



k a b i r i

The Official Journal of the

*North American
Schelling Society*

Becoming as Formation of Boundaries: Schelling's Philosophy of Nature and Whitehead's Process Philosophy

Philipp Höfele

philosophy of nature, ethics of nature, holism, process philosophy, life, organism, division (*Scheidung*), inhibition, Alfred N. Whitehead, Hans Jonas

The beginning of process philosophy is usually associated with Alfred N. Whitehead.¹ Nevertheless, with regard to the understanding of the whole of nature as a process, there are obvious precursors to be found in the philosophy of nature around 1800 and especially in that of F.W.J. Schelling.² Hans Jonas registered this proximity, at least indirectly. In his contribution to *A Philosophical Biology*, traces of both Schelling and Whitehead can be found, even if he never quotes the former directly and thinks he has to differentiate himself from the latter despite all kinship.³ A central question in common for Schelling

¹ See Nicholas Rescher, *Process Philosophy: A Survey of Basic Issues* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000). At the same time, however, Rescher rightly emphasizes that this is a movement of thought that goes back to Heraclitus and cannot be equated with the position of a single person.

² See Johanna Seibt, "Process Philosophy," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, first published Oct 15, 2012; substantive revision May 26, 2022, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/process-philosophy/>.

³ See Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology*, with a foreword by Lawrence Vogel (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 95–96. See also Jesper L. Rasmussen, "Hans Jonas' philosophische Biologie und Friedrich W. J. Schellings

and Whitehead concerns the formation of boundaries and, thus, of structures and forms. This question appears too in Jonas's work, albeit less radically insofar as he understands only organic life and its permanent metabolism, rather than the whole of nature, as processual. Thus, Jonas poses the question of identity formation solely with respect to organic life.⁴ The process-philosophical perspective on the whole of being, which is shared by Schelling and Whitehead but rejected by Jonas, is, however, justified from certain points of view, especially in view of a holism increasingly discussed in the Anthropocene.

It is the thesis of this paper that the process-philosophical reading shared by Schelling and Whitehead is conducive to an ethical holism of the kind that seems especially attractive in light of the challenges posed for environmental ethics by the Anthropocene.⁵ In being so conducive, it is Schelling's reading that, unlike Whitehead's, is *at the same time* able to do justice to Hans Jonas's concerns and that, in addition to a holistic perspective, seeks also to take into account the special position of the living and of the human being.

The paper aims to show this using three highlights: First, I briefly address Jonas's interpretation of Whitehead as presented in *The Phenomenon of Life* in 1966.⁶ Despite Jonas's clear appreciation, his sharp criticism of Whitehead's philosophy highlights the latter's concerns all the more clearly. Considering holism as the essential idea of process philosophy, I note that these concerns are also shared by Schelling (section 1). Following two stages of development from the trajectory of Schelling's thought, I will show that Schelling—here quite close to Whitehead's process philosophy—also understands the whole of nature to be a process or activity, and that he also therefore regards the topic of the formation of boundaries and structures to be central. This will be shown on the one hand using one of Schelling's first

Naturphilosophie. Einleitende Bemerkungen zu einer Affinität," in *Res Cogitans* 11, no. 1 (2016): 63–93; as well as Hava Tirosh-Samuels and Christian Wiese, eds., *The Legacy of Hans Jonas: Judaism and the Phenomenon of Life* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

⁴ See Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 64–92.

⁵ With regard to Schelling, Goethe, and Schopenhauer, see also Philipp Höfele, "Schelling—Goethe—Schopenhauer: Zur holistischen Betrachtung der Natur in der ‚Sattelzeit‘ um 1800," in *Schopenhauer liest Schelling. Freiheits- und Naturphilosophie im Ausgang der klassischen deutschen Philosophie*, ed. Philipp Höfele and Lore Hühn (Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2021), 163–95.

⁶ Probably written in the 1950s, the work was originally titled *Organism and Freedom. An Essay in Philosophical Biology* and, after rejection by two publishers, was first published in English in 1966, in a heavily revised version, under the title *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology*, before it appeared in 1973 in a German translation prepared together with Klaus Dockhorn as *Organismus und Freiheit. Ansätze zu einer philosophischen Biologie (Organism and Freedom: Approaches to a Philosophical Biology)*; for the Insel Verlag edition (1994), the title was changed to *Das Prinzip Leben (The Principle of Life)*.

natural-philosophical writings, the *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature* of 1799 (section 2), and on the other with the help of the first draft of the *Ages of the World* of 1811 (section 3). The anthropomorphism of the latter writing, in particular, will show how Schelling, in his “middle” philosophy in the years after 1809, maintains the process-philosophical holism of his early writings on the philosophy of nature—thereby demonstrating his proximity to Whitehead—while at the same time reflecting on the specific position of the human in nature. Against this background, in a short concluding outlook, I will ask to what extent a process-philosophical approach modified with Schelling can support an ethical holism in the Anthropocene (section 4).⁷

Jonas’s Critique of Whitehead’s Process Philosophy as an Implicit Schelling Critique

In his main work in the philosophy of nature, *The Phenomenon of Life* of 1966, Jonas does not conceal his esteem for Whitehead, and in New York in 1970–71, he even goes so far as to give an entire lecture series on *Process and Reality*.⁸ Thus, in 1966 Jonas calls Whitehead’s 1929 work a “bold proposition of basic ontology, whose intellectual force and philosophical importance are unequaled in our time.”⁹ At the same time, Jonas does not spare Whitehead his severe criticism: it is true that Whitehead developed a “philosophy of the organism,” which Jonas also tried to work out.¹⁰ On this point, Whitehead—like Schelling—follows Leibniz. However, Whitehead had gone too far in understanding all being, and not only biological being, according to the paradigm of the organism, “thereby incidentally depriving the latter [the organic identity] of the specific challenge it poses by normal physical standards: it has been converted into a case of what universally holds.”¹¹ In Jonas’s eyes, Whitehead achieves “the overcoming of an annoying dualism.”¹² But insisting on this continuity of being leads him to annul the differences between different forms of nature.

⁷ See also Philipp Höfele, “The Changed Role of Anthropology in the Anthropocene,” in *Le tecnologie ‘moralì’ emergenti e le sfide etico-giuridiche delle nuove soggettività. Emerging ‘moral’ technologies and the ethical-legal challenges of new subjectivities*, ed. Silvia Salardi and Michele Saporiti (Turin: Giappichelli, 2020), 125–44.

⁸ See edition of these lectures in Hans Jonas, “New Yorker Vorlesungen. 3. Alfred North Whitehead (1970/71),” in *Kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke Hans Jonas*, ed. Dietrich Böhler et al., vol. II/3: *Leben und Organismus. Life and Organism* (Freiburg: Rombach), 495–554.

⁹ Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 96.

¹⁰ Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 95.

¹¹ Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 95.

¹² Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 95.

Jonas himself, in fact, insists that “emerging life indeed marks an ontological revolution in the history of ‘matter.’”¹³ According to Jonas, a basal form of freedom appears in nature for the first time with organically constituted life. He describes this form of freedom as “a certain independence of form with respect to its own matter.”¹⁴ In the realm of lifeless and inorganic entities, it is their material constitution that is decisive. Their forms, which can be changed by the influence of wind and weather, however, are inessential and merely accidental. “But viewed from the dynamic identity of the living form, the reverse holds,” as Jonas points out.¹⁵ Because, in the case of organic life, “the material contents in their succession are phases of transit for the self-continuation of the form.”¹⁶ Here, Jonas is thinking of the phenomenon of metabolism, which can be evidenced in organic entities. The consequence of metabolism is that the identity of a living organism does not consist of pure persistence, expressed on the basis of the logical formula $A = A$, since metabolism ensures that almost every molecule of the living body can be exchanged over a certain period of time. In spite of this, the living body does not suffer a loss of identity. The identity of living things is rather based on an “inwardness which by a kind of memory would bridge the discontinuity of actual event.”¹⁷ The “continuity [that guarantees identity] is comprehended as self-continuation” in the case of the organic,¹⁸ even if the concept of “self” can only be applied in a very rudimentary way in the case of the most elementary examples of life, as Jonas concedes.

Jonas explicitly takes over from Whitehead this concept of identity as self-continuation, even if he restricts it in a decisive way, namely to organic life. In Jonas’s eyes, Whitehead understands principally every form of identity in nature as a kind of a self-continuation guaranteed by interiority, and “this is a transference from life, and frankly speculative.”¹⁹ Even though Whitehead understands his own approach in *Process and Reality* as “Speculative Philosophy,”²⁰ Jonas’s remark here is undoubtedly meant critically: Whitehead’s “metaphysical doctrine of the philosophy of organism” pursues the thesis that “the notion of an actual entity as the unchanging subject of change is completely abandoned.”²¹ His “philosophy of organism,” in other

¹³ Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 81.

¹⁴ Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 81.

¹⁵ Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 80.

¹⁶ Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 80.

¹⁷ Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 81.

¹⁸ Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 82.

¹⁹ Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 81.

²⁰ Alfred N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology. (Gifford Lectures Delivered in the University of Edinburgh During the Session 1927/28)*, ed. David R. Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 3.

²¹ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 29.

words, understands every entity as something permanently changing; there is no underlying “subject” whose properties merely change. In this remark, Whitehead also negates the phenomenon of a persisting inorganic matter still assumed by Jonas. Whitehead wants every entity, whether inanimate or alive, to be built up from fluctuating “actual occasions”: “The philosophies of substance presuppose a subject which then encounters a datum, and then reacts to the datum. The philosophy of organism [represented by Whitehead] presupposes a datum which is met with feelings and progressively attains the unity of a subject.”²² As in the case of the organically living described by Jonas, the “data” translated into “feelings” are thereby structured teleologically with reference to their form, to their endpoint. This is why Whitehead, instead of an always-already underlying “subject,” prefers to speak of a “superject” a “thrown-over” from the goal of development: “The subject-superject is the purpose of the process originating the feelings. The feelings are inseparable from the end at which they aim, and this end is the feeler. The feelings aim at the feeler, as their final cause.”²³ As Jonas rightly observes, “the result is a submersion of discontinuity where it matters—between life and nonlife—against its injection where it is hypothetical—between phases of physical duration.”²⁴

But Jonas, on the basis of this result of Whitehead’s metaphysics, hastily rejects this approach. The “atomicity of ‘actual occasions’”²⁵ claimed by Whitehead has its merits, not so much for an ethics of life, but rather for a holistic ethics, which includes everything that exists and attests to a general equality of origin and equivalence, insofar as all complex entities deviate from each other only because of the relations and teleologically organized associations they have entered into. In this respect, Whitehead shows an astonishing proximity to Schelling’s philosophy of nature, even though he quotes it only once in the second lecture of *The Concept of Nature* from 1919.²⁶ With regard to Schelling,

²² Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 155.

²³ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 222.

²⁴ Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 96.

²⁵ Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 96.

²⁶ See Alfred N. Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature: The Turner Lectures (Delivered in Trinity College, November 1919)*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 31f. He quotes at length from Schelling’s *Über den wahren Begriff der Naturphilosophie (On the True Concept of Natural Philosophy)* and remarks that the topics addressed here, “though they lie outside the range of our discussion, are always being confused with it,” since they nevertheless “lie proximate to our field of thought” (Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature*, 32). Whitehead cites the following passage: “Ich betrachte in der Naturphilosophie jenes Subject–Object, das ich Natur nenne, allerdings in seiner Selbstconstruction. Man muß sich zur intellectuellen Anschauung der Natur erhoben haben, um dieß zu begreifen.—Der Empiriker erhebt sich dahin nicht; und ebendebwegen ist er eigentlich immer das construirende, in allen seinen Erklärungen. Es ist daher nicht zu verwundern, daß das Construirte und das, was construiert werden sollte, so

on the one hand, the nature-ethical implications of pan-organicism become clearer. On the other hand, Schelling is at the same time able to take into account Jonas's concern for the irreducibility of organic life.

Schelling's Early Philosophy of Nature as Process Philosophy: The Example of the *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature* from 1799

Similarly to Whitehead, Schelling's early philosophy of nature assumes no original and persistent substances in nature. Analogous to transcendental philosophy, which proceeds from a "constructive activity" of the ego, the philosophy of nature must, according to Schelling in his *First Outline*, also begin from an "absolute activity" or "an infinite (insofar as ideal) productive activity [*einer unendlichen (insofern idealen) productiven Thätigkeit*]," as it is only in this way that there could be something unconditional in it (AA I/7: 67; SW III: 5).²⁷ In contrast to Fichte's figure of the "*Thatandlung*" or the self-setting of the ego, Schelling asserts in the *Introduction to the Outline to a System of the Philosophy of Nature* from 1799 "an unconscious productivity which is originally related to consciousness, the reflection of which we see in nature [*eine bewußtlose, aber der bewußten ursprünglich verwandte Productivität, deren bloßen Reflex wir in der Natur sehen*]," and which should function as the starting point of the philosophy of nature (AA I/8: 30; SW III: 272).

But since the "possibility of a representation of the infinite in the finite" (AA I/7: 79; SW III: 14) must be given, Schelling also has to name the "reason for the inhibition [*Hemmung*]" (AA I/7: 81; SW III: 16) in nature, which alone leads to individual, finite products. But the approach of Schelling's "dynamic atomism [*dynamischen Atomistik*]" (AA I/7: 67; SW III: 5) is so radical that he does not want to accept that real, finite products could emerge from the infinitely productive *natura naturans*. The products arising through inhibition could only be "mere pseudo-products [*bloß Scheinprodukte*], i.e. the tendency to infinite development must lie in each individual being [*in jedem*

selten übereintrifft.—Der Naturphilosoph kann eben darum, weil er die Natur zur Selbstständigkeit erhebt, und sich selbst construiren läßt, nie in die Nothwendigkeit kommen, die construirte Natur (d. h. die Erfahrung) jener entgegen zu setzen, jene nach ihr zu corrigiren" (AA I/10: 100; SW IV: 97). He quotes it from a work translated into English by the Russian philosopher Nikolay O. Lossky, *The Intuitive Basis of Knowledge: An Epistemological Inquiry*, trans. N.A. Duddington (London: Macmillan, 1919).

²⁷ See AA I/7: 78; SW III: 12f. Schelling is quoted with the abbreviation "AA" according to the following edition: Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, edited by the Schelling Project – Edition and Archive of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities (Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1976ff.). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

einzelnen muß nieder die Tendenz zur unendlichen Entwicklung liegen]; each product must be able to decay again into products” (AA I/7: 67; SW III: 5). The infinite activity of nature aims at “an infinite product” (AA I/7: 67; SW III: 5), at “a general organism,” which is accompanied by a “struggle of nature against everything individual [*Ankämpfen der Natur gegen alles Individuelle*]” (AA I/7: 69; SW III: 6).

Nevertheless, there must be an inhibition of the original infinite activity in nature. Because of the “autonomy of nature” (AA I/7: 81; SW III: 17), this inhibition can only come from itself. To understand how this self-inhibition could come about, one would have to prove the presence of “opposite tendencies in nature [*entgegengesetzter Tendenzen in der Natur*]” (AA I/7: 82; SW III: 17). According to Schelling, these tendencies “reveal” [*offenbaren*] themselves in nature as “original qualities [*ursprüngliche Qualitäten*]” (AA I/7: 84; SW III: 20). He thereby comes to consider a qualitative register as part of the determining limitation of the single things in a gesture analogous to Whitehead’s concept of “feelings.” Since it is only the finite product resulting from this inhibiting that can be found in space, the inhibiting “must not be in space,” and yet, at the same time, must “be the principle of space-filling [*Princip der Raum-Erfüllung*]” (AA I/7: 85; SW III: 21). However, this only applies to qualities such as gravity or density, which Schelling understands as “actions [*Actionen*]” in the sense of his “dynamic atomism”: “Each quality is an action of a certain degree [*Jede Qualität ist eine Action von bestimmtem Grad*]” (AA I/7: 86; SW III: 24), which ensures the uniqueness of the individual products.

Only by explaining the phenomenon of the border as a separation of inside and outside can Schelling deduce nature’s richness of structures and forms. As in Whitehead’s process philosophy, Schelling thus provides an explanation as to how a static being can emerge from a general dynamic becoming. But these limitations caused by individual “actants” or tendencies in nature are, for Schelling, merely temporary, limited in time. For nature aims at developing an “infinite product” or a “general organism,” which alone can represent an adequate objectification of the infinite activity of nature.

The radicality of this goal-directedness of the process of nature can be seen in the context of a reinterpretation of Goethe’s concept of metamorphosis.²⁸ In the “Entries in the Handwritten Copy” of his *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*,²⁹ Schelling describes the “metamorphosis going to infinity [*ins Unendliche gehende Metamorphose*]” characterized by polarity and heightening in visible reference to Goethe (AA I/7: 284; SW III: 44). In opposition to Goethe, Schelling emphasizes, on the one hand, the radical nature of metamorphoses in nature, since in the case of the butterfly, for

²⁸ See, in more detail, Philipp Höfele, “Schelling—Goethe —Schopenhauer,” 168–82.

²⁹ For the dating, see the editorial report by W.G. Jacobs and P. Ziche in AA I/7: 37–40.

example, “just the transition from one state of metamorphosis to another is not a mere partial, but a total change [Jener Uebergang von einem Zustand der Metamorphose zum andern ist überhaupt nicht etwa eine bloße partielle, sondern eine totale Veränderung]” (AA I/7: 286; SW III: 46). On the other hand, Schelling sees a tendency of nature toward the abolition of all individual forms; nature “constantly strives to abolish duality [die Dualität aufzubeheben] and to return to its original identity [ursprüngliche Identität].” “As soon, therefore, as the product has reached the highest summit [den höchsten Gipfel], it is subject to nature’s general striving towards indifference [dem allgemeinen Streben der Natur nach Indifferenz]” (AA I/7: 287–8; SW III: 49). In this way, Schelling emphasizes the productivity and dynamics of nature, which play with the emergence and decay of the individual, to such an extent that it can ultimately no longer be described on the basis of Goethe’s methodology. Schelling pushes the methodological approach of Goethe’s doctrine of metamorphosis to its limits in order to show a general purposefulness of the natural process, and in a way that foreshadows Whitehead.

The Process of Nature and the Position of the Human Being in 1811

In the drafts of the *Ages of the World* from 1811 on, Schelling still pursues the approach of assuming an original dynamic in nature, which only afterward forms structure. However, on the one hand, he now no longer speaks of an infinite productive activity in nature but of an “eternal freedom” (WA I: 14),³⁰ thus indirectly indicating that he now wants to encompass the realm of human history as well. On the other hand, limited being is now conceived even more negatively: “being [das Seyn] is an inferior [tiefer] condition of the essential being [des Wesens], whose most primordial, unconditioned state towers above all being” (WA I: 14),³¹ as Schelling states in allusion to Plato’s *Politeia* (509b). This “inferior condition” or lower state is understood as a “necessity” and even as a “disastrous fate [Verhängnis]” (WA I: 14).³² The consequence of this, as it was in the early philosophy of nature, is that “everything that is [alles Seyende] is

³⁰ Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *The Ages of the World. Book One: The Past (Original Version, 1811) Plus Supplementary Fragments, Including a Fragment from Book Two (the Present) along with a Fleeting Glimpse into the Future* F.W.J. Schelling, trans. and with an introduction by Joseph P. Lawrence (Albany: State University of New York Press), 70.

Schelling’s *Ages of the World* is cited in this article using the abbreviation “WA,” according to the following German edition: Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling: *Die Weltalter. Fragmente. In den Urfassungen von 1811 und 1813*, ed. Manfred Schröter (Munich: Beck’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1946).

³¹ Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 70.

³² Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 70.

agitated by a thorn that prods it forward and makes it spread itself out, hiding within it an infinity that would like to express itself” (WA I: 14).³³ The dynamic of “eternal freedom” that underlies all things and in which all things still continue to participate even in the state of absolute necessity thus makes itself felt in everything, namely through the compulsion to develop or even to overcome itself.

Schelling now describes this fact no longer, as in 1799, on the basis of different tendencies or “actants” in nature, but on the basis of the tragic interaction of two wills in everything that exists:

This is the dire fate of all life, that to become comprehensible to itself, it seeks constriction, demanding narrowness over breadth. But after constricting itself and discovering what it feels like to be, it demands once again to return into openness. Indeed, it finds itself longing to return back into the quiet nothing it once inhabited. This, however, is impossible; to do so, it would have to abolish the life it has given itself. (WA I: 34)³⁴

The way by which the limitation and finiteness of the products of nature are abolished is now no longer understood as a “striving of *nature* for indifference” but as something that is inherent *in each being itself*, thus leading it to a self-contradiction. By integrating nature’s striving for indifference and the destruction of the individual into the individual being in this way, by making it, as it were, palpable to itself, Jonas’s criticism of Whitehead, that the “polarity ... of being and not-being” as well as the “deep anxiety of biological existence”³⁵ are not accounted for in Whitehead’s system, does not apply to Schelling. In his “middle” philosophy, Schelling pays precisely the greatest attention to these negative phenomena of being, even as he simultaneously seeks to show ways of overcoming them.³⁶

According to Schelling, this self-contradiction can be solved by simultaneously recognizing and overcoming this limitation of one’s own being. This is indicated precisely by the imperative at the center of the first draft of the *Ages of the World*: “Without a vital present, born by a real division [*Scheidung*] from the past, no such thing exists” (WA I: 11).³⁷ Only a “division from the

³³ Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 70.

³⁴ Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 93.

³⁵ Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 96.

³⁶ See, in detail, Philipp Höfele, *Wollen und Lassen: Zur Ausdifferenzierung, Kritik und Rezeption des Willensparadigmas in der Philosophie Schellings* (Freiburg: Karl Alber 2019), 101–252.

³⁷ Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 66. See, on the concept of “division” (*Scheidung*), and more precisely with a view to Rosenzweig and Heidegger, Philipp Höfele, “‘Scheidung von sich selbst’ und ‘Ekstase’: Zur Rezeption von Schellings Weltaltern bei Rosenzweig und Heidegger,” *Schelling-Studien: Internationale Zeitschrift zur klassischen deutschen Philosophie* 3 (2015), 51–77.

past” or a “separation in itself” as internal demarcation can lead to true life, as Schelling also shows in the example of the plant emerging from a seed: “It [the seed] is taken up into the time of the growing plant. It does not simply continue to exist in it, but instead it ceases to exist as a seed and is thereby posited as past” (WA I: 18).³⁸

The “division” (*Scheidung*) is a form of self-limitation, which does not cut one off from development, but rather makes openness toward the future possible in the first place. The division does not simply negate the preceding, overcome state in its limitation in favor of a greater whole. Schelling already has in mind here his concept of the organism as “a relationship of a particular to a whole” (WA I: 81),³⁹ as he will develop it in the section on “Genealogy of Time”: what is past and particular is not negated, but rather suspended in a whole. This is also already indicated by the third implication of the figure of division: division is not a mere separating of states, which would then relate to each other like Leibnizian monads. Rather, division is a way of “setting-in-relation,” just as the “letting go” of the past first allows one to have a past. Finally, with regard to Jonas’s critique of Whitehead, it should also be noted that Schelling, despite his dynamic process-philosophical approach, is able to think differences and hierarchies in being. For it is only in the case of the human being that the “division” (*Scheidung*) in nature comes into its highest realization: “Humanity has to be torn from its being in order to be elevated into the most supreme self-presence and spirituality. He alone is free, for whom his entire being has become a pure instrument” (WA I: 84–5).⁴⁰

Concluding Remarks: Schelling’s and Whitehead’s Ethical Holism in the Anthropocene

As this comparison of Schelling and Whitehead shows, Jonas’s reproach of a “submersion of discontinuity ... between life and nonlife”⁴¹ applies to Whitehead’s, but not to Schelling’s process-philosophical approach. It is precisely in the *Ages of the World* that Schelling seeks to think a dynamic ground of all being in terms of “eternal freedom,” in contrast to which limited and finite being is conceived as something secondary and even inferior. At the same time, however, Schelling, unlike Whitehead, definitely considers the differences and hierarchies between the various stages of development of being, especially when he refers to the human being and the division taking place in the human being between the being that he has become and his free

³⁸ Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 76.

³⁹ Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 142.

⁴⁰ Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 145.

⁴¹ Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 96.

future being, or between nature and spirit. For the division possible for the human being alone leads to the fact that “his entire being has become a pure instrument” (WA I: 85),⁴² which in turn results in a “participatory knowledge [*Mitwissenschaft*] of creation” (WA I: 4).⁴³ As in the case of Jonas, this goes hand in hand with the “role of stewardship,”⁴⁴ which belongs to humankind alone. Against Jonas, however, it must be emphasized at the same time that it is precisely the process-philosophical approach shared by Schelling and Whitehead that is conducive to an ethical holism of the kind that seems particularly attractive against the background of the environmental-ethical challenges posed by the present epoch of the Anthropocene. Due to the fact that, for both Schelling and Whitehead, persistent and finite entities are something secondary to the original processuality of all being, then it is no longer appropriate to use solely inherent or instrumental values to ascribe value to particular modes of being.⁴⁵ If individual entities are formed first of all out of the processuality of being, these entities remain related to each other even as they are demarcated from one another. They relate to each other organically insofar as the individual always remains in relation to the general process.

Based on Whitehead’s process philosophy, Barbara Muraca has, in this respect, introduced another category of values, namely “relational values,” which belong to all entities and can thus function as a foundation for ethical holism. Each entity “embodies complex, *concrete* relations, displayed across space and time, inscribed in its very material structure.”⁴⁶ Muraca illustrates this through the example of a knife strongly connected to the memory of one’s own father and which becomes irreplaceable precisely due to this character of reference. But for Muraca, as for Whitehead and Schelling, this is just one striking example indicating that “value is not attached to single entities, but to processes and relations.”⁴⁷ To speak with Schelling: if everything is an expression of an “eternal freedom,” it also participates in the value of that freedom, even if this freedom is realized to varying degrees and has its highest expression precisely in the human being for whom, concomitantly, it entails the greatest responsibility.

⁴² Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 145.

⁴³ Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 57.

⁴⁴ Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1984), 8.

⁴⁵ See Barbara Muraca, “Relational Values: A Whiteheadian Alternative for Environmental Philosophy and Global Environmental Justice,” *Balkan Journal of Philosophy* 8, no. 1 (2016): 19–38, here 25–32.

⁴⁶ Muraca, “Relational Values,” 31.

⁴⁷ Muraca, “Relational Values,” 34.