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Life and Parallelism in Schelling's Critique of Spinoza

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A central claim of *Schelling and Spinoza: Realism, Idealism, and the Absolute*¹ is that Schelling distinguishes his own philosophical system from that of Spinoza by way of a critique of his undeniable predecessor's doctrine of attribute parallelism.² Though Schelling's inheritance of Spinoza's monism has been widely noted in the secondary literature,³ his explicit critique of Spinoza's parallelism is rarely discussed in significant detail. Granted, doing so is not a straightforward affair. Throughout his writings, Schelling's position regarding parallelism contradicts itself. Though he is largely consistent in his criticism of Spinoza's parallelism, we can find Schelling at times advocating for a parallelism of his own. Schelling writes of a preestablished harmony between

¹ Benjamin Norris, *Schelling and Spinoza: Realism, Idealism, and the Absolute* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2022).

² Spinoza himself never uses the term "parallelism," but the term is deployed to interpret EIIp7, in which he writes: "The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things." Baruch Spinoza, "Ethics," *Spinoza: Complete Works*, trans. Samuel Shirley, ed. Michael L. Morgan (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002): 213–382, 247.

³ For two recent examples, see Charlotte Alderwick, *Schelling's Ontology of Powers* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021) 53–58, 120–27; and Ben Woodard, *Schelling's Naturalism: Space, Motion, and the Volition of Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019) 38–46.

transcendental philosophy and the philosophy of nature as well as a non-intersecting parallelism between the ideal and the real. If it is the case that Schelling's critique of Spinoza centers around the issue of parallelism, then does Schelling ultimately fail to learn the lesson of this critique? In light of this dilemma, the purpose of this essay is to reconcile Schelling's vacillating utilization of parallelism within a more unified account of Schelling's notion of life as the conflict generated by a dynamic identity of identity and opposition and his account of the Idea as something other than just an element of subjective cognition.

To make this case, I take the following steps. Section one summarizes the evidence for the conclusions of *Schelling and Spinoza* by presenting the relationship between Schelling's criticism of Spinoza's attribute parallelism and his well-known claim that Spinozism is lifeless. Section two addresses in detail an objection to the emphasis on parallelism in my account of Schelling's critique of Spinoza. Namely, in §270 of the 1804 *System of Philosophy in General and of the Philosophy of Nature in Particular*,⁴ Schelling includes in this formulation of the identity philosophy a strict parallelism. This is not the first example of parallelism in Schelling's philosophy, but in these lectures, he is clear to his audience that he is directly drawing from Spinoza when speaking of the non-intersecting relation between the real and the ideal. Section three reconciles the apparent tension between Schelling's critique of Spinoza's parallelism and the parallelism described in §270. I argue that Schelling's solution for the emergence of a unified duality—an identity of differential instantiation—of the attributes of thought and extension is both Spinozist in its emphasis on activity as the ground of unity and anti-Spinozist insofar as it relies on Schelling's unique characterization of the Idea, which he explicitly contrasts to that of Spinoza. I conclude by connecting Schelling's critique of Spinoza's parallelism to the distinction Schelling later draws between positive and negative philosophy.

I

Schelling's general critique of Spinoza at first appears as somewhat simple. Spinozist monism, Schelling famously claims in 1809, is lifeless.⁵ Consequently, the systematicity of Spinozism forecloses a robust account of dynamic nature

⁴ Hereafter *System*.

⁵ "The error of his system," Schelling writes of Spinoza in the *Freedom* essay, "lies by no means in his placing of things *in God* but in the fact that they are *things* [...] Hence the lifelessness of his system, the sterility of its form, the poverty of concepts and expressions [...] hence his mechanistic view of nature follows quite naturally as well" (SW VII: 350). F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 20.

and human freedom. However, these failures are symptoms of a larger issue, and to understand this systematology, we must dig a bit deeper. Throughout his philosophical career, Schelling found inspiration in Spinoza's monism. Yet, as he moved through the philosophy of identity—which initially took Spinoza as a model for both form and content—Schelling formulated a critique of Spinoza's position regarding the parallelism that obtains between the attributes of thought and of extension. In the introduction to his 1801 *Presentation of My System of Philosophy*, the work that inaugurated the identity philosophy, Schelling writes: “Until now realism in its most sublime and perfect form (in Spinozism, I mean) has been thoroughly misconstrued and misunderstood in all the slated opinions of it that have become public knowledge” (SW IV: 110).⁶ Following this, Schelling goes on to demonstrate how only one thing—reason—is “one in an absolute sense” (SW IV: 116)⁷ and that “nothing individual has the ground of its existence in itself” (SW IV: 130).⁸ Both of these claims are fidelitous to Spinoza's project of demonstrating that only substance is one in an absolute sense and that any finite mode cannot be the cause or ground of its own existence. In the 1797 introduction to the *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, Schelling also voices his praise for Spinoza, writing: “The first who, with complete clarity, saw mind and matter as one, thought and extension simply as modifications of the same principle, was *Spinoza*” (SW II: 20).⁹ Here Schelling focuses our attention on Spinoza's doctrine of the attributes. Thought and extension are not principles separate from or external to substance. Instead, they are, according to Schelling's formulation, modifications of the infinite, simple, and self-same God or nature that exists solely by virtue of its own necessity. This again falls broadly in line with Spinoza's *Ethics*. So, we can see Schelling embracing the fundamental components of Spinoza's metaphysical system in both the philosophy of nature and the identity philosophy.¹⁰ However, Schelling does not uncritically adopt the categories. “He saw that the ideal and real (thought

⁶ F.W.J. Schelling, *Presentation of My System of Philosophy in The Philosophical Rupture between Fichte and Schelling: Selected Texts and Correspondence (1800–1802)*, trans. and ed. Michael G. Vater and David W. Wood (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012): 141–205, 143. Unless otherwise noted, all emphasis is Schelling's.

⁷ Schelling, *Presentation of My System of Philosophy*, 147.

⁸ Schelling, *Presentation of My System of Philosophy*, 155.

⁹ F.W.J. Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature as Introduction to the Study of This Science*, trans. Errol E. Harris and Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 15.

¹⁰ For more on the relation between the *Ethics* and Schelling's 1801 presentation of the identity philosophy, see Michael G. Vater, “Schelling's Philosophy of Identity and Spinoza's *Ethica more geometrico*,” in *Spinoza and German Idealism*, ed. Eckart Förster and Yitzhak Y. Melamed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 158–174; and Yitzhak Y. Melamed, “*Deus sive Vernunft*: Schelling's Transformation of Spinoza's God,” in *Schelling's Philosophy: Freedom, Nature, and Systematicity*, ed. G. Anthony Bruno (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020): 93–114. Vater downplays the influence of Spinoza on the *Presentation of My System of Philosophy*, while Melamed outlines the deeper similarity between the 1801 text and the *Ethics*.

and object) are most intimately united in our nature” (SW II: 35), Schelling writes of Spinoza later in the 1797 text’s introduction.¹¹ He then begins to distance his own position from Spinoza: “For, because there was no transition in his system from infinite to finite, a beginning of *becoming* was for him as inconceivable as a beginning of *being*” (SW II: 36).¹² Despite adopting the building blocks of Spinoza’s *Ethics*, Schelling endeavors to move past Spinozism such that becoming can begin. In other words, he seeks to breathe life into the otherwise dead *Ethics*.

Schelling identifies an absence of life in Spinoza’s monism because it lacks any dynamic unity of unity and duality—of any identity of identity and difference. Consequently, Spinoza’s substance fails to attain the status of a living Absolute. To begin, we must understand what life is for Schelling and how this connects to the problem of parallelism. We can see quite clearly that Schelling’s notion of life closely mirrors his understanding of the Absolute as an identity of identity and difference. For Schelling, life is not a hylozoism that “postulates a *primordial* life, in matter” (SW VII: 444).¹³ Life is not a primordially given substratum. It is instead something generated by a fundamental conflict omnipresent in nature, divinity, and the Absolute itself. In the *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*, Schelling writes of life—both vegetative and Life with a capital “L”—that it is not “anything other than constant awakening of slumbering forces, a continual decombination of bound actants” (SW III: 39).¹⁴ The *System of Transcendental Idealism* deepens our understanding of this awakening and decombining through the introduction of the notion of struggle. Schelling claims that “life must be thought of as engaged in a constant struggle against the course of nature, or in an endeavor to uphold identity against the latter” (SW III: 496).¹⁵ Life in its “natural” form is an expression of the constant struggle between identity and dissolution, or between self-maintenance and self-laceration—in short, life is the ongoing attempt to sustain an identity of both identity and differentiation. This claim is echoed in the *Freedom* essay, where Schelling writes: “Where there is no struggle, there is no life” (SW VII: 400).¹⁶ This struggle is connected to the mechanism of contradiction. In the 1815 draft of the *Ages of the World*, Schelling claims that “all life must pass through the fire of contradiction. Contradiction

¹¹ Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, 27.

¹² Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, 28.

¹³ F.W.J. Schelling, “Stuttgart Seminars,” *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory: Three Essays by F.W.J. Schelling*, trans. Thomas Pfau (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994): 195–243, 215.

¹⁴ F.W.J. Schelling, *First Outline for a System of the Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Keith R. Peterson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 32.

¹⁵ F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, trans. Peter Heath (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978), 127.

¹⁶ Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 63.

is the power mechanism and what is innermost of life Were there only unity, everything would sink into lifelessness” (SW VIII: 321).¹⁷ Life, in short, is an expression of actual conflict between actually existing contraries. For this kind of conflict to be possible, there must be both unity and duality.¹⁸ The actuality of life is dependent upon real opposition, but the intelligibility of this opposition is made possible by a unity between contraries. The exclusion of unity—the unifying endeavor to “uphold identity”—eliminates the possibility of real conflict between differences. The exclusion of duality—the instantiation of difference through the decombining of bound forms—denies the reality of contraries as contraries.

With this particular logic of life in mind, we must interrogate why Spinoza’s monism is necessarily lifeless and what follows from this lifelessness. It may appear at first as if the lifelessness of Spinoza’s pantheism is the result of a mereological error. It is true that the reduction of the finite to mere things eliminates the possibility of any living or organic unity between parts and whole. However, concluding any discussion here of Schelling’s critique of Spinoza yields only weak dividends. First, this mereological approach implies a bad reading of Spinoza, for whom the notion of finite, individual things was simply absurd,¹⁹ and second, this mereological problem alone is not sufficient for understanding why Schelling believes Spinozism excludes the possibility of *both* productive nature and transcendental freedom. A second candidate for the lifelessness of Spinozism would be its necessitarian implications. If one’s goal is to allow for a philosophical account of both nature and freedom, then it seems sufficient to reject necessitarianism in favor of a richer modal metaphysics.²⁰ However, were this the case, Schelling would not claim that “Spinozism is by no means in error because of the claim that there is such an unshakable necessity in God, but rather because it takes this necessity to be impersonal and inanimate” (SW VII: 397).²¹ It is not necessitarianism per se that one must reject. Instead, Schelling concludes that Spinozism is lifeless and inanimate because it fails to account for the emergence of duality out of unity,

¹⁷ F.W.J. Schelling, *Ages of the World* 1815, trans. Jason M. Wirth (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 90.

¹⁸ As Schelling explains in *On the World-Soul*: “Without opposing forces, no motion is possible. Real opposition is only thinkable, however, between *magnitudes of the same kind*. The original forces [...] would not be opposed to one another were they not originally *one and the same (positive) force*, which only acts *in opposite directions*” (SW II: 390). F.W.J. Schelling, “On the World Soul,” trans. Iain Hamilton Grant, *Collapse: Philosophical Research and Development, Volume 1* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2010): 66–95, 85.

¹⁹ See Baruch Spinoza, “Letter 12,” *Spinoza: Complete Works*, 787–91, 788.

²⁰ For more on this, see Franz Knappik, “What is Wrong with Blind Necessity? Schelling’s Critique of Spinoza’s Necessitarianism in the *Freedom Essay*,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* Vol. 57, No. 1 (January 2019): 129–57.

²¹ Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 61.

and is consequently irreducibly dualistic. Thus, for Schelling, Spinoza's particular form of dualism must be overcome if philosophy is to come to life once again.

One of the earliest full formulations of Schelling's critique of Spinoza's dualism appears in 1803. In the revised introduction to the *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, Schelling describes the shortcoming of Spinoza's *Ethics* as follows:

There is still a want of any scientifically observable transition from the first definition of substance to the great first principle of his doctrine ... The scientific knowledge of this identity, whose absence in Spinoza subjected his teaching to the misunderstandings of a former day, was bound to be the beginning of a reawakening of philosophy itself. (SW II: 71–72)²²

Schelling cites the following from the Scholium to *EIIp7* as the “great first principle” of Spinoza's philosophy:

Whatever can be perceived by infinite intellect as constituting the essence of substance pertains entirely to the one sole substance. Consequently, thinking substance and extended substance are only one and the same substance, comprehended now under this attribute, now under that.²³

Spinoza claims that the attributes of thought and extension are not two separate things. Instead, they are two distinct ways that substance expresses itself. Just because they are distinguishable as thought and extension, however, does not imply that the substance whose essence they express is two. There is an implicit duality in the unity of thought and extension in relation to substance, but this implicit relation lacks a certain dynamic form. What is absent from Spinoza's *Ethics*, according to Schelling, is a sufficient account of the genesis of the difference between the attributes of thought and extension out of the unity of substance. As a philosopher concerned with emergence, Schelling finds the absence of such an account in the *Ethics* to be a grave issue. Schelling remains committed to this critique of the relation between the unity of substance and the duality of the attributes in the writings that follow the identity philosophy, and he explicitly connects it to the reality of conflict that is the mechanism of all life. Schelling frames the issue in the 1810 “Stuttgart Seminars” as follows:

²² Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, 54. Schelling makes a similar claim in the original introduction to the *Ideas* but formulates it more concretely in the revised introduction.

²³ Spinoza, *Ethics*, 247.

Spinoza claims that thinking and substance (= the Ideal and the Real) both belong to the same substance and function as its attributes; he altogether fails, however, to think with any precision this very substance of which they are considered attributes, determining it instead through the empty concept of an identity (empty because of the lack of opposition) ... *Precisely* at this point, which Spinoza does not investigate any further, precisely here the concept of the living God can be found. (SW VII: 443–44)²⁴

Contradiction is not something that life strives to do away with; instead, contradiction is the “power mechanism” of life itself. Spinozism is empty precisely because his monism excludes the real opposition necessary for contradiction. Without this real opposition, philosophical thinking stalls before it is able to articulate the concept of a living, and therefore becoming, God. In the 1815 *Ages of the World*, Schelling repeats this thought, writing:

Instead of the living conflict between the unity and duality of both the so-called attributes and substance being the main object, Spinoza only occupies himself with them as both opposed, indeed, with each for itself, without their unity coming into language as the active, living copula of both substance and attribute. Hence the lack of life and progression in his system. (SW VIII: 340)²⁵

Here we see the explicit connection between Schelling’s critique of Spinoza’s dualism and his claim that Spinozism is lifeless. Spinoza frames the opposition between the attributes but fails to account for the unity that would propel this opposition into a living conflict. Without a dynamic interrelation of unity and duality, life cannot emerge as a relevant philosophical category. We can see that Schelling is not strictly speaking an anti-dualistic thinker insofar as he sees that some kind of actually existing dualism is a condition for the possibility of life. However, if we are to commit ourselves to a doctrine that centers the dynamic of becoming, the genesis of this dualism cannot remain unaccounted for as Schelling claims it does in the *Ethics*. There must be a prior unity of unity and duality from which any dualism emerges. Further, this unity must be of an active nature. Brewer’s claim regarding the 1801 *Presentation of My System of Philosophy* holds true here as well: “The unity of this system is no longer grounded in the unity of consciousness but rather in the univocity of a constructive activity of which that system would be an expression rather than

²⁴ Schelling, “Stuttgart Seminars,” 214.

²⁵ Schelling, *Ages of the World (1815)*, 105.

a representation.”²⁶ The system of identity is not a representational deduction of the necessary forms of consciousness alone. Instead, consciousness and self-consciousness are expressions of the larger system of unity. Thus, as Schelling will put this point: “It is not me who recognizes this identity, but it recognizes itself, and I am merely its organ” (SW VI: 143).²⁷

II

I will now turn to the relation between parallelism and dualism in Schelling and frame more precisely the kind of dualism that follows from Spinoza’s parallelism. As I have already noted, Schelling’s relation to the problem of dualism generally and parallelism in particular is not strictly speaking consistent, and this has not gone unnoticed by other commentators. Recently, Rodríguez has argued that from 1809 onward, Schelling shifts from a “monistic-immanent” theory to a “‘real-idealistic’ and consequently dualistic thinking.”²⁸ The specific dualism to which Rodríguez appeals is the distinction Schelling draws between ground and existence in the *Freedom* essay.²⁹ Though I agree Schelling rejects a certain form of monistic, immanent metaphysics, it is not clear to me that 1809 marks a unique turn toward dualistic thinking. If we follow Schelling’s understanding of Spinoza’s parallelism as a form of dualism, we can find examples of the strictest possible form of dualism as early as 1800.

²⁶ Benjamin Brewer, “‘The Unity that is Indivisibly Present in Each Thing’: Reason, Activity, and Construction in Schelling’s Identity Philosophy,” *Kabiri* 2 (2020): 28–38, 34.

²⁷ F.W.J. Schelling, “System of Philosophy in General and of the Philosophy of Nature in Particular,” in *Idealism and The Endgame of Theory: Three Essays by F.W.J. Schelling*, trans. and ed. by Thomas Pfau (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994): 139–94, 144.

²⁸ Juan José Rodríguez, “A Dark Nature: Schelling on the World and Freedom in the Years 1806–1810,” *Idealistic Studies* 52, no. 2 (Summer 2022): 179–99, 181. In *Schelling and Spinoza*, I argue that Schelling’s philosophy can be interpreted as an “ideal-realism” that disrupts any strict demarcation between immanence and transcendence as explanatory or metaphysical categories. Central to this argument is an emphasis on the binding and separating role played by the hyphen in the formulation “ideal-realism.” The hyphen marks a unity of unity and bifurcation—the identity of identity and difference—constitutive of both what Schelling designates as the Absolute and the dynamic he claims makes any form of life possible.

²⁹ It is not entirely clear what Rodríguez means by “dualism” in his essay. He begins by discussing dualism but later shifts to the language of duality. He surely is not referring to a dualism as entrenched as the dualism established by the conceptual and causal barriers that underlie the doctrine of attribute dualism. Though it may constitute a duality, I’m not fully convinced that the relation between ground and existence in the 1809 text is itself strictly speaking dualistic. Heidegger, for example, suggests that this distinction itself “comprises the jointure in every being.” Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysics of German Idealism: A New Interpretation of Schelling’s Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom and the Matters Connected Therewith* (1809), trans. Ian Alexander Moore and Rodrigo Therezo (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2021), 65.

In the foreword to the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, Schelling writes of his attempt to provide a complete history of self-consciousness:

The author's chief motive for devoting particular care to the depiction of this coherence, which is really a *graduated sequence* [*Stufenfolge*] of intuitions, whereby the self raises itself to the highest power of consciousness, was the parallelism of nature with intelligence; to this he has long since been led, and to depict it completely, neither transcendental philosophy nor the philosophy of nature is adequate by itself; *both sciences* together are alone able to do it, though on that very account the two must forever be opposed to one another, and can never merge into one. (SW III: 331)³⁰

The final lines of this quotation suggest that some kind of parallelism is fundamental to Schelling's own understanding of the systematicity in his writings preceding the 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Throughout this work, Schelling continually appeals to a preestablished harmony between intelligence and nature to show how intelligence and nature move distinctly yet still in tandem. Transcendental philosophy needs to be supplemented by the philosophy of nature. Further, as Schelling states at this point, transcendental philosophy and the philosophy of nature can only harmonize because they are forever opposed and can never merge into one single system. Schelling also advocates for a form of parallelism in the 1802–1803 lectures *The Philosophy of Art*, but there he turns his focus from the parallel relation between transcendental philosophy and the philosophy of nature to the parallel relation between the ideal and the real. In these lectures, firmly within the identity philosophy, Schelling's language takes a more distinctly Spinozist tone. "No matter how far back we go in the history of human culture," Schelling claims, "we always find two separate streams of poesy, philosophy, and religion, and in this manner, too, the universal world spirit reveals itself according to two antithetical [*entgegengesetzten*] attributes: the ideal and the real"³¹ (SW V: 424). Here, ideal and real are characterized as opposing attributes through which the universal world-spirit reveals itself and renders itself comprehensible in the various forms of art, religion, and philosophy. The historical constitution of the particular forms of art and religion emerges from the shifting relation Schelling spells out between these attributes. So, if parallelism is a form of dualism—and as I will show shortly, the strictest possible form of dualism—Schelling's utilization of dualism by no means arises as late as 1809.

³⁰ Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 2.

³¹ F.W.J. Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, trans. and ed. Douglas W. Stott (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 57.

Contrary to the criticisms of Spinoza's parallelism discussed in section one of this essay, in § 270 of the 1804 *System*, we find Schelling explicitly embracing a doctrine of parallelism that he models after the one found in the *Ethics*—contrary to the more Leibnizian characterization present in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, that of parallelism as a preestablished harmony between distinct things. The explicit Spinozism of this 1804 text represents the height of Schelling's parallelism. Therein Schelling states: "No causal connection is possible between the real and the ideal, being and thinking, or thinking can never be the cause of a determination in being, or, conversely, being the cause of a determination in thinking" (SW VI: 500–501). This is more or less an explicit restating of *EIIp7*, the very proposition that Schelling had previously claimed excluded any living, dynamic, and interpenetrating unity of real and ideal. In §270 Schelling explains that

a man who has two names is nevertheless only one and the same man, and the man whose name is A corresponds with man whose name is B and does the same thing [acts in the same way], not because they are connected in some way, or because one determines the other, but because the person named A and the person named B are in fact only one and the same person. (SW VI: 501)

He contrasts this view to Leibniz's example of two clocks,³² writing that real and ideal "in no way harmonize like two different things, for which the reason for the harmony lies in something alien, as Leibnizian harmony has been understood and explained by the example of two clocks" (SW VI: 501). We can see Schelling moving away from the model of preestablished harmony articulated in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*. We can also mark a renewed

³² Scott isolates four distinct uses of this example in Leibniz's work. At first, Leibniz takes the example of the clock to demonstrate the superiority of his own theory of parallel harmony over occasionalist theories of causation. The two clocks, representing two distinct substances, are without the need of miraculous intervention in order to remain synchronized. A perfect creator fashioned the two clocks in advance to maintain their harmony, and they do just this. The clocks in no way interact, yet they nevertheless remain consistent with one another. Schelling characterization of the clocks as "two different things" seems to indicate that he is thinking of Leibniz's clocks along these lines. Alternatively, in the fourth use of the example, "the two clocks are employed to represent not different *substances*, but the relation between *substance* and *phenomena*." David Scott, "Leibniz and the Two Clocks," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58, no. 3 (1997): 445–63, 461. This case seems closer to the point that Schelling is articulating. Again, the two clocks are predisposed to uniform and coordinated movement. No miraculous intervention is needed to keep the clocks on track. Each has been predetermined or preprogrammed to correspond with the other due to its own internal unfolding and not due to a continuous or intermittent intervention of their creator.

commitment to certain aspects of the *Ethics* over and above the lessons Schelling had drawn from Leibniz in his earlier works.

Schelling chooses the example of a person with two names because it grounds the unity of the attributes in the object of reference. The example Schelling uses clearly shows that he has a generally subjectivist understanding of Spinoza's attributes. According to this position, the best way to understand the attributes is as subjectively dependent points of view. The subjectivist posits a kind of epistemological isomorphism between the explanatory order and connection of ideas and the explanatory order and connection of things. This is because the order and connection of ideas is not an expression of one thing while the order and connection of things is an expression of some other thing. Both are "views" on the single thing that exists. In other words, each attribute expresses the essence of substance in a distinct descriptive regime. This interpretation seems to follow from Spinoza's *EId4* definition of an attribute as "what the intellect perceives of a substance." Though he follows the subjectivist reading of the attributes in the *Ethics*, Schelling himself does not embrace this minimalist or subjectivist interpretation of the real and the ideal in his philosophy of identity. Schelling suggests that the real and the ideal in the identity philosophy are to be understood in relation to Spinoza's attributes of extension and thought respectively. Real and ideal, for Schelling, are actual self-determinations of and by the Absolute. Though there must be a real distinction between the real and ideal, this distinction, if it is to be the foundation of a living system of the world, must somehow have its origin in a preexisting and unacquired unity present in the Absolute. One must move from the unity of the Absolute to the duality of real and ideal and not the other way around. To begin with real and ideal and then attempt to arrive at the Absolute would be to fall prey to an abrasive construction of the Absolute after the fact, which Schelling explicitly rejects in *Philosophy and Religion*.³³ Returning to Brewer's analysis, "this absolute standpoint is not the dialectical overcoming of already-existing or already-positing differences, but an attempt to think the differentiating activity that produces difference, the 'unified' activity of differentiation."³⁴ To leave real and ideal without an active genetic relation to the Absolute would be to fall back into the lifelessness of Spinozism.

³³ He writes of philosophers who believe they are able to "describe the idea of the absolute" as either the simple negation of difference or "as the *product* that brings about the unification of opposites" (SW VI: 22). F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophy and Religion*, trans. Klaus Ottmann (Putnam: Spring Publications, 2014), 12. As a consequence of this perspective, "they think of the philosopher as holding the ideal or subjective in one hand and the real or objective in the other and then have him strike the palms of his hands together so that one abrades the other. The product of this abrasion (*Aufreibung*) is the Absolute" (SW VI: 22). Schelling, *Philosophy and Religion*, 12.

³⁴ Brewer, "The Unity that is Indivisibly Present in Each Thing," 34.

A brief look at Davidson's philosophy of mind is relevant to the present discussion because it allows us to better understand how strict a dualism follows from the doctrine of attribute parallelism. In "Mental Events," Davidson argues that there is a kind of explanatory barrier between the physical states of mental events and the psychological description of these events as we experience them in everyday life. This barrier between the mental and the physical arises due to the absence of any universally binding, lawlike relation between physical states and the intentional vocabularies we utilize to describe our beliefs, desires, perceptions, and other such actions. Davidson wants to defend "a version of the identity theory that denies that there can be strict laws connecting the mental and the physical."³⁵ Davidson calls this position "anomalous monism," and claims that it "resembles materialism in its claim that all events are physical, but rejects the thesis, usually considered essential to materialism, that mental phenomena can be given purely physical explanations."³⁶ The goal is to maintain some form of identity theory according to which the mental is not ontologically distinct from the physical, while avoiding a form of reductionism. Unlike someone like Goodman, for whom incompatible statements are equally true insofar as they are true of different worlds, Davidson follows Spinoza in maintaining that (apparently) incompatible statements remain true of the one world.³⁷

By denying any universal causal correlation between physical and mental events, we can continue to consider certain acts or mental events as autonomous from any strictly rule bound relation to physical states. Davidson refers to this as a kind of "nomological slack between the mental and the physical."³⁸ We can see that Davidson's theory here establishes a kind of duality between the mental and the physical, but it is nowhere near as strong as the dualism Spinoza's parallelism entails. Davidson believes that all mental events have some kind of grounding in physical events. He just denies that there is a uniform set of rules and regularities according to which mental events are *caused* by physical events. Consequently, there can be a causal interaction between the descriptions of physical states and mental events, even if this interaction is not strictly rule bound in the same way as descriptions of physical states.

³⁵ Donald Davidson, "Mental Events," *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): 207–25, 212.

³⁶ Davidson, "Mental Events," 214.

³⁷ See Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1978), and Hilary Putnam, "Irrealism and Deconstruction," *Starmaking: Realism, Anti-Realism, and Irrealism*, ed. Peter J. McCormick (Cambridge/London: MIT Press, 1996): 179–200.

³⁸ Davidson, "Mental Events," 223.

Bowie directly refers to §270 of the *System* in a discussion of Schelling, Davidson, and Rorty. Before citing the passage in which Schelling erects a causal barrier between the real and the ideal, Bowie writes: “Davidson sees his position as Kantian: it is in many ways closer to Schelling.”³⁹ This is a fair claim, but what Bowie fails to note is the explicit connection between §270 and *EIIp7* that Schelling’s example of the person with two names invokes. Puzzlingly, then, Bowie goes on to use §270 to argue against a kind of reductive physicalism inspired by Spinoza’s theory of the identity of thought and extension. “Physicalism,” Bowie writes, “is, of course, itself the contemporary form of Spinozism.”⁴⁰ If we take a reductionist understanding of the relation between mind and substance in the *Ethics*, what Schelling might refer to as a dogmatic approach to Spinoza, this lineage seems appropriate. However, what goes unnoticed, or at least unacknowledged by Bowie, is that the doctrine of parallelism itself resists a certain form of reductive physicalism in which the ideal elements of the world are reducible to the real or physical elements of the world. In the present case, Schelling’s anti-reductionism embraced by Bowie is in fact deeply Spinozistic, though it is by no means physicalist in the sense described by Bowie.

One of the upshots of Spinoza’s parallelism is that its anti-reductionism cuts in both directions. As Della Rocca explains, “Spinoza is, despite being an identity theorist, neither a physicalist nor an idealist. This is because of Spinoza’s strict explanatory barrier between the attributes which rules out any mental-physical dependence of the kind that both idealists and physicalists invoke.”⁴¹ Della Rocca connects this to a broadly subjectivist interpretation of the attributes—

For Spinoza, neither the mental nor the physical are reducible to the other. Rather, they are two separate ways of explaining the same things⁴²

—and then refers directly to Davidson’s theory of mental events. So, again, we can see that the critique of reductive physicalism or eliminative idealism that arises from Schelling’s parallelism in §270 draws from Spinozism. It is only through Spinoza that Schelling’s critique of reductionist physicalism and eliminative idealism makes sense.⁴³ At the same time, both Schelling and

³⁹ Andrew Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1993), 80.

⁴⁰ Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy*, 81.

⁴¹ Michael Della Rocca, *Spinoza* (London: Routledge, 2008), 103.

⁴² Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, 103.

⁴³ For more on eliminative idealism and Schelling’s critique thereof, see Norris, *Schelling and Spinoza*, 132–38.

Davidson commit a violation of Spinoza's form of naturalism because, Della Rocca continues, "if there are strict laws governing the physical, but no strict laws governing the psychological,"⁴⁴ then not "everything in the world plays by the same rules."⁴⁵ If we can conceive Davidson's "nomological slack" as a kind of "dysfunctioning of determinism" that "is a consequence of the deficient and incomplete harmonization of the various faculties forming the individual's constitution,"⁴⁶ then we can see how both Davidson and Schelling are ultimately unwilling to indulge in a truly "Spinozistic extravagance"⁴⁷ when it comes to the problem of attribute parallelism.

Though Schelling seems to embrace a subjectivist interpretation of Spinoza's characterization of the attributes, his criticism of Spinoza only takes hold if we incorporate the objectivist interpretation of the attributes. If substance itself is to come to life, there must be some kind of metaphysical distinction between real and ideal that generates the conflict from which life emerges and becomes actual. That is, Schelling's critique of Spinoza in the works both before and after the 1804 *System* depends upon there being a real metaphysical distinction between the attributes of thinking and being, or in Schelling's preferred language, between the ideal and the real. As Shein explains, "by insisting on the real distinction between the attributes, the objectivist interpretation finds itself, then, having to supplement Spinoza's texts by supplying an explanation for the unity (or apparent unity) of the modes of really distinct attributes."⁴⁸ This is precisely the position in which Schelling finds himself. To reconcile this tension, Schelling again argues that there is no interaction between real and ideal, the body and the soul in this case, because the actions of both are in the last instance simply instantiations of one and the same act of substance. In other words, soul and body are not really distinct. He explains: "The identity of the real and the ideal is ... therefore *in all action only absolute substance*" (SW VI: 550). As he insists, any action is not an action of *my* body or *my* soul. Instead, each is a localized instantiation of the action of substance itself. He here seems to be picking up on Spinoza's claim in *EIIId7*, that "if several things occur in one act in such a way as to be all together the simultaneous causes of one effect, I consider them all, in that respect, as one individual." In the *System*, this action that unites apparent distinctions is the eternal self-affirmation of God. "God is not as other things are," claims

⁴⁴ Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, 104.

⁴⁵ Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, 5.

⁴⁶ Adrian Johnston, *Žižek's Ontology: A Transcendental Materialist Theory of Subjectivity* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008), 114.

⁴⁷ Davidson, "Mental Events," 212.

⁴⁸ Noa Shein, "The False Dichotomy Between Objective and Subjective Interpretations of Spinoza's Theory of Attributes," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 17, no.3 (2009): 505–532, 512.

Schelling. “He is only to the extent that He *affirms himself*” (SW VI: 151).⁴⁹ Put otherwise, “*that which absolutely affirms itself and thus is its own affirmed, is only the absolute or God*” (SW VI: 148).⁵⁰ As a result, “with respect to the absolute, the Ideal is immediately also the Real” (SW VI: 149).⁵¹ Further, “*the absolute identity as identity cannot be canceled in any way*” (SW VI: 156).⁵² So, even though the actions of the body can never be caused by the actions of the soul, this parallelism itself can never negate or cancel the identity of God’s act of self-affirmation. Again, this model is broadly in line with Spinoza’s. Each attribute is conceptually and causally distinct, thereby barring any interaction between attributes. However, this distinction is overcome by the activity of the one thing that exists. In action strict dualism reveals itself to be a duality capable of being drawn into the larger unity from which it had initially emerged.

Shein concludes that the distinction between the subjectivist and objectivist interpretations of the attributes is ultimately a false one, and I believe Schelling would agree with this conclusion, at least in relation to his own philosophical project. Of the source of the division between attributes, Shein explains: “Commentators have wrongly assumed that to say that it is the finite intellect necessarily implies that there is some kind of illusion in perceiving the attributes as constituting the essence of substance.” She continues: “I have suggested, however, that one can hold that attributes really do constitute the essence of substance (because they are identical to it), on the one hand, and that it is the finite intellect that perceives the essence of substance in multiple ways, on the other.”⁵³ The attributes, on this reading, are both subjective and objective. Because the attributes themselves are “identical” to the essence of substance, they are objective and constitute a real metaphysical diversity in substance. However, they are also subjective insofar as they allow any finite intellect to perceive this real essence of substance. Schelling comes to a similar conclusion. Insofar as the “I” is the organ through which Absolute identity recognizes itself, Schelling seems to deny that the genesis of the attributes themselves could be purely subjective. The conflict between real and ideal—understood as the interplay of their identity and non-identity—has an objectivity prior to its localization in the individual mind. That is, the objectivity of this conflict predates but does not invalidate its subjective expression.

⁴⁹ Schelling, “System of Philosophy in General,” 150.

⁵⁰ Schelling, “System of Philosophy in General,” 148.

⁵¹ Schelling, “System of Philosophy in General,” 148.

⁵² Schelling, “System of Philosophy in General,” 153.

⁵³ Shein, “The False Dichotomy between Objective and Subjective Interpretations of Spinoza’s Theory of Attributes,” 531.

III

At this point in 1804, Schelling appears to be fully adopting the model of parallelism we find in the *Ethics*, and this impression is not entirely misguided. In the *System*, real and ideal are broadly understood as non-intersecting and parallel ways of 1) the Absolute constituting itself objectively, and 2) the subjective perspectives through which we come to know this self-constituting Absolute, that is, a localization of the self-constituting Absolute coming to know itself. In the *System*, Schelling is working within Spinoza's paradigm, yet the very same text provides insight into a solution to the problem Schelling extrapolates from *EIIp7* both before and after these lectures at Würzburg. To distinguish Schelling's parallelism from Spinoza's, we must first take a step back and further flesh out the connection between real and ideal in the *System* and its relation to what Schelling calls the Idea.

Central to the identity philosophy is an inviolable and unacquired identity between real and ideal. This identity holds true of the actualization of the Absolute as the world, or the One as the All: "*Hence, the real and the ideal universe are but the same universe*" (SW VI: 204), Schelling explains.⁵⁴ He continues: "For that which in the real universe is being posited as real and, in this real form, as affirming, is being posited as ideal within the ideal universe and, in this ideal form, as affirmed" (SW VI: 204).⁵⁵ Any act of affirmation simultaneously entails something affirmed. Consequently, anything posited as ideal entails a corresponding positing in the real, and vice versa. We find here both the unity and the duality Schelling claims are the necessary conditions of life. To elucidate what Schelling is getting at here with the coexistence of an unacquired unity of unity and an emergent duality or instantiated difference, it is helpful to look at the example of a circle discussed earlier in the text.⁵⁶ Writes Schelling:

The idea of the circle, then, is (1) doubtless an absolutely simple one, although this indivisible position of the circle already comprises the center and the periphery; (2) in the circle, the center is the affirming, or it behaves as the completely subjective [factor], whereas the

⁵⁴ Schelling, "System of Philosophy in General," 187.

⁵⁵ Schelling, "System of Philosophy in General," 187.

⁵⁶ Hegel too finds great utility in the figure of the circle for illustrating the interlocking moments of his logic and his system more generally, but Schelling takes this example in a different direction. See, for example, G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Amherst: Humanity Books, 1969), 842, and G.W.F. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. William Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 20.

periphery is the affirmed or the objective; the former is the Ideal and the latter is the Real. (SW VI: 166)⁵⁷

The circle's existence is potentiated in two distinct ways simultaneously. First, according to its Idea, the circle is at once center and periphery; the two are inseparable due to their immediate indifference and eternal codependence. Let us characterize this as the "A model" of the circle. In this model, the Idea of the circle is irreducibly simple, and this simplicity nowhere introduces the need for any parallelism between real and ideal. The A model is the indifference of the potentiation of the circle into a real objective pole and an ideal subjective pole. However, from the perspective of subjective and objective, the circle is a duality—at once both the affirming center and the affirmed periphery. We can call this the "B model" of the circle. Here we see a kind of dualizing polarity inherent in the figure of the circle. Schelling continues: "The center is the circle as its own affirmation, the *ideal* circle, yet it is already the entire circle. The periphery is the circle as the affirmed, yet it, too, is already the entire circle" (SW VI: 167).⁵⁸

In the circle, center and periphery never intersect in any causal way. The center no more causes the periphery than the periphery causes the center. Both are implicated in the very existence of the circle as a whole. Though a periphery may be literally drawn around a center, this is merely an empirical determination that presupposes the construction of the circle in space and time as a process with a beginning and an end. This is, of course, strictly excluded from the perspective of reason as timeless, absolute identity. Real and ideal are both implicated in a similar fashion. They are of the same circle but are in some way distinct yet interconnected in an other-than-causal sense. Put otherwise, the B model is always secondary to the A model described above. In the absence of the A model, the B model is without reality. The identity of the A model gives reality to the B model, but this identity contains within itself the need to differentiate itself through the polarization of real and ideal. What is important to keep in mind is that the ideal is not excluded from the real world, just as the real is not excluded from the ideal world. To recall his claim cited earlier, for Schelling, the real universe and the ideal universe are one and the same universe. What we see here are the multifaceted ways duality plays itself out within unity. Real and ideal—as the two poles of the Idea—intertwine to form and deform the apparent products of both nature and spirit. It is here that we find the sufficient conditions for Schelling's notion of life.

⁵⁷ Schelling, "System of Philosophy in General," 160.

⁵⁸ Schelling, "System of Philosophy in General," 161.

Maintaining the difference between Schelling's parallelism and Spinoza's comes down to the difference in their definitions of "Idea." Schelling explains:

By idea, here and subsequently, I do not understand the mere mode of *thinking*, as the term is generally understood (even in Spinoza); instead, I understand the idea (following its original meaning) as the archetype [*Urgestalt*], as the essence or the heart of things, so to speak; it is that [aspect] of things which is neither merely subjective, like the concept, the mode of thinking, nor merely objective, like the thing purely in itself; instead it is the absolute identity of these two aspects. (SW VI: 183)⁵⁹

For Spinoza, as Schelling reads him, the Idea has a restricted and largely epistemological function.⁶⁰ For Schelling, the dynamism of the Idea has a much more general function of formation that concretizes throughout both the real and the ideal. Consequently, Ideas are not reductively epistemological. Ideas themselves are the structure of subjectively intelligible objective reality. To elucidate the importance of this distinction, let us recall Schelling's two descriptions of a circle. The first, the A model, was the idea of the circle as "an absolutely simple one, although this indivisible position of the circle already comprises the center and the periphery" (SW VI: 166).⁶¹ This would be the archetype, the essence, and the heart of the circle. It is neither subjective nor objective. It is reducible to neither a mode of existence nor a mode of thinking. Instead, the A model is an archetypal and immediate unity that stands "above" both thinking and being. That is, though it grounds the unity for thinking and being, it itself is neither of thought nor of being.⁶² The second characterization of the circle, the B model, depends upon the polarity of center and periphery, in which "the center is the affirming, or it behaves as the completely subjective

⁵⁹ Schelling, "System of Philosophy in General," 172.

⁶⁰ Schelling's gloss on Spinoza's idea here seems to lack a certain depth. However, even a more detailed account of the role played by ideas in the *Ethics* such as Della Rocca's characterizes ideas (in their adequate form) as "the only states of *mind* that are wholly adequately caused from within the *mind*." Michael Della Rocca, "The Power of an Idea: Spinoza's Critique of Pure Will," *Nous* 37, no. 2 (Jun 2003): 200–231, 205. Emphasis added. Alternatively, Sharp approaches the idea in Spinoza through a more panpsychist lens, emphasizing that ideas pertain to more than just *human* bodies. See Hassana Sharp, *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 2011), 55–84.

⁶¹ Schelling, "System of Philosophy in General," 160.

⁶² For more on this formulation of the Idea, see Iain Hamilton Grant, *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling* (London: Continuum, 2006), 158–186; and Jeremy Dunham, Iain Hamilton Grant, and Sean Watson, *Idealism: The History of a Philosophy* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2011).

[factor], whereas the periphery is the affirmed or the objective; the former is the Ideal and the latter is the Real” (SW VI: 166).⁶³ It is this second characterization of the circle to which the doctrine of parallelism must apply. This means that there is not a parallelism between the Idea of the circle, on the one hand, and the circle as composed by a real and an ideal pole, on the other. Consequently, the parallelism we find in §270 is a parallelism between the ideal and the real and not of the Idea and the real. This is a distinction unavailable to Spinoza, for whom the idea is “a conception of the Mind which the mind forms because it is a thinking thing.”⁶⁴ Schelling’s parallelism is therefore a restricted parallelism between real and ideal, and it is intelligible and existentially instantiated only in the larger context of the indifferent unity of the Idea.

So, the important point is that for Schelling, the Idea and the ideal are not the same thing. They do not function in the same way. Throughout his writings, Schelling’s conception of the Idea remains largely consistent. He draws from Kant, who in turn draws upon the role of the Idea in Plato’s writings. “For Plato,” writes Kant, “ideas are archetypes of the things themselves, and not, in the manner of the categories, merely keys to possible experiences.”⁶⁵ It is through the Idea that Schelling is able to achieve what Spinoza was unable to, namely, a larger unity that brings actually existing contraries into a living conflict. Schelling claims in the lectures at Würzburg “that what is genuinely Real in all things is strictly their *idea*” (SW VI: 183).⁶⁶ The Idea is the genuine reality of things because only through ideas can we find the “complete identity of the particular with its universal” (SW VI: 185),⁶⁷ and in the end, this identity is an expression of “*the essentiality of things as they are grounded in the eternity of God=Ideas*” (SW VI: 183).⁶⁸ Finally, “it is in the idea and in God that *essence* and *Being* are one” (SW VI: 192).⁶⁹ Here we find what Schelling believes to be lacking in Spinoza’s metaphysical system, namely the source of a transition from unity to duality that never ceases to uphold the identity of this difference. The Idea is not an object that grounds two parallel orders of thinking and being. Instead, it is the archetype of the unity that makes the grounding of each order possible. In §296, Schelling explains that “through the idea of the absolute the concept of the thing and the thing itself are eternally one” (SW VI: 534). The Idea of the Absolute doesn’t set up a

⁶³ Schelling, “System of Philosophy in General,” 160.

⁶⁴ Spinoza, *Ethics*, 244: EIIId3.

⁶⁵ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 310: A313/B370.

⁶⁶ Schelling, “System of Philosophy in General,” 172.

⁶⁷ Schelling, “System of Philosophy in General,” 173.

⁶⁸ Schelling, “System of Philosophy in General,” 171.

⁶⁹ Schelling, “System of Philosophy in General,” 178.

parallelism between the thing and the thought of that thing. Further, it doesn't simply guarantee a *post facto* epistemological fit between thoughts and things. Instead, it is the active ground of the unity *and* disunity of thoughts, things, and their dynamic interrelation through the shared activity of affirmation. To return to Schelling's example in §270, the Idea is not one of a person's two names, and it is not simply the person itself. It is instead the archetype of a person as an individual capable of bearing multiple names, of a biological reality capable of carrying with it the weight of a multiplicity of social and historical determinations.

IV

What I have presented for you is Schelling's critique of Spinoza, confined to the period Schelling would retroactively describe as negative philosophy. This critique hinges upon the problem of parallelism and the notion of life as an actual conflict between actually existing contraries. For Spinoza, the conceptual and therefore causal barrier between attributes forecloses the conflict of unity and duality necessary for the emergence of a notion of life worthy of the name. When we reject the doctrine of strict parallelism, we open the space for a dynamic interpenetration of real and ideal more capable of accounting for the messiness of nature and mindedness without appealing to the categories of immanence and transcendence.⁷⁰ The rejection of "Spinozistic extravagance" and the introduction of "dysfunctioning determinism" into a novel monistic frame that centers the incompleteness of the whole opens the space for the emergence of human freedom so central to Schelling's middle and late philosophy.

Despite the fact that the 1801 *Presentation of My System of Philosophy* is essentially dedicated to Spinoza, it is the 1804 lectures in which Schelling's Spinozism reaches its peak due to their explicit embrace of a Spinozistic-style dualism between the real and ideal.⁷¹ Schelling's parallelism as articulated in 1804 sits so uncomfortably between two characterizations of the interrelation of the real and the ideal that it seems to contradict. In the 1799 "Introduction to the Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature, or, On the Concept of Speculative Physics and the Internal Organization of a System of this Science," Schelling claims that "*the ideal must arise out of the real and admit of*

⁷⁰ Spinoza's argument for existence monism relies upon the explanatory barrier between the attributes. Consequently, we cannot maintain a Spinozist notion of immanence while rejecting the parallelism of the attributes. See Norris, *Schelling and Spinoza*, chapter 3.

⁷¹ See Schelling, *Presentation of My System of Philosophy*, 145: "Concerning the manner of exposition, I have taken Spinoza as a model here, since I thought there was good reason to choose as a paradigm the philosopher whom I believed came nearest to my system in terms of content or material" (SW IV: 113).

explanation from it” (SW III: 272).⁷² If this is the case, then there is some sort of causal and conceptual connection between the real and the ideal, at least from the perspective of the philosophy of nature. The ideal must be in some way explicable by and through the real from which it arises, and this shows that there is no strict explanatory barrier between real and ideal. Many years later, in the Berlin Lectures *On the Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, Schelling appears to return to this earlier position. He claims that “it is not because there is thinking that there is being, but rather because there is being that there is thinking” (SW XIII: 161 n. 1).⁷³ Being here again takes priority over thinking, seeming to suggest that there must be some relation between the two whereby thinking emerges from being as its ground. How can we account for this shift in Schelling’s philosophical trajectory?

The beginning of an answer to this question can be found in the 1809 *Freedom* essay. Therein, Schelling seeks to further elucidate the relationship between the monolithic universality of the identity philosophy and the instantiation of particularity—what he calls “the eternal birth of all things and their relationship to God” (SW VI: 17) in *Philosophy and Religion*.⁷⁴ Schelling famously writes “idealism is the soul of philosophy; realism is the body; only both together can constitute a living whole” (SW VII: 356).⁷⁵ If Spinozism is lifeless and realism and idealism are to constitute a “living whole,” then Spinoza can no longer be a guide as he was for the identity philosophy. Schelling continues:

if a philosophy is lacking this living foundation, which is commonly a sign that the ideal principle was originally only weakly at work within it, then it loses itself in those systems whose abstract concepts of aseity, modifications, and so forth, stand in the sharpest contrast with the living force and richness of reality. (SW VII: 356)⁷⁶

Here we find a prefiguring of the distinction Schelling will later draw between positive philosophy—the “living foundation”—and negative philosophy—the systems of abstract, logical determinations. Schelling came to believe that it was not until his later lectures on positive philosophy, mythology, and revelation—what McGrath calls “the turn to the positive”⁷⁷—that the true

⁷² Schelling, *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*, 194.

⁷³ F.W.J. Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*, trans. Bruce Matthews (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 203 note xx.

⁷⁴ Schelling, *Philosophy and Religion*, 8.

⁷⁵ Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 26.

⁷⁶ Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 26.

⁷⁷ Sean J. McGrath, *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling: The Turn to the Positive* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021).

living ground of philosophy emerges. In the negative philosophy the adherence to the kind of strict parallelism that precludes a logical notion of life accounted for Spinoza's inability to move from God as a principle to God as an actually existing personality. Consequently, this turn to the positive is already intimated in Schelling's critique of Spinoza and at least partially premised upon this critique's success. The rejection of strict parallelism allows the otherwise all-encompassing negative philosophy to open onto the place proper to positive philosophy. Furthermore, the rejection of strict parallelism entails that any relation between what Schelling calls the real and the ideal must be a messy, muddy, blurred, dynamic site of interpenetration. In this muddy mess we find life not just as a logical form but as a real process of formation. We have no reason to believe that the subsequent articulation of the positive philosophy and its relation to the negative rejects this earlier critique of parallelism. This seems to entail that there must be a dynamic, messy, interpenetrating, and therefore *living* relation between negative and positive philosophy if this distinction is to avoid lapsing into the dualistic lifelessness of Spinozism once again.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ I'd like to thank the North American Schelling Society for the opportunity to present and refine this material. I'd also like to thank the editors and reviewers at *Kabiri* for their assistance and feedback.