

## **“Idea”: The Genealogy of the Word from Kant to Schelling<sup>1</sup>**

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Idealism, Schelling writes in the *Freedom* essay, “is the soul of philosophy; realism is the body.”<sup>2</sup> The two cannot be separated, whether their relation is one of enfolding or an unfolding in which, as Schelling says in renouncing “mere progression,” there is no evolution without involution.<sup>3</sup> To be sure, despite his departure from Fichteian idealism, the early Schelling often elides this involution. For in work that includes *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (1797/1803), *The System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800) and *On University Studies* (1803), he still tries to see what he calls the real and ideal sciences<sup>4</sup> in a relation of synchronicity. Thus as he writes in another text from this period, the “Introduction to the Outline ... or The Concept of Speculative Physics”: “If it is the task of transcendental philosophy to subordinate the real to the ideal,” it is the task of the philosophy of nature “to explain the ideal by the real”; the two are “one science, differentiated only in the opposite orientation of their tasks.”<sup>5</sup> To be sure, Schelling’s earlier work cannot be homogenized into a night in which all cows are black, since even at this point he produces multiple “introductions,” “outlines,” and “ideas” for a system of philosophy. Indeed *The First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature* (1799) already discloses a tangled, auto-

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<sup>2</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations Into the Essence of Human Freedom* (1809), trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 26.

<sup>3</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, *The Ages of the World* (1815), trans. Jason M. Wirth (Albany: State University of New York press, 2000), 83.

<sup>4</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, *On University Studies*, trans. E.S. Morgan, ed. by Norbert Guterman (Athens: University of Ohio Press, 1966), 10-13, 59, 103-4. The real sciences are empirical or positive sciences dealing with the finite and with particulars, or having a historical element; ideal sciences such as philosophy deal with ideas and principles. The title *On University Studies* is a loose translation. The correct title, since Schelling is not talking about the institution of the university, is “On the Method of Academic Study.”

<sup>5</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, “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” (1799), in *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Keith Peterson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 194.

generative nature that cannot be easily synchronized with spirit and that provides the “real” basis for Schelling’s middle work, which has been of interest to contemporary theory. Nevertheless the “Introduction” written shortly after tries to fit what Hegel will describe as this “Proteus” of nature that is so “refractory to the unity of the notion”<sup>6</sup> back into the philosophy of identity, granted that it requires an “invasion of nature ... through freedom” to bring this about.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, nature in the early Schelling is conceived in terms of forces and potencies, which is to say that this radically ungrounded subject-less nature does not as yet touch or hurt consciousness.

On the other hand, in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the key text in the transition away from this idealism that absorbs the real, makes it complementary but separate, or abstracts it from experience, idealism unfolds *within* the real, the “labour” of the negative in which consciousness must endure the “length of [its] path” and “linger over” each moment.<sup>8</sup> Indeed Hegel is critical of “the universal idea” in a “non-actual form” that ignores difference and moves too quickly to claiming all things as one. Thus, in the famous phrase that Schelling took personally, Hegel dismisses, as the “night ... in which all cows are black,” this “enthusiasm” of absolute idealism which “begins straight away with absolute knowledge.”<sup>9</sup> He insists that substance is “subject” or “the mediation of its self-othering with itself.”<sup>10</sup> Mediation, in turn, is “the possibility of adapting findings ... from one level to another.”<sup>11</sup> But this possibility of explaining the real by the ideal is not simply “a transition into a higher sphere.”<sup>12</sup> It risks being a self-othering that Hegel must endure, when he writes poignantly that “nature seems an alien existence, in which spirit does not find itself.”<sup>13</sup> Or as Derrida says, in his similar critique of Schelling in “Theology of Translation,” there are “differences” between one domain and another: “If the mind could, in a single act of knowledge, *really* grasp absolute totality as a system completed in all its parts, it would overcome its finitude.” “It would not need to translate”<sup>14</sup> between nature and spirit, the real and the ideal. But the very need for translation points to the difficulty of this mediation.

Despite or because of the break that followed Hegel’s criticism in 1807, Schelling’s middle work bears the impress of his reproach, in the echo of the

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<sup>6</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature* (1830), trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 444-5.

<sup>7</sup> Schelling, “Introduction to the Outline,” 196.

<sup>8</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 17.

<sup>9</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 9, 16.

<sup>10</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 10.

<sup>11</sup> Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 39-40.

<sup>12</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline* (1817), trans. Stephen A. Taubeneck, in *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline and Critical Writings*, ed. Ernst Behler (New York: Continuum, 1990), 54.

<sup>13</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 3.

<sup>14</sup> Jacques Derrida, “Theology of Translation,” *Eyes of the University: Right to Philosophy II*, trans. Jan Plug et. al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 79.

*Phenomenology* in the 1815 *Ages*, where Schelling writes: “Whoever wants knowledge of history must accompany it along its great path” and “linger with each moment”;<sup>15</sup> and in a new emphasis on struggle, on the impossibility of having “the bloom and the fruit without the hard covering that enclose[s] it.”<sup>16</sup> Two further motifs recall the *Phenomenology*. At the level of logic, Schelling begins with the copula in the *Freedom* essay (1809) so as to rethink identity as difference, and he thus radically shifts the axis of Idealism. Thus the copula (“the body is blue”) does not state an equivalence but a relation. And inasmuch as the copula is the grammatical figure for identity, subject and predicate, ideal and real, or essence and existence, are connected but are not, as before, one science from different perspectives.<sup>17</sup> However, this point is already made by Hegel, when he insists that the subject, for instance the absolute as subject, is by itself “meaningless ... it is only the predicate” that gives it a meaning.<sup>18</sup> Hegel goes on to criticize the “formalism” of Kant (and by implication Schelling),<sup>19</sup> which “imagines that it has comprehended and expressed the life and nature of a form when it has endowed it with some determination of the schema as a predicate.” In contrast to this “lifeless” copula of equivalence the copula in reality “separates” its terms as well as “holds [them] together.”<sup>20</sup> Predicates are “accidents,”<sup>21</sup> and an “accident as such, detached from what circumscribes it,” can “attain an existence of its own and a separate freedom,” which is the “tremendous power of the negative.”<sup>22</sup>

As important to the bond between the real and ideal is Schelling’s new emphasis on “personality,” a version of Hegel’s claim, against Spinoza, that substance is subject.<sup>23</sup> Not only does the copula “substance is subject” insert

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<sup>15</sup> Schelling, *Ages of the World*, 4. “Wer von ihr Kenntniss will, muss den grossen Weg mitwandeln, bei jedem Moment verweilen, sich ergeben in die Allmächlichkeit der Entwicklung.”

<sup>16</sup> Schelling, *Ages of the World*, 103.

<sup>17</sup> Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 13.

<sup>18</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 12.

<sup>19</sup> While it is Kant who is explicitly accused here of making the triadic schema “lifeless,” the references to electricity, magnetism and the philosophy of nature all suggest that Hegel also has Schelling in mind (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 29-30).

<sup>20</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 29, 352, 473.

<sup>21</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 37.

<sup>22</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 19.

<sup>23</sup> Curiously for the remainder of their lives both Hegel and Schelling accuse each other of the same things: formalism or schematism, and insensitivity to experience or the real. In the *Phenomenology* Hegel accuses Schelling of a “monochromatic” style of “painting” and of taking refuge from what he knows to be the inadequacy of this “schematism” in “the void of the absolute” (29-31). In his much later lectures *On The History of Philosophy* he repeats this charge that Schelling’s work is guilty of schematism and lacks a sense of dialectical movement (trans. E.S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson, 3 vols. [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995], vol. 3, pp. 334, 341-3). In his late *Lectures On The History of Modern Philosophy* Schelling accuses Hegel of creating a purely logical philosophy ruled by the concept, in which the end is predetermined from the beginning, as in the Identity Philosophy (trans. Andrew Bowie [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995], 134-42, 153). He complains that “the translation of the concept of *process* onto the dialectical movement, where no struggle is possible, but only a monotonous, almost soporific progression” hides “the lack of *true life*” (143). But as Theodor W. Adorno says, “Even after the split between

substance into a movement of self-difference, where it is subject to the accidents of its predicates. In its personifications of concepts like beauty and understanding,<sup>24</sup> and in its pathos and affect, the *Phenomenology* introduces a new style of philosophy. For the *Phenomenology* in its opening and closing casts itself as a spiritual autobiography, while the *Philosophy of Nature* goes farther and is a pathography of the involution or alienation that afflicts evolution.<sup>25</sup> Schelling gives the name personality to this new style of philosophizing that does not stay at the level of the concept or the *idea clara* that makes aesthetics, as it was for Baumgarten, a mere handmaiden to logic. Personality is “the ultimate potency by which an intelligent being exists in an incommunicable fashion,”<sup>26</sup> and it is only in the wake of the *Phenomenology* that Schelling’s own subject-less style of writing acquires a personality.

Introducing this concept in the *Freedom* essay, Schelling writes: “Selfhood as such is spirit; or man is spirit as a selfish, particular being (separated from God)” and “precisely this connection constitutes personality.” But if separation from God suggests that personality is somehow deficient, in the *Freedom* essay God himself has personality through his “bond ... with nature.”<sup>27</sup> Personality, in turn, rests on a “dark ground,”<sup>28</sup> which is to say that as separation, it arises from what Schelling describes as the force of contraction: “something inhibiting, something conflicting,” a “darkening that resists the light,” an “obliquity that resists the straight.”<sup>29</sup> It is because of this new emphasis on personality that Schelling, in introducing the *Freedom* essay, seems to set aside his *System of Transcendental Idealism*, in saying that until now he has not arrived at a “complete” system but has “confined himself wholly to investigations in the philosophy of nature.” Evidently neither absolute nor Transcendental Idealism were Idealism, since nine years later Schelling is only just beginning “the ideal part of philosophy.”<sup>30</sup> What makes this new stage the true beginning of “the ideal part of philosophy” is the bond with the real that arises through personality, and what makes the earlier investigations in the philosophy of nature also preliminary is that they had not yet taken up the consequences of the empirical for the transcendental as a problem, rather than a synchronicity that bypasses the hard covering for the bloom and fruit.

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Schelling and Hegel one finds in both of them—in *The Ages of the World* in Schelling’s case and in the *Phenomenology* in Hegel’s—formulations and whole trains of thought in which it is just as difficult to identify the author as in the writings of their youth” (*Hegel: Three Studies*, trans. by Shierry Weber Nicholson [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994], 60).

<sup>24</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 19.

<sup>25</sup> Elizabeth Green Musselman uses the word pathography to describe “autobiographical memoirs by modern day physicians who suffer” from the condition they describe (*Nervous Conditions: Science and the Body Politic in Early Industrial Britain* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006], 6).

<sup>26</sup> Schelling, *Ages of the World*, 107.

<sup>27</sup> Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 33, 59.

<sup>28</sup> Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 75.

<sup>29</sup> Schelling, *Ages of the World*, 6.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

This sequencing of the real and ideal parts of philosophy might seem to set Schelling on a similar path to Hegel in terms of laboring through nature to reach “spirit,” at least in the sense that in the middle work the form of Schelling’s thinking becomes profoundly temporal. But pushing Hegel even further, Schelling subjects the unfolding of the ideal to a continuing “involution” within the real that still enfolds the possibility of “evolution.”<sup>31</sup> Involution implies that what Schelling calls the negating and affirming potencies are each the inside *and* outside of the other, each requiring only an “inversion, a turning out of what was concealed ... to ... transform, the one into the other.” This is to say that despite Schelling’s often Hegelian privileging of evolution, evolution can and does turn back into involution. Indeed this double fold also describes the differend between Hegel and Schelling, both of whom emphasize negativity, inhibition or the force of contraction, and both of whom would agree that “development is not expected from what easily unfolds.” But in his middle work Schelling gives a greater emphasis to “the contracting force” as “the root force of all life,” so that for him development occurs not just through negativity but “from what is excluded and which only decides to unfold with opposition.”<sup>32</sup>

As such, idealism is the soul of philosophy in a particular sense, which this paper tracks through the term at its very centre, “idea”: a largely Hegelian term that I suggest must be thought in terms of the dark ground of personality that cannot be reduced to the concept. For soul—a term also used by Hegel—is not spirit, but crosses lines with it in a way which suggests that it is an envelope for rethinking spirit. Soul, “the supremely interior,” as Schelling says in *Ages*, is the instinct “bound to the higher life” “that dwells in matter,” that “forms” and “heals everything” when it is released into a “free circulation” with “what is higher,” but only insofar as it is “enveloped and retained by the negating force as by a receptacle.” The “soul does not want somehow to sublimate the negating force” as what merely “precedes it,” and indeed “demands and confirms the negating force.” But insofar as it “heals everything,”<sup>33</sup> and spirit is “the eternally healing, reconciling potency,” the soul is in some sense spirit; it is the involution of spirit, where what is to be unfolded “lies still wrapped up.”<sup>34</sup>

But this means that spirit too, a word we particularly associate with Hegel, is not what we commonly understand it to be: namely the politically charged word that Derrida critiques and gives a “philosophical nationality” from Hegel to Heidegger, as “the affirmation of spirit through *Führung*.”<sup>35</sup> From the *Phenomenology* to the *History of Philosophy*, spirit is both that which consciousness becomes at the end of phenomenology and the passion to become

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<sup>31</sup> Schelling, *Ages of the World*, 107.

<sup>32</sup> Schelling, *Ages of the World*, 18, 83, 107.

<sup>33</sup> Schelling, *Ages of the World*, 57-8, 69.

<sup>34</sup> Schelling, *Ages of the World*, 46, 70.

<sup>35</sup> Jacques Derrida, *On Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. by Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 7, 21-2, 32.

that thing:<sup>36</sup> a structure of drive (not *Führung*) that also provides the structure for “the idea.” This means that spirit is no more than the idea of spirit, where the very word “idea” evokes both the concept of spirit and the inadequacy of this concept. Indeed as Hegel writes in a comment that Jean-Luc Nancy takes up, German has the “peculiarity” that some of its words—*Grund* or *Abgrund* being his example—have “not only different but opposite meanings,” a duplicity (in Schelling’s sense) that renders individual words themselves a site of speculation.<sup>37</sup> Such words include above all idea itself, as the mode of thinking terms like ground and spirit in their difference. For the idea is the “real existence of the concept”: an ambiguous phrase which may suggest that the idea is the full realization of the concept, but may also suggest that in its real as opposed to ideal functioning, the idea is that which exceeds the (Kantian) concept and the limited “concept” Hegel might prefer to have of the idea. Hence Hegel’s *Aesthetics* is all about the labour of the negative in which the idea is still making itself clear to itself. And Schelling’s middle work is all about reconfiguring sciences he had wanted to see as ideal in his lectures on *University Studies*—sciences such as religion, philosophy and history—when they become involved or involuted within the real sciences of nature.

I suggest therefore that at the core of idealism is the self-othering of the idea, and that the radical shift undergone by this term “idea” indexes the direction taken by idealism itself when it becomes a project in Romanticism. For idealism’s commitment to philosophy as a means to identity, system, and totalization emerges within the broader literary-cum-philosophical thought environment of Romanticism, where it is itself an “idea” complicated by its writing.<sup>38</sup> For Schlegel philosophy is science (*Wissenschaft*) but it is also an art (*Kunst*) insofar as it works with concepts but in language.<sup>39</sup> Writing, in turn, as

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<sup>36</sup> As regards the *Phenomenology* Hegel is often thought to distinguish consciousness, as a “disparity” between “the ‘I’ and the substance which is its object,” from spirit, which has “made its existence identical with its essence” (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, 21). But this distinction is complicated by the fact that he constantly personifies Spirit, thus presenting it as “incomplete” and effectively no different from consciousness. Moreover, he sees “science” in its drier forms such as mathematics (26-7) or the complacency of immediate sense experience as characterized by an “absence of spirit” (15), which is to say that spirit is something deeper and more passionate than mind. As regards *The History of Philosophy*, it is notably Boehme, the most unperfected of philosophers, whom Hegel associates with the “spiritual [*geistige*] philosophy, substantial in a higher sense ... though still in a peculiar and barbarous form,” and whom he sees as the return and retreat of a “German” origin (vol. 3, p. 350).

<sup>37</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Speculative Remark (One of Hegel’s Bons Mots)*, trans. Céline Surprenant (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 24, 61-3.

<sup>38</sup> For a different, though overlapping, distinction between Idealism and Romanticism see Ernest Rubinstein, *An Episode of Jewish Romanticism: Franz Rosenzweig’s The Star of Redemption* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 8-12. Describing Idealism (Fichte, Hegel, Schelling) as epistemological and Romanticism (Novalis, Schlegel etc.) as aesthetic, but emphasising that they are deeply entangled, Rubinstein sees the “infinitesimal” difference between them as consisting in Romanticism’s refusal to finally arrest the movement of difference and reflexiveness that is also part of Idealism.

<sup>39</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, *Wissenschaft der europäischen Literatur, Kritische Friedrich- Schlegel-Ausgabe*, ed. Ernst Behler et.al., 35 vols. (München: F. Schöningh, 1958), vol. 11, p. 10.

Lyotard puts it, makes thought responsible to “what every representation misses.”<sup>40</sup> More specifically, if the relation between nature and spirit is at the heart of idealism, the idea, a term drawn in the first instance from Plato, is reconfigured within this relation. While the earlier Schelling in his identity philosophy wants to synchronize spirit and nature, the “I am” of transcendental idealism and the “It is” of the *Naturphilosophie*, Hegel, by making the relation successive rather than simultaneous, so that nature must struggle to become spirit, exposes spirit to its nature. Indeed one could say that especially in the *Phenomenology*, the *Aesthetics*, and the *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel exposes spirit to its human nature, given that as Schelling will say, the “eternal nature,” like “the nature of the person” and like nature itself, is “a life of ... anxiety, a fire that incessantly consumes itself, and unremittingly produces itself anew.”<sup>41</sup> Given Hegel’s silent impact on Schelling’s middle work, when Schelling moves to the “ideal part of philosophy” in the *Freedom* essay to take up the consequences of his earlier investigations into nature for transcendental thought, these investigations initiate what is not just a “topic within philosophy” but an entirely new way of “doing philosophy in accordance with nature,” as Jason Wirth puts it.<sup>42</sup> The resulting autoimmunity of idealism can be focalized through the term whose meaning and affect are at its center: namely the idea.

Autoimmunity is Derrida’s word for the process by “which an organism tends to destroy, in a quasi-spontaneous ... fashion, some organ or other, one or another of its own immunitary protections.”<sup>43</sup> Or as Goethe puts it, when he writes of the “crisis” (not consolidation) that occurs when a field “matures” enough to call itself a “science,” at this point the “universalist, who believes that “one idea obtains in forms endlessly divergent,” is confronted with the “singularist,” who still wants to fit the particular into the universal but constantly finds exceptions. Thus sciences, according to Goethe, “destroy themselves in two ways: by the breadth they reach and by the depth they plumb.”<sup>44</sup> These exceptions are indeed the challenge that Schelling faces in his *Naturphilosophie*, when he tries to see in the multiplicity of “organisms” and phenomena “one archetype whose objective aspect alone changes and whose subjective aspect is unchangeable.”<sup>45</sup> Or as Hegel poignantly admits at the end of the *Philosophy of Nature*, the “material element” “in its ever-increasing wealth of detail” proves “refractory towards the unity of the notion,” confronting “reason” with a profound obstacle to finding in “nature a free reflex of spirit.”<sup>46</sup>

This autoimmunity can be contrasted with the simplification of Idealism

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<sup>40</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *Heidegger and ‘the Jews’* (1988), trans. Andreas Michel and Mark Roberts. Minneapolis (University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 5.

<sup>41</sup> Schelling, *Ages of the World*, 3, 46.

<sup>42</sup> Jason Wirth, “Mass Extinction: Schelling and Natural History,” *Poligrafi* 16. 61-2 (2011), 59.

<sup>43</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 124.

<sup>44</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, selections from *Maxims and Reflections*, in *Scientific Studies*, ed. and trans. Douglas Miller (New York: Suhrkamp, 1988), 305.

<sup>45</sup> Schelling, *On University Studies*, 142.

<sup>46</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 444-5.

that occurs in its British appropriation by Coleridgeans such as Joseph Henry Green and Richard Owen. It is worth beginning a genealogy of the word idea here because our own sense of idealism and organicism have been filtered through this appropriation. Green and his protégé Owen, the foremost biologist of the Victorian period, were familiar with Kant and Schelling. Indeed Green, who studied in Germany, went not to the more popular English destination of Göttingen but to Berlin, to work with Solger, who was instrumental in hiring Hegel in the following year (1817). But the British Idealists—Coleridge, Green and Owen—read Kant and Schelling with a deep nervousness about an autotelic let alone autogenetic view of nature. Thus as Robert Richards notes, in taking over *Naturphilosophie*'s desire to conceive nature as teleologically structured, Green retained the central designing power for God.<sup>47</sup> By contrast Schelling writes in the *Ages* of a “nature that evolves itself out of its own powers and utterly for itself” in a “terrible loneliness.”<sup>48</sup>

To be sure Green, as an Idealist who worked on the real sciences of comparative anatomy and physiology, seems to place the idea within the matrix of time, history and nature. But he reads the immanent unfolding of the idea from the closure of the end, as is evident in his claim that “inferior forms are declensions from or defective forms of the idea of man.”<sup>49</sup> Hence, though his point of entry into Idealism was via the natural or real sciences, Green assimilated the real into the ideal in his own progress from “vital” to “mental dynamics” as the foundation of a Coleridgean clerisy. *Vital Dynamics* is the title of Green's gathering together, in 1840, of his Hunterian oration that year along with material going back to the 1820s which dealt with the always troublesome life sciences. Green then echoes this title in his *Mental Dynamics* (1847) so as to effect his own transition from nature to spirit, as a specifically Coleridgean transition from physiological to political “constitution.” In *Mental Dynamics*, a text on education or *Bildung*, Green sketches a curiously Hegelian disciplinary series proceeding from grammar, to “natural history,” to what he calls physiogony, through civil history, to mathematics and logic, and finally philosophy.<sup>50</sup> Green's curriculum mirrors that sketched less systematically by Coleridge, who also envisioned moving from the life sciences to “a new series beyond ... physiology,” the ideal series in Schelling's terms, namely philosophy and theology.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Robert Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2002), 518.

<sup>48</sup> Schelling, *Ages of the World*, 104.

<sup>49</sup> Joseph Henry Green, *Vital Dynamics: The Hunterian Oration Before the Royal College of Surgeons in London, 17th February 1840* (London: William Pickering, 1840), 61.

<sup>50</sup> Joseph Henry Green, *Mental Dynamics or Groundwork of a Professional Education, The Hunterian Oration Before the Royal College of Surgeons of England, 15<sup>th</sup> Feb 1847*. (London: William Pickering, 1847), 7-19, 41. Green defines physiogony as “the history of nature” considered as “preface and portion of the history of man” (*Vital Dynamics*, 103).

<sup>51</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Theory of Life* (1816), in *Shorter Works and Fragments*, ed. H.J. and J.R. de J. Jackson, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), vol. 1, pp. 516, 519 n; *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Vol. 4, ed. Kathleen Coburn and Merton Christensen



Coincident with this ascent of knowledge, as he moved into the Victorian period, Green increasingly Platonized the idea, referring to “ideas, principles, or final aims,” and associating an idea with “integration.”<sup>52</sup> This conservative understanding of the word is borne out by his equation of “idea” with “type,” a biological term that Green also uses theologically, linking it to the “book of nature.”<sup>53</sup> The concept of type, in turn, removes the idea from any possibility of an unfinished evolution, and grounds it in a preformationist rather than epigenetic biology, while also binding Schelling’s more unpredictable potencies into a teleology. Thus in his final work, the posthumously published *Spiritual Philosophy*, Green writes that the antecedent idea or “potential unity of the manifold is inconceivable except as predeterminate in aim and object, and this predeterminate we may call the ‘type,’” without which “the parent one would have remained, or could be conceived only as an undifferentiated, unintelligible potentiality.”<sup>54</sup>

The resulting containment of philosophy, science, history and the transfers between them within a theologocentric architectonic of knowledge is continued even when the terms “type” and “archetype” definitively migrate into the life sciences in Owen’s work on the “vertebrate archetype.” As Rupke sums it up, in Owen’s homological research programme the vertebrate archetype is “the most complete visual expression of a belief in the fundamental relatedness, if not of all organisms, at least of all animals with endoskeletons.”<sup>55</sup> Owen famously concludes *On the Limbs* (1849) by placing the “archetype” in an evolution all of whose “modifications” the “Divine Mind ... foreknew,” and which leads “amidst the wreck of worlds, from the first embodiment of the Vertebrate idea under its old Ichthyic vestment, until it became arrayed in the glorious garb of the Human Form.”<sup>56</sup> It is true that scientifically speaking Owen’s archetype really is a “general and undifferentiated form,” and that his equation of the archetype, which in its vertebrate form is more properly a “structuralist” notion, with the Platonic idea, may have been motivated by a desire to please his conservative patrons that does not nullify his considerable scientific work.<sup>57</sup> But the fact remains that both Green and Owen, in their public *personae* as members of an

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(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), n. 4517. While Schelling’s division of ideal and real sciences may have suited Coleridge, Coleridge was harshly critical of him for making nature absolute.

<sup>52</sup> Green, *Mental Dynamics*, 34; *Spiritual Philosophy: Founded on the Teaching of the Late Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. John Simon, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1865), vol. 1, p. 198.

<sup>53</sup> Green, “Introduction to the Natural History of Birds,” 310.

<sup>54</sup> Green, *Spiritual Philosophy*, 202-3.

<sup>55</sup> Nicolaas Rupke, *Richard Owen: Biology Without Darwin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 118.

<sup>56</sup> Richard Owen, *On the Nature of Limbs: A Discourse*, ed. Ron Amundson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 186.

<sup>57</sup> Ron Amundson, “Richard Owen and Animal Form,” in *On the Nature of Limbs*, xxii-xxvii. See also Rupke, who takes issue with seeing Owen’s archetype as a sign of his reactionary position: “Rather, the Platonization was a response to the ... vaguely evolutionary transcendentalism of the Schelling-inspired *Naturphilosophen* and was intended to reintegrate morphology into a traditional, teleological epistemology” (133). But it is hard not to see such an epistemology as conservative.

institution, adapted the speculative interdisciplinarity of German Idealism to a discipline, and took it in a theologocentric direction. For Owen's gold standard is the hierarchical, classificatory discipline of comparative anatomy, whose importance for an idealism of the clerisy we still see in Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*. The late Romantic and mid-century appropriation of Kant and Schelling by the Coleridgeans in turn laid the basis for a conservative Victorian appropriation of *Hegel*. And it is to this appropriation that we can trace the bad press which Idealism has received in our own time (especially in Romantic studies), as the philosophical underpinning for various forms of aesthetic and romantic ideology that one could argue German Idealism itself puts under erasure.

Kant also used the term "idea," distinguishing ideas of reason from concepts of the understanding, where reason is the faculty of principles and understanding is the faculty of rules.<sup>58</sup> In the first *Critique*, evoking Plato, Kant says that ideas flow "from the highest reason" and go "far beyond the concepts of the understanding (with which Aristotle occupied himself) since nothing in experience [can] ever be congruent to" them.<sup>59</sup> For Kant, as Karl Jaspers puts it, ideas make things too big for the understanding, while concepts make them too small for reason.<sup>60</sup> But Kant then limits these transcendental ideas of pure reason to a merely regulative status. Pressing beyond these limits Schelling, in his early transcendental idealism, does often justify the British Idealists' Platonizing of the idea as a "design" or "paradigm,"<sup>61</sup> granted that we are dealing here with a mystical rather than theological "Plato." Thus in Schelling's *Bruno* (1802) ideas are sheltered in "archetypal nature" rather than "productive nature," and are housed in an "archetypal understanding."<sup>62</sup> To be sure, they are also realized in time. But as Schelling writes in *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, "In nature ... the whole absolute is knowable, although appearing nature produces ... in endless development, what in true nature exists all at once and in an eternal fashion."<sup>63</sup> So whereas the *First Outline* tests its idealism against the philosophy of nature, *Bruno* contains the threat posed by nature—which is present in sections on "the three grades of finite being" and the heavenly bodies—within transcendental idealism, through the anchoring of productive nature in archetypal nature, and the consequent disabling of time.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 387.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 395.

<sup>60</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Kant*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Harcourt, 1957), 46.

<sup>61</sup> Green, *Spiritual Philosophy*, 213, 240.

<sup>62</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, *Bruno, or On the Natural and Divine Principle of Things*, ed. and trans. Michael G. Vater (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 122, 125.

<sup>63</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Errol E. Harris and Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 272.

<sup>64</sup> Schelling, *Bruno*, 125. In other words time is an abstraction in *Bruno*, existing only at a logical and not experiential level. Similarly in *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, productive nature is an abstraction because the text thinks within a transcendental empiricism that has no sense of time. For this reason, *Bruno* and *Ideas* form a pair in which transcendental philosophy and the philosophy of

The word Idea in this Romantically Platonic sense is also present in Schelling's lectures on *University Studies*, where at "the level of the Idea or being-in-itself" what "temporal knowledge ... posits conditionally and successively ... exists unconditionally and simultaneously." This level is that of the "idea of all ideas ... the idea of the absolute itself."<sup>65</sup> But interestingly Schelling rarely uses the word idea after the early 1800s. One reason may be its association with an absolute idealism that he could ground only as a construction: a construction that he knew to be "an invasion of nature through freedom." As such, far from being what Meillassoux attacks as strong correlationism,<sup>66</sup> this is always already a deeply self-critical, indeed autoimmune construction, as is evident in the fact that Schelling was at the same time writing the *First Outline*, which lays the seeds for a rethinking of freedom at the hands of nature. Another reason for dropping the word idea is of course its increasing association with Schelling's rival Hegel. But this is not to say that Schelling abandons the idea, only that he moves away from a totalized form of absolute idealism that it becomes convenient—if inaccurate—to project onto Hegel. For the graduated stages of nature in the *First Outline* (where Schelling still uses the word idea) are all about the immanently self-developing force that Hegel sees in mind and things. Hence in the *Naturphilosophische* side of his work from the *First Outline* to the *Freedom* essay and the 1815 version of *Ages*, Schelling too is now engaged in rethinking this force which Hegel calls "the idea" in accordance with nature as part of an unfinished evolution. For Hegel this rethinking occurs because substance unfolds as subject, while for Schelling it is because substance is deconstructed as nature.

This sense of the idea as unfinished is also in Kant. For while in the first *Critique* ideas lack presence but are not inchoate, in the third *Critique* they are subdivided into "aesthetic" and "rational" ideas. Aesthetic ideas are intuitions of the imagination to which no "concept" or "determinate thought" is "adequate," and "rational" ideas are concepts that cannot be concretely embodied. Either way, such ideas "strive towards something lying beyond the bounds of experience," but without any concept being "fully adequate to them as inner intuitions," even when (as in the second case) they are described as "concepts."<sup>67</sup> By the third *Critique*, then, ideas, through their division into the mutually supplementary categories of aesthetic and rational, have become constitutively associated with inadequacy—a problem that dogs Hegel throughout his work. Nevertheless Kant approaches the idea's difference from itself in logical rather than bio-or psychological terms. Put differently, for Kant the incompleteness of ideas is thought

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nature can still come together as one science. But this is not possible when we pair the far more radical *First Outline* with *Bruno*, since it is here, in the "graduated stages of nature," that the sense of time which becomes so important to the middle work first enters Schelling's corpus.

<sup>65</sup> Schelling, *On University Studies*, 14, 44.

<sup>66</sup> Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (London: Continuum, 2008); see especially 37, 50-3.

<sup>67</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 192.

within an aesthetics that aims at harmonization, while in Schelling's *First Outline* it is the real science of physics that is the source of a certain de- and recomposability of ideas into what Schelling calls "actants" that makes them highly volatile.<sup>68</sup> It is in post-Kantian idealism, then, that the idea becomes more dangerously exposed through the sciences to a materiality, contingency and historicity that are the source of its potentiality and generative failure.

Hegel's "idea," singularized to give it a certain driving force, might seem theoretically consistent with the more Platonized idea of Schelling's *Bruno*. *Bruno*, which uses the word in both the plural and singular, is studded with references to the "absolute idea" and the idea as the absolute's "identity." The idea—which is the third in the series intuition, concept, idea—"comprehends and identifies both the unity of the bare concept and the multiplicity of objects furnished in intuition." As such, the idea in *Bruno* is the "reality" of the "concept,"<sup>69</sup> a formulation echoed in Hegel's definition of the idea as "the real existence of the Concept."<sup>70</sup> Or as Hegel says in the *Logic*, the idea is the "adequate concept," "the unity of the concept and objectivity"; it is not just the "bad infinity" of a "goal which is to be approximated but itself remains always a kind of *beyond*," but is the "congruence of concept and reality."<sup>71</sup>

But is this not the essence rather than the "real existence" of the idea? Or in other words, is the idea to be approached as part of an epistemology or a phenomenology? The question goes to the heart of Paul Ricoeur's distinction of consciousness, which "aims at another that it is not," from spirit, which "is not directed toward another who is lacking to it" but is "entirely complete within itself." On this basis Ricoeur sees Husserl's work as "a phenomenology of consciousness that is raised above itself into a phenomenology of mind," while Hegel's is a phenomenology that remains "in consciousness."<sup>72</sup>

Hegel's emphasis on consciousness, or later on the idea as consciousness, marks his difference from epistemology and logic on the one hand, and from transcendental idealism on the other. At the root of the emerging difference of Hegel's phenomenology from Schelling's transcendental idealism, which then becomes the ground of their unconfessed convergence, is the division of labour to which Rosenkranz points when he suggests that while Schelling in the Jena years tried to lay the foundations of absolute philosophy, Hegel worked on developing philosophy as a *cycle* of sciences.<sup>73</sup> This diachronic nature of Hegel's project necessarily removes the idea from the realm of the unconditioned. Instead the idea becomes, as Gasché says in commenting on

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<sup>68</sup> Actants (Keith Peterson's translation for *Aktionen*) are Schelling's version of monads as forces rather than matter, "originary productivities" (Schelling, *First Outline*, 19-34).

<sup>69</sup> Schelling, *Bruno*, 161, 143.

<sup>70</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T.M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), vol. 1, 106.

<sup>71</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic* (1816), trans. and ed. George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 572, 670-1.

<sup>72</sup> Paul Ricoeur, "Hegel and Husserl on Intersubjectivity," *From Text to Action* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 229-31.

<sup>73</sup> Quoted by Michael Vater, *Introduction to Schelling, Bruno*, 82.

Friedrich Schlegel, “infinitely inappropriate to its own self-presentation,” insofar as it “continually transcends the synthesis ... that it achieves.” Or as Schlegel says, in a formulation that brings out the speculative nature of the idea, the idea is “an absolute synthesis of absolute antitheses, the continual self-creating interchange of two conflicting thoughts.”<sup>74</sup>

Granted that Schlegel’s formulation is more enthusiastic than agonistic, and thus substitutes paradox for a dialectic that carries with the negative. The word idea in this speculative sense is ubiquitous in Hegel’s work, especially in the *Encyclopedia* and the *Aesthetics*. And it is precisely this commitment to the idea that is at odds with Lyotard’s claim that Hegel limits thought to “what can be taken into intelligibility under concepts.”<sup>75</sup> To a degree Hegel does build on Schelling’s use of the word idea as the reality of the concept in *Bruno*, but he does not adopt the synchronicity of the ideal and real in the latter’s earlier work. Rather in the disavowed conversation between the two thinkers that we are tracing, Schelling’s long-term impact on Hegel is his thinking of philosophy according to nature in the other side of his work, with the difference that nature becomes history in Hegel, but a history that faces all the pitfalls of the history of nature.

To be sure, in the *Science of Logic* (1816) which is condensed in the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel wants the idea to be “the adequate concept” or “reason identical to itself.” But if “the whole of science is the presentation of the idea,”<sup>76</sup> this presentation in the *Encyclopedia* is articulated in three broad divisions in which the synthesis is at the beginning as a proposition instead of at the end as the result of a dialectic. The subsequent cycle of disciplines then has the form of an unfinished evolution, in which two of the divisions are about the difference between the “theme” and “execution” of the idea, to evoke Hegel’s own terms.<sup>77</sup> Hence in what Derrida criticizes as Hegel’s onto- and auto-encyclopedia of the state,<sup>78</sup> it is only in the first division of the system, the *Logic*, that the idea is “in and for itself.” Logic is followed by the philosophy of nature, or “the idea in the form of *otherness*,” as “the negative of itself,”<sup>79</sup> and then by the philosophy of spirit or the science of the idea “as it returns to itself from its otherness.”<sup>80</sup> In the *Logic* the idea is formally elaborated as the “free concept ... determining itself as reality,” which has moved beyond mere “representation.”<sup>81</sup> The idea as the teleological fulfilment of the concept is brought in towards the end to save the

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<sup>74</sup> Rodolphe Gasché, “Foreword: Ideality in Fragmentation,” in Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. by Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), xiv-xv; Schlegel, *Athenaeum Fragments*, in *Philosophical Fragments*, n. 121.

<sup>75</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. by Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 108-9, 112.

<sup>76</sup> Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 527; *Encyclopedia*, 54.

<sup>77</sup> Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 96, 289.

<sup>78</sup> Jacques Derrida, “The Age of Hegel,” *Who’s Afraid of Philosophy?: Right to Philosophy I*, trans. Jan Plug (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 148.

<sup>79</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 13.

<sup>80</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, 54.

<sup>81</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, 128; *Science of Logic*, 628, 670.

concept, which has become problematized by having to be dialectical. But in the *Philosophy of Nature* the idea is no mere “formal-logical entity.”<sup>82</sup> Much like “spirit” in the *Phenomenology*, it is personified in its *agon* with nature. It must struggle through “each grade or level of nature” in which it is imperfectly present, “estranged” from itself, in a nature which is “only the corpse of the understanding”: a “petrified intelligence,” in the phrase from Schelling that Hegel cites.<sup>83</sup> In the process it must endure a “*self-degradation*” and “disparity with its own self.”<sup>84</sup> Hence while the idea may be brought in to save the concept, Hegel also has to make the concept the resolution of the idea’s contradictions, when he writes that the “unity of the subjective and objective idea is the concept.”<sup>85</sup>

This privileging of the concept is what leads some to see Hegel as a philosopher of the concept rather than, in Kantian terms, of the idea. Thus for Schelling, who reads Hegel purely through the *Logic*, the idea is identified with the formalism of the concept, and generates only a dialectic that is “abstract” and “empty.” The idea is always already the “completed idea,” which “is certain of itself” and “knows in advance that it cannot perish in its being-other.”<sup>86</sup> But I suggest rather that the anxiously overlapping, supplementary relationship of idea and concept exposes the inadequacy of the idea to its concept or blueprint.<sup>87</sup> Thus instead of spirit succeeding nature, within each major division of the *Encyclopedia* are further disciplines and sub-disciplines, in which the idea, having indeed perished in its being-other, must go through the same struggle to become identical to itself, only to start anew in a new discipline. After the failure of the idea to prevail in the *Philosophy of Nature*, in the *Aesthetics* we begin with Symbolic art, in which the idea cannot be adequately embodied because it has not found its “form even in itself” and “remains struggling and striving after it.” The “adequate embodiment of the idea” is then achieved in Classicism, but only for this synthesis to fall apart at the higher level of Romanticism where the inwardness of the idea cannot find expression in external forms. Indeed Classicism is better described as an art of the concept. Throughout the *Aesthetics* the idea “presses on to representation and reality” without definitively consolidating itself,<sup>88</sup> so that instead of arriving at the end of history Hegel must declare an end of art. Thus as is well known, having experienced the history of art as the questioning of the very criterion of adequate embodiment, at the end of the *Aesthetics* Hegel has philosophy supersede art. But then at the end of *The History of Philosophy* we have only arrived at Schelling, whose work has “great merit,” but who has “misconceived the nature of thought” as art rather than

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<sup>82</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, 128.

<sup>83</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 14-15.

<sup>84</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 17.

<sup>85</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, 136.

<sup>86</sup> Schelling, *On The History of Modern Philosophy*, 142-3, 154.

<sup>87</sup> For elaboration of this point see Tilottama Rajan, “Towards a Cultural Idealism: Negativity and Freedom in Kant and Hegel,” *Idealism Without Absolutes: Philosophy and Romantic Culture*, ed. Tilottama Rajan and Arkady Plotnitsky (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 56-7.

<sup>88</sup> Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 76, 77-9, 299.

philosophy.<sup>89</sup> The envelope or prototype for this process of perpetually unworking the idea is provided by the *Phenomenology*, the text which definitively brings not just dialectic, but also narrative, into philosophy's self-identity: a narrative of the "Calvary" of spirit, in which consciousness is never fully raised into spirit.<sup>90</sup>

What then is Hegel's idea, if it is not reason identical to itself? In effect the idea is a drive to be the idea, which it cannot adequately embody; it is an "urge ... to become objective to itself,"<sup>91</sup> or as Coleridge says of Schelling (albeit critically), an "anticipation" that "acquires necessity by becoming an idea."<sup>92</sup> At the core of the idea is what Hegel calls a "germ" or "*idea matrix*"<sup>93</sup> and what Schelling in *On The World-Soul* calls a "*positive force that ... initiates motion*" and is the reason why "in nature everything strives continuously forwards."<sup>94</sup>

Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* is an interesting text within this genealogy of the idea, warped by its author's ill-will towards Hegel, but symptomatically revealing the tensions that traverse the word idea. It is clear that Schopenhauer wants to deconstruct, as a mere representation of the will, the myth of reason identical to itself. Hegel, as Alison Stone argues, constructs his philosophy of nature as an ascending sequence of natural forms conceived as "constellations of concept/matter relations," or "forms of thought" increasingly integrated with matter. Hegel's is thus a "strong a priori" reading of nature as "intrinsically rational," even if non-consciously.<sup>95</sup> In the second book of his *magnum opus* Schopenhauer adopts this ascending sequence of natural forms, whether from Hegel, or from Schelling's graduated stages of nature, or from Kierkegaard before them. But for Schopenhauer this idea of reason in nature is

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<sup>89</sup> Hegel, *History of Modern Philosophy*, vol. 3, p. 542.

<sup>90</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 493. In seeing the 1807 *Phenomenology* as a containing form for Hegel's work I differ from M.J. Petry, who argues that Hegel replaces the Jena with the Berlin *Phenomenology*, which becomes a subordinate section of the second and third editions of the *Encyclopedia*. According to Petry the Jena *Phenomenology* was marred by its focus on consciousness and failure to properly distinguish consciousness and spirit, which are later divided up between the sections on phenomenology and psychology respectively. Insofar as he comes to prefer a "systematic" to a "phenomenological" exposition, the later Hegel gives up "temporal sequence" for analytic and synthetic procedures that are "structural," and "never again" returns to the Jena *Phenomenology*'s "teleological exposition" ("Introduction" to G.W.F. Hegel, *The Berlin Phenomenology*, ed. and trans. M.J. Petry [Holland: D. Reidel, 1981], xv-xviii, xliii, xlvi, ci). But the problem with Petry's claim is that Hegel continued to arrange several lecture series in a temporal-historical sequence (e.g., the *Aesthetics*, *Philosophy of Religion*, *Philosophy of History*, and *History of Philosophy*). Moreover, even the *Encyclopedia* itself is arranged in a temporal, if not historical, sequence.

<sup>91</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 26.

<sup>92</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Marginalia* (M:4.379-81); *Notebooks*, Vol. 3, ed. Kathleen Coburn (1973), n. 4449. Coleridge is, however, critical of Schelling for confusing ideas with self-evident theorems on the one hand, and ungrounded anticipations on the other.

<sup>93</sup> *Philosophy of Nature*, 347.

<sup>94</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, extract from *On the World Soul*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant, *Collapse VI* (2010), 95.

<sup>95</sup> Alison Stone, *Petrified Intelligence: Nature in Hegel's Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 57-9.

nothing but the representation of a blind will whose metaphysical fraud he wants to unmask by presenting it as a representation (*Vorstellung*), the word Hegel is careful to distinguish from idea. However, as we know, in the first English translations of *Die Welt as Wille und Vorstellung*, *Vorstellung* was rendered as “idea,”<sup>96</sup> in part because Schopenhauer also does use the word “Idee” as a compromise formation between will and representation, necessity and freedom, realism and an idealism he cannot entirely renounce. The word *Idee* as distinct from *Vorstellung* is first introduced in the second book of Schopenhauer’s auto-encyclopedia of the ruin of spirit, or we could say, borrowing a term from E.S. Burt, his auto-thanatography of spirit.<sup>97</sup> The first book is his anti-logic: a proposition about how the world of representations is nothing but a representation of the will. The remaining three books move from the real science of *Naturphilosophie*, to aesthetics as at once a real and ideal science, to ethics as the death-wish of a spirit that cannot emancipate itself from nature. Returning to the second book, the idea is introduced here as the “adequate objectivity of the will”<sup>98</sup> and has several “grades” like the graduated sequence of stages in *Naturphilosophie*. The individual ideas—since Schopenhauer uses the word both in the singular and plural—are each expressions, at a particular stage, of a will that “objectif[ies] itself more distinctly from grade to grade” through the forms and forces of nature, culminating in man as the “(Platonic) idea” in which “the will finds its most distinct and perfect objectification.”<sup>99</sup> The whole, in turn, is a process in which “a higher idea,” as in Schelling’s *First Outline*,<sup>100</sup> subdues the “lower ones through *overwhelming assimilation*,” even as these lower ideas struggle to survive.<sup>101</sup>

For Schopenhauer, then, what Hegel seeks as an “adequate embodiment of the idea” is nothing but the “adequate objectivity of the will.” Yet curiously this deconstructed idea is attributed to Plato. Schopenhauer’s use of the term idea thus raises the question: why use two terms, *Vorstellung* and *Idee*, and why bring in Plato who would not have recognized himself in this brutally Malthusian, biopolitical concept of the idea? The first term, the notion of categories like time and space as mere “*Vorstellungen*” of the will, functions within an epistemology. But the second term, idea, albeit an idea generated within nature, functions within a metaphysics, wherein the idea is an “actual being”<sup>102</sup> whose reality Schopenhauer cannot repudiate as mere representation, even though he may demystify its *idealization* by Hegel. This is also to suggest that Schopenhauer

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<sup>96</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, trans. J.B. Haldane and R. Kemp, 2 vols. (Boston: Ticknor and Co., 1887).

<sup>97</sup> E.S. Burt, *Regard for the Other: Autothanatography in Rousseau, De Quincey, Baudelaire, and Wilde* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 6-8, 26-8.

<sup>98</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* (1819/1844), trans. E.F.J. Payne, 2 vols. (New York: Dover, 1966), vol. 1, p. 154.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 154, 149, 153.

<sup>100</sup> In the *First Outline* Schelling discusses the problem of how an “individual nature” can hold its own against the “*universal organism*” (53-4).

<sup>101</sup> Schopenhauer, *World as Will*, vol. 1, p. 145.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 154, 181.



cannot get rid of the idealism of the post-Kantian idea, for there is an almost schizophrenic inconsistency between the demystification of the Hegelian idea and its re-mystification through Plato. This tension in the idea between the will that it is and the Platonic idea that it wants to be also plays out as an *agon* between the deconstruction of the idea in the second book on nature and its construction in the third book on art.

But here we must note the difference between Hegel's "adequate embodiment of the Idea"<sup>103</sup> and Schopenhauer's description of the *idea* as "the adequate objectification" of the *will*." That the idea for Hegel too is will or drive is marked by his shift from ideas to the singular "idea," which has no referent since it is not the idea "of" anything.<sup>104</sup> This would not matter if it were simply a term in logic or epistemology, like "concept" and "intuition." But the idea is also something real, which is to say that Hegel retains it as an object of striving, whereas Schopenhauer deconstructs it into the will but then cannot part with the idealism that he thereby disavows. What Schopenhauer does contribute to the history of the term is a powerful sense that this idea as an immanently developing potentiality is generated within productive nature rather than standing outside it in "archetypal nature."

The later Schelling also rethinks the idea in terms of a will involved in an unfinished evolution. While rarely using the word idea, at crucial points he retains the word *Urbild* or prototype, which he had used synonymously with ideas in *Bruno*, and which he says are "not quite physical natures," but are also not to be thought "apart from all physicality": they are therefore not "universal concepts of the understanding" or "fixed models" but "are in ceaseless motion and production."<sup>105</sup> In the *Freedom* essay Schelling relocates this *Urbild* from archetypal nature to the ground, which is really an *Ungrund* that is "being *before* all ground."<sup>106</sup> He also reconceives soul as a potentiality sheltered in the negative, where in *Bruno* it had been "torn" from the archetypal state by its "union with the body" and "transition over to temporal existence."<sup>107</sup> The *Urbild* or "idea hidden in the divided ground," an idea that must therefore itself be divided, thus develops within nature, but is an ideal by which life "steers" itself, and "in conjunction with" with which it "organically" shapes itself:<sup>108</sup> what Habermas calls "something not yet made good that pushes its essence forward."<sup>109</sup> Yet this guidance or steering is caught in a circular logic in which it can never truly ground itself, as the "higher potency" is the "archetype of the lower potency"

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<sup>103</sup> Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 77.

<sup>104</sup> "The idea is ... not to be taken as the idea of any one thing or other" (Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, 128).

<sup>105</sup> Friedrich Schelling, *Ages of the World* (1813), trans. by Judith Norman, in Slavoj Žižek/F.W.J. von Schelling, *The Abyss of Freedom/Ages of the World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 161.

<sup>106</sup> Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 68.

<sup>107</sup> Schelling, *Bruno*, 134.

<sup>108</sup> Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 31, 76.

<sup>109</sup> Jürgen Habermas, "Ernst Bloch: A Marxist Schelling," *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985), 71.

which is the “ectype” of the higher,<sup>110</sup> making the idea no more than an idea of itself. Thus in the *Freedom* essay, Schelling talks of a “blind will” which “to the extent that it has not yet been raised to ... complete unity with light (as principle of understanding), is pure craving or desire.”<sup>111</sup> But he also conceives this will in much more idealistic terms than Schopenhauer, who knew the *Freedom* essay.<sup>112</sup> For the will, as “an inner, reflexive representation (*Vorstellung*),” is the “first stirring of divine existence,” in which God, by which Schelling means the ideal principle, “is realized, although only in himself,” “begotten *in* God himself,” that is to say autogenetically rather than teleologically.<sup>113</sup> It is the “eternal embryo of God that is not yet an actual god, but rather only a god with respect to its forces.”<sup>114</sup>

Or we could cite Coleridge, who anticipates Ricoeur in distinguishing between “life” and “mind.” Where mind is “logically defined” as a “subject possessing its object in itself,” “life” is “a subject” that “produce[s] an object” in order “to *find* itself.” Life “has an ascension towards mind,” but remains “incomplete”: it cannot therefore be the subject of a logic.<sup>115</sup> In Hegel’s *Aesthetics* too, the insistent unworking of the idea’s “adequate embodiment” recognizes the idea as a certain will that Schelling analyzes in *Ages of the World* as the rotary motion of positive and negative drives, projection and resistance, in which even synthesis is only a moment. Yet, as we ask what the word idea tells us about idealism, Hegel’s (in)adequate embodiment is a useful corrective to Schopenhauer’s reduction of the idea to pure will, which is itself caught within a rotary motion that reconstructs what Schopenhauer deconstructs. This “restless fermentation” of the idea<sup>116</sup> constitutes the vitality of idealism, as a Romanticism in which consciousness has yet to become that spirit which, as Ricoeur says, “is not directed toward another who is lacking to it, but is complete within itself.”<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Schelling, *Ages of the World*, 57-9.

<sup>111</sup> Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 32.

<sup>112</sup> See Sebastian Gardner, quoting Christopher Janaway, in “Schopenhauer, Will, and the Unconscious,” *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer*, ed. by Christopher Janaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 415 n.

<sup>113</sup> Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 30-2.

<sup>114</sup> Schelling, *Ages of the World*, 86.

<sup>115</sup> Coleridge, *Shorter Works and Fragments*, 2, pp. 1426-7, 1436-7.

<sup>116</sup> Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 438.

<sup>117</sup> Ricoeur, “Hegel and Husserl,” 129-31.