following: First, the Philosophy of Identity, including its construction of the myth, is written after *System of Transcendental Idealism*; second, because it has a place in the identity system, myth should have another function, since the philosophy of which it is part is of another and more far-reaching kind; third, the myth is exactly constructed in the philosophy of identity.[50] Hence, it does not spring from a limitation of philosophy, as is the case within the system of knowledge. Here Schelling does not construct myth. With this in mind, I will outline the concept of myth, i.e., mythology in Schelling's early philosophy.

First, there is a division of the concept of myth into historical and philosophical myths. Schelling differentiates between them based on their purpose: the purpose of the historical myth is history (*Geschichte*); the purpose of philosophical myth is an exposition of *the Truth* (*Darstellung der Wahrheit,* SW I: 57f.). Thus, the latter ought to convince someone of the truth, i.e., to bring someone to an understanding of something through the medium of a myth. The former seeks to be a mere description of an actual event. Further, the myth lacks precision but is livelier, more concrete and convincing (SW I: 64). The myth is not allegorical, because it does not refer to something through something else, i.e., no comparison takes place. The philosophical myth is complete in itself (SW I: 64f.). The language of the myths is hence symbolical, although not accidental. Its language is that of its time, i.e., in the best possible language available at the time. Following a long tradition, e.g., Lessing in his interpretation of Christianity, Schelling understands the concepts of the oldest world as sensuous; this is why the oldest myths have a sensuous expression

48 Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 232f.

49 Hereafter *On Myths*.

50 For an example see §39 of *Philosophie der Kunst*. SW V: 406ff.; F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophy of Art*, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 45ff.

(SW I: 64f.).[51] They are expressions of a need to communicate the truth about a phenomenon. In this way, they bring the listeners to an understanding by showing before their eyes how a phenomenon achieved its place in cosmos (SW I: 70). Importantly, this include the place of man himself.

To expand on these rather superficial remarks: the myth is to be understood as a response to some alien phenomenon by giving this phenomenon a place in the common cosmos. From this ensues a world picture, in the best possible language of an age. In the language of *System of Transcendental Idealism*, a myth should not rise from the individual, but of itself. Hence, the myth comes "not of some individual author, but of a new race, personifying, as it were, one single poet" (SW III: 629).[52] Its origin is the unconscious. Here, I have left out many important distinctions of the concept of the myth from *On Myths*. Further, I have omitted some of the characteristics which Schelling shares with the enlightenment, e.g., that the languages of the oldest world are preforms of rational language. This could indeed render Schelling's mythology superfluous for his own times, if his time had a fully enlightened concept of reason. With the limitation of philosophy however, Schelling seems to deny in such a concept in *System of Transcendental Idealism*.[53] It seems to me that much of the content from *On Myths* does not exclude the need of a new rational mythology, although Schelling's explicit interest here is to understand the oldest myths in the context of contemporary theology. In *System of Transcendental Idealism* his interest is not in the the ancient times, but in the history of consciousness. In general, however, the myth integrates an alien phenomenon into a contemporary and common world picture. Thus, the early studies could lend some determinations to the mythology which Schelling suggests in *System of Transcendental Idealism*.

The content of such a myth is not accidental, butaccidental but needs to be established on the basis of the earlier stages, i.e., on the philosophy of nature. As Walther Ehrhardt has remarked, this new mythology could very well be a scientific mythology.[54] In this sense, the myth does not have to stand in opposition to reason and hence be irrational. Thus, Schelling's philosophy of nature should provide the mythical grounding of his system. Further, the language of myth would have to be the highest of the times. This would, I here

51 Cf. SW I: 68ff.

52 Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 232. In German, the full quote is as follows: "Wie aber eine neue Mythologie, welche nicht Erfindung des einzelnen Dichters, sondern eines neuen, nur Einen Dichter gleichsam vorstellenden Geschlechts seyn kann, *selbst* entstehen könne, dieß ist ein Problem, dessen Auslösung allein von den künftigen Schicksalen der Welt und dem weiteren Verlauf der Geschichte zu erwarten ist." SW III: 629.

53 Cf. Adolf Allwohn, "Der Mythos bei Schelling," *Kant-Studien* 61, Ergänzungshefte (1927), 18.

54 Walter E. Ehrhardt, "Ergänzende Bemerkungen," in *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, ed. Horst D. Brandt and Peter Müller (Hamburg: Meiner, 2000), XLV-L, XLIXf. Cf. Lore Hühn, "Die Idee der Neuen Mythologie. Schellings Weg einer naturphilosophischen Fundierung," in *Evolution des Geistes: Jena um 1800*, ed. Friedrich Strack (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994), 393-411.

suggest, be that of reason (*Vernunft*). It would have to be mythology of reason (*Mythologie der Vernunft*). As a mythology of reason (*Mythologie der Vernunft*), it is the genesis of reason (*genitivus obiectivus*), before reason, and written in the language of reason itself (*genitivus subiectivus*).

If the situation is as described above and calls for such a concept of construction, mythology would be the answer to Schelling's systematic intentions. The new myth would take the form of an elevation of the philosophy of nature to a more complete form, which would include the human being. Further, it brings the philosophy of nature into transcendental philosophy, which lets the former supervene (*hinzukommen*), thereby completing the system of knowledge. In other terms, the new myth continues the genetic function of the construction. It would present and reintegrate the philosophy of nature—and not just its content—in the domain of transcendental philosophy, by showing the place of spirit in the world picture. Such a myth, a rational myth, would be the lively story of the construction of nature and spirit. Thereby, it adds objectivity or reality to the system from 1800.[55] Thus, the myth is what the system needs for its completion in the artwork (SW II: 218n1).[56] Schelling occupied himself continuously with this kind of mythology.[57] A mythology not absolutely opposed to *logos*, not a fictitious bedtime story, but a myth capable of leading to the truth. Thus, the Schellingian problem is a problem of beginnings, to which the myth is the temporary answer. As a rational-mythological background, this new myth can supplement the universals of the philosophy of nature, leading towards an understanding of ourselves as part of nature. Whereas philosophical construction interprets the sciences and nature in opposition to the human being, according to my thesis, the new myth is an interpretation of nature as such, including the human being.

To sum up, construction is a free activity. This freedom is transferred to nature's constructs. In the products, although not free themselves, we recognize resemblances to human freedom. Likewise, the new myth is the genesis of reason and freedom. In this way, freedom could be said to be the guide of Schelling's philosophy of nature and transcendental philosophy. Accordingly, Schelling can write in the *First Outline of a System of Philosophy of Nature* that to see nature as unconditioned would be impossible, "if the concealed trace of freedom could not be discovered in the concept of being itself" (SW III: 13).[58]

A new myth should, it seems, take over where philosophy is no longer able to construct. Schelling does not construct after the third chapter of *System of Transcendental Idealism* although he uses postulates up to the very end

55 Cf. Paul Ziche, "Wirklichkeit als 'Duft' und 'Anklang'. Romantik, Realismus und Idealismus um 1800," in *Europäische Romantik* (Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 125-142.

56 Schelling, *Ideas*, 175n4. Cf. SW I: 216.

57 Steffen Dietzsch, "Zum Mythos-Problem beim frühen Schelling," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift. Gesellschafts- und Sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe* 1 (1976): 99-111.

58 F. W. J. Schelling, *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Keith R. Peterson (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), 14.

of *System of Transcendental Idealism*. So the postulates are ever present, but Schelling limits construction to the theoretical part. As we have seen in the *Outline,* Schelling actually states this difference, saying that postulates are not directly kept in the practical philosophy, but are tasks (*Aufgabe*; SW I: 416f.). Although this is Schelling's characteristic of the break with theoretical philosophy in 1798, the limits of this magical circle (*magischen Kreis*; SW I: 395) should be breached by these kind of tasks, i.e., by practical philosophy. In *System of Transcendental Idealism*, this move seems to come after the practical philosophy and to prepare the completion of the system with a new myth. That a myth is the answer to this impotence is thus in no way arbitrary.

As an example of how this is done from a similar position, I will point towards Jonas. Although Jonas did not explicitly use the concept of construction, he conceptually understood the relationship between philosophy, the sciences, and the history of philosophy in a similar way to Schelling. He states his thoughts on the place of myth in philosophy in *The Phenomenon of Life* from 1966.[59] By pointing towards Jonas, I hereby not only wish to show an important development of a philosophy rooted in Schelling, but also to bring an aspect of Schelling's thoughts clearer to the foreground than Schelling himself did. At that time, a new myth seamed obvious. This obviousness lacks in twentieth century philosophy, why Jonas had to legitimate the need for myth for philosophy.[60]

A Schellingian Heritage: Hans Jonas' Philosophical Biology

While any talk of Jonas as a sort of pupil of Schelling would seem out of the question, he must have known some of Schelling's work. He partook in at least one of Heidegger's seminars on Schelling from 1927/28, where Jonas presented a version of his forthcoming book on the problem of freedom in Augustine.[61] In the following, I will begin by considering some reservations in comparing Schelling's philosophy with Jonas' philosophy when it comes to the concept of system and construction in their respective works. This nevertheless leads to a common understanding for the need of myths. Finally, I will follow up with an

59 I use and refer to the German edition (Hans Jonas, *Organismus und Freiheit. Ansätze zu einer philosophischen Biologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973). Unless otherwise stated, I follow the style of *Kabiri* by quoting Jonas from the English original (Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*) with reference to the German and Jonas' improved edition in brackets in text, providing the corresponding reference from the English original in a footnote.

60 See also Jesper L. Rasmussen, "Hans Jonas' philosophische Biologie und Friedrich W. J. Schellings Naturphilosophie: Einleitende Bemerkungen zu einer Affinität," *Res Cogitans* 11, 1 (2016): 63-93.

61 *Heideggers Schelling-Seminar (1927/28). Die Protokolle von Martin Heideggers Seminar zu Schellings 'Freiheitsschrift' (1927/28) und die Akten des Internationalen Schelling-Tags 2006*, ed. Lore Hühn, Jörg Jantzen, Philipp Schwab and Sebastian Schwenzfeuer (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2010).

example of how Jonas interprets the cybernetic explanation of metabolism. On this background, the scope and role of Jonas' myth become clear.

Jonas considered his philosophy as an attempt of hermeneutical-interpretation, with the explicit goal to transform phenomenology and biology into a philosophical biology through interpretative thinking. Here, we find a concept of philosophy, where freedom should be the Ariadne thread which guides us in the interpretation of life.[62] In Jonas' works, we thus find a similar situation regarding mind and nature as we do in the works of Schelling. Jonas' critique of phenomenology entails an attempt to appropriate nature and the natural sciences into philosophy and phenomenology. This can be seen in his appropriation of insights from Darwinism combined with phenomenology, resulting in an understanding of nature and the human being.[63] By determining a degree or reminiscence of freedom in living nature and simultaneously balancing anthropocentrism, biocentrism, panvitalism, and panmechanicism, Jonas interprets the results from the sciences (broadly speaking) into a kind of hierarchy of the living nature. Although Jonas' presentation hardly comes close to the completeness and systematism of Schelling's, their intentions seem to agree. In contrast to Schelling however, Jonas limits his philosophy to life, i.e., to organic nature. This seems to put into question the use of construction in Jonas' philosophy.

Jonas was not a straightforward constructor of systems like Schelling. When Jonas mentions "construction," he often does so critically in reference to a godly constructer, which entails fatalism. It seems that Jonas had a mathematical God in mind when considering the concepts of construction and system.[64] There are, though, other pertinent aspects of Jonas' philosophy which I will briefly emphasize here. One of the constructors that inspired Jonas was Spinoza. He wrote on Spinoza on several occasions and praised him for establishing the first organic concept of individuality—referring to the anti-atomistic inner world of Spinoza's substance.[65] Moreover, in his letters (*Lehrbriefe*) to his wife Lore Jonas, he praised Spinoza's third form of knowledge (*amor dei intellectualis*).[66] This is not to mention the theological writings of Jonas, e.g., *Matter, Spirit, and Creation* (*Materie, Geist und Schöpfung*). Thus, Jonas is not completely distancing himself from a project like Schelling's, although he

62 Jonas, *Organismus und Freiheit*, 14; Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 3.

63 See for an example the third chapter ("Philosophische Aspekte des Darwinismus") in Jonas, *Organismus und Freiheit*, 60ff.; Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 38ff.

64 See for an example: Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "Cum Deus calculat et cogitationem exercet, fit mundus," "Dialogus," in *Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Zweite Abtheilung*, ed. Carl I. Gerhardt (Berlin: Georg Olms Verlag, 1961), 190-193.

65 Hans Jonas, "Spinoza and the Theory of Organism," in *Philosophische Hauptwerke 1. Organismus und Freiheit. Philosophie des Lebens und Ethik der Lebenswissenschaften* (*Kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke von Hans Jonas*, I/1), ed. Dietrich Böhler, Michael Bongardt et al. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach Verlag KG, 2010), 571-592.

66 Hans Jonas, "Lehrbriefe an Lore Jonas 1944/45," in *Erinnerungen*, ed. Rachel Salamander and Christian Wiese (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 348-383, here 370.

clearly sees the limitation of philosophy in these matters. In fact, this is why in *The Phenomenon of Life*, Jonas dedicates the twelfth and last chapter to an exhibition of the creation of the world. This takes the form of a myth, which is necessary in order to understand his earlier investigations on organisms.

Jonas describes the origin of these finite life forms as the risky venture of being (*Wagnis des Seins*), the adventure in mortality (*Abendteuer in Sterblichkeit*).[67] In Jonas' words, we are *tempted* to use the freedom of not knowing (*Freiheit des Nichtwissens*) to establish a complete metaphysics capable of explaining being on the basis of freedom. The medium for this should be the myth.[68] This is legitimized by Jonas with a reference to the Platonic use of myths. We are, however, necessitated to trust this medium: "In the great pause of metaphysics in which we are, and before it has found its own speech again, we must entrust ourselves to this, admittedly treacherous, medium at our risk."[69] As we are not able to do metaphysics before its ground is made clear to us again, the myth, is the only way to explicate the ground according to Jonas. The ensuing myth of God is briefly put as follows: the finite world follows from God's free decision. This decision is God's determination to renounce his being and deity to become the world once and for all. In considering the following longer quotation from Jonas' thoughts of an alternative to a pure identification of God and World (pantheism), we are immediately reminded of Schelling's Odyssey of the spirit from *System of Transcendental Idealism*:

> In order that the world might be, and be for itself, God renounced his own being, divesting himself of his deity—to receive it back from the Odyssey of time weighted with the chance harvest of unforeseeable temporal experience: transfigured or possibly even disfigured by it. In such self-forfeiture of divine integrity for the sake of unprejudiced becoming, no other foreknowledge can be admitted than that of *possibilities* which cosmic being offers in its own terms: to these, God committed his cause in effacing himself for the world.[70]

This is a response to the experience of not knowing, which, however, is an experiencing of something. This experience is namely the experience of the loss of transcendence, security and the experience of finitude and mortality.[71] The

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67 Jonas, *Organismus und Freiheit*,, 162; Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 106.

68 Jonas, *Organismus und Freiheit*, 331. Here, I cite the German version, which in full is as follows: "Wenn ich, wie man manchmal zu tun nicht widerstehen kann, von der Freiheit des Nichtwissens Gebrauch mache, die in diesen Dingen unser Los ist, und vom Mittel des Mythus oder der glaublichen Erfindung, das Plato dafür erlaubte, so fühle ich mich zu Gedanken wie den folgenden versucht." Jonas, *Organismus und Freiheit*, 331. The English version has quite a different choice of words. See Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 275.

69 Jonas, *Organismus und Freiheit*, 335; Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 278.

70 Jonas, *Organismus und Freiheit*, 332; Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 275.

71 Jonas, *Organismus und Freiheit*, 323ff.; Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 268ff.

gut reaction to such a response would be to deny it any philosophical legitimacy.[72] Against this, Jonas as well as Schelling could respond with a grounding of the myth in reason and in the sciences. The uncertainty following the basic structure of being is a mythical response to the experience gained through Darwinism, natural selection, and phenomenology. This experience and science, then, is understood through the myth. These, at the same time, necessitate the form and content of the myth. As a new mythology, a mythology is required which builds on our experiences of the world gained from the sciences and from ourselves. Essential for this is our experience of freedom, which consequently necessitates that the myth must have freedom at its core. Jonas explicitly states this. The world is not necessary, only possible. The reason for the existence (*Dasein*) of this world, the mystery of mysteries, is God's self-denial of his inviolateness.[73] This, Jonas adds, should be reflected symbolically in the myth. Now, man stands alone.

> The image of God, haltingly begun by the universe, for so long worked upon—and left undecided—in the wide and the narrowing spirals of pre-human life, passes with this last twist, and with a dramatic quickening of the movement, into man's precarious trust, to be completed, saved, or spoiled by what he will do to himself and the world.[74]

The only transcendence is the lasting footprints of the finite beings on this Earth.[75] Thus, an ethics of responsibility should be made possible through this myth.[76]

According to Jonas, the myth can only be hypothetical, temporary or experimental in character.[77] We can find this kind of temporariness of the myth in Jonas as well as Schelling. Thus, we must not mistake these myths for scientific theories of everything or finalized metaphysical systems. The myth given must be thought of as constantly revisable on the grounds of new experiences. However, this character of the myth does not make it changeable at one's discretion, but it is rather bound with common experience. Thus, the sciences, our experience of ourselves in their context, and the myth, i.e., world pictures, must stand in a mutual relationship. Thereby, the myth loses its arbitrariness.

To give an example of this, I will conclude with Jonas's interpretation of cybernetics to draw attention to the relationship between the sciences,

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72 Cf. György Lukács, *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1955).

73 Jonas, *Organismus und Freiheit*, 336; Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 279.

74 Jonas, *Organismus und Freiheit*, 334; Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 277.

75 Jonas, *Organismus und Freiheit*, 334; Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 277.

76 Jonas, *Organismus und Freiheit*, 335; Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 278. Cf. Jonas, *Organismus und Freiheit*, 331; Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 274.

77 Jonas, *Organismus und Freiheit*, 335; Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 278.

philosophy, and myth in Jonas.[78] Here, Jonas targets Norbert Wiener's cybernetic explanation of organic metabolism as an input-output machine, describable only in purely mathematical terms. Here, Jonas explicitly maintains that his purpose is the meaning (*Sinn*) of metabolism. The explanations of Wiener are right on some level, i.e., the objective level visible for the empirical eye. Nonetheless, the ground of the input and output is the subjectivity of the organism. This subjectivity is a higher form of activity, making the autopoetic relation of input and output possible. Furthermore, to know how this activity is possible, the organism first needs to be 'constructed.' For this activity to function, a certain emancipation or negative freedom of the organism is necessary. The organism as subject is dependent, but not completely determined by the organism as object, i.e., the actual input and output. We are attentive of this kind of freedom, Jonas claims, because we know it from our own freedom.[79] This is the reason why we experience a structural similarity between our own experiences and those of other organisms.

While the cybernetic input-output analysis explains the purpose of an organism as its endpoint, it fails to do justice to the *autopoesis* of the organism, i.e., in Kantian terminology, the inner purposefulness. Cybernetics, according to Jonas, mistakes "to have a purpose," i.e., an inner purpose, with the "execution of a purpose," i.e., an outer purpose. When cybernetics extrapolates from its actual objective description on the phenomenon level, it actually posits a steersman outside the organisms to explain that activity, i.e., an outer purpose. According to Jonas, the organism possesses a kind of freedom, i.e., autonomy—a phenomenon only recognized on the basis of the principle of freedom as the guide in the interpretation of life.[80] Thus, Jonas limits cybernetics to the objective level as an approximate description of behavior, thereby showing the need for further interpretations. Such 'constructions' would ultimately result in the understanding of the subjectivity of the organism.[81]

Admittedly, there appears to be no clear end to the possibility of construction in this sense in Jonas' philosophy, but Jonas admits that there is some kind of boundary beyond which we are necessitated to the symbolic language of myth. As the background from which the myth is told, one candidate for this limit seems to be the practical realm of human life including immortality and ethics. If there is something to this, it is the need for an interpretation of the genesis of human life itself, i.e., free human life in a

78 See also Rasmussen, "Hans Jonas' philosophische Biologie und Friedrich W. J. Schellings Naturphilosophie," 70ff.

79 For Jonas, this freedom mainly expresses itself as an intentional directedness in organic life.

80 See Jonas, *Organismus und Freiheit*, 164ff.; Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 108ff.

81 For a similar point relating to the *General System Theory* of Bertalanffy, see H. Jonas, "General System Theory: A New Approach to Unity of Science—A comment on General System Theory," in Hans Jonas, *Herausforderungen und Profile* (*Kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke von Hans Jonas* III/2), ed. Sebastian Lalla, Florian Preußger, and Dietrich Böhler (Freiburg im Breisgau, Berlin, Wien: Rombach Verlag, 2013), 333-340, here 340.

natural world, that necessitates the myth.[82] As a necessity springing from our position in nature, we are forced to construct as far as we can. At some point a rational myth is the only means from which grounds we can establish an adequate understanding of life. The results of science are confronted with our freedom, which necessitates a new interpretation of the understandings given to philosophy from the sciences. After having come to a new understanding of nature by interpreting these results, we are in the end forced to myth, if we want to understand ourselves as a part of nature. Neither the sciences nor philosophy is able to complete such a worldview itself.

Conclusion

After all then, there is some recognition of the necessity of construction in the limiting and uniting sense in Jonas' philosophical biology. This leads to the need for a new myth. That Jonas writes an actual myth could be said to be in disagreement with the intentions of Schelling, whose mythology demanded the myth to arise unconsciously. However, the myth springs from an irresistible need, which in Jonas' description, forces itself upon him. As I hope to have sketched, Jonas' myth should correspond with philosophical biology. Just as with Schelling, arbitrary and ideological myths must be discarded as irrational.

This brief examination of Jonas' philosophical biology should, at least, render probable a likeness between some parts of his project with Schelling's. Perhaps his philosophical biology could even be said to be in need of a more developed ground, the like of which could be perhaps be found Schelling's philosophy. On the other hand, Jonas' later engagement in ethics on the grounds of his metaphysics seems to give us a possible ethical answer to a Schellingian question, regarding the relationship between man and nature. In Schelling, ethical implications concerning a responsibility of man towards nature remain at best partly unanswered.[83]

First of all, they both show the need for construction in the understanding of facts. Second, and just as important, we are shown the limits of this constructive process, which instead of resignation ends in the need for a new, rational myth. What I have found in hints in Schelling and an interpretation of his work is brought forth clearer by a closer look at Jonas' philosophical biology. That the principle for both endeavors is freedom, which we learn from an experience of ourselves as free, turns out to cast a new light on the concept of construction and the ensuing myth. In Jonas as well as Schelling, we find both concepts in sharp opposition to a standard conception of construction, as exhibiting mechanism, relativism (constructivism), or fatalism. By drawing on Höijer's work on construction and Schelling's reception of it, this is made

82 See Jonas, *Organismus und Freiheit*, 317; Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 262.
83 E.g. Jonas' *Das Prinzip Verantwortung* (1979).

especially clear.

On the grounds of my interpretation of Schelling, I thereby also hope to have made a possible heritage of Schelling's philosophy of nature visible: A heralding of another kind of myth, i.e., a scientific and rational myth, where freedom is the central vehicle. Although Jonas himself in 1992 expressed an unconcerned attitude towards the contemporary public opinion, I find Jonas' sense for the times and milieu he lived in quite extraordinary.[84] By pointing from Schelling towards Jonas, I thus hope to have exemplified an actuality of Schelling. Hence, I see Jonas as a co-poet (*Mitdichter*) of Schelling, although Jonas, to my knowledge, never mentioned Schelling in his works. Thereby Jonas must be considered an *autonomous co-poet* (*Mitdichter*)—albeit *incognito*—of Schelling.[85]

To read the philosophy of nature, be it Schelling's or Jonas', through a mythological lens could seem a terrible devaluation of Russellian proportions, the like of which we so often have witnessed in the 20th century's reception of any philosophy of nature.[86] On the contrary, I have suggested quite the opposite by pointing to the system of knowledge and the philosophical biology.[87] Only by accepting certain forms of myths as rational means to an understanding of man and nature are we able to discard the myriad of irrational myths, which make claim to our modern worldview.

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84 Jonas proclaimed that "der Zeitgeist … meinen Buckel herunterrutschen [kann]." Hans Jonas, *Hans Jonas zu Ehren. Reden aus Anlass seiner Ehrenpromotion durch die Philosophische Fakultät der Universität Konstanz am 2. Juli 1991* (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 1992), 42.

85 Cf. O. Marquard, "Schelling–Zeitgenosse incognito," in *Schelling. Einführung in seine Philosophie*, ed. Harald Holz and Hans M. Baumgartner (Freiburg im Breisgau; München: Verlag Karl Alber, 1975), 9-26; Michael Hackl, "Ein Appell an die Freiheit. Existenz, Mythos und Freiheit bei H. Jonas und F.W.J. Schelling," in *Die Klassische Deutsche Philosophie und ihre Folgen*, ed. Michael Hackl and Christian Danz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 131-154.

86 E.g. Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London: George Allen and Unwin LTD, 1948), 745.

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