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Dead Mirrors: Nature, Ideology, and the Intellectual Intuition

Robert O'Shea Brown

In his essay "Constructing the Natural: The Darker Side of the Environmental Movement" (1985), cultural ecologist Neil Evernden questioned what he described as the use and abuse of ecology. The growth of a popular or vulgar environmental movement—from which the first signs of a bourgeoning neoliberal environmentalism emerged—was proof enough: the conceptual organon of ecology and its associated natures could be used to serve a wide variety of ends, few of which had anything to do with social and ecological justice. The ecological turn could not be relied upon to provide a principle capable of securing and maintaining the ideological intent of a left-leaning academic holism. Ecology was just as equally a means of rebranding the status quo. Ecology was both the "mask" and "blunt instrument" for certain kinds of societies, a kind of "institutional shaman that [could] be induced to pronounce natural anything we wish to espouse."[1] Indeed, and in retrospect, Evernden's critique exposed a tendency within environmentalism, as many of the Deep Ecologists surrounding him started openly expressing misanthropic tendencies that allied them with radicalizing forms of neoconservatism.[2] As it

[1] Neil Evernden, "Constructing the Natural: The Darker Side of the Environmental Movement," *The North American Review* 270, no. 1 (1985): 19.
[2] See, for instance, Blair Taylor, "Alt-Right Ecology: Eco-Fascism and Far-Right Environmentalism in the United States," in *The Far Right and the Environment: Politics, Discourse and Communication* (London: Routledge, 2019), 275–292.

turned out—as the legacy of Deep Ecology should teach us—creating an environmental movement capable of critiquing the failures of the neoliberal project while remaining free of crypto-fascist tendencies was harder than it first seemed. In Evernden's words, our recourse to ecology and nature "justifies nothing, or anything."[3] All ecology was ideology—all ecology was an ecologism.

Though the connection was largely unknown to environmentalists of his generation, the conclusion that Evernden arrives at had already been reached by Schelling in his *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (1797/1803). There too the conception of nature has been debased and bent to serve the ends of a society that actively worked to conceal both the power of nature and its entwinement with the social. The early Schelling, however, was not stricken with the same sense of hopelessness present in Evernden's essay. In the revelation of a nature overwrought by the play of competing and conflicted ideologies, Schelling sees the fragile hope of unity not behind or before modern society, but rather outside of it entirely. The ideological construction of nature does not end in relativism, but rather reveals the means by which the social might be reconstructed—by, in Schelling's philosophy, a mode of practice that thinks contradiction and crisis manifested between competing ideologies as an attempt to reveal the source of their shared or common germ. Recalling the work of Evernden may provide insight into the present moment in Schelling scholarship. As the North American literature comes ever closer to producing a rigorous understanding of his politics and his nature philosophy, it might be possible to reground radical ecological thought with the study of Schelling. Care, however, must be given to the ideas we put into the carrier bag of history. Both Schelling and environmentalism demand a sensitivity to the past that is often extended to the former and denied to the latter.

The strangeness still perceived in Schelling's nature philosophy—a strangeness that surpasses the oddities of post-Kantian idealism—testifies to a conception of nature lost, forgotten, or otherwise repressed within modern intellectual history. A work like Habermas's "Dialectical Idealism in Transition to Materialism" is symptomatic of this intellectual loss. When Habermas grounds his reading of Schelling on the existence of a biblical fall narrative and the creation of first and second natures, any conception of the political has already eliminated an entwined nature-history that no measure of materialism can restore. Following Étienne Balibar, if politics is defined by a conception of natural sociability that holds a vision of society instituted "*after*, if not *against*, the spontaneous impulse of nature," then the essential conception of politics is premised on its constitution as an antithetical form of social engagement.[4]

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[3] Evernden, "Constructing the Natural," 19.

[4] Étienne Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, trans. Peter Snowden (New York: Verso, 2008), 77.

Whether its foundation is the *philia* of the Greeks, the concord of Christianity, or the discursive democracy of the late Frankfurt School, politics marks a social nature that is explicitly unnatural.[5]

Schelling saw this repression of nature at work in his own age, namely and most prominently, in the rejection of Spinoza's nature philosophy and the attempt therein to overcome the conception of natural sociability that eliminates spontaneous creation while situating the logic of antithetical production. Schelling's nature philosophy is a repetition of the political theory that grounds Book I of the *Ethics* (1677). Read as such, a work like *Ideas* displays many of the signature elements that led Louis Althusser to position Spinoza's practical philosophy as the foundational expression of ideology critique. For both Spinoza and Schelling, entry into the conception of nature is figured through a comparative political anthropology—a mode of situating and analyzing the cultural representations of competing political realities at play. What Schelling takes from Spinoza is the depth of violence made real by the naturalistic fallacy at work in ideology. There is much that is unnatural in nature; so much so that the truth of nature is its untruth. From this vantage, the argument for holistic natures and their supposed naturalness is posited as the ground of all ideology. Schelling's nature philosophy becomes an explicit social-political philosophy that calls into question the ways in which the ideologies of nature are used and abused to meet the ends of dominant social systems. Indeed, the intellectual intuition, what Schelling will describe as the non-faculty of the idea, is a mode of consciousness with the explicit purpose of denaturalizing the naturalization of ideology. The intellectual intuition is posited as a dynamic social consciousness intended to realize and address the workings of ideology. While Schelling and Spinoza reserve a space for direct participation within nature, this experience is also distorted by a false conception of nature. The experience of nature is given, but also effaced and reconstructed as a means for domination, the creation of social hierarchies, and the conditioning of subjects.

First Nature

Schelling's introduction to *Ideas* displays an understanding of ideology positioned between the enlightened ideology of the Revolution and a more modern conception of ideology closer to our own. In keeping with French ideologues like Destutt de Tracy, Schelling's attempt to reconstruct the conception of nature marks a desire to reorient the organization of social-scientific ideas and thus prepares the way for an expansive conception of communal life. Schelling does not believe that changing the empirical

[5] Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, 77–78.

functions of one's mind can alter one's social environment for the better; far more radically, he believes that the study, centralization, and revision of immanent ideas—ideas as constructed through the crisis, conflict, or contradiction of their real–ideal or natural–historical composition—holds the key to revealing both their power and the meaning of their social operation. Early modes of ideology, as Terry Eagleton argues, are acts of mental rupture that work in parallel with the physical toppling of Priests and Kings.[6] And yet, whether as expressed by the Reign of Terror or by the drive to reconstruction, the rupture itself is often repressed by a search for unity that thinks itself as the necessity of a determinate whole.

Troubled by the violent outcome of ideology in France, Schelling organizes his thought to militate against the secular-rational treatment of ideology otherwise inseparable from the logic of the Enlightenment. In no uncertain terms, the ratiocinative understanding of the enlightenment *lacked* reason and was, for Schelling, driven on by a callous morality devoid of immanent ideas.[7] Social life is not a mechanism to be altered by the great engineers of the Enlightenment. What is more, adding insult to injury, the reaction leveled against enlightened ideologies only further delayed revealing the significance of philosophical critique. After Napoleon was installed, it was not just the enlightened philosophy of the Revolution that became a scapegoat for all of France's social ills; it was widely held that philosophy *as such* was responsible for the failure of the New Republic. In Schelling's interpretation, the Revolution was not guided by philosophy at all. The Revolution was a criminal atrocity that had paved the way for a new slavery under Napoleon. The French ideologues were not *philosophes*, they were *raisonneurs* "with empty notions of the understanding."[8] Already displaying something of our own understanding of ideology, the French ideologues were entrapped by false consciousness and preyed upon by illusions.

Given the ties between the French Enlightenment and the empirical natural sciences, it is clear why Schelling was eager to develop a dynamic philosophy of nature. With his nature philosophy, Schelling rewrites the dominant standards of knowledge in and through the Spinozism that enlightened thought had rejected as rote fanaticism. Schelling sees, as Spinoza did, that the conceptualization of nature is constructed and deployed to ground material and libidinal organization in social structures. Our conceptions of nature are so convincingly real that citizens will happily reproduce servile cultural practices on their basis, all the while thinking themselves as a free nature.

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[6] Terry Eagleton, "Introduction," in *Ideology* (New York: Longman Publishing, 1994), 2.
[7] F.W.J. Schelling, *On University Studies*, trans. E. S. Morgan (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1966), 52.
[8] Schelling, *On University Studies*, 52–53.

With the introduction to *Ideas*, Schelling channels Spinoza to rewrite the political anthropology of his day. Taken from Hume and Rousseau, the idea that reason emerges in and through the separation of humanity from nature grounds the *zeitgeist* of the age and is reproduced quite prominently in influential popular works like Kant's "Conjectural Beginning of Human History" (1786) and Fichte's *Vocation of Man* (1800). In each case, new social life is forged through the construction of a history that divides consciousness and nature. In Kant, the stirring of reason prompts the subject to draw a contrast between itself and the world and, thus, to chart a sovereign path free from nature's heteronomy. In Fichte, the cunning of reason frees humanity from the violence of nature. Fichte's watchwords are calculation, regularity, order, conquest, and, finally, peace. In either case, the bond that comes to define the social is delineated by the authority to abstract one's existence from nature. Socialization is based on the repetition of this scission that figures society as a perpetual act of separation that sets the subject in opposition with its nature, and thus, in opposition to itself.

Differentiating himself against his peers, Schelling's political anthropology begins in the here and now of phenomenal life and through a thoroughly sentimental expression of a natural unity on par with the French writer Romain Rolland's oceanic feeling:

> Whoever is absorbed in research into Nature, and in the sheer enjoyment of her [sic] abundance, does not ask whether Nature and experience be possible. It is enough that she [sic] is there for him; he had made her [sic] real by his very *act*, and the question of what is possible is raised only by one who believes that he does not hold the reality in his *hand*. Whole epochs have been spent in research into Nature, and yet one does not weary of it. Some have devoted their entire lives to this avocation and have not ceased to pray to the veiled goddess. Great spirits have lived in their own world, untroubled about the principle of their discoveries; and what is the whole reputation of the shrewdest doubter against the life of a man who has carried a world in his head and the whole of Nature in his imagination? (SW II: 12)[9]

Both the form and content of this passage delineates nature as a first or primordial state. Nature is abundant; it is not given, but nevertheless can be possessed, held, as it is, in one's hand, carried in one's mind, providing unity to one's imagination. Nature is real, an idol of devotion, and a wellspring of wealth and certainty in the face of radical doubt. Nature offers a sphere free

[9] F.W.J. Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Errol E. Harris and Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 9–10.

from alienation. Nature portends a state of placid and secure existence seemingly prior to the labor of reflection and interrogation. Where a mere two years prior, Schelling had committed himself to, in Daniel Whistler's words, "a 'two-world' metaphysics in which reality and the ground of reality exist as qualitatively opposed realms," with *Ideas* there is no doubting Schelling's desire to articulate a bond between thought and nature that is mediated by the idea.[10]

Schelling will not invalidate or condemn the legitimacy of the sentimental portrayal of nature he leads with, nor will he allow this nature to be positioned as a halcyon first nature from which humanity has divided itself or has otherwise fallen. Following Schelling's narration, while there may very well be some form of first nature where proto-humanity exists as undifferentiated from itself and the world—what Schelling will name a "(philosophical) state of Nature"—this state would exemplify a condition that eradicates the realization of any real unification (SW II: 12).[11] Making an argument congruent with his interpretation of consistent dogmatism in the "Letters," to be one with one's self and the world is to exist as undifferentiated—without reflection and without consciousness of the self. If primordial nature is an *a priori* unity, that nature cannot be known as an object of experience by virtue of the fact that it cannot be known otherwise. The predication of nature is dependent on the allocution of a subject that reflects on that nature as an experience of qualitative alterity. Without such a difference the philosophical state of nature is not an object of natural historical reality. It is, as Schelling argues, an "obscure recollection" floating before "the most wayward thinker" (SW II: 12).[12]

If the "philosophical state of nature" is unimaginable or delusional, there can be no going back to nature; in fact, there is no first nature for experience to return to. Despite his consistent allusions to primordial truths, *Ur*-forms, dark, unconscious, barbarous, and chthonic principles, Schelling immediately bans any conjecture that would allow for the constitution of a nature that exists as independent of its idea. The production of first nature is fantastical. The culture of "wayward thinking" wants to create a qualitative distinction between first and second nature. It wants to position the break from nature as the evolution and climax of a human exceptionalism, rather than to concede its existence as one derivation among others, all of them subject to a greater set of forces (SW II: 12).[13] There are, says Schelling, "no native sons of freedom" (SW II: 12).[14] The idea of an (in)organic nature is the

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[10] Daniel Whistler, *Schelling's Theory of Symbolic Language: Forming the System of Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 72.
[11] Schelling, *Ideas*, 10.
[12] Schelling, *Ideas*, 10.
[13] Schelling, *Ideas*, 10.
[14] Schelling, *Ideas*, 10.

product of a historical-material shock that breaks the philosophical state of nature into differentiated identities, each calling into question the reality of their present existence, and, thus, expressing a drive to actualize a harmony between thought and nature. "How a world outside us, how a Nature and with it experience, is possible—these are questions for which we have philosophy to thank; or rather, with these questions philosophy came to be" (SW II: 12).[15] The world begins not with the freedom to be; it begins with the freedom to reflect on what might be—through a freedom, in Schelling's words, that "strives to make itself free," that disentangles "itself from the fetters of Nature," that abandons "itself to the uncertain fate of its own powers," and that, in the end, returns to the same place it had spent the "childhood of its reason" (SW II: 13).[16] Schelling articulates a historical separation, but this distance is not a divide. Nor is the construction of sociality predicated on necessary degrees of enmity. Following the refrain that orients all of Schelling's early works, that which is real is that which is known. It is not enough for Schelling that the workings of nature are unconscious to thought.

Humanity sets itself in opposition to the external world and in doing so initiates a reflective mode of being that works toward a true philosophy of nature. Humanity separates "from now on what Nature had always united, separates the object from the intuition, the concept from the image, finally (in that he becomes his own object) himself from himself" (SW II: 13).[17] Reflection, when held within rational limits, is figured as a means of fulling the intuition of unity that initiated the drive of freedom. Reflection is a means of uniting freedom and nature in a shared practice of existence; it is a means of anticipating an equilibrium of forces that has been delegitimized and repressed as the expression of an infantile proto-history.

Strictly speaking, we do not find a second nature in Schelling that confirms any commonplace conception of society that is defined by a shared language, range of cultural practices, territory, or even state. The idea of a capital "N" Nature—the fulfillment of a realized subject–object unity—remains a heuristic to be fulfilled. Modern culture has not arrived at such a Nature and Schelling is deeply skeptical concerning when or if it will. The system of nature is not yet a system of thought. As sporadic remarks between the "Oldest Systematic Program" (1797) and the "Stuttgart Seminars" (1810) indicate, the state stands in for the nature we lack. The creation of the state is symbolic of societal resignation. When we posit the state, we speak to the inherent lack of a real unifying principle. The state stands in for the force that we fail to comprehend; it is a placeholder for a sovereign union yet to be

[15] Schelling, *Ideas*, 10.
[16] Schelling, *Ideas*, 10.
[17] Schelling, *Ideas*, 10.

realized. The state is a grand admission that the system of nature is not yet the system of the mind.

In fact, it is worth questioning whether we find any formal conception of nature in *Ideas* at all. Adrian Johnston gestures toward this sentiment when he characterizes Schelling's nature as a mode of denaturalization in Lacanian terminology, as *antiphusis* or *contre-nature*.[18] And yet this oversteps the intent of Schelling's early nature philosophy and is already too wrapped-up in the particular unconsciousness of psychoanalysis; it is already too committed to a nature conceptualized vis-à-vis Freud's dead mothers or Lacan's crocodilian mother. Johnston's conceptualization is not unlike Timothy Morton's ecology without nature—it is too committed to its own iconoclasm. If Schelling's nature is an anti-nature, counter-nature, or a nature without nature, it ceases to be speculative; it ceases to be properly philosophical when it commits itself to the continuous division of its idea.[19]

Contrastingly, Schelling's nature and the power of its productivity is closer to the work of Claude Lefort in its original form.[20] When Schelling evokes nature as "the unconditioned," he gives an account of something close to Lefort's empty place of power.[21] The French Revolution, Lefort explains, marks a break in social life that was perceived as constituting a time and space separate from history. Lefort discerned that when the rule of the mass was thought to have entered the stage of historical development, it was, at that very moment, haunted by the sentiment that the power to make history was never present in any objective sense, and could not be conceptualized and accounted for. Indeed, whether this belief is retained, repeated, or revealed, the struggle to overthrow Christian power and its incarnation in corporeal rule had revealed at least one aspect of demagogic authority. The ability to assert, wield, or clearly direct power attested to the Christian belief in a power that rests elsewhere—in a God external to the world and only ever approximated and represented in corporeal rule. What post-revolutionary thought comes to realize is that religion portends an expression of power that outstrips representational logic to define a mode of social engagement and organization that is not contained

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[18] Adrian Johnston, "Ghosts of Substance Past: Schelling, Lacan, and the Denaturalization of Nature," in *Lacan: The Silent Partners*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (New York: Verso, 2006), 34.
[19] Walter Cerf, "Speculative Philosophy and Intellectual Intuition: An Introduction to Hegel's Essays," in G.W.F. Hegel, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, trans. H. S. Harris and Walter Cerf (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977), xvii.
[20] Psychoanalysis post-Žižek takes up Lefort's theory of power and makes it its own, albeit under the pretext outlined above. See Slavoj Žižek, *The Most Sublime Hysteric*, trans. Thomas Scott-Railton (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), 191–94.
[21] Claude Lefort, "The Question of Democracy," in *Democracy and Political Theory*, trans. David Macey (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), 17.

or fulfilled by or in empirical space and time.[22] Contrary to a state founded on the principles of reason, society organizes itself through the passions. As Lefort summarizes, humanity arrives at an opening in being that is not a simple product of empirical creation, and thus constitutes an involvement with and through an "excess of being over appearance."[23] Returning to the central refrain of Schelling's nature philosophy, the power of nature is that it is everywhere and nowhere.

The Science of Subservience

With the emergence of reflective rationality, Schelling pauses his political anthropology in order to treat the ideology at work within the effacement of nature. Unlike "Of the I" or his "Letters," with *Ideas*, Schelling is no longer playing the young proctor that treats the division of subjects from objects as a lapse in knowledge that requires correction. The contextualization of division has changed to acknowledge a logical system of forced separation.

Though at times mystifyingly, Schelling begins undermining and inverting the concepts he is thought to hold most dear. Where previously Schelling had argued that reflection was a means of unifying nature and freedom, reflective consciousness is now posited as a tautological form of knowledge.[24] If freedom and nature (or the ideal and the real) are the polarities of a singular force, why is reflection employed to structure and coordinate subjective identity through the logic of discriminatory difference? Schelling will not pose a definitive answer until about 1806, but his intimacy with Spinoza aids him in conceptualizing how the reality of nature is transfigured to elicit a seemingly free mode of activity that disavows the realization of freedom. Paraphrasing Spinoza, when nature is effaced, this social fantasy that replaces it allows servitude to be reconceptualized as freedom.

The appendix to Book I of Spinoza's *Ethics* is a critique of the "anthropo-theological fantasy" of early modernism.[25] Having explained his conception of God and the necessity of a divine nature, Spinoza concludes Book I by reflecting on the reasons his philosophy has been met with so much hostility. In Spinoza's account, it comes down to a single point of human exceptionalism that has engendered a multitude of prejudices. Humanity is

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[22] Claude Lefort, "The Permanence of the Theologico-Political?," in *Democracy and Political Theory*, trans. David Macey (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), 223.
[23] Lefort, "The Permanence of the Theologico-Political?," 223.
[24] While Schelling's tendency to invert his terminology poses a challenge for the reader, I believe it is worth preserving this ambiguity in an attempt to elicit the concomitant presence of both participations in manifold.
[25] Hasana Sharp, *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 60.

born into the world with and without forms of knowledge. Subjects know that they identify themselves through the effects of their appetites and their conscious attempts to secure advantage for themselves. Simultaneously subjects struggle with the knowledge that they do not know the causality that orients and orders their relationship with the objects of their desire. Thinking themselves free of a first principle, the touchstone of human freedom is understood by subjects as their consciousness of individual volition and appetite. Men, writes Spinoza, "believe that they are free, precisely because they are conscious of their volitions and desires; yet concerning the causes that have determined them to desire and will they do not think, not even dream about, because they are ignorant of them."[26] Freedom is the freedom to desire, not a freedom determined by knowledge of the causality that defines freedom. More so and relatedly, insomuch as humanity is defined by the attainment of advantage, personal action and social engagement are oriented by the fulfillment of individual ends and the expectation that others will be driven in kind. Formally organizing existence around the logic of causal experience—once the social contract is constituted through the freedom of desire and the fulfillment of the subject as an end in itself—both individual and world are degraded as a series of means ruled by no other causality than the end that is fulfillment. Exhibiting the fundamental refrain of instrumental reason, everything is rendered a means for one's advantage: "eyes for seeing, teeth for chewing, cereals and living creatures for food, the sun for giving light, the sea for breeding fish."[27] Nature has no other causality than as a linear existence in a teleological drive that registers the corporeal through the fulfillment of an order predetermined to serve the advancement of humanity.

Transforming prejudice into a worldview, when the subject of the state thinks a world that is concomitantly not a subjective creation yet nonetheless created for the attainment of individual ends, it follows that such a world was offered up by a providential ruler or rulers—a God or Gods—to worship, like subjects that worship themselves as an end to themselves: a God that might love the temperament of their worship above all others and "direct the whole of Nature so as to serve [humanity's] blind cupidity and insatiable greed."[28] What remains is a fractured existence that cannot be thought without the predication of a higher or more perfect consciousness, but also a world that can only be known through its consumption and assimilation as an object for fulfilling innately teleological desire. It is a world that is given and prefigured, that denies the necessity of critical reflection, that perpetuates a fantastic state in which final causes are human fictions that invert the conditions of reality.

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[26] Spinoza, "Ethics," in *Complete Works*, ed. Michael L. Morgan, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company), 239.
[27] Spinoza, "Ethics," 239.
[28] Spinoza, "Ethics," 239.

Repeating Althusser's now famous interpretation, the appendix to Book I of the *Ethics* contains "the matrix of every possible theory of ideology."[29] What is traded as the immediate truths of the world are the illusions of an imagination codified by the perception of the world as lived. As Althusser stresses, it is not that the world of the imagination dominates life from above, but rather, "that the immediate world such as we perceive it is strictly indissociable and inseparable from the imagination and its construction of its essence."[30] Or, in the words of Warren Montag, the subject that is the free cause of itself is an illusion disciplined by the system of the imagination, and yet, this falsity is made true when it is produced and lived as a material reality.

Spinoza, in Althusser's interpretation, defines the logic of individualism. Thinking itself unconditioned and undetermined in ground and principle, the subject reverses the causality of its existence by convincing itself that it orders the cause and effect of the world with will and desire. In the course of contemplating this unlimited freedom—what Schelling would describe in his "Letters" as the horror of freedom—one is free to enact a freedom that includes one's own servitude. As Hasana Sharp explains, the subject is free in thought while still limited and constrained by conditions placed on thought and action. In this regard, that fantasy is not an illusion.[31] By way of action and practice the life of fantasy is structured into the system of existence and lived out as that which is necessary to one's life. Ideology presupposes a new object of life: a life that is its own object.

The Fiction of Principles

The faculty that Althusser would come to name the imagination already appears in at least two significant forms across the two editions of Schelling's *Ideas*. In the 1797 edition of *Ideas*, Schelling uses the term *speculation* to describe what Althusser would later identify as the illusory imagination at work in the ideological state apparatus. In this sense, speculation is used as a heuristic that allows for a critique of a particular vision of philosophy that is satisfied with logical argumentation, the creation of dichotomies, and the abstract analysis of concepts. Mere speculation, writes Schelling, is a scientifically and socially degenerate understanding that kills the creative imagination, effaces the intuition of (in)organic unity, and then hails itself as an exemplar of self-actualized human nature (SW II: 222).[32] When Schelling publishes the second

[29] Louis Althusser, "The Only Materialist Tradition," in *The New Spinoza*, eds. Warren Montag and Ted Stolze (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 1997), 6.
[30] Althusser, "The Only Materialist Tradition," 6.
[31] Sharp, *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization*, 60.
[32] Schelling, *Ideas*, 177–78.

edition of *Ideas* in 1803, much has changed. Most prominently, while the drive of his criticism remains the same, Schelling has revised *Ideas* to remove every significant mention of mere speculation and replaced it with the notion of reflection (SW II: 14).[33] Mere reflection, as Schelling comes to call it, represents this kind of topological imagination that cleaves existence into isolated conceptual fragments to be rendered whole by a version of the understanding that is incapable of reason. Reflection radicalizes and materializes the Kantian blockage against thinking beyond reason. It acts as a systemic rampart, halting the application of "pure intuition" or "creative imagination."[34] As Schelling describes across the two editions of the text:

> *Mere speculation*, therefore, is a spiritual sickness of mankind, and moreover the most dangerous of all, which kills the germ of man's existence and uproots his being. It is a tribulation, which, where it has once become dominant, cannot be dispelled—not by the stimulation of Nature (for what can that do to a dead soul?), nor by the bustle of life. (SW II: 14)[35]

Or, by Schelling's repetition:

> *Mere reflection*, therefore, is a spiritual sickness in mankind, the more so where it imposes itself in domination over the whole man, and kills at the root what in germ is his highest being, his spiritual life, which issues only from Identity. It is an evil which accompanies man into life itself, and distorts all his intuition even for the more familiar objects of consideration. (SW II: 13–14)[36]

Instead of privileging one edition over the other, counterposing the two versions of the text speaks to Schelling's struggle to encapsulate the paradoxical ways in which a fantastical notion exerts itself as matter and force, developing itself as a simulacrum of reality, all the while effacing any mode of thought capable of challenging it.

On one hand, the critique of mere speculation stresses the association between fantasy and abstraction. The "speculative chimera" turns nature upside down (SW II: 21).[37] Like Spinoza, Schelling's critique of false ends

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[33] Between the two editions of *Ideas*, Schelling and Hegel have been working in parallel to recuperate the idea of speculative philosophy. For the time being, it suffices to say that the 1802 presentation of speculation is used to describe an authentic philosophy.
[34] Schelling, *Ideas*, 35.
[35] Schelling, *Ideas*, 11. Italics mine.
[36] Schelling, *Ideas*, 11 n4. Italics mine.
[37] Schelling, *Ideas*, 16.

expresses the *zeitgeist* of a theoretical praxis that misconstrues the relationship between cause and effect. The experience of phenomena is made manifest through a fundamentally inseparable experience of the object and idea.

> In that I envisage the object, object and idea are one and same. And only in this inability to distinguish the object from the idea during the envisaging itself lies the conviction, for the ordinary understanding, of the reality of external things, which become known to it, after all, only through ideas. (SW II: 15)[38]

In this account, mere speculation can only ask "how do ideas of external things arise in us (SW II: 15)?"[39] Speculation can only pose the question through the displacement of a thing external to the self and thus engages in a tautological process whereby the structure of the question predetermines the appearance of the answer. Opposed to one another in this way, object and subject are relatable, but only as a matter of cause and effect—only as two desperately alienated points held in manifold by the will of the self. When the individuated self asks how it is that it has ideas, the structure of the inquiry has been prefigured: The I becomes a being that has raised itself "above the idea and become, through this very question, a being that feels itself to be free *ab origine* with respect to all ideation, who surveys the ideation itself and the whole fabric of his ideas beneath himself" (SW II: 16).[40] The force that orders the world is the same force that expresses the existence and being of the in- and of-itself. The I is a being unto itself, a being that removes its self from the generation of ideas, that rises above the power of nature and separates and organizes the world as it sees fit.

Echoing Spinoza's plea, both the understanding and causality must be recast. The question is not "how that assemblage of phenomena and the series of causes and effects, which we call the course of Nature, has become actual *outside us*," but rather, how that nature is being constructed, implemented, and made "actual *for us*, how that system and that assemblage of phenomena have found their way to our minds, and how they have attained the necessity in our conception with which we are absolutely compelled to think of them (SW II: 29–30)."[41]

Pointedly, Schelling asks his reader a question that becomes a metaphor for causality as envisioned by Leibnizian fulguration.[42] Why is it that

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[38] Schelling, *Ideas*, 12.
[39] Schelling, *Ideas*, 12.
[40] Schelling, *Ideas*, 13.
[41] Schelling, *Ideas*, 23.
[42] G. W. Leibniz, "Monadology," in *Philosophical Texts*, trans. and eds. R. S. Woolhouse and Richard Francks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 274.

"lightning precedes thunder?" Why is it that "we must think of a succession of phenomena, which is absolutely necessary?" (SW II: 30)[43] Why is it that when succession is objectively necessary it is concomitantly subjectively necessary? At their most salient, phenomena are inseparable from their succession, just as succession is inseparable from the phenomena. The common explication is, in turns, either dogmatic or critical: either succession and phenomena "arise together and inseparably outside us" or they "arise together and inseparably inside us" (SW II: 31).[44] By the first example, the relationship between succession and phenomena is a testament to the productivity of a consciousness that animates things in themselves. Succession, independent of finite ideas, is posited as working outside the understanding to express a unity independent of consciousness, or one that portends a mode of succession that can exist independently of its foundation in and through a being that can only come to know the relationality of existence through the discursivity of the presentation. As opposed to expressing how the I comes to think succession, the thing itself maintains a presentation of causality that is quite literally unthinkable—it is causality that exists beyond the conditions of thought. Alternatively, with the second example, as an orientation over and against the illusory causality of things in themselves, the presentation of succession becomes a product of one's self. The idea of relationality and causation is a product of a self that knows itself only through the objectification of its subjectivity through the categories. All representation originates in a mind with the capability of knowing things in the world through an idea of succession derived from that mind. "The succession of our ideas arises in us, and indeed a necessary succession; and this self-made succession, first brought forth in consciousness, is called the course of Nature" (SW II: 34).[45]

The question concerning succession is unanswerable when both lines of argumentation attempt to construct a vision of relationality meant to enforce the barriers of categorically distinct entities. The only possibility that remains, argues Schelling, is "to derive the necessity of a succession of presentations from the nature of our mind, and so of the finite mind as such, and, in order that this succession may be genuinely objective, to have the things themselves, together with this sequence, arise and come into being in it" (SW II: 35).[46] Schelling's summation is remarkably simple. "Already the first look at nature teaches us what the last one does" (SW II: 360).[47] The experience of lightning precedes thunder when "all beings like ourselves perceive the

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[43] Schelling, *Ideas*, 23.
[44] Schelling, *Ideas*, 24.
[45] Schelling, *Ideas*, 26.
[46] Schelling, *Ideas*, 27.
[47] F.W.J. Schelling, "Treatise on the Relationship of the Real and the Ideal in Nature," trans. Dale Snow, *International Philosophical Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (2015): 239.

phenomena of the world in the same necessary serial order," which is made "conceivable only and solely from our common nature" (SW II: 38).[48] The causal order of the phenomena matters little. Lightning could precede thunder or thunder could precede lightning; either way, the causal order of this relationship is secondary to the fact that all like beings perceive the phenomena in an identical order and thus occupy a shared world. Lightning precedes thunder because the conditions of our existence all share a common environing of existence.

On the other hand, Schelling's critique of reflection reveals the ways in which fantasy is materialized as a simulacrum of reality structuring a subservience that convinces the individuated self that it is free. To rephrase the critique developed in Spinoza's *Ethics*, once the self has been divided from its object, the individual can either understand its separation from itself as a means or as an end. As a means, division marks a methodological principle of striving for unification. The self divides itself from nature, so that it may know the reality of nature as well as its own relationality in and through that nature. Division is the foundation of an epistemological affirmation that leads humanity to assert itself as truly human by demanding a relationality between itself and nature. In Schelling's words, "[o]riginally in man there is an absolute equilibrium of forces and of consciousness. But he can upset this equilibrium through freedom, in order to reestablish it through freedom" (SW II: 13).[49] Or, more radically still, the sociality that enters into the philosophical state as a means does so in order to eliminate the demand and the disciplinary construct of philosophy altogether. To enter into the state of philosophy preserves the desire to be released from it. By enacting freedom as a means, Schelling preserves the radical alterity essential to the perpetuation of a will that is free. This, however, is distinct from separation as an end. In the latter case, freedom is granted to the social body when first nature is positioned against a second nature that manifests social organization through a systemic logic that naturalizes quantitative discrimination. The state of philosophy, as a state of being and a state of thought, is maintained by a "*mere* reflection" that fetishizes the labor of dissection to defend and perpetuate permanent separation (SW II: 13).[50] Each and every thing is an identity unto itself; each is a quantitative difference that can only be understood when arranged as isolated identities known through the organization of perspicacity.

The crux of the issue, for Schelling, is the belief that what is separated in thought can also be separated in fact (SW 11: 192).[51] Reflection as means can be actualized as will. Confirming external nature as a collection of

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[48] Schelling, *Ideas*, 29.
[49] Schelling, *Ideas*, 11.
[50] Schelling, *Ideas*, 11.
[51] Schelling, *Ideas*, 154.

mechanical laws, while at the same time, working from a perspective that has eliminated any metaphysical reserve, be it dogmatic or otherwise, reflection can divide the conceptual manifold of objectivity in two. There is a kind of subject-object, i.e., the objectivity determined by the will of free subjects, as well as a material object that does not confirm the dynamic, subjective, or human nature that reflection conceptualizes through the objectivity of the self. This relationship between the self and other allows for the self to cast the objectivity of itself without having to rely on the heteronomy of an external cause or agent. As such, it follows that other subjects populate perception with the traces of their own objectivity to form a stratum of subject–object representations capable of approximating the synthetic activity of consciousness to evoke the conditions of self-consciousness. The individuated self no longer fears that its association with a heteronomous world will condition or otherwise contort the drive of its freedom if and when that world is constructed as a product devised by the collective labors of reason. The object checks the efficacy of the subject; it still bars access to the in-itself of being, but now, because the subject-object is itself a product of a free and rational agent, the reflective content of alterity positions itself as an affirmation of free choice.

The reflective block that placed limits and boundaries on the reach of reason is institutionalized in the individuated self as a ban on thinking otherwise. Reflection actualizes the creation of a transcendental *nomos* that is expressed *ad infinitum* with every evocation of the individuated self. The self is the necessity of an identity that defines the authority of itself by repulsing alterity. Or, as a practical expression, the self manifests its sovereignty by making the decision to effectuate itself through the free expression of its will. To be self-conscious is to manifest oneself and one's community by participating in a developmental paradigm that actively eliminates the being of things by transforming them into objects capable of affirming a rational nature—a rational nature that learns this right by objectifying its own body, that extends the realm of its authority by determining things as objects and objects as property. Though reflection may begin as a mode for the integration of the phenomenal world, it comes to dominate the entirety of the individual. Reflection is an evil, says Schelling, "that accompanies man into life itself," distorting the most basic intuition of objects, misrepresenting the phenomenal world with a chimerical intellectual world, and thus, at its most violent, separating the individual from the most basic spiritual principles. Freedom, as expressed by the reflective state, is a search for perpetual foreclosure—tirelessly cutting short its interaction with the world, policing borders for the exclusion of difference, and abandoning a conception of subjectivity that finds what is highest through communion.

Mere reflection, says Schelling, is self-referential, converting "the world into play of concepts" and "the mind within you into a dead mirror of things (SW II: 19)."[52] Mere reflection may reflect, but it never captures the vitality of its figure. The mirror that is the self is no longer a reflection of the good—it is no longer a reflection of the absolute. The subject is a dead object of vanity reflecting a self-same social condition that continues forward, unchallenged by a philosophy that is content to posit the reified as the standard of the philosophical state. Recontextualizing what Montag describes as the "vicious theological/anthropological circle" of Spinoza's *Ethics*, in Schelling, this becomes a vicious reflective/anthropological circle. "The mirror mirrors another mirror mirroring it: there is no origin in this relation in that what is reflected is itself a reflection of what reflects it."[53]

Common Knowledge

The climax and resolution of Schelling's political anthropology in the *Ideas* comes by way of a conceptual reversal. Up until this point in his introduction to *Ideas*, Schelling has been leading his reader with an ambiguous treatment of unity and freedom somewhere between the tenets of dogmatism and criticism. While there are hints and suggestions that Schelling has a few figures in mind, the reality is that the history of philosophy, with the exception of Spinoza, is the history of mere reflective thought. Taking this sense of ambiguity further, Schelling recasts his previous anthropology by circling back to his original evocation of an unreflected nature now mediated through its connection with an empirical object. The object and idea that are one and the same, says as much about the reality of the external things as it does the constitution of the ordinary understanding (*gemeinen Verstand*) in itself. Schelling centralizes the unity of thought and the object, but figured through the capacity of ideas and a presentation of the understanding like the *experientia vaga* that Spinoza would conceptualize as an ordinary, common, or vague understanding. In this moment, it becomes abundantly clear that Schelling is inverting the conceptualization of common knowledge.

Embracing the naïve experience of nature that merely reflective philosophy condemns as vague, common, or enthusiastic preserves the legacy and potential of a true philosophy; at the same time, Schelling will contend, what is traded in the schools as true philosophy must be ousted as the base expression of a broken understanding. As he spelled it out in *On University Studies* (1803), the common understanding is not solely or primarily an

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[52] Schelling, *Ideas*, 15.
[53] Warren Montag, *Bodies, Masses, Power: Spinoza and His Contemporaries* (New York: Verso, 1999), 39.

understanding that is crude or uncultivated. On the contrary, "the common understanding is one nurtured by false and superficial education, taught to be content with hollow, empty ratiocination and to think of itself as highly cultured—the sort of understanding that has expressed itself in modern times chiefly by deprecating everything that rests upon Ideas" (SW V: 258).[54]

When the ordinary understanding is figured as the common understanding, the respective wellsprings of Spinozism, pantheism, dogmatism, and the vulgar consciousness are raised to the status of true philosophy, while the logic that posits separation as unity held in such high esteem marks the formalization and institutionalization of the mere or relative knowledge that Schelling's readers thought they were fighting against through the adoption of reflective philosophy. Toying with an increasingly sophisticated inversion of the transcendental and diminutive notion of the common, Schelling suggests that what is common is philosophical while what is often held as philosophical is merely the product of primitive accumulation. Observing that they are no different in holding the "mythology" and "poetic fictions" of the ancients, Schelling suggests that his readers are still attached to a social body founded on the "conflict between spirit and matter (SW II: 19)."[55] They are still ignorant of the fact that philosophy only reached its becoming, with Spinoza's description of concepts capable of holding mind and matter as two duplicitous forms of knowledge in unity (SW II: 20).[56] Mere speculation is no longer speculative when the creative imagination is no longer an experience capable of grasping the metaphysical whole of being and mind in their coming to be. The reversal of common and reflective knowledge initiates a desire to rearticulate nature by fundamentally redrawing the historical horizon of the Western philosophical project. Schelling notes something of this in *Ideas* when he suggests that the illusion of nature is conceived and concretized by religious cultural paradigms founded on the supposed conflict between spirit and matter.

While it is impossible to extricate Schelling from his inherent classism and his attachment to theories of genius, the reversal of the common understanding speaks to a similar thread that appears in the fragment "Oldest Systematic Program." The end of ontological and political delusion is not realized through "charts and indices"; it is a matter of cultivating an aesthetic sense, an idea of beauty in its "higher platonic sense," or what the fragment describes as a "sensual religion."[57] To cultivate this sense, the fragment

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[54] Schelling, *On University Studies*, 52.
[55] Schelling, *Ideas*, 15.
[56] Schelling, *Ideas*, 15.
[57] Anonymous Author, "The Oldest Systematic Program of German Idealism," trans. Diana I. Behler, in *Philosophy of German Idealism: Fichte, Jacobi, and Schelling*, ed. Ernst Behler (New York: Continuum, 2003), 162.

abandons its defense of the estates and the monarchy to argue that society will only be liberated—the "great multitude" brought to their realization as a "people"—once they are freed from the tyranny of their rulers, and knowledge is constituted across and through the bounds of class.[58] To cite what are inarguably the most provocative set of passages from the "Oldest Systematic Program":

> [W]e so often hear that the great multitude should have a *sensual religion*. Not only the great multitude, but even philosophy needs it. Monotheism of reason and the heart, polytheism of the imagination and art, that is what we need.
>
> Until we make ideas aesthetic, i.e., mythological, they hold no interest for the *people*, and conversely, before mythology is reasonable, the philosopher must be ashamed of it. Thus finally the enlightened and unenlightened must shake hands; mythology must become philosophical, and the people reasonable, and philosophy must become mythological in order to make philosophy sensual. Then external unity will reign among us. Never again the contemptuous glance, never the blind trembling of the people before its wise men and priests. Only then does equal development of all powers await us, of the individual as well as of all individuals. No power will be suppressed any longer, then general freedom and equality of spirits will reign—A higher spirit sent from heaven must establish this religion among us, it will be the last work of the human race.[59]

The fragment still bows to a sovereign force that comes from elsewhere—though not a monarch that occupies the head of the social body. Sovereignty is a higher power brought down to earth to manifest social space extensively and thoroughly as the first and last realization of a mediated social conflict. While the "Oldest Systematic Program" argues for the freedom and equality of the great multitude, the realization of the people is not figured or founded on a preexistent unity. The idea of freedom does not cohere with the reality of freedom. The idea and reality are bonded by an internal crisis of meaning. A free people exists as a question, refusing certainty and engendering anxiety, an anxiety that allows its self-definition to remain as a site of contention. Thus, the people as elicited by the fragment are continually being composed between poles. In order to actualize any political, ontological, or epistemological conflict, the fragment evokes the truth of an ideal social space as an absolute outpouring of difference in manifold. The people are composed of antithetical

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[58] Anonymous, "Oldest Systematic Program," 162.
[59] Anonymous, "Oldest Systematic Program," 162–63.

ideological drives: the enlightened reticulated through the unenlightened, the absolute meted by the masses, and philosophy made inseparable from mythology. When refined to its ideal expression, each lies between the one and the all. The one that is the "ideal I" must be inextricable from the reality of the all that is the multitude. Against an interpretation of post-Kantian idealism that prioritizes the power and sovereignty of an *a priori* absolute, what the "Oldest Systematic Program" suggests is what Schelling describes in the "Letters" as a "canon" *for* the all—that is, a canon *of* the all, a canon for and by the collectivity that comes to compose the idea of the absolute.

Schelling's unconditional or absolute nature is known, understood, and felt as and through the products of an existence flung into a state of unrest and ever attempting to create a social space capable of actualizing an unassailable people. At a point in time when enlightened philosophy was put into the service of despotism and the revolutionary mass expressed themselves as if they were unruly hordes directed to action by the jeers of modern-day Sophists, the "Oldest Systematic Program" fragment refuses to abandon the promise of either. Where both have failed to realize a sensual religion, it is the alienation of philosophy from the mass and the mass from philosophy that is the germ of this miscarriage.

Youthful Ideas

Schelling's evocation of fulguration in *Ideas* reaches beyond a critique of causality. Schelling will make the same allusion in the Würzburg lectures (1804). "The absolute light, the idea of God, strikes reason like a flash of lightning, so to speak, and its luminosity endures in reason as an eternal affirmation of knowledge" (SW VI: 155).[60] This light, this strike, notes G. Anthony Bruno, is the light of the intellectual intuition.[61]

In *Ideas* the intellectual intuition is not present by its proper name. Nor does Schelling invoke the intellectual intuition introduced in "Of the I" or the one he arrives at in his identity philosophy. With *Ideas* and in response to J. B. Erhards's criticism, Schelling suspends the formal vestiges of the intellectual intuition and allows the practice to become something more than itself by becoming something less than itself. In its dehiscence, the intellectual intuition becomes the "collective intuition" that unites mankind in the "contemplation of the absolute." The productive intuition presents the whole "communal

[60] 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. Thomas Pfau (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 152.

[61] G. Anthony Bruno, "The Appearance and Disappearance of the Intellectual Intuition in Schelling's Philosophy," *Analecta Hermeneutica* 5 (2013): 7.

product of objective and subjective activity (SW II: 228)."[62] It is what Schelling will call a state of intuition, a state of being drawn between two points or poles, pulled forwards and backwards, reversed and reversible, as it were (SW II: 229).[63] Schelling will name a productive intuition that presents the whole through its parts and its parts through the whole (SW II: 238–39).[64] It is direct intuition that provides the real and demonstrates the dynamism of living matter. This is an intuition that grasps past and future as succession as such (SW II: 31–32).[65] This is an intuition that is terminated when opposed forces are pulled out of conflict, where the unresolved dialectic has been deadened and brought to a standstill, when the gap or empty space of power has been foreclosed (SW II: 221).[66] It is the pure intuition of subject and object, ideal and real, all of which it understands as "originally one and the same"; an intuition that had "long since the discovered the symbolic language" by which "Nature speaks" (SW II: 47).[67] It is also and most importantly an intuition that is capable of conceiving nature in particular and the philosophy of nature in general. This is perhaps a "mere" intuition, but only if it is possible to read what is "mere" as portending a necessary reversal—casting the lowest level of knowledge as the highest and the highest as the lowest. In this reversal, and in its multiplicity of types, roles, and uses, intuition surpasses itself. In part, Hegel, Marx, and to a lesser extent, Lukács are to blame for a certain inherited understanding of this generative incoherence, as Schelling's intellectual intuition becomes a watchword for enthusiasm and irrationalism. And yet the theoretical definition of the intellectual intuition is not nearly as important as what it does in practice.

When figured as mode of practice—when figured both socially and naturally, the intellectual intuition is the organ of ideology. The advancement and realization of culture is dependent on liberating social systems from ideological illusion and reconstructing an expression of these systems founded by a natural-historical understanding. This is precisely why Schelling evokes the aspect of intellection: "*the nature of intuition, that which makes it intuition, is that in it absolutely opposite, mutually restricting activities are united*" (SW II: 221).[68] The intellectual intuition is a proto-dialectical synthetic judgment that expresses not the singular identity of things, but rather, the identity of difference—the identity of the mutual in difference. It is an ability to apprehend the transhistorical nature of an identity effaced across history, and yet, that

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[62] Schelling, *Ideas*, 183.
[63] Schelling, *Ideas*, 184.
[64] Schelling, *Ideas*, 190.
[65] Schelling, *Ideas*, 24.
[66] Schelling, *Ideas*, 177.
[67] Schelling, *Ideas*, 35.
[68] Schelling, *Ideas*, 177. Original italics.

nonetheless persists through history. Rephrased, intellectual intuition is not just an ability to think through difference in the creation of thought, but rather, the ability to think thought in and through the process of thinking. Such a thought is the thinking of the unconditioned or the thought of the empty space. Removed from its near-mystical trappings, the intellectual intuition is knowledge of the idea. It is the methodical deconstruction of ideological force that works to realize the reality of ideas.

In saying the intellectual intuition is the organ of ideology critique, it can be argued that Schelling provides a decisive example of what Slavoj Žižek describes as the "slide into ideology." Denouncing merely reflective philosophy as an ideological fantasy that must be banished by figuring a nature capable of liberating social life, the attempt to remove oneself from the flux of ideology expresses the ideological gesture par excellence.[69] The attempt to attain a reality that raises itself above the fictions of ideology turns the ideological drive over. It seems unlikely, however, that Schelling thought it possible to remove one's self from ideology, even if the drive to do so is essential to the system. When the power of nature is taken as unconditioned space, as an empty space, as a gap or rupture in the social, the conception of ideology changes. It is no longer a question of separating the fantasy from the real. The real role of ideology is to conceal, as Lefort says, the enigma of the political form. The aim of ideology is to disempower the social by reducing "the indetermination of the social."[70] With his critique of ideology, Schelling is charting the structure of ideas, displaying their relations and codependencies, and tracing the ways in which they work to occlude the work of freedom. *Ideas* is an attempt to make a social system that has been stabilized and settled dynamic again—to make its passions and motivations visible again. To reground existence in the identity of its difference. It is a desire to reground the nature of the social as the unthing (*Unbedingt*).

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[69] Slavoj Žižek, "Introduction: The Spectre of Ideology," in *Mapping Ideology*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (New York: Verso, 1994), 17.

[70] Bernard Flynn, *The Philosophy of Claude Lefort: Interrupting the Political* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 187.

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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

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Naturphilosophie. Einleitende Bemerkungen zu einer Affinität," in *Res Cogitans* 11, no. 1 (2016): 63–93; as well as Hava Tirosh-Samuelson 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.

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[7] See also Philipp Höfele, "The Changed Role of Anthropology in the Anthropocene," in *Le tecnologie 'morali' 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

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[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,

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[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 Tarner 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 ebendeßwegen ist er eigentlich immer das construirende, in allen seinen Erklärungen. Es ist daher nicht zu verwundern, daß das Construirte und das, was construirt 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 "*Thathandlung*" 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 wieder 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 aufzuheben*] 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

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[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.

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[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.

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A Fissure is a Very Superficial Thing: Contrasting Oppositions in Schelling and Whitehead

Agustín Mercado Reyes and Violeta Aréchiga

opposition, experience, natural sciences, contrasts,
epigenesis, social dynamics

"We are outfitted with senses that convey the surfaces of things. Even when intellectual curiosity and technological ingenuity makes possible anatomy, geometry, the microscope, X-rays, and other ways of peering beneath surfaces, our way of probing the viscera of the world is to turn them into yet more surfaces."

—Lorraine Daston, *Against Nature*, 2019

Introduction

The natural sciences influence our conception of what the world is. In the most unassuming accounts, it is argued that the sciences present us with objective descriptions of our internal and external environment. Another view of the role of science, decidedly more imposing in its scope, is that the sciences reveal reality itself, even beyond the mere appearances perceived by our natural senses. Science has become a paradoxical human activity that not only goes beyond everyday human sensory capabilities and commonsense views, but also

radically transforms the environment from which it emerged, all in its endeavor to unearth the truth of what is really real.

Since the birth of the modern sciences in the seventeenth century, the success of scientific practices has understandably molded our conception of reality and the ways in which we approach it. Such practices determine what is and what is not—the valid ways of intervening in the world and the limits and possibilities of our understanding—while deploying a grid of supposedly neutral categories. If the world and our thought have an intimate connection, the sciences have positioned themselves as the best tool to help us understand and mediate such a bond. However, it cannot be denied that scientific rationality carries with it a host of presuppositions and even predispositions. To give just one example (brilliantly portrayed by Isabelle Stengers),[1] Galileo's rational mechanics, taken as a starting point for modern science, had its origins in a necessity to establish itself as a voice of authority—the authority of speaking in the name of the natural world—in front of a rival point of view. Indeed, in Stengers' account, modern science is almost a weapon wielded by Galileo not only against religious orthodoxy but also against the Aristotelian-empiricist commonsensical view of basic physical phenomena such as the falling of bodies and the movement of stars. Indeed, according to Stengers, Galileo still offers an appropriate historical standpoint for talking about such origins, because his work inaugurated a new way of arguing that imposed a new kind of truth. With his inclined plane, "Galileo effaces himself in order to leave 'speech' to the thing that will silence the others."[2] In other words, with his experimental device Galileo succeeded in making the phenomena speak and, simultaneously, in silencing his rivals. Thus, from its origin, modern science had the effect of silencing opponents with the authority of the voice of the world that speaks in facts. It goes without saying that an activity that has its inception in an agonistic mood can inform even our political stance: must the search for truth always be resolved in confrontation?

These are the main reasons for our present interest in exploring the web of effects between scientific endeavors and the vision of the world that philosophy wants to express. In Schelling's case, some of the ways in which fundamental and novel scientific conceptions are present in his manner of conceiving being have a profound importance, not only in terms of their implications (for example, the new scientific concepts allow him to connect his primitive forces with the phenomena of nature, and they also stress the process of movement itself rather than the mere result of the process) but because such conceptions allowed him to consider radically different alternatives. Schelling's interest in the natural sciences of his time expresses

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[1] Isabelle Stengers, *The Invention of Modern Science* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

[2] Stengers, *Invention of Modern Science*, 82.

itself well beyond a mere copying of their structure so as to cast a philosophical system in their image. His intention is to reveal the deeper meaning and underlying causes of the phenomena and processes that the empirical sciences account for without going beyond their surface. To this end, he elaborates a philosophy of the natural sciences and a philosophy of nature in a broad sense,[3] which, taking natural forces as their starting point, delve into the content of the natural sciences and criticize the mechanistic views of his time. It is also clear, however, that this starting point and model for an important part of his philosophy has consequences ultimately expressed in a taxonomy of being that, while challenging accepted principles of the time, is characterized by dichotomy and confrontation.

There are a great many philosophers that could be contrasted with Schelling's position, which is so emphatic about the fundamental character of opposed principles. Here, we choose to contrast it with the ontological system of Alfred North Whitehead (an author who seldom mentions Schelling)—both because of his similarities with Schelling, some of which hopefully will be evident further on, and because of the disparities between them. Specifically, we center our discussion on two seemingly simple, implicit questions that reside in Whitehead's system: What if opposition is not the only, or even the most important, mode of relationship? And what if we consider a more complex mode of comparison, one not necessarily restricted to the interplay of two opposing forces? We have tried to explore the possible answers to these questions, as well as the consequences brought about by alternative ontological solutions, by developing our own notion of a *fissure:* a notion that brings to mind alternative possible arrangements between surfaces and depths, and that hopefully clarifies other modes of thinking that we consider viable and important. The alternative views that spring from these reflections touch upon every aspect of our particular lives—something that risks being forgotten when dealing with abstract, fundamental notions of ontology. Thus, after showing—in our discussion of the way nature itself was seen by the sciences that influenced Schelling's thought—the configuration of a fertile ground for thinking a fundamentally oppositional ontology, we then discuss the aforementioned alternative arrangements: a view of the world that thrives on contrast but not necessarily opposition. Lastly, we explore the possible consequences in yet another territory of being, the social realm, in which the difference between opposition and contrast can make or break the possibility of living together.

[3] See Joan Steigerwald, *Experimenting at the Boundaries of Life: Organic Vitality in Germany around 1800* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019).

Schelling and the Natural Sciences

In line with the epistemological optimism that characterizes *Naturphilosophie*, Schelling claimed in 1797, in his introduction to *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, that there is a homogeneity between spirit and nature—because both are characterized by their spontaneous activity, by an internal force through which they produce themselves, and by their configuration according to ends: "The system of nature is at the same time the system of our mind" (SW II: 39).[4] However, this identity of nature and spirit is not only a sign of this epistemological optimism; it is also a sign of the deep interest Schelling's philosophy takes in the science of his time.

This interest, clearly visible both in the various writings of *Naturphilosophie* and, fifteen years later, in *The Ages of the World*, allows us to recall that at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, the profound separation between the natural sciences and philosophy that would later characterize modern science, at least in discourse, had not yet stabilized. The panorama at the time Schelling wrote was somewhat more complex: there was, on the one hand, a natural philosophy with inquiries directed toward the search for causes and, on the other, a natural history postulated as solely descriptive and classificatory. Simultaneously, what would later be known as biology was being born as a discipline with its own object and ends; chemistry was in the process of solidifying its revolution and separation from physics; and physics itself was becoming the "queen of the sciences," superior in hierarchy to the others. But none of this had yet crystallized: within the field of natural philosophy there were various research activities aiming to offer causal explanations; by the beginning of the second half of the eighteenth century, Buffon would propose to rise to the challenge of making natural history likewise an enterprise of an explanatory nature.[5]

It is not strange, then, that the scientific theories of Schelling's time—both those that concern physical movement and those that deal with life, and both those with a more experimental orientation and those with a more speculative tone—occupy such an important place in his thought. Now, this does not mean that he simply accepts what his contemporaries propose. Despite the fact that in his writings on *Naturphilosophie* he supports the intimate

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[4] F.W.J. Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Errol E. Harris and Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 30. See also Jean-Christophe Lemaitre, "Le statut de l'organisme dans la philosophie shellingienne de la nature," *Philosophies de la nature. Klesis —revue philosophique* 25 (2013).

[5] See Phillip Sloan, "Natural History, 1670–1802," in *Companion to the History of Modern Science*, R. C. Olby, G. N. Cantor, J. R. R. Christie, and M. J. S. Hodge, eds. (London: Routledge, 1990).

link between what we know and nature as it is[6]—the possibility of going far beyond the regulative character that Kant had granted to knowledge of the living precisely because of this link—he announces, again optimistically, in *The Ages of the World* (1815) that

> it is an advantage of our time that this [living, actual] being has been given back to science and, indeed, it may be asserted, in such a way that it may not be easily lost again. It is not too severe to have judged that, in the wake of the now awoken dynamic spirit, all philosophy that does not take its power from it can still only be regarded as an empty misuse of the noble gift of speaking and thinking. (SW VIII: 199)[7]

Schelling is acutely aware of the limitations of the natural-philosophical theories of his day. His criticism of mechanic-empiricist conceptions—among other things, for their linear conception of causal relationship, for their inability to adequately explain change and movement, and for their remaining with what appears to us as given—runs through an important part of his work. The present critique, directed mainly at areas of what today we would call physics and biology, seeks not only to inquire about the metaphysical presuppositions that characterize scientific thought both today and then, but also to show that science, as it is, does not tell the entire story. Indeed, accounting for movement when it comes to bodies that we consider inert, or when it comes to the formation of living beings, requires for Schelling considering a deep activity, constitutive of what exists, and not only to account for what appears before our eyes as given fact and, in that sense, fixed in more or less permanent results. The fundamentally active and interacting, changing character of the real is precisely what Schelling foregrounds and what makes his philosophy relevant for the current era—in the discourse about both scientific knowledge and accepted facts. Today, neglecting these dynamic characteristics of nature conditions proposals that result, for example, in reducing the complexity of the behavior and morphology of living beings to isolated traits, focusing solely on function in terms of survival, and ignoring the weight of evolutionary inheritance and the way in which this inheritance conditions currently present characters.[8]

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[6] "The 'Highest Truth,' the truth of speculative idealism, the identity of thought and being," in the words of Žižek. See Slavoj Žižek, *The Abyss of Freedom* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 10.

[7] F.W.J. Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, trans. Jason M. Wirth (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), xxxv.

[8] Stephen Gould and Richard Lewontin, "The Spandrels of San Marco and the Panglossian Paradigm: A Critique of the Adaptationist Programme," *Proc. R. Soc. London* B 205 (1979).

Faced with the shortcomings of mechanic-empiricist conceptions, Schelling presents an open path: not only is there an intimate correspondence between spirit and nature that allows knowing the latter; additionally, as he affirms in *The Ages of the World*, thanks to Kant there awoke a "dynamic spirit" that would allow both science and philosophy to be endowed with content. For Schelling, this course implies two main paths: one that takes contradiction as its axis, visibly linked to notions of the attractive and repulsive forces of the natural philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and one that perhaps less evidently presents a construction of the real linked to the notion of epigenesis.

The Two-Force Model

The topic of contradiction appears in *Naturphilosophie* linked to the question both of movement and the limits of science. In fact, in the *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*, movement occupies a prominent place, as if, in opposition to the picture of nature drawn by many researchers of his time, Schelling wanted to show all of its vitality and generative capacity and wanted to do this because, in his words, in the mechanistic framework, motion can only be caused by motion and so on *ad infinitum*. Empiricism, and with it mechanism, sees natural objects as something given, already finished, and not as something in constant change, in a process of becoming. Now, although change and permanence were of course an old problem in the field of philosophy, alongside the developments in science of the eighteenth century a multitude of new models for this duality were proposed. In particular, in natural philosophy there were by this time a number of approaches to the problem of motion in terms of a two-force model going back to, at least, Newton, followed by, among many others, Hales, Buffon, and of course Kant.

Newton, in the *Opticks*,[9] speaks of attraction and repulsion as the two types of short-range forces between particles and gives examples of phenomena caused by them. His speculations gave rise to a research program in the theory of matter and in chemistry, within which Stephen Hales stands out as one of the first authors to speak of a force other than attraction. In his *Vegetable Staticks* of 1727 he makes the repulsive force an essential element of the economy of nature, claiming that if only the force of attraction existed, the whole of nature would soon be transformed into an "unactive cohering lump."

> Wherefore it was absolutely necessary, in order to the [sic] actuating and enlivening this vast mass of attracting matter, that there should be every where intermixed with it a due proportion of strongly repelling

[9] Isaac Newton, *Opticks* (New York: Dover Publications, [1704] 1979).

> elastick particles, which might enliven the whole mass, by the incessant action between them and the attracting particles.[10]

A series of authors elaborated speculations and even calculations about the interaction between these two forces in an endeavor that took form, during the second half of the eighteenth century, in the systems of Boscovich and Buffon. Specifically, the latter argued in 1774 that the fundamental forces of nature are two: gravity and heat; the equilibrium between these two diametrically opposed forces allows them to balance without destroying each other, thus originating all the phenomena of the universe.[11]

According to Stengers, the history of science and philosophy is contingent in the sense that it cannot be explained in the traditional way of an orthodox philosophy of science, i.e., by making of description a mere deduction. But this does not mean that it is arbitrary: the problems and significations of science and philosophy cannot simply be reduced to context. "The contingent process invites us to 'follow' it, each effect being both a prolongation and a reinvention."[12] Schelling's interest in the sciences of his time itself does just that: it prolongs and reinvents models and propositions that are part of his milieu, making them a fertile ground for his own natural-philosophical conceptions.

Hence Schelling reinvents the two-force model. He criticizes its point of view, claiming that it considers only the product, or what already is, and cannot adequately account for change, i.e., the object in its becoming and movement. This concern leads him to postulate a dynamic system in which there is necessarily wavering between productivity and product, between activity and result. For Schelling it was necessary to account for a continuous re-production process in which absolute permanence is only a deceptive appearance. To address this, he intends to explain movement as a result of movement, yes, but also as a result of rest: "Nature is movement while also at rest; this is the foremost fundamental principle of dynamic philosophy" (SW III: 24–27).[13] If for Buffon the equilibrium between heat and gravity, expansion and attraction, originates all the phenomena of the universe, for Schelling there is an alternation between contraction and expansion that is matter itself. In other words, forces are not something imposed on matter from outside, but are something whose alternation rather constitutes matter. In this process, productivity becomes product through a limitation of its

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[10] Stephen Hales, *Vegetable Staticks* (London: Oldbourne, [1727] 1961), 178.
[11] Georg-Louis Leclerc Buffon, "Des éléments : Introduction à l'histoire des minéraux," in *Œuvres complètes de Buffon Tome I* (Paris: Furne et Cie., [1774] 1839).
[12] Stengers, *Invention of Modern Science*, 82.
[13] F.W.J. Schelling, *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Keith R. Peterson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 22 fn.

activity, which results in a rest that is, however, only apparent: the permanent in nature is only a relative and momentary limitation of its own activity, so that the product is never absolutely fixed, finished, but is continuously in reproduction. Here, movement and productivity are identified: the productive activity of nature is already movement. And from the beginning, for Schelling, the approach to the subject implies fundamental duplicities in contrast to which identity is equivalent to absolute permanence, rest, and inactivity, that is, to what Schelling considers the product of natural activity but not that activity itself.

Whether it is countless constant beginnings or a productivity that never stagnates—except ephemerally in the product—the duality of expansion and attraction and, more generally, of an expansive drive and a retarding one, is constituted as the starting point of this undertaking. If nature can be a unity of multiplicity and if something can be distinguished in it, it is because its original identity is canceled—that is, nature is canceled as pure productivity in the original diremption of nature.

The original diremption sets nature in motion. It establishes a fundamental dualism that is characterized—like the movement of forces in the natural philosophy of the time—by an encounter of opposing tendencies that waver and recur in alternation. They have to do so because otherwise they would only annihilate each other, as Schelling maintains in the *First Outline*. Wavering, in contrast, allows the outset of movement, of productivity: "In the pure productivity of nature absolutely nothing is distinguishable without diremption; it is only productivity dualized in itself that gives the product" (SW III: 297).[14] In the world thus presented, dualization appears as necessary for the manifestation of productivity in the product and as the condition of all formation.

Movement in nature, Schelling explains, is a continuous effort to reach and recover the identity dissolved by the antithesis arising in the original productivity. Identity and cancellation of identity mutually require each other for movement to be; without the effort to achieve the first, or without the opposition to that effort that constitutes the second, everything would come to a standstill: "Nature is an activity that constantly strives toward identity, an activity, therefore, which in order to endure as such, constantly presupposes the antithesis" (SW III: 309).[15] The product never cancels the original duality that permeates the entire process; on the contrary, it is the persistence of this duality that allows the constant emergence of new products, the development of an "infinitely progressive formation" (SW III: 310).[16] Thus, the duality

[14] Schelling, "Introduction to the Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature," *First Outline*, 212.
[15] Schelling, "Introduction to the Outline," *First Outline*, 220 fn.
[16] Schelling, "Introduction to the Outline," *First Outline*, 221.

established from the original diremption functions as a motor that not only "enlivens the whole mass," as Hales had described, but also enlivens the very existence and organization of the natural world.

Epigenesis and History

In *The Ages of the World* (1815), the question of movement with contradiction as its motor and, with it, the deeper significance of the account Kant provides in his *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (1786), receives a slightly different treatment. The "infinitely progressive formation" of *Naturphilosophie* appears more clearly as a process in which something that follows is articulated with something that precedes: "Not only human events but the history of nature has its monuments"—says Schelling—"and one can surely say that they do not abandon on their wide path of creation any stage without leaving behind something to indicate them" (SW VIII: 202).[17] In a history also marked by contradiction, he begins his narrative with the primal living being as something indeterminate capable of developing by itself—thanks its own impulse and will and according to laws of its own—to give rise to the present world in which we live.

It is a true organic construction, very close in its conception to the way in which Blumenbach, the naturalist who influenced Kant so much, theorized the formation of living beings. Now, in the field of the study of living beings, a controversy had been taking place since the middle of the eighteenth century. Some authors argued that the mechanic model was unable to explain, from only matter and movement conceived as external to them, the way living beings originate—that is, the model is incapable of explaining so immanently. Recognition of this inability led some mechanists to postulate a theory of preexisting germs according to which, rather than being produced or generated, the germs of all living beings—past, present, and future—had been created by God at the beginning of time, were encapsulated within each other, and were waiting only for the propitious moment to develop. Various naturalists opposed this view, and Blumenbach was among those who most clearly expressed themselves in this regard. "There is no such thing in nature as preexisting organized germs,"[18] he maintained, instead proposing a gradual formation of living being from unorganized matter—a formation that occurs thanks to the fact that the unorganized matter of generation "falls under the influence" of a *nisus* or effort in such a way that "the prepared, but at the same time unorganized rudiments of the foetus, first begins to be gradually

[17] Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, xxxvii.
[18] J. F. Blumenbach, *An Essay on Generation* (London: T. Cadell, Faulder, Murray, and Creech, 1792), 20.

organized when it arrives at its place of destination at a due time, and the necessary circumstances. This is the doctrine of Epigenisis [sic]."[19]

A central characteristic of epigenesis in these theories is the gradualness with which it conceives the formation of living being, the way in which, precisely as Schelling presents it, the past becomes the basis and material for the construction of the present and future. It could be said of epigenesis, as of the development of being, that "no present is possible that is not founded on a decisive past and that no past is possible that is not based on the present as something overcome" (SW VIII: 259).[20] Schelling pictures here a process in which things go through different moments, successive stages that lead them to maturity, and the examples he presents are often of living beings: "Every kind of life is a succession and concatenation of states in which everything prior is the ground, the mother, the birthing potency, of everything posterior" (SW VIII: 260).[21]

There is another aspect in which the development of being as presented by Schelling in *The Ages of the World* seems to take up and elaborate anew the processes of epigenesis. In order to account for the self-organizing capacity of living beings, Blumenbach proposes the existence of a *nisus formativus* or *Bildungstrieb*, a kind of drive or effort whose nature is as unknowable as Newtonian gravity.[22] But it is only the existence of this drive, affirms the naturalist, that makes it possible to explain why unorganized matter acquires all those forms "corresponding to, and equally numerous with the endless differences in the purposes which organized bodies and their parts are destined to fulfill."[23] The living being, unlike inert matter, has its own internal teleology, purposes, and laws according to which it produces itself and the members of its species. Similarly, the world's becoming process in the past of the *Ages* is also characterized by an internal teleology. In the introduction to this text, speaking of primal nature, Schelling affirms the oldest being, the being that no other precedes:

> It can develop itself, insofar as it develops itself, only freely, out of its own drive and conation, purely out of itself. But it does not develop lawlessly but only in accordance with laws. There is nothing arbitrary

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[19] Blumenbach, *An Essay on Generation*, 5.
[20] Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 42.
[21] Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 43.
[22] Blumenbach says so explicitly: "The expression Formative Nisus, like that of Attraction, serves only to denote a power, whose constant operation is known from experience but whose cause, like the causes of most of the qualities of matter, is a *qualitas occulta* to us" (Blumenbach, *An Essay on Generation,* 20–21). He quotes Newton in the footnote attached to these lines.
[23] J. F. Blumenbach, *A Manual of the Elements of Natural History* (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1825), 11.

> in it. It is a nature in the most complete understanding of the word. (SW VIII: 199–200)[24]

The primal nature, an aspect of God and finally its ground, needs to be, however, a nature "in the most complete understanding of the word"—to access expressibility, as Schelling will later call it—of a complex dynamic not only between spirit, nature, and the union of both, but, previously, of an interaction between its three powers (the affirmer, the denier, and the unity of both). This interaction gives rise to an eternal rotary movement of contractive and expansive forces from which arises in primal nature a longing: the "eternally commencing life" (SW VIII: 239)[25] wishes to get out of involuntary movement and distress. And then "that which is higher, magically, so to speak, rouses in that life the yearning for freedom" (SW VIII: 239),[26] the longing for being; the spirit represents to primal nature that against which it can become a being. With this longing, nature can then refer itself to something superior, and a separation takes place that becomes permanent when

> eternal nature, placed into freedom by the confirmed cision itself, is able to decide. And now, by virtue of an eternal wanting or decision, it eternally and inseparably allies itself to the highest as its immediate subject and becomes its unwavering Being, its abiding substratum. (SW VIII: 241)[27]

Thanks to this great decision, nature gains access to the possibility of expressing itself. Thus, in the process by which the world comes to be, desires and decisions of both primal nature and spirit intervene. According to Welchman and Norman, since both nature and the godhead are aspects of God, "the longing [of the primal nature] is really God longing for himself."[28] On the other hand, they add, God freely makes the decision to recognize primal nature in his desire to be, and as a result it becomes the ground of God's existence. If the life of the world is an involution of nature and spirit,[29] if the interaction between them gives rise to the world we know, the ends and laws of this development cannot be external to the very development of the natural world conditioned by that interaction.

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[24] Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, xxxv.
[25] Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 27.
[26] Schelling, *The Ages of the World,* 28.
[27] Schelling, *The Ages of the World,* 29.
[28] Alistair Welchman and Judith Norman, "Creating the Past: Schelling's *Ages of the World*," *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 4 (2010): 34.
[29] See Steigerwald, *Experimenting at the Boundaries of Life,* 29.

This process of development of the natural world, torn by the contradictions that incessantly drive it, possesses its own immanent teleology: it is not subject to a necessity that inevitably had to be, but is rather a result of decisions that from a non-deliberate urgency go on progressing until becoming free decisions of the divinity. The course is not, then, predetermined, but is not arbitrary either. We are not here before Newton's capricious god,[30] nor before Leibniz's god subjected to the principle of sufficient reason. It is a development that has occurred and continues to occur, in which the divinity finds in itself a dynamic of opposition that—thanks to the interplay of the first potency, eternal nature; the second potency, spirit; and the third, the world soul that links them and through which God acts in the natural and spiritual world—gives it ground and consequently allows it to reveal itself freely, not canceling the necessity but giving it its rightful place in its self-construction process. As in *Naturphilosophie*, the architectonic model of nature in *The Ages of the World* is the living being that has its own ends and that, according to those ends, gradually develops and becomes complex.

Also, as in *Naturphilosophie*, the engine of this development is a contradiction, understood more generally as the opposition between forces or contrary drives. According to Schelling, without this general, non-logical contradiction there would be no movement, and there would be neither life nor progress. And this contradiction will here too receive epigenetic treatment. In effect, the architectonic and historical articulation in the development process—the way in which what comes later is linked to what came earlier—involves both the movement arising from the struggle of forces and the subsequent attempt of nature, at a given moment, to achieve peace, an attempt that in turn implies a separation of the opposing forces, that is, an articulation that takes place when they occupy their rightful place in one of them recognizing the other as superior. This struggle for a peace that can never be attained echoes, once more, the words of Hales mentioned above: if the force of attraction alone existed, everything would become an *inactive* lump. But now there is a relationship between forces that is not just hierarchical—that is, above all, a relationship in time. While "A is equal to x" and "B is equal to x" exclude each other if it is affirmed that this equality occurs at the same time—or if A and B are the same as x, or if x is A and x is B simultaneously—Schelling

[30] As can be seen, among other places, in the correspondence between Leibniz and Clarke, for Newton, God must exercise a continuous and vigilant action so the world does not degenerate into chaos; through this intervention, God becomes present in the world in the manner of a king who disposes and orders everything. In contrast to the Leibnizian god who adheres to the principle of sufficient reason, the Newtonian god seems to be a capricious being who only follows his own will in deciding, for example, to create a portion of matter in one place, and another in another. See G. W. Leibniz and Samuel Clarke, *Correspondence* (Hacket Publishing: Indianapolis, 2000); see also Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1957).

is speaking of a relationship in which, given A, B subsists also as given—in which A and B, opposites, are at the same time in different times.

> Different times […] can certainly be, as different, at the same time, nay, to speak more accurately, they are necessarily at the same time. Past time is not sublimated time. What has past certainly cannot be as something present, but it must be as something past at the same time with the present. (SW VIII: 302)[31]

The notion of ground, the foundation on which living being and the whole of what exists is built, is essential here. Contradiction is resolved by the ground: God is an entity at the same time as a negation and as an affirmation, but the first precedes, grounds, the latter, which therefore remains as grounded. We are thus faced with a contradiction that is no longer just a relationship between two terms (each the logical negation of the other), but a relationship in which, in an epigenetic movement, one of the terms becomes the basis and antecedent of the other, which, consequently, becomes posterior to and fruit of the first. These are opposites that can exist at the same time, however, because existence in the presence of the second not only does not suppress the first but rather presupposes it. This motor that acts constructively from the undifferentiated to the differentiated also explains why the movement of being is always ascending, since time and time again it lays a base that will later be surpassed by a new development, and this development will in turn eventually be surpassed. The notion of ground also makes it possible to explain the unity of opposites in a way different from that of *Naturphilosophie*: negation and affirmation, recast as (for example) attraction and expansion, make up a unit not only because one would not exist without the other, but also because, thanks to the relation of grounding, it is possible for both to exist at the same time without cancelling each other or losing their differences.

We encounter here, then, a model for the relationship of mind and world—not only in terms of its structure but in the dynamic process of its construction from the interplay of opposites that can collide with each other or form a unit, all without ceasing to be mutually opposed. Both through the scission and in a tense unity, Schelling presents contradiction as that which allows movement again and again. It is this contradiction that brings life with it, that involves moments of violence and crisis, that causes fissures that pierce nature's entirety. It is thanks to opposition that the world develops and its different beings appear. But, at least when it comes to primordial nature, Schelling warns that "the cision of forces can never become a complete cision because the limit should be spared and the first negation and restriction should

[31] Schelling, *The Ages of the World,* 76.

be retained" (SW VIII: 279).[32] Although "everything that lives is only conceived and born in violent struggle" (SW VIII: 322),[33] and the multiplicity of nature is inexplicable for him from the peaceful coexistence of the various forces, it is the introduction of the epigenetic element that allows the system to continue being—and being dynamically productive—by using the strife of opposition as fuel for creativity. Indeed, even when Schelling seems to be in dialogue with Hales when he says that "in point of fact, everything in nature becomes only through development, that is, through the constant contradiction of a swathing, contracting force. Left to itself, nature would still lead everything back into that state of utter negation" (SW VIII: 244),[34] and agreeing with him that something is needed to balance attraction or else everything would stop, the truth is that if only the expansive force existed, everything would disintegrate and arrive, by this route also, at absolute rest—at death. In this sense, contradiction never causes wounds—fissures—that tear apart the real completely. The past acts as Blumenbach's germinal matter, ensuring that the ground on which living being is built is always present, overcome but not canceled, and functioning as tissue conferring unity to the opposites while connecting, but never totally closing, the wounds opened by contradiction time and again in the course of the vital process of being.

In this process, and despite the connecting function of the past, the primal fissure and the successive ones are always present or opening. And these are fissures between yes and no, attraction and expansion, gravity and light, positive and negative, affirmation and negation; dualism is, as we have said, what drives the construction of reality. But what about hues and nuances? Is there a world whose construction is possible from the interplay not only of dualities but of multitudes? If, as Schelling claims, the opposites can be at the same time, that is, if they can constitute a productive unity, why not unities not limited to dichotomies, perhaps even more productive?

Indeed, Schelling struggles with conceptual elements that seem precluded from his vision; it seems particularly telling that in the middle of his most insistent presentation of the contrariety of the world in its different ages, there emerges a provocation to find "intermediate concepts" (SW VIII: 286),[35] the call to think beyond the false understanding that the conciliation of opposites is stating that "yes is no." The productive wavering is clearly not the nonsensical collapse of contradiction; nevertheless, it seems necessary to avoid not only the "flagrant extremes" of the oppositions, but the flattening of the manifestation of the world into the single line between the extremes of contradiction that, even if it is subtly graduated, loses the opportunity of

[32] Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 58.
[33] Schelling, *The Ages of the World,* 91.
[34] Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 31.
[35] Schelling, *The Ages of the World,* 64.

thinking radically about the "merely various." This is why we contrast Schelling's system with that of Whitehead, taking into account their common trends but stressing the points in which the notion of contradiction, even when modulated into the oppositions that go beyond mere logical negation, seems to burst at the seams.

We have found it useful to think about what we have called *a fissure*. It is an ambiguous image: something that breaks, but neither completely nor cleanly. It can be mended relatively easily; and beneath it, even if it runs deep, the echo of continuity is never gone. A fissure can be shown superficially, but one can only speculate what goes on in its depths; and as Lorraine Daston notes in our epigraph, even if we had instruments to probe it, we would only be fabricating even more surfaces. If we tried to dig a fissure out, it would keep eluding. A fissure is also compatible with but not equivalent to an opposition; for the nature of a fissure calls for possible oppositions between the complementary surfaces on each side of it, but one side can never disappear or be reduced to a wavering between two opposed states, never ultimately resolved. The importance of each side is only relative, dictated by a valuation.

A fissure, despite what can be initially thought, is something that can unite: it is a shape on a surface that creates different zones that could have been otherwise and that puts those zones in contrast—not necessarily in opposition—with each other. The unity that it creates is the big picture. It is a notion that resonates deeply with different ideas suggested by Schelling. But here there is no yearning and no overcoming of the separation, and, above all, no ultimate way of considering the relationship of duality and unity. Unity is not a higher state, but an inseparable part of the process of constitution; everything (the fissure, the whole, the parts and the shapes) must be valued by everything and everyone involved. And we know well that two accounts of exactly the same fact will be radically, inescapably different, depending on the valuations of the different witnesses.

A Brief Meditation on Whitehead's Concepts

To further explain the concept of fissure, and to contrast it with the notion of opposition, it is necessary to describe, at least in a cursory manner, some of Whitehead's concepts. We will risk giving an account that simplifies the dense web of different ingredients that compose his system, and the multiplicity of ways that these ingredients interlock with each other; and then we will work toward the notion of contrast—a feature of Whitehead's metaphysics that speaks of a unity between things that are different but in no way incompatible or opposed. We consider that this metaphysical element, and the notions associated with it, are a neuralgic point in the comparison of these two complicated systems. It gives rise to a series of similarities, in which Schelling

and Whitehead profoundly agree, but highlights the parts in which they stress different values of the constitution of reality.

For Whitehead, everything starts and ends with actual entities. In one of those insistent passages that sometimes surface in Whitehead's writing, he states his ontological principle thus: "In separation from actual entities there is nothing, merely nonentity—'The rest is silence.'"[36] In other words, "'actual entities'—also termed 'actual occasions'—are the final real things of which the world is made up. There is no going behind actual entities to find anything more real."[37] But do not assume that any and everything we perceive as real and tangible (the cat and the mat she is sitting on, the light from a nebula, the invasion of a country or the country we know as Ukraine) is in itself an actual entity. True, these partake of and depend on the actual entities that compose it as a recognizable whole, and on their characteristics; they are indeed in a process of constant change. But they are not the drops of existence and experience that are the central point of Whitehead's system.

The nature of these drops of existence, these actual entities, can be better understood by considering the synonym stated in the quote above: "actual occasion." An actual entity is never a fixed thing, but is inseparable from the process that gives rise to it. It is a process that has an ordered series of steps: an actual entity first emerges as a nucleus of pure potentiality that gradually becomes more concrete, with the help of all of the feelings it feels when experiencing its surrounding universe. It then takes these feelings and gives them different importance, deciding what is relevant and how. This, and no other, is the famous "process" that titles Whitehead's technical masterwork, and it culminates with its "satisfaction": a point of pure actuality in which nothing else can be decided and all is determined. The entity is now ready to perish, but—a small consolation—it achieves immortality when it is felt by other entities that succeed it and integrate that specific feeling into their own constitution. This process is in some sense out of time; one cannot set up any instrument to catch the incomplete actual entity, red-handed, in some stage of its own constitution.

Already we can see some kinship with Schelling's ideas about the constitution of reality. The deep, radical past that Schelling sketched time and again is not a prehistorical but empirically accessible moment, but a primal point in time in which two forces find an unsteady balance in their opposition before they can be expressed fully in our world. Also, there is an unmistakable agreement in their willingness to allow the elements of reality at large the possibility of deciding.

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[36] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Free Press, 1978), 43.

[37] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 18.

How can reality at large decide? Decision is supposed to be, at least colloquially, an election, meditated or visceral, between alternatives. It seems to presuppose knowledge—at least of said alternatives. But whereas in Schelling the decision goes on from a kind of blind urgency of the forces that initially make up reality to a free decision by God to express himself, in Whitehead's system a decision embodies that which we (and any other entity) receive from the world around us—something simply given, something that is a brute, irreducible fact. We can take this notion of the given in our hands and turn it to see some of its facets to better understand it. For example, this "givenness" is simply another name for the pure actuality, the final manifestation of the complicated process of the constitution of every drop of reality. As such, it forces us to land squarely in the realm of what William James called "stubborn facts," leaving aside the urge to imbibe anything and everything with universals. It speaks of the importance of the particular fact; the notion of "grave injustice" might stir feelings in us, but if a particular injustice is done to us we experience it as a direct fact—and the results for everyone involved are radically different in their concreteness. "Bradley's[38] doctrine—Wolf-eating-Lamb as a universal qualifying the absolute—is a travesty of the evidence. That wolf eat that lamb at that spot at that time: the wolf knew it; the lamb knew it; and the carrion birds knew it."[39]

Contrary to the current understanding of the activity of science, which dictates that the sciences represent the real facts, Whitehead describes scientific endeavor as going beyond mere fact, as a way to unearth the web of relations (for example, of causality) that are not properly expressed in the final, actual presentation of any fact. Simply put, science makes theories. But it must always retain a link to that stubborn fact that is not informed by rational analysis but is just "given" and thus irrational. The reversal that this causes for Whitehead is almost comic; science is based on the hope that rationalism works … and is, for that reason, a matter of pure faith.

This idea goes a long way toward structuring reality. Givenness is positioned as the correlative of potentiality. That is, something given is what really, in fact, happened at some point. It is not what might have happened; what has not happened but might have happened does not enter what is given. This is precisely the decision, the cutting off, the separating, of that which did happen from the rejected, infinite potential that might have but did not. This

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[38] Francis Herbert Bradley (1846–1924) was harshly criticized by both Whitehead (as seen in this quote) and William James for his idealist views, in which he disparaged immediate, raw sense perception, preferring absolute and universal notions. See William James, *Writings, 1902–1910* (New York, N.Y: Library of America, 1987), particularly his essay "Bradley or Bergson?," 1266–271. As seen in this quote, for Whitehead and James, this left out a richness of the concrete, the all-important sheer fact.

[39] Whitehead, *Process and Reality,* 43.

is how decision works in a dynamical, spontaneous but active fashion. It is the process by which the entities, in their concrescence, deplete bit by bit their own potentiality, sacrifice what will not be but could have been in order to achieve the final presentation of fact. In a way, the process of decision is indeed the past, since everything that we actually see (and generally feel) presupposes that it has already gone through this process. Like Schelling, this past is not the chronological sequential steps of actual reality, but something that cannot have been seen and yet still shimmers through everything in the present. In Whitehead's system, however, the past is not a primordial ordering of a dynamic of forces, but an atomized multitude of universes that were just here, almost within reach of our senses, but are now gone.

We must pause for a moment to make a crucial distinction between the notion of experience in the two systems that we are contrasting. Experience (including the experienced past) is, for Schelling and Whitehead both, the way that the world gives itself to that which experiences. For Whitehead, however, experience does not only participate in the process of building knowledge of the world, as Schelling would have it, but informs the very process of coalescing of each entity in the world. Experience is literally taken as an ingredient in every entity's being in the process of actualizing itself, and thus it has a particularly strong ontological role. Experience is not limited to the realm of knowledge or of consciousness. Its content is not only modified and structured by the experiencing entity, but *valued*; and in turn, the experienced entity is affected not only as the receiver of data about the world, but as the receiver of the ingredients for its own ontological becoming—including experiencing its own immediately past self. An important consequence is that the process of experiencing the world is, for each entity, a pre-individual event. From this, one can conclude two important things that may well be the key points of departure that reside in the base of our contrast of the two systems. Firstly, each entity needs to "feel" the experience of the whole world in all its complexity, and that means that there is no stage in which a simple, undifferentiated potency needs an opposing foil in order to develop the world, but instead each entity receives and values everything, all at once. And secondly, the ontological integration of the world in the process of the formation of each entity considers the "outside" world and integrates it in its own being, and thus the fundamental opposition between subject and objective world, between a being and its outside, becomes fluid and permeable, and must be reconceptualized.

All of the above does not mean, however, that deep, fundamental dichotomies and oppositions must be thrown out the window in favor of a fluid world with no clear distinctions. There are, to be sure, momentous decisions in ontological terms: to be, or not to be. Indeed, the posing of that question as an affirmation and negation (and implicitly as the opposition

between contradictory alternatives, and their coming together as one in the process of decision, akin to Schelling's ideas) is what marks higher forms of consciousness, according to Whitehead.[40] All of these ingredients form what Whitehead calls a contrast: a unity of differences, put together by the act of being experienced in togetherness. "Being" and "not being" is one of the most important contrasts. In the manner of Schelling, Whitehead suggests that affirmation and negation are completely meaningless without each other. There is a logical soundness to the idea that reality is made of opposed impulses, and to the mode in which these two primal forces integrate with each other and qualify anything.

For Schelling, the dynamics of opposites, cast in a productive tension, seems to be enough for the world to spring forth with its deep complexity, at least at a fundamental level. This gives nature immanent features, such as having a radical origin in an undifferentiated unity, as well as the possibility to keep reaching for it, but internally it is still produced by agonistic drives. The union must be between radically, undoubtedly distinct elements, so that productive tension is generated and, in later works, so that there can emerge a "strange logic of indifference" in which two elements of any given opposition can be absolutely in themselves, each in its own. Duality, then, is the seed of all differentiation, and beyond or below that, there is only the absolute of indifference (see SW VII: 406–407).[41] The importance of the dual relationship of opposition is evident when he explicitly comments: the concept of a connection is "much too weak for the thoughts that should be expressed [in the *Ages*]" (SW VIII: 213).[42] Different manifestations of a fact or an enduring element of reality are, for him, merely variations, and "the merely various can also connect" (SW VIII: 213), without being truly the opposition he strives for.

But why should the monumental pairs, freedom and nature, gravity and light, and ultimately affirmation and negation, be the only encounters that should be taken that seriously? With all of their shared features and among all the differences between them, this is one of the most radical ways in which Whitehead parts ways with Schelling. The "merely various" is an ingredient as important as God or as the last, completely decided, actual entities. "In order to discover some of the major categories," he says, "we must appeal to

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[40] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 267.

[41] 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). For further reflections contrasting Whitehead with Schelling, specifically a sketch of the conception of evil in Whitehead's philosophy, see Agustín Mercado Reyes and Siobhan Guerrero McManus, *Fragmentos: cuatro ensayos de pensamiento ambiental* (Mexico: CEIICH-UNAM, 2020), particularly chapter 4, "Mal Ecológico."

[42] Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 7.

evidence relating to every variety of occasion. Nothing can be omitted, experience drunk and experience sober, experience drowsy and experience wide-awake, experience anxious and experience carefree, experience normal and experience abnormal."[43] (We have omitted ten or so additional pairs that are as entertaining and interesting to think about as the ones we quoted.) One can plainly see that these modes of experience, and modes needed to think about them, are not as clear-cut as being/not-being. One cannot *be* "just a little," but one can be tipsy, not sober but not drunk either. A contrast can unite the opposites, but also works on the different, on the merely various, to make them a feeling that an entity incorporates in its process of decision making. Briefly, for Whitehead, the dynamics in which forces enter a productive tension are equally important as to how these dynamics are felt by the entities that witness that encounter.

Furthermore, these forces are not necessarily oppositions. One contrast can be, for example, that which emerges when we witness something a particular shade of gold next to something a particular shade of red. That contrast "cannot be repeated as that contrast between any other pair of colours, or any pair of sounds, or between a colour and a sound."[44] It is a unique, unrepeatable union in an experience. Yet it is open for everyone. Everyone can take it the way each pleases; that is to say, any entity can value its relevance and mode as it better suits it. It can also form complexes with other contrasts. Red-and-gold can inform, for example, contrasts between musical harmonies, as happens in the synaesthetic musical systems of Alexander Scriabin or of Olivier Messiaen, both of whom associated juxtapositions of chords with color progressions. In something superficial and apparently subjective, from a secondary quality, Whitehead finds a rich ontological universe that can produce infinite modes of being.

A Fissure in Reality

A fissure is a very superficial thing; by definition it does not separate fully, but creates a new organization on an otherwise continuous surface. This event in itself is momentous, because the surface instantly becomes part of a potential not fully expressed. A fissured continuity is no longer sustainable in absolute terms. A crack has appeared in actuality. But it is equally important to note that continuity still resides deep in the fissured material: as a past event from which the fissured present is derived, something may reappear in a reconfiguration of the fissure that can be fused or healed, and more importantly, as the

[43] Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Free Press, 1933), 226.
[44] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 228.

potential for the emergence of more fissures, differently organized in the surface but related in the unseen depth.

Conceptually, this means that the facts and categories of both the world and our conception of the world can be carved in unlimited ways. A fissure marks a border between the two chunks of matter in which it has appeared, but it is a conceptual decision to regard each side as forming the sides of an opposition. Not only can the fissure appear in various ways in a surface and in doing so generate diverse structuring of the resulting plane; but once appeared, a fissure organizes sides that can be thought along the lines of different relationships.

Take, for example, the political division between us and them. If we say, "we have an interest in Schelling," are you, reader, being included? Are you with us, or one of them? Should you be offended if you were not included? Yásnaya Aguilar[45] points out that in mixe, a language spoken in the northern part of the state of Oaxaca, there is indeed a separation between *ëëts*, a "we" that includes the listener, and *atom*, a "we" that excludes them. The fracture that appears in invoking a first-person plural reveals itself to be iridescent, precisely because of its plurality, of the process of "many becoming one and being increased by one." Are you, reader, standing right on a fissure? Inside of the language we are conversing in right now, you only have contextual cues and guesswork to decide. A fissure can mark a separation. But in some conditions, this separation is revealed as superficial, while in the depths a host of unseen dynamics can happen. I can no longer even be sure if the relationship expressed in the fissure is one of opposition; it can be, in the most radical way, riddled with ambiguities that threaten the stability of the division. What is really happening, as Aguilar goes on to point out as she develops her account of the two pronouns, is that a fissure, regardless of the superficial separation, can problematize identity and self, even of the one who creates the fissure.

As is attested by someone who does not know where they are after the fissure cracks a surface—as you do not know where you stand when we say "we"—a fissure might be narrow, but it need not be empty. We don't mean to delve into the labyrinth of the continuum, in which thinkers have been lost for centuries, but it is important to think what processes can take place (and are in effect taking place, being actualized) in a fissure.[46] The surface that divides opens the possibility of new processes on the inside, because a surface that cracks on a superficial level but remains in a state of exchange in the potential

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[45] Elena Yásnaya Aguilar Gil, "Ëëts, Atom: Algunos apuntes sobre la identidad indígena," *Revista de la Universidad* (September 2017), 17–24.

[46] Schelling has suggested as much in the passage cited above (SW VIII: 286), in which he calls for intermediate concepts that point to "the truth that does not lie in flagrant extremes" of, for example, being / not being.

depths opens the way for the integration of new elements in the gap that lies between. A fissure may be superficially empty, but it may very well be a zone of interchange between two individuals that are not distinguished except by a vague difference in pattern. In the actual, natural world, we can readily find that a fissure, far from being a mere emptiness in space, a momentary break in matter, can be the structuring and driving force behind a novel, as yet unheard of process in nature. A fissure may even become a nuclear reactor.[47]

There is one last problematization of the character of opposition that the notion of fissure tries to think through and beyond. A fissure need not be a separation between two parts. Even in the most fundamental of apparent oppositions, the encounter between the two sides is felt as a contrast. A contrast is indeed a process in which two opposed elements become something unified, but that unification does not happen in itself, by virtue of an ontological transmutation caused by dueling forces, but by the feeling the contrast brings about in the entities that witness it—effectively, in every entity in the universe. Each opposition is contemplated in this way by a myriad regards, each of which synthesizes its own unified feeling of contrast. Thus, it is precisely unity (of the opposition) that is the place of the emergence of multiplicity and variety (as a feeling for each entity). This brings about a corollary: if contrasts are the unification of two different elements performed by a great number of different entities, each of these entities would place that contrast in a context; and in each of these contrasts different elements can be relevant for different entities. A contrast, moving beyond the agonistic tension of opposites, may incorporate different elements; a fissure, by its shape, can not only separate two sides but create ramifications that can delimit three or more elements.

To recap: the oppositional, productive tension between two fundamental forces of nature informs a way of thinking. It is only natural that it does so—especially in the realm of *Naturphilosophie*, in which thinkers try to take their cue from nature and mirror its order in their systems. However, it is inconvenient to reject the "merely various" as a fundamental point in the emergence of reality and experience, expressed as a fissure. The merely various are one of the clearer examples of gaining a foothold to understand that logical frameworks that turn around well-configured opposites are not completely appropriate to account for the richness of the world, with their inability to question the separation of the individual from its environment, the radical difference between active affirmation and active negation, and basic laws of

[47] We are thinking of the Oklo reactor in Gabon, a fissure in sandstone in which water has percolated and concentrated oxidized uranium from the ore embedded in the sedimentary rock, giving rise to a slow and self-controlled fission reaction. See John Maynard Smith and Eörs Szathmáry, *The Major Transitions in Evolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 18–20.

logic. It will be evident that there are common grounds between the need of going beyond the usual logic and various consequences proposed by Schelling—his non-synchronic coexistence between contradictory states, his proposal of opposition arising from the possibility of being both A and B (SW VIII: 213–14),[48] and especially his idea of a logic of indifference—but, in the end, Schelling still depended fundamentally on an agonistic mode of view which resolved itself either by a motion-producing wavering or by the casting of opposites into a strife for unity. This is evident in various places. For example, as he failed to see a real opposition, and especially a real resolution, into a unity in Spinoza's structuring notions of substance and attributes, Schelling deemed his predecessor's system as lacking life and progression (SW VIII: 340).[49] This critical appraisal of Spinoza is derived from Schelling's insistence on looking at the genesis and structure of beings through the lens of opposition; in the same passage, he tries to recast the attributes of extension (a contracting thesis) and thought (the expanding antithesis) as opposites, and then goes on to attempt the same movement with the general ordering of categories of substance as unity, and attributes as duality. In reality, one could say that Spinoza, at least in this respect, is a freer system, because it is not chained to the necessity of collapsing two opposites into a productive unity or mediation. Thought and extension can be, in a Cartesian mood, read as a couple of opposites; but for Spinoza, they are only the two exemplars of intelligibility that we humans are able to process. The realm of bodies and that of minds is not that of the ultimate two opposed drives, but of just two of an infinite variety of attributes of the substance. The only reason that they are all-important to us, and that they seem to be the fundamental pair, is that they are the only ones we can see.

Whitehead's system does not require such a collapse. The moment of unification is not a clash of opposed forces but a sort of contemplation by a singular entity, which incorporates all the contrasts and the patterns they suggest in its own being. A patterned world is constantly changing; contrasts emerge and fizzle away constantly, and in some way remain. We know it through the bumpy, indirect line of thinkers that swear that the past is always here even though it has passed. Fissures, then, appear and disappear and leave their ghosts for future fissures to echo in some ways.

A Radical Difference

We put forth the concept that we call fissure to think about nature and our own thoughts, because we are in agreement with the dictum that nature and

[48] Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 8.
[49] Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 105.

thought co-construct each other in a radical identity. If the construction takes place as pure conflagration, the effects in what we can think, what we can do, and what we are, are profound. If opposition—one can even say, violent confrontation—is the starting point of being, it does not take a great leap to consider this kind of relationship as the standard, and the brunt of peaceless unrest as the expected state of existence. Abstract concepts, which are related but may be seen as mutually exclusive, seem to be transmuted by this mood of violence. The infinite endlessly resists its finite manifestations, which in turn spring forth as a rejection of absolute freedom.

Schelling spells it out, as explicitly as possible:

> It is futile to attempt to explain the diversity in nature by the peaceful eisemplasy of various forces. Everything that becomes can only become in discontent. And just as anxiety is the fundamental sensation of every living creature, so, too, everything that lives is only conceived and born in violent struggle. (SW VIII: 322)[50]

Whitehead, in our view, expands the monochromatic beginning of being, and this expansion brings consequences with it. Schelling, in placing a strife front and center for the understanding of thought and nature, leaves us with a cosmic paradox: how can God take part in a creation in which Godself is bound to the inescapable pull of the two striving forces? Schelling preserves the strife between finite manifestation and eternal potency even in God, but in them the strife is transfigured into a freedom to manifest; only God escapes the push and pull of opposition by freely deciding. He is manifested, but God could have not been. Here we have not a traditional omnipotent God, controlling his creation from a perspective from beyond, but a God that exercises power through decision. Whitehead's God, though still central to the functioning of the universe, has the role of mediator, of ordering "eternal objects" that inform actuality and of permitting them to interact with the actual, finite world. God does not decide, at least not omnipotently. God merely serves as a reason why a world, in which actual entities are the only reasons, can feel the influence of pure, eternal concepts. God is even described as a "derivative notion."[51]

Aside from theological meandering, the central point here is that the different concepts of God reveal the central point of our argument. For Schelling, potency is revealed through the power of autonomous, free decision, granted only to God. Whitehead, on the other side, conceptualized a God that

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[50] Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 91.
[51] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 31.

is important but, as Cobb[52] argues, does not derive this importance from coercive power. This God is still an emperor who emits decisions, and Whitehead "thinks that finding God revealed in this kind of controlling power has done enormous damage in human history"—a timely warning, considering that still today humanity is bent on the idea that our power of intervention and the authority of scientific knowledge are our main tools for overcoming our various, global, current crises. Instead, Whitehead posits a God that does not control or coerce but finds its power in persuasion.

The placing of a diversity of relationships—of possible contrasts—as alternatives to the all-generating opposition reaches not only God, but the different facets of mind and matter: an open physical account that goes beyond attraction and repulsion; a view of life, not only in terms of an organism and its relationship with its own potencies, but also in its ecological potentiality; the manner in which we structure our account of the organic and inorganic world, no longer completely excised from each other; and the way that we manage our relationship with the others, which is to say, our political activities in the world.

Even when we are proposing looking beyond opposition, it should be clearly stated that we are not suggesting here that forceful power should not exist, or that, in itself, it carries the sign of an intrinsic moral character to be judged. This would be similar to thinking that Spinoza's subtle distinction, the difference between *potestas* and *potentia* that Negri[53] so emphasized, leads us to a scenario in which the brute power of *potestas* is always an undesirable abuse. Power as force simply is; even opposition is, as can plainly be seen every day, a real fact of existence. But to think of opposition as the primeval motor of a confrontation that makes everything—the organic, the inorganic, matter and mind, the temporal dimensions, the one and the others—spring forth sets the stage for a peculiar way of navigating existence. Power is there to exercise itself, but a responsible acceptance of this fact should include the consideration that it is only one mode of a non-denumerable wealth of contrasts.

Hannah Arendt[54] detected three general modes of political relationships, and two of them (imposition of one side over the other by force; and prevailing due to authority over rivals) can be productive, but often seem incapable of resolving opposition. There is a third mode, surely just one alternative among many more, to contrast to pure force and authority; it still touches on opposition, but handles it a different way, even making it so that it

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[52] John B. Cobb, *Whitehead Word Book: A Glossary with Alphabetical Index to Technical Terms in Process and Reality* (Anoka, MN: Process Century Press, 2015), 69.
[53] Antonio Negri, *The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza's Metaphysics and Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).
[54] Arendt, Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006).

is no longer recognizable as opposition. Though this mode is so seldom explored that we do not fully understand what it means exactly, it may lead us to other paths of inquiry and of being in the world with others; it is the possibility of patiently persuading, which requires accepting the risk of allowing ourselves to be persuaded.

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The Origami Fold: Nature as Organism in Schelling's Later Identity Philosophy

Michael Vater

affirmation, Böhme, copula, expression, freedom, nature, not-being, null-point of difference, Spinoza, will

From 1801–1807 Schelling continued to refine his early attempts at *Naturphilosophie* in the metaphysical framework of a transcendental Spinozism that he initially called Identity Philosophy. While mathematics and geometry provided the model for identity and its quantitative differentiation in early versions of identity theory, from 1804–1807, logic and theory of language offered a model of identity capable of unknotting persistent Spinozistic puzzles such as the connection between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*—the absolute and its potencies—and the ontological status of the individual. Schelling's initial concepts of identity as "indifference" or "the identity of identity and difference," themselves the offshoot of meditations on polarity and repeating structure in the philosophy of nature, make way for logical concepts such as "expression" or "affirmation" and the propositional operator "bond" or "*Position*" found in the copula. The new essays approach ultimate reality through Spinoza's disjunction of God or nature, or productive and produced nature; so in addition to identity theory, a general metaphysics of nature prefaces treatments of specific natural phenomena. These dual metaphysics of God and nature inject a dynamic or expressive movement into identity that is not yet the unfolding of identity as grounding-and-division that Schelling will articulate in the 1809 Freedom Essay, but it carries a sense of motion and differentiation—or evolution and unfolding—not found in his earlier attempts. The entire identity philosophy period is best viewed as a step in Schelling's lifelong project of reworking Spinoza by adding life and spirit to nature.

The darkness of gravity and the radiance of light ... first produce together the beautiful appearance of life and complete it to the point of ... actual reality.

—*Treatise on the Relation of the Real and the Ideal in Nature* (SW II: 369)[1]

Some ten years ago Milwaukee Country opened the final segment of the Hank Aaron trail, making it possible to bicycle from the shores of Lake Michigan to those of Lake Mendota, ninety miles inland. On a warm autumn afternoon, the reclaimed railroad bed was crowded with retirees. On one stretch of the trail, large origami cranes (*orizuru*) began to appear on the shrubbery bordering the trail every quarter mile or so. After fifteen cranes, one could finally see the benefactor, a frail man in his mid-eighties, hanging his work. The art that turns flat paper into a three-dimensional structure seemed an apt way to mark the bit of transcendence that the trail represented. Only later did I learn that the red-crowned crane is considered a mediator between the human and spirit worlds in Japanese culture. But why present the origami crane as a symbol of Schelling's later *Naturphilosophie,* itself a construct representing living nature? Both paper and nature are wholes that come to be articulated into dimensions and functions not by division into parts but by imposing structure or pattern upon them: the fold. The symmetry imparted by the fold mimics the organic body in the one case, giving the artifact the ability to mimic flight; in the other case, it suggests the polarity of forces that manifest in nature, and the ultimate unifying nonpolarity—or "null-point of difference"—that holds nature together. Will the paper crane fly? Will it fly us to the world of spirit?

While one can argue that *Naturphilosophie*'s "fold," the repeating pattern of the *Potenzen,* arose early on in a commonsensical way from the factual dependence of biology upon chemistry and chemistry upon physics, Schelling's endeavor in the identity-philosophy era is to depict nature along the lines of Plato's *Timaeus* as a living totality, self-originating and self-sustaining. Where earlier versions employed static mathematical or geometric models for the ontological *Urgestalt,* in 1804 Schelling switches to a dynamic model of speech or expression to suggest a nature that is powerful, self-caused, self-sustaining—like Spinoza's substance—and self-directed and self-organizing—like Kant's organism. In the decade from 1797 to 1807, Schelling tries to capture this powerful/forceful character of nature by framing its agentless agency in various ways:

[1] F.W.J. Schelling, "Treatise on the Relationship of the Real and the Ideal in Nature, or the Development of the First Principles of the Philosophy of Nature and the Principles of Gravity and Light," trans. Dale Snow, *International Philosophical Quarterly* 55 (2): 245.

- as a hierarchy of forms produced as a negative feedback loop of activity (1799–1800)
- as the identity or indifference of active and produced nature (1801)
- as speaking forth: expression or manifestation (1804–1805)
- and as all three at once: the bond or copula that is the (ontological) position underlying all proposition—the thetic move (1806–1807)

Schelling carefully reworked Spinoza's *Ethics* for his 1804 lectures on the *System of Philosophy in General and of the Philosophy of Nature in Particular*, then distilled the new version into two collections of aphorisms that appeared in the 1805 *Annals of Medical Sciences.* Nature, as in Spinoza's inclusively disjoined *deus sive natura,* is the subject of both the unpublished and published versions. Alongside *On the Relation of the Ideal and Real in Nature* (1806) and the 1807 oration "On the Relationship of the Plastic Arts to Nature," they present a nature more organic or internally articulated than the static versions of 1801/1802.

I can offer but a limited survey of *Naturphilosophie*, although based on its philosophical methodology I think three phases can be distinguished: *genesis* or transcendental deduction (1797–1800), philosophical *construction* (1801–1803), and metamorphosis or *organicism* (1804–1807). In the first, nature's motion is a function of philosophical narration or the free act of the philosopher. In the second, narration is stilled and nature is viewed as a timeless or synchronic order. In the last, nature itself appears as incessant becoming or change, both in individual potencies and the unifying function of the copula. The evolutionary character of the 1804–1807 texts on nature prefigure some startling features of the 1809 *Investigations on Human Freedom*—its reinterpretation of identity as decision (emergence of consequent from ground), its portrayal of the basis or *Ungrund* as implicit will, and will's self-affirmation as both nature and spirit (or intelligent self-direction). In bypassing familiar concepts and detailed topics in *Naturphilosophie*, my aim in the following remarks is mainly documentary—to point out new language or the more developed concepts of God and nature that these latter works present.

Nature in the Identity System, 1804–1807

Schelling's 1804 lectures at Würzburg present his full system—identity metaphysics, *Naturphilosophie*, and philosophy of spirit. Nature gets a threefold treatment: general principles or a metaphysics of nature, then specific considerations of inorganic and organic phenomena. The identity-theory of this version expands the sparse propositions of the 1801 *Presentation* with arguments that frame its transcendental Spinozism with arguments against both causal realism and Fichte's phenomenal idealism. By "transcendental

Spinozism" I mean a view of nature introduced by an analysis of the conditions of knowing, that makes nature the outcome of *agentless agency*. I use the latter term to cover a range of causal activities that culminate in organism or entelechy. In a *Propaedeutic* to the system covering the history of philosophy, Schelling argues that despite his apparent Cartesian dualism, Spinoza stands inside the sphere of transcendental reflection on the possibility of experience, which is where philosophy must take its origin even if it goes on to discuss two distinct orders of phenomena (SW VI: 97–98).[2]

Schelling published two sets of aphorisms on this system in the 1805 *Jahrbüchern für Medizin als Wissenschaft*: *Aphorisms Introductory to the Philosophy of Nature,* and *Aphorisms on the Philosophy of Nature*. These treat the core of the lecture's concerns, *Naturphilosophie* or *natura naturata*, prefaced by a "religious" metaphysics exploring the expressive character of *natura naturans*. The same view that the aphorisms present from a religious perspective finds a naturalistic voice in the 1806 "Treatise on the Relationship of the Real and the Ideal in Nature" and an aesthetic voice in the 1807 oration "On the Relationship of the Plastic Arts to Nature." In the former, Schelling explains the self-affirming copula whose affirmation is material nature:

> [M]atter expresses no other or lesser bond than that which is in reason, the eternal identity of the infinite with the finite. We recognize in things first of all the pure essentiality itself, that cannot be further explained, but rather explains itself. We see this essentiality, however, never in itself, but rather always and everywhere in a wondrous union with that which could not subsist by itself and is only illuminated by being, without ever being able to become anything essential in its own right. We call this the finite or the form. (SW II: 360)[3]

Two things are noteworthy in this passage: essentiality or core reality (*Wesen*) is dynamic; and its "speech" or expression in nature is a bond of material and mental factors that mirrors its ontological makeup.

All these versions of identity- and nature- philosophy display two characteristics. The first is Schelling's robust embrace of metaphysics. The 1801 *Presentation* followed an austere logical path to expounding the core of Spinozism, the duplicity of *natura naturans* and *natura naturata,* but in 1804 and thereafter Schelling does not hesitate to speak of the absolute as God, and God's being as the affirmation (or explication) of the two orders. Formerly, explanation invoked the transcendental premise—the identity of knower with the known—to argue to a view of identity as an identity of relative identities,

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[2] Schelling, *Propädeutik der Philosophie*, 97–98.
[3] Schelling, "Treatise on the Relationship," 239–40.

the orders of nature and perception structured by the potencies. Identity-theory was then distinctly conceptual. Now, however, identity was not just a matter of conceptual evidence, but a self-actualizing "position" that is ontically efficacious: dynamic connection, or *affirmation* as the identity of affirming and affirmed. Identity morphs into being: *God is self-affirming affirmation*.[4]

A second hallmark of these versions is the view, premised on an event-ontology or monadology, that nature is pervasively organic—a field of living expressions or an *ecology*. Schelling calls them "monads." Nature unfolds ecologically as a series of *metamorphoses,* as does philosophy (SW VI: 113).[5] Though many passages picture a top-down order of God's affirmation as an unfolding, detailed discussions of the potencies suggest instead nature's bottom-up or ecological organization. Leibniz's term "preestablished harmony" seems rather mechanistic, but if we replace engineered design with *ecological integration* we get a processive order of self-arrangement and self-maintenance to model what even Spinoza called the "face of the universe" (SW VI: 109).[6]

Identity Metaphysics in the *System of Philosophy in General*[7]

The 1804 Würzburg lectures on the complete system and nature offer the fullest sketch of identity philosophy, and as the quiet counterpart of that year's *Philosophy and Religion,* offer a deeper engagement with Spinoza's *Ethics* than earlier essays that largely focused on the unity of substance or reason. Schelling crafts an account of finite individuals that is faithful both to Spinoza's own account of attributes and modes and to Jacobi's interpretive framework that prohibits any causal derivation for them.[8]

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[4] I use "God" and "the absolute" interchangeably, both synonymous with Spinoza's "God or nature." There is no suggestion of a personal God in these texts, much less of an existent "Lord of being."

[5] Schelling, *Propädeutik der Philosophie*, 113.

[6] Schelling cites Kant's remark that Leibniz needs to be understood better than he understood himself. See Schelling, *Propädeutik der Philosophie*, 109.

[7] F.W.J. Schelling, "System of Philosophy in General and of the Philosophy of Nature in Particular," trans. Thomas Pfau, in *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

[8] Norris presents Spinoza as an "existence monist" whose system rides on the principle of sufficient reason, and who can secure the unity of substance in *Ethics* I only at the price of making his subsequent accounts of nature, ideas, affects, and liberation incoherent (underivable by the principle of sufficient reason). Norris draws on Dodd, Žižek, and Pfau to craft an account of Schelling's view of particularity as nonbeing. See Benjamin Norris, *Schelling and Spinoza: Realism, Idealism, and the Absolute* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2022), 123–25.

The key idea of the 1804 identity-metaphysics is "position" or affirmation: the concretion of the copula that is the identity of affirming and affirmed.[9] Through a process of contemplation, the thinker comes to see identity as affirmation, which manifests as self-affirmation or the affirmation of being vis-à-vis the possibility of nothing. That *thinking's self-affirmation is being* functions as a modal axiom, like Parmenides' "being is and cannot not be." Being comes on the scene with its foil or shadow, nonbeing, initially viewed as possible, just the way in all transcendental philosophy, self-identical reason asserts itself in the face of "reflection" that differentiates subject and predicate. For Schelling, identity is self-generated and self-validated, as Spinoza said substance was. It is self-originating, not produced, i.e., not abstracted from some prior self-identical being.

Let me briefly outline Schelling's argument, which superficially seems to affirm both horns of a dilemma (I call it the *light and shadow* argument):

(1) Skeptical analyses of reflection (or subject-centered cognition) refute both realistic views of causal influence and perceptual idealism. Reflection must be abandoned in favor of reason's presupposition: cognition is the identity of knower and known. (SW VI: 139–40)[10]
(2) Subjective reflection falls away when one *contemplates* identity: reason comes to recognize itself in the self-same. (SW VI: 142–43)[11] This is the inverse of the Cartesian *cogito*; "I" come to intuit the I's nonexistence.
(3) Only what is known within the law of identity exists in reason; the subject and object posited in reflection are derivative. (SW VI: 145)[12]

From this Schelling concludes that *identity affirms itself* and reason steps into being as the singular item *God* (SW VI: 148).[13]

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[9] Schelling scrupulously avoids using "*Setzen*" or "positing" for the ontological establishing he has in mind here. The English "position" that he borrows carries no note of hypothetical or subjective surmise.

[10] Schelling, "System of Philosophy in General," 142–43. In the detailed considerations of nature that follow, Schelling translates the metaphysical-epistemic standard of identity in knowing as nature's basic figure of identity-through-change, or *metamorphosis* (SW VI: 299). Matter's basic action is *metamorphosis*, while its second-potency manifestation is the dynamic process or the interplay of physical forces and chemical processes (SW VI: 321); both plant-propagation and fetal development in animals follow the law of *metamorphosis* (SW VI: 419).

[11] Schelling, "System of Philosophy in General," 144.

[12] Schelling, "System of Philosophy in General," 147.

[13] "[T]he absolute identity of subject and object can be affirmed *universally* only if the in-itself, the essence of *all* existence, is inherently and autonomously its own affirming and affirmed … That which absolutely affirms itself and thus is its own affirmed, is only the absolute or

(4) This affirmation takes expression variously, so if identity is viewed as the sameness of subject and object or concept and being, God is the immediate affirmation not of the idea of being, but of *being itself*.
(5) If one contemplates this idea of God as self-affirmation, "(t)he *absolute* light, the idea of God, strikes reason like a flash of lightning and … we recognize the eternal *impossibility of nonbeing* …. The absolute position of the idea of God is indeed nothing but the *negation* of nothingness." (SW VI: 155)[14]

The term "position" is new to Schelling's vocabulary; it is the *affirmation-eventing* that replaces Fichte's positing, a hypothetical supposition of being made from the self-enclosed stance of subjectivity. The potencies follow from the idea of God, or God's primal self-affirmation, except that in the case of God, being excludes "the nothing" while in the relative orders being and nonbeing contend. Hence, reflection shadows being. Even if in its self-affirmation, reason must say *nothing is not*, its identity is shadowed by reflection's "What if?," or the abysmal question, "Why not nothing?" Consequently,

(6) the simultaneous "being and relative nonbeing [*Nichtseyn*] of the particular in the universe constitutes the seed of all finitude." (SW VI: 170)[15]

While reason views the particular's life as a singular "idea" that mirrors the life of the whole universe, in appearance its being is dispersed over nonbeing (SW VI: 187–88).[16] Earlier versions of *Naturphilosophie* foundered on Spinoza's apparent acosmism, which viewed nature as both productive and produced but found no causal connection between them. In 1804, reason poses divine self-affirmation in the gap between *natura naturans* and *naturata*. But why should there be a doubling or a gap in the first place? Schelling speaks of a kind of reflection within the absolute, a vision simultaneously contemplative and contemplated, wherein a second lightning strike still illuminates the divine necessity but "leaves behind only the lifeless shape, like a shadow, the pure nothingness of the particular," but where nonetheless the powerful substance of God is expressed (SW VI: 195–96).[17] I find it intriguing, but not completely logical, that God's self-expression secures not only its absolute being but the

God .... God is his own absolute affirmation; this is the only true idea of God" (Schelling, "System of Philosophy in General," 148. Original emphasis.
[14] Schelling, "System of Philosophy in General," 152.
[15] Schelling, "System of Philosophy in General," 170. Translation altered.
[16] Schelling, "System of Philosophy in General," 175.
[17] Schelling, "System of Philosophy in General," 181–82.

relative being-and-nonbeing introduced in the original question: Why not nothing? Why should the absolute wonder about its parentage and legitimacy—unless, as Schelling begins to explore in 1809, it has a past and faces a future?

Schelling offers two explanations, one Leibnizean in inspiration, the other rehearsing earlier analyses of identity as qualitative indifference overlaid by quantitative variations of subjectivity and objectivity. In the first, creative being manifests in what is affirmed both as affirming and affirmed, so that phenomena are not lifeless but a display of the divine affirmation (SW VI: 204–205).[18] In the second, the potencies are said to express difference—though in each of the phenomenal orders, real and ideal—as a doubled manifestation of the God's affirmation. As reflections of ectypal being, they express the nonreality (*Nicht-Wesen*) of things, their lack of expressive reality (SW VI: 210–11).[19]

Philosophy of Nature in the *System of Philosophy in General*

The initial theorems of the Universal Philosophy of Nature describe the monadological nature of beings, each one an identity of affirming and affirmed as idea, but a difference of those factors in appearances which, consequently, appear as "soul" and "body." Each particular is ensouled, both expressive and expressed, a *monad* or world unto itself (SW VI: 215–18).[20;21] In its difference from universal being, it displays its finitude or its distance from it as infinite lack of being—or *extension*. But intuiting its nonbeing vis-à-vis the absolute, it expresses its infinite aspect in the finite as endless negation, the order of *time*. Space and time thus reflect the difference between the universal and particular, while in their mutual reflection they form the basis of space. The bodily aspect is the antithesis of life, degraded and powerless unless it also incorporates the living or affirmative aspect (SW VI: 215–22).[22] Inorganic nature is deficiently expressive, a distant reflection of the unity of affirming and affirmed in God.

Schelling turns to optics and to Goethe's color-theory to explain the ontological mirage. When we view a particular substance, we do not see substance but only substance reflected in the nothingness of particularity; due to "incapacity to receive the divine," we comprehend absolute identity only as indifference, like perceiving light refracted through a prism or as a rainbow.

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[18] Schelling, "System of Philosophy in General," 186–87.
[19] Schelling, "System of Philosophy in General," 191–92.
[20] Schelling, "Allgemeine Naturphilosophie oder Construction der Natur der realen All," *System des gesamten Philosophie und der Naturphilosophie insbesondere.*
[21] Schelling, "Allgemeine Naturphilosophie."
[22] Schelling, "Allgemeine Naturphilosophie."

Investigated more closely, color is a function of perceptual edges, a bright speck displayed against a dark ground. Things are double-images, ontological illusions (SW VI: 228–30).[23] Similar alternative accounts confront the mechanistic view of matter, mass, rectilinear motion, and gravity. Gravity expresses the relation of mass to infinite substance and so of each body to every other, since each point of filled space is the midpoint and there is no empty space or action at a distance, as Kant had surmised (SW VI: 250–55).[24] Freed of connection to distinct regions or entities, gravity is the life of body in the infinite substance or the soul of matter. The motions of bodies in a gravitational system arise from a body's double nature: *qua* mass, to depend on substance as its ground of reality, but as ensouled, to be a midpoint of the system—with each body relating to every other in reciprocal relationship, and changes of places being *coordinated* rather than caused by external forces. Viewed as the principle of this twofold being, *gravity* is deemed a universal and necessary attribute of substance (SW VI: 258–59).[25] Gravity's counterpart, *light* (*Lichtwesen*), is the ideal principle, since while it is not the ground of motion, it is motion's immediate being. "In nature … the one real substance absolutely considered, light and gravity are one" (SW VI: 265).[26] Accordingly, light and gravity become general terms for the two fundamental natural principles and their various combinations constitute the frameworks of space and time. Subsequent discussions fall into facile analogies at this distance from concrete phenomena, but we note the prominence of the dyadic concepts of *ground and being* in these discussions in which Schelling rejects linear causality in favor of systematic interdependence.

Schelling prefaces specific treatments of inorganic and organic phenomena with twelve axioms for the metaphysics of nature. They alternate not only between Spinoza's language of nature as a double expression, both creative and created, of infinite substance, on the one hand, and the new language of God/nature as an identity of affirming and affirmation, on the other; but also with Leibniz's view of monads as producing and being produced by coordinated perceptions. While (1) from an ontological point of view, things both inhere in infinite substance and appear distinct from it as the ground of their existence, (2) from the viewpoint of physics, the universe is an equilibrium of motion and rest wherein individuals maintain their "identity" as constant ratios of motion and rest; yet (3) from an ideal point of view, the universe is a field of perception-entities adjusted to one another through

[23] Schelling, "Allgemeine Naturphilosophie."
[24] Schelling, "Allgemeine Naturphilosophie."
[25] Schelling, "Allgemeine Naturphilosophie."
[26] Schelling, "Allgemeine Naturphilosophie."

universal reciprocal perception (SW VI: 278–81).[27] Discussing sensibility in the organism, Schelling contends that perception's occurrence in matter is not contingent, but a necessary display of its essence. Matter as matter is already perceptivity or a product of its relations to its environment (SW VI: 432–33).[28]

God and Nature in the 1805 *Aphorisms*

The 1805 *Aphorisms Introductory to the Philosophy of Nature* and *Aphorisms on the Philosophy of Nature* set the new views of the Würzburg *System* before the public in the same general format—first metaphysics, then metaphysics of nature—but seem guided by the intention to present the Spinozistic view of *deus sive natura* from both sides.[29] The metaphysical or "introductory" comments sound four notes: (a) the single nature of God, (b) the sameness and equiprimordiality of nature and spirit, (c) the systematic nature of God/universe depicted in a table (SW VII: 184 n1),[30] and (d) a contrast between the absolute (potency 0) vis-à-vis the manifest potencies as *being* and *nonbeing* (SW VII: 196–97).[31]

Space will not permit a look at all themes, but for the first, Schelling puts the unity of God (and God's identity with the universe) in a striking fashion, with the new "affirmation" or "position" vocabulary giving God a narrative voice. "It is impossible to furnish anyone with a description of reason. Reason must describe itself in each one and by means of each one" (SW VII: 146).[32] Reason can be satisfied only with itself, never within anything external or relative. It is, therefore, self-affirmation or the indissoluble identity of predicating and predication. "God is the realization [*Position*] of all things, that which in all things is equal to itself" (SW VII: 147).[33] Reason can never step outside God and affirm anything other; it is itself the being of God and is in God; "Reason does not *have* the idea of God, it *is* this idea and nothing else" (SW VII: 149).[34] There is no propositional cognition or conceptual knowledge of God, since in reason knower and known disappear as distinct items, as in

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[27] Schelling, "Specielle Naturphilosophie, oder Construction der einzelne Potenzen der Natur," *System des gesamten Philosophie.*

[28] Schelling, "Specielle Naturphilosophie."

[29] Schelling notes that although he has expanded parts of *Naturphilosophie* and altered others, he stands by the first fifty theorems of the 1801 *Presentation of My System* (SW VII: 141–42); see F.W.J. Schelling, "Aphorisms as an Introduction to Naturephilosophy [Extract]," trans. Fritz Marti, *Idealistic Studies* 14, no. 3 (1984): ¶ 18–21, 246–47.

[30] Schelling, *Aphorismen zur Einleitung in die Naturephilosophie.*

[31] "The being of things in God … is their nonbeing relative to one another, just as conversely their being relative to one another involves their not-being-in-God or their nonbeing relative to God." Schelling, *Aphorismen zur Einleitung.* Translation mine.

[32] Schelling, "Aphorisms as an Introduction," ¶ 31, 248.

[33] Schelling, "Aphorisms as an Introduction," ¶ 37, 249. Translation altered.

[34] Schelling, "Aphorisms as an Introduction," ¶ 48, 250.

the restraint of will or self-forgetfulness that marks perfect morality (SW VII: 150).[35] The self-affirmation of God is infinite affirmation and so cannot be broken down into partial concepts like "God as self-affirming" *or* "God as affirmed," unity *or* totality, acting *or* being. The idea of the absolute is indivisible, hence impervious to every abstraction or conceptual analysis. A circuit through all possible conceptual abstractions may suffice for a partial account of its being, but acting must be included among these, so that these attempts culminate in an absolute self-recognition of unity as totality (SW VII: 151–53).[36]

With a shift from the absolute's strict identity to its function as the identity of the subjective and the objective, we arrive at the *Aphorisms*'s second theme, the sameness of identity expressed in the real and ideal orders of potencies. Schelling asserts that God as infinite self-position is a union of predication and predicate, and so equivalent to the unity of the subjective and the objective (SW VII: 147, 153).[37] It is difficult to see how the latter follows, unless the subjective and objective are vectors or tendencies to a polar distinction not yet concretized as subjects and objects, since those items do not exist in their own right. Schelling hits upon an illustration for this "distinction which is clear enough in itself yet is not clear for most." It is a negative illustration however, and suggests at best a relative identity of opposites *in a single point,* when what we require is the idea of an identity of opposites in all points:

> The fulcrum of a lever represents the equilibrium of two opposite forces; it is what unites both, but it is not their absolute identity. It is what it is, namely a point of rest, but only in relation to the two forces, not by itself. The forces annul each other in that point, but the point as point is not the *positive* nullity of the two. (SW VII: 154–55)[38]

With this idea of identity as the *positive nullity of distinguished items* we have Schelling's core definitions of identity collapsed into a single point: identity, self-affirmation, position, and the nullity of nonbeing vis-à-vis the power of being. The *fulcrum represents the origami fold:* the engineered structure that somewhat represents a crane and permits an impoverished imitation of its flight. The living bird, living nature, is the positive nullity of all the broken formulas Schelling presents and all the broken understandings they evoke in Schelling's readers. *Positive nullity* is the ultimate formulation for God's being, of God's position in every proposition. As self-articulating, it might be

[35] Schelling, "Aphorisms as an Introduction," ¶ 53–54, 251.
[36] Schelling, "Aphorisms as an Introduction," ¶ 55–63, 251–53.
[37] Schelling, "Aphorisms as an Introduction," ¶ 36, 63, 249, 253.
[38] Schelling, "Aphorisms as an Introduction," ¶ 68, 254.

implicitly pinned to a narrative, an origin story. It seems instead to be *implosive,* the abyss of all stories and representations. Since whatever is necessary is in God and nothing that is impossible, nothing can happen in God or evolve from God. There is no agency in God, nor any inclination. God does not come to be inside God's self-knowing. Lacking any outside, there is no access to or departure from God. True knowledge of God is solely contemplative, literally speculative, vision (SW VII: 157–59).[39]

The account of God in the *Aphorisms Introductory* is brief and conceptually deflationary, but this contractive vision is balanced by the expansive account of nature that follows. It considers first the metaphysics of finitude, or created nature, as an expression of creative nature; and then considers the metaphysics of infinitude. In the first perspective, finite beings appear as material, but must be accounted as ensouled, or at least produced. The latter perspective considers the finite body in terms of motion, connection, freedom, or infinitude; it is said to depict the "dissolution of gravity into the life circuit [*Lebenswechsel*] of all of nature" or its identity with the all-copula (SW VII: 229 n2).[40] While the overall structure of the potencies in nature is clear—the first being universal *metamorphosis* in nature, the second dynamic life, then organic life as the full expression of inner and outer life (SW VII: 244)[41]—the exposition is complicated by Schelling's alteration between Platonic and Spinozist vocabularies as well as the introduction of theosophical vocabulary from Jakob Böhme; Schelling uses "*Temperature*" meaning the harmony of the seven original sensory qualities or motions for his own "*Indifferenz*" or "positive nullity."[42]

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[39] Schelling, "Aphorisms as an Introduction," ¶ 76–80, 256–57. James Dodd comes close to stating this in "Expression in Schelling's Early Philosophy," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 27, no. 2, 109–30. Expression, connoting both *explication* and *involvement*, may characterize Spinoza's attributes and modes, which are neither existents nor products but inhere in God as Idea or counter-image. God as reason is negative, the abyss of particularity.

[40] Schelling, *Aphorismen über die Naturphilosophie. Der Naturphilosophie erster oder allgemeiner Theil* (1805).

[41] Schelling, *Aphorismen über die Naturphilosophie*.

[42] Böhme derived his theory of the seven properties or motions from Paracelsus: desire, pain, anxiety, light, warmth, sound, and substance or nature. Their "temperature" is said to be the divine harmony or *Ungrund.* http://jacobboehmeonline.com; lexicon7.215210906.pdf, 52, 42–45.

Aphorismen über die Naturphilosophie's contrast between the light (*τοῦ ὄντος*, *das Seyendes*) and the darkness (*τοῦ μή ὄντος*, *das Nichtseyenden*) and its talk of "the birth of things" as essence's drive toward self-affirmation also reflect Böhme's influence. See *Aphorismen über die Naturphilosophie* III–V (SW II: 198–99) and XVI–XXI (SW VII: 201).

While Schelling typically speaks of God's expression as "affirmation" ("*Affirmation*"), at the beginning of *Aphorismen über die Naturphilosophie*, he employs quasi-theistic language such as "existence's desire to reveal itself" ("*Lust … sich selbst zu offenbaren*"), the copula's way of "[simultaneously] containing itself and affirming itself" ("*sich selbst in sich selbst habe und*

As Schelling explains it, there is only one existence, one *Position*, in the multitudes of finite bodies. Their being involves that of all in each and each in all. Through the divine in-forming or the "divine temperature," all are co-present and express one another, even though each, as Spinoza says, appears to be determined by a previous one (SW VII: 200, 203).[43] The divine or creative nature abides in itself, eternally free or expressive just because in its finite expressions its creative light is translated into a dark web of interrelations—since each finite entity exists only insofar as it expresses multitudes (SW VII: 206, 207).[44] Nature displays itself not in individual things but in a seemingly "divine chaos": the elements develop into plants, plants into animals and higher animals, life into stars, the stars into the cosmos; everything lower also pertains to the existence of a higher, and the latter to the existence of the "one-and-infinitely perfect" (SW VII: 211).[45]

What changes has Schelling introduced into identity philosophy in 1804/1805? The 1801 definition of the absolute as the identity of *Wesen* and *Form*—altered in 1802 to "identity of identity and difference" and "idea" or the inscription of the infinite in the finite—gives way to extensive analyses of the complex nature of *Wesen* or core reality and its "expression." A new ontological map locates both the absolute and the relative in the space of possibility and makes *being* a continuous overcoming of the possibility of nothing. The absolute makes its own being or secures its being against the possibility of nothingness. On the side of form or expression, the absolute is a creative disclosure of an inter-involvement of being and not-being—the infinite and the finite, or the ideal and real. Unlike the static, tabular character of earlier versions, the new Spinozism of 1804/05 finds incipient activity in God's nature and expression of that activity as the core of nature.

Creative Being (*Wesen*) and Bond (*das Band*) in Nature, 1806–1807

Schelling penned the essay "On the Relation of the Real and the Ideal in Nature, or Development of the First Principles of Nature Philosophy from the Principles of Gravity and Light" in 1806 as a preface to a new edition of the 1798 *On the World-Soul, A Hypothesis of Higher Physics to Explain Universal Organism*. Its brief propositions are offered as a syllabus for further study and

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bejahe"); and "all existence is but the self-disclosure of a dynamic essential nature" ("*alle Existenz ist nur Selbstoffenbarung einer wesentlichen Natur*"). See *Aphorismen über die Naturphilosophie* V–VIII (SW VII: 199). Schelling is clear that "self-disclosure" happens by necessity, not by arbitrary choice or decision. Böhme does not yet eclipse Spinoza.

[43] *Aphorismen über die Naturphilosophie* XII, XXVII.

[44] *Aphorismen über die Naturphilosophie* XXXVI and XLV.

[45] *Aphorismen über die Naturphilosophie* LXII and LXIII.

to underscore the similarity of its philosophical organicism to the empirical theories of the Hungarian chemist Jakob Josef Winterl, who made the bond between acid and alkali the core structure of all elements (SW II: 352–53).[46] Except for its brevity and its references to Plato's *Timaeus* and *Philebus* and to Goethe's color theory, its content is largely the same as that of the second section of the 1804 *Complete System,* Universal Philosophy of Nature. The 1807 academy oration *On the Relationship of the Plastic Arts to Nature* uses themes from the 1804/05 essays on God and nature to argue that art must harness nature's expressive vitality if it is to be genuine and to explain the double nature of *bildende Kunst,* ancient sculpture that embodies the principle of gravity and modern European painting the principle of light. The difference between these essays in "applied" *Naturphilosophie* and their more theoretical kin is more a matter of emphasis than content. Matter is not a defective ectype of the absolute, since "Nature is not merely the product of an inconceivable creation, but it is this creation itself" (SW II: 378).[47] The artwork is a second creation from nature's basic energy, birthed in the depths of nature, growing into spiritual infinity and finally achieving grace and soul (SW VII: 322–23).[48] The salient difference is that individual items of appearance are no longer regarded as contaminated mixtures of being and not-being, but as tighter bonds of real and ideal energies than nature as such demonstrates; their development traces an arc of increasing freedom and ontological richness (SW VII: 303; SW II: 372–73).[49] Perhaps one can say that Schelling has dropped the "*sive*" from his double-sided consideration of God and nature in 1804/05 and now considers nature to be the entire field of being, but *this* nature is material only in its initial manifestation and endowed with will or self-developmental telos. "The Absolute is, however, not only a willing of itself, but rather a willing in infinite ways, that is in all forms, grades, and potencies of reality" (SW II: 362).[50]

The metaphysics of the essay on the real and the ideal in Nature is a simplified version of the 1804 *Complete System,* with the interplay of being and not-being muted and the active or self-expressive character of nature

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[46] Preface to the Second Edition, *On the World-Soul*. See H. A. M. Snelders, "The Influence of the Dualistic System of Jakob Josef Winterl (1732–1809) on The German Romantic Era," *Isis* 61, no. 2: 231–40.

[47] Schelling, "Treatise on the Relationship," 250.

[48] F.W.J. Schelling, "On the Relationship of the Plastic Arts to Nature," trans. Jason M. Wirth, *Kabiri* 3 (2021): 154–55. This remark anticipates the developmental cosmogeny and psychology of *Human Freedom* (1809) and the *Stuttgart Seminars* (1810).

[49] "When art presents the being (*Wesen*) in that moment, it lifts it out of time. Art lets it appear in its pure being (*Sein*), in the eternity of its life" (Schelling, "On the Relationship of the Plastic Arts," 141); "The absolute copula of gravity and light is productive and creative nature itself ... From this springs all that we think of in connection with the idea of the reality of existence" (Schelling, "Treatise on the Relationship," 247).

[50] Schelling, "Treatise on the Relationship," 241.

emphasized. Schelling is no longer interested in Spinoza's complicated view of the double existence of the finitude mode, as idea in God and as the constrained power of striving inside the attributes. The absolute as bond or copula projects itself upon the screen of otherness, manifests a multitude of interrelated beings and so immediately displays the Böhmean "birth of things in God."

The bond's expressive nature is its infinite self-love, pleasure in self-disclosure, self-affirmation ("*sich-selbst-Bejahen*") or simply willing itself ("*sich-selbst-Wollen*"). Corresponding to its infinite expression is the bonded's nature as impression or ectype. The absolute therefore functions as unity in totality or connection in being-connected (SW II: 362–63).[51] As the active ground of being ("*das Wesende*"), it both individuates and connects its manifestations, establishing the being of individuals, their limitations and their transient character. Each individual is the center of centerless space, its own reality, but only in relation to others. In their not-in-itself character, things annihilate space, produce the form of transience, time; and both forms of finitude stand in contrast to the absolute's eternity. "Therefore, the situation where the former (the bound, *qua* bound) expands beyond the eternal (or the bond) is a mere accident and limited in time" (SW II: 364).[52] Schelling compares this to a point entering (or extending itself into) a line. The principle of gravity serves, therefore, both to establish and abolish individual being, but the alteration of the two shows up again in the organism, where but a knife edge can separate extreme liveliness and perishing (SW II: 367).[53]

If gravity establishes finite individuals as limited and transient, light-essence establishes their unity, reality, necessity, and truth. Where gravity establishes the individual as the all-in-one, light-essence or the one-in-all dissolves them back into the one. The term light-essence might seem odd, but perhaps it can convey something like the ancients' notion of ether or *world-soul*. "The darkness of gravity and the radiance of light are that which first produce together the beautiful appearance of life" (SW II: 369).[54] Schelling's remark recapitulates the three main potencies of nature: gravity, light, and organism. In the last, what might appear to be the one unbroken line of the producing and perishing of things turns back upon itself and persists as the chain of life wherein each component is necessary for the whole, and none can undergo any alteration of this relationship without showing some sign of life or sensitivity (SW II: 373).[55] Nature as a whole betrays this same interplay of

[51] Schelling, "Treatise on the Relationship," 241.
[52] Schelling, "Treatise on the Relationship," 242.
[53] Schelling, "Treatise on the Relationship," 243.
[54] Schelling, "Treatise on the Relationship," 245.
[55] Schelling, "Treatise on the Relationship," 247.

conditioning and conditioned function, and so displays a plentitude of forms—an ecosystem of ecosystems.

The 1807 oration "On the Relation of the Plastic Arts to Nature" is more accessible than the laconic 1806 essay on the real and ideal, though the metaphysics (of bond and expressive being) they share serves more as a critical canon for the analysis of sculpture and painting in ancient and modern European cultures than as an explicit focus. Schelling's speech foregrounds the achievements and critical lapses of Johann Joachim Winkelmann's 1764 *History of Ancient Art,* adapting his four-phase schema of the rise and fall of Hellenic art—especially the middle two, "high" and "sensuous" art—to draw a distinction between "sublime beauty" and "grace." But if he accepts Winkelmann's historiography, he rejects his formalistic aesthetics that decreed that artists must return to ancient models and start from imitation of natural forms. "The magic circle is drawn, but the spirit that should be apprehended within it does not appear. The spirit does not acquiesce to the call of the one who holds that creation is only possible through mere form" (SW VII: 296).[56] For Schelling, the day's artists find access to the expressive power of nature blocked, even if their aim is imitation, and collectors and critics instead generally turn their gaze to soul and the moral-aesthetic power of grace (SW VII: 292).[57]

For too long, artists' vision of nature and its power have been blurred by crude, materialistic, and distorted "naturalisms" that counsel aesthetic distance or abstraction from nature, or brutal wallowing in the ugly instead of a spontaneous immersion in nature's energetic production. "The determination of form in nature is never a negation, but rather always an affirmation" (SW VII: 303).[58] Form conveys the energy of expressive being, not its restriction—so that expressive being seizes the finite moment or form and lifts it into its proper or eternal state.

Most of the oration's lengthy text is dedicated to the quarrel of the ancients and the moderns, and to the strange aesthetic classification of "plastic art" (*bildende Kunst*), which encompasses both sculpture and figurative painting. Greek sculpture directly embodies the natural principle of gravity that contracts the universe to a single point, abstracts from individuating detail, puts space under severe restriction, and produces an impression of solemnity or austerity (SW VII: 307–8).[59] In contrast, modern painting has adopted the universalizing style of the *Lichtwesen*—painting details of figure and historical subjects, incorporating feeling, and above all, in the spirit of *grace*, harmonizing the impulses of beauty and morality.

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[56] Schelling, "On the Relationship of the Plastic Arts," 137.
[57] Schelling, "On the Relationship of the Plastic Arts," 134.
[58] Schelling, "On the Relationship of the Plastic Arts," 131.
[59] Schelling, "On the Relationship of the Plastic Arts," 143–45.

"We have seen," concludes Schelling, "how the artwork emerges as if from the depths of nature, growing up with determination and limitation, and unfolding inner infinity and fullness, until it finally transfigures into grace and then ultimately attains soul" (SW VII: 322–23).[60] Art travels the same evolutionary path as the birth of freedom from nature that will be depicted in the 1809 *Philosophical Investigations* and the human psyche in the 1810 *Stuttgart Seminars*.

Conclusions

From 1797–1807, the project of *Naturphilosophie* did not change: to portray natural phenomena and their theoretical foundations in a nonmaterialistic framework also suited to explain consciousness, its biological basis, and its personal and social forms. Methodologically it derives its premises from Kant's transcendental questioning, asking after the conditions for cognition, granted that we have *some* secure knowledge. Aiming for theoretical parsimony, it adopts the core of Spinoza's metaphysics as its explanatory structure, i.e., the separate but complementary orders of creative nature and created nature, linked in a minimal story of "agentless-agency." I argue that one could aptly call Schelling a "transcendental Spinozist." Schelling's deductions are sprinkled with arguments against empiricism, random experiment, and mechanistic physics; though we may regard them today as misguided asides, they seem integral to his argument.

I have summarily distinguished three phases in Schelling's career as nature-theorist: In the initial phase, *Genesis*, or deduction from Fichtean premises of continuous alteration between action and inhibition, yields a hierarchy of increasingly complex forms. But since it collapses *explanans* (arithmetic structure) and *explanandum* (phenomena), the evolving order that the deduction discovers in nature comes from the side of its arbitrary origin, transcendental *narration*. In a second phase, Schelling claims he can extricate abstract theory-making from an anthropocentric basis and find a purely logical starting-point, a metaphysics of identity that displays a single structure: difference as a modification of indifference. The result is a tabular depiction of phenomena that eliminates activity and subjects nature's organic teleology to two-dimensional depiction. *Construction* can anatomize nature but it results in a skeleton. In the third phase, which we have closely followed, Schelling restores life to nature by articulating a metaphysics of expression in which the absolute or God is reconfigured as the *copula* or *Band* joining objective and psychic orders; the "position" of being inside the proposition; or God's self-affirmation as affirming and affirmed. These expressions suggest a pre-

[60] Schelling, "On the Relationship of the Plastic Arts," 154–55.

subjective, pre-intentional, but self-referential movement probably best conveyed by the Leibnizean term *entelechy*. I call this third phase *Organicism*. Its three-part metaphysics—wherein *Wesen* or dynamic being is the indwelling basis of both nature and spirit—endures even as the story of onto- and theogenesis becomes more complicated in 1809 and philosophical interest shifts to the origin of agency as such.

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Life and Parallelism in Schelling's Critique of Spinoza

Benjamin Norris

F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Philosophy in General*, B. Spinoza, *Ethics*, parallelism, realism, idealism, the Absolute, life, the Idea

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 *E*IIp7, 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

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[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 Yitzak Y. Melamed, "*Deus sive Vernuft*: 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

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[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,

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[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 *E*IIp7 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:

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[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.

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[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" (SW V: 424).[31] 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.

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[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 *E*IIp7, 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 preprogramed 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 *E*Id4 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-posited 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.

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[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 Davison'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.

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[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 *E*IIp7 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 things[42]

—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

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[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 *E*IId7, 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

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[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.

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[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 *E*IIp7 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.

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[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

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[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

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[63] Schelling, "System of Philosophy in General," 160.
[64] Spinoza, *Ethics*, 244: *E*IId3.
[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

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[72] Schelling, *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*, 194.
[73] F.W.J. Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Belin 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.

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Schelling and Levinas on Theodicy and the "Life" of Evil[1]

Bettina Bergo

> *In evil's appearing, in its original phenomenality, in its* quality*, there is announced a* modality*, a manner: the not-finding-a-place … a counter-nature, a monstrosity, the of-itself disturbing and alien.* And in this sense, transcendence***!***
>
> —Emmanuel Levinas, "Transcendence and Evil" (Postface)[2]

To begin, let us recall the two paths that Schelling identifies in 1809 as alone able to give us a non-reductive elucidation of evil: dualism and kabbalism. He writes:

> To demonstrate that there are but two means for explaining evil—the dualistic, according to which an evil ground-being with modifications supposed as much beneath as beside the good; and the Kabbalistic, according to which evil is explained through emanation or contraction, and that thereby every other system must sublimate evil—[to

[1] An earlier version of this paper appeared in *Science et esprit* 70, no. 3 (2018): 303–315 (Dominican University College, Ottawa, Ontario).
[2] Emmanuel Levinas, foreword to *Job and the Excess of Evil*, by Phillipe Nemo, trans. Michael Kigel (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 173.

demonstrate this] would require nothing less than the entire power of a … fundamentally expanded philosophy.[3]

The dualist path, setting good and evil either in a vertical (*unter*) or a lateral relation to each other, and the kabbalistic or ecstatic-instatic path, to which Schelling adds surreptitiously the neo-Platonic terms "emanation" and "distance"—these are the sole approaches liable to do justice to the reality of evil.

Now, given the formalism Schelling denounced in what he calls Spinoza's "realism," and given the abstractness of Leibniz's theodicy (SW VII: 356);[4] indeed, given the formalist assumption of an absolute knowledge that crosses through and guides Hegel's *Phenomenology*, Schelling drops the foregoing remark, toward the end of his *Inquiries*, like an avowal or a justification. Arguably, Schelling is less dualistic than biune and processual. Indeed, the ultimate unification of his two originary principles in the *Ungrund*[5] seems more speculative still than the original birth of intelligibility, *das Wort*, out of the two fundamental principles themselves. As we know, Schelling is indebted to the Christian kabbalism he learned from seventeenth-century mystic Jakob Böhme (1572–1624). But he is clear: to provide an account of the reality of evil able to rival or to parallel Kabbalism "would require nothing less than the entire power of a fundamentally expanded philosophy." This is because, beginning with the Greeks, evil was conceived *eo ipso*, in privative rather than living or substantive terms.

Schelling's quest for a *gründlich ausgebildete* philosophy unfolded over three decades, during which the changes he introduced to his terminology arguably all strove to reach a positive philosophy that would be beyond criticism and dialectics. We see one germinal line of this worked out in the 1809 *Inquiries into Human Freedom*. I apologize to the Schellingians here for what will be a somewhat superficial discussion of the *Inquiries*. I proposed to present

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[3] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*, trans. James Gutmann (La Salle, IL: Open Court, [1936] 1986), 91; in German, *Sämmtliche Werke*, Vol. 7 (Stuttgart: Cotta'scher Verlag, 1861), 360. Hereafter, page numbers are from the SW, included in the English translation, abbreviated as PINH.

The original reads: "So um zu beweisen, daß es nur zwei Erklärungsarten des Bösen gebe—die dualistische, nach welcher ein böses Grundwesen, gleichviel mit welchen Modifikationen unter oder neben dem guten, angenommen wird, und die kabbalistische, nach welcher das Böse durch Emanation und Entfernung erklärt wird—und daß deshalb jedes andere System den Unterschied von Gut und Böse aufheben müsse … würde nichts weniger als die ganze Macht einer … gründlich ausgebildeten Philosophie erfordert."

[4] Schelling, *Philosophical Inquiries*, 31.

[5] " … [E]s muß vor allem Grund und vor allem Existierenden, also überhaupt vor aller Dualität, ein Wesen sein; wie können wir es anders nennen als den Urgrund oder vielmehr *Ungrund*?" (SW VII: 406; PINH: 87).

on Schelling and Levinas, and so I will discuss the surprising impact of the first on the second. Let me first review the meaning of evil in the birth of intelligibility out of the conjoined but disparate first principles in the *Inquiries*.

In the context of the debate over Spinozism, Schelling echoes Jacobi's conviction that the Spinoza-reception had reified human freedom, and the proposition that all things are in God, into a higher-order mechanics—but that the actual *intent* of Spinozism could be recovered through a finer understanding of participation and predication, whose logic focused on the relationship between the antecedent and the consequent (SW VII: 342; PINH: 14): "[I]f, for example, [a] proposition is advanced that the Perfect is the Imperfect, it signifies: the Imperfect exists not by means of those attributes in and through which it is Imperfect, but by means of the perfection which it contains" (SW VII: 341; PINH: 13). Schelling argues further: "The profound logic of the Ancients distinguished subject and predicate as the antecedent and the consequent … and thus expressed the real meaning of the law of identity [of beings and God, beings in God]. Even a tautological statement," he adds, "if it is not to be altogether meaningless, retains this relationship" (SW VII: 34; PINH: 14). In short, that there might be freedom *and* evil "in God" need neither vitiate evil nor deny freedom as such.

Manfred Frank has reminded us that Schelling here returns to the logic of identity he learned from Gottfried Ploucquet, namely that every being contains within it something ostensibly other than it, which indeed it may become. That is, an A, conceived within this dynamic and modalizing logic, is both itself and what it may become: Aa and Ab. In other words, A^o or A in its "originary state" contains *not so much a* and *b* qua predicates but qua modes by which A raises itself in its becoming to a higher power of itself, or A^2. This resurrection of a logic known to Leibniz but abandoned after Wolff[6] admits more than the two aforementioned modalizations; there might be an infinity of them. In this respect, to understand nature, or freedom, as "in" God does not mean to localize them in God like qualities or predicates—so much as to understand that through some power of God, they have their being.[7] Properly

[6] See Manfred Frank, "'Identity of Identity and Non-identity': Schelling's Path to the 'Absolute System of Identity,'" in *Interpreting Schelling*, ed. Lara Ostarič (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 130. Frank writes: "If one wishes to compare this conception with the Kantian one, predication is precisely a relative identification, just as being [*Sein*] is an absolute one. By bringing together Kant's famous thesis about being and the identity conception of predication, there emerges the conception peculiar to Hölderlin, Novalis, and Schelling, according to which the essence of absolute identity presupposes a ground that rejects all consciousness."

[7] "If we let infinite Substance = A, and infinite Substance regarded in one of its consequences = A/a; than that which is positive in A/a is indeed A. But it does not follow on this account that A/a = A, i.e., that infinite Substance regarded in its consequences is to be *considered exactly the same as infinite Substance* as such. Or … it does not follow that A/a is

understood, Spinoza's God should neither deny freedom (SW VII: 345; PINH: 18), nor should Spinoza's pantheism sublimate individuality. In order that both freedom and individuation be preserved, however, Spinoza's God had to be explicitly set forth as living, since what is not living could not admit such modalizations. A living God, then, is primordial being, and "Will is primordial Being" (SW VII: 350; PINH: 24). As we know, rather than a lifeless pantheism, then, Schelling executes his "pistol-shot" birth of the absolute by offering a "narrative" of the emergence of God from God's self.

Werner Marx has urged that we consider Schelling's "God" as essentially the universe and, we might add, as "what-is."[8] That "God" be living, then, requires that God be born, which in turn invites us to conceive of something in God that both is and is not God (SW VII: 359; PINH: 34). Recurring to Ploucquet's logic of *reduplicatio*, Schelling identifies this in 1809 as God's *Basis*. He writes:

> As there is nothing before or outside of God, he must contain within himself the ground of his existence. All philosophies say this, but they speak of this ground as a mere concept without making it something real and actual [*etwas Reellem und Wirklichem*]. This ground of his existence, which God contains, is not God viewed as absolute, that is, insofar as he exists. For it is only the *Basis* of his existence, He is *nature* [*der Grund seiner Existenz, Er ist die Natur*] … inseparable from him … but nevertheless distinguishable from him [*unabtrennliches, aber doch unterschiedenes Wesen*]. (SW VII: 358; PINH: 33–34)

The inseparable *Grund* of God does not precede God qua personality or qua livingness (either chronologically, or logically). Here, Schelling sets a kind of *epochē* on the coordinates of inner–outer, before–after, urging: "God contains himself in an inner basis of his existence, which … precedes him as to his existence, but similarly God is prior to the basis[,] as this basis … could not be if God did not exist in actuality" (SW VII: 358; PINH: 33).

This argument is crucial because it will ultimately justify humans' *being* in God *as well as* their freedom to commit evil acts—and we may legitimately describe the birth of the God-personality from the God-Basis without fearing recourse to fables *or* analogy because, precisely, we are ourselves one aspect *of*

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not a distinctive and particular substance, *even though it be a consequence of A*" (SW VII: 344; PINH: 15). My italics.

[8] Werner Marx, *The Philosophy of F.W.J. Schelling: History, System, and Freedom*, trans. Thomas Nenon (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 61: "At the same time, divine Being is the 'Universe,' 'absolute totality' [SW IV: 128–29], and contains nature and the finite intellect as forces within itself. All finite and the singular beings, the plurality, are thus simultaneously real and ideal within this unity of a qualitative identity."

the absolute, of "God."[9] The relationship between these aspects of the absolute is simultaneously in-different—there is no *tertium comparationis* by which to define their difference—*and* the relationship is tensed. Existing in the most amorphous sense, the aspects coexist *as* God, inseparably yet without the interaction or possible reciprocation precursive to a dialectics of becoming (as in Hegel's initial and purely formal dialectic, of being and nothing in the subjective *Logic*). At this "virtual" degree of coming-into-being, then, we may focus on either one of two "equally eternal beginnings of self-revelation" (SW VII: 395; PINH: 80). From the point of view of their tensed coexistence, "the first beginning of creation is the longing [*Sehnsucht*] of the One to give birth to itself, or the will of the depths" ("*es sei die Sehnsucht, die das ewige Eine empfindet*"). Through the same will, modalized now as love, arises an incipient coherence and intelligibility that Schelling calls *das Wort*—principle of personality and spirit.

The unfolding of the two *Wille*, that of the "middle nature like desire or passion" and that which is "altogether free and conscious" (SW VII: 395; PINH: 102), crosses through all becoming. The unfolding "vitalizes" Spinozistic necessity by *thinking* a living unconscious and by urging that the "geometric reasoning which has ruled so long" coexist with the passional and the spiritual. Schelling writes of the "irrational relationship [*irrationale Verhältnis*]" between nature and reason (SW VII: 395). This uni-dualism of principles—which for Schelling is also a return to what was best in Leibniz; viz., "laws of nature [that] are morally [in the sense of practically] necessary" (SW VII: 396; PINH: 103)—the uni-dualism of the principles at the birth of God from itself is thus found in animals and humans alike. Schelling offers the image of light emerging from obscure gravity, a figure so vivid that it was lost neither on Gilles Deleuze nor on Slavoj Žižek, albeit for quite different ends. We will see why it is also important to note that the modalization of the will of love as *das Wort* is indebted to Kabbalism flowing through Philo into Abulafia's ecstatic mysticism—in short, Matthew Arnold's much-cited Jew-Greek that is also Greek-Jew.[10] No doubt Christian adaptations of Kabbalah,

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[9] In his essay, "La naissance angoissée de l'Absolu: Autour des *Recherches sur l'essence de la liberté humaine* et des *Âges du monde* de Schelling," Étienne Pelletier (Université de Montréal) cites Augustin Dumont pondering Schelling's *Die Weltalter*: "[L]'acte philosophique de dire le développement temporel de l'absolu, c'est-à-dire de le raconter, n'est que l'explicitation à soi de cet absolu, mais cette explicitation doit être elle-même 'naturante.'" See *Laval théologique et philosophique* 73, no. 1 (2017): 53–73. "Le récit inévitablement humain du passé de l'absolu est donc sommé d'être, à l'instar de l'absolu, naturant et créateur." See Augustin Dumont, "Le langage du temps," *Methodos [online]* 14 (2014), https://doi.org/10.4000/methodos.3740.

[10] Moshe Idel, *Abraham Abulafia and Ecstatic Kabbalah* (New York: Facsimile Publisher, 2016), 57. Schelling's claim that "even he who has moved out of the center retains the *feeling that he has been all things when in and with God*" (390) rings like the direct uptake of Abulafia's *Devekuth* or *unio mystica* with God. In Judaism, as in Christianity, it is, of course, antinomian.

like Jakob Böhme's, confronted the further challenge of a triune god with minimal "emanations" or *sephirot*. But I am anticipating my discussion of Levinas.

In the cosmic genealogy, nature emerges with the birth of light, albeit never losing the dark principle from which the light was raised (SW VII: 377; PINH: 54); at a higher degree, however, the same biune principle gives rise to spirit, which Schelling aligns with the realm of history (SW VII: 377–78; PINH: 54). A common matrix thus guides the unfolding of history and nature. But within the realm of spirit, the dark principle moves through passion as an excitation or e-motion (*Erregung*), seeking to move itself from the neutral core (*Zentrum*) of the being to its periphery. Whilst in animals the two principles remain in balance, in humans there arises a choice or possibility: to enact the will of the depths or to incarnate the will of love. "Indeed, the dark ground operates incessantly in individual man too, and rouses egotism and a particularised will just in order that the will of love may arise in contrast to it" (SW VII: 381; PINH: 57–58). Particularisation thus emerges from the interaction of the two wills, though it is *Angst* in man that drives him "out of the center (*Zentrum*) in which he was created" (SW VII: 381; PINH: 57–58). This illustrates what has been deemed the emanationism in Schelling's logic,[11] though he rejects Neo-Platonism as unable to account for evil and freedom.

Be that as it may, we see the tension between his struggle to preserve the importance of individual actions, whether good or evil, and the power of the will of love to reconcile and to unify. This is what I am calling the *chiaroscuro* theodicy. Indeed, the echoes of this extraordinary cycle show up in places as diverse as Freud's metapsychological conceptions of Eros and Thanatos. For Schelling, then, in each person, then, the interaction of *Angst* and *Erregung*, embodying the tension between the two principles, plays itself out according to the self that has emerged. Although there is a historical teleology explicit in these pages—not to mention an oblique reference to the Apocalypse of John (SW VII: 379–80; PINH: 56–57)—it is not clear that that telos will be realized in "the present age"; nothing indicates that the principle of light will triumph

[11] Schelling reminds his readers that St. Augustine criticized emanationism as unable to explain the origin of man from the substance of God. Nothing comes from God but God; the corruptibility and essential lack in humans is explained by their being created *ex nihilo*. For Schelling, however, the nothing in question should well be *the question* for us: "Augustinus sagt gegen die Emanation: aus Gottes Substanz könne nichts hervorgehen denn Gott; darum sei die Kreatur aus Nichts erschaffen, woher ihre Korruptibilität und Mangelhaftigkeit komme (*De liberum Arbitrium*, L. I, C. 2). Jenes Nichts ist nun schon lange das Kreuz des Verstandes. Einen Aufschluß gibt der Ausdruck der Schrift: der Mensch sei *ek tōn mē ontōn*, aus dem, das da nicht ist, geschaffen, so wie das berühmte *mē on* der Alten, welches, so wie die Schöpfung aus Nichts, durch die obige Unterscheidung zuerst eine positive Bedeutung bekommen möchte" (SW VII: 379–80; PINH: 56–57).

and not sink back into primordial chaos,[12] "into the *turba gentium* which overflow the foundations of the ancient world as once the waters of the begin *again* cover the foundations of primeval time" (SW VII: 380; PINH: 57, emphasis added). In time, however, the "point of origin" or *Basis* will be resorbed into light, or drift into insignificance. But the problem is that this "*in* time" fails to capture the necessity with which the principle of love triumphs; that is, how God, conceived as the one—though ever in the uni-duality that began Schelling's exposition of his two principles—unifies or sublimates that dark principle in light. Until then—if there is indeed a "then"—the wisdom Schelling urges us to pursue is a *gnōthi seautōn*, which, holding reason ever close to "the heart," does not contravene the "most sacred sentiments and feelings and moral consciousness (*Gemüt und sittlichen Bewußtsein*)" (SW VII: 413; PINH: 92). As he urges two years later in the *Weltalter* (1811), a certain theosophy *must* dwell with philosophy, keeping its sights on the positivity of revelation that begins, firstly, in nature itself.

It is not my aim to comment on or criticize this extraordinary text, which crowned the *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling and the intuitions of which accompany him, throughout his unpublished thought, into the *Philosophy of Revelation*. It remains extraordinary because, through the self-birth of the universe, it establishes a natural teleology built upon a natural theology of creation or what we could call "Being" or "life." Through the higher-degree birth of humans out of nature and spirit, Schelling further opened rational theology to an ethics of the good will,[13] reflecting the divine will of love. He thus assumed the task of bridging "natural theology and *revealed* religion,"[14] proposing his original solution to the Kantian dilemma. Moreover, I believe Heidegger is right to say that Schelling did not so much change systems as struggle "passionately ever since his earliest periods for his one and unique

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[12] After comparing Schelling and Schlegel, Hans Blumenberg put his finger on the dilemma that gives rise to the temptation to dualism or Gnosticism, with an eye to Schelling's youthful work: "When the Greek discovered the cosmos *and* tragedy, the relation of the gods to the admired world-order remained unclarified and doubtful for them. It was to emerge that Christianity, too, could not overcome this ambivalence—indeed, that it intensified it even further because it had to claim the identical God for the creation *and* for its redemption. How the perfection of the first act could allow the second act's desperate intervention to become necessary was *so far from being satisfactorily explicable* that the Gnostic separation of the responsibilities for the world and for salvation had to remain *the most tempting solution to this radical dilemma*." *The Genesis of the Copernican World*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1987), 71. (First published in German by Suhrkamp Verlag, 1975.)

[13] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, *Including the First Introduction*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), 326–34; *Kants Werke Akademie Textausgabe V*, 438–47.

[14] Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*. First published in 1861 in Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, XIII and XIV. I use the German and the two-volume French translation *Philosophie de la révélation*, trans. Jean-François Marquet and Jean-François Courtine (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989), 46. Pagination from the French.

standpoint," which is precisely this solution to the natural theology–revealed religion tension.[15] Now, if the *Philosophy of Revelation* stands as anything like the culmination of his struggle, then we might note that, by 1840, the system unfolds according to a three-term logic of the *can-be* (*Seinkönnende*), the mere-being (*Seiende*), and a third term that Schelling chose to leave unnamed. "The third cannot be defined otherwise than as *that which is effectively free to be* and *not to be*."[16] This excluded-included middle, in which the freedom to be or not to be coexisted as effective possibility, denotes the unique source of all acting and willing, beyond understanding and theorization. Not so unlike the light principle that consummates the path taken in the *Inquiries*, the *Philosophy of Revelation*'s unpronounceable third term completed "that, which will be" and so, "with this determination we have … reached," said Schelling, "the absolute."[17]

I would argue that this "theodicy" is less "*chiaroscura*" than unutterable. What, after all, do we gain by opposing binaries like possible–impossible to a philosophy of becoming, which dogged the possibility of synoptic intuition? Schelling's recurrence to Ploucquet's logic of perspectival conciliation allowed him to valorize an indeterminacy that Manfred Frank clarifies this way: supposing De Morgan's Law, dating from after Schelling's work, that the negation of a disjunction ¬ (A V B) is equivalent to the conjunction of the two terms negated (¬A & ¬B), it remains that in the initial, disjunctive formulation, *one* of the terms opposed *can* be positive. By contrast, in the second expression, the conjunction shows only two negated terms. Formally, they would be equivalent. What then has happened? The "positivity" in the initial disjunction has passed without apparent residue into the conjunction of negated terms. But this is the case only in one of the aspects of this conceptual deployment. According to another aspect, the positivity persists hereafter, as if imperceptible in the formalization. You can imagine how useful such a logic was for thinking the two natures of God in the Christian trinity (Jesus as man and Jesus as God). For Schelling, however, this logic pointed *beyond* idealist formalism toward a positive philosophy of paradoxical conciliation.

The connection to Levinas passes through Franz Rosenzweig's struggle against Hegelianism in *The Star of Redemption* (1921). But Levinas sets it into a kind of phenomenology, or a pre-phenomenology, steeped as he is in the rationalist Judaism that contested Kabbalah. Thus, during his captivity in the officers' camp at Fallingbostel, Levinas reflected on the basis of existence out of which arises intelligibility or, for him, active intentionality. Already in

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[15] Martin Heidegger, "Introductory Remarks of the Lecture Course," in *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), 1–13.

[16] Schelling, *Philosophie de la révélation*, 235.

[17] Schelling, *Philosophie de la révélation*, 238.

1944, he wrote: "Hypostase – comme terme par lequel je pourrais remplacer la notion de subjectivité."[18] This would be a minimalist subjectivity arising, Schelling-like, out of itself, out of its sleeping body. That would be his way of contesting Heidegger's almost a-subjective *Dasein*. And Levinas immediately added a Schelling-like reflection on good and evil, citing the Talmudic gloss on Genesis 25:22: "'But the children [Jacob and Esau] struggled in her [Rebecca's] womb.' This evokes both the co-originarity of good and evil, and the roots of Judaism and Christianity (Genesis 32: 29)." Now this might seem a peculiar reading of Judaism *or* Christianity, and we can well wonder what connects Jacob and Esau with the *hypostasis* with which Levinas replaces subjectivity. Is he thinking of Kabbalah? He is certainly not thinking only of gnostic dualism, any more than Schelling was. He adds, "Les principes du bien et du mal qui ont dans le judaïsme et le christianisme la même source—tragique de cette communauté d'origine. Dans la religion d'Ormund et d'Orient il n'en est rien [Zoroastrianisme, Manichéïsme]."[19]

Whatever we make of Levinas's interpretation of dualism, the common source of good and evil in Judaism and Christianity bespeaks the tragedy of the human and the ever-present possibility of evil. Obviously, felling trees in an officer's camp while his family was murdered motivated Levinas to take evil seriously, as an existential. To be sure, Levinas was interested in a subject—better, in a consciousness emerging from impersonal consciousness, or even from its sleeping body. He was rethinking, as I said, Heidegger's *Dasein* as the site of listening and questioning. What he seeks is a "sub-ject" that is thrown, embodied, *jacere*, but not yet master of its intentions and acts—in a word, a *Basis*. Levinas writes in the same notebook, "*Anokhi* [in Hebrew, the word for the 'I' of mastery]. It does not encompass the unity of its personality [*ne comprend pas l'unité de sa personne*], and yet it is conditioned by this contradiction," which Schelling identifies as the tension between good and evil.[20]

Thinking within Judaism and Husserlian phenomenology, Levinas imagines "situations" that afford us access to a pre-reflective, profoundly embodied experience, in which Being and self are indeterminately mingled. Between 1944 and 1947, when he publishes *De l'existence à l'existant*, this is the *il y a*, the moiling contrapositive of Heidegger's *es gibt*, which echoes the universal *Basis* in Schelling as much as the *tohu–va vohu* preceding creation in Genesis.[21] Out of this *il y a* prior to subjects and objects arises the

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[18] Emmanuel Levinas, "Carnet V" [1944], in *Carnets de captivité et autres inédits*, Vol. I (Paris: Grasset et Fasquelle, 2009), 146–147, 488 n. 20.
[19] Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, 147, 488 n. 22.
[20] Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, 146–47. My translation.
[21] Levinas, *De l'existence à l'existent* (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1978); followed by Alphonso Lingis's English translation *Existence and Existents* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001).

"hypostasis"—a term we find when Jewish mysticism sets to speaking "Greek" (from Philo to Abulafia). Important in Levinas's *mises en scène* of sleeplessness and awakening is that the hypostasis arises from its localization, from its body, like the first intelligible from the ground zero of Being. Where Schelling spoke of a kind of tension between the two first principles, Levinas proposes a phenomenology of awakening. Rather than dialectizing, the hypostasis emerges as if ecstatically from Being, over which it then assumes a certain mastery, for itself. Levinas writes:

> Par la position dans l'*il y a* anonyme s'affirme un sujet. Affirmation au sens étymologique du terme, position sur un terrain ferme, sur une base, conditionnement, fondement. Le sujet qui s'arrache à la vigilance anonyme de l'*il y a* n'a pas été cherché comme *pensée* ou comme *conscience*, ou comme esprit.[22]

The watchword is "basis," the "sur-une-base" out of which a subject a-firms itself, takes on consistency. Levinas adapts this in such a way that it no longer serves theodicy or theosophy, but a phenomenology of the body, which is neither Husserl's *Leib-Körper* nor is it Heidegger's open site in the world.

Like Schelling seeking the root common to nature and history, Levinas will argue:

> Our investigation did not start with the ancient opposition of the ego to the world. We were concerned with determining the meaning of a much more general fact, that of the very apparition of an existent, a substantive in the heart of this impersonal existence, which … we cannot give a name to, for it is a pure verb.[23]

From the becoming or verbality of Being borrowed from Schelling—as from Franz Rosenzweig who appropriated Schelling's logic in 1921—from pure verbality arises a substantive, a word or noun. In what Kabbalah conceived as a contraction of being or God, a word congeals that is *creative*. If Schelling sought to revitalize Spinoza and *to clarify* what was deemed Spinoza's "pantheism," and if this required "*die ganze Macht einer … gründlich ausgebildeten Philosophie*," as we have seen, then Levinas is struggling against his targets of Hegelian dialectics and Heidegger's "always-already thrownness" of Dasein. Like Schelling, he requires the power of a philosophy fundamentally worked out, this time biblical; one in which "the word *davar* [meaning both "word" and "thing"] teaches us … that any dissociation between the universe of

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[22] Levinas, *De l'existence à l'existent*, 139–40; *Existence and Existents*, 82.
[23] Levinas, *De l'existence à l'existent*, 139–40; *Existence and Existents*, 82.

language and that of Being is foreign to the Hebrew language."[24] In short, creation emerges from and as the *Said* (*du Dit*) of God, "because the Word [*le Verbe*], in its purity, is creative"—an intuition hardly lost on Schelling, with its permutations specific to Jewish and Christian mysticism.[25]

Recall now that Schelling had urged that the relationship between the *Basis* and *das Wort* or meaning-incipient can be understood as "a birth out of darkness into light." As Schelling rhapsodized, "the seed must be buried in the earth and die in darkness in order that the lovelier creature of light should rise and unfold itself in the rays of the sun. Man is formed in his mother's womb; and only out of the darkness of unreason (out of feeling, out of longing …) grow clear thoughts" (SW VII: 360). In his turn, Levinas rethinks being and time, in light of Heidegger. At the source of thrownness and futural temporality, Levinas sets the instant of emergence:

> This movement, of coming to oneself without having left from anywhere, is not to be confused with that which spans an interval of time. It comes to pass in an instant itself where something … precedes the instant. The essence of an essence, its effectuation consists in spanning this inner distance.[26]

What "precedes" the instant and thus phenomenological temporalization is "[t]he drama inherent in an instant itself, its struggle for existence, which mechanism fails to recognize when it takes an instant to be a simple and inert element of time."[27] Out of its own bodily basis, and prior to any distinction between being and beings, emerges, "dramatically," the hypostasis as incipient crystallization of subjectivity. *This* sub-ject[28] is a birth neither out of the world nor out of Being, and therefore ventures to contest Heidegger's ontological

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[24] André Neher, *The Exile of the Word: From the Silence of the Bible to the Silence of Auschwitz*, trans. David Maisel (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1970 [English edition]); 99 in the original.

[25] Neher writes: "The most popular of the Jewish interpreters of the Bible, Rashi, proposes what amounts to a broader interpretation of the Midrashic books to which John (in John 1:1) is most probably referring: if creation could be born from the *Said* [*du Dit*] of God, it is only because the Word [*le Verbe*], in its purity, is creative …. The unity of the *davar* implies that the word [*parole*] accompanies every coming into presence and constitutes, in André Neher's beautiful expression, its 'rhythm'" (99).

[26] Levinas, *De l'existence à l'existent*, 131; *Existence and Existents*, 75–76.

[27] Levinas, *De l'existence à l'existent*, 129; *Existence and Existents*, 74.

[28] Jean-François Courtine translates the term literally, and with an eye toward Aristotle's metaphysics, as the *jacent-au-fond* or lying-at-the-base. See "Schelling et l'achèvement de la métaphysique" in *Extase de la raison: essais sur Schelling* (Paris: Galilée, 1990), 169–99, esp. 185: "le jacent-au-fond, c'est ce sans quoi un autre ne peut pas être, mais qui lui-même peut être sans l'autre. Du même coup, sa *priorité* … [il] est seulement 'ce sans quoi,' mais non pas 'ce grâce à quoi' une chose est précisément la chose qu'elle est."

difference. It is like Schelling's birth out of self, and nightly, cyclically, it "dies back into itself" by falling asleep. Levinas transposes Schelling's absolute to the human. Schelling would hardly have rejected such a transposition, I think.

For Levinas, the paradox of a birth out of self is that this coming into being "is" only in its now, its instant. But if we shift perspectives slightly, we discover that "dans l'instant lui-même," there is "quelque chose si l'on peut dire [qui] précède l'instant," as I said.[29] Via this Schellingian and chiasmatic logic, the present is absolute birth and anything that lies "before" the instant of the emergence of hypostasis from its base, is simply beyond representation.[30]

We might here recall Schelling's words: "Without this preceding gloom, creation would have no reality; darkness is its necessary heritage. Only God—*the Existent himself*—dwells in pure light; for he alone is self-born" (SW VII: 360, emphasis added).

Beyond these indicative remarks, Schelling's influence on Levinas could well be shown systematically. For my purposes, the question of evil in Levinas becomes the question of freedom and the tension between intelligibility and ground, or the hypostasis and the *il y a*. Does Levinas's *il y a* lead in some way to evil or is it above all a way to think birth processually and instantaneously? Recall Levinas's *Carnets de captivité* notes on Genesis 25:22. Good and evil are co-originary in the womb. Jacob and Esau struggled already before they came into the world. The *il y a* is not evil in itself, any more than the *Basis* is evil. But Levinas's *il y a* is not ecstatic, either. It is a "ground" out of which arises an embodied being, the "hypostasis," through whose

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[29] Levinas, *De l'existence à l'existent*, 131; *Existence and Existents*, 75.

[30] Levinas, *De l'existence à l'existent*, 131; *Existence and Existents*, 75.

Compare the use, here, of "accomplir l'événement du commencement" with an entry from "Carnet VII," which dates from 1944 or 1945: "Chez Heidegger [l']existence accomplit la compréhension. (Il prend l'idée husserlienne de l'intention spécifique, adéquate à l'être des objets, pour voir dans les faits de l'existence, dans toute leur concrétion, des compréhensions.) Pour moi, l'existence accomplit mais non pas en tant que compréhension. Elle accomplit spécifiquement—ce n'est pas un événement extérieur—mais la compréhension est en dehors de l'accomplisse [sic]. La compréhension toujours théorique, toujours lumière. Elle donne à l'accomplissement sa signification propre—qui est dans la tension dramatique (—temps—*felix culpa*). (Par elle [la tension dramatique] ce n'est pas un événement extérieur), c'est le symbole anticipant. Mais le symbolisme, [connaissance?] philosophie—n'est pas l'événement même." Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, 184.

By restricting his investigations to a pre-ontological *comprehension* by Dasein of its Being, Heidegger remains at a conceptual-intuitive level that Levinas here calls "symbolic"; the symbolic is not language so much as it is already representation. In that way, it is not an event *per se*; it has already happened. Cf., *Totalité et infini* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961), 182: "le corps est en fait la *façon* dont un être, ni spatial, ni étranger à l'étendue … physique, existe séparément …. Non pas qu'à une intention dite théorique, base du moi, s'ajouteraient des volontés, des désirs et des sentiments, pour transformer la pensée en vie. La *thèse strictement intellectualiste subordonne la vie à la représentation*." Emphasis added.

emergence a sub-ject that is both *moi* and *soi*, intentional and corporeal, eventuates as if otherwise than (Heidegger's) Being that calls silently within *Da-sein*. The least we can say is that embodiment, understood as the life of the drives, allows Levinas to ponder evil as chaos and suffering. That is, he approaches evil from the perspective of the other who *suffers it*.

Earlier I had written: "There is no theodicy in Levinas," but now I am inclined to say that there is a contemporary theodicy here, less concerned with justifying God's good, or God's justice, than with responding to Heidegger: that is, "Otherwise than Being" also means "Otherwise than Nothing"—otherwise than Heidegger's 1936 flight of the gods, otherwise than all his cryptic remarks about the divine *needing* Being, any more than Schelling's birth of God needs Heidegger's Being in a way other than the Being that it provides itself thanks to its biune development. Suffice it to say that if Levinas's phenomenology never sought to explain evil, it takes it as seriously as did Schelling.

On the other hand, Levinas does show us a psychological way in which suffering points beyond the evil of human egotism in Schelling (i.e., the will of the self, *Eigenwillens*). Suffering comes to denote the "alterity" of a memory that does not synthesize into phenomenology's synthetic, flowing time-consciousness. This conception of evil serves his strategy of linking suffering with intersubjective passion; if you will, "our" pre-conscious ("irrational") inability to get through the melancholia—or trauma—of having failed to assist one who suffered and to whom "we" did not respond. Is this perspective an adequate justification of evil's reality? Can Schelling's theodicy be replaced by Levinas's patho-*dicy*? Perhaps, but above all, it does undercut Schelling's drive-self that strives to move out of the center and toward a passional hegemony over reason. It undercuts this drive-self by inquiring how it is that "we" become aware at all of the co-presence of good and evil, that same co-presence that Levinas found in the Bible, and Schelling in Böhme's Christian Kabbalah. Like the phenomenological descriptions he proposed of the hypostasis, the priority of evil as drives-based and willed gets shifted toward its condition of possibility in intersubjectivity: that is, in the emergence of self from itself out of its bodily location, which for Levinas is followed by the higher-level emergence of the ego through social encounters. The Schellingian logic seems still present. And I find this a productive approach to evil, as it neither abstracts it nor rationalizes it. Not unlike Schelling, it re-thinks the question, shifts perspective, and asks: in what sense, for us today, is evil ineluctable?

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The Divine Stakes of Human Freedom: Jonas in Dialogue with Schelling

Ian Alexander Moore

Alas, there doesn't seem to be much You Yourself can do about our circumstances, about our lives. Neither do I hold You responsible. You cannot help us, but we must help You and defend Your dwelling place inside us to the last.

—Etty Hillesum, Amsterdam under German occupation, July 1942[1]

In a recent article, Lore Hühn calls for a comprehensive study of the parallels between Schelling's critique of the will, on the one hand, and the philosophies of nature and technology developed in the twentieth century by students of Heidegger such as Hannah Arendt, Günther Anders, and Hans Jonas, on the other. Hühn notes, in particular, that

> essential moments of Jonas's ethics of responsibility, with its critique of classical metaphysics' neglect of the body and nature, cannot be understood without the background of Schelling; this holds as well for Jonas's speculative figure of the self-retraction of God and for his

[1] Etty Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life: The Diaries, 1941–1943 and Letters from Westerbork*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (New York: Henry Holt, 1996), 178.

theory of responsibility for the totality of beings.[2]

In this article, I intend to contribute a small piece to that larger study by bringing Jonas's speculative theology into dialogue with Schelling's theodicy as outlined in the latter's 1809 Freedom Essay. While there have been other studies on the Jonas–Schelling connection,[3] they have mainly centered on points of convergence in their philosophies of life and have largely neglected the Freedom Essay, which is the only text by Schelling that Jonas demonstrably knew well. There is, nevertheless, a connection between Jonas's philosophical biology, his theory of human freedom, and his theology that warrants methodological comparison with Schelling but that I can at the outset only mention here. Whereas Schelling attempts to understand how God and the world must be constituted if human freedom, as the ability to do good and evil, is to be real, Jonas attempts to understand how God and the world must be constituted if the phenomenon of life, broadly speaking, is to be saved as purposive and as, to various degrees, free. My focus will be on the theological significance of the advent of human freedom in the cosmos.

For Jonas, if human freedom is really to be free—indeed so free that it does not implicate God in the Holocaust—the traditional attributes of the Judeo-Christian God must be rethought. "[W]e allow," writes Jonas in his much-discussed essay "The Concept of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice,"

> the force of a unique and shattering [*ungeheuerlicher*] experience [to have] a voice in the question of what "is the matter" with God [*was es mit Gott auf sich habe*]. And there, right away, arises the question, what did Auschwitz add to that which one could always have known about the extent of the terrible and horrendous things that humans can do to humans and from times immemorial have done? And what has it added in particular to what is familiar to us Jews from a millennial history of

[2] Lore Hühn, "Ekstase und Gelassenheit: Schelling und Heidegger im Gespräch," *JTLA (Journal of the Faculty of Letters, University of Tokyo, Aesthetics)* 42-43 (2017–2018): 17–33, 32. Here and below, all translations for which I do not supply an English edition are mine.
[3] Michael Hackl, "Ein Appell an die Freiheit: Existenz, Mythos und Freiheit bei H. Jonas und F.W.J. Schelling," in *Die Klassische Deutsche Philosophie und ihre Folgen*, ed. Michael Hackl and Christian Danz (Göttingen: V and R unipress and Vienna University Press, 2017), 131–54; Jesper L. Rasmussen, "Freedom as Ariadne's Thread through the Interpretation of Life: Schelling and Jonas on Philosophy of Nature as the Art of Interpretation," *Kabiri* 1 (2018): 69–91; Jesper L. Rasmussen, "Hans Jonas' philosophische Biologie und Friedrich W. J. Schellings Naturphilosophie: Einleitende Bemerkungen zu einer Affinität," *Res Cogitans* 11 (2016): 63–93.

suffering and forms so essential a part of our collective memory?[4]

These questions lead Jonas to espouse, admittedly with some hesitation, the following three theses: (1) divine omnipotence must be relinquished, (2) God must be "passible," i.e., able to suffer at the hands of humans, and (3) eschatology must allow for different ends.

In what follows I will discuss these theses in Jonas and compare them with Schelling's philosophy in the Freedom Essay. My aim is not merely to show Jonas's debt to Schelling, who has been almost entirely overlooked in major studies of Jonas's theology,[5] but also to raise considerations in speculative theology today. I would like, in other words, this brief essay to be not only historical but also systematic, a matter not only of Schelling's *Nachleben* or "afterlife" in twentieth-century philosophy and theology but also of the *Sachen* or "matters" themselves.

First, a few words on Jonas's acquaintance with Schelling are in order. Jonas, to all appearances, first engaged seriously with Schelling in Heidegger's Winter Semester 1927–1928 advanced seminar on the Freedom Essay, which was held right after Heidegger had published *Being and Time* but shortly before he would move from Marburg to Freiburg to take over Husserl's chair of philosophy. Judging from the copy that has survived in his literary remains, Jonas did not discuss Schelling in the presentation he gave to the seminar on January 21, 1928. He seems, instead, to have followed Heidegger's directive to several of the participants to focus on the problem of freedom in Schelling's predecessors. Jonas wrote and delivered a presentation titled "Das Freiheitsproblem bei Augustin" ("The Problem of Freedom in Augustine"), thereby laying the foundation for what would become his first book: a "demythologizing" approach to the biblical Fall and the doctrine of original

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[4] Hans Jonas, *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz: Eine jüdische Stimme* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1987), 10; in English, Hans Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," in *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 131–43 (132). I have emended the second sentence to match the original publication of Jonas's own English version in *The Journal of Religion* 67, no. 1 (January 1987): 1–13 (2). As it appears in *Mortality and Morality*, the sentence does not contain the words "the extent of the terrible and horrendous things that humans can do to"; they were presumably omitted by accident during transcription.

[5] For example, Schelling is not mentioned in Raphael Döhn, *Der Mensch in der Verantwortung: Die Theodizeefrage bei Hans Jonas, Dorothee Sölle und Abraham Joshua Heschel* (Berlin: Logos, 2020); Udo Lenzig, *Das Wagnis der Freiheit: Der Freiheitsbegriff im philosophischen Werk von Hans Jonas aus theologischer Perspektive* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2006); or Christian Wiese, *The Life and Thought of Hans Jonas: Jewish Dimensions*, trans. Jeffrey Grossman and Christian Wiese (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2007). Schelling appears just once in a footnote in Thomas Schieder, *Weltabenteuer Gottes: Die Gottesfrage bei Hans Jonas* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1988), and together with Hegel as general historical background in Wolfgang Baum, *Gott nach Auschwitz: Reflexionen zum Theodizeeproblem im Anschluß an Hans Jonas* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2004).

sin by way of a critical analysis of chapter 7 of Paul's Epistle to the Romans and Augustine's various interpretations thereof.[6] (Incidentally, the word *demythologisieren* makes an early appearance in the 1930 book version of Jonas's study of Augustine, prior to its famous use by Protestant theologian Rudolf Bultmann, who was Jonas's lifelong friend and one of his most important teachers.[7] Only later in life, as we will see, did Jonas recognize the contemporary theological exigency of myth, i.e., "that vehicle of imaginative but credible conjecture that Plato allowed for the sphere beyond the knowable."[8]) The fact that Schelling was nevertheless important for the early Jonas, and again on his mind late in his life, can be gleaned from a letter Jonas wrote in 1972 to Heidegger, who had just sent him a copy of the book version of his 1936 lecture course on Schelling. "I am," writes Jonas, "eagerly looking forward to studying [your book] during my vacation, which has just begun. In my youth, Schelling's treatise once made a deep impression on me, but over the years it has gradually slipped away from me. So now I will reread it under your guidance."[9]

That Jonas might have reread Schelling in the 1970s is not especially relevant for the two texts I will be discussing in order to develop Jonas's position on the three matters mentioned above (namely, power, suffering, and

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[6] Heidegger's notes and protocols of the seminar are available in *Heideggers Schelling-Seminar (1927/28): Die Protokolle von Martin Heideggers Seminar zu Schellings 'Freiheitsschrift' (1927/28) und die Akten des Internationalen Schelling-Tags 2006*, ed. Lore Hühn and Jörg Jantzen in collaboration with Philipp Schwab and Sebastian Schwenzfeuer (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 2010). Jonas's presentation is available on pages 373–402; 439–458. See also page 308; and Martin Heidegger, *Seminare: Hegel – Schelling*, ed. Peter Trawny, Gesamtausgabe 86 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2011). Jonas's book was published under the title *Augustin und das paulinische Freiheitsproblem: Ein philosophischer Beitrag zur Genesis der christlich-abendländischen Freiheitsidee* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1930; 2nd, expanded ed., 1965).

[7] Jonas, *Augustin und das paulinische Freiheitsproblem*, 2nd ed., 82. For more on Jonas's early work on demythologization and the scope of its applicability, see Ian Alexander Moore, "Jonas's Augustine-Book: An Early Application of Hermeneutic-Phenomenological *Destruktion*," in *Hans Jonas und die Marburger Hermeneutik*, ed. Malte Dominik Krüger and Andreas Großmann (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2023), 131–54.

[8] Jonas, *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 15; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," 134. For Jonas's correspondence with his erstwhile teacher on his myth—the only such exchange Jonas saw fit to publish during his lifetime—see Hans Jonas, *Zwischen Nichts und Ewigkeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1963), 63–72; in English, Rudolf Bultmann and Hans Jonas, "Exchange on Hans Jonas' Essay on Immortality," trans. Ian Alexander Moore, *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 40, no. 2 (2020): 491–506. I draw, with emendations, on my introduction to the latter in my discussion of Jonas's Immortality Essay below.

[9] "Jonas' Korrespondenz mit Martin Heidegger," in *Rudolf Bultmann and Hans Jonas, Briefwechsel 1928–1976*, ed. Andreas Großmann (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 123; Martin Heidegger, *Schellings Abhandlung Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit (1809)* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1971).

eschatology). These two texts, initially given as popular lectures, are titled "Immortality and the Modern Temper" (1961)[10] and "The Concept of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice" (first published in German in 1984 and then in Jonas's own English translation in 1987, but based on a text from 1965).[11] Jonas's letter to Heidegger nevertheless attests that Schelling had been important for Jonas and gives some, albeit limited, biographical-historical warrant for the comparisons and contrasts I would like to draw with the Freedom Essay. More could, of course, be said about how Schelling's positions in his 1809 treatise are complicated by later writings such as *Ages of the World* or the *Philosophy of Revelation*, but I will not do so here.

Jonas's speculative theology, which has "made him a minor star in the Jewish theological firmament,"[12] began to take shape in the early 1960s. His pioneering work on Gnosticism[13] led to an invitation to give the 1961 Ingersoll Lecture at Harvard University. In accordance with the standing stipulation that the speaker address the topic of "the Immortality of Man,"[14] Jonas chose to reflect on what sense, if any, immortality could have in the current age, given the prevailing skepticism about such matters. He titled his talk "Immortality and the Modern Temper," dedicating it to "H.A." (Hannah Arendt), who, it might be remembered, predicted in 1945 that "[t]he problem of evil will be the fundamental question of postwar intellectual life in Europe."[15]

Today, Jonas contends, we are all too aware of the vicissitudes of

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[10] Jonas first published this text in *Harvard Theological Review* 55, no. 1 (January 1962): 1–20, and then in a slightly different German version under the title "Unsterblichkeit und heutige Existenz," in Jonas, *Zwischen Nichts und Ewigkeit*, 44–62. Later, he republished the English version as his final essay in *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966; republished in Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001). It also appears in Jonas, *Mortality and Morality*, chapter 5.

[11] See note 4, above. The 1965 version is titled "Theology of the Suffering God," a draft of which can be found in the *Sammlung Hans Jonas*, HJ 1-8-29, Philosophisches Archiv der Universität Konstanz. It served as the basis for an intermediate version in 1968, now titled "The Concept of God after Auschwitz" and published alongside works by Elie Wiesel and Emil Fackenheim, among others, in *Out of the Whirlwind: A Reader of Holocaust Literature*, ed. Albert H. Friedlander (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 465–76.

[12] Benjamin Lazier, *God Interrupted: Heresy and the European Imagination between the World Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 10.

[13] Hans Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist. Erster Teil: Die mythologische Gnosis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1934); *Teil 2,1: Von der Mythologie zur mystischen Philosophie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1954); *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon, 1958).

[14] This quotation and information about the Ingersoll Lectures, which have featured such intellectuals as William James, Alfred North Whitehead, Paul Tillich, and Toni Morrison, can be found here: https://guides.library.harvard.edu/c.php?g=469643&p=3210581 (accessed March 18, 2023).

[15] Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding 1930–1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken, 1994), 134.

history and the fickleness of public opinion to put much stock in the immortality of fame or influence. Personal immortality has little hold on the minds of modern existence. And most intellectuals would balk at claims of mystical union with the eternal. Jonas therefore turns to moments of decision—those times, however seldom, when we feel as though our deeds had indelible cosmic import, as though we had some share in shaping the world, even if no trace should remain of our agency. We cannot, to be sure, know whether our deeds are immortal, just as we cannot know whether they are not. But we can endeavor to make sense of such feelings by means of speculation on how the universe and its foundations would have to be if these feelings should be more than mere illusions.

To this end, and despite the demythologizing approach of his early work, Jonas invents a creation myth with an open-ended conclusion. "Radicalizing," as he says, the idea of the self-withdrawal of God (*tzimtzum*) in the Lurianic Kabbalah, Jonas imagines that, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth by divesting himself of his power and giving himself *wholly* over to the evolution of the cosmos.[16] God starts to win himself back as inorganic matter and prerational life develop, but it is only with the arrival of human knowledge and freedom in the world that God can come into his own. God's success is not guaranteed, however. The human being can just as well act for evil as act for good, and that means just as well scar the face of God as adorn it. Our deeds do not merely impact the cosmos. Our deeds shape the very image of the deathless, albeit violable God. Herein lies our immortality. And even if God cannot respond directly, we can perhaps catch wind of his sighs of anguish in our dispirited age and learn to take responsibility for one another, for the world, and indeed for God himself.

This, at any rate, is the tale Jonas would like to believe true. And it is a tale he believes he cannot avoid telling, though he is careful to stress its revocability, its merely speculative character, and even its status as a "very *personal* stopgap [*Notbehelf*]":[17]

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[16] Only later does Jonas refer explicitly to the Lurianic Kabbalah. See Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Out of the Whirlwind*, 473; and Jonas, *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 45; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Mortality and Morality*, 142.

[17] "Religionsphilosophischer Diskurs mit Hans Jonas: Hans Jonas im Dialog mit Dietrich Braun, Walter Jaeschke, Michael Theunissen, Albrecht Wellmer (Juni 1992)," in *Fatalismus wäre Todsünde: Gespräche über Ethik und Mitverantwortung im dritten Jahrtausend*, ed. Dietrich Böhler (Münster: Lit, 2005), 153–85; 168. Emphasis added.

This late dialogue shows Jonas's ongoing commitment to his myth and its theological implications, even if he is little interested in debating subtleties, let alone in defending the myth to the letter. See also the 1989 interviews with Jonas published in *Erinnerungen*, ed. Christian Wiese (Frankfurt: Insel, 2003); in English, "'All this is mere stammering': Auschwitz and God's Impotence," in *Memoirs*, trans. Krishna Winston (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2008), 214–219.

> where, in a seriously non-dualist fashion, the authentic reality [*eigentliche Wirklichkeit*] of the human points back to the authentic reality of the universe […] and where it is necessary to speak also of this—of the totality of being and its ground [*vom All des Seins und seinem Grunde*]—without there being an identifiable terminology for it, we are directed to the path of the symbol that hints in an objectifying way [*des objektivierend andeutenden Symbols*], and perhaps a momentary, as it were experimental mythologization, holding itself in suspense, can come closer to the mystery again. And here the revocability of the anthropomorphic symbol would have to wait to be replaced by other, for their part equally revocable symbols, but not for a subsequent demythologization, which would have to reveal [*preisgeben*] what was to be signified only in the symbol.[18]

Jonas did not leave it at that, however. Just a few years after presenting his myth (which "as a matter of biographical fact [...] really came first"), he offered something of a "theological or conceptual translation" of it to a group of rabbis in New York, thereby attempting "to connect what must seem a strange and rather willful personal fantasy with the more responsible tradition of Jewish religious thought." "By this means," Jonas explained, "I try to redeem the irresponsibility of my tentative, groping speculation."[19]

The guiding question in this text, initially titled "Theology of the Suffering God," is what sense the concept of God can have "after Auschwitz," which is Jonas's synecdoche for the Shoah as *the* trauma of human history. This question is even more poignant in the 1984 version of his text, now bearing the title "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," as Jonas comes to view his work on the concept of God less in terms of conceptual vindication than as a response to the unanswered lamentations of the murdered at Auschwitz, including those of his own mother:

> When, with the honor of this award [i.e., the Dr. Leopold Lucas Prize], I also accepted the burden of delivering the oration that goes with it, and when I read in the biography of Rabbi Leopold Lucas, in whose memory the prize is named, that he died in Theresienstadt, but that his wife Dorothea, mother of the donor, was then shipped to Auschwitz, there to suffer the fate that my mother suffered there, too, there was no resisting the force with which the theme of this lecture urged itself

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[18] Letter from Jonas to Bultmann, January 7, 1962, in *Briefwechsel 1928–1976*, 52.
[19] Jonas, "Theology of the Suffering God," 1. Cf. "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Out of the Whirlwind*, 468; *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 24; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Mortality and Morality*, 136.

> on my choice. I chose it with fear and trembling. But I believed I owed it to those shadows that something like an answer to their long-gone cry to a silent God be not denied to them.[20]

The answer Jonas gives is novel, and novel it must be. For it is not enough, indeed it is "of no use," according to Jonas, to speak any longer of faithlessness, witnessing, or trial when wrestling with God over what happened in the camps. No, "'Auschwitz'" is "a theological event" that "calls, even for the believer, the whole traditional concept of God into question. It has, indeed, […] added to the Jewish historical experience something unprecedented and of a nature no longer assimilable [*nicht zu meistern*] by the old theological categories."[21]

§1. Omnipotence

One of these categories—and this brings me to the first of the three issues I would like to discuss—is omnipotence. Jonas tackles this issue in two conflicting ways in his lecture. On the one hand, he gives up on the idea of divine omnipotence. On the other hand, he contends that God himself gave up his omnipotence in the act of creation. In the first approach, which I take to be more plausible based on Jonas's premises, Jonas develops a trilemma according to which only two of the following three favorable options can be simultaneously chosen: 1. God's omnipotence, 2. his complete goodness, and 3. his intelligibility. If 1. (omnipotence) and 2. (complete goodness), then, as I suggested earlier in view of Auschwitz, we cannot have 3. (intelligibility), for "[o]nly a completely unintelligible God can be said to be absolutely good and absolutely powerful, yet tolerate the world as it is."[22] Further, Jonas stresses that Judaism depends on being able to understand at least some things about God and his ways, which, after all, he has communicated through the mouths of his prophets. (One might, however, wonder how he could do so if, as we

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[20] Jonas, *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 7; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Mortality and Morality*, 131. That this question was also motivating "Immortality and the Modern Temper" can be seen in a retrospective explanation in *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 15; *Mortality and Morality*, 134 ("the specter of Auschwitz already played its part"); and already in the earlier "Immortality" essay, *Mortality and Morality*, 129.

[21] Jonas, *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 12, 14; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Mortality and Morality*, 133. The quotation about Auschwitz as "a theological event [*ein theologisches Ereignis*]" can be found in Hans Jonas, *Materie, Geist und Schöpfung: Kosmologischer Befund und kosmogonische Vermutung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988), 55; in English, "Matter, Mind, and Creation: Cosmological Evidence and Cosmogonic Speculation," trans. Paul Schuchman and Lawrence Vogel, in *Mortality and Morality*, 189.

[22] Jonas, *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 37; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Mortality and Morality*, 139.

will see, he is in fact powerless or at best can only make himself felt in the world). Let us not forget that Jonas is also a philosopher, who, even if he recognizes the limitations of reason, is not willing to give up on the reasonableness of the God in whom he believes, nor on the reasonableness of that very belief. On occasion, he speaks of his endeavors in "The Concept of God after Auschwitz" as "rational 'theology.'"[23] Yet, however far human rationality may reach, Jonas is at least committed to the idea that God must make sense, and God would not make sense, for Jonas, if he were both good and omnipotent during Auschwitz.

If, however, 1. (omnipotence) and 3. (intelligibility) hold for God, then we cannot have 2. (complete goodness). Without argument, Jonas rejects the abandonment of God's absolute goodness. Presumably, Jonas would also reject the position of the medieval Franciscan voluntarists who maintained that something is good only because God declares or makes it so and not the other way around.

Jonas opts, then, for 2. (complete goodness) and 3. (intelligibility), declaring that the God of his myth "is not an omnipotent God."[24] (Jonas also develops a logical argument that I will only mention here; this argument views power as relational and so deems omnipotence an empty concept, like force without resistance.) In abandoning divine omnipotence, Jonas does not, however, fall prey to the dualist temptation, which Schelling, for his part, calls "a system of the self-destruction and despair of reason" (SW VII: 354)[25] and which Jonas had spent much of his career trying to combat at several levels (soul/body, mind/matter, subject/object, freedom/necessity), although without thereby espousing an undifferentiated monism. Jonas instead connects his account with that of God's self-contraction or self-withdrawal in the Lurianic Kabbalah. This is his second approach to the problem of omnipotence. However, unlike in the Kabbalah, Jonas adds that God's divestment of self (which sounds more like Christian *kenōsis* or self-emptying) must be total (which—"patripassianism" aside—nonetheless cannot be said of God the Father in Trinitarian theology, however much it can be said of the Son).[26] After creation, Jonas's God is not *somewhat* powerful. He is not

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[23] Jonas, "Is Faith Still Possible? Memories of Rudolf Bultmann and Reflections on the Philosophical Aspects of His Work," in *Mortality and Morality*, 209–210n9. See also Jonas, *Materie, Geist und Schöpfung*, 35; "Matter, Mind, and Creation," 179. Cf., however, "Religionsphilosophischer Diskurs," 168.

[24] Jonas, *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 33; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Mortality and Morality*, 138.

[25] *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2006), 24.

[26] Jonas recognizes this parallel, but distances himself from it: "There is, of course, a Christian connotation of the term 'suffering God' with which my myth must not be confounded; it does not speak, as does the former, of a special act by which the deity at one

powerful *at all* (except, Jonas maintains, to the extent that God can make himself felt in creation, which suggests that a partially potent, transcendent aspect of his self-divestiture into immanence remains).

It should be asked whether this makes sense from the Kabbalistic perspective, i.e., whether Jonas's attempt to "radicalize the concept of *tzimtzum* to a point never imagined before"[27] really "pushes [it] further,"[28] or whether he does not instead depart from the tradition altogether. Michael Theunissen raised this issue indirectly in a conversation he had with Jonas in 1989, when Jonas was almost ninety years old. Interestingly, Theunissen did so by distinguishing Jonas's position from the later Schelling's use of the concept of *tzimtzum* (which begins with the 1810 *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*, composed right after the Freedom Essay).[29] It is worth translating and citing from the transcript of the exchange at length, not merely because it provides further evidence of Jonas's awareness of Schelling, but because it highlights their differing positions on omnipotence:

> The late Schelling took up the, as you [Jonas] call it, "cosmogonic centerconcept"[30] of the Lurianic Kabbalah in such a way that he deployed it in his struggle against Hegel's Philosophical Theology. Hegelian theology stands or falls with the assertion that God has

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time, and for the special purpose of saving man, sends part of itself into a particular situation of suffering (the incarnation [*Fleischwerdung*] and crucifixion)." *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz,* 25; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Mortality and Morality*, 136. Or as he puts in a letter to Bultmann: "My myth is therefore a non-Trinitarian myth of incarnation [*Inkarnationsmythus*], as several Christians with whom I have been in correspondence here [in the U.S.] have remarked. Immediately after my lecture at the Divinity School at Harvard, it was brought to my attention that, in the old church, there was once something similar under the name of 'patripassianism': it is not the Son, but the Father himself who is the subject of the Passion. I do not know anything more about this. But, for me, it is, of course, a matter not of doctrine, but of a symbolic attempt that most readily expresses what to me seems to bring some sense to the enigma of being and existence." Jonas, *Zwischen Nichts und Ewigkeit*, 71–72; "Exchange on Hans Jonas' Essay on Immortality," 503. Cf. Marcel Sarot, "Patripassianism, Theopaschitism and the Suffering of God: Some Historical and Systematic Considerations," *Religious Studies* 26, no. 3 (1990): 363–75.

[27] Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Out of the Whirlwind*, 473.

[28] Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Out of the Whirlwind*, 473; Jonas, *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 45 (where Jonas uses the word *radikalisiert*); "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Mortality and Morality*, 142.

[29] On Schelling's indirect use of Kabbalistic sources, as mediated above all by Friedrich Oetinger, see Christoph Schulte, "Ẓimẓum in the Works of Schelling," *Iyyun: The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly* 41 (January 1992): 21–40. For the relevant passage in the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*, see SW VII: 428–30.

[30] See Jonas, *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 46; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Mortality and Morality*, 142.

> emptied and externalized himself into the world [*sich in die Welt entäußert*] and has, to a certain extent, been prompted to do so for his own sake, because it is only through the world that he can transform his poor, abstract being [*Sein*] into a rich, concrete one. Schelling's conception of *Contractio Dei* is a counter project to this concept of an emptying/externalization [*Entäußerung*] to which God is always already driven. For you, in contrast, "contraction" means at the same time that God "gave himself whole to the becoming world" [*"sich ganz in die werdende Welt hineinbegab"*].[31] Is this not a contradiction, which hands contraction over to its opposite, expansion? A contracting God makes room for another; he does not pass into the other. To give oneself to the becoming world—that means for you, of course: to renounce oneself [*sich seiner selbst entschlagen*]. But contrary to your intention, you thereby radicalize not the thought of *Zimzum* but that of emptying/externalization; and you do this so much that you can actually no longer think what is essential in Schelling's alternative to the model of emptying/externalization: that God, precisely thanks to his restraint vis-à-vis the world, remains its lord. Not only do you let go of the "Lord of history,"[32] as you expressly profess to do; moreover, you rid yourself of the idea that God is in every respect, as Schelling expresses it, the Lord of being [*Herr des Seins*].[33] The elimination of the predicate of omnipotence from the concept of God follows from this necessarily.[34]

Unfortunately, Jonas did not reply to this portion of Theunissen's intervention. However, whatever he might have said about Schelling and *tzimtzum*, Jonas no doubt would have resisted alignment with Hegel's notion of *Entäußerung* (a term that Luther used to render *kenōsis* in Paul's Epistle to the Philippians and that Jonas also uses when writing in German).[35] Even if God has something to gain in creation, success, on Jonas's account, is far from guaranteed, and the cunning of reason can only be anathema after the Holocaust. Hegel's "doctrine," he contends, "we must deny, being, as we are, more sober onlookers of the large and small theaters of the world, of nature and history.

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[31] *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 46–47; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Mortality and Morality*, 142. Jonas writes *hineingab*.
[32] *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 14; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Mortality and Morality*, 133.
[33] For discussion and references, see Grzegorz Kozdra, *"Herr des Seins": Eine Untersuchung zur philosophischen Gottesfrage in F.W.J. Schellings Münchener Vorlesungen* (Munich: Herbert Utz, 2016).
[34] "Religionsphilosophischer Diskurs," 178–79.
[35] Philippians 2:8; Jonas, *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 17, 45, 46; Jonas, *Zwischen Nichts und Ewigkeit*, 70. See also the following footnote.

The counterevidence is too overwhelming."[36]

Still, by positing "limitless power"[37] at the origin—which is then renounced to make room for creation—and by chalking creation up to "either inscrutable wisdom or love or whatever else the divine motive may have been,"[38] Jonas displaces, but does not resolve, the problem of God's scrutability. Unintelligibility returns at the inception, and we are compelled to ask: Why, if God had been all-powerful in the beginning, would he have given up that power? If he had really been *all*-powerful, could he not have brought about what he wanted differently, such that the Shoah would not have happened? Despite the importance of the contemporary redeployment of *tzimtzum* (or perhaps better of *kenōsis*), I am thus less persuaded by this aspect of Jonas's argument. According to his own logic, he would have done better to leave unqualified his statement "that, for the sake of our image of God and our whole relation to the divine, for the sake of any viable theology, we cannot uphold the time-honored (medieval) doctrine of absolute, unlimited divine power."[39] Later in life, Jonas did express himself more clearly: "It must somehow be supposed as the reason for why the world was created at all that the world, i.e., finitude, offers possibilities that God at the beginning [*der anfängliche Gott*] would not at all have on his own."[40] God was thus not, *stricto*

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[36] Jonas offers this critique of Hegel in his 1988 text *Materie, Geist und Schöpfung*, 51–53; "Matter, Mind, and Creation," 187–88. Herein he revisits themes from his speculative theology, understanding God now as "self-emptying/externalizing of *mind* [*Selbstentäußerung des Geistes*]" (56/189; translation modified. Emphasis added.

[37] Jonas, *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 36; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Mortality and Morality*, 139.

[38] Jonas, *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 32; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Mortality and Morality*, 138.

[39] Jonas, *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 33; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Mortality and Morality*, 138.

[40] "Religionsphilosophischer Diskurs," 181. Although Jonas does not raise the issue of God's *omniscience* directly, it too would seem to have to fall by the wayside if we are, with Jonas, to preserve God's goodness. God must, to be sure, have seen that he had something to gain from human freedom or at least from the creation that eventually results in it. But if God had foreseen how that freedom would in fact play out, he would appear to be less a gambler (as Jonas's language suggests) than someone who is willing to use others—and their suffering—for his own ends. If omnipotence and omniscience are abandoned, however, nothing prevents us from saying that God did not foresee the Holocaust, perhaps not even as a possibility. Jonas may not want to go this far. In a letter to Bultmann he writes that "the complete wager of incarnation had to include the possibility of evil [but, we should ask, does inclusion mean foreknowledge?], because only in this way—in the presence of fallibility, in the presence of the ability to be otherwise, and as a continually renewed decision—does the good attain concreteness in a temporal realization." Jonas, *Zwischen Nichts und Ewigkeit*, 69; "Exchange on Hans Jonas' Essay on Immortality," 501. Rejecting divine omniscience would, however, be one way for Jonas to defend himself against the following critique, which also, incidentally, brings up Schelling as a point of contrast:

sensu, omnipotent.

A similar tension is present in the Freedom Essay, where Schelling wants simultaneously to retain God's omnipotence and make divine self-revelation dependent on the actions of human beings, at least at the pre-temporal level of the intelligible deed. Although he contends that "God is a life," and that "[a]ll life [...] is subject to suffering and becoming," such suffering would not seem to infringe upon his "omnipotence [*Allmacht*]," which he is to "*prove* [*erweisen*]" through creation (SW VII: 403, 373–74; emphasis added).[41] This leads me to the second issue I would like to discuss, which concerns the extent to which God can thus really be said to suffer. What, in other words, are the divine stakes of creation, and in particular of human freedom? Is it merely a matter of revelation, as Schelling repeatedly suggests, or might the very being of God be on the line? What would this even mean, though?

§2. Passibility

On this question, too—and this is perhaps partly a result of the imprecision of mythological presentation—Jonas vacillates. On the one hand, in his attempt to elucidate his myth, Jonas speaks of a "*becoming* God" who is "affected," and that "means altered, made different [*alteriert, im Zustand verändert*]," in his relation to the world.[42] Humans evolve not so much "in" the image of God as

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The whole thing may be justifiable in Schelling, where God's sovereignty and his revelation in history figured as central items on the agenda, but this is hardly the case in the context of an ethics of responsibility (à la Jonas). As the condition for the possibility of the world, God's contraction is one thing (and it is thoroughly comprehensible); as total self-abandonment without any institution of meaning (*Sinnstiftung*) in the world that has been made possible, it is quite another thing (and rather ludicrous at that). "He is therefore also an endangered God, a God who runs a risk." This God is, furthermore, dangerous, an intolerable risk. Comfort, however, is gained by his powerlessness—the danger of further irresponsible action on his part is at least held in check—otherwise one would have to give up. With the creation of the world and the genesis of the human being that is derived from it, this God has accomplished a deed that Jonas would never less pass as ethically justifiable for the same human.

Andreas Urs Sommer, "Gott als Knecht der Geschichte: Hans Jonas' 'Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz'; Eine Widerrede," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 51, no. 4 (1995): 340–56 (349–50; see also 346–47); citing Jonas, *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 32.

[41] *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 66, 41. See also SW VII: 375; *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 42: "The will of the ground admittedly also cannot break love nor does it demand this, although it often seems to; for it must be particular and a will of its own, one turned away from love, so that love, when it nonetheless breaks through the will of the ground, as light through darkness, *may now appear* in its omnipotence." Emphasis added.

[42] Jonas, *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 28; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Mortality and Morality*, 137.

"for" the image of God.[43] We must repair not only the world (*tikkun olam*) but also God himself (*tikkun jhwh*). God has not only a self-revelatory stake in human creation (as we find in the Freedom Essay), but an ontological one. What it means to *be* God can change depending on our actions. God is thus "an endangered God, a God who runs a risk," even if this risk should lie in the *way* God could turn out (i.e., as "transfigured or possibly even disfigured") rather than *whether* God will continue to be.[44] The stakes of our freedom could hardly be higher, indeed not only within the immediate theological framework, but more broadly to the extent that "God" for Jonas overlaps with the "primordial mind" (*Urgeist*) or "ground of being," i.e., with "the question of all questions" in which the human mind has a supreme interest.[45] On the other hand, Jonas's language in his myth largely accords the primacy Schelling accords to God's self-revelation in creation. For example, Jonas writes that "the deity comes to *experience* itself" with creation, "trying out [its] hidden essence and *discovering* [itself] through the surprises of the world-adventure."[46] In his Immortality Essay, Jonas also speaks of the "suffering" yet "*immortal* God."[47]

One way in which to reconcile this tension in Jonas would be to relegate the motivation of self-revelation to pre-human creation and that of an essential ontological gain to the creation of humans. Useful in this context might be the distinction in Schelling between God's timeless being and God's existence as revealed (which would attain partial realization with pre-human creation but needs the free deed of the human being to come fully into its own)—a "two-tiered ontology of revelation," in other words, which Mark Thomas has recently developed.[48] "Existence" here should be understood as the development or "unfolding" of what is already contained implicitly in the Godhead, thereby enabling the latter to become a living, personal God. As Schelling would write a few years after the Freedom Essay, in reaction to Jacobi:

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[43] Jonas, "Immortality and the Modern Temper," *Mortality and Morality*, 128.
[44] Jonas, *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 17, 32; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Mortality and Morality*, 125, 138.
[45] Jonas, *Mortality and Morality*, 128, 134, 179, 189, 191; *Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 15; *Materie, Geist und Schöpfung*, 35, 55–56, 58. I thus wonder whether the atheist option can in fact be legitimately chosen, as Jonas allows in *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 14; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Mortality and Morality*, 133; and more explicitly in "Religionsphilosophischer Diskurs," 167–88.
[46] Jonas, *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 19–20; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Mortality and Morality*, 135, emphases added. See also Jonas, *Materie, Geist und Schöpfung*, 56; "Matter, Mind, and Creation," 190.
[47] Jonas, "Immortality and the Modern Temper," *Mortality and Morality*, 130. Emphasis added.
[48] Mark J. Thomas, *Freedom and Ground: A Study of Schelling's Treatise on Freedom* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2023), 256–57, 288n90.

> I posit God as First and Last, as A and Ω, but as A he is not what he is as Ω, and insofar as he is only as *the latter*—God *sensu eminenti* [in the highest sense]—he cannot also be God as the former, in the specified sense; nor, strictly speaking, can he be called God, unless one were to expressly say the *undeveloped* God [*der* unentfaltete *Gott*], *Deus implicitus*, since he is *Deus explicitus* as Ω. (SW VIII: 81)

Nonetheless, from a Jonasian perspective, it is not enough for just God's self-revelation or his "existence" (in Schelling's sense) to hang in the balance. God must have more to lose ontologically—i.e., we must be able not only to resist or prevent the development of his primal "folds" but to rend them irreparably asunder—if our actions are to be sufficiently meaningful to account for both the horrors of the Holocaust in the choice of evil and the hope of recompense in the choice of the good. Jonas, having abandoned personal immortality, does not find this *possibility* of recompense at the individual level but rather, as we have seen, at the level of the deity.

§3. Eschatology

The modality of this recompense brings me to the final issue I want to take up, which marks the greatest point of disagreement between Schelling and Jonas on the status of human freedom. This is the issue of eschatology. Summarizing some of the attributes of God that Auschwitz has compelled him to rethink, Jonas writes: "Several of Maimonides's Thirteen Articles of Faith, which we solemnly chant in our services, fall away with the 'mighty hand' [i.e., God's intervention in human affairs]: the assertions about God ruling the universe, his rewarding the good and punishing the wicked, even about the coming of the promised Messiah."[49] It is on this last point, regarding the promise of a messianic end, that I will now focus.

In his "Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Freedom," Schelling famously distinguishes between two non-dualistic principles: "being in so far as it exists [*Wesen, sofern es existiert*]" (also referred to as light) and "being in so far as it is merely the ground of existence [*Wesen, sofern es bloß Grund von Existenz*]" (also referred to as darkness) (SW VII: 357).[50] Both principles are necessarily in God. Although God cannot eliminate the ground (to this extent, his power is restricted), God does, within himself, keep the principle of darkness inextricably subordinate to the principle of light. For the

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[49] Jonas, *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 42; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Mortality and Morality*, 141.
[50] *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 27.

sake of his self-revelation, God nevertheless allows for the possibility of their inversion through the free act of the human being. This inversion is what constitutes evil, properly speaking. Evil comes about when humans choose to deny God's order and put the ground, which should be below, on top.

Yet this insurrection, however catastrophic, is also transient, as Paul prophesies in his First Letter to the Corinthians:

> The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. [. . .] And when all things shall be subdued unto him [namely, Jesus], then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him [namely, God] that put all things under him, that God may be all in all [*ta panta en pasin*]. (1 Corinthians 15:26–28, KJV)

Near the end of the Freedom Essay, Schelling alludes to this passage from the Bible and provides the following gloss:

> scripture also distinguishes periods of revelation and posits as a distant future the time when God will be all in all things [*Alles in Allem*], that is, when he will be fully actualized [*verwirklicht*]. [...] [S]pirit is the first being which unified the world of darkness with that of the light and subordinates both principles to its actualization and personality. Yet, the ground reacts against this unity and asserts the initial duality, but only toward ever greater increase and toward the final separation of good from evil. The will of the ground must remain in its freedom until all this may be fulfilled and become actual [*bis daß alles erfült, alles wirklich geworden sey*]. [...] [E]vil is only evil to the extent that it exceeds potentiality, but, reduced to non-Being [*Nichtseyn*] or the state of potency, it is what it always should be, basis, subordinate and, as such, no longer in contradiction with God's holiness or love. Hence the end of revelation is [*ist*] casting out evil from the good, the explanation of evil as complete unreality [*Unrealität*]. (SW VII: 403–405)[51]

On the basis of this and other passages, it seems reasonable to claim that Schelling does not doubt the final outcome of creation and human freedom, nor, would it seem, did God, with the possible exception of humans' having chosen the good rather than evil in their pre-temporal condition.

Interestingly, when Jonas uses the Christian trope of the all-in-all, it is for a state *prior* to creation: God "has first, by the act of creation itself, foregone

[51] *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 66–67. Translation modified.

being 'all-in-all' [*alles in allem*]."[52] Although Jonas is not always as clear about this as he is in the passage about the Maimonidean articles of faith I cited above, such as when he "entertains the idea of God who *for a time* [*für eine Zeit*]—the time of the ongoing world process—has divested himself of any power to interfere with the physical course of things,"[53] Jonas cannot follow Schelling in espousing eschatological certainty. For this would, he claims, make "a sorcerer" out of God: "this caring God is not a sorcerer who in the act of caring also provides the fulfillment of his concern: he has left something for other agents to do and thereby has made his care dependent on them."[54] In Jonas's eyes, our freedom depends on admitting different outcomes, including that of catastrophic failure. We need not, but can and very well may, fail not only one another, but God himself, whose existence stands on the line. Only with this possibility can we say, with Schelling but also beyond him, that freedom is "not simply a subordinate or subsidiary concept, but one of the systems' ruling centerpoints" (SW VII: 336).[55]

Conclusion

I have tried to bring Jonas and Schelling into dialogue over the questions of divine omnipotence and passibility, as well as of eschatology. Although Jonas is indebted to Schelling in his attempt to reconcile freedom with divine intelligibility and (although this would be a matter for a different study) in his recognition of the necessity of narrative, Jonas finds it necessary to push Schellingian positions in the Freedom Essay to their limits or even to their breaking points. That is, he finds it necessary to view God as weak or lacking power altogether, as suffering in his being, and as uncertain about the end times. For Jonas, this is not simply a matter of Judaism vs. Christianity. It is a matter of making sense of God and human freedom in the wake of the Shoah. It is often claimed that the death of Caroline had a major impact on Schelling's later philosophy. One can only wonder what he would have made of traumas of the twentieth century.[56]

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[52] Jonas, *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 32–33; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Mortality and Morality*, 138.
[53] *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 42; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Mortality and Morality*, 141.
[54] *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz*, 31–32; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," *Mortality and Morality*, 138.
[55] *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 9.
[56] My thanks to Marcela García-Romero, Francesco Guercio, Tobias Keiling, Luca Settimo, Mark Thomas, and the participants of the 2022 North American Schelling Society conference.

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The Organic Form of Time in Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology

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organism, non-linear time, mythology, anthropological plurality, history, racism, revelation, natural history, process ontology, genealogy of consciousness

How must time be so that consciousness can emerge? As we can infer from the second part of this question, time is concerned here with the conditions for the appearance of consciousness. So, time does not question the fact of the existence of consciousness, but given the latter's fact, it looks for the grounds on which consciousness could have emerged. But it is not at all obvious what time has to do with the *coming-into-being of consciousness*. The question somewhat implies that time is one of the conditions for the becoming of consciousness, but it also posits a relation between the very idea of emergence and that of time. If we want to know the conditions in which consciousness can emerge at all, we have to look into the specificity of the relation between time and the conditions for consciousness' coming-into-being.

In this paper, I argue that these questions concern Schelling in his 1842–1845/46 Lectures on the *Philosophy of Mythology*. The lectures deal with the conditions for the coming-into-being of reason, with a focus on the emergence of self-conscious beings. But in doing so, the lectures look at the very idea of what it means for something to come into being. I would like to

put forward the thesis that Schelling's system of time in the *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* is a theory of the form of time that would be necessary for self-conscious beings to appear. Since time is the very condition for the emergence of minded subjects, time itself must be prior to the emergence of self-conscious beings. Positioning himself against Kant, Schelling understands time not merely as a condition for subjective experience, but as the very condition for the subject. But since time is itself becoming, it is not possible to just situate time before the emergence of the subject. For time to be what it is, it must become itself. So, Schelling's presentation of the system of time in relation to consciousness does not situate consciousness after time; rather, the emergence of consciousness *is* the very process of time becoming what it is.

To address this, I will focus on Schelling's description of the system of time, according to which time has to be organic. I will suggest that the organicity of the system of time is not a metaphor, but constitutes the form of becoming of time at the point of the emergence of consciousness. I will then point to some consequences that this idea might have for Schelling's understanding of how anthropological plurality takes part in the process of the becoming of time and thus of the emergence of self-consciousness.

The Organic System of Time

That Schelling's late philosophy is less concerned with a *Naturphilosophie* than is his early work has been contested many times over the last years.[1] It is, however, enough to take a look at the 1843/44 *Darstellung des Naturprozess* to realize that excluding the philosophy of nature from the later work is a misconception of the development of Schelling's thought. As we will see, not only is nature a subject of the later works, but some topics and theses remain the same as in the early *Naturphilosophie*. Moreover, not only do I think that we find traces of a *naturphilosophical* thought in the mythological system of time, but that the *Naturphilosophie* is key for understanding how time operates in this system. To show this, I will start by looking at the passage of the *Historical-*

[1] Iain Grant's *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling* has been central to the critique of the division of Schelling's work between the early and the later as one between Schelling's concern with *Naturphilosophie* as distinct from the rather anthropological-theological work. In Grant's interpretation, Schelling's interest in *Naturphilosophie* through all of his work should be read as motivated by an aprioristic materialist empiricism; the apriorism of this approach, however, must be distinguished from Kant's, since the empirical does not only work as a limit of that which can be known by the transcendental subject. According to Grant, the *a priori* of nature in Schelling is, rather, related to the inner logic of nature. See Iain Hamilton Grant, *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling* (New York: Continuum, 2006).

Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology in which Schelling refers to time as an organism.

After having differentiated, in Lecture Ten of the *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, between prehistorical time and historical time, Schelling refers to the process of the emergence of history in the following way:

> It is thus no longer a wild, inorganic, boundless time, into which history runs; it is an organism, it is a system of times, into which the history of our genus [*Gattung*] encloses itself; each member of this whole is an independent time of its own, which is limited by a time that is not merely preceding, but by a time that is set off from it and is essentially different, except for the last one, which no longer needs a limit, because in it there is no more time (namely, no more succession of times), because it is a relative eternity. These members are absolute-prehistorical, relative-prehistorical, historical time. (SW XI: 235)[2]

While the relation between the organic and time might appear to be a metaphor or a mere manner of speaking, I would like to argue, against such a thesis, that the organism is rather the form of time as it develops itself. Thus, understanding what the form of time is requires looking into Schelling's concept of the organic. It is in this sense that Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology is closely related to his Philosophy of Nature.

Hendrik Nikolaus has accurately pointed to the close relationship that the early Schelling's ideas on the organism—already in the *Identitätsphilosophie*—maintain in the later work. According to Nikolaus, this relationship is one of continuity.[3] The organism is, in Nikolaus's interpretation, always differentiated from the mechanism. Organisms and mechanisms are distinguished from one another as relational structures with two different forms of causality. On the one hand, mechanisms are constituted in the fact that their parts are parts externally related to each other, where the effect on one of the parts is dependent on the intervention of an external object. In mechanisms, causality is external. On the other hand, organisms are whole-part systems, in which each one of the parts is dependent on relation to the whole. An effect on any of the parts of the organism is caused by the system as a whole. Causality is internal. Nikolaus further develops this: "The organism is therefore also not 'composed' of parts. Rather, it represents a part-whole structure in which the principle of the world of ideas manifests itself."[4] Already in 1799, in *Introduction*

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[2] All texts in German are my translation.

[3] Hendrik Nikolaus, *Metaphysische Zeit. Schellings Theorie einer seelischen Zeit* (Berlin: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Berlin, 1999).

[4] Nikolaus, *Metaphysische Zeit*, 53.

to his Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature, or on the Concept of Speculative Physics and the internal Organisation of a System of this Science, Schelling works with a conception of the organism conceived as a whole-system. In this text, Schelling not only develops his theory of the organism and its distinction from the inorganic, but he also conceives of the whole of nature as a system. Thus, each phenomenon of nature must be related to nature as a whole (SW III: 279). The system of nature is constituted both by nature as an endless continuous productivity (*natura naturans*) and nature as concrete finite discrete points or natural products (*natura naturata*) (SW III: 284). Since nature is an organism, the form of the science that researches nature must be the same as the object of research. For this reason, according to the early *Naturphilosophie*, speculative physics must be a system, which is indicated in the title of the above-mentioned text (SW III: 280).

Already in this early conception of the organic form of nature, time becomes a fundamental element in Schelling's philosophy. Here time is defined as the evolution of the eternal development of the productivity in nature (SW III: 285). In this definition of time, it becomes very clear that this should be distinguished from any mechanistic conception: "Time, then, as the evolution of that activity, cannot be produced by composition" (SW III: 285). By defining time as the evolution of the endless productive force in nature, Schelling argues against any idea of time as merely dependent on minded subjects. Time is not a mere succession, or as he says, a composition of different moments, but rather the force of becoming of nature as a whole. If time were only a succession of moments, it would rather follow the form of the mechanism,[5] so that each moment would be autonomous in relation to the other moments, and a third agent—a subject—would be necessary to hold them together. Each moment in time, as parts of an organism, must be related to the productivity of nature as a whole. Thus, the succession of moments is not given by a minded subject, but by nature itself. Nikolaus sees correctly that there is a close relationship between time and the organism that goes across Schelling's early and middle work, but his study only relates the early *Naturphilosophie* to the *Ages of the World* (1811). I am interested, however, in the later work. But Nikolaus does refer to the *Philosophy of Mythology* as one of the moments in which Schelling explicitly defines time as an organism.[6] There, Nikolaus also states that the organicity of time should not be understood as mere metaphor, a thesis that is central to the argument of this paper: "In this context, it should be recalled once again that Schelling conceives the 'organism'

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[5] Arturo Leyte Coello, "Zeit-Denken. Zu einem nicht-begrifflichen Zugang zur Zeit bei Schelling und Heidegger," in *Heideggers Schelling-Seminar (1927/28). Die Protokolle von Martin Heideggers Seminar zu Schellings "Freiheitsschrift" (1927/28) und die Akten des Internationalen Schelling-Tags 2006*, ed. Lore Hühn (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 2010).

[6] Nikolaus, *Metaphysische Zeit*, 142.

ontologically as that form of nature in which the divine self-affirmation is directly present. And (actual) infinity is the only possible 'form of reality' of ideas."[7]

With this in mind, we can now go back to the passage from the *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*. As we see, the concept of the organism as a whole-system with internal causality seems to continue to be present there. The passage suggests that time is only what it is if firstly its parts are related to it as a whole, but also if time has its own internal causal principle. The question is, however, why does Schelling need to bring this organic system of time within the context of a text on mythology? Lecture Ten, to which the quoted passage belongs, is concerned with the relationship that the philosophy of mythology maintains with the philosophy of history. The thesis is that mythology is a limit for history since history only begins with the time in which we know about human actions and events related to those actions. As Schelling is looking for a realistic account of the relation of consciousness to mythology,[8] he needs to account for the succession of events in the mythological form of reason. Although the kind of events that happen within mythologies are not of the same kind as the ones of history, they both share the quality of being successions of events. Actions within the mythological consciousness seem to have a different character than those that are told in history. The question thus is, how is mythological time organized and how does it relate to history? As we will see, mythological time and historical time are not only limiting to each other but related insofar as they concern the relation between history and natural history. This, however, does not only mean that the emergence of minded subjects has its ground in life, but—I would like to suggest—that time itself is what is organic here. In this sense, *history* is not a process derived from *natural history*; they are both parts of the process of the becoming of time. In order to grasp this organicity in becoming, I would like to look more closely at the elements of the organism and the limits determining the relations among them.

The Emergence of Consciousness

The *Philosophy of Mythology* has the task of developing a history of the emergence of consciousness out of mythological reason[9]—a history that is grounded in a

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[7] Nikolaus, *Metaphysische Zeit*, 142.

[8] Markus Gabriel, *Der Mensch im Mythos* (New York: De Gruyter, 2006).

[9] Here I follow Markus Gabriel, who, following Jens Halfwassen and Walter Schulz, reads the Philosophy of Mythology as a history of consciousness (Gabriel, *Der Mensch im Mythos*, 409). Such an epochal narration of the history of consciousness is considered as a response to Fichte's attempt to account for the genesis of consciousness in his *Science of Knowledge* (*Wissenschaftslehre*) via a transcendental self-reflection of the synthetic "I." According to

realist theory of revelation. In this sense, in the first lectures of the *Historical-Critical Introduction*, Schelling argues against other accounts of mythology according to which myths would be fictional stories intentionally narrated by persons, or poetic products appreciated for their aesthetic value. On the contrary, in Schelling's view, myths are a reference to a real experience that therefore has the power to bring people to act and organize the life of a community following that shared experience. In this sense, he says: "Mythology as the history of the gods, that is, mythology proper, could only generate itself in life; it had to be something experienced and lived" (SW XI: 125). Since myths are not mere aesthetic products but are experienced, they serve as grounds for action.[10] But what exactly is meant by the idea that mythology is generated in life?

If consciousness has a history, the next question is, where does the beginning of that history occur? As we have seen, the point of emergence of consciousness creates a limit between that which is before consciousness and consciousness as self-reflective. The point at which something is delimited—and thus is not yet that which it is—is its point of emergence. If consciousness is, there must be a point at which it did not yet exist; its limit and point of emergence. This is what generates different periods in the history of consciousness. Since the history of consciousness is the history of its relation to being and to its self-reflection,[11] it coincides with different periods of divine revelation. The point of emergence concurs with the mythological form of reason and is, at the same time, its limit. Thus, the history of consciousness and mythology is a shared process:

> Consider the following. Those real (actual [*wirklichen*]) powers by which consciousness is moved in the mythological process, whose succession is precisely the process, have been determined as the same by which consciousness is originally and essentially the God-positing. These powers, which create consciousness and, as it were, set it in motion, can they be other than those through which nature is also posited and created? (SW XI: 215)

Gabriel, the history of consciousness is self-reflective as well, since the object of reflection is consciousness itself, which has to constitute itself as object and come back to itself as an act of self-reflection. An important difference from Fichte's genetical method would be that "at the end of the history of his coming to himself, self-consciousness comes to the realization that in all knowledge there appears an unknown and unknowable" (Gabriel, *Der Mensch im Mythos*, 382).

[10] For a theory of action in Schelling's late philosophy, see Stefan Gerlach, *Handlung bei Schelling: Zur Fundamentaltheorie von Praxis, Zeit und Religion im mittleren und späten Werk* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2019).

[11] As Gabriel notes, this is a reflection of second-order, "in which world-consciousness is content" (Gabriel, *Der Mensch im Mythos*, 392).

The shared process between mythology and history generates a new question: If mythology is beyond consciousness, how does the process of mythology have any power over the history of consciousness? As we can see in the passage above, both the process of positing god—the mythological process—and consciousness are part of the same process that produces nature. They both belong to an all-encompassing process of becoming: the process of being. So, although mythology is the history of the relationship between gods and the world that creates a limit for consciousness as a self-reflective process, it is also a moment in the larger process of becoming and being. It is in this larger process that history and mythology share the same generative power as nature, as we can see in this passage that I will quote at length:

> It is not to be thought in itself that the principles of a process, which proves to be a theogonic one, can be other than the principles of *all* being and all becoming. The mythological process, therefore, is not merely religious; it has a universal meaning, for it is the universal process that repeats itself in it; accordingly, the truth that mythology harbors in the process is also a universal one that excludes nothing. Mythology cannot be denied *historical* truth, as is usually the case, because the process by which it comes into being is itself a true history, a real process. Nor can physical truth be excluded from it, for nature is as necessary a point of passage of the mythological as of the universal process. The content of mythology is not *abstract*-religious, like that of the common theistic doctrinal concepts. Between consciousness in its mere essentiality and consciousness in its realization, between the unity realized in it merely essentially laws and the unity realized in it, which is the goal of the process, the world lies in the middle. The moments of the theogonic movement, then, do not have exclusive meaning for that movement; they are of universal meaning. (SW XI: 216)

As we can see, mythology is part of the process of becoming of everything that is. The relation between gods, conscious beings, and world is not only self-referential and meaningful as part of a religious process or practices, but it has consequences for the larger process of becoming. As part of that larger process of becoming, mythology is part of history. But it is also part of nature as the productivity of nature is part of the becoming of everything that is as well. It is in this intersection between mythology, history, and nature that I think we can situate the organic character of time and its relation to the necessity of anthropological plurality.

As all of humanity emerges from this unitary process of becoming, a history of the development of humanity contains both the mythological

process and the natural one. But the process by which self-conscious beings emerge is a unitary one. So, the question is, if humanity shares a continuity in the form of its natural and theogonic process, how is it possible that the experience of the divine differentiates? How is a unitary form of consciousness pluralized in such a vast variety of forms of religious life, as attested by the history of mythologies? As Gabriel points out, the self-relation of consciousness as the process of knowledge of the self only contains time implicitly: "The noetic sequence of subject, object, and subject-object, regulated by the principle of contradiction, is therefore the still-implicit possibility of time, which is explicated by the fall of man into the multiplicity of a world, and, i.e., in particular into the temporally regulated multiplicity of history."[12] This unitary form of self-knowledge is the first period of the history of consciousness. Since time is only implicitly contained in it, this is not history proper. History begins with the development of this unity into a plurality of systems of beliefs and thus of multiple experiences of the divine—that is, mythology proper. Accordingly, Schelling defines historical time as the moment of separation of the unity of humanity into many peoples (*Völker*). This separation coincides with the differentiation of language, so that a people (*Volk*) is identified as such by possessing a language. The emergence of anthropological plurality is thus described as a crisis (*Krisis*), a division in an original unity of humanity. Incisions always cut things into two. And although Schelling talks about a first unity that is transformed into a multiplicity with the emergence of many peoples (*Völker*), the cut in the unity of humanity should not be considered as one made into a given thing, but rather as separating time itself. It creates a cut between time as the general process of becoming and historical time or the time of consciousness. So, the differentiation into many peoples (*Völker*) not only gives way to anthropological plurality, but differentiates time itself. It cuts time in time before and after the emergence of consciousness. The differentiation of time corresponds to the differentiation of humanity.

The Emergence of Time

The task set by the *Philosophy of Mythology* is to develop a history of the emergence of consciousness, but the consciousness of time emerges with history. So, to avoid a vicious circle, we have to begin with the very fact of consciousness. Therefore, the question is a transcendental one: what are the conditions of possibility for consciousness to be? Or: how must time be so that consciousness can emerge? While this is a transcendental question, it is one that asks about that which conditions the subject. In *Presentation of the*

[12] Gabriel, *Der Mensch im Mythos*, 369–70.

Natural Process, a later naturphilosophical text from 1843–44, Schelling clearly distances his position from Kant's concepts of time and space. Central to this text is the question of the limits of the world, in reference to which Schelling analyzes the corresponding Kantian antinomy. Here it becomes clear that Schelling advocates for the objectivity of time and space: "we do not subscribe to [Kant's] transcendental idealism, i.e., to the opinion that the external world as such—a completely indeterminable, absolutely unknowable, transcendental object, or as it is otherwise called, thing-in-itself set aside—does not exist at all apart from our representations" (SW X: 338). When, in this text, Schelling deals with the question of the limits of the world, he focuses on spaces and only briefly deals with it in relation to time. The antinomy concerning time is not as interesting for Schelling since, in his view, it does not constitute an antinomy:

> [W]hat is the sense of the sentence, that the world has a beginning in time, as well as the contrary? Is the sense of the sentence, the one or the other [sentence], to have a beginning or not to have a beginning, that it is an essential, therefore really *a priori,* determination of the world, or should it be expressed with the thesis as a fact that the world has had a beginning, with the antithesis that it has not had one. Kant obviously avoids the last expression on purpose, with which the question passes into a completely different area than that of serving reason. For here we are speaking of something that has once taken place, but there of something lasting and eternal. (SW X: 344)

The sentence "the world has a beginning in time" refers to something that happens in a succession of moments, and the second sentence, "the world has no beginning," refers to the eternal. There is no antinomy, since the first phrase relates to that which had a beginning at some point, and the second one to that which has no beginning in time. The eternal has no moment that precedes it; it is not limited by that which could have been before. But Schelling introduces here a difference between beginning once in time and an eternal beginning (SW X: 344). Beginning in time always implies a preceding moment. The eternal beginning of the world, however, refers to the transition from non-being into being: "The world is initial [*anfänglich*] by its nature, because it cannot be otherwise than by a transition *a potentia ad actum* [from potency to act], i.e., from non-being to being" (SW X: 344). The beginning of the world is an eternal beginning. Each passage from non-being into being is the eternal becoming of the world, each is its beginning. If the world would have begun only once, it would have to have stopped being at the moment in which the beginning stops being. Thus, the form of being of the world is of an absolute

becoming given by an eternal iteration of the transition from non-being into being:

> It is [the world's] nature to be initial [*anfänglich*]. Here, therefore, the question is not whether it has begun at all once, but it is eternal, because according to [the world's] nature it is initial. The beginning that is assumed here is not a temporary one that once was beginning and then is no more, but a beginning that is always beginning because it is posited by the nature of the world. This Beginningness [*Anfänglichkeit*] has no contradiction. (SW X: 344)

That which has no beginning is not temporal in the sense of being conditioned by the subject. Time in the sense of the eternal iteration of the transition from non-being to being, that is, time as becoming, conditions the subject. It is in this sense that it becomes relevant to research the structure of time as it conditions the existence of minded subjects. So, in researching the conditions of possibility of consciousness, we are not so much concerned with the point in time before consciousness, but with the potential for its coming into being out of non-being. It is a question concerning the *emergence* of consciousness. The time before consciousness is thus strongly related to the question about that which constitutes possibility at all. If consciousness is, it must have been possible for it to come into being. So, a natural history of consciousness implies researching the very nature of the conditions for anything to come into being. The *Philosophy of Mythology* carries out a research of time departing from the history of consciousness. Although this history depends on the existence of consciousness, it has nothing to do with a subjectivist picture of time. However, it has a different starting point from the genealogy of time that we have seen in the philosophy of nature. Time analyzed from the point of view of the philosophy of nature has no limit, because it includes the meaning of being, the eternal process of becoming. Different from the eternal beginning of the world, the beginning of consciousness has a before—it has a limit. Understanding the form of that which precedes consciousness requires that we now turn to the organic form of time as it appears in the *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*.

The Organic System of Time

The appearance of consciousness creates a division between, on the one hand, time before humanity is aware of its relation to time, and on the other hand, time after the consciousness of time appears. It is a split between time before the division into a plurality of peoples (*Völker*)—and time as it is consciously experienced as such, that is, history. History is a relation of consciousness to

itself, because it is a conscious relation to time in which the relationship itself is the object of reflection. In the relationship to itself, consciousness is processual. So, a reflection of consciousness on its relation to time is itself in time. This is why to research the relationship of consciousness to itself, it is necessary to carry out a genealogy of history as such. Accordingly, we have to divide time into time as history proper and time before history.[13] We must assume that there is a time before the emergence of time, one that Schelling calls prehistorical time (*vorgeschichtliche Zeit*). This division emerges from questioning whether the time before history is essentially different from historical time. If the time before history were not essentially different from historical time, how could it be a limit of history? It would only be history expanded to a previous period (SW XI: 230). Prehistorical time must be one to which we do not have access via consciousness, since the conscious relation to time is that which we identify as history (SW XI: 232). But not having conscious access to that period does not mean that the period did not exist. Prehistorical time occurs within time as an eternal process, and not only as time appears to minded subjects. Since what is before history has occurred as well, it is not only necessary for limiting consciousness, but as consciousness' point of emergence, it is essential for the very development of consciousness. If prehistorical time is essential for historical time, it seems they must share something. The difference in the form of the relationship of consciousness to

[13] This shows the previously discussed distinction between this realistic concept of time and Kant's. In this sense, Schelling can easily avoid any of the problems that Quentin Meillassoux has named under the rubric "ancestrality of time": "Let us call 'ancestral events' all events whose dating is said to be legitimate before the emergence of life on Earth. Let us call 'ancestral time' a time whose scientifically established chronology includes ancestral events, that is, a time of the physical universe in which the emergence of life and humanity form specific points in a chronology that contains and transcends them." Quentin Meillassoux, "Metaphysik, Spekulation, Korrelation," in *Realismus Jetzt: Spekulative Philosophie und Metaphysik für das 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. Armen Avanessian (Berlin: Merve, 2013).

Meillassoux presents ancestral time as an aporia in which we get trapped if we assume that existence correlates with thought. If we can only think of existence with the means of thought, how are we supposed to think of that which existed before the existence of thinking subjects. The question has a similar form to Schelling's inquiries on the genealogy of history. However, we should note that Meillassoux wishes to restrict the field of explanations with an epistemic value: "Under exactly what conditions can a philosophy give sense to the statements that refer to ancestral events (let's call them ancestral statements for the sake of simplicity) and to ancestral time? How to think about this relatively new fact, which is not the fact that people speak of what has preceded them (they always do), but the fact that they have inscribed the ancestral discourse in the field of scientific experiment and no longer that of myth, narrative or inconsequential hypothesis?" (Meillassoux, "Metaphysik, Spekulation, Korrelation," 26). In the context of Schelling's realist account of mythological reason, myths carry epistemic value since they inform the process of the genealogy of consciousness, thus the time before consciousness is not separated from natural history. The history of consciousness goes across both history and natural history.

prehistorical and historical time is given later *in time*—after the emergence of consciousness. So, it is a difference, but it is not an essential one. Thus, Schelling concludes that there is no real, essential difference between prehistorical and historical time (SW XI: 232). The essential shared core—the eternal process of becoming—only takes its form after the conscious reflection on the emergence of consciousness has happened. The time before history only becomes related to history after the emergence of history. But the shared essential core does not need minded subjects to exist; it only becomes part of history after the emergence of history:

> Through the preceding investigations, directed towards a completely different object, the time of the past has, in the meantime, also gained for us a different shape, or rather a shape at all. It is no longer a boundless time into which the past loses itself; it is into times that are really and inwardly different from one another that history settles and structures itself for us. (SW XI: 232)

Given these considerations, prehistorical time is divided into *relative* and *absolute*. Relative prehistorical time names the time before time, but one in which the relation between consciousness and time is of the first order. Consciousness happens in the eternal process. But here it is identical to the eternal process:

> Historical time, then, does not continue into prehistoric time, but is rather cut off and limited by it as a completely different one. We call it a completely different time, not that in the broadest sense it is not also a historical one, for great things happen in it, too, and it is full of events, only of a completely different kind, and which are under a completely different law. In this sense we have called it the relatively prehistorical. (SW XI: 234)

In the relation of first order, prehistorical time is relative because it is determined by the conscious relation to time, which, as we have seen, only emerges after the emergence of consciousness. Relative prehistorical time is bound to consciousness. Prehistorical and historical time must share the same essential core, thus the time in which that essential core already existed before being bound to history is what Schelling calls absolute prehistorical time or "the time of perfect historical immobility" (SW XI: 234). Absolute prehistorical time is, however, the one that has to be posited before the very division of time. But for it to be posited it must already have a relation to consciousness, since consciousness is the one positing such a relation. Thus,

absolute prehistorical time is the self-constitution of consciousness.[14] It is absolute because the condition of possibility of history must always already have been there, but it only becomes absolute after that which it conditions has come into being. Here we can see the double side of the transcendental argument in which the ground becomes the grounded and the grounded becomes the ground. On the one hand, time is grounded in our conscious experience of it, that is, in the emergence of history. On the other hand, consciousness is grounded in time, as it becomes absolute time, that is, after becoming the condition of possibility for our conscious experience of it.

The relation between relative prehistorical time, historical time, and absolute prehistorical time is what constitutes the organic system of time in Schelling's *Philosophy of Mythology*. As an organic system, each part is related to the system as a whole. It makes no sense to produce a genealogy of time based on a linear narration of events: "A true succession is not formed by incidents which disappear without trace, leaving the whole in the state in which it was before" (SW XI: 234). The whole in this system of times is given by the history of consciousness, a process produced by consciousness itself. All periods in time are therefore somewhat related to consciousness. But it is not only in this sense that time is organic. As we have seen, time in all of its periods belongs to the process shared both by nature and history. It is at this intersection that anthropological plurality becomes necessary.

The Necessity of Anthropological Plurality

The last part of this paper is concerned with Schelling's argument for the necessary division of humanity into a plurality of peoples (*Völker*), an event that, as we have seen, is closely related to the emergence of history. Although in this paper this event has already been mentioned in the context of the genesis of time, I would now like to look closely at it from the anthropological side. As we have seen in the previous section, the organic system of times in the *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* is constituted by three moments in the relation between time and consciousness: relative prehistorical time, historical time, and absolute prehistorical time. These moments are related to three periods in the history of consciousness and thus of the human relation to the divine. The first period is characterized by a unity of humanity with its genus and therefore with its nature. Here, consciousness is in an unmediated relation to the process of becoming in which it is immersed:

[14] Gabriel, *Der Mensch im Mythos*, 370.

> The primordial being of man is, even according to the accepted concepts, if they seek to become reasonably clear, to be thought only as one still supratemporal and in essential eternity, which in relation to time is itself only a timeless moment. There is no room for a revelation whose concept expresses an event, a process in time; there could be nothing between man and God whereby man is kept separate and distant from God; and something of the sort must be in order for revelation to be possible; for revelation is an actual relation (based on an *actus*); but there only an essential relation can be thought; *actus* is only where there is resistance, where there is something that must be negated and sublated [*aufgehoben*]. (SW XI: 141)

In this period, expressions about the very facticity of being can only be immediately self-referential, since there is no reflection of consciousness toward itself. Thus, epistemic access is denied here. Only mere experience of the actuality of God is possible: "The God of the prehistoric times is an actual real God, and in which also the truth Is, but not known as such. Mankind thus worshipped what it did not know, to which it had no ideal (free) but only a real relation" (SW XI: 176). There is a single humanity and a single language as well. Schelling identifies this first period with a form of monotheism, but a relative monotheism—that is, one that did not emerge from a free decision but as given to humankind by its very nature. God is unified, but only because God cannot be otherwise for humanity in this period.

This period is interrupted by the crisis (*Krisis*) of history. With this rupture, not only does time get partitioned, but so too does humanity and its expressions. This is the period of the separation into peoples (*Völker*) (SW XI: 233). Here consciousness undergoes change; thus the previous unity of the genus becomes plurality (SW XI: 233). The emergence of different peoples (*Völker*) is simultaneous with the emergence of various languages and systems of belief. This generates plural forms in which the relation of consciousness to its own process can be declared and narrated. As different languages emerge, multiple signifiers can be assigned to the same referent. Since many expressions can now be given to the same facticity of being, the cut is the partition of being into being and thought (*Urteil*).

By multiplying the frames of reference for the divine, a plurality of options are opened for mankind. Since the absolute God is only recognized as such as the result of a decision, it must appear as different possibilities. If a unitary God should have needed to become absolute, all other options would have needed to be negated and sublated (SW XI: 127; SW XI: 141). This does not imply the necessity of going back to the non-mediated unity of relative prehistorical time. As the other possibilities are negated, they become part of a unity that contains a plurality. This complex unity of plurality corresponds to

absolute prehistorical time. The unity of the first period always already contains the potential for such a complex unity of plurality, but since the relation between consciousness and the divine is of the first order, this potential is not yet developed. Time is only implicit in the first period. Pure actuality does not constitute change, movement, or plurality. This is the point at which anthropological plurality becomes fundamental not only for the genesis of self-consciousness, but also for revelation to express itself in all its potential.

The relation between these periods in the development of humanity and natural history is better understood when looking at Schelling's reflections on the necessity of a plurality of beliefs. When dealing with the question of how polytheism appeared—considering that God is a unity—Schelling concludes that different gods could have only appeared if they did so in a succession. But if they were only a succession, they would be bound to the contingency of merely having appeared one after the other. However, if the plurality of systems of belief is necessary, it could not be subjected to mere contingency. On the one hand, it is this succession of plural mythologies that makes mythology a real process, one that can be reflected upon from the point of view of history (SW XI: 131). On the other hand, this process cannot be governed by mere linearity (SW XI: 129). Thus, the time in which humanity comes from a mere, immediate relation to its reality in historical time is bound by the organicity of time. In this form, that which appears to be before historical time is part of it as well, but only when it is absolute.

The organic form of time is Schelling's explanation for how human history is embedded in natural history, or how spirit (*Geist*) always appears in nature, a process that is at its core an anthropological development. I think this argument could be very fruitful for thinking about the necessity of a plurality of cultures—for example, in those cases where the idea of cultural identity is in dispute and it is relevant to know whether belonging to a culture is a quality given by nature or a historical category. But it is also relevant for debates on how we can justify different epistemic forms of access to truth without jeopardizing truth.[15] In this context, the necessity of anthropological plurality grounded in a localized spirit (*Geist*) within nature could be very helpful to sort out the argumentation.[16] But to work on that argument, one should first situate

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[15] For some examples of this debate, see Deborah Goldgaber, "Matter and Indifference: Realism and Anti-Realism in Feminist Accounts of the Body," in *Idealism, Relativism, and Realism,* ed. Dominik Finkelde and Paul Livingston (Berlin: De Gruyter 2020); Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Woman: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Sally Haslanger, "Feminism in Metaphysics: Negotiating the Natural," in *The Cambridge Companion to Feminism in Philosophy,* ed. Miranda Fricker and Jennifer Hornsby (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[16] I think Deborah Goldgaber has done great work in this regard. See Goldgaber, "Matter and Indifference."

Schelling's racist remarks on the *Philosophy of Mythology* historically and critically and give them the weight they deserve: a task that I do not take to be a minor one since those remarks occupy no small place in Schelling's account of the natural history of humanity—about thirty pages on a defense of slavery[17] and colonialism (SW XI: 509), to cite just some examples.[18] They should also be put into the context of Schelling's reception of Linnaeus and Buffon,[19] who, as we know, are the main characters in the genesis of the theory of human races. Schelling does not, however, argue for a natural differentiation of peoples (*Völker*), but one given by the difference in systems of belief and languages:

> If now, by the way, also the facts presented above might even serve as proof that the process of races [*Racenproceß*], as we want to express ourselves for the sake of brevity, has extended into the times of the formation of the peoples [*Völker*], it is nevertheless to be noted that the peoples have not, at least not consistently, been divided according to races. (SW XI: 99)

One could therefore think that Schelling's position is free of racism, since anthropological difference seems to be only a difference in spirit (*Geist*) (SW XI: 129). Anthropological difference is necessary for the development of humanity. It might seem that Schelling is arguing for the absolute inclusion of all human beings in a single humanity, especially since Schelling's racist exclusion of some parts of humanity does not *start* with the division into a plurality of peoples (*Völker*). However, although Schelling's racism does not follow the structure of a biological argument, he nevertheless maintains a problematic division. He excludes some human communities, but does so a step before the emergence of human consciousness. Schelling distinguishes between humans and "human-like" beings (SW XI: 500). For example, when he talks about the habitants of the colonized territory in South America, he

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[17] See Lecture 21, special focus on SW XI: 513–15.

[18] See also clearly racist remarks in SW XI: 503–506.

[19] As Stella Standford has shown, Kant introduced the term *race* in philosophical anthropology, after zoologists Louis Leclerc Buffon and Carl von Linné. Standford shows that Kant uses the term *genus* (*Gattung*) to refer to humanity as a unity, a term he takes from Aristotle's logic. This is Kant's way to deal with the problem of the unity in diversity of humankind. So, according to Standford, race is used to name the level at which humans are differentiated, while genus (*Gattung*) is used to refer to the level at which all humans are unified. Schelling thinks that the only condition for peoples (*Völker*) to be formed is their sharing the same system of beliefs and the same language. Thus, he does not pluralize humanity according to its different races. This, however, does not mean Schelling does not hold any racist view; rather, he holds such views at a different level. See Stella Standford, "Kant, Race, and Natural History," in *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 44: 9 (2018): 950–77.

speaks of a "human-like population" that is so "alienated from God in such a way that it is difficult, even impossible, to recognize here the soul that was in original contact with the divine" (SW XI: 501). Schelling thus denies the possibility for them to be a people (*Volk*). For Schelling, they do not seem to present any kind of human-like behavior, so no real language is present (SW XI: 505). In this context, he stays very clear that not all masses of "human-like population" are a race or a people (*Volk*). He takes the moment of establishing this exclusion from humanity a step further when, during his argumentation for the plurality of peoples (*Völker*), he lets us know that "the European Mankind should not be named a race" (SW XI: 98), thus reserving the term *race* for anything other than European, and mankind for the later ones. I think all of these performances of exclusion and violent speech-acts should not be ignored when considering Schelling's argument for anthropological plurality and when considering the productivity of that argument, which I think is still possible precisely if we avoid neglecting these racist elements that are central to Schelling's anthropology. So, the organic form of time might be productive when thinking about anthropological plurality, but it is necessary to remember the exclusions it presupposes—exclusions that happen in the determination of where and when is the point of emergence of humanity.

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Schelling's Later Philosophy of Religion as a Philosophy of Life

Hadi Fakhoury

F.W.J. Schelling, philosophy of religion, life, monotheism, God, potencies, creation, polytheism, mythology, human consciousness

One of the most characteristic themes of Schelling's later philosophy is, in the famous words of the *Essay on Human Freedom*, that "God is a life, not merely a Being" (SW VII: 403).[1] Despite the prominence of this idea in Schelling's later work, it is far from obvious what it means for God to be a living God. What is at stake in this claim? How do we know that God is a living being? What are the form and content of the divine life? And if life, as Schelling insists, implies movement, toward what end does the divine being move? This paper addresses these questions through a reading of Schelling's treatise titled *Monotheism*. In conjunction with the *Historical-Critical Introduction*, to which it is "formally and immediately" connected (SW XII: vi), *Monotheism* serves as a "foundation" to the *Philosophy of Mythology* and, by extension, the entire positive philosophy of religion. In the *Historical-Critical Introduction*, Schelling demonstrated that mythology was "something *lived* and *experienced,*" and argued that historical polytheism stems from an original monotheism in human consciousness (SW XI: 89). Picking up the thread of the *Historical-Critical Introduction*, *Monotheism* aims to demonstrate the universal possibility of

[1] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany: SUNY, 2006), 66.

polytheism by explaining monotheism as a "living fact" (SW XII: 7–8). If monotheism does not negate the possibility of polytheism, then the one true God affirmed in it must be conceived as "the living God, that is, the uni-total God" (SW XII: 70). Since God is absolutely free, He must be both immanent and transcendent in relation to His creation. Therefore, Schelling interprets the creation of the world and human consciousness as moments in the realization of the divine life.

My paper focuses on three aspects of *Monotheism* that illustrate the function of life in Schelling's understanding of God and religion. (1) Schelling argues that monotheism presupposes multiple principles in God. Although these principles define the immutable form of the divine life, God is not under any one of them taken separately, but only as their indissoluble unity; they are only the "passages points" of the divine being. Thus, equally rejecting the "dead, motionless, lifeless" pantheism of Spinoza and the "empty" and "impotent" theism of Jacobi, Schelling affirms a "living monotheism" in which "the *living* unity is that which at the same time is a *totality*, it is the totality that fills up and vivifies unity" (SW XII: 105). (2) Assuming that monotheism is not only a concept, but something real, Schelling explains how God can posit an actual being separate from His essence. Since God is necessarily the "All-One," the only way to represent a being outside of God is to admit the hypothesis of a "theogonic process," in which God temporarily negates His being. This process constitutes what Schelling calls the passage from the "form of the divine life … [to] actual life, the living God himself" (SW XII: 59). (3) To show that the theogonic process is not merely a hypothesis, but represents the actual creation of the world, Schelling argues that the divine potencies that constitute the theogonic process also create human consciousness: humanity is the product of the monotheism expressed in creation. Although the human being is innately God-positing, his knowledge of this fact is initially unfree, merely potential. By stepping out of his original quiescence, the human being triggers a new theogonic process. The theogonic process in human consciousness underpins the history of religions, which aims toward the realization of human freedom in the not-yet-existing philosophical religion. The paper concludes by considering how Schelling's later philosophy of religion might also be said to be one of life, and by indicating possible limits of this philosophy.

1. The Form of the Divine Life: The Freedom of God and the Doctrine of Uni-Totality

In keeping with the "analytical" method of the *Historical-Critical Introduction* (SW XII: 6–7), *Monotheism* does not derive the concept of monotheism from universal principles. It does not proceed from an *a priori* investigation of the principles of reason to establish a rational concept of monotheism. Rather, it

presupposes monotheism as a "fact" (*Thatsache*), something already existing (*vorhanden*), and proceeds to investigate its meaning, its actual content, with no presupposition other than that it has content and meaning. It is a question, for Schelling, of "becoming aware of what can be thought and what cannot be thought in an already given and universally accepted concept" (SW XII: 10). In the *Historical-Critical Introduction*, Schelling shows that historical polytheism presupposes a "potential monotheism" that is connatural with human consciousness, in the sense that consciousness "carries [this monotheism] within itself and cannot move or detach itself from it—it is unified with it, one with it" (SW XII: 8). Because human consciousness is that which posits God naturally, it cannot emerge from this relation without being led back into it through a process. This process produces God and is therefore a theogonic one (SW XI: 198).[2] Although the *Historical-Critical Introduction* shows that the process by which mythology emerges into being has an irreducibly religious meaning for human consciousness, it does not demonstrate the objective meaning of this process, i.e., its meaning independent of human consciousness (SW XI: 215).[3] In order for this result to be verified "independent of an individual mode of thinking," that is, to be established on universal principles, one must "succeed in leading mythology back to presuppositions of a universal nature and in deriving it as a necessary consequence from out of such presuppositions" (SW XI: 227).[4] This is what Schelling aims to achieve in *Monotheism*.

Schelling presents this work as the first to uncover the actual meaning of monotheism, this "first and, as it were, simplest of all concepts" (SW XII: 12). In his reading, monotheism can only be adequately understood in relation to polytheism: "both concepts stand and fall together" (SW XII: 15). If these are usually seen as mutually exclusive, Schelling argues, it is because the unicity (*Einzigkeit*) of God affirmed in monotheism is erroneously understood as excluding the very possibility of polytheism. If polytheism is impossible, it would be redundant to affirm God's unicity: it would suffice merely to posit God, *tout court*. Monotheism—the positive affirmation that there is only one true God—would lose its justification. Consequently, Schelling stresses the need to distinguish between two separate meanings of unicity with respect to God: the unicity of God, and the unicity of God as such. Any analysis of God's unicity must start with the simple concept of unicity, "absolute unicity." The concept of God already presupposes unicity: it implicitly excludes there being another like Him. If another God could be thought alongside God, then God would not be God. "Whoever says the name of God," Schelling writes, "does

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[2] F.W.J. Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, trans. Mason Richey and Markus Zisselsberger (Albany: SUNY, 2007), 138.
[3] Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction*, 150.
[4] Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction*, 157–58.

not feel that, by doing so, one has declared a unicity, but rather that one has presupposed it. One must, in fact, think this unicity in order to think God (and not: a god), therefore before even truly thinking God as such" (SW XII: 24). God, therefore, is not simply that which has no equal, but rather that which *can* have no equal. This means that God cannot be a mere being alongside other beings. Rather, God can only be conceived as Being itself (*das Seyende selbst*). Further, God can never be conceived as not being—existence is not something added to His being, but rather constitutes His essence. In this sense, He is the necessary being. Being itself, however, is not what constitutes the divinity of God—what makes God God—but rather it is only the "necessary pre-concept of God," the "material" of His divinity (SW XII: 25).

Although Being itself is not a being, it is not nothing. Rather, it is that which will be (SW XII: 32). The statement "God is Being itself" should therefore be understood in the sense that God, in Himself and before Himself, viewed in His pure essence, is what will be. This definition corresponds to the oldest attested document in which the one true God is mentioned, or rather, where He speaks and gives Himself a name: "I will be" (*JAHWEH*), which Schelling further interprets: "I will be who I will be" (SW XII: 33). This is the "supreme concept of God," insofar as it expresses the idea that God is "outside of being, above being … [He is] a lucid freedom to be or not to be, to assume or not to assume a being" (SW XII: 33). Therefore, God is not the necessary being, but rather the "Lord of Being" (*Herr des Seyns*). Since Being itself is the universal subject, of which all being (*Seyn*) is predicated, it is the *prius* of being—it has an *a priori* relation to it. Thus, to determine the modalities of Being itself is to determine the modalities of all being, including that of God (SW XII: 33–34).

In and of itself, absolute unicity does not designate a real, existing being, but merely the possibility of such a being. To arrive at the concept of a real being who is God, and not merely the concept of His possibility, one has to move from the possibility of God to the actual being. To be able to conceive an immediate relation between Being itself and actual being, the former must be posited as that which can be—the immediate and intrinsic ability to be (*das seyn Könnende*). This determination refers to the universal principle of being, *potentia existendi*, without which nothing can come into being. It can be identified as the general power (*Macht*) of being in God, the "principle of pantheism." To admit this principle, however, does not immediately and necessarily lead to a system of pantheism. Pantheism, Schelling argues, is not simply the notion that all being is the being of God, but rather the idea that God is a "blind, and in *this* sense, necessary being, a being in which He remains *against his will*, and where He is deprived of all freedom" (SW XII: 35). If God were merely the power of being, if He were nothing but the immediate *potentia existendi*, He would lose all freedom the moment He stepped into being, which

would result in a "system of blind being" (SW XII: 36). By coming out of itself and becoming active, the *potentia existendi* would cease to be what is free from being and become "afflicted" (*behaftete*) and "entangled" (*befangene*) in being (SW XII: 37). Schelling finds an illustration of this system in Spinoza's pantheism, which he describes as "motionless, lifeless" (SW XII: 72).

If restricting God to the universal *potentia existendi* results in a lifeless system, to reject this principle in the name of theism results in an equally lifeless system. Indeed, God's determination as *potentia existendi* ensures and expresses His capacity to generate. As *potentia existendi*, God is able to emerge into being—to cease to be a will at rest so as to become an active will. Thus, God is capable of movement, of "coming out of himself." Without this capacity, we are left with an "impotent theism" (SW XII: 42). The power of immediate being—this divine power of ecstasy (*Ekstasis*)—is the "true procreative force [*Zeugnungskraft*] in God" (SW XII: 41). To deprive God of this vital power is to deprive Him of the capacity to create. Thus, if God is not God by virtue of this potency, neither is He God without it: it is the "foundation, the beginning, the 'position' of the divine being" (SW XII: 42).

> [The idea that God's being underlies all being] cannot be denied to either reason or feeling. It alone is the idea that makes all hearts beat. Even Spinoza's rigid and lifeless philosophy owes the power which it has always exerted over hearts—and not the most superficial among them, but especially the religious ones—it owes this entire power only to [this] fundamental idea … By rejecting the *principle* of pantheism … theologians deprive themselves of the means to achieve true monotheism. For true monotheism is perhaps nothing other than the overcoming of pantheism. (SW XII: 39–40)

How to conceive the transition from Being itself, insofar as it is only the capacity to be God, to an actual being who is God? "That which is" (*das Seyende*), in its transition to being, is in the first place merely a power that can be (*Seynkönnende*), and in a second moment, that which simply is. In the first moment, or in the first potency of its being, "that which is" is pure potentiality, *potentia pura*; in its second moment, it is pure being, *actus purus*. There is perfect compatibility between the two. "Although 1 is the first, the antecedent [*Vorausgehende*], 2 the second or the consequent [*Folgende*], there is no real before or after here, but we must imagine both of them posited at the same time" (SW XI: 50). The second is to the first as the object is to the subject. They are indissolubly linked together. God contains both determinations as logically distinct moments of His being. He is neither the first, negated being as such, nor the second, positive being. As God, He is neither of these two in particular, but rather 1 + 2. This is not to posit many Gods, but rather two

"figures" of one God. Although God contains both terms, there is a progression from the first to the second. The first, as *potentia pura*, can be defined as a beginning, which Schelling conceives as the capacity of attraction (*anziehen*) (SW XII: 52). The first potency is thus capable of attracting the second, to clothe itself with being, thus rendering it visible. The original potency, however, as *subjectum*, "remains deeply hidden … [as] the real mystery of the divine being, which, lacking all being in *itself*, covers itself externally with infinite being, and because it is nothing for *itself*, is therefore another (namely, the infinite being)" (SW XII: 53). Similarly, in the judgment "A is B," A is the subject of B; it is not itself and by nature B (which would make the proposition tautological), but is also what can be *not* B. In this sense, infinite possibility can be said to be infinite being, that which infinitely is.

So far what has been defined is only the concept of the divine being *a priori*, i.e., the concept of God's being before His real being. If God is that which has being (A), then this being is in the first moment or first potency of being –A (that which lacks all being—pure subject), in the second moment +A (infinite being—pure object). These determinations, however, immediately exclude one other (SW XII: 56). "What we really want," Schelling contends, is a subject that is able to determine itself in a real being, or (what is the same) an object that retains the capacity for self-negation. This "need" is resolved in a third potency (±A), as the fulfilment and balance of the first two potencies, which mediates between and integrates them while remaining free from them. This third principle is "spirit," the capacity "to remain and abide in the being-*outside-of*-oneself *in oneself* (in one's essence), to not lose, in the being-*outside-of*-oneself, one's in-oneself [*An-sich*], one's essence, one's self" (SW XII: 57). The progression from one form of being to another (–A, +A, ±A) defines the *a priori* concept of the divine being and divine life. This concept alone establishes the "true, unique content of the *concept* of monotheism" (SW XII: 61). Although God is plural, He is not many Gods, but one God. As the unity of the three determinations of being, He is the "All-One" (*All-Eine*). These forms exist in God as a "self-determined plurality." He is not God in these forms taken separately, but only as their indissoluble unity. This is the sense in which God's unicity as such is to be understood.

> There is no better attested word concerning God's unity than the capital and classic address to Israel: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD [Jehovah] your God [Elohim] is one [*einzige*] LORD – יְהוָה אֶחָד" [Deut. 6,4]—; it does not mean: "he is single"; "he is אֶחָד" or One [*Einer*], purely and simply, but rather: "He is a single *Jehovah*," i.e. that he is only single as Jehovah, as the *true* [*wahre*] God or according to his divinity, and it is therefore permitted to say that, excluding his being-Jehovah, he can be *plural*. (SW XII: 47)

2. The Realization of the Divine Life: From Monotheism as a Concept to Monotheism as a Dogma

If God is not just a concept, but a real being, this being must be associated with an act. In the mere concept of God, there is no need to factor in any act: the modalities of being constitute a set of logical determinations; they are true regardless of whether or not they are attributed to a real being. As ideal determinations, the three forms of being are posited simultaneously. Although a necessary sequence has been posited in the determination of these forms, there has been no demonstration of actual movement. For there to be movement, there needs to be an act that separates beginning, middle, and end (SW XII: 80). As long as the forms of being are considered in the divine concept, there is perfect equality and mutual acceptance between them. The first potency, as long as it is only an ability to be self'ed (*selbstisch*)—that is, as long as it remains only that which is potentially self'ed—is like that which is inherently non-self'ed, the second potency. Similarly, the second potency, *actus purus*, precisely because it is *actus purus*, is not an actual being. Consequently, the second potency, in a sense, is nothing, since it is not an actual being-in-action. The two figures—1 and 2—are identical insofar as each lacks the self'edness that would allow a real opposition to emerge between them. Since the first two are not mutually exclusive, then the exclusion of the third is not real, but merely logical. The three potencies thus occupy the same place; their difference is merely one of nature (SW XII: 81–82).

For there to be a real separation between the potencies, for a real antithesis to take place, one has to factor in selfhood (*Selbstheit*). The only way to obtain a real being is if the necessary presupposition of being, namely, that which is non-being by nature, would become non-being in act. To be realized as non-being, however, it has to be posited as being—a transition impossible by virtue of its mere nature. This leaves us with one hypothesis, namely, to consider this transition as posited by a divine will (SW XII: 84). This idea might seem counter-intuitive, because it involves God negating His own being, positing Himself as non-being. Since God, however, is the being who, by nature, is –A +A ±A, and therefore necessarily and irrevocably All-One, he can be *actu*, the opposite (SW XII: 84–85). The act by which the potencies are posited in being, i.e., as potencies in tension, involves the temporary reversal or suspension of their nature. Thus, since –A is by nature that which is not, its actualization makes it operate as its opposite, as that which is. This is only effected so that it can be negated again, posited once more as –A. The initial reversal of –A, the first and necessary position through which God is posited as a real being, simultaneously entails the exclusion of +A, which finds itself at the beginning of this process posited as negated, as non-being. In turn, however, +A is only

negated so that it can be posited again through this process as that which is (SW XII: 86–87).

In their transition into being, the potencies acquire new designations. A, as the general potency to be (*Seynkönnende*), which can transition directly from potency to actuality, is determined in the first potency as A1. The second potency, that which purely is, is posited as A2, because it cannot be actualized by itself, but only through another. As soon as it emerges into being, however, A ceases to be a potency, the source and subject of being, and becomes unequal to itself: A becomes B, which is the first potency in its intensification (*Steigerung*), its "becoming-other" (*Andersgewordenseyn*). Meanwhile, A2 ceases in the process to be that which is, and becomes that which can be. Since the mutually exclusive potencies cannot be separated, but are ordained by nature to exist in the same place, the result is a process by which what was negated (A2) seeks to negate that which negates it (B) and restore it to its original position as non-being. The second potency, however, seeks to displace that which should not be (*was nicht Seyn Sollende*)—that is, the first potency in act—not in order to assume being for itself, but, on the contrary, in conformity with its original nature as pure object, lacking all selfhood, to divest itself of selfhood and be restored as *actus purus*. Thus, the process consists in the gradual overcoming of that which should not be (B) by that which should be (*das Seyn Sollende*). The latter, however, cannot be posited immediately, but only after the first has been overcome by the second. As that which should be, it presupposes the struggle between the first two potencies; it is the potentiality of being *tertio loco*, A3, the spirit as such, the inseparable subject-object (SW XII: 88–89).

Although this third potency must be posited as spirit, it is not God. God is more than spirit, He is the exuberant being itself (*Ueberschwengliche*), free from all necessity of being. He treats spirit merely as one of His potencies. He is in all the potencies—not in any one taken separately, but as "the one operating all in all," and as such differentiates Himself from the potencies by His indissociable unity (SW XII: 89). As the All-One, God can only be different in appearance, externally: internally, He remains the same. Consequently, the potencies in their mutual exclusion and inverted position are "God only insofar as [He is] externally disguised (*verstellte*) by divine irony." They are the inverted (*verkehrte*), overturned (*umgekehrte*) One, literally "*uni-versio*" (SW XII: 90). In their extroversion, the potencies are the means by which God realizes all the possibilities of being and becoming. Therefore, the act by which God negates Himself is necessarily the same act by which God posits a universe. Thus, Schelling achieves a conjunction between the living, personal God and a naturalistic explanation of the world.[5]

[5] Already in the *Denkmal an Jacobi* (1812), Schelling described his project of a "scientific theism," as the "living conjunction" between naturalism ("the system that posits a nature in God") and theism (the system that "affirms a consciousness, an intelligence, and a free-

> [T]he mystery of the divine being and divine life is explained by this *miracle* [*Wunder*] of the *permutation* or *reversal* of the potencies. And a universal law of the divine mode of action is thereby at the same time applied to the highest problem of all science, to the explanation of the world …. The existence of a world different from God (because the potencies in their tension are no longer God) is based on a divine art of disguise, which affirms in appearance what it intends to negate, and vice versa, negates in appearance what it intends to affirm. What explains the world in general explains also the course of the world, the many great and difficult riddles that human life offers as a whole and in its details (SW XII: 91–92).

The question remains to know if this theogonic process justifies monotheism as a dogma. A dogma has a positive content, and therefore only has meaning as the expression of an actual antithesis. Therefore, monotheism only acquires significance as a dogma to the extent that polytheism is something objectively possible and real. Schelling has already admitted a plurality of principles in the divine being, but he has not yet shown any actual opposition between them. With the hypothesis of the theogonic process, however, the dogmatic significance of monotheism becomes possible: only after the objective possibility of polytheism has been established does it make sense to affirm that there is only one true God. With the determination of the potencies in the theogonic process as the external face of God, polytheism becomes conceivable. Considered outside the divine unity, the potencies are not God, nor are they concrete things, but spiritual essences, which Schelling describes as "pseudo-Gods," the biblical Elohim (SW XII: 98). Consequently, monotheism does not imply the absolute impossibility of polytheism. In the theogonic process, God is at every level in becoming. He appears, at separate moments, as a different figure of this divine becoming, as a series of gods. To this extent, polytheism is something natural, something the possibility of which is not excluded *a priori* (SW XII: 107).

3. The Aim of the Divine Life as the Aim of the Human Life

After defining the concept of monotheism, and deriving from the hypothesis of a theogonic process in general the possibility of monotheism as a dogma, Schelling returns to the question raised at the beginning of the treatise: "Does

willing in God") (SW VIII: 69). Since God is a living being who encompasses all things, then "real theology cannot come into conflict with Nature, nor suppress any system whatsoever" (SW VIII: 55).

monotheism have an *original* relation to *human consciousness*?" (SW XII: 108). In the *Historical-Critical Introduction*, Schelling shows that the potencies by which human consciousness is moved in the mythological process are the same potencies by which consciousness is "originally and essentially that which posits God." Further, he argues that the potencies at work in human consciousness must be the same through which nature is created, stating that "human consciousness [is] something that has become, and nothing *outside* of creation, but rather its end" (SW XI: 215).[6] On this basis, he speculates that the theogonic process in human consciousness must have an objective significance; that is, the religious process in human consciousness must be originally related to God.

> It is not in itself thinkable that the principles of a process that proves to be a theogonic one can be something other than the principles of *all* Being and *all* Becoming. Thus the mythological process does not have merely religious meaning—it has *universal* [*allgemeine*] meaning. For it is the universal [*allgemeine*] process that repeats itself in it; accordingly, the truth that mythology has in the process is also a universal [*universelle*] one, one excluding nothing. (SW XI: 216)[7]

How to conceive an original relation between the monotheism expressed in creation and human consciousness? Up until this point, Schelling has only explained the concept of a theogonic process in general, outside of human consciousness. We have seen how God in this process achieves His goal *per contrarium*, since the process is initiated by a temporary negation of the divine being. At the end of the process, the three potencies (which had become extroverted during creation) are restored to their natural introverted state. Given that the potencies at work in creation derive from God, and that it is He who, through the potencies, operates in this process, it might seem as if God needs creation in order to realize Himself. This view is incompatible with God's absolute freedom and life. If this process is not necessary for God, however, the question remains to know for whom or what creation is intended. This is a delicate question in Schelling, one that has always attracted suspicions of monism and pantheism. That Schelling here affirms God's absolute sovereignty is evidenced by a decisive passage at the beginning of Lecture 6:

> [God's] realization [in this process] is not necessary for *himself*. Even without it he knows himself [to be] the insurmountable All-One. For him, this movement, this process would be without result. What could

[6] Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction*, 150.
[7] Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction*, 150.

> then lead him to the free decision of manifesting [*hervorzutreten*] in this process? The reason for this decision cannot be an aim that he wanted to achieve in relation to himself. There must be something outside of him (*praeter ipsum*), something that He wants to achieve by means of this process, something that does not yet exist ... but which this process makes possible … a creature that God sees as future, as possible. (SW XII: 108–109)

For something that did not previously exist to emerge into being, the potencies must operate as *causes*. In the process, that which ought not to be (B) operates as the *causa materialis*, that from which all things emerge. It is that which is changed and modified in the process that progressively seeks to convert it back into non-being. The second potency (A2) is *causa efficiens*, through which everything comes to be; it is what transforms, what acts on and alters B. The third potency (A3), *causa finalis*, is the goal or end toward which everything becomes. These three causes, insofar as they are ordained to joint action (being indissociable even while in tension), presuppose a fourth one, *causa causarum*, the cause of causes. It is the will of the divinity itself, and to the extent that it acts through the three causes, all products are the work of the divine will. Thus, the naturalistic explanation of things (through the three causes) does not exclude the religious one, and vice versa (SW XII: 112–113). As creative causes, the potencies bridge concrete, material reality and abstract concepts, the region of true universals. Since the theogonic process is not merely an abstract sequence of logical determinations, but also constitutes the process of creation, it does not just result in being in general, but in "concrete being in all the variety of its gradations and ramifications" (SW XII: 116). Therefore, the process unfolds in stages: the potency that underlies the process (B) is overcome through a succession of moments, the product of an explicit divine will affirming a variety of things distinct from God. If there were no distinguishable moments, no middle terms, then the unity that was negated at the beginning of the process would be immediately restored: there would be nothing new, nothing that did not previously exist (SW XII: 116).

If creation begins with the emergence of non-being into being, it ends with the potencies restored to their original nature in a new and independent being, namely, the human being. Human consciousness is nothing but "the end and goal of all the process of nature" (SW XII: 118)—it is the "product of monotheism expressed in creation" (SW XII: 120). The elements that are at work in creation—i.e., the potencies in tension—also create human consciousness. The latter represents the point in which all the potencies are restored to their unity, where the God-negating principle (B) is again turned into the God-positing principle (*Gott Setzende*)—that is, it becomes subject. As the pure substance of human consciousness, this principle is that which, in

consciousness, naturally posits God. Because of it, the human being is originally, i.e., by nature, a God-positing essence, before any notion of God can be externally communicated to it. Original human consciousness is nothing but this positing of God, "before all invention and all science, and also before all revelation and the possibility of all revelation … not *actu* nor knowingly and voluntarily—there is no room here for any of these things—but rather in non-act, in non-will, and in non-knowledge" (SW XII: 119).

If the potencies in creation are those of God, how are human beings separate from God? The essence of human consciousness is not equal to B, but to B that has been overcome by A and brought back into its original latency. It is a new essence, separate from B. Neither is it merely A, but rather, it is A that has B as its foundation, A that has overcome B. Thus, with the creation of human consciousness, something that did not exist before has been posited. Since human consciousness is neither A nor B, it is an intermediary, a third vis-à-vis the two. This centrality with respect to both potencies makes it free in relation to them: it is a distinct, independent being (*Wesen*). Insofar as it is A containing B, human consciousness is able to raise B and put it in motion again, as independent of God (SW XII: 121–22). Since nothing can be absolutely outside of God, Schelling's claim that human beings are independent of God has to be understood in a relative sense. Human beings are independent of God in the sense that they are, by nature, endowed with freedom. At the same time, since human consciousness is constituted by the same potencies through which God providentially operates in creation, when consciousness moves, these potencies move with it. "The essence of the human being is so connatural with that of God that it cannot move itself without God himself moving toward it" (SW XII: 125).

To what end does the human being trigger a new theogonic process? Schelling argues that while human consciousness is God-positing by essence, it has no knowledge of this fact at the beginning. In order for the human being to come to know himself as God-positing, he has to come out of his original position. Thus, he triggers a new process that repeats the process of nature, only now in human consciousness. Having become a principle of human consciousness, the principle at the foundation of the first process "goes through the same path toward the human [being], toward the positing of God, as that which it had gone through in creation at an earlier stage" (SW XII: 127). By stepping out of his original position, the human being dislocates the unity of the potencies. The ensuing struggle between the potencies constitutes the natural development of religious consciousness. Mythology is nothing but the record of this struggle in human consciousness. Mythological representations, Schelling argues, were not originally imparted to consciousness from outside: they are not artificial allegories, but "pure, internal emanations" or "modifications" of human consciousness (SW XII: 128). As the expression of

consciousness under the irresistible influence of the potencies, "[m]ythology as the history of the gods, thus the actual mythology, was only able to be produced in life itself; it *had* to be something *lived* and *experienced*" (SW XI: 126).[8]

If monotheism is the foundation of mythology, it defines, by extension, the actual content of all religion. Monotheism is not only a variety of religious belief among others. Since it constitutes the essence of human consciousness, and undergirds the latter's development through the religious process, all religions ultimately derive from it: it is "tree of all religions" (SW XII: 79). Therefore, it is inaccurate to say that Christianity—or any single religion, for that matter—invented this idea. Rather, it is Christianity that actually derives from it: monotheism is "all of Christianity in the bud, in design (*Anlage*)." Christianity is only the "highest appearance of monotheism." The Christian doctrine of the Trinity expresses the same principles in the concept of monotheism, only it contains them "at a superior level" (SW XII: 79). In mythology, human consciousness was under the influence of the potencies as if driven by a force it did not fully understand, leading Schelling to characterize mythology as the "blind, unfree religion." By contrast, Christianity represents the process through which consciousness is liberated from paganism, and through which "the true religion, the spiritual religion—the religion of free contemplation, of free knowledge—is first mediated and made possible" (SW XIII: 194). This not-yet-existing philosophical religion emerges through a "scientific" understanding of the content of the mythological and revealed religions. Since monotheism, however, is the ultimate root of all religions, the future philosophical religion is necessarily also monotheistic. Consequently, Schelling characterizes the religious history of humanity as a "passage from a monotheism that is purely essential and connatural to the *essence* of the human being, to the freely recognized monotheism" (SW XII: 126).

Conclusion

This essay has offered a reading of Schelling's *Monotheism* highlighting the role of life in his doctrine of God and religion. In the first place, I showed how Schelling defines the concept of monotheism as including a plurality of principles that constitute the necessary form of the divine being. God's life is expressed both in His freedom vis-à-vis the potencies, and in that He is their "living unity." In the second place, I explained Schelling's doctrine of creation as reflecting what he described as the passage from the "form of the divine life … [to] actual life, the living God himself" (SW XII: 59). In the third place, I showed how Schelling interprets the original human consciousness as the

[8] Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction*, 89

product of the actual life of God, and further, how God underpins the religious life and history of humanity.

The philosophy of religion thus outlined can be understood as a philosophy of life in a double sense. For one, God's life, in its various moments, is the main subject of this philosophy. A central point in *Monotheism* is that God is not only the necessary being, but also the "Lord of Being." This is the supreme concept of Schelling's later philosophy.

> A philosophy that goes back to that which is in itself and starts with it, already leads us directly and by itself to a system of freedom, and has liberated itself from the necessity that weighs like a nightmare on all systems that stop at pure being, without rising to *that which is in itself* … To go beyond being, and to stand in a free relation to it, [that is] is the real aim of philosophy. (SW XII: 33–34)

If Schelling's later philosophy is a system of freedom, it is by the same token a system of life. Indeed, as I have shown, life and freedom as applied to God are closely interdependent concepts in Schelling's thought. God is a living God only insofar as He is free. Both life and freedom are expressed in God's ability to generate Himself in an external being while remaining free in relation to all being.

There is another, complementary sense in which Schelling's later philosophy of religion is also of one life. This second sense is not about Schelling's philosophy possessing and affirming the free, living God as its highest concept. Rather, it refers to the idea that this philosophy is itself somehow an extension of the divine life. Indeed, in Schelling's view, his philosophy of religion is not only an abstract theory of religion, but itself represents a movement in the actual development of human consciousness toward the realization of the not-yet-existing philosophical religion. This religion, as noted above, understands the content of all historical religions in freedom, that is, independent of all compulsion, whether internal (as in the mythological process) or external (i.e., the dogmatic authority of the Church): it is the religion of "free philosophical knowledge" (SW XIII: 192–93). That being said, under Schelling's own terms, it is not only his philosophy, but the entirety of human experience that is implicated in the movement of the divine life. To quote *Monotheism* again: "The essence of the human being is so connatural with that of God that it cannot move itself without God himself moving toward it" (SW XII: 125).

If this passage, however, can be cited to support a reading of Schelling's later philosophy of religion as a philosophy of life, it might also be cited to argue the opposite. Indeed, by funnelling life—both divine and human—through the dialectical determinism of the potencies, *Monotheism* arguably

meets the demands of systematicity and reason, but at the cost of ignoring the demands of the actual religious life, namely, not those of an impersonal human consciousness evolving in history, but rather those of the human person *hic et nunc*. Schelling offers a system of conceptual formulations that is rich with intuitions, yet for all its insistence on movement and life, the only thing that really appears to move in it is reason. No doubt, Schelling felt this when he later distinguished the "negative philosophy," which is rational and dialectical, from the "positive philosophy," which bases itself on experience.[9] His awareness of the need to transcend the limits of discursive thought is most forcefully and clearly expressed in the unfinished Lecture 24 of the *Purely Rational Philosophy*, which offers a phenomenology of the consciousness dissatisfied with mere reason and demanding a God "outside the idea."[10]

[9] The distinction between the negative and positive philosophies belongs to "last" period of Schelling's thought, beginning with his move to Berlin in 1841 until his death in 1854. *Monotheism* remained essentially unchanged since 1827; it precedes the positive–negative distinction.

[10] See, e.g., this characteristic passage: "The I feels naturally alienated under the Law .... This is because, as something universal and impersonal, the Law can only be harsh as a power of reason that ignores personality (*Persönlichkeit*) to the point of not letting it off by a single iota in the name of the person …. The I wants to be for itself, but facing the Law finds itself subjected to the universal …. The human being can never find peace through the Law" (SW XI: 554–55).

kabiri
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NEW TRANSLATION

F.W.J. Schelling's *Monument to Jacobi's Work on the Divine Things* (1812) (excerpts)

Translated by Hadi Fakhoury

The text offered here in translation is extracted from Schelling's *Monument to Jacobi's Work on the Divine Things* (1812), his last major work published during his lifetime.[1] Written in under two months, the book is a response to Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's *On the Divine Things and their Revelation* (1811).[2] Schelling's cutting rejoinder appeared only a few weeks after Jacobi's book, resulting in what came to be known as the "controversy concerning the divine things."[3]

[1] The full German title is *F.W.J. Schellings Denkmal der Schrift von den göttlichen Dingen u. des Herrn Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi und der ihm in derselben gemachten Beschuldigung eines absichtlich täuschenden, Lüge redenden Atheismus*. All references to Schelling's works are from Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schellings *Sämmtliche Werke* [=SW], Bd. I–XIV, ed. K. F. A. Schelling (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856–1861). The text of the Denkmal is found in SW VIII: 19–136. Jacobi's text can be found in *F. H. Jacobi, Schriften zum Streit um die göttlichen Dinge und ihre Offenbarung* (Werke, Bd. 3), ed. Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2000).

[2] Schelling's letter to Windischmann on February 27, 1812, in *Aus Schellings Leben. In Briefen*, Bd. II, ed. G. L. Plitt (Leipzig: G. Hirzel, 1870), 294.

[3] A recent treatment of the controversy can be found in Gunther Wenz, *Von den göttlichen Dingen und ihrer Offenbarung: Zum Streit Jacobis mit Schelling 1811/12* (München: C. H. Beck, 2011). The classic account is Wilhelm Weischedel, *Jacobi und Schelling: Eine Philosophisch-Theologische Kontroverse* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969). See also

Despite the *Denkmal*'s polemical character—Xavier Tilliette referred to it as the *Annihilationsschrift*—it provided Schelling an opportunity to clarify and develop his philosophical views. Shortly after its publication, in a letter to his friend Georgii on January 14, 1812, Schelling wrote:

> It is only now that I can finally say that I am finished with my predecessors. The appearance of this book has been an epochal point in the evolution of my system and in its victory over former laziness of heart and intellectual nullity, which was being passed off as faith, or even as some sort of superior philosophy. Hardly anything happier could have happened to me.[4]

Schelling considered the *Denkmal* as the starting point of a new development in his philosophical system. Later, in his lectures on the *Philosophy of Revelation*, he said: "I did not reveal the positive philosophy—even after it had been discovered—except in an elusive manner (on the occasion, among others, of the well-known paradoxical theses formulated in the polemic with Jacobi)."[5]

The *Denkmal* is divided into two parts, with the second part making up the bulk of the book. In the first part, titled "Provisional explanation of the accusations made against me in Mr. F. H. Jacobi's work," Schelling viciously attacks Jacobi, whom he accuses of maliciously misrepresenting his ideas to make him seem like an atheist. The second part is titled: "Contributions toward an assessment of the polemic started by Mr. Jacobi and its relation to science, theism, philosophy, and religion, as well as literature in general." It contains a preface and provisional explanation (here translated), as well as three chapters titled, respectively, "The Historical," "The Scientific" (offered here in translation), and "The Universal (An Allegorical Vision)." The latter chapter is a kind of literary comedy in which Jacobi is satirically put on trial before a large crowd and unmasked as an impostor. He is interrogated, in turn, by philosophers, religious leaders (represented by the figure of Luther), writers, and an otherworldly "stranger." The scene culminates in a blindfolded Jacobi performing his famous *salto mortale* by jumping in the air only to land in the same spot. While the narrative includes philosophical and theological

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Claudio Ciancio, *Il Dialogo polemico tra Schelling e Jacobi* (Torino: Italia, 1975), and Walter Jaeschke (ed.), *Religionsphilosophie und spekulative Theologie: Der Streit um die Göttlichen Dinge (1799–1812)* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1994).

[4] Letter to Georgii on January 14, 1812, in *Aus Schellings Leben*, II, 281.

[5] SW XIII: 86. See a similar statement in the Paulus edition: "the *Denkmal auf Jacobi* (1812) contains the beginning of the positive philosophy" (in Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung 1841–1842*, ed. Manfred Frank [Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977], 138).

arguments, Schelling's cruel representation of his adversary is also evidently intended as an attack on his character.

In the first chapter, "The Historical," Schelling presents a satirical account of Jacobi's philosophical career and of what he regards as Jacobi's central idea, namely, that any scientific demonstration inevitably leads to atheism and to fatalism. With his principle that "philosophy is *necessarily* atheistic," Schelling argues, Jacobi has "solemnly proclaimed, publicly declared war on scientific knowledge and promulgated a general hatred of reason" (SW VIII: 47). Jacobi's claim that knowledge of divine things is inaccessible to science, according to Schelling, falls back on its author, who has "generously spread out the miserable limitation of his spirit to the entire human species," and whom Schelling compares to "those great Pharisees who not only took away the key leading to knowledge and could not access it themselves, but *also tried to block those* who *sought to* access it" (SW VIII: 44). Schelling, by contrast, maintains that it is the proper task of philosophy to produce rational and demonstrable knowledge of God:

> Philosophy is truly philosophy only so long as the idea or certainty remains that it is possible through it to assert something scientific regarding the existence or non-existence of God. The moment it appeals to pure and simple faith, it loses itself in the general and what is simply human. (SW VIII: 42–43)

The second chapter contains the philosophical gist of the *Denkmal*. Schelling aims to justify the "scientific" character of theism by "grounding" it in naturalism, all the while showing that Jacobi's faith-based theism is conducive to atheism. For Schelling, "real philosophy" is a "scientific theism," and the ultimate object of scientific research is to demonstrate the existence of God as a personal being (SW VIII: 42; 54–55; 82). The fundamental and original insight of philosophy is precisely the idea of a personal being, "the hidden, inscrutable One" (SW VIII: 54), who is the originator and governing principle of the world. The system reaches toward the justification of that personal God as its teleological end, conceived as something "real," "living." In this sense, "true objective science" is "a progression and development of the object itself"; its method is "ascending" (SW VIII: 59). Just as God can leave no contradiction outside Himself, so "the true doctrine of God cannot be at odds with Nature, nor suppress any system" (SW VIII: 55). Here, however, we encounter again the same oppositions that Schelling had earlier resolved in absolute identity. How to surmount the dualities without suppressing them? As Xavier Tilliette points out, Schelling's solution can be summed up in one word: "explication," that is, the "passage" from the implicit to the explicit, from the potential to the actual. This procedure allows Nature

to evolve from its primitive stage to more developed and accomplished forms. Horst Fuhrmans rightly described this phase in Schelling's thinking as "explicatory theism."[6] The Absolute, from this perspective, is development, evolution, and ontogenesis.[7]

Schelling rejects Jacobi's claim that naturalism and theism are incompatible. He sees in this alleged irreconcilability the main cause for the ruin of theism and the real source of atheism (SW VIII: 67–68). He affirms instead a "living conjunction" between naturalism, i.e., "the system that asserts a nature in God," and theism, i.e., the system that "asserts consciousness, intelligence, and free will in God" (SW VIII: 69). Why does Schelling seek to combine the two? First, as already mentioned, he thinks that, if the two systems cannot be reconciled, naturalism is indelible and cannot be suppressed, which therefore leaves open the source of scientific atheism (SW VIII: 69). Secondly, he argues that theism cannot subsist by itself. Alone, it is without force, empty, intangible, fragile; it is afraid of science and terrified by the living, physical reality of God. For this reason, it seeks refuge in feeling, nostalgia, and "non-knowledge" (SW VIII: 69–70).

Not only is theism incapable of suppressing naturalism, it further cannot exist on its own: "theism … cannot even begin without naturalism; it hovers completely in the void" (SW VIII: 69). By severing God from nature, and positing a purely spiritual idea of God, theism tries in vain to pass from God to nature (SW VIII: 70). For Schelling, beginning with a moral cause, an intelligent creator before—and to the exclusion of—nature, is untenable. Theism forgets to specify whether the original Being, *necessarily* anterior to all things, is anterior *insofar* as He is Perfect (SW VIII: 65–66). It runs into difficulties when it asserts that "the One, the good and wise in itself, is also the *beginning of all things*, the *original beginning*; that the One is also *actu before* the many" (SW VIII: 77). In this case, God has no reason to create; creation would be a loss. In language recalling the alchemical imagery of the *Essay on Human Freedom*, Schelling writes:

> What could possibly move the living to create the dead, if indeed God is a God of the living and not of the dead? It is absolutely more conceivable that life emerges from death—which, of course, cannot be an absolute death, but only a death containing life within itself—than the other way round, that life descends into death, loses itself. (SW VIII: 77)

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[6] Horst Fuhrmans, "Das Gott-Welt-Verhältnis in Schellings positiver Philosophie," in *Kritik und Metaphysik*, eds. Friedrich Kaulbach and Joachim Ritter (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1966), 198.
[7] Xavier Tilliette, *Schelling: une philosophie en devenir*, vol. 1 (Paris: Vrin, 1992), 577.

Unlike theism, naturalism can at least begin by itself (SW VIII: 68–69). Naturalism offers the possibility and the foundation of a development in God, or an ascent from the less perfect to the more perfect (SW VIII: 70). But how is the conjunction of naturalism and theism accomplished? God contains nature as His ground (*Grund*). God makes Himself His own ground by subordinating a part or a potency of His essence (the non-intelligent part) to the superior part, "just as man only truly transfigures himself into intelligence, into a moral being, by subordinating the irrational part of his being to the higher" (SW VIII: 71–72). Thus, God separates in Himself light from darkness. It is the same God who is the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega, but He is not the same at the beginning as He is at the end: as alpha, He is *Deus implicitus*, the yet non-developed God—and He cannot even be called God, strictly speaking, whereas, as omega, as *Deus explicitus*, He is God in the eminent sense, the God of theism proper (SW VIII: 81). Since what constitutes the beginning cannot be completely blind, like a stone or a wood block, Schelling conceives an intermediary term between intelligence and non-intelligence: an "innate, instinctive, blind, not yet conscious wisdom," which he associates with divine inspiration (SW VIII: 66). This rapid sketch illustrates what Sean McGrath describes as Schelling's struggle to "break through to a *religious naturalism*, a theory of nature that is not only *compatible* with monotheism, but is systematically and essentially related to a conception of a free and personal divine creator."[8] Thus, more than just a polemical text, the *Denkmal* is indispensable to understanding the foundations and aims of Schelling's later philosophical project.

[8] Sean J. McGrath, *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling: The Turn to the Positive* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 63.

[SW VIII: 19][9]

F. W. J. Schelling's Monument to Mr. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's Work "On the Divine Things, etc." and to the Accusations Made in It Concerning a Deliberately Deceptive and Lying Atheism[10]

Distressingly, it has now come to the point that people who freely admit that they do not possess the idea of God and know him only through created things (whose causes they are ignorant of), do not hesitate to accuse philosophers of atheism.
—Benedict De Spinoza[11]

[21] Preface

The *scientific* reader would adopt the most correct point of view for this short work by regarding it as the settlement of an old debt to science incurred by me long ago, and at the same time as the preface to a work in which many things that could only be hinted at here will receive the precise and detailed explanation they deserve.

I have only one request to make of the *non-scientific* reader: not to mix in any matters foreign to this subject, since here we are only speaking of scientific matters, and I make use of no other freedom than that which cannot be taken away from the scholar without immediately suspending all literary activity.

On the whole, I ask you not to regard this essay as an *appeal to the (present) public*. The dispute I had to settle with Mr. Jacobi cannot be settled according to the concepts prevalent today. By its circumstances it pertains to the general literary history of the nation, and by its subject, to the special history of world wisdom; both will not forget our quarrel and will pass the final judgment between us. He with me, or I with him: either way, we will both stand together before the judgment seat of posterity.

Munich, December 13, 1811

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[9] Page numbers from Schelling's *Sämmtliche Werke* will be indicated between brackets throughout the text.

[10] I thank Kyla Bruff, Paolo Livieri, Sean McGrath, Matthew Nini, Birgit Sandkaulen, and Leo Weiß for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this translation.

[11] Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, trans. Michael Silverthorne and Jonathan Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 27.

[22] Contents of this work

Provisional explanation of the accusations made against me in Mr. F. H. Jacobi's book.

Contributions toward an assessment of the polemic started by Mr. Jacobi and its relation to science, theism, philosophy, and religion, as well as literature in general:

1) The Historical
2) The Scientific
3) The Universal (An Allegorical Vision)

[23] Provisional Explanation

In the just published work of Mr. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *On the Divine Things and their Revelation* (Leipzig, 1811), the following assertions are made with regard to the so-called *doctrine of all-unity*, *the doctrine of identity*, *the philosophy of nature*, etc.:

1) "Twelve years ago, when the natural daughter of critical philosophy, the doctrine of science [*Wissenschaftslehre*], claimed that the moral world order alone is God, this assertion at that time caused quite a *stir*"; (as is well known, the civil authorities were called upon by several governments against the author of *The Doctrine of Science,* and he lost his public teaching position, at least indirectly, as a result of this quarrel.) But "what is said in an Italian proverb: *una meraviglia dura tre giorni* [*a wonder lasts three days*], could hardly have been more strikingly confirmed on any occasion than when, shortly afterwards, the *second* daughter of critical philosophy (the above-mentioned doctrine of all-unity) completely, that is, *explicitly* abolished the distinction which the first had left standing between the philosophy of nature and moral philosophy, between necessity and freedom." (From this one could conclude that it had in fact already been abolished by Fichte). "For this abolition, even by name, *no longer aroused any astonishment*" (pp. 117, 118).

It is difficult to say what, in the opinion of this pragmatic narrative, should have happened to the author of the second doctrine after Kant [24] to make the *surprise* at his undertaking comparable to the sensation caused by Fichte's undertaking. At the very least he should have been removed from his position. Unfortunately, this did not happen. The narrator testifies that *he* has no part in this indifference. He washes his hands—in innocence.

As regards the content of the philanthropic statement concerning my doctrine, the author owes nothing but—the proof that it, namely the

distinction between the philosophy of nature and moral philosophy, between necessity and freedom, is abolished *in the sense in which he wants it to be taken*. Namely, in such a way that instead of moral freedom only natural necessity or necessity in general remains.

This ambiguous way of expressing my actual thoughts is one of the tricks that have been so abundantly used against my doctrine before the uninformed part of the public.[12]

2) This second daughter of critical philosophy (!) declared, "without further elaboration, that *above nature there is nothing*, and *nature alone is*," or, in another phrase, that "*nature is the One and the All, above it there is nothing*" (p. 118 ff).[13]

What does the sentence just cited represent for the author? Either the characteristic doctrine of the whole system, or a result which must first be drawn from it, brought out through deductions. I shall explain in a later section this form of polemic, of drawing conclusions at random from the statements (whether or not they are understood) of an author, in order to present them as his *real assertions*. The above assertion cannot be given by the author himself as a mere consequence. It cannot be so by its nature; if it is a doctrine of my system at all, it must be the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of it. The whole tone, the typographical emphasis which [25] Mr. Jacobi always uses for quoted words, shows, in fact, that he wishes to present it as a literal assertion.

From this one should conclude that the sentence, "*above nature there is nothing*, and *nature alone is*," is to be found everywhere in my writings. I assure you *that it is not to be found in any of my writings*.

That would be enough, but I prove in addition that it *cannot* be found in them, because it goes against the nature and fundamental concept of my whole system.

This cannot be denied so long as the fundamental explanation of *nature*, which was given in the first detailed exposition of my system, is not ignored.[14] This explanation is formulated on page 114 [SW IV: 203] in the following terms: "we understand by nature the absolute identity, to the extent that it is

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[12] Compare with the explanation found in the first tome of my *Philosophical Writings* (Landshut 1809), pp. 406–407 [SW VII: 341–42; *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2006), 13].

[13] This page number is from Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's *Von den göttlichen Dingen, 1811* (it can also be found in Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Werke*, Vol. 3 [*Schriften zum Streit um die göttlichen Dinge und ihre Offenbarung*, ed. Walter Jaeschke (Meiner: Fromann-Holzboog, 2000), 76]). Trans. note.

[14] It is found under the title of the second booklet in the second tome of my Journal of Speculative Physics (Jena and Leipzig, 1801) [Schelling is referring to his 1801 *Presentation of my System,* SW IV—a foundational text of his Identity Philosophy period].

not regarded as *being* [*seyend*], but *as the ground of its own being*." Here the *existing* [*seyende*] absolute identity is distinguished from the non-*existing* one, which is only the *ground* (in my language this means the "foundation") of its existence [*Existenz*], and the latter alone is declared to be nature. I thus assert that nature is the (as yet) non-*existing* (or purely objective) absolute identity. Mr. Jacobi, however, has me assert that it alone is, which is tantamount to saying that it alone has the predicate of existing.—Since, furthermore, that which is [*Seyende*] must generally be *above* that which is only the ground (or foundation) of its existence, it is obvious that, according to this very explanation, the *existing* absolute identity (God in the eminent state, God as *subject*) is placed above nature as the non-*existing*—merely *objective*—absolute identity, which behaves only as the ground of being.—The following words leave no doubt about this: "we foresee from this that we will call nature everything that lies *beyond the absolute being* of absolute identity" [SW IV: 203–204]. Common sense indicates that differentiation by appeal to what is *beyond* a given thing [26] cannot apply to *everything* there is, *for there is nothing outside this totality*. But these words also define what is outside of nature. Nature, they claim, is everything that (from the highest standpoint of the already existing absolute identity) lies *beyond* its *absolute*—namely, subjective—being; the same thing expressed from the human standpoint would have to be formulated as follows: nature is everything that for us is situated *below* the existing absolute identity, *below* its absolute—that is, subjective—being. From this it is clear that, from the standpoint of nature or even our own present existence, the *existing* absolute identity, i.e., God as subject, must be a *beyond*, i.e., probably also a beyond situated *outside* and *above* nature.

But there is no need to go into it so deeply. That such a proposition is completely impossible in my system is already evident from what everyone knows who has only read about it in learned journals, namely, that from the very beginning the real world has been opposed to the ideal world, and nature to the world of spirits.

3) "The same doctrine of all-unity was practically forced to abandon the doctrine of God, immortality and freedom—all that remained was *a doctrine of nature, a philosophy of nature*" (p. 139).

That the *philosophy of nature* is only one side of the whole system is known to every beginner in the study of it. Mr. Jacobi alone is pleased to ignore it for the sake of his polemic. It would be ridiculous to cite a passage to prove this assertion.

As regards the first part of the proposition (that the doctrine of all-unity *practically* must abandon the doctrine of God, etc.), nothing more can be said than simply that it contains an unprovable falsehood.

4) "The system of absolute identity is, *in fact and truth*, only one with Spinozism" (which Mr. Jacobi has been declaring to be *atheism* for 25 years) (p.

193).—In the introduction to the first presentation of my system I have explained that Spinozism [27], in a certain (by no means Jacobi's[15]) sense, is the primordial, real side of all true philosophy, which must necessarily be subordinated to the ideal [side]. I have stuck to this assertion until now, and have sought to verify it in reality. To this extent the statement that the doctrine of identity is Spinozistic has nothing against it, provided one adds that it is so from the point of view of one of its parts or elements, just as there is nothing objectionable in saying that man is a physical being provided this is not taken to mean that he is *only that*.—But that the doctrine of identity is *nothing other than* Spinozism remains to be proved by Mr. Jacobi.

5) "The philosophy of nature asserts that *all* dualism, however it may be called, must be annihilated (p. 118), and therefore asserts *in truth* (Mr. Jacobi always adds this) the identity (or one-and-the-same-ness) of reason and unreason, of good and evil" (p. 160). The first part of this sentence could perhaps be excused by the crudest, most general appearance. The philosophy of nature recognizes only *a single and unique supreme principle* and thus abolishes *all* dualism except the one in the supreme principle itself. But as far as the dualism that derives from it is concerned, which only appears in the physical and moral world, it would be odd if the author of the philosophy of nature, who started out by establishing dualism as a *fundamental law* of all reality, were the very one who had annihilated it. As regards the recognition of dualism also as a fundamental law of the moral world, he has explained himself clearly enough in his *Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*. Thus it is for Mr. Jacobi to show where, how, and by which reasons drawn from my doctrine [28] I have *in truth* abolished all distinction between reason and unreason, right and wrong, good and evil.

6) According to this same doctrine, "the coral that produces islands in the sea is more similar to God than the man striving for virtue and holiness" (p. 186).—Although these words are not designated in print as being quoted, the fact that they are linked to words I have actually used gives rise to the possibility—who knows if not intentional?—of also taking them as such.

Of course, the whole turn of this sentence is too Jacobian—too *lachrymose* in its polemical genre—for an intelligent person to attribute it to me.

7) To make the following stunt comprehensible, the two related passages must be seen side by side:

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[15] A claim in the Introduction clarifies this last point: "It almost seems to me—as if the present exposition were its proof—that, until today, in *all* publicly known views, realism in its most perfect and accomplished form (I mean in *Spinozism*) has been completely *misjudged* and *misunderstood*" [SW VII: 110]. In this manner, Jacobi's presentation of Spinozism was perfectly well-understood, not only in its general lines, but owing to the completely mechanical, lifeless, and abstract concepts which it made of it.

Schelling *Discourse on the Relation of Fine Arts to Nature* [SW VII: 293]	Jacobi *On the Divine Things* p. 157
"For the enthusiastic researcher alone, nature (to the one this, to the other that) is the sacred, eternally creative primordial force of the world, which generates all things from itself and brings them forth by its own activity. This principle of imitation probably had great significance when it taught the art of emulating this creative force, etc."	"If we were told, as a higher and deeper revelation of doctrine, that nature, or absolute productivity, is *the sacred, eternally creative primordial force of the world, which generates all things from itself and brings them forth by its own activity*; that it is *the only true God, the Living One*; that the God of theism, on the other hand, is only a tasteless idol, a figment of the imagination which dishonors reason, we would not be allowed to fall silent immediately upon hearing this."

The reader who is only a little attentive will see that the words *added* by Mr. Jacobi—"it (nature) is [29] *the only true God*, *the Living One*"—which were *added* out of his own invention, not only appear in the context of the discourse as a *continuation* of the previous words, but by the same typographical emphasis are also *placed completely on a par with them externally*, i.e., they are also presented as literally cited words.[16]

But also the following words, "the God of theism, etc., is a figment of the imagination," are not emphasized in print, but continue in the same context, in the same construction with the previous words, in such a way that every unsuspecting reader, who is not familiar with my way of thinking, must also take them for my own words.

The announcement of a higher and deeper revelation! This is how Mr. Jacobi ought to describe my *actual* words.—A higher and deeper revelation! A speculative doctrine in a speech on fine arts delivered before a mixed assembly! What must that poor speech have been guilty of, that its innocent words are taken *so* highly, that Mr. Jacobi himself drags *it* before his own tribunal! He would gladly put it under torture to force words from it that it did not say! Is

[16] Perhaps that slippery man will plead that between the genuine words and the made-up ones there is a further unitalicized "it is." Now it would not in itself be a very honest method to distinguish what is genuine from what is made-up by a boundary so fragile, which no reader can easily perceive; but it should be mentioned that earlier in the sentence, only the *predicates* are typographically emphasized—not the subject (nature or absolute productivity), nor the auxiliary (*is*)—from which it is clear that the made-up words are placed on an equal footing with the authentic ones.

this academic speech, which is still often discussed, perhaps the main source from which Mr. Jacobi drew his knowledge of my system?

That nature generates all things (surely by this is meant the things of nature?) from itself and brings them forth by its own activity: this sentence is probably one of the most innocuous ones, to which even the blindest zealot could take no offense, since even Mr. Jacobi himself, on p. 165 of his book, provides an edifying commentary on the words of Genesis: "and God said: let the *earth* [30] *bring forth* living animals, etc." What makes this sentence, which in itself is quite unsuspicious and does not contain anything striking or new, reprehensible—what makes it *truly atheistic*—is the *addition* by Mr. President that "it (nature) is the only true God, the Living One."

These are the means the fine man uses to make his accusations credible to the public.

8) "The naturalist who dogmatically asserts that everything is nature, and that nothing exists apart from and above nature"—that is, the naturalist, according to the passage quoted above under 2), who is one *only in a very specific sense*, namely, to the extent that he is the author of the second system after Kant's, the author of the doctrine of identity, of the philosophy of nature—that naturalist, "when he uses the words: God, freedom, immortality, good and evil, seeks only to deceive." This is stated in clear words on pp. 153–154. According to a parallel passage (p. 113), which is unmistakable, this is also to be expressed in this way: "the naturalist in this sense only uses these words *to deceive* and *play games*"; and according to a passage (p. 183) which also obviously belongs here: "he wants to know nothing of the true God, but nevertheless shies away from denying Him—*with his lips*." He is not in a (still forgivable) self-deception, his use of these words is a scientific fraud intended *to mislead* (p. 158).—"Naturalism in this sense must never want to speak—even (!) of God and of divine things, not of freedom, of moral good and evil, of actual morality; for, according to his (whose?) *innermost conviction*, these things do not exist, and in speaking of these things, he says what he does not *really* mean. But one who does so, speaks a *lie*" (pp. 154–155). In this passage only the system is spoken of at first, but as if this were not enough, by speaking of an innermost conviction, the discourse artificially plays the meaning over into the personal, and thereby prepares the very personal conclusion: he who does this, etc.—who denies God on principle, who denies all difference between right and wrong, good [31] and evil—is the naturalist in the sense explained above, and, moreover, a public *deceiver* and *liar*.

Let Mr. Jacobi say, if he can, that by naturalism he did not definitely understand *the system of the philosophy of nature*, and by the naturalist not definitely *the one who asserts the system of the philosophy of nature*. For Spinoza, the only one who could possibly still be meant—inasmuch as he too is a naturalist in Mr. Jacobi's sense, and yet has given the first book of his *Ethics* the title *De Deo,*

and a subsequent one *De libertate humana*—is already excluded in advance by an earlier explanation[17]: *he* had the right to use those words, *he* was not a deceiver.

If Mr. Jacobi already had this principal and universal method in readiness, he would not have needed any of the above. Nor did he have the right to invent words and add them *untruthfully* to mine, so as to make me say that I do not recognize any God but nature; he could have left my statements as they were, even cited theistic ones recognizing a true God. Because the *one* radical method abolished everything, he only had to add at the end that all this was only lies and deceit.

The last attack is of such a nature that it becomes impossible to find epithets and words to describe it.—He who allows himself to be taken so far in a scientific dispute as to attack the innermost part of his adversary, which he does not know, nor is even capable of knowing, and which only God knows, needs nothing but his own action to bring *stigma* upon himself; and he who still believes in glory and honor, in the judgment of posterity, would infinitely prefer to be the target of such an attack than to be the attacker, provided also that—in an incredible way—the attacker would find means of evading the utterance of the *disgrace* due to him in life.

[32] Man is by nature a good-natured being. Readers who merely recall the first accusations (Nos. 1–6), and remember how each one had to be answered *invariably with* "*this is not true*," will not comprehend, will hardly be able to *believe*, that a man who still claims some literary dignity could not only forget himself so far—could even be *satisfied with bringing* his adversary *into disrepute* by using untruthful rhetoric, with *defaming* him (there is no other word), regardless of whether it was later found to be an utterly vulgar falsehood—provided he was only able to vent his anger. I myself, after writing the foregoing, went back several times to verify, to convince myself again.

For a number of years now, a similar web of untruths about my doctrine has been running through public papers. All at once the source is revealed, the purposes for which it has been spun, the way of thinking for which it has been defended.

Mindful of the dignity that is due to the scientific man in the face of the rabble of nameless scribblers, I had to consider it beneath me to take note of it. Now a name suddenly appears at the top—the name Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi. The public will excuse me from discussing the reasons—for they are

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[17] Cf. *Against Mendelssohn's Accusations,* p. 84, compare with *Jacobi to Fichte,* p. 41.—(In his *Letters concerning Spinoza* (p. 228), he makes the following remark about the statement that Spinozism is atheism: "I am far from claiming that all Spinozists are atheists." But as regards his contemporary, whom he accuses of Spinozism in his latest work, he knows that he is well aware of himself, and that he is also an atheist "according to his most intimate conviction" (added in the author's manuscript)).

several and varied—that led me to make a public declaration at this time: partly because every intelligent reader can easily imagine those reasons for himself, partly because it might seem as if I only wanted to raise a great clamor about injustice done to me, which is entirely against my nature. I shall content myself with saying flatly that all the statements in that book concerning my scientific convictions are bold fabrications on the part of their author which cannot be substantiated by anything.

Although this characteristic of those statements is sufficiently obvious for me personally, fair consideration demands that I not make the final statement on my own behalf, so as to leave open to Mr. Jacobi the possibility of producing any evidence he might have for his statements.

I only have to explain myself about the *kind* of proof that could take place here alone.

[33] It is not a question of the value of my philosophical assertions, nor of whether the statements attributed to me by Mr. Jacobi are atheistic—nor whether those which may appear in the following work are theistic; it is merely to do with the scientific-historical question of knowing *what I have really asserted, what not,* whether *the assertions attributed to me are in truth my assertions, whether the passages presented as literal quotations from my writings are really to be found in my writings or not*. This question is of such a kind that only admits of a scholarly decision, but yet one that is perfectly settled, in that it rests merely on the existence or non-existence of certain philosophical assertions which can either be attested or not in the entirety of the available record (my writings).

For this very reason it goes without saying that, in regard to these questions, the testimonies or assurances of others (which could basically only be repetitions of the same untruths, all the more *dishonorable* if they were presented by unnamed persons) can prove nothing, just as it is generally appropriate that the person who makes the attacks should also personally provide the evidence.

I am willing to submit to all the consequences that must result for me from the evidence actually given by my adversary, just as I am convinced that in the event of the evidence not being given, public opinion will treat Mr. Jacobi with the same degree of well-founded contempt with which, in the opposite case, it would have been entitled to regard me.

No one will blame me for pushing the matter to this point. It is to be assumed that whoever ventures to come out with public accusations has also equipped himself with the necessary evidence in case it is required. If he cannot produce them, he deserves neither pity not consideration; even his friends cannot but condemn him, at least for his imprudence. For one thing is certain: attacks on another's personality are not to take lightly, [34] and there is hardly any other likely means of bringing slander back to its senses after it has become insolent through long, undisturbed habit. It is impossible even for a depraved

public to take long pleasure in seeing a single person always challenged in this way. Even if one wishes to see him refuted, one wants it to be done soundly, not with the weapons of ignorance or lies, but with those of the spirit and of truth.

If, after this explanation, any harshness should still be found in my chosen manner of proceeding, I only wish that the public, who are somewhat familiar with the nature of my opponent, may ask themselves what Mr. Jacobi would have done in my place, and whether it could be assumed that he, attacked in this way and by such means, would have shown even the tenth part of the moderation that I have shown toward him.

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With this in mind, I leave it to Mr. Jacobi, first of all, to provide evidence for all the statements and allegations contained in citations 1 to 6—for which, however, exclamations, accusations, and other rhetorical devices, still less the contemptible tactics of the art of drawing conclusions [*Consequenzmacherei*], cannot be used. If Mr. Jacobi intends to provide evidence, he can only do so through the expressed principles of my system, through clear statements of my public writings.—Meanwhile, and until Mr. Jacobi provides this evidence, truth and justice demand that all the statements and allegations contained in citations 1 to 6 be taken as *one*—and, in any case, to be declared as *worthless slander*—regardless of whether they were produced intentionally or by delusion.

Since, with the intention of making me out to be an atheist, a sentence is also given under No. 2 as a literal assertion, at least as a sentence in one of my writings, a sentence that I assure you [35] does not appear in any of my writings and cannot possibly appear in any of them, Mr. Jacobi will have no choice, in order not to be found out as a man of obvious, deliberate untruth, but to prove the existence of this sentence in my writings.

In the same way, because of the passage quoted under No. 7, Mr. Jacobi has only one kind of justification still available to him: to prove that the words "*nature is the only true God, the Living One*" are really contained in my academic speech or in any of my writings. Until he has given this proof, no one will have any hesitation in declaring that passage to be a *falsification* of my words and ideas.[18]

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[18] According to the Campe dictionary, "to falsify" means "to make inauthentic, to make worse with a *foreign addition*." The above case fits entirely under this definition, with the only difference that *by the foreign addition* (made by Mr. Jacobi), my discourse is not made worse but *completely bad*, namely atheistic, and, it should be noted, not by chance, but in a book and in a context that have the specific *intent* to portray me as an atheist.—As is well known, the juridical concept of *Falsum* expressly requires, in addition to the material aspect of the action,

Given the resentment and the personal attitude with which Mr. Jacobi has conducted all his literary disputes (of which there are not a few), it has long been assumed that he has a particular opinion of his profession. Since he has really tried to develop the quality of an appointed Grand Inquisitor toward me, I will indicate a means by which this quality could be combined with that of a scholar.

If, by the fact that I have dwelt for a long time on the most general principles, that from the beginning I have preferred to devote my diligence to the part of my system dedicated to the philosophy of nature—if thereby [36] any uncertainty or ambiguity could ever have arisen in regard to my convictions of the highest ideas—inasmuch at least as most are incapable of developing even the already existing seeds independently—I have removed this ambiguity in every respect with the treatise *On the Essence of Human Freedom*, written already three years ago. *Ignorance* (always a deplorable means) is here as *wrong* as the addition above (No. 7). Since in that treatise I have not only explained the concept of moral freedom, as well as that of the personality of the supreme being, but have sought to give them an objective foundation, *the least* that I can demand of Mr. Jacobi in regard to the accusations contained in No. 8 is the proof that the concepts in that treatise are not taken in the sense in which the common man, the natural human understanding, takes them, and that therefore, in truth, I have only sought through them to deceive and play games.

Here the question is not whether Mr. Jacobi considers those concepts and doctrines to be really justified by the principles developed there (which is of no consequence at all), but only *whether I have sincerely considered the former to be justified by the latter, and whether I had to do so*, since I am speaking here only of my inner conviction.

As long as Mr. Jacobi has not really proved what is demanded (what is called proving), the disgust naturally provoked by the odiousness of this unscientific attack, this attempt *to murder morally* the opponent's person, if it were possible—this disgust will remain in the breast of every honest man, without this being my fault. No man of honor will think of calling this act a

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the characteristic of *specific intent*. As soon as this characteristic is present, that concept is decided; it is not mere forgery, but falsification (*Falsum*).—In the *lege Cornelia* [Cornelian law] the present case is also definitely provided for: cf. LXVI, paragraph 2, *Dig. de lege Cornelia de falsis* [Concerning the Cornelian law on deceit]: "And also others who have made false entries in registers, public documents, or anything else of the kind, without sealing them, or, in order to prevent the truth from being known, have concealed or stolen anything, or made a substitution, or unsealed a paper, there is no doubt that it is customary for them to be punished with the same penalty [the Cornelian law]" [Book XLVIII, Title X (Concerning the Cornelian Law on Deceit and the Libonian Decree of the Senate), Paragraph 16 (*Paulus, Opinions, Book III*) §2, in S.P. Scott, *The Civil Law, Including The Twelve Tables, The Institutes of Gaius, The Rules of Ulpian, The Opinions of Paulus, The Enactments of Justinian, and The Constitutions of Leo*, 17 Vols. [ref. in Vol. XI] (Cincinnati: The Central Trust Company, 1932)].

literary disgrace, which I would not wish to do for the sole reason that it must seem doubtful whether an *act* can ever be attributed to a man who has so little power over himself.[19]

[37] With the foregoing explanation, I have fulfilled what I could seem to owe to external circumstances. If there I was in a sense compelled to respond personally to an unknown figure, from here on I stand as a scholar purely opposite the scholar. I am again in my own element: from now on I speak in a different tone, from a different standpoint, that of the freethinker, the independent, scientific researcher.

Since I have been compelled to stand up personally against a strange, indeed, to tell the truth, distasteful attack, the scholarly world cannot find it undesirable that I should use the occasion given me to argue fully with Mr. Jacobi on the subject of science, as has long been desired.

Being accustomed to use disdainful spitefulness and all attempts to stop me only for the higher and stronger development of science, I had not to be content with what was merely outwardly demanded, but to think of transforming what was meant maliciously into something good for myself and others at the same time.

To a certain extent, the public had a right to demand that such a conspicuous way of acting as that described in the previous section be made reasonably comprehensible to them. This could only be accomplished by a historical exposition of the relation which the opponent has always held to theism and science. This first of the following chapters will be devoted to this purpose.

A second good deed was made possible insofar as the opponent had interspersed his attack with individual scientific arguments, by means of which he partly wanted to defend his old, long-known opinion, [38] and partly to support his polemic against my philosophical assertions. By subjecting these to examination in turn, I had at the same time the opportunity to express myself indirectly on some of the most important scientific points, which will soon be addressed in a more serious and direct manner.

The third, and if successful, best work, was finally to help my opponent, after the public had been made properly aware of him, where possible to come to a more correct understanding of himself, an aim with which the third chapter will be primarily concerned.

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[19] It remains to be seen for what reason, administrative or otherwise, Mr. Jacobi, who in other circumstances distinguishes sufficiently between the person and the subject matter, refrained from expressing my name. To imitate him in this, I have found neither compatible with my straightforward manner, nor even in general: through me, he is confronted with a subject matter [i.e., my system], whereas through him, I am only confronted with a person. What would have been gained if, as he only ever spoke of the author of the philosophy of nature, I had only spoken of the author of *Woldemar*?

[…]

[54] 2. THE SCIENTIFIC

The first person who, in the course of pure rational research, was struck by the thought that a personal being might be the originator and ruler of the world as the all-reconciling solution to the great puzzle, was indisputably moved by it as if by a miracle, and was astonished to the highest degree. It was not only a bold idea, it was absolutely the boldest of all thoughts. Just as this thought gave everything a human significance, the first to discover it (if there ever was one) certainly had a completely human idea of this personal being. He certainly did not just sit back and relax, but went out under the open sky and asked all of Nature, the stars and the mountains, the plants and the animals, whether they would give him any information about the hidden, inscrutable One; or, he went into distant lands to search among unknown people, tribes and nations for signs or historical traces of this being.

But it was precisely he, who was led to this thought by scientific research, who had to recognize most definitely that the perfectly founded insight into the existence of this being could only be the final fruit of the most thoroughly developed, most comprehensive science.

This remains basically the case to this day. The reality of such a being and its relationship to the world are still the subject of scientific research.

[55] Even without taking into account the results of a so-called rational critique, which in other respects are false, it is clear from the ongoing dispute between, on the one hand, the prevailing theism, and on the other, naturalism, pantheism, and other systems, that scientific theism has not yet been found, or, if found, that it has in no way been recognized. For scientific theism can no more leave a contradiction outside itself than can God Himself, and just as God allows Nature and the World to exist without being dependent on them for His existence, so the true doctrine of God cannot be at odds with Nature, nor suppress any system. It must reconcile everything, just as God reconciles everything, and just as, according to some, in the most distant future, when God gathers all His works together again, Satan himself will appear before the throne of the Eternal in order to submit to Him with all his hordes, so before true theism, if only it appeared in all its perfection, even the most determined scientific atheist would have to fall down and worship.

It is mankind's duty to ensure that this faith, which until now has remained mere belief, is transfigured into scientific knowledge. Man should not stand idle, but grow in the perfection of knowledge, until he becomes like his archetype.

Whoever claims that this goal is not only unattainable now or in the near future, but that it is absolutely and intrinsically unattainable, deprives all scientific endeavors of their highest, their ultimate direction. From the moment that the object is taken away by which alone the human spirit is truly set *outside* itself and lifted above itself, the prophecy would be fulfilled that science recognizes nothing more than *ghosts*.

The scientific spirit is too stimulated in our time for such a doctrine, which strips man of his nobility, to announce itself with open freedom, as it did not so long ago. Even Mr. Jacobi, whose exultation at the supposed ignominious end of science through Fichte knew no bounds, feels that something more than his mere assertion is needed to prove such an opinion. But [56] where are the arguments to be found now?—In this distress, as once Samuel's spirit at Endor [1 Samuel 28], so now Kant's letter is conjured up from the dead. Mr. Jacobi assures us that Kant has *irrefutably* demonstrated the impossibility of arriving at a scientific understanding of God and divine things (p. 115). What is this assertion supposed to mean? It either means this: that the propositions, the conclusions by which Kant arrived at that conclusion are irrefutable; in which case Mr. Jacobi must declare the whole Kantian critique irrefutable, which not long ago he thought he could even refute himself. Or else it means only this: the result Kant had reached is irrefutable, even if his arguments are not. In the first case, it is nothing but a repetition of his own assertion in a different form; in the second case, nothing but an attempt to encourage himself by the great name of Kant.

After these cries for help, Mr. Jacobi finally decides to try some proofs from the treasure of his own wisdom, and indeed the scientific effort behind his latest work cannot be mistaken.

The arguments are partly direct, in that they logically demonstrate, from the nature of the proof itself, that a scientific knowledge of God is impossible; and partly indirect and only, as it were, instinctively defensive, in that by positing an absolute opposition between nature and God, and thus by similarly holding naturalism and theism apart, the latter is deprived of any scientific ground.

Knowledgeable readers will hardly find anything significantly new, no argument that has not already been put forward in one way or another and refuted directly or indirectly long ago.

No matter! We are glad that it is only a question of arguments, that it has at last become possible to drag that unscientific talk, which seeks to borrow a semblance of reason itself, before the judgment seat of science.

As we are ourselves compelled, by going through the individual arguments, [57] to express some things individually, we certainly expose ourselves to the possibility of new misunderstandings. But it is enough for me if, by discussing those arguments, only my *true* and *real* atheism—namely in

relation to the theism of my opponent, to which it relates as a true anti-theism—is put in the proper light.

The reader may be assured of finding in what follows the gist of the philosophical and dialectical wisdom of our author's latest work. Whoever compares it with the present exposition will not be able to deny that I have reproduced the proposed arguments faithfully, without distortion or misrepresentation, and that I have refuted them just as honestly and without falsehood.

The proposition cited at the beginning of each section, and otherwise excellent, is each time a literal excerpt from the latest revelations of Jacobian non-knowledge.

1) "The ground of proof [*Beweisgrund*] is always and necessarily *above* that which is to be proved by it; it *comprehends* it *under* itself; truth and certainty flow down from it to that which is to be proved; it borrows its reality from it as a fief" (p. 136).

This proposition, stated as a self-evident truth that requires no proof, provides the most profound insight into the author's logical and scientific concepts, which is why it has been appropriately placed at the beginning of all other propositions.

According to this axiom, the number 3 will in the future be regarded *as higher* than the number 9; for the number 9 requires the number 3 for its proof, it borrows its reality from it: 3 is therefore more than 9 and all the potencies resulting from it.

In geometry, the theorem that the longest side of a triangle is opposite the largest angle is higher than the Pythagorean theorem: the latter is below it, for truth and certainty flow from the former to the latter. It is true that Euclid placed it as if intentionally at the end of his first book to indicate that it is the culmination, as it were, of all that preceded it. But what does Euclid know about scientific form?—The theorem of the tenth book, that [58] there can be only five regular bodies, is regarded by the Ancients, as by Kepler, as the crowning achievement of all geometry.[20] But according to our logician, even the most trivial theorem belonging to the elementary principles stands *above* that theorem, because the former serves to prove the latter.

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[20] "Proclo non credidit affirmanti, quod erat *verissimum*, scil. *Euclidei operis ultimum finem,* ad quem referrentur omnes omnino propositiones omnium librorum (exceptis quae ad Numerum perfectum ducunt), esse quinque Corpora regularia" (*Joh. Kepleri Harmonice Mundi*, L. I). ["as (Ramus) knew that Proclus was a member of the Pythagorean sect, he did not believe him when he asserted, which was quite true, that the ultimate aim of Euclid's work, to which absolutely all the propositions of all its books were related, was the five regular solids" (Johannes Kepler, *The Harmony of the World*, trans. E. J. Aiton, A. M. Duncan, and J.V. Field [Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1997], 11).]

This axiom is certainly not abstracted from common experience or the method of all true sciences; rather, it is a true *a priori* proposition, which produces in all our views a reversal of the same kind as the Copernican system does in our views of the heavens.—Since, for example, in the construction of a house, I must of necessity begin from the foundation, and thus the foundation is the true *ground* of proof of a house, it is evident that we are mistaken in looking for the foundation *below*; for the ground is necessarily above that which is founded by it. To be sure, the words "ground" [*Grund*], "principle" [*Grundsatz*] and also the expression "establishing a truth" [*Wahrheit begründen*]—even the Latin expression *ratio sufficiens*—all these words point downwards, into the depths. In relation to them, the expression *ground of proof* used in the axiom is truly wooden iron [i.e., a contradiction in terms]. But language, as is well known, is usually governed by appearance, or by mere common sense, and the lofty paradox of the axiom is only rendered more spiritual by the *ground* of proof hovering in the air.

This new axiom, which might be called a true counter-argument of all *depth*, is, however, perfectly true to the doctrine given twenty-five years ago: we can only demonstrate similarities; all demonstration is only progress by way of identical propositions[21]; there is no progress from one term to another, but from the same to the same: the tree of knowledge never comes to flower nor to fruit; there is no development at all; there are only [59] general propositions and concepts, *among* which more particular ones are included as mere *applications*.

It is with concern that we now recognize the cause of our misunderstanding. We must confess that we were not acquainted at all with proofs based on concepts as such; that we had unfortunately not learned that subjective manner of philosophizing where the philosopher makes his own truth; that we had hitherto thought that the object of a true objective science was a real [*Wirkliches*], living thing [*Lebendiges*]; its progression and development a progression and development of the object itself; that the true method of philosophizing was ascending, not descending. This necessarily resulted in the exact opposite axiom: "The ground of development [*Entwicklungsgrund*] is always and necessarily *beneath* that which is developed; it sets that which develops from it *above* itself; it recognizes it as higher and, having served its development as a substance, as an organ, as a condition, submits to it."

2) The suggestion of the possibility of such an evolutive method does appear once—in the appendix (pp. 212, 213)—but only to be refuted. But the argument must first be propped up if it is to fulfill this function.

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[21] *Letters concerning Spinoza*, p. 225. [F. H. Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2000), 123.]

"I prove," says the author, "by *showing* the place or position that a particular part occupies in a particular whole." (Of course, everything is expressed here in a lifeless way, as a mere *showing* of what already exists, as if we were speaking of drawers, not of a living bursting forth of each part in the position and at the level where it is necessary.) "What does not belong as a part to a whole can neither be demonstrated nor deduced."

"Now, not only are all the parts, determinations, or predicates, taken together, equal to the whole which unites them in itself, and one and the same with it or the object, but for this very reason they *also necessarily present themselves as existing simultaneously with it* [60], so that objectively neither the whole can exist before its parts, nor the parts as parts of this whole exist before it."

From this it must be concluded that all proof is impossible, because everything to be proved must relate to that from which it could be proved as a part, a determination, or a predicate, but there is no true succession between the whole and the part, the condition, the predicate.

But this argument, put down on paper with visible effort, would prove far too much, in that it would follow from it the impossibility of all proof, and not only of scientific proof, but of all development without distinction.

Our great dialectician, who on p. 155 even shows, to my delight, his familiarity with an Aristotelian rule—has forgotten only one small stipulation in the proposition that all the parts must exist simultaneously with the whole, namely, that the parts can exist simultaneously with the whole both *implicitly* and *explicitly*. If he means the latter, his conclusion has the insignificant error of which he may remember having heard in logic under the name of *petitio principii*; but if he means the former, the nerve of the proof is lost.

It may be clearer for the author if we put it this way: his whole argument is based on denying that a whole can exist in a state of involution. According to him, every concept reaches its fullness immediately, the essence immediately snatches at the form, the unity at the totality. Now because the philosopher has his essence [*Wesen*] precisely in this middle, Mr. Jacobi does not understand how one can get in between. Certainly he speaks here from experience: it is indisputable that in this case Mr. Jacobi has lost the greater part of his philosophical understanding, and now, as the cunning fox in Aesop's fable, he wants to persuade the rest of us to discard this *useless* and *superfluous tool*.

Neither is there any foundation for the assertion that what is developed or what is to be proved must relate to that from which it is developed [61] or proved as a *part* to the whole. The most proximate relation is rather that between the implicit, undeveloped whole, and the explicit whole, divided according to its individual parts. However, in the latter, precisely because it is an explicit whole, the part can be determined only by its relation to another part, and not by virtue of its being in the whole, otherwise this second

(objective) whole would not be truly distinct from the first (the subjective whole).—Here, however, it is important to find the *beginning*, which Mr. Jacobi has not found throughout his life, and, as will become clear from the following, could not find at all.

3) The following argument (p. 136), which hits the nail on the head, refers again to axiom No. 1.

"If it were possible to prove the existence of a living God, God Himself would have to be deduced from something that can be explained, derived, [and] developed as if out of His own principle, from something that we would be able to conceive as His ground, and which, therefore, would be *before* and *above* Him. For the mere deduction of the idea of a living God from the nature of the human faculty of knowledge leads so little to a proof of His true existence that, on the contrary," etc. (this last point is given to him and willingly conceded).

To be *before* another and to be *above* him are synonymous terms for the author: he joins both propositions calmly with an "and." It is the confusion of priority and superiority already criticized in the *axiom*.

This proposition, too, can again be reversed to its exact opposite, namely that "the existence of a living God is demonstrable precisely because this living existence develops itself from a necessary ground, of which we necessarily become aware, and which in this respect is *before* and *below* the living existence, and is therefore also to be developed from it."

"Horrible!" exclaims our philosophical divine scholar: to hear us say that the living existence of God, or God Himself as a [62] living being, presupposes a *ground* from which He first develops—that He is, as it were, only an effect, only a soul of the whole.—Just keep calm and the matter will be explained! If only the divine scholar would realize that this ground is again God Himself, but not *as* a conscious, intelligent God, and at least *this* terrifying thing would disappear. God must have something before Him, namely *Himself*, as certainly as He is *causa sui*. *Ipse se ipso prior sit necesse est*: if these are not empty words, God is absolute.

Admittedly, this idea is not compatible with the concepts of a vapid theism that allows no distinction in God, that describes the being in whom all fullness dwells as an utterly simple [concept]—completely empty, lacking substance, only just *tangible*. Nor should it be compatible with them.

To make it clearer for the attentive, well-meaning reader, I add the following. The deepest, most hidden thing in God is what the philosophers call aseity. It is that which is unapproachable in Him, which conceals love and goodness. But is this aseity God Himself, God in the eminent sense? How could it be, given that all deeper thinkers agree that, *in and of itself* (in the undeveloped state), it [aseity] leads no further than to the concept of a Spinozist substance?—Or is this aseity already consciousness, i.e., the

conscious God? Can Mr. Jacobi, for instance, conceive of an aseity having consciousness?—How little has he looked into this sacred depth!

4) "There can be only two main classes of philosophers: those who allow the more perfect to emerge from the less perfect, to develop gradually; and those who maintain that the most perfect is first, and that everything begins from it, that the origin and beginning of all things is *not* a nature of things, but a moral principle, an intelligence that wills and acts with wisdom: a Creator—God" (pp. 149, 150).

In this main proposition, too, which I confess, if found true, would make all scientific theism impossible, the teacher of our time has left out much that requires closer [63] definition, and which a philosopher by profession, who has practiced this profession almost from childhood, should not overlook.

This will be most clear if I reproduce the proposition with the necessary remarks added to the text, printing what belongs to what Mr. Jacobi, as is appropriate, in italic type, and what belongs to me, with the exception of a few words, in ordinary type.

"Some claim that *there are only two main classes of philosophers*. The first, they say, allows *what is more perfect to develop and rise from what is less perfect*."

"But you should make two subdivisions here. First, there could be those who allow the more perfect to rise from a less perfect [being] *that is independent of it and different from it*. There are no such philosophers to be found, however, who have strayed so far into absurdity. There are, however, such philosophers, not a few of whom are still insignificant, who allow the more perfect to rise *from what is less perfect in it*. There is nothing absurd in this. For thus we see every day that through education and development a man who is ignorant becomes a man who knows; that a man works his way up out of himself as a youth, the youth out of himself as a boy, and the boy again out of himself as a child, which are all less perfect states. Not to mention that nature itself, as those who do not lack the necessary knowledge know, has gradually risen from lower and more confused creatures to more perfect and well-formed ones."

"*The other main class* [*of philosophers*]," however, those who spoke first again assert, "distinguishes itself by teaching that *the most perfect is first*," but it makes the mistake of not saying whether it is [first] *actu* or *potentia*, first *in fact* or *merely in ability*; for the latter is also asserted by the others, whom this class nevertheless wishes to contradict. For the most perfect—that which has the perfection of all things in itself—must *necessarily* be *before all things*. But the question is whether [64] it was first *as* the most perfect, which is difficult to believe for many reasons, if only for the very simple one that, possessing in reality the highest perfection, it had no reason to create and bring forth so many things, through which, unable to attain a higher degree of perfection, it

could only become less perfect. But this does not contradict the fact that that which was first is *precisely that which* is the most perfect—just as when someone, to give only an approximate analogy, who says that Newton is the most perfect geometer, does not mean that he was already so as a child, and yet does not deny that *the Newton* who was the child is the same *Newton who* is the most perfect geometer."

"*This other main class* [of philosophers] further *asserts*, contrary to the first, as it thinks, that *the origin and beginning of all is not a nature of things*. But those of the first class do not mean this either, if the 'nature of things' is understood to be an *external* nature in relation to God. They only maintain that the nature of the *being* [*Wesen*] *itself* which extends through creation necessarily precedes this being, and that this nature cannot be of one kind with this being itself, but rather must be different from it in respect of its *attributes*. As, for example, if it were said that the actual nature [*Art*] of the being [*Wesen*] consists in love and goodness, so the *nature* [*Natur*] of this being, which is inseparable from it, and which this being to a certain extent presupposes, could not also consist in goodness and wisdom, because otherwise there would be no difference; in it there must therefore be a lack, at least of self-conscious goodness and wisdom, or it must be mere strength.[22] [65] But [the claim] that there is something in God that is *merely* force and strength cannot be disconcerting, provided one does not claim that God is *only* this and nothing else. Rather, the opposite should be disconcerting. For how could there be a *fear* of God if there were no strength in Him, and then how could He Himself, with all His wisdom and goodness, exist without strength, given that strength is precisely existence [*Bestehen*] and, in turn, all existence is strength? Where there is no strength, there is also no character, no individuality, no true personality, but vain diffuseness. We see this every day in people without character. And just as well, indeed better, can the old saying be reversed that without strength even the highest goodness would never be elevated to majesty. It is not for nothing, it might be added, that holy books speak so much of God's force and the strength of His authority."

"But once a strength, that is, *something that is mere nature*, must be admitted in the supreme being, the question then rises as to which *came before* the other: do they believe that goodness and wisdom came first, and that strength was then added to them, or do they believe that, conversely, strength came first, and was then tempered by wisdom and goodness? And if they must find the latter [hypothesis] far more plausible, as they ought to (unless they are

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[22] "Nature of itself exercises neither wisdom nor goodness, but everywhere only power; it is what works without freedom, without knowledge and will; in it alone the law of powerprevails. But where wisdom and goodness are lacking, and only the law of power prevails, there is, says an old saying, no true sublimity, there is no majesty: Sine bonitate nulla majestas!" (Jacobi, *Von den göttlichen Dingen*, pp. 167–168).

too incapable even to rise to such thoughts), they will probably also have to admit that it was what has been and has not ceased to be from the beginning, i.e., the very first existing being—certainly not a nature of things, which would be something merely external and not belonging here at all—[but rather] *the nature of the being itself*, which has evolved out of itself to the *actu* most perfect [being]. But those who have remained novices in philosophy all their lives, and who have never arrived at the right concepts, however much they have snatched at them, do not arrive at such determinations at all."

"Thus these same philosophers also constantly oppose the first ones: *the beginning of everything must be a moral principle* [66], but they omit to specify whether it is an *actu* or merely *potentiâ* moral principle, whereby they gain that those who are wiser than they are, stand as if they posited an absolutely blind being, as it were a stone or a block, as the beginning. For even the moral being, in order to be just such and to distinguish itself as such (in which the act of personality consists), must have in itself a *beginning of itself* that is not *moral*.[23] But the beginning of itself, which a moral being has in itself, is already *potentiâ* or *implicite* moral, and not an absolute opposite of freedom or morality."

But as far as what that so-called other main class of philosophers further says, namely that "*the origin and beginning of all things* (of intelligence itself as well?) *is an intelligence that wills and acts with wisdom*," we have already answered with the question inserted in the words just cited. Since they believed themselves to be at the deepest level, they have hardly penetrated below the surface. Let them only ask themselves, if they understand so much, whether an intelligence, as *intelligence*, can rest so purely and simply *on itself* (that is, *exist* as pure intelligence), considering that *thought* is the very opposite of *being*, and is, as it were, as thin and empty as the latter is thick and full. But that which is the beginning of an intelligence (in itself) cannot in turn be intelligent, since otherwise there would be no differentiation; nor can it be purely non-intelligent per se, precisely because it is the possibility of an intelligence. Thus it will be a mediator, that is, it will act with wisdom, but as it were with an innate, instinctive, blind, not yet conscious wisdom, just as we often see enthusiasts acting: they speak sayings full of understanding, yet they do not do so with reflection, but rather as if by inspiration.

"Those others (of the second main class), who are too idiotic to understand these things, become quite indignant when they realize [67] that those who are knowledgeable accept a non-intelligent principle as the lowest and deepest of intelligence, and are full of annoyance when they realize that they cannot arrive anywhere at reality with their enlightened God. They cannot utter a word when they are asked how such a strangely confused whole as the world (even if it has been put in order) could have arisen from such a

[23] To be distinguished from *immoral*.

completely clear and transparent intelligence. Full of anger at this, they begin to scold those of the first class as deniers of God, and put the thumbscrew on them that they should confess that they are atheists, and are only lying when they speak of God."

"So it is with those *two main classes of philosophers*, where, however, it would be far more correct to say that one is the class of philosophers, and the other the race of wretched and ignorant sophists."

In this paraphrase of Jacobi's propositions, I have thus explained my... *naturalism* openly and, as it seems to me, clearly enough for the deeper-thinking reader. To *this* atheism I confess. Let him who can refute it come, and I will face him.

Our divine scholar cannot be expected to do this. If he could only suspect such things, he would have long since been troubled by more obvious questions, e.g.: "How is it that the Old Testament came before the New, since in his opinion the most spiritual is always what comes first? Why did God reveal Himself *much earlier* in the former as an angry and zealous God—more hidden than manifest[24]—and generally displayed more physical characteristics, but only found it good to reveal His highest spiritual characteristics explicitly to the human race not yet two thousand years ago?"

5) "There are only two systems, naturalism and theism: both are incompatible, and can in no way exist together or balance each other out."—This proposition sums up the substance of the entire polemic so well that it would be unnecessary to cite any single passage.

[68] Therein—in this supposed irreconcilability, which all half-heads must passionately assert, because this is the only way their half-headedness can exist—lies the main reason for the ruin of theism and the main source of all real atheism.

True theism cannot but be divine itself, and therefore, as already remarked, can exclude nothing, suppress nothing. These are the saddest theologians, who want to prescribe to God the way in which He alone can be God, as it were, namely, when He has nothing of a nature in Himself. They consider God to be just as limited as their own narrow-minded ideas, and defending their pathetic theism, they give themselves the pretence of fighting for His glory.

Naturalism, even if it is not equal to theism in terms of dignity, is nevertheless completely equivalent to it as far as reality is concerned, i.e., it has to satisfy the same requirements. A theistic system that excludes the explanation of nature does not even deserve its name, because without a definite concept of the relation of God to nature, the concept of God remains

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[24] "Nature hides God," says the divine scholar on p. 189, not realizing that according to this only the hidden God can be.

uncertain. All knowledge of the divine nature, however, remains quite incomplete, since the mere science that a being exists without recognizing anything of its effects or relations is the most deficient knowledge of all.

Naturalism *can* only recognize the existence of theism to the extent that it is satisfied at the same time as the latter. Indeed, according to the simple principle that everywhere and in all knowledge one must progress from the lower to the higher, that the lower must first be comprehended before one can presume to comprehend the higher, naturalism has even earlier claims to the genuine philosophical system than theism.

Our teacher says: there are only these two systems, so he really recognizes them as two, i.e., each as something. He grants them the same indestructibility, and yet—naturalism alone should fall silent, and allow itself to be rejected by a highly incomplete theism, [69] a theism *in name only*, which does not even satisfy its own purpose. It is precisely through this—through such a powerless and yet exclusionary theism—that the living, never-ending source of a scientific atheism is kept open. This atheism deserves and wins respect because it basically fights only for the interests of science. No compulsion is good on the long run.

Whoever imagines the equal indestructibility of both systems clearly enough must immediately recognize that they must be reconciled in some way, even if this cannot be done by *making them into one* [*Einerleimachen*], as our supposed divine scholar imagines, but only by a connection not unlike that which takes place between body and soul, or, in general, between the lower and the higher.

Incidentally, in asserting such a living connection between the two systems, I do not mean by naturalism any system relating to external nature, but *the system that asserts a nature in God*.—Without this, no system is possible which asserts *consciousness, intelligence, and free will in God*, as I have shown in the previous proposition. Thus I have also proved that naturalism (in the sense just defined) is *the foundation, the necessary antecedent* of theism.

From this it is evident that, if it is in the interest of these two systems to enter into that living relationship, the interest on the side of theism is even greater than on the side of naturalism. The latter can at least still begin on its own, and to that extent exist, even if it cannot end on its own, cannot transfigure itself into something higher, for which it longs as intimately as does nature itself. Theism, on the other hand, cannot even begin without naturalism; it hovers completely in the void, where it is no wonder that no wing of knowledge reaches to it, that we are really only engaged in a faint grasp for it: this is what Mr. Jacobi wants to suggest to us under the title of presentiment, of longing, of feeling, as [70] the most perfect way of becoming certain about something. Just as the God of this theism hovers in the void, so He is also inwardly empty; there is nothing in Him that is solid, definite: in a word, no

nature, in the sense in which a man is said to be a strong, a capable, a healthy nature. This being [*Wesen*], inseparable from the longing and feeling of the individual, and for which even the concept is too strong, too objective, must be guarded from all the air of science out of tender care that it may be blown away by it. Hence the fear of science, the explicit statement: if God were known, He would no longer be God; the fear of any real vitality [*Lebendigkeit*] of God: if this vitality were to become clear to our divine scholar today, he would be as frightened by it as he would be by a ghost, because such a vitality cannot be conceived without a physical ground.

Precisely this opposition, which is offered to us once more as the last legacy of the previous age, was the great error of this whole epoch of education, in that through the complete separation of theism from all naturalism, and conversely of naturalism from all theism, it became necessary to posit at the same time *an unnatural God and a godless nature*. Only together do they produce a living being. The question can only be: how and in what way can they be brought together? Modern theism, which thought it could start from the most spiritual concepts, sought in vain to get from God to nature. It had no choice but either to deny the existence of the latter (which was attempted in idealism), or to ignore it, or, which is just as convenient, and which wants to say the same thing, to withdraw into non-knowledge about it, as our divine scholar does.—There is no way from theism to naturalism; that much is clear. It was time to turn naturalism, i.e., the doctrine that there is a nature in God, into the basis, the *ground* of theism's development (and not something higher than [theism]).

This necessary idea first came to fruition in our time through what is therefore called [71] the philosophy of nature, the doctrine of all-unity, or as Mr. Jacobi otherwise wishes to call it.

Now as to how this can happen—he does not understand this scientific process, just as he does not understand many other things, and for this very reason should not worry about it, or even complain about it.—The gold of divine knowledge is not found on the wet way of idle tears and pointless longing; it is only won in the fire of the spirit.

6) "One has only the choice of assuming that the absolute is a *ground*, or that it is a cause. Naturalism claims that it is a *ground* and not a *cause*; theism, that it is a *cause* and not a *ground*" (p. 169).

The answer to this is that there is absolutely no choice here, that the absolute is *both* ground *and* cause, and must be thought of as both.

Since our teacher denies only the first, we have only this to prove.

God, or more precisely, the being that is God, is *ground*—and in two senses which must be distinguished. In the first sense, He *is* ground—namely, of Himself, insofar as He is a moral being. That every intelligence must have a beginning of itself in itself, a beginning that is non-intelligent, has already been

shown on the occasion of the fourth proposition. But God also *makes* Himself into the ground by making that very part of His being with which He was previously active [*wirkend*] subject to suffering [*leidend*]. "The external creation," says J. G. Hamann, "is a work of the greatest humility"; the most spiritual teachers unanimously regard creation as condescension. How can God condescend but by making *Himself*, namely a part (a *potency*) of Himself, the *ground*, so that it is possible for the creature to exist and for *us* to have life in Him? But at the same time He makes Himself the ground of His own *self,* since it is only insofar as He subordinates this part of His being [*Wesen*] (the non-intelligent) to the higher part, that He lives with it free from the world, *above* the world (according to the Jacobian expression, [72] as a *cause*)—just as man only truly transfigures himself into intelligence, into a moral being, by subordinating the irrational part of his being to the higher.[25]

It goes without saying that such views are not for those who assume a God who is finished once and for all, and therefore truly inanimate and dead: there would be nothing more to say in this regard than that they should be content with the common concepts and not get involved in the business of philosophizing.

What is said here is also applicable to all the different variations of that "either/or" (this whole polemic is only an eternal repetition), e.g., on p. 175, where one assertion (that of naturalism) is expressed as follows: "the Absolute *is* (!) only the substrate of the conditioned," where substrate means as much as *ground*.—It is, however, certain that *neither* assertion, taken in isolation, can explain the existence of the universe.

In this regard it is worth noting that, if our great teacher appears to have recognized the equal objectivity of both systems in the foregoing, he (on p. 176) again wants to explain subjectively the "never to be eradicated" antagonism of both, quite simply on the basis of the simultaneously sensual and rational nature of man! Such a statement can arouse nothing but real pity.

All these "either/or's" are cut off by the first principle of the so-called philosophy of nature. Had the only wise man of our time learnt to understand even this, he could have spared himself all his polemic, and would not on all occasions where he touches on the opposition, e.g., on p. 170 (where the "either" is as untrue and tasteless as the "or") and on p. 177, where he wants to speak of freedom and necessity, have even miserably missed the mark.

7) "Do not call God the infinite being, says Plato, for existence resists the infinite; it is essentially without essence [*wesenlos*].—[73] Call Him the one

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[25] See the *Stuttgart Seminars*, in the previous volume [SW VII], p. 429 and 433 ff. Editor's note. [Schelling, *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory*, trans. Thomas Pfau (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 203–204 and 206 ff.]

who gives the measure, in whom the measure originally is; say: He Himself is the measure" (p. 14).

This passage from the earlier essay (*Concerning a Prophecy by Lichtenberg*) is one of those statements that *are pleasing to the ear*, because one thinks that what one is hearing is correct, and yet there is no seriousness in it, as one immediately finds oneself back on the old wrong track.

If the wise man of our time had only learnt to understand the *single* statement: existence resists the infinite, and had he seriously endeavoured to place a true *finitude*, that is, something *negative*, in God, all this quarrelling would have been unnecessary. But this is frightening to him because of the emptiness of his abstract concepts, which are in no way different from the well-known concepts that God is *ens realissimum*, *actuosissimum*. On p. 164, he again assures us that everything *apart from God* is finite—in God, therefore there is no finitude.

As long as the God of modern theism remains the simple, purely essential [being], but which in fact is a being without essence, which He is in all recent systems; as long as a real duality is not recognized in God, and that the affirming, expansive force is not opposed by a restricting, negating one; as long as the denial [of the existence] of a personal God is [taken as a sign of] scientific honesty, the affirmation of His existence will indicate a lack of honesty, which a *truly* honest man like Kant deplored so much in these matters.—As for the thought that he [Jacobi] considers necessary, no one can be responsible for it, and when one is incapable of thinking something, one should not presume to be able to do so. Fichte, according to our mutual teacher (on p. 116 and 117), was honest enough to say: "To attribute consciousness and personality to God is to make Him a finite being; for consciousness and that higher degree of it, personality, are tied to limitation and finitude." Why does Mr. Jacobi not emulate him, since to him a personality of God must not only be incomprehensible (he admits this), but *unthinkable* as long as he does not recognize a *nature*, a negative principle in God? One may assert this, inasmuch as it is not individually, but generally and intrinsically impossible to think a [74] being with consciousness that has not been constrained by any negating force in itself—as generally and intrinsically impossible as it is to think a circle without a center. To be unable to think something and to deny its existence are, indeed, two very different things.

Why, then, does Mr. Jacobi pretend to be the only one still holding the personality of God, he, who *denies* the very principle in God by which alone personality is possible, and whose God must be an entirely subjectless being?

All consciousness is a concentration, a collection, a gathering, and a bringing together of oneself. This negating force of a being, which goes back

to itself, is the true force of the personality in it, the force of selfhood, of egoity.[26]

Until, therefore, our teacher recognizes such a force in God, or until he recognizes *the absolute identity of the infinite and the finite*, an identity which is such a great annoyance to him when it comes to the philosophy of nature, and of which he has always spoken only in relation to the creature, without even there showing any special understanding of it—until he understands this identity *in God Himself*, he should refrain from instructing others that they should not call God the *Infinite*. Until then, he should not expect us to concede to him even a *concept* of the personality of God, and to regard *what he says* about it as anything more than nonsense.

Now that it has been shown by the previous arguments, according to the opinion of our teacher, that only *either* theism *or* naturalism can be accepted, the following proofs will make it clear that the higher cannot be derived or developed from the lower, and that the divine, the true, and the good cannot be derived or developed from the natural.

8) "That the things in the world are—or will become—*good*, says Aristotle, cannot be caused by fire or earth or anything of the kind, and those philosophers themselves (who hold the All to be One, adds Mr. Jacobi) could not have believed this" [75] (p. 147). (From this it will be concluded later that those *stagger* who do not posit a moral cause as the beginning.)

For the time being, we will leave aside Aristotle, and how he is actually to be understood, in order to come to terms with a much greater thinker.

He *talks* a lot about a *power* of the good and, following Plato, claims that God is the origin and *power* of the good. Now power is unthinkable without something against which it is power. Thus the good itself demands something against which it can express power, and which in this respect is necessarily—not exactly evil, but nevertheless—the non-*good*. Only by transforming and ennobling this non-good in itself, by ennobling it, by making it good, does it reveal itself as the good in itself, as the *power* of the good. This is also what Plato says in the passage quoted—not that God produces the good, but that He produces *that which is better*.

Where, then, does the non-good, without which the good could not *exist* and reveal itself as the good, come from? Does Mr. Jacobi want to derive the origin of the non-good from the good? In this case, the good, i.e., God, would not, as he says, be the origin and power of the good, but the origin and power of the non-good.

Thus, if this non-good cannot be *produced* by the good, it must necessarily be as eternal *in its own way* as the good itself. And because the good

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[26] Cf. *loc. cit.* [SW VII] p. 419 and p. 436, pp. 439–40. Editor's note. [Schelling, *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory*, 196–97 and 208–209, 210–212.]

cannot *create* it, indeed cannot possibly truly *will* it, the good can only *find* it, in the same way that we only *find* it (in ourselves); and so the non-good is *already there* when the good arises.

But because this non-good is not a *real* but a *possible* good, something that can be transformed into the good; because it thus contains the good as a possibility; because, furthermore, the non-good is not itself that which is [*Seyende*], but only the ground of *that which is*, namely of the good (which has the [ground] *in itself* as the beginning of itself): thus we can say that not only the original principle [*Erste*], i.e., *that which is* before all things, is the good, but also that *which in itself is not* [*das nicht selber Seyende*], which [76] has the good in itself as its own ground: it is an inner or hidden good, a possible good. Thus in every way the good is the beginning and the original principle.

I do not suppose that my opponent understands these words, which for his sake I did not wish to make clearer. I now turn to Aristotle, whose passage from book XIII of the *Metaphysics*, as quoted by Mr. Jacobi *against* me, is actually in my favor.

"Even for the experienced scholar," so reads that passage in Jacobi on p. 148, "the relation of the good and the beautiful to the original elements and principles is difficult. Whether there is something in the latter that we may call the *truly* good (Aristotle here does not omit this absolutely necessary determination), or whether it is not contained in them, but arose later—this is the difficulty. Among present-day theologians, it seems, this question is considered settled: they answer the first hypothesis in the negative, and maintain *that only in the course of the development of the nature of things do the good and the beautiful* ***appear***" ("appear" and not simply "become," as our philosophical theologian interprets it. According to this, it would be nothing less than inconceivable that Aristotle meant among these theologians the very *Plato* whose equal Mr. Jacobi would like to become, but who, notwithstanding the eternity of the archetypes, asserts *precisely* what Aristotle says here, who likewise accepts the existence of a primeval chaos—the mere concept of which is a scandal for our theologian—and who even allows the *nature of things* to arrive, only later, from an earlier state of disorder to the present perfection of their organization (*ἐς τὸν νῦν κόσμον ἀφικέσθαι*).—"They (those theologians) do this for fear of a *real* difficulty that stands in the way of those who accept the One as the *original beginning*. This difficulty, however, does not lie in the fact that the good is attributed to the original beginning *as being present with it* (and not as *being* it), but rather in wanting to make the One (that which truly is, the good as such—*simultaneously*) the *original beginning* (what we have called above only the beginning of [77] the good in itself), and to make the original beginning (furthermore) the original matter, and the many the *product* of the One (deriving it from the One)": what poses the difficulty, therefore, is precisely what is constantly recurring in Jacobi's sermon, namely that the One, the good and

wise in itself, is also the *beginning of all things*, the *original beginning*; that the One is also *actu before* the many. In short, the difficulty is what still now constitutes the cross of philosophy, to which Mr. Jacobi has been nailed along with many others.

Following this explanation, everyone will probably find it advisable for *our* theologian no longer to deal with the *old* theologians. They are well over his head; let him instead try his hand with us lesser ones!

9) "We cannot imagine ourselves as a living thing belonging to the non-living, a light kindled by darkness, an absurdity, crawling out of the unintelligent [*dumm*] night of necessity, of chance. We cannot imagine, even by straining our wit madly, *that life came out of death*, that the latter only gradually came to think of the former, as unreason gradually came to think of reason, nonsense of an intention, chaos of a world" (p. 98).

It would take pity on a stone to see how miserably Mr. Jacobi, *his* wit really madly *straining*, presents the opinions of his opponents. Our theologian is an unmistakable master of refutation by mere presentation, by altering and exaggerating features, first to make them tearful, then grimacing, and finally hideous. No one has ever even thought of the matter as he presents it here, much less asserted it. These are true *aegri somnia*.

Does the witty man find the opposite so natural, namely, that death comes out of life? What could possibly move the living to create the dead, if indeed God is a God of the living and not of the dead? It is absolutely more conceivable that life emerges from death—which, of course, cannot be an absolute death, but only a death containing life within itself—than the other way round, that life descends into death, loses itself.

[78] For our theologian, being and life, non-being and death, are also synonymous things. As he says (on p. 158): "The God of theism calls forth being from non-being." Thus we would be a living thing *crawling out* of the unintelligent night of non-being, our life would really have come from death. In line with his principle, our divine scholar would have to say that the God of theism calls forth non-being (the empty being of things in the world) from being (His own being).

The same applies to light and darkness. He seems to find it more conceivable that light begat darkness than that, conversely, light arose from darkness. No one has ever said that darkness *kindles* light (although there may be an unexpected meaning in this), but the most basic experiment of rubbing metal or grinding stones to obtain fire shows that darkness contains fire within itself.—Even the Mosaic story of creation, which our enlightened theologian, following Herder, explains as an allegorical representation of morning—as a kind of panorama of sunrise—is completely alien to the idea that darkness comes from light.

My real opinion, which I affirm openly, is that all life, without distinction, starts from a state of envelopment, because in relation to the subsequent state of its development and unfolding, it is like a dead and dark seed before it is lowered into the earth.[27]

I even maintain, contrary to all Jacobian logic, that even in *thinking* and *research*, it is possible to arrive at so-called clear concepts, but not to *start* from them, because one remains inevitably stuck with them. Usually they are so clear, and so emptied of substance, that it is impossible with them to arrive at what is actually dark, i.e., the real. Rather, I believe that the healthy, natural, and *therefore the only fruitful* course of thinking and research is to move from dark concepts to clear ones, from darkness to light, from the chaotic material and mixture of thoughts [79] through gradual determination to order and lawful development.

Non fumum ex fulgore, sed ex fumo dare lucem.[28]

This (I repeat it here too) is the way of the true artist—and also that of God.

According to the philosophy professed by our perfectly clear theologian, the Deity behaves in creation like the sun, which first *makes* clouds then gathers them; according to the philosophy that is an abomination to him, like the sun that divides clouds *that already exist.*[29]

We conclude with the most sublime result that has been reached for this time by Jacobian philosophizing.

10) "There is indeed a *knowledge* of the supernatural, of *God*, and of divine things, and indeed this knowledge is what is most certain in the human spirit; it is an *absolute* knowledge, arising immediately [*unmittelbar*] from human reason—but this *knowledge* cannot take the form of a *science*" (p. 152).

This confession, hidden in a note, together with the appended distinction, must seem strange to all faithful admirers and the few followers of Mr. Jacobi. They will ask where the non-knowledge so praised and accepted *utiliter* by them has gone, and where the ingenious principle has gone: "a God who could be *known* (of whom therefore there can be *knowledge*) would be no

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[27] See the already cited work [*Stuttgart Seminars*, in SW VII], p. 441. Editor's note. [Schelling, *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory*, 212].

[28] "Non fumum ex fulgore, sed ex fumo dare lucem/cogitat, ut speciosa dehinc miracula promat" (Horace, *Ars poetica* 143-144) [Not smoke after flame does he plan to give, but after smoke the light, that then he may set forth striking and wondrous tales]. Horace, *Satires. Epistles. Art of Poetry*, trans. H. Ruston Fairclough (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1926), 463. DOI: 10.4159/DLCL.horace-ars_poetica.1926. Trans. note.

[29] This too is a truly Platonic doctrine.—Anyone who has only a smattering of Plato on the basis of the Latin translation, or who has become acquainted with him from the translation of Stollberg, even of Kleuker, and for a few years now from Schleiermacher's (not yet completed) translation, should not take the liberty of talking about Plato.

God at all,"[30] as well as many other similar doctrines, e.g., that "all philosophers wanted to *know* the true, not knowing that if the true could be known by man (i.e., by human reason), it would have to cease being the true, in order to become a mere *creature of* [80] *human invention*, *of the imagination and cultivation of insubstantial fictions*,"[31] or even: "with his reason (the same reason from which now arises *an absolute knowledge* of God, the most certain thing in the human spirit?) man is not given the faculty of a science of the true, but only the feeling and consciousness of his ***non-knowledge*** *of it*: the ***intimation*** of the true."[32]

But if the beloved admirers also admit the apostasy [*Abfall*] from non-knowledge, which until now had been asserted mainly with regard to God, on account of the fact that it only appears in a note—like proper waste [*Abfall*]—and because therefore they hope that this new knowledge is never expressed in the *text*, that it never rises to the text; if, furthermore, they recall the subtle distinction made between knowledge and science, how are they to bring the latter part of the assertion into harmony with the statement also found in a note (p. 35), that "the generally non-philosophical (!) Trinitarian belief in God, nature, and personal spirit, must also become philosophical *in the strictest sense*, confirmed in *reflection* (i.e., in *science*, surely?)"? As you can see, the confusion of ideas is not small, and the various parts of the stitched-together book diverge on all sides.[33]

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[30] *Jacobi to Fichte*, x. [F. H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel* Allwill, trans. George di Giovanni (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 500. Translation slightly modified.]

[31] *Jacobi to Fichte*, 26. [Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings*, 513. Translation slightly modified.]

[32] *Jacobi to Fichte*, 28. [Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings*, 513. Translation slightly modified.]

[33] On p. 8 of the preceding essay [i.e. Jacobi's *On Divine Things*], we also read: "For those who do not see God, nature is irrational." But already on p. 177 nature is again said to be irrational.—There we read: (admittedly only in the note on p. 34): "the understanding in *isolation* is materialistic and irrational: it denies the spirit and God. Reason in *isolation* is idealistic and unintelligent: it denies nature and turns itself into God. The whole, undivided, real and true human being is *both* intelligent and rational; he believes undividedly and with the same confidence—in God, in nature, and in his own spirit."—Setting aside all other peculiarities, a unification of the understanding and reason is recognized here, which, because both, according to what is said on p. 177, relate to each other as naturalism and theism relate to each other, also implies a possible union of these two doctrines. But between these two, according to what is said on p. 150 (in-text), "no rapprochement, still less unification into a third [doctrine] in which they balance each other out." In the face of reason, even the understanding only retains the right—to remain silent.

The author's annotations relate to his own text as some commentators do to the texts of others. We might almost recommend, if it could help, that in the future, since he seems to be running out of text anyway, he should write notes without text—*only* annotations.

[81] Mr. Jacobi asserts that there is an unconditional knowledge of God—most likely a *personal* knowledge—which springs immediately from reason. In this I cannot agree with him, and in so saying my teacher proves me right, he affirms far more than I ever demanded. The pure, immediate knowledge of reason can only be a knowledge by virtue of its absolute law—a recognition of the *contradiction,* or of the *absolute identity of the infinite and the finite,* as the highest. This recognition is indeed also a knowledge of God to the extent that the essence of that absolute identity is *implicitly* already God, or, to be more precise, the *same essence* that transfigures itself into a personal God. But it cannot be called a knowledge or recognition of the personal God. Nor have I ever presented it as such, but expressly declared the contrary.[34]—I posit God as first and as last, as alpha and as omega. As alpha, however, He is not what He is as omega; and insofar as He is God *sensu eminenti* only as omega, He cannot also, as alpha, be God in the same sense, nor, strictly speaking, can He be called God,[35] unless it were explicitly said that He is the *still undeveloped* God, *Deus implicitus*, while, as omega, He is *Deus explicitus*.

An immediate knowledge of a personal God can only be a personal knowledge, based, as every [82] knowledge of this kind, on contact [*Umgang*], real experience. But this does not fall within the jurisdiction of philosophy. It is not, as I have already said, the business of reason, and it is hardly what was meant by Mr. Jacobi, who, by the way, mixes up all these concepts.

But precisely this existence of God as a personal being is the proper object of *science*, and not only from a general point of view: rather, it is science's highest, ultimate object, the *goal* of all its striving, for which it has always strived, and which it has now *reached*, precisely thanks to that philosophy which our good man—Mr. Jacobi—accuses of atheism, and just when he (who would hardly be able to find an intelligent meaning to these words: *knowledge* of God cannot develop into a *science*, but, on the contrary, knowledge must develop *starting from* science) wants once again to tear it away from [science's] eyes.

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[34] See the treatise on *The Essence of Human Freedom* in my *Philosophical Writings*, Bd. I, p. 505. [p. 412 of the previous volume [SW VII]].

[35] In the first exposition of my system (*Zeitschrift für speculative Physik*, Bd. II, Heft 2 [4]), to which I have to refer again and again, I refrained from calling the absolute identity, insofar as it had not yet evolved to the point mentioned above, God, as anyone can convince oneself through his own observation. It was only in later, less rigorous presentations that I departed from this, because I was concerned about no further misunderstandings on this point.

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Reviewed by Francis K. Peddle

James Bradley was an Anglo-British philosopher who spent his professional career teaching at Memorial University of Newfoundland from 1988 to his untimely death from cancer in 2012. Though his written output is not as substantial as many of his contemporaries, he has nonetheless achieved, through reputation and a fecundity of ideas, something of an iconic status in the idealist community in Canada. Dominican University College awarded him an honorary doctorate posthumously. This collection of essays, long time in the making and edited by his protégé Sean J. McGrath, will be the litmus test for the staying power of Bradley's speculative philosophy in the coming years. The Bradley Memorial Lectures or the James Bradley Lectureship, which began at Memorial University in October 2012, is an ongoing annual event, or at least it was until the beginning of the pandemic.

The ten essays in this volume (hereafter *Essays*) are ordered chronologically from an early essay on F. H. Bradley in the 1980s to "Philosophy and Trinity," published in the *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* in the year of his death. Bradley's "path to the Trinity is the theme of this book," and

the editor uses this as his criterion for inclusion in the collection.[1] There is an extensive introduction by Sean J. McGrath, a preface by fellow Memorial University philosopher Peter Harris (1931–2018), and a postscript by Bradley's friend Helmut Maassen. Together the contributions by Harris and Maassen add some poignant personal touches to Bradley's character and *modus vivendi*. There are two appendices: Appendix A is "James Bradley's Tables of Triads and Trinities," which will be critically examined later, while Appendix B is a very helpful "Complete List of James Bradley's Publications." Overall, the manuscript is in good shape, with few errors and inconsistencies. Thankfully, Edinburgh University Press tolerates the use of footnotes instead of mandating irksome endnotes.

In contemporary philosophy the term *speculative* has no particular meaning. Tracking from crass materialism to various amalgams of the cult, it is suspiciously eyed, usually dismissively, by professional philosophers in the Anglo-American world. There are philosophers who present technical definitions of the term, see G. W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (¶ 82)—but for the most part, you would have to be in a sustained and careful dialogue with a speculative *aficionado* to garner its special meaning and associated clusters of concepts and motivations. It is clear that Bradley likes the term *speculative*. He infuses it with much significance and force. It is therefore incumbent upon us to discern its basic underpinnings in his philosophy. I take Bradley's understanding of "a strong theory of existence," and his trinitarianism (in a non-confessional, non-theological sense), to be the fundamental hallmarks of his speculative philosophy. There are many other closely aligned ideas in Bradley's work, but if you want the basic pivots, these two orientations cannot be argued away or buried in the foibles of the history of philosophy.

James Bradley's Big Four: F.H. Bradley, Alfred Whitehead, C.S. Peirce, R.G. Collingwood

Bradley wrote his doctoral dissertation on F. H. Bradley's (no relation) "theory of feeling," which he takes as the illuminating portal into the latter's absolute. His basic interpretation of the British Neo-Idealist is that if such considerations as a "non-relational continuum" and the "historical-critical" are understood in light of a metaphysics of feeling, then the philosopher's particular brand of neo-idealism would have had much more traction in

[1] Sean J. McGrath, "Introduction: James Bradley's Path to the Trinity" in *Collected Essays in Speculative Philosophy,* by James Bradley, ed. Sean J. McGrath, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 7.

twentieth-century philosophy.[2] Privileging relations over substances is the non-Aristotelian game plan of much of contemporary philosophy, both speculative and analytical (or, indefinably, neither). Some well worked out recent examples of this privileging are Peter McCormick's *Relationals: On the Nature and Grounds of Persons,*[3] especially chapter 5 "Speculative Relations" under the heading "Persons and Relations," and *The Metaphysics of Relations*,[4] especially Jeffrey Brower's "Aristotelian vs. Contemporary Perspectives on Relations."

The theory of feeling in F. H. Bradley, as maturely expressed in "On Our Knowledge of Immediate Experience," in *Essays on Truth and Reality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914), is a way of creating a post-Kantian subject–object identity that dispenses with the transcendental "I" and Hegelian dialectical logic. For Bradley's speculative philosophy, this approach to the older Neo-Idealist does not inform his later thought in any significant way, except insofar as it is a springboard into a post-idealistic metaphysics that is still fundamentally speculative without being a speculative materialism (Quentin Meillassoux), a transcendental nihilism (Ray Brassier), or a blogger's world of pan-psychist metaphysics. Bradley would probably have some sympathy with Gilles Deleuze's view of the basic task of philosophy as impeding stupidity.

Jump ahead to a few years after his doctoral work, and Bradley finds much to advance his own thinking in Alfred Whitehead's process philosophy. The twin themes of "self-realisation" and the "temporalizing" of time, i.e., radical novelty, occupy chapters 2 to 4 of this collection. If the notion of the temporalizing of time sounds like a bloated pleonasm, then it is not. Much of twentieth-century philosophy hinges on the irreducibility of time. So much for it being Plato's moving image of eternity. Hence, time becomes principally "event time" that must privilege time-concepts or orientations. Time is not to be explained in terms of a contrasting eternity, or somehow constructed or synthesized out of non-temporal elements. Bradley's preferred term here is *event-concepts*. This is as much the philosophical agenda of Heidegger as of Wittgenstein. In Whitehead, event-concepts are "occasions," while Heidegger's term is "*Ereignis*." Bradley himself finds more hefty philosophical fare in the work of Whitehead. Event-concepts follow the theme of radical novelty.[5] Unpacking the implications of this for the self-repudiating tendencies of modern philosophy is the crux of chapter 2, "Whitehead, Heidegger, and

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[2] Bradley, *Essays*, 49.
[3] Peter McCormick, *Relationals: On the Nature and Grounds of Persons* (Kraków: Copernicus Center Press, 2020).
[4] See Anna Marmodoro and David Yates, eds., *The Metaphysics of Relations* (Oxford: University Press, 2016).
[5] Bradley, *Essays*, 52.

the Paradoxes of the New."

Bradley uses the contrast between Whitehead and Heidegger to reveal his far greater empathy toward the metaphysics of the former than toward the "wholesale repudiation and destruction of the entire enterprise of philosophy" in the anti-metaphysics of the latter.[6] I take Bradley's philosophical motivation to be basically soteriological. He wishes to "save" philosophy from its pervasive self-destructive tendencies in the twentieth century, hence his allegiance to a strong or positive theory of existence and its associated structures in triads and trinities, which he buttresses through rich re-interpretations of Whitehead, Peirce, and others that reveal their often-hidden speculative reams of gold. Ultimately he must, like all speculative philosophers, maintain that only his version of "speculative philosophy" can do this saving. The last chapter in this collection, "Philosophy and Trinity," is his remedy, his final *apologia*: "With this, I rest my case for speculative philosophy."[7]

The much-neglected metaphysics of Whitehead, though not as neglected as Bradley would lead us to believe, is a thoroughgoing re-working of the nature of metaphysics in terms of radical novelty. How it does this is one of the more substantive projects in Bradley's speculative philosophy, and hence the importance of chapter 2 in this collection. The paradoxes of the new, though some would certainly quibble with their newness, take the familiar conceptual form of self-defeating propositions, like "all is relative," or "all is self-realizing," or "all is new." I would call the internal logical contradiction in these statements "soft paradoxes." They are not new, are easily sidestepped, and are definitely not what Bradley is talking about. The radical novelty of the anti-metaphysicians reduces all conceptual or logical abstraction to a deeper immersion in unrepeatable and unique content, variously described as "occasion," "event," "process," or "clearing." Radical novelty cannot be brushed off by logical fiat. If so, then philosophy cannot save itself. "There is only literature now." The harder paradox in this situation is that there cannot be literature either, or history, or sociology, with its ever-shifting identities of social constructs. Even Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* is not the end of literature, or grammar, or communication, or comprehensibility, or everything. There is, after all, a popular Chinese translation to refute those who thought any translation of *Finnegans Wake* impossible. For Bradley, Whitehead provides a way out of the whole unsettling mess with an "analogical algebra" of the new.[8] Analogical relations between categories and the empirical world constitute the power of a scheme, and such schemes are inherently speculative.[9]

The categorical, the mathematical, the schematic, the coordinate, the

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[6] Bradley, *Essays*, 53, 59, and especially 76–81.
[7] Bradley, *Essays*, 263.
[8] Bradley, *Essays*, 59.
[9] Bradley, *Essays*, 67.

methodological, the logical, the patterned, the general, are all retained in Whitehead's "algebraic method."[10] Radical novelty in Whitehead does not put an "anti" in front of all of the foregoing, but asks the oft-asked question, "How do the categorical and the empirical stand to each other?"[11] For the Whiteheadian process philosopher, empiricism is all- inclusive and unlike anything the tradition has served up—from the givens of classical British empiricism, to the reconstructed indeterminate immediacies of the idealists, to the lived experience of the phenomenologists.[12] Whitehead bows sufficiently to the philosophical tradition of rational connection and structure—i.e., to Platonism (after all, he said that all of Western philosophy is a footnote to Plato) for Bradley to make him instrumental to his speculative project. Is this enough? Clearly not. Speculative philosophy has to deal not only with the schematizing or generalizing of categorical thought processes, but with the ever-nebulous individual. In fashionable rejections of the philosophical tradition anti-metaphysicians always grumble about the cavalier, or veiled and unintentional, dismantling of the individual.

This is where polyadic propositional functions come into play. Imaginative generalization uses analogy to functionally coordinate the experiential by using words to correct each other. Whitehead's analogical algebra is thus the meat and potatoes of speculative philosophy, which is elaborated on extensively by Bradley in chapter 4, "The Speculative Generalisation of Function: The Key to Whitehead." Contemporary philosophers usually picture relations as polyadic. There are one-place or monadic properties and there are multi-place or polyadic properties. At least some of the latter are not reducible to the former. For a good contrast, see, Sydney Penner, "Why Do Medieval Philosophers Reject Polyadic Accidents?" in *The Metaphysics of Relations*, mentioned above. Analogical algebra dissolves the "Hegel–Heidegger disjunction," according to Bradley.[13] In other words, "the true speculative proposition" transcends the "mutual inversions of univocity and equivocity" so prevalent in the philosophical tradition by means of the "analogical proposition of schematic analysis."[14] For a luxuriant treatment of the speculative proposition in Hegel's philosophy, see Jeffrey Reid, *Hegel's Grammatical Ontology* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021).

Chapters 3 and 4 should be read as further elaborations on the foregoing themes in F. H. Bradley and Whitehead. One of the key considerations for speculative philosophy is "non-relational unity." Bradley recognizes, although tantalizingly does not develop, the importance of internal

[10] Bradley, *Essays*, 59–63.
[11] Bradley, *Essays*, 63.
[12] Bradley, *Essays*, 95.
[13] Bradley, *Essays*, 70.
[14] Bradley, *Essays*, 70.

versus external relations for the whole enterprise.[15] I will take up this issue later in Bradley's treatment of triads and trinities. It is not really helpful to articulate the concept of internal relations in terms of monism, which Bradley himself implicitly acknowledges.[16] Whitehead's "many-to-one" analysis of relations is definitely a counterthrust to Russell's doctrine of asymmetrical serial relations that for contemporary philosophy is the paradigm of external relations. The bottom line is that philosophy cannot be speculative unless it deals with absolutes, and absolutes cannot be absolutes unless they have a developed theory of internal relations. It is Whitehead who successfully brings together, or speculatively melds, the idealism of F. H. Bradley and Russellian empiricism.[17]

The other basic concept in all of this, and one that is fundamental to Bradley's own philosophy, is "self-actualisation." Hegelians could be forgiven for having to go over old ground on this score. The "activity of actualisation" is self-explanatory.[18] A strong theory of existence requires that absolutes, such as God, substance, spirit, love, feeling, cannot have anything derived from outside themselves. Weak theories of existence are always in some sense episodic and thus susceptible to the externally derived. As one tries to piece together the common threads in these *Essays*, the thought frequently comes up that if Bradley had developed a coherent and transparent theory of internal relations, coupled with a quadratic capping off of his secularized trinitarianism, the case for speculative philosophy would have been considerably advanced. As things stand in these *Essays*, there is far too much of an *embrouillement* in specific philosophers and issues in the history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century philosophy to reach common ground on what might be, in all its purity, Bradley's speculative philosophy. This might bode well for future research agendas, but speculative philosophers tend to wrap themselves more around finality than never-ending revisionism.

A good example of this problem is Bradley's comment:

> that the hitherto unrecognised significance of A. N. Whitehead resides in the fact that he fuses together a speculative philosophy of activity and logical analysis by drastically reinterpreting the nature of mathematical function and redefining the self-explanatory in terms of the applicability of descriptive adequacy of his functional analysis to the nature of things.[19]

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[15] Bradley, *Essays*, 85–86, 93.
[16] Bradley, *Essays*, 93.
[17] Bradley, *Essays*, 93– 98.
[18] Bradley, *Essays*, 100.
[19] Bradley, *Essays*, 100.

It is not possible to unpack the significance of this without a thorough immersion in Whitehead and his reworking of mathematics in terms of de-quantification and the relevance of this for the task of speculative philosophy. Bradley clearly wants to use "function" and the "concept of mapping" to flesh out the self-explanatory.[20] This is a thoroughly relational exercise. But what kind of relation? And how are these functionally shifting relations to be anchored? Most of Bradley's language, and critical shibboleths are aimed at what he sees as traditional failings in the history of speculative philosophy, such as getting caught up in the search for "grounds," or dialectical straitjacketing, or over-universalizing things like declaring the "fact of absolute freedom," which is Whitehead's aside.[21] Unfortunately, Bradley seems to suffer the fate of most speculative philosophers from Plato onwards. Their tantalizing ideas and wide-eyed insights only hint at the glories to come. James Lowry's *Mentaphysics* and *Spirit of the Ages* is one of the few examples in the speculative tradition of a no-holds-barred, finished system.[22] Lowry and Bradley knew each other, but there was no interaction between them. Canadian philosophy, especially of the speculative variety, is definitely not a seamless dialogue. Leslie Armour's and Elizabeth Trott's *The Faces of Reason* could certainly use an update.[23]

The next big piece in the puzzle of Bradley's speculative philosophy centers on triads and related concepts of trinities and triune events. This is first taken up in chapter 5 of this collection, "Triads, Trinities, and Rationality," constitutes pretty much the core of the remaining five chapters. I see the chief task here to be one of drawing connections between Bradley's rich discussion of triads and trinities, and his strong theory of existence discussed in chapter 7, "What is Existence?" The basic question of rationality, and speculative philosophy, is the intelligibility of the triadic principle of order or "the triadic order of order."[24] Any rational determination of order involves at least two terms and their relation. Whether the relation is prior or subsequent to the determination of the terms or variables, is irrelevant at this point of the inquiry. Generally, though, a theory of internal relations would make it prior, while a theory of external relations would make them subsequent. Relations can be given. They can be imposed. A relation can be a process. It can be a product. It can be a tool. Relations construct and de-construct. They can also be thought away, e.g., non-relational unities, or the first hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*.

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[20] Bradley, *Essays*, 104.
[21] Bradley, *Essays*, 111.
[22] See James Lowry, *Mentaphysics: The Life of Spirit as Love* (Ottawa: Ailouros Inc., 2020) and *Spirit of the Ages* (Ottawa: Ailouros Inc., 2020).
[23] See Leslie Armour and Elizabeth Trott, *The Faces of Reason* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1981).
[24] Bradley, *Essays*, 116.

Is there some system in which relations can be self-explanatory? Or is there no such system, and relations must be simply accepted as inexplicable givens? For Bradley, these are the ultimate questions of speculative philosophy.[25]

There are a number of thought-directions fundamental to the speculative consideration of ordered triadicity, activity, and the self-explanatory. Bradley lays this out in an orderly fashion in chapter 5, "Triads, Trinities, and Rationality," especially at *Essays*, 117–123. There are five key orientations identified on these pages. Abstractly put, they are: (i) activity;[26] (ii) the principle of reason; (iii) self-explanatoriness;[27] (iv) the investigative;[28] and (v) seriality.[29] Wedged between (iv) and (v) is an even more revealing summary. The "speculative" with respect to these orientations relies on a "creedal" acceptance of the "hypothesis of reason"; furthermore, it constructs "the most inclusive description possible of the nature of things."[30] The speculative orientation being developed in these passages is anti-foundationalist and fallibilist, i.e., sorting out the ordering principles in the speculative orientation embedded in the modern context of an excruciating sensitivity to historicity, experientiality, and self-referentiality.[31] This is no small task, and I am not sure if, at the end of the whole encounter in these *Essays*, we will be able to hold on to some modicum of finality.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 are profitably read as a unit. There is considerable conceptual, as well as textual, overlap, but they do provide us with key taxonomies and basic markers for any speculative undertaking in philosophy. I use the term *marker* deliberately in this context because Bradley is keen on avoiding conceptual grids and logical bracketing. The struggle is to integrate a dynamism into contemporary speculative philosophy without irreparably burdening it with historicism, relational functionality, or unmanageable algorithmic processes. This is why he likes abduction, ablative activity, the triune event, and the agapeic community.[32] Equally, this is why he is attracted to the "presuppositional or fiducial version of historiology" described in R. G. Collingwood's work.[33] Each one of these thought-orientations should be further unpacked and developed into a more comprehensive speculative narrative, which appears to be precisely what Bradley was doing before his untimely death, according to his friend and now also deceased colleague Peter

[25] Bradley, *Essays*, 117.
[26] Bradley, *Essays*, 117.
[27] Bradley, *Essays*, 118.
[28] Bradley, *Essays*, 119.
[29] Bradley, *Essays*, 121.
[30] Bradley, *Essays*, 119.
[31] Bradley, *Essays*, 120.
[32] Bradley, *Essays*, 145.
[33] Bradley, *Essays*, 226.

Harris.[34]

The penultimate chapter on R. G. Collingwood in this collection is the longest and most extensive consideration of the quartet of F. H. Bradley, Whitehead, Peirce, and Collingwood in the pantheon of James Bradley's favorite philosophers and predecessors to his speculative project. The focus is on the metaphysics of absolute presuppositions, which is as it should be in any speculative philosophy. The analysis is primarily on Collingwood's *An Essay on Metaphysics*, first published in 1940. This is viewed by Bradley as the culmination of Collingwood's speculative work. In a section entitled "Faith, Reason, and Metaphysics in Collingwood's Writing,"[35] he lays out the five phases in the development of Collingwood's thought that led to *An Essay on Metaphysics*. The key to the whole undertaking is the "creedal rule thesis."[36] These are rules of faith or trust that historically manifest themselves in absolute presuppositions. Reconciling, at some level, philosophy and its history was Collingwood's chief intellectual goal, see, *An Autobiography* (1939). The conceptual mechanism he used to intertwine philosophy with its history is embedded in the distinction between relative presuppositions, which can be propositions and absolute presuppositions that cannot be propositions. To go on about empirically verifiable propositions à la A. J. Ayer or Karl Popper may excite the fancies of episodic thinkers, but such propositions have no application to, or significance for, metaphysical claims. What, then, do absolute presuppositions actually do if they hover indifferently above neither empirically true nor false statements? Bradley's answer, enmeshed in his discussion of Collingwood's view of the Trinitarian Creed as the fundamental presupposition of science, is to be found in "The Theory of Absolute Presuppositions."[37] Apart from the arcane discussion of "consupponibility,"[38] the whole issue boils down to all of us, in one form or another, subscribing to "first-person performative rules of faith or trust."[39] Consupponibility is simply a way of imagining absolute presuppositions concurrently and not as deductions from one another. The only proviso is that the implications of such imaginings must be compatible with the implications of the others. Philosophically uncovering creedal rules through a historical enquiry into our philosophical and scientific cultures will reveal standards and guides "for thought and practice."[40] Much of Bradley's discussion, and Collingwood's as well, is here a not too disguised Kantianism, with metempirical creedal rules

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[34] Bradley, *Essays*, xvii.
[35] Bradley, *Essays*, 216–221.
[36] Bradley, *Essays*, 221.
[37] Bradley, *Essays*, 205–216.
[38] Bradley, *Essays*, 214–16.
[39] Bradley, *Essays*, 206.
[40] Bradley, *Essays*, 206.

taking on "regulative" powers and serving as delimiters for a critique of relative propositions. They are the ultimate "defence against heresies" that would in the normal course of philosophical discombobulation be the invalid rules of faith of empiricists, dogmatists, sceptics, logical atomists, and perhaps even misologists.

It is now time to turn to Bradley's previously mentioned *apologia* for speculative philosophy. "Philosophy and Trinity" first appeared in *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Philosophy*[41] in 2012, the same year as his death. As Socrates taught us, any good defense is only to be found in a strident charge across the enemy lines. Who are the enemies of speculative philosophy? Analytic philosophers, empiricists, materialists, religious dogmatists, and other speculative philosophers are the easy targets. Bradley's favorites are descriptivists, weak theorists of existence, and algorithmic elites. The latter can be particularly dangerous for the body politic. In "Philosophy and Trinity," the adversaries coalesce around the banderole of "naturalistic philosophy" and its legends of algorithmic functionaries of "meaning" and their weapons of "deflationary" relations. Not to overdo the polemics, but such naturalism can result, in Bradley's view, in nothing other than a contingent view of history. My PhD thesis under J. N. Findlay is on the historicization of modern thought, so this is a theme that has long been in my DNA. It is the pervasive subtext in Bradley's speculative philosophy that cries out for considerable exfoliation.

With Lutheran fortitude, Bradley presents us with ten theses. Tantalizingly, he calls them "bizarre," but I take this as an innocent aside in the sense that any defensible philosophical claim should have an element of wonder in it. There are two hypotheses, presumably absolute presuppositions, or creedal rules, that lurk behind the ten theses. The first is the hypothesis of reality, or the assertion of a mind-independent nature outside of us. The second is the hypothesis of the reality of universals, or the indefensibility of nominalism. The first three theses are a critique of naturalistic philosophy and its many sub-themes in modern thought. These three theses are a propylaeum to the formal defense of speculative philosophy.

Bradley's formal defense of speculative philosophy starts with the principle of reason, which stands at the head of the fourth thesis, and which undergirds the remaining theses. There is no need here to constrict the meaning of reason. It merely exhorts us to search for explanations. He clearly views the hypothesis that "nothing is without a reason" to be at the very core of the speculative mindset.[42] Formulaic or sufficiency arguments do not and cannot exhaust the principle of reason. Bradley is happy to make it an

[41] Bradley, "Philosophy and Trinity," in *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 16.1 (2012): 155–177.
[42] Bradley, *Essays*, 250.

"inference to the best possible explanation."[43] This is a nod to the abductivists and the fallibilists and fits well with the creedal rules of the mode of speculative enquiry. More so, it is an excellent counter to contingency, which in itself cannot be a self-explanatory principle. The latter is also an indispensable part of the speculative toolkit. The fifth thesis is an elaboration of explanatorist theories. It should be read primarily as a clarification. In this sense it is not really a thesis at all. Bradley's chief enemy here is the explanatorist descriptivism of Schopenhauer, masquerading as speculative philosophy, not unlike Nietzsche's will to power or Bergson's *élan vital*.

Bradley's sixth thesis presents a typology of "principles of actualisation."[44] It needs be conjoined with the seventh thesis, which is also taxonomic. Western thought is dominated by reflections on triunity, from Plato's *syntrisi*; to Hegel's dialectical-speculative metaphysics; to Peirce's triune ontology of firstness, secondness, and thirdness; to Heidegger; to Collingwood's Trinity. This is indeed a large canvas. Speculative minds immediately want to know why there is such a prevalence of triadic thinking? Is it one of those creedal rules that is itself creedal? If triadic thinking is unavoidable, then does it really matter whether I believe in it or not? The seventh thesis is Bradley's attempt to address this issue. He comes up with three historical camps. First, there are the supra-rationalists who declare that the triune tradition is not susceptible to intelligible explanation. The Pseudo-Dionysius and Eriugena are good examples. Second, there are the rationalists who describe the triune disposition on the psychological analogy of mind—as in, for instance, Aquinas, Hegel, or Lonergan. Third~~ly~~, there are the "explicabilists" who say all things are intelligible, but intelligibility need not be identified with mind or rationality. The focus in this camp is on activity~~,~~ as spontaneous and free albeit relational and teleological.[45] Duns Scotus and Schelling dwell in this realm of abductive movement that is a knowable, but non-conceptual, approach to experience.[46] Theses eight through ten are an elaboration of this third camp as a theory of dynamical and inexhaustible infinity.

Bradley's theory of self-actualization starts with Peirce's principle of firstness. It is "a syncategormatic infinite of real or dynamical potentiality that is always greater than any determination whatsoever."[47] To this friend of speculation, Peirce's activity is very much the thought-world of modern existentialism, with its wholesale inversion of the classical Greek view of the priority of actuality over potentiality. In this writer's view a prioritized

[43] Bradley, *Essays*, 251.
[44] Bradley, *Essays*, 255.
[45] Bradley, *Essays*, 257.
[46] Bradley, *Essays*, 258.
[47] Bradley, *Essays*, 258.

immersion in the potential entails more dangers than its subordination to the actual. A developed theory of "quadraplicity," as hinted at in Plato, Hegel, and others, is a response to Bradley's explanatory unity of realism and constructivism that he sees as the hallmark of modern speculative philosophy.[48]

In theses nine and ten the aforesaid unity is developed in terms of "communicative actualisation" and the "agapeic community." The former involves the give and take of sign and interpretant, while the latter finds expression in the motivations of unconditional concern and self-donation. The speculative tradition—with its luxuriant reflections on freedom, spontaneity, activity, event ontology, and historicity—ultimately and perennially refocuses itself on communicative self-actualization and agapeic love. In a sense Bradley's defense is a movement back from the triune into a dyadic dynamism where "being as communication is love as unconditional giving or donation, unconditional concern *(agape)*."[49] One might waver on whether this is the better outcome for the West's overinvolvement with the triadic; nevertheless it must be said that Bradley has certainly forced us to stand back from the triune event and reflect on the virtues of a dyadic or quadratic dynamism.

Two Postscripts on German Idealism and on the Fallacy of Irreformability

A postscript is necessary with reference to the relation between Bradley and classical German philosophy. If one were to rank the priority of influences on Bradley's relation to the "big four" of classical German Idealism, it would be Schelling, Kant, Hegel, and Fichte —the last of these being non-existent. It is the late Schelling of the philosophy of revelation, and the Berlin lectures of the 1840s, that holds the most weight for Bradley. Sean J. McGrath has written extensively on this in *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling: The Turn to the Positive*.[50] Kant's critique of classical metaphysics is the starting point for Bradley's project of developing a distinctively contemporary speculative metaphysics. Hegel is undoubtedly there in Bradley's philosophical outlook and lurks menacingly in the back-staging. Bradley's interaction with German Idealism is polychromatic, sometimes elusive, and at other times maddeningly simplistic.

First to Schelling. McGrath's introduction to this volume with its many references to Schelling is the best place to start.[51] I cannot say I am particularly

[48] Bradley, *Essays*, 259.
[49] Bradley, *Essays*, 261, see also 145–48.
[50] See Sean J. McGrath, *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling: The Turn to the Positive* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021).
[51] See especially Bradley, *Essays*, 14–15.

enamoured with the nomenclature of "metaphysical empiricism."[52] This is an *indicium* of a fallibilist metaphysics that allows for and learns from new experiences. It is ultimately traceable to the critical philosophy according to Schelling. This in turn opens the door to an "explanatory metaphysics" that contemplates a unity of realism and constructivism that Bradley believes lies at the core of modern speculative philosophy. Schellingian metaphysical empiricism is transformed by Bradley into the speculative project and that project has made its peace with the historical consciousness especially in the form of the historicity of Collingwood's absolute presuppositions. Bradley's post-idealistic working out of speculative philosophy is through the alembic of the late Schelling's positivism.

There are numerous indications in these *Essays* that Bradley's basic philosophical *nisus* is more Kantian than Hegelian. Unconditionals are as much a part of Bradley's agapeic community as the noumenal presuppositions of Kant's sourcing of the apex of human reasoning in the regulative power of reason. This is not to say that Bradley thinks speculative philosophy in its current incarnation should concern itself much with transcendental conditions. Though Kant is usually seen as occupying a period in Western thought that is pre-historiological, when compared to Hegel, the late Schelling, and especially Collingwood, the critical philosophy was crucial for modernity in steering attention toward an ablative, scientifically revisionary approach to experience, albeit one based on a transcendentally unifying grid of *a priori* categories. These categories are, however, constitutive and not deductive in the older sense of a rationalistic realism. As constitutive they always leave open the horizon of possible experience. Indeed, a transcendentally based modal category of possibility could be said to be Kant's most basic presupposition, not supposition, and as such and surprisingly the critical philosophy is potentially the most historicistic of German idealisms. One can only surmise how far Bradley would wish to push Kantianism on this point, but it nonetheless shows that in terms of the modern speculative project Kant has more to offer than Hegel, who hammer locks history into philosophy in an altogether overly necessaritarian manner.

It is evident that Bradley does not think Hegel's reconciliation of concept and object as a univocal relation is able to deal with the new and its paradoxes in the way Kant's approach to experience is able, or even more so, in accordance with the late Schelling's explanatory, revisable metaphysics.[53] Bradley says things about Hegel that would make any knowledgeable Hegelian squirm, though it would be most unfair to say that he has only a superficial acquaintance with the German Aristotle. Bradley characterizes Hegel variously

[52] Bradley, *Essays*, 9.
[53] Bradley, *Essays*, 58.

as a necessitarian, a rationalist, or a conceptual determinist. Nahum Brown's *Hegel on Possibility*[54] effectively undermines these conventionalisms. Any respectable Hegelian can make short work of any one-sided appellation or designation. This includes working within the Hegelian system to account for the novel in the face of the pre-determined. One does not get the sense in Bradley's work that he has struggled mightily with Hegel, though there are many detectable Hegelianisms in these *Essays*, especially those that cluster around the idea of self-actualization and its many related subtexts. This is somewhat surprising, for Hegel fits all the criteria for irremovable inclusion in Bradley's speculative philosophy: a strong theory of existence, Christian trinitarianism, a self-explanatory principle, triads and triunities, and the rise of a modern historical consciousness thoroughly entwined with the philosophical consciousness. Are Bradley and Hegel reconcilable? Or should one even bother? Hegel is rarely today taken seriously as a metaphysician. As a speculative philosopher in his own technical sense of the term, Hegel is only thought of as illuminating certain unities at a specified level. A good example would be his consideration of measure in the larger *Logic* as the unity of quality and quantity in such areas as the science of chemistry of his day. As for Fichte's absolute "I," I can find no reference to it these *Essays*.

The second postscript centers on the issue of "the fallacy of irreformability."[55] It must not be assumed, Bradley warns us, that speculative philosophy is irrevocably wedded to this or that theory of the real. This resonates well with moderns but not with more traditional speculative philosophers who cannot let go of bracketing logical structures or "ordinations," as Bradley would say. One can only lament that Bradley never wrote his chapter on speculative theories of ordination.[56] The fallacy of irreformability may not be a fallacy at all because being irreformable is what the speculative often strives to be, especially in its critical capacity of sending just about everybody to reform school. A paradox of the new overlooked by Bradley is surely that the irreformability of reformability, or the converse, is baked into the self-explanatory ultimates of speculative philosophy.

Finally, and in the context of speculative reformability, there is the question of Bradley's contribution to Canadian philosophy and whether it adds anything distinctive to the brand. This may seem a bit out of place given that Bradley is an intellectual cosmopolite and British *émigré*. Like all of us, his education is readily disclosed in his writings. What matters to him may seem parochial to many, a curious emanation from an outpost of the empire in faraway Newfoundland. Furthermore, he did not write anything that can be explicitly construed as characteristically Canadian in political or social

[54] See Nahum Brown, *Hegel on Possibility* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).
[55] Bradley, *Essays*, 172.
[56] See editor's note, Bradley, *Essays*, 172.

philosophy. Nonetheless, if you let these *Essays* sink into your soul, you will see and feel that this philosophy and this country go together quite nicely.

Bradley is British-educated and continentally oriented in a pan-European-based worldview. How does his brand of thinking find its place in the present Canadian mosaic? The best place to begin to answer this question would be to read, or reread, Leslie Armour and Elizabeth Trott's *The Faces of Reason*, a volume that begs for a post-World War II sequel. Canada has long traditions of idealism and neo-idealism. It had its importations during the 1950s to 1970s of analytical and linguistic philosophy, much of which was foreign to many of the country's traditions. Then came certain revivals on the "continental" side that Bradley rightly notes were equally inimical to speculative philosophy. Today there is a broad embrace of many sub-specialties, reflecting the currents of the day, and drawing instrumentally, and indifferently, from the different in-flows of multiple schools and traditions. Few self-identify as speculative philosophers. Making large claims, or drawing extravagant depictions of all things human and divine, does not resonate well in our institutional and professional environments, which is to be expected.

I would, however, suggest that there are some themes that may help Canadian philosophy restore itself to its cosmopolitan roots in a more unified way and thus secure some of its more particular cultural inclinations. Bradleyan speculative philosophy fits well with our anti-dogmatism and general agapeic tolerances. Self-donation is a national virtue. Others see us this way and so we see ourselves. With multiple languages and cultures now finding surer footings in the Canadian mosaic, the idea of communicative self-actualization fits well with the ideals of an agapeic community. Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* uniquely reconciles individual and collective rights, or at a very minimum provides a civilizing forum for their reconciliation. This is something that is not generally found in other nations and their constitutions. Bradley's work brings together European and American philosophers—in a way that few others have successfully articulated or similarly provided us with transparent guideposts and touchpoints. Canadians have always found themselves dangling precariously between the American and European divide. Now they have a philosopher they can work with who is unburdened by either of these traditions and yet remains a champion for a novel speculative philosophy flourishing in a country where the unconditional concerns of country and citizen for one another know no bounds.

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