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Idealism and Education: Continuities and Transformations in Schelling's Philosophy and Its Implications for a Philosophy of Education

Kristian Simcox

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**IDEALISM AND EDUCATION: CONTINUITIES AND
TRANSFORMATIONS IN SCHELLING'S PHILOSOPHY AND
ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR A PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION**

by

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DISSERTATION

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Requirements for the Degree of

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IDEALISM AND EDUCATION

by

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ABSTRACT

This project is centrally concerned with the connection of Schelling's philosophy of education to his broader philosophical commitments, from his identity-philosophy period to his middle period philosophy of freedom. I argue that, while there are some essential threads of continuity from Schelling's earlier views to his middle period philosophy that should not be ignored, there are some basic problems inhering in the identity-philosophy system that motivate some radical transformations in his views by 1809. I argue that these transformations must result in a rethinking of his earlier views on university education, as expressed in his 1802-1803 lectures *On University Studies*. I begin with an exposition of Schelling's absolute idealism, specifically as it is presented in his 1802 *Bruno* dialogue. This lays the ground for the discussion of Schelling's philosophy of education in his 1802 *Lectures on the Method of University Studies*. In an analysis of those *Lectures*, I show the direct implications of his identity-philosophy for his plan for a reformation of the university. I then trace the developments and transformations of his idealism in his 1809 essay *Of Human Freedom*. In my explication of this later text, I show that certain basic features of Schelling's earlier educational

program would have to be abandoned in light of these later developments in his philosophical project.

This project is one of historical scholarship. I aim to bring into clearer light the nature of Schelling's philosophy of education in particular, and his philosophy in general as it developed over the course of the early 1800's. The research presented here, while valuable in its own right, also lays the groundwork for future studies of Schelling's relationship to other major historical figures of philosophy, such as Heidegger, enriching our understanding of each through the other.

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Introduction

The announcement of the project of critical philosophy by Immanuel Kant, with the publication of *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781, quickly inspired critics and critical admirers. Among the critics who argued for the abandonment of Kantianism was Friedrich Schiller, who saw reason as a “torch in a dungeon,” suggesting, as Joseph Esposito observes in his *Schelling’s Idealism and Philosophy of Nature*, that the critical philosophy “had sown the seeds of its own destruction, for it had not critically established the conditions for its own possibility” (19). Many of Kant’s admirers shared this latter concern—that the critical philosophy of Kant had failed to establish its own justificatory ground—but responded with an attempt to supply “a transcendental deduction of the possibility of critical philosophy itself,” rather than dispose of the project altogether (Esposito 19). This path, initiated by figures such as Karl Reinhold and J. G. Fichte, would form an approach that would eventually take the name of “German Idealism.”¹ This project would later be inherited and cultivated by, among others, Georg W. F. Hegel and Friedrich W. J. Schelling, the latter of whom is the focus of the following study.

In his 2005 book, *All or Nothing*, Paul Franks notes that Reinhold, who would become the first of the German idealists, introduced Kant to widespread interest by presenting the Kantian critical philosophy as an answer to the “Spinozism controversy” of the mid-1780’s (10). This controversy arises from Friedrich Jacobi’s argument, in 1785, that Spinoza’s philosophical system is the one that escapes the “Agrippan trilemma” of justification. The Agrippan trilemma is offered by the skeptic who aims to show that any answer to a “why-question” lacks satisfactory justification, for “it is either

¹ As many commentators note, this term encompasses such a way variety of concerns and methodologies that it is a risky designation. There are, though, some basic features that tie these “German Idealisms” together, such as the development out of the attempt to complete Kant’s philosophy.

a brute assertion that itself lacks justification, or a justification that raises a further why-question, or a justification that presupposes what it is supposed to establish” (Franks 17-18). If the skeptic successfully demonstrates that one of these problems attends the answer to the why-question, “then any response you give to the why-question will either terminate arbitrarily, or lead to an infinite regress, or move in a circle” (Franks 18).

The German idealists, along with Jacobi, hold the view that a genuine justification only exists in a system that is such that “every particular (object, fact, or judgment) be determined through its role within the whole” and that “the whole be grounded in an absolute principle that is immanent and not transcendent” (Franks 9-10). Jacobi emphasizes that Spinoza’s system offers the best (rationalist) answer to this trilemma, but that this system ought to be avoided at all costs, for adherence to it would dissolve the individuality of anyone who would embrace it (because such a system allows no meaningful room for individuals). This is not only a theoretical problem but a practical one: morality cannot withstand this annihilation of the individual. The German idealists do not accept Jacobi’s conclusion. Thus “they face the problem of developing a version of Spinozism that escapes not only the Agrippan trilemma, but also what Jacobi calls nihilism” (Franks 10). This goes a long way toward understanding the German idealists’ concern with the basic justifications of the Kantian critical philosophy. Although Kant himself did not embrace Spinoza’s system, his project was otherwise tremendously influential to the German idealists. As the German idealists see it, however, the critical philosophy cannot be salvaged unless it is systematized such that it triumphs over the challenges to justification raised by the Agrippan trilemma.

From 1789-1791, while holding the chair of Critical Philosophy at the University of Jena, Reinhold presents lectures in what would come to be called his “Elementary Philosophy.” Frederick Beiser remarks in his 2002 book, *German Idealism: The Struggle against Subjectivism, 1791-1801*, that the “Elementary Philosophy” “was first and foremost an attempt to systematize and provide a foundation for the critical philosophy [by deriving] all the main results of the critical philosophy from a single self-evident first principle, which would express a fundamental ‘fact of consciousness’” (Beiser 227). Reinhold claims to discover this “fact of consciousness” in representation, following Kant’s claim, “that all forms of consciousness could be regarded as species of representation” (Beiser 227). It is by appeal to representation that Reinhold also seeks to resolve a problem of dualism present in Kant’s philosophy, namely, the skepticism that arises from the distinction between an object as appearance and as a thing-in-itself. In response to this Kantian dualism, “Reinhold proposed a triadic relation of subject-representation-object, and sought to answer the question of *how representations* are formed,” instead of where they come from, as was Kant’s concern (Esposito 161). “Then in order to overcome the Kantian difficulty over things-in-themselves, [Reinhold] considered noumena mere regulative Ideas in epistemology” (Esposito 161).

Schelling rejects this approach, for it amounts to an epistemology without an adequate ontology. Schelling inherits Fichte’s concern with the Kantian dualism of phenomena and noumena, namely, that the latter are posited by reason and then treated as inaccessible. Fichte notes a prior problem with Reinhold’s account. While Fichte shares the view that a system must begin from a self-evident first principle, he rejects representation as this first principle, for the simple reason that representation clearly

presupposes a subject to whom it is represented. Fichte, then, moves the principle one step back: “the possibility of representation depends upon the *acts* (possible or actual) by which the subject relates itself to, and distinguishes itself from, the conscious state and its object” (Beiser, *German Idealism* 228). The subjective act of distinguishing self and not-self, an unconditioned act in which reason determines the external world as finite (and thus defends against its own annihilation as individual subject) now occupies the status of first principle. This focus on act, in turn, provides to Fichte a hint for the unity of theoretical and practical reason asserted by Kant: the external world emerges (in representation) and exists as a means for the subject to carry out its moral obligations.

This is the scene upon which Schelling arrives in the early- to mid-1790’s. Schelling shared in common with his predecessors an admiration for Kant’s accomplishments, and a dissatisfaction with the evident lack of a justificatory foundation for the critical philosophy and with the dualism established between the phenomenal and noumenal realms. Schelling initially viewed himself as an adherent of Fichte’s idealism, seeking to assist in the completion of Kant’s project through the completion of Fichte’s. Even while outwardly maintaining an intellectual affiliation with Fichte’s idealism, however, Schelling would come to see that it needed an “objective” complement. He perceived the basic problem of modern philosophy to lie in its rigid dualisms, which expressed a disruption in the original unity between human and nature, and that modern philosophy had effected an annihilation of nature. Nature was in need of recovery, for a true understanding of human subjectivity requires an account of its own emergence from or equi-primordially with nature.

If nature, or the real or objective side, is at least equally original with subjectivity, as became Schelling's view, then there is an inevitable conflict with Fichte's idealism. "If nature coexists with thought, or even precedes it, then the *first* task of philosophy is not to chart the realm of the self's unconditioned, reflective experience, but to understand the nature of the original relation between self and nature" (Esposito 35). Although Schelling initially conceived of his nature-philosophy as a necessary complement to Fichte's idealism, it contained within it the seeds of the coming departure from Fichte. As he developed his nature-philosophy as the objective counterpart to Fichte's subjective idealism (as Schelling saw it), he came to realize the need for an even more fundamental unity of the objective and subjective, or real and ideal sides. This he would discover in the absolute of his identity-philosophy. The absolute identity of thought and being, Schelling argued, is the basic condition of the possibility of knowledge at all. This absolute identity, moreover, was to be grasped through the act of intellectual intuition—an act that Kant unequivocally denied to be possible for the human subject.

It is at this stage in Schelling's career that my study begins. In what follows, I trace some of the central movements in Schelling's philosophy, starting with the identity-philosophy as it takes shape from 1800-1803, and then as it unravels in the revelations of his middle-period works, especially his treatise on freedom of 1809. I do so, moreover, through the framework of Schelling's philosophy of education. That is, I show the essential features of his vision for university study as it is rooted in his identity-philosophy, and I argue for the implications of his transformations in his general philosophical commitments by 1809 for that vision.

One of my chief aims in this project, then, is to offer a reading of several of Schelling's texts that makes explicit the connection between his philosophy of education and his broader philosophical project, and in doing so, to improve our understanding of his philosophy of education. To this end, I present an interpretation of his 1802-1803 *On University Studies*, read within the context of other texts of this period, especially his *Bruno* dialogue (also of 1802). I then trace the development of his thinking into the *Philosophical Inquiries into the Essence of Human Freedom* of 1809, focusing especially on the implications for his philosophy of education that result from the fundamental changes in his more general philosophical commitments. Finally, I raise some questions concerning the impact of Schelling's thinking for the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, specifically as it pertains to the latter's own philosophy of education.

In the first chapter, I argue for an epistemological reading of Schelling's identity-philosophy that nevertheless has a basis in certain important ontological commitments. Primarily, I argue that Schelling's chief concern is to offer a system that overcomes the rigid dualisms plaguing the philosophy of his era. I begin with an examination of Schelling's search, in his 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism*, for an avenue into the absolute that re-unites thought and nature, and that culminates in the art-product. The climax of this text arrives in an analysis of the artwork as the product that radiates the identity of freedom and necessity.

In the context of this discussion, I respond to Devin Shaw's argument, from his *Freedom and Nature in Schelling's Philosophy of Art*, that art occupies the priority of place in Schelling's philosophy from his early mature works of the mid-1790's through at least the latter part of the next decade (prior to the publication of *Human Freedom* in

1809). I argue that, while the artwork is inarguably the keystone of his system in 1800, it does not retain this position by the time of the composition of *Bruno* two years later. While art remains important as Schelling's identity-philosophy develops, it clearly steps aside as philosophy ascends. Not only is this evident from what Schelling says about art and its relationship to truth in *Bruno* and the contemporary *University Studies*, I argue that there are tensions internal to the 1800 *System* that necessitate Schelling's move away from his position on art in that text.

In the second chapter, the focus turns to the argument of 1802's *Bruno* itself. My task in this chapter is to elucidate the essential threads of Schelling's philosophy at this time in his career. If one of my chief aims is to show the ways in which Schelling's philosophy of education is situated within his broader philosophical project, it is of course necessary to offer an exposition of that broader philosophical project. My analysis of *Bruno* will set the stage for my reading of *University Studies*, in the following chapter.

There are several reasons for choosing this text as the focus. First, it appears in 1802, the same year that Schelling presents his lectures on *University Studies*, so it is representative of his philosophical commitments at the time. In fact, it is not merely representative; I would argue that it is exemplary in this regard. The full title of this dialogue—*Bruno: or, On the Natural and the Divine Principle of Things*—is especially indicative of its content: the natural and the divine, traditionally considered to be opposed realms, are here treated as dual manifestations of *one* principle. It is no surprise to discover, then, that Schelling presents a detailed and sustained treatment of his identity-philosophy in this work.

The content and format of the *Bruno* dialogue also reflects its historical situation (a feature that is important to my overall approach to understanding Schelling's works). By presenting his philosophy here in the form of a dialogue, Schelling explicitly develops his arguments in contrast to opposing philosophical positions—most notably his former mentor Fichte. The dialogue takes place between four interlocutors over the course of a night: Anselm, a Platonist; Alexander, whose philosophical commitments are perhaps less clear; Lucian, who presumably represents Fichte; and Bruno, who is Schelling's own mouthpiece (it is noteworthy, I think, that Bruno does not enter the discussion until much later than the others—perhaps symbolic of Schelling's own historical relationship to the others). The heart of the text consists of a battle between Lucian and Bruno, though this “battle” might be better characterized as a lengthy exposition by Bruno of Schelling's own identity-philosophy, occasionally interrupted by an exchange between Lucian and Bruno. Naturally, Bruno wins the day. In part at least, the *Bruno* can thus be read as Schelling's account of his own development out of, opposition to, and triumph over Fichte's subjective idealism.

Of course, one thing that Schelling continues to hold in common with Fichte in 1802 is the motivation to overcome (or surpass, or bring to completion) Kant's critical philosophy. Schelling is dissatisfied by the limits placed by Kant on the use of reason, and aims to resume the project of speculative metaphysics despite Kant's well-argued caution against such endeavors. At the same time, Schelling is aware of the strength of Kant's arguments on this matter, and in no way intends to disregard them outright. Rather, Schelling seeks to engage in a kind of speculative metaphysics that respects the

truth in Kant's critical philosophy. Much of the *Bruno* can be understood as Schelling's response to Kantian criticism.²

Schelling is equally if not more dissatisfied with the dualism of Kant—especially the phenomenal-noumenal dichotomy—which he likely takes to be a consequence of the critical philosophy.³ In his attempt to surpass the limits of the critical philosophy and to overcome Kant's dualism, Schelling arrives at identity-philosophy, which finds its ground in what Schelling terms “the absolute.” It is thus necessary to discuss Schelling's understanding of the absolute, the role it plays in his system, and the relationship of the individual to it. In order to grasp what is at stake in Schelling's *On University Studies*, I clarify at least three central aspects of the *Bruno*: Schelling's treatments of the opposition of infinite and finite, of the identity of knowing and intuition, and of the relation of the soul to the body. A grasp of the first subject, the relation of finite to infinite, allows us to see more clearly the way in which the various subject matters of university study are unified in the principle of absolute identity. The second and third aspects concern the possibility of knowledge of nature generally, and of the possibility of insight into the idea of the absolute, in which all particular concepts and objects are unified. The nature and possibility of knowledge is, of course, crucial for a program that is to organize an institution that has knowledge as its primary aim. These analyses of Schelling's broader

² Even some forty years later, in his *Berlin Lectures*, Schelling remains insistent on the importance of keeping Kant close (perhaps as both friend and enemy), disputing “the opinion that any position can be advanced that is completely removed from a connection to Kant,” and suggesting that: “Whoever wishes to make philosophy their major field of study must always begin with Kant” (110-11).

³ In his overturning of this Kantian dualism, Schelling denies the existence of the inaccessible noumenal world, asserting only a world of appearances—or rather, that the very distinction between appearance and thing-in-itself is drawn within the phenomenal realm. This paves the way for a speculative metaphysics that heeds the warnings of Kantian criticism.

commitments of his identity-philosophy lay the groundwork for arguments I present in the third and fourth chapters.

Schelling's methodology in responding to the perceived problems of Kant's philosophy differs from that of Fichte, and Schelling's attack on Fichte in the *Bruno* is revealing in understanding his (Schelling's) surpassing of Kantian dualism. That is, I elucidate the arguments in *Bruno* that support the overcoming of the dualism of spirit and nature, and I think that certain passages of Schelling's refutation of Fichte's methodological approach to idealism do just that. For example, Schelling critiques Fichte's starting point, arguing that it is inadequate: Following a lengthy exchange, Bruno (Schelling) forces Lucian (Fichte) to agree that the identity that exists in what the latter calls "absolute knowing" (Fichte-Lucian's starting point) is not absolute, but merely a "relative identity" (Schelling, *Bruno* 154). According to Schelling, it follows from this that,

As soon as any relative identity is posited as real, immediately and necessarily so is its opposite. So, for example, if the real detaches itself from absolute identity and subsists within the ideal, so too the ideal detaches itself by reason of its connection to the real. The upshot, viewed from the perspective of absolute identity, is this general rule: Absolute identity must necessarily appear as two distinct though correlated points, one of which actualizes the ideal through the real [and this is nature], the other of which actualizes the real as such by means of the ideal [and this is the domain of consciousness]. (*Bruno* 155)

The argument, then, is that each of the relative identities (ideal/real, mind/nature, thought/being, and so on) are mutually interdependent, equally primary, and rooted in the more fundamental absolute identity. Thus, the positing of consciousness (which is the relative identity of thought and being in which being is determined by thought) requires at the same time the positing of nature (the relative identity of being and thought in which thought is determined by being), and vice versa. In other words, if there is a self thinking about a world of objects, there must in fact *be* a world of objects to think about. These two relative identities rest upon the more fundamental identity of identity and difference, or absolute identity. From the standpoint of absolute identity, a strict dichotomy of spirit and nature cannot be maintained.

In Chapter Three, I offer a reading of Schelling's 1802-1803 *Lectures on the Method of University Studies* through the framework of his identity-philosophy as I've presented it in the two preceding chapters. In these Lectures, Schelling lays out his vision for the university, including arguments for its proper task and organization. I show *why* Schelling is committed to this particular vision of the university at this stage of his career, on the basis of the implications of his system of identity-philosophy. A further upshot of the reading I offer of *University Studies* is that it affords a clear, a perhaps more concrete, insight into the nature of the identity-philosophy itself. That is, by examining some of the specific implications of identity-philosophy for the university as Schelling himself understands it, we can get a better foothold in an admittedly obscure and potentially overwhelming philosophical viewpoint. Schelling's identity-philosophy is often criticized on the grounds of its obscurity, with some concluding that it amounts to no more than romantic mysticism. I do not think this is the case—I find in it a sophisticated

philosophical argument—and the *University Studies* lectures aid in revealing some practical implications of Schelling's early system.

The reading of *University Studies* that I offer is not presented only within the context of the identity-philosophy but also with a view of certain historical circumstances that motivate Schelling's arguments. I begin with a general historical account of the state of the university in Germany leading up to Schelling's appointment to professor at the University of Jena. Schelling's vision for the university is grounded in the unity of the absolute—a clear implication of the philosophy of identity. But it aims to respond to another pressing concern as well, namely, what he and his contemporaries called the *Bildungsfrage*, and the view that university is the proper arena for the transformation of the individual. I look to those moments in *University Studies* that respond to this problem.

Fate would not look favorably, as it turns out, on Schelling's identity-philosophy. In chapters two and three, I elucidate some of the tensions inhering within the system that ultimately gave way to its undoing. One implication of the unraveling of a philosophical system is that the vision for an institution grounded in that system is likely to crumble along with it. I raise the concern, at the conclusion of chapter three and again in chapter four, that Schelling's early philosophy of education suffers from the problems that plague the identity-philosophy system itself. I argue that these problems can be seen within the context of his university program, as well as within the more general context of the system itself.

In the fourth chapter, I offer a reading of Schelling's 1809 work, *Philosophical Investigations into the Nature of Human Freedom*, in which I argue that, despite important and radical shifts from his earlier philosophical orientation, Schelling

maintains some essential threads of continuity from his earlier idealist philosophy. For this reason, I argue that a moniker often applied to the period of Schelling's career, "post-idealism," is troublingly misleading (its other merits notwithstanding). For one, it is clear that Schelling continues to be motivated, in *Human Freedom*, by the very problems that motivated his earlier German idealist work (and German idealism generally), including the Spinozism controversy discussed above. As I argue below, Schelling dedicates considerable effort to clarifying his position on his philosophy's relationship to Spinozist pantheism. In fact, he seems to be quite concerned to correct some misinterpretations of his earlier work, by emphasizing the "freedom" aspect of his "Spinozism of freedom" project of the identity-philosophy. We can view this in the light of certain critiques of Schelling's work, Hegel's chief among them, that reduce Schelling's philosophy to a repetition of Spinoza's monism (and thus guilty of the same dissolution of individuality and freedom characteristic of Spinoza's own account). Many passages from *Human Freedom* indicate that Schelling worried that he had emphasized the Spinozist side of his philosophy at the expense of the importance of the Fichtean influence (perhaps in part out of a spirit of rebellion against his former mentor).

At the same time, I highlight some of the fundamental differences between the manner in which Schelling addresses this problem (namely, defending a version of pantheism against the charges of nihilism levied by Jacobi) at the earlier and later stages of his career. One central point of difference concerns his optimism over the possibility of bringing the absolute to light. That is, in the earlier philosophy Schelling works to complete (his version of) the Kantian philosophy by providing it with a justificatory ground, and he seeks to demonstrate, for instance, the genesis of self-consciousness out

of a real, natural ground. In the 1809 work, we see Schelling coming to terms with the brute contingency of existence. He now argues that the entire system of reason is generated out of a ground different from itself, and one such that it cannot be fully explicated by reason. In so doing, he aims to preserve room for freedom even in relation to the necessity of a system of reason.

After arguing for this reading of the 1809 text, I turn to some considerations of the implications for Schelling's philosophy of education. I raise the question, "What kind of philosophy of education might Schelling have endorsed in 1809?" That is, I argue for what essential features of his 1802 program for the university would need to be abandoned by the author of the 1809 essay. Although I am reluctant to speculate about precisely what kind of university program Schelling might have formulated in 1809, there are some clues in *Human Freedom* of important ways in which Schelling's philosophy of education evolved between 1802 and 1809, chief among them the introduction of a "dark, unruly ground" resistant to conceptual clarification and thus also of educational transmission.

Finally, in the concluding chapter of this project, I point to some further possibilities for Schelling scholarship that can grow from the work I do here, focusing especially on the affinities between Schelling and Heidegger at various stages of their respective careers. In his article, "Reading Schelling after Heidegger," Peter Warnek argues that we need to look to Heidegger (as a prominent figure in the historical reception of Schelling) in order to understand Schelling. I add that we must look to Schelling in order to understand Heidegger. There are manifold ways in which the content and movements of Heidegger's work echo those of Schelling. In examining these two greater

thinkers together—including and especially their respective views on philosophy and education—there is much that we can learn about each of them. This issue is of special concern given the intimate connection between Heidegger’s university vision and his deeply troubling political affiliations of the 1930’s (as Iain Thomson reveals in his 2005 book, *Heidegger on Ontotheology: Technology and the Politics of Education*). My concluding chapter raises some questions that can guide such a reading, and suggests some frameworks for responding to these questions.

In what follows, then, I begin with an exposition of Schelling’s absolute idealism, specifically as it is presented in his 1802 *Bruno* dialogue. This lays the ground for the discussion of Schelling’s philosophy of education in his 1802 *Lectures on the Method of University Studies*. In an analysis of those *Lectures*, I show the direct implications of his identity-philosophy for his plan for a reformation of the university; that is, I demonstrate that and how his philosophy of education in 1802 is rooted in his more general philosophical commitments of that time. I then trace the developments and transformation of his idealism in his 1809 essay *Of Human Freedom*. In my explication of this later text, I argue for the implications of the transformations of his philosophical commitments for his earlier philosophy of education. In other words, I hope show that certain basic features of Schelling’s earlier educational program would have to be abandoned in light of these later developments in his philosophical project.

Along the way, I hope to achieve several other goals as well. First, I understand this project as one of historical scholarship. That is, I aim to bring into clearer light the nature of Schelling’s philosophy of education in particular, and his philosophy in general as it developed over the course of the early 1800’s. Moreover, I see myself in this project

as contributing to the work being done by those who are bringing to light the relationship of Schelling to later thinkers, specifically of the twentieth century. The research presented here, while valuable in its own right, also lays the groundwork for future studies of Schelling's relationship to other major historical figures of philosophy, such as Heidegger, enriching our understanding of each through the other.

Chapter 1: The Task of the System of Absolute Identity

1.1: The Possibility of Knowledge

The *Bruno* dialogue is said to fall within Schelling's identity-philosophy period.⁴

There are perhaps several ways of understanding Schelling's undertakings in general during this period, and thus in this 1802 text. For one, Schelling is faced with the task of overcoming the dualism of mind and body entrenched in modern philosophy.⁵ Schelling refers to this tradition of dualistic thinking as the basic problem of modern philosophy, as a "great disaster" and "spiritual sickness." He also aims to establish and explain the possibility and conditions of knowledge of nature. This task is, of course, intimately related to the previous one (overcoming dualistic thinking), because for Schelling having knowledge of nature entails bridging the divide, introduced in modern philosophy, between mind and body, or self and nature. In this sense, what Hegel called the "task of philosophy" in his 1801 *Difference* essay holds true for Schelling in 1802 as well: to understand and recover the original relation of self and nature.

According to Schelling, the condition of knowledge *at all* is the absolute identity of subject and object (or thought and being, or mind and nature, etc.). As he asserts in *University Studies*, "without intellectual intuition, no philosophy" (*University Studies* 49).

⁴ The term "absolute idealism" might be considered appropriate for this period also, and was used at times by Schelling himself. While Schelling is working within the idealist tradition initiated by Kant and developed by Reinhold and Fichte, and he is concerned with the absolute identity of subjective idealism (à la Fichte) and objective idealism (Schelling's own, earlier contribution), the moniker "absolute idealism" is more frequently associated with Hegel—who sought to distance himself from Schelling in his employment of this term. For that reason, I opt for the equally-representative "identity-philosophy" instead.

⁵ The mind/body dualism is one of a handful of dualisms that Schelling aims to overcome, several of which will be addressed below. As will be shown below, the overcoming of dualistic thinking does not mean the same thing as the complete dissolution of dualistic terminology.

Intellectual intuition—a term that in itself expresses the sort of identity he seeks (of thought and being/intuition)—means, for Schelling, “the capacity to see the universal in the particular, the infinite in the finite, and indeed to unite both in a living unity” (*University Studies* 49). The problem that Schelling faces, then, is one of justification: Schelling confesses that such absolute knowledge is indemonstrable, which would mean that its reality cannot be established. Thus it would appear that his project is doomed from the start, for if absolute identity is the condition of knowledge, and such knowledge is indemonstrable, then the condition of knowledge evidently cannot be established.

Schelling’s identity-philosophy period does not, of course, begin with the *Bruno*. We find him tarrying with similar problems, for instance, in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* of 1800.⁶ There, Schelling attempts resolve the problem of justifying the claims to absolute identity by establishing its *possibility* rather than its reality.⁷ His approach involves an appeal to the art-product. Although he abandons this approach in the *Bruno*, I think it would prove worthwhile to examine Schelling’s use of the art-product in the *System* to support his claims to absolute identity, for in doing so we can also observe some of the problems with this approach, which I think play a role in motivating his approach in *Bruno* two years later.

⁶ Some commentators mark 1801 as the beginning of this period, picking out *Presentation of My System of Philosophy* as its inaugural text. This is misleading for a number of reasons, however. See Andrew Bowie’s “Introduction,” in Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press: New York, 1994, page 13.) It will be clear from what I argue below, in any case, that Schelling’s approach in the 1800 *System* already locates it within the identity-philosophy framework.

⁷ This is perhaps a slyer move than it would seem, as he later suggests that possibility and actuality are identified.

1.2: Art and the Absolute in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*

In the concluding part of the *System*, Schelling seeks a product that reflects the identity of freedom and nature in such a way that is available for consciousness. If such a product can be deduced, then, Schelling claims, we will be able to recognize at the same time the faculty for absolute knowledge, which in this case is aesthetic intuition: “If we know the product of the intuition, we are also acquainted with the intuition itself, and hence we need only derive the product, in order to derive the intuition” (*System* 219). Again, Schelling is here seeking the faculty of absolute knowledge, which means a faculty by which the original unity of self and nature is recovered. At the outset of Part Six of the *System*, he postulates that this faculty is aesthetic intuition, which can “bring together that which exists in separation in the appearance of freedom and in the intuition of the natural product” (219). The product of this intuition, then, will share conscious intent with the product of freedom, and will share the character of unconscious production with the product of nature. These two products—of freedom and of nature—are, viewed separately, contrary to one another. Nature, Schelling claims, “begins as unconscious and ends as conscious” (219). That is, the productive process of nature is characterized by a kind of blind activity, not in itself purposive, but its products reflect a teleological—and thus rational—structure. The product of freedom (which is the product of the ego), by contrast, is the result of a productive process that “must begin (subjectively) with consciousness, and end without consciousness, or *objectively*” (219). In other words, this activity is accompanied by self-knowledge, is initiated by conscious intent, but its product reflects back to the ego a character of otherness (a character that receives clearer treatment below).

In seeking such a product, however, we arrive at a “manifest contradiction” (220). In the product being sought—the product that will provide a justificatory ground for the possibility of knowledge of absolute identity—the “conscious and unconscious activities are to be absolutely one” (220). Moreover, these activities are to be identified for consciousness; otherwise, the product would be irrelevant for securing the possibility of *knowing* the absolute. Yet this is not possible, Schelling notes, “unless the self is conscious of the production” (220). And here lies the contradiction: “if it [the self] is so, the two activities must be separated, for this is a necessary condition for being conscious of production. So the two activities must be one, since otherwise there is no identity, and yet must both be separated, since otherwise there is identity, but not for the self” (220).

The problem, then, is how to resolve this contradiction. When it is resolved the deduction of the art-product will be complete, and the possibility of aesthetic intuition, and with it, absolute knowledge, will be demonstrated. Schelling’s first step in his attempt to resolve this contradiction is to note that in aesthetic production the conscious and unconscious activities must be separated, but in a qualified fashion. The activities must be separated, for this meets the criterion of the possibility for consciousness of production, noted above. Yet the activities must be separated for appearance only, and not to infinity (as in the ideal, free act).⁸ Otherwise, the product could never be complete. The conscious and unconscious activities must be separated, in other words, but only in such a way that the original identity will be re-established at the end of production: “The identity of the two was to be abolished only for the sake of consciousness, but the production is to end in unconsciousness; so there must be a point at which the two merge

⁸ The free act is absolutely unconditioned, and thus stripped of any marks of finitude.

into one; and conversely, where the two merge into one, the production must cease to appear as a free one” (220-221).

When this point is reached—when the two activities merge into one—production ceases absolutely. Schelling claims that here “it must be impossible for the producer to go on producing; for the condition of all producing is precisely the opposition between conscious and unconscious activity; but here they have absolutely to coincide, and thus within the intelligence all conflict has to be eliminated, all contradiction reconciled” (221). Thus the opposition of the two activities ends, and with this we encounter the *impossibility* of continued production; that is, we encounter an unsurpassable boundary to freedom (in itself infinite). What begins in freedom, the disruption of the original indifference of self and nature, ends with the removal of the appearance of freedom. In the process of free production, the activity becomes objective and finite. This stopping point coincides with the recognition of the identity by the ego.

Schelling then notes some further features of the product that are reflected back to the ego. For one, he claims, the identity achieved in the product will seem to the producer as though bestowed from elsewhere, as “freely granted by a higher nature, by whose aid the impossible has been made possible” (221). This “higher nature” is the absolute, which makes possible the union of thought and being, freedom and nature, conscious and unconscious. The absolute, moreover, “brings with it an element of the unintended to that which was begun with consciousness and intention” (222). This “element of the unintended” is according to Schelling what we call “genius”; thus, the product is the product of genius, which is of course the art-product. From the artwork, then, we

glimpse a reflected image of the absolute in which the identity of thought and being exists.

At this point, the deduction of the art-product is complete, for the apparent contradiction noted above is resolved, and at least the possibility of absolute knowledge is defended. Schelling follows this with a more detailed analysis of the art-product, which serves mostly to reiterate and further support the case he made in the deduction. This analysis also serves to establish something like a definition of the true artwork, as well as argument for the ontological status of the artwork. The features of the analysis, while interesting, are not essential to the present discussion.⁹ What is important here is that Schelling, in 1800, believes that he has discovered the end of philosophy in the product of art. Philosophy culminates in art, he argues, because the first principle of philosophy becomes objective only in art.

In his insightful *Freedom and Nature in Schelling's Philosophy of Art*, Devin Shaw argues for a reading of Schelling in which the philosophy of art maintains the place of privilege in Schelling's philosophy, from (at least) 1800's *System of Transcendental Idealism* through 1807's *On the Relationship of the Plastic Arts to Philosophy*. Shaw traces the developments of Schelling's dual philosophical commitments from the mid-1790s on, articulating their respective paths as they unfold and finally intersect in the identity-philosophy. The dual systems are, of course, the subjective idealism adopted from Fichte, and the nature-philosophy developed (in part) out of several readings of Spinoza. These two philosophical systems present parallel accounts of, on the one hand, a philosophy of freedom (the Fichtean subjective idealism, presented in the *System* as a

⁹ Possible exception: Schelling's contrasting of the art-product and the organic product of nature (which contains no *necessary* beauty, as the nature-product remains unseparated and thus involves no resolution of discordant elements).

philosophy of history), and on the other, a philosophy of necessity (the Spinozist philosophy of nature). Throughout, Schelling seeks a means to unite the subjective and objective accounts; the result of this union is Schelling's version of absolute idealism and, in the years immediately succeeding the *System*, the identity-philosophy.

On Shaw's reading, the philosophy of art is the keystone of Schelling's philosophical system. As I argued above, this is clearly the case within the context of the argument of the *System*. There, Schelling appeals to aesthetic intuition to "bring together that which exists in separation in the appearance of freedom and in the intuition of the natural product; namely *identity of the conscious* and the *unconscious* in the *self*, and *consciousness of this identity*" (*System* 219). That is, the artist is driven by a conflict of the principles of freedom (conscious) and nature (unconscious), and the identity of these is manifested in the art-product. Shaw insists that Schelling gives priority to artistic activity, because in it identity (of freedom and necessity) is made real (actual), while for philosophy it remains only ideal (possible): "For Schelling, ... artistic production—what he calls aesthetic intuition—is the *real* expression of reason; it objectively produces what philosophy can only address ideally with intellectual intuition" (Shaw 80). While I am reluctant to accept the implication in this, that the absolute is expressed *really* in the art-product (for reasons I argued above, and to which I will return below), I will accept this provisionally, in order to emphasize some problems that arise from this view. In any case, this does seem to be Schelling's view within the framework of the *System* itself. On my reading, Schelling backs off from this to some degree—for reasons I will trace in what follows—and this is the site of my disagreement with Shaw.

Before proceeding, however, it is important to address an apparent case of over-determination here: why would Schelling insist on the priority of the artwork for the expression of the identity of freedom and necessity, when this identity exists—on Schelling’s own account—in the organic product of nature? In support of the view that the organic product could play the role Schelling reserves for the art-product, we can note the (at least somewhat) analogical activities of the artist and organic nature: both involve infinite productivity, which must nonetheless be limited in order for the product to appear. Schelling addresses this potential objection in the *System*: “so far from the merely contingent beauty of nature providing the rule for art, the fact is, rather, that what art creates in its perfection is the principle and norm for the judgment of natural beauty” (227). The “contingency” of natural beauty results from the lack of conscious activity operative in its production. The artist, on the other hand, actively seeks to realize the infinite ideal of beauty itself. Thus “the organic being still exhibits unseparated,” Schelling argues, “what the aesthetic production displays after separation, though united” (226). This union after separation culminates the trajectory of the *System*: the rupture of subject and object, thought and being, inaugurated by philosophical activity is overcome by aesthetic intuition.

Another problem arises here, however: to what does aesthetic intuition refer? Does it belong to art, distinct from philosophy, or rather the philosophy of art (a branch which would belong to philosophy more generally)? On the one hand, the argument is that art surpasses philosophy, because the artwork expresses objectively what philosophy is unable to: the identity of freedom and necessity. On the other hand, it seems to fall to

the philosopher to grasp this, in which case philosophy retains its place of privilege.¹⁰ In fact, Shaw seems to advocate for the latter position. He notes that Schelling distinguishes himself from his Enlightenment predecessors (for whom a philosophy of art aims to establish “external standards of art such as taste, morality, or aesthetics (as a science of sensation)”) by focusing on “the search for the idea produced through art, that is, the truth of art” (Shaw 80).

The primacy of art, then, lies in its capacity to enable the philosopher to grasp the identity of freedom and necessity in a real product. While the artist’s own account supports the philosopher’s discovery (“Just as aesthetic production proceeds from the feeling of a seemingly irresolvable contradiction, so it ends likewise, by the testimony of all artists” (*System* 223)), aesthetic intuition remains a philosophical activity. The artist, through the conscious contribution of his craft and the unconscious contribution of his genius, imparts into his work a reflected identity of freedom and nature, but the philosopher discovers this identity as the realization of her search for truth. The highest moment belongs to the philosopher, but (according to the Schelling of the *System*) she could not accomplish this without the work of the artist. Shaw supports this view in his critique of readings of Schelling that treat artistic activity as autonomous over the philosophic: “To claim that artistic production is over philosophy severs the unity between intellectual intuition and aesthetic intuition” (82). Philosophy needs art in order for identity to be expressed in an objective product; art needs philosophy to deduce the truth of this identity.

¹⁰ Of course, the privilege would still belong to one specific kind of philosophical activity.

As noted above, Schelling backs off of this view in the years immediately following the publication of the *System*.¹¹ Before returning to my reading of the post-*System* period, however, a few other issues concerning Schelling philosophy of art need to be addressed. For one, Shaw's argument for the centrality of art in Schelling's philosophy seems to upset the symmetry that underpins Schelling's identity-philosophy. From the standpoint of the *System* alone, this would not pose a problem.¹² Shaw, however, extends this argument to apply to Schelling's philosophy until at least 1807. To review, Shaw argues that artistic activity is given priority, because it produces as *real* what philosophy expresses only as *ideal*. On what grounds, though, is the objective given priority over the subjective?

To perceive the problem more clearly, we must turn to Schelling's recognition of the limitations of practical reason. Fichte's philosophy as presented in the 1790's argues for the primacy of practical reason. Throughout the late 1790's, Schelling slowly moves away from this view of practical philosophy, first by offering a complement in nature-philosophy (thus giving practical philosophy a place of, at best, co-primacy), and then by subordinating it to art-philosophy by 1800. By the time of the composition of the *System*, Schelling has settled on the view that Fichte's concept of freedom is limited and that, for this reason, his privileging of practical reason for a system fails. It is for this reason that he turns to the art-work, rather than history (or morality), for a demonstration of identity in a product.

¹¹ Schelling seems to glimpse some of the problems with this account even within the *System* (in a way that clearly draws on Romantic influence, and also aptly describes a feature of poetry—contra art—that plays a central role for later-period Heidegger): “Besides what he has put into his work with manifest intention, the artist seems instinctively, as it were, to have depicted therein an infinity, which no finite understanding is capable of developing to the full.” (*System* 225)

¹² That is, it would not pose a problem for Schelling scholarship. Again, I think that a trouble is brewing already for Schelling, which motivates some of the moves he makes in the ensuing years,

Shaw notes that Schelling's criticism of Fichte on freedom "is one of his important contributions to early German Idealism, presaging Hegel's criticisms of the 'bad infinity' of practical reason" (87). From the standpoint of theoretical reason, Hegel's criticism of the "bad infinity" targets the concept of infinity often employed by common consciousness, which is itself the concept of infinity belonging to the understanding. This way of thinking "infinity" refers to a "beyond": the infinite is that which lies beyond the finite. This view fails to properly think the infinite, Hegel shows, because it entails a limitation of the infinite by the finite: if the infinite is "beyond" the finite, then it is excluded from the finite. The infinite, of course, is by definition immune from limitation, so thinking it as "beyond" results in a contradiction. This view of infinity is, then, hopelessly confused. Hegel argues instead for an infinity that dialectically incorporates the finite.¹³

What Hegel demonstrates with regard to infinity from the theoretical standpoint applies to the practical as well. The infinity of practical reason can be thought as perfect virtue. The infinite given to practical reason seeks to be realized by action; practical reason seeks a notion of the good, which can in turn be realized as an objective product in ethical activity. Such a product can never in fact be fully realized, however, which leaves us to conclude that the (infinite) lies beyond the possibility of human activity. Schelling's recognition of this limitation of practical reason motivates, in 1800, the promotion of the artwork to the pinnacle of his system:

The subordination of practical philosophy to the philosophy of art occurs because the infinite striving of practice can never be completely objective,

¹³ A more detailed discussion of Hegel's on infinity appears in my discussion of Schelling's treatment of infinity and finitude below.

and it itself relies on the separation of subject and object in appearances, while aesthetic intuition results in the artwork, which presents...the infinite in finite form.¹⁴ (Shaw 81)

Schelling abandons a commitment to the primacy of freedom, then, because the work of freedom never becomes fully objective; what is unified in practical activity is not expressed in a product. For similar reasons, Schelling places philosophy of art over theoretical philosophy: art presents in an object what for (theoretical) philosophy remains “only” ideal. While absolute identity (of freedom and nature) is given to intellectual intuition, its expression is merely ideal and subjective. Aesthetic intuition overcomes this supposed limitation by presenting absolute identity in a real product.¹⁵ It not clear, however, why objectivity should be privileged over subjectivity in this way. Within the context of the *System* alone, this may not seem problematic. But Schelling continued to develop his philosophy in the years immediately following the publication of the *System*, and the system presented in the *Bruno* is at odds with such prioritizing. By that time, Schelling is committed to an identity-philosophy in which opposites stand in a relation of indifference, and he develops an account of the potencies of real and ideal along a spectrum in a way that precludes an asymmetrical understanding of these opposites.¹⁶

¹⁴ Schelling “presages” Hegel’s criticism of the “bad infinity,” then, by elucidating the limitations of Fichte’s concept of freedom, but also adopts this (negative) view of practical reason. On this reading, it seems, Schelling recognizes the problems of the bad infinity, but fails to perceive the proper notion of infinity, instead developing an account of aesthetic intuition.

¹⁵ Shaw describes the genius’ artwork as “objective proof” of identity (81).

¹⁶ One might respond to this objection of asymmetry by arguing that, in fact, the product of art features symmetry that is lacking in the products of nature. The response might go as follows: art incorporates subjective activity into an objective product, which is not true of nature. This response is plausible, but is attended by its own problems. An adequate treatment of this response would require a lengthy analysis of Schelling’s nature-philosophy texts, especially 1799’s *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*. This analysis will be reserved for a future project.

1.3: The Descent of Art: *Bruno*

Leaving aside, now, the question of the role of the artwork in Schelling's philosophy through 1800, let us turn briefly again to its role in the immediately ensuing years. As discussed above, Schelling seems quite clear in his change of attitude concerning the primacy of art by the time he composes the *Bruno*. There are several indicators in that document that Schelling has changed his position on this issue. First, which I explored in some detail above, the argument is presented early in the *Bruno* that no artwork is capable of achieving its own task: true beauty remains beyond the possibility of representation by any finite and temporally-characterized product. By contrast, the philosopher has access, through an intellectual intuition, to genuine and eternal truth. It seems clear, then, that Schelling has replaced the artist with the philosopher at the pinnacle of the system.

One reservation that might be expressed here is that it is Anselm, rather than Bruno, who presents this argument within the dialogue. Anselm represents a Platonist philosophy, while Bruno is quite clearly the mouthpiece of Schelling. Should we take Anselm's argument with a grain of salt, then, and hesitate to attribute his conclusions to Schelling? In fact, Anselm's presentation of this argument provides a further hint of Schelling's own move away from the argument he presents in *System* and earlier. Schelling's choice to have this discussion (on art and beauty) take place between Anselm and Alexander tells us that he perceives those features of his work to be, at least in some respects, outdated. Those conclusions are relegated to a past which is interesting primarily as means to trace the path to his current system; they should not, however, be seen as continuing to belong to the newly refined identity-philosophy. (Moreover, Anselm's opening line of the dialogue—"Lucian, would you repeat what you said

yesterday about the relation of truth and beauty”—tells us that the initial discussion of the *Bruno* dialogue has the character of recapitulation (119).) The fact that the theme of art is not raised again after Bruno enters the conversation suggests that the artwork no longer has the pride of place it once occupied in Schelling’s work.

Though I will reserve a more detailed exposition of Schelling’s 1802-1803 lectures *On University Studies* for the next chapter, it would be worthwhile to see what Schelling has to say about art in that text at this point. In the fourteenth Lecture, Schelling takes up the issue of “The Science of Art.” He begins with a polemic against art that echoes the treatment from the early discussion in the *Bruno*:

“Philosophers aim at the truth via intellectual intuition, and what they call truth is accessible to the mind’s eye, not to the eye of sense. What, then, can they have to do with art, whose sole purpose is to produce visible beauty and whose products are either merely deceptive images of truth or wholly sensual?” (*University Studies* 144)

This statement might call to mind Plato’s repudiation of art and the poets in the *Republic*, and this is no coincidence, for Schelling mentions Plato by name in this discussion. But Schelling adds that, “unless we determine clearly from what standpoint [Plato] speaks, we will never be able to grasp his richly nuanced thought” (145).

Though Schelling also claims that, “this is true of Plato more than any other philosopher,” we find that he could just as well have been speaking in reference to himself (145). After arguing for a context that would explain Plato’s condemnation of art in such a way that a defense of art could be mounted even within Plato’s philosophy, Schelling emphasizes the importance of art despite the earlier criticism. Schelling argues

that a spiritualized, rather than merely sensuous, art, “is a worthy subject for the philosopher” (146). The question that remains concerns the possibility of an adequate analysis of the essence of art by the philosopher. From the standpoint of identity-philosophy, this is not only possible, but surely an appropriate task of the philosopher:

Everything contained in this world has its archetype or counterpart in another. So absolute is the universal opposition between the real and the ideal that even at the ultimate frontier of the infinite and the finite, where the phenomenal oppositions are resolved in the purest absolute, the relationship asserts itself, this time at the highest level: the relationship between philosophy and art. (147)

So what is this relationship?

Art...is to philosophy what the real is to the ideal. ... This is why philosophy enables us to gain the deepest insights into art; indeed, the philosopher can form a clearer idea of the essence of art than the artist himself. Because the ideal is always a higher reflection of the real, what is real in the artist is, in the philosopher, a higher ideal reflection of it. This shows not only that art can become an object of philosophical knowledge, but also that nothing about art can be known absolutely save in and by philosophy. (147)

Art thus retains a highly significant place in the identity-philosophy, but has clearly been subordinated to philosophy itself.

We might add here, as a note on the role of art in the post-1800 identity-philosophy: Along with the important task of philosophy, to grasp the truth of art, art is also exoteric. It translates the esoteric of philosophy into content for popular

consciousness. It is not necessary for the philosopher (who has access to an intellectual intuition), but offers an aid in elucidating the absolute.

In the *Bruno* dialogue, then, we encounter a significantly different account of the relation of beauty to art, and of the relevance of the creative artist for the possibility of absolute knowledge, from that of *System* two years prior. This new analysis of the art-beauty relationship evidently owes much to Platonic metaphysics, and is articulated in the dialogue by the Platonist figure Anselm just prior to the appearance of Bruno. At this stage in the dialogue, Anselm and his interlocutor Alexander have provisionally established two important claims: genuine truth is in itself eternal and thus non-temporal, and that this is true also for all perfections. The two agree, then, that “nothing in its eternal existence is in any way flawed or imperfect,” and the converse holds as well, that “in the domain of time, everything is necessarily flawed and imperfect” (*Bruno* 125-126).

Anselm’s next task is to establish the identity of truth and beauty.¹⁷ In order to accomplish this task, he needs first to show that beauty is a perfection, for it has already been agreed that all perfections are eternal, and that truth is a perfection. Anselm poses the question of whether beauty is to be included among the perfections, to which Alexander replies in the affirmative, arguing even that beauty “is the most unconditional excellence a thing could have” (126). He supports this assertion by defining beauty as “what the thing really is, considered purely in itself” (126). That is, the value of beauty is measured in itself, while other perfections are measured in terms of their fitness as means

¹⁷ This is the goal Anselm sets at the outset of the dialogue, in the context of refuting the Fichtean Lucian’s assertion that “many works of art could embody the highest sort of truth and yet not, for that reason, deserve the prized title ‘beauty’ too.” (119) Anselm eventually denies that anything could be genuinely true without being beautiful as well, and also denies that works of art truly embody either.

to some further end. The beauty of a thing, moreover, is what is necessary in it, stripped of any contingent properties. Thus, beauty is the most intrinsically perfect excellence.

A consequence of the assertion that beauty is a perfection, however, is that it exists independent of time: “beauty cannot at all come into being within the temporal order,” Anselm concludes, and “nothing in the temporal order can rightly be called beautiful” (126). This precludes the artwork from the category of true beauty, then, for the artwork clearly exists within the temporal order. Schelling has Alexander note this, confessing that the “habit of calling certain natural or artistic objects ‘beautiful’ is quite mistaken” (126).

It is evident, then, that Schelling has revised his position on the status of the artwork between 1800 and 1802. In the *System*, for one, Schelling held that the true artwork not only is beautiful, but necessarily beautiful, whereas the beauty of a natural object is accidental and measured by reference to the artistic object.¹⁸ Schelling in the *Bruno* denies true beauty to things generally, insofar as they exist in time, and reserves the title of “beauty” for eternal concepts alone (127).¹⁹ The use of the term “beauty” for temporal objects now indicates a lack of either linguistic or philosophical rigor. If we are to be precise, we should say that the artwork offers the image of beauty, not beauty itself, and that the image is necessarily flawed.

The further conclusion, then, is that it is the philosopher, not the creative artist, who has access to genuine beauty. The artist trades in images, which are by nature imperfect, whereas the philosopher concerns herself with ideas, which are eternal and thus “necessarily and exclusively beautiful” (127). Interestingly, though, Schelling’s

¹⁸ In the *System*, the criterion for true art, and also for the necessarily beautiful, is the resolution of conscious and unconscious forces.

¹⁹ Thus true beauty always has the quality of necessity.

understanding of the creative process of the artist remains unchanged between 1800 and 1802. In the *Bruno* dialogue, the artwork retains the character of the resolved conflict of conscious and unconscious activities (though the terminology differs). After establishing that any individual thing is beautiful only in virtue of its eternal concept, Anselm questions how the individual, finitely created and existing artworks come to represent genuine beauty:

Within the creative individual, the element of divine beauty is immediately related to just this one individual. Since this is so, is it conceivable that the idea of divine beauty could exist in this [limited] way and at the same time exist fully and essentially as well? Rather is it not necessarily the case that the idea's full reality lies elsewhere? In the same individual, indeed, but in an absolute mode, and not as the immediate concept of the individual? (131)

In other words, the element of divine beauty is acting through the creative individual, without her awareness of its activity. The problem for Schelling, then, is that the product offers nothing more than an image of beauty inadequate to its eternal concept, and the creative artist *herself* does not even have knowledge of beauty in itself. Schelling finds his earlier emphasis on the artistic process problematic because it relies too heavily on the unconscious activity. While the art-product may offer some gesture of a demonstration of the possibility of the absolute, it has been revealed as insufficient for the present task. Schelling is evidently more optimistic in the *Bruno* about the actuality of absolute knowledge. The philosopher, unlike the creative artist, gains clear insight into the absolute via intellectual intuition, which replaces aesthetic intuition as the highest.

To what, then, does the artwork amount *for* the philosopher? In the *System*, of course, the philosopher was perhaps able to catch a glimpse of the absolute as reflected out of the artwork. The philosopher relied on the existence of the artwork to complete her own task; thus the philosopher remained subordinate to the work of creative genius. In the *Bruno*, Schelling describes a similar experience of the artwork by the philosopher, borrowing from Plato's *Phaedrus*, though his interpretation of this experience differs:

For those who have seen beauty in and for itself are also accustomed to seeing the archetype within its imperfect copy, undaunted by the flaws pressed in upon resisting nature through the force of causes. They love everything they remember from their former state of blessed union. (126)

The philosopher is reminded of true beauty by the artwork, but does not require the artwork for knowledge of the absolute (as was the case in the *System*). As the status of the artwork has been thus demoted in the *Bruno*, Schelling must now turn anew to the task of demonstrating the possibility and perhaps actuality of absolute knowledge.

Chapter 2: Tarrying with the Absolute

2.1: The Concept of Absolute Identity

In the foregoing, I have explicated some of the movements of Schelling's philosophy as it works toward the explicit emergence of his identity-philosophy, specifically as it concerns the relationship of philosophy to art. In doing so, I have argued that relocates art from the zenith of his system to a subordinate step. I turn next to a discussion focusing on meaning and role of absolute identity itself in his system as he formulates in 1802. In the *Bruno*, Schelling seeks to demonstrate the possibility of knowledge of the condition of knowledge, namely, the absolute identity of thought and being. He first attempts to show the possibility of absolute identity in itself, then the possibility of its cognition by the individual. In what follows, I will retrace his arguments accordingly.

Schelling's introduction of Bruno into the dialogue marks the assertion of the principle which is "first and prior to all else": "the idea [of the absolute], wherein all opposites are not just united, but are simply identical, wherein all opposites are not just cancelled, but are entirely undivided from one another" (136). This principle is the condition of genuine knowledge, but is one that, formulated this way, is perhaps overly obscure and is surely attended by certain problems, not least of which is its vulnerability to various misinterpretations. One such misinterpretation motivates Lucian's initial objection to this first principle, which Lucian takes to imply a contradiction:

Identity is necessarily opposed to opposition, since it is impossible to conceptualize identity without contrasting it to opposition, or to think opposition apart from its contrast to identity. It must therefore be

impossible to posit the reality of identity without positing some real opposite along with it. (136)

Lucian's interpretation of the principle of identity is evidently motivated by the implicit assumption that identity and difference are causally interactive, whether considered from the phenomenal or the absolute standpoint. It is only under such an assumption that difference could be thought to "distort" identity, which is meaning of Lucian's objection, insofar as he denies the possibility that identity and difference could be thought together in the supreme or absolute identity.

Schelling responds to this possible criticism by attempting to show that difference does not or could not distort identity at either the relative or the absolute level. With regard to the latter possibility, that identity and difference remain opposed from the absolute standpoint, he is rather dismissive:

If you maintain that identity and difference are opposites with respect to the supreme identity, and that the supreme identity is thus distorted by some opposition, I deny it; specifically, I deny your premise, that in the context of the supreme identity, identity and difference are opposed to one another. (137)

The thrust of Schelling's reply here is that the suggestion that difference affects identity in the context of supreme identity is internally contradictory, as the definition of supreme identity precludes such a possibility. This leaves the possibility that identity is affected by difference for finite cognition alone. Schelling rejects this as well. He begins this argument by distinguishing between absolute and relative opposition, so that it can be determined in what sense identity and difference are opposed to one another. It cannot be

the former sense of absolute opposition, he argues, for the same reason that difference cannot affect identity within the context of supreme identity. The opposites of absolute opposition are defined as “absolutely, necessarily, and eternally distinct from one another” (137). But this is not the case in the context of supreme identity, because they are unified there. Thus their opposition must be a relative one. Under this assumption, identity and difference are opposed only from the standpoint of finite cognition, and not in themselves. The only way they could causally interact, finally (and this is the same as saying that identity is distorted by difference), is if they were entities, and this an absurd suggestion, “similar to the practice of armchair philosophers” (138).

At this stage, it would be fruitful to clarify Schelling’s meaning of the term, “idea.” This term plays a crucial role in his system of identity-philosophy, and, as we will see in the following chapter, the “idea” is fundamental to his vision for university study. Schelling’s use of this term, in part at least, draws from the employment of the term by Kant. In the “Transcendental Analytic” of the First *Critique*, Kant discusses at length what he calls, “ideas of reason,” which we are ineluctably driven to consider but which are also beyond our capacity for knowing. While he insists that we refrain from attempting knowledge claims concerning these ideas, they do remain an interest for reason, and thus retain a theoretical as well as practical value. These ideas, which Kant refers to also as “regulative,” include God, cosmos, and soul. While they cannot be cognized and thus lie outside the bounds of knowledge proper, Kant argues that they play an essential role in our scientific and moral inquiries and undertakings. For example, faith in the existence of God could underpin a commitment to the objectivity of moral

obligations. Similarly, the presupposition of cosmos or “world” as whole and unified grounds the confidence in scientific investigations into particular regions of nature.

Schelling draws on certain features of Kant’s treatment of these ideas, but rejects many of the limitations that Kant places on our thinking of them. For Kant, knowledge is limited by what is available to the faculty of understanding (namely, empirical experience), and reason becomes unruly in its attempt to establish the reality of these ideas. Reason generates such ideas as “world,” which again is of an entire, unified, but also infinite universe. But in attempting to comprehend this idea, we inevitably encounter contradictions (such as what we find in the “bad infinity” critiqued by Hegel). If we think of world as both infinite and complete, we posit the unlimited universe at the same that we seek to establish its boundaries. Such oppositions, of course, are not problematic for Schelling. The very fact that we can think these oppositions together is evidence for the possibility for knowing them. The idea of the absolute, then, is the idea of fundamental and all-encompassing unity. It is not—and cannot be—confirmed by empirical investigation. But it is the condition upon which knowledge of nature (for example) is possible, and thus is defensible as an object of possible knowledge.

2.2: Identity of Thought and Intuition

Schelling’s reply to the criticism that holds that identity is distorted by difference is representative of his methodology in the *Bruno*: the assertion of a conceptual definition, followed by the unpacking of its implications. He turns next to another significant pair of opposites, of particular importance to the problem of knowledge of nature: the opposites of “real” and “ideal,” which have as their grounds, employing

Fichte's terminology here, "intuition" and "thought," respectively.²⁰ Having already shown that opposites can exist in an identity without affecting or simply collapsing into one another, Schelling's task now is to explicate the meaning of the identity of thought and intuition.²¹

Schelling first notes that this identity echoes other, previously addressed expressions, namely "the identity of identity and opposition," and "the identity of the finite and infinite" (140). This is because "intuition or sensory representation is completely determined in each and every one of its individual occurrences," and intuition must be conceived in this way in its relation to thought, if they are to "form an opposition as well as an identity" (140). In other words, intuition is distinguished from thought by its reference to unique, particular, and fully limited objects. And yet, a given intuition is not determined by its object, but rather by "another intuition, and this latter by another, and so on to infinity" (141). This means that intuition is characterized by finitude and difference: finitude, because each intuition is completely determined and limited; difference, because each intuition is determined by its distinction from every other intuition. The concepts that apply to these intuitions, on the other hand, are characterized by infinity and indifference: infinity, because the concept applies equally to all possible cases; indifference, because the concept is not affected by the idiosyncrasies of the particular intuitions. Thus thought and intuition share in the kind of identity shown to be possible for identity and difference: they can be considered together in a unity from the standpoint of absolute identity without distorting one another.

²⁰ For Fichte, the unity of thought and intuition constitutes knowledge.

²¹ It is interesting that Schelling assents to the term "intuition" here, rather than "being" (for example). For, as he notes in passing, "'intuition' might ... itself be an identity of real and ideal factors" (140), i.e., intuition already seems to imply a representation of its object. Clearly, Schelling is undoing Fichte's argument on Fichte's own turf.

2.3: Individuality and Absolute Identity

Lucian: Well, my friend, you have managed to delve pretty deeply into the nature of the incomprehensible! But I am curious to see how you will get us back to the plane of consciousness, once you have soared so grandly beyond it. (152)

In this passage, Schelling is either engaging (via Lucian) in a bit of self-deprecation, or lampooning those who would deprecate him. In any case, he does gesture at a conspicuous problem attending the foregoing argument. While he has perhaps established in principle the possibility of the identity of thought and identity within the absolute identity, and along with it the possibility of the principle of knowledge, he has yet to show that such knowledge is possible for the individual. Indeed, he has yet to show, given the truth of absolute identity, how individuals are possible *at all*. The latter task must be accomplished before undertaking the former, and both in turn must be completed before Schelling can turn to a more detailed discussion of the individual's knowledge relationship to nature (a task that will inform his program for university education, and philosophy generally).

Schelling first formulates the problem of the connection between absolute knowledge and the knowledge of nature the is possessed by the individual in the following way:

Knowing, by which we mean the identity of thought and sensory intuition, is consciousness... And yet the principle governing consciousness is supposed to be this very same identity, but now conceived as pure or absolute; the principle of consciousness thus turns out to be 'absolute consciousness,' while the factual identity of thought and intuition is

“derivative” or “grounded consciousness.” Now this is your contention, that in doing philosophy we have no warrant to step beyond the [appearance] of pure consciousness which is given [to us] inside grounded consciousness? That, in general, we have no way to investigate pure consciousness other than in connection to the derivative consciousness whose governing principle it is? (153)

The nature of the criticism to which Schelling here aims to respond here has something of a Kantian ring to it: inquiry into the unconditioned, even as the principle that serves as the condition of knowledge, can only be undertaken in reference to empirical consciousness.²² Rather than responding directly to this criticism, however, Schelling indicates that such a supposition implies two distinct identities, one belonging to pure consciousness, the other to empirical consciousness. The apparent difference is as follows: in the identity proper to pure or absolute consciousness, the “opposed” elements, the real and the ideal, are indistinguishable, while for empirical or derivative consciousness, these two elements remain distinguishable (154). Thus the identity of empirical consciousness is necessarily a relative one. The two elements nevertheless remain identical in the absolute, such that one element can never be posited “without the other factor posited under the same determination” (154). In other words, the ideal cannot be posited without at the same time positing the real, and vice versa.

The first consequence of this, of course, is that finite knowing is characterized by the relative identity of ideal and real factors, or thought and being. For while it is immediately evident that knowing includes thought (or the ideal element), this entails

²² This is Fichte’s stance. Fichte is more daring than Kant, though, about the accessibility of pure consciousness via empirical consciousness.

positing being as thought's opposite. There is a further consequence as well: not only are the opposites necessarily posited together in a given relative identity (such as in finite consciousness), but the opposite relative identity is also posited along with it. Thus when we posit the relative identity of ideal and real factors in finite knowing, we immediately and necessarily posit the relative identity of real and ideal factors in finite being as well. This, Schelling concludes, furnishes us a "general rule":

Absolute identity must necessarily appear as two distinct though correlated points, one of which actualizes the ideal through the real [and this is nature], the other of which actualizes the real as such by means of the ideal [and this is the domain of consciousness]. (155)

As it turns out, then, absolute identity is not only the principle governing knowledge, but is the principle of being as well. Since knowledge and nature stand under the same principle in the absolute, their inseparability is guaranteed, and the (supposed) gap between them is bridged.²³

The possibility of knowledge of nature is safeguarded by the indifference of the natural and the intelligible/spiritual principles in the absolute. This depends, however, on the knowledge of the absolute identity, and this remains undemonstrated. Schelling calls the "question of the absolute's identification of opposites...the only subject worth philosophical investigation and that philosophy is concerned with this topic alone"

²³ From Lecture 6, *University Studies*: "Neither empirical philosophy resting on facts nor formal, merely analytical philosophy can lead to any knowledge whatsoever; a one-sided philosophy cannot lead to absolute knowledge because it treats its object from a limited point of view. A genuine speculative philosophy can one-sided, too, when it takes as its absolute principle a particular form of the fundamental identity..." (67)

(142).²⁴ This is implicit, he claims, in the fact that “what dominates all philosophical talk or investigation is the [dialectical] impulse, the tendency to either posit the infinite within the finite, or the reverse, to set the finite within the infinite... This [dialectical] method,” moreover, “is a gift of the gods to mankind” (142). Schelling evidently suggests that the capacity for inquiry into and knowledge of the absolute is an essential feature of the human being. What remains unclear are the details of the method by which such knowledge is attained, though it appears that the individual pursuing such knowledge is animated by the “dialectical impulse.”

2.4: The Doctrine of the Soul

The solution to the dual problems of knowledge of nature and knowledge of the absolute lies in the relationship that Schelling explicates between the soul and the body.²⁵ His doctrine of the soul appears at the conclusion of the deduction of the visible universe, within the context of his treatment of organic beings, and marks the transition to an analysis of consciousness. Schelling defines the soul as “the concept of a thing,” and thus attributes infinity to the soul (for concepts are infinite) (177). Yet the soul participates in finitude insofar as it relates to the individual thing of which it is the concept: “from the viewpoint of the finite, it is ... determined to be the soul of an individual existing thing” (177). That is to say, the soul of a thing and the thing itself are identical in respect of their possibilities for engaging a world beyond themselves.

²⁴ Compare, from *University Studies*: “The task every student should set himself as soon as he takes up philosophy is to strive for the one truly absolute knowledge, which by its nature includes knowledge of the absolute, to strive for it until he has perfectly grasped the whole as unity.” (69)

²⁵ This relationship will prove to be especially important in the following chapter, as Schelling announces in his lectures *On University Studies* that, “The true science of man must be based on the essential and absolute unity of soul and body.” (65)

The conclusions concerning inorganic and organic beings that Schelling derives from this are quite interesting: “it follows that only so much of the universe falls within the soul of an individual thing as is actually expressed in the thing” (177). In the case of the inorganic being, possibility and actuality are equal. The soul or concept of the inorganic being does not include the possibility of anything beyond itself: “the bare corporeal this is ... necessarily and to infinity individual and isolated from others” (177).²⁶ The inorganic being—a stone, say—does not have the capability of engaging the world beyond itself, as its concept does not contain possibilities of being anything other than what it actually is in itself.²⁷

The organic being, by contrast, “contains within its concept the possibility of infinitely many things that lie outside of its individual state” (177). This possibility takes various forms. For one, this possibility can be realized by the individual’s active physical engagement with its environment, and even this engagement is manifold. One expression of this engagement of the physical world by organic beings in general is procreation: “it may contain its own possibility in the guise of an infinite number of offspring that may arise from propagation” (177). This kind of possibility belongs of course to plant life as well as animal life. The organic being also expresses its own possibility by way of its

²⁶ We can see here an analogy with the “worldlessness” of objects that appears in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*.

²⁷ This is from the standpoint of individuality. The inorganic being is not infinitely isolated from the standpoint of absolute identity. Also, it is worth noting here that passages such as the one above stand as evidence against the claims of mysticism directed at Schelling, at least in his early period. Such accusations often derive from his supposed pan-psychism, and at best it would appear that they depend on a misinterpretation of Schelling’s attribution of rationality to nature.

interaction with other beings through movement in space and time, a possibility for animal life (177).²⁸

The organic being arises from and depends for existence upon earth, in whose identity the individual participates. That is, from the standpoint of whole (earth), there is identity, yet this does not negate the individuality of the individual entity that arises from but is not fully reducible to the whole. If it is not clear already, “possibility” for Schelling expresses that character of “thought” (“concept” is an act of thinking; soul is the concept of a thing; “soul” or “concept” expresses all possibilities of thinking a thing), while “actuality” expresses the concrete character of a thing. As Adrian Johnston notes, Schelling “suggests replacing the thought-extension dichotomy with a dialectical tension between ‘actuality’ and ‘potentiality’/‘possibility’” (“The Soul of *Dasein*” 5). As will become clear later, this move will prove crucial for Schelling’s analysis of the fundamental unity of mind and body, or spirit and nature.²⁹

What is significant at this stage is that the organic entity arises from but is not reducible to the earth as a whole. In turn, the same will be true of consciousness: consciousness arises from but is not reducible to organic nature. As we can see from the above, even animal nature displays a kind of thinking, even if it does not attain to the level of consciousness proper: “[the organic being] may contain the possibility of other individual things that are different from itself, related to it through motion” (*Bruno* 177).

²⁸ This suggests a model for the “world-poor” animal nature of Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. Also, the organic being contains its own time only imperfectly, for it is dependent on a ground outside of itself for its existence, and is thus subject to decay and death. The absolute contains its own time perfectly; in other words, eternity properly belongs to it. As we will see in the discussion of Schelling’s 1809 *Human Freedom* below, however, this very pairing of time and eternity is problematic.

²⁹ As Johnston argues, this move lays the ground for a model of human existence that in some important ways anticipates Heidegger’s analytic in *Being and Time*.

To borrow a Heideggerian turn of phrase, the organic being is always already engaged with its environment, though at the phenomenal level of nature it is lacking the requisite level of self-awareness for consciousness. The animal exists in a concrete unity, expressing its possibilities through its affecting and being affected by its surroundings. Out of this engagement with its environment arises the possibility of finite or empirical consciousness:

Finally, it [the organic being] may contain the possibility of other individual things that are different from it but are at the same time within it {as objects of cognition}. And this last case is possible because the organic being embodies the idea itself, and in relation to difference, the idea indeed functions as the intuiting agent {or knower}. (177)

The level of finite consciousness is characterized by an awareness of difference, especially of the difference of self and not-self. The intuiting agent contains the possibilities of other individual things by way of its thinking those things through their concepts, specifically as representations that it (the agent) possesses.

An examination of Schelling's treatment of the soul in his *Clara* dialogue should prove illuminating here. Some readers might object to an appeal to *Clara* for clarification of an argument from *Bruno* on the basis of the time frame in which *Clara* was composed. Although there is an unresolved debate over the precise time during which Schelling put this text to paper, the general consensus is that he began writing it around 1810, and continued to work on it until perhaps as late as 1817.³⁰ In any case, this puts *Clara* squarely within what is frequently called Schelling's "middle period," which begins with

³⁰ *Clara* is widely considered to have been composed in 1810, and I will refer to this as its year of composition from here on.

the publication, in 1809, of *Human Freedom*, and also includes such texts as the “Stuttgart Seminars” and the drafts of his *Ages of the World*. This period of Schelling’s philosophy is also often referred to as “post-idealist” (which I find to be somewhat misleading for reasons I will present in the third chapter). Many scholars would consider a reading of this period of Schelling’s work in the context of his 1802 philosophy of identity anachronistic, for the commonly held view is that Schelling had fundamentally abandoned his earlier positions. While it is undeniable that Schelling undergoes some radical transformations between 1802 and 1810, I argue that there are essential threads of continuity between these periods of his philosophical productivity as well. While much of that argument will be reserved for Chapter 3, my present appeal to *Clara* provisionally assumes that later argument, on the one hand, and offers some anticipatory evidence for that argument, on the other.

In *Clara: or, On Nature’s Connection to the Spirit World*, Schelling presents a number of philosophical (and theological) themes in the form of a conversation between several figures, including a priest (who is also the narrator), a doctor, and the dialogue’s namesake. A central concern of the dialogue is nature and existence of an afterlife. At the heart of this dialogue, in the third of its five parts, Schelling presents a sustained treatment of the nature of soul, which—though differing considerably in context—quite clearly resonates with the treat we find in the *Bruno*. In elucidating the nature of the soul, Schelling relies on the notion of the “whole person,” which—in a fashion consistent with the earlier identity-philosophy—reflects in miniature the notion of a cosmic “whole” (the universe). The soul is introduced as a “tie” uniting two opposites—the spirit and the body—“present within...a whole person” (*Clara* 33). As the tie connecting the opposing

parts, the soul “must share equally in the nature of both,” for otherwise interaction would be inexplicable (33).³¹

The soul, then, serves at least as a point of articulation between body and spirit. If we were place this account within the context of the identity philosophy, we would expect that spirit and body would be presented as opposites existing in a relationship of identity. And this is just how Schelling presents them in *Clara*: they are two sides of a coin, and as such, each cannot exist without the other. “The spirit merges into the body through the soul, but through the soul the body is raised once again into the spirit... The whole person thus represents a kind of living rotation: wherever one thing reaches into the other, neither of the others can leave, each requires the other” (35). The soul *is* a unity of spirit and body, not fully reducible to either, and has no being without both. At either pole of the unity, the same relation holds: body cannot be without soul, and so too with spirit. What we have, then, is a dialectical relationship of soul, spirit, and body, each existing but none independently of the others.

As this discussion develops, we find an account that resonates with his earlier view of potentiation (which we know he retains in the contemporary *Ages of the World*). As the soul transitions from this life to the next, it transforms from a more embodied soul into a more en-spirited one:

We shouldn’t have said that the soul becomes spiritual after death, as if it weren’t already spiritual before; but that the spiritual, which was already in the soul but seemed to be more tied down there, becomes freed and prevails over the other part through which the soul was closer to the

³¹ Interaction between spirit and soul requires that the two share something substantively in common (or else we simply return to the problems of Cartesian dualism), and so too with soul and body. I take “equally” here to refer to essence, not degree.

corporeal, the part that rules in this life. So, too, then, we shouldn't say that the body becomes spiritual in that higher life, as if it weren't spiritual from the beginning; but that the spiritual side of the body that here was hidden and subordinate, becomes one that there is manifest and dominant.

(39)

In the earlier identity-philosophy, Schelling presents the relationship of thought and nature in terms of potencies: thought is rationality in a higher potency; organic nature is rationality in a lower potency; and inorganic nature is rationality at a still lower potency. These relative points exist along a continuum, each possessing the pair of opposites in a unity, but a unity in which one side predominates. While the context of the presentation differs in *Clara*, the conceptual framework remains: in the soul's earthly life the corporeal power predominates, while in the future life the spiritual power predominates.

Schelling expands this framework beyond the sphere of human existence, arguing that these relationships inhere in other forms of nature as well, and that at every stage the "soul" of the entity strives to be what is beyond itself. "Even animal life," he notes, "wants to go beyond itself: the beaver constructs its palace in the water with a humanlike understanding; other animals live in humanlike conditions and domestic relationships" (39).

The argument Schelling presents in this part of *Clara* also defends against the concern, expressed in *Bruno*, that the finite is so absorbed by the infinite that it loses its being altogether. In doing so, he emphasizes the soul's participation in the finite and the infinite, again without reducing the soul to either. The argument Schelling presents here relies on his interpretation of Spinoza's pantheism, which aims to correct certain

criticisms of both Spinoza's and Schelling's respective views. This discussion will be taken up in more detail in the fourth chapter (wherein I will address Schelling's important treatment, in *Human Freedom*, of the relation of ground to existence); the present treatment of this problem anticipates the lengthier one I present later.

After presenting his argument for the existence and nature of the soul and its transformation after death, Schelling takes up the concern that the soul will, as a result of this transformation, lose its own being into the being of the infinite (God): "many people generally fear that once they have become completely transfigured their self-will will be completely overcome and they might disintegrate entirely," and that, "they eventually pass over into God completely, and finally they even disappear within him" (52). This problem echoes Hegel's famous barb, that Schelling's identity philosophy depicts a "night in which all cows are black." The concern is that the subsumption of the finite by infinite entails the utter dissolution of the finite, such that it retains no real being. Thus, a "perfect unity with God" is as terrifying as it is desirable.

Schelling's response to this concern in *Clara* can be read as defense of his earlier accounts of identity, insisting upon nuances that have been overlooked but are essential nonetheless. "I don't quite see," he remarks, "that it necessarily follows that we would lose our particular existence if we became completely one with the Divine. For the drop in the ocean nevertheless always is this drop, even if it isn't distinguished as such" (52). Again, Schelling argues that, while the finite may belong to the infinite (for it is, in any case, not "beyond" the infinite), it is in itself not reducible to the infinite. Just as a "speck of dust...is certainly completely suffused by the magnet's strength, ...[yet] nevertheless still has something in it that it does not have from the magnet," the finite thing retains

something—namely, its finitude—that distinguishes it from the infinite. If we apply the reasoning from *Clara* to the discussion of the soul found in *Bruno*, we can see that, while “thought” and “being” are opposites existing in a state of indifference, the soul spans the two without being fully reduced to either.

In his 2003 article, “The Soul of *Dasein*: Schelling’s Doctrine of the Soul and Heidegger’s Analytic of *Dasein*,” Johnston argues convincingly that Schelling’s articulation of the identity-relationship of soul and body anticipates some of the more essential features of Heidegger’s work, in the late 1920’s, seeking to overcome dualisms characteristic of Cartesian and Kantian metaphysics. In doing so, Johnston not only paves the way for a more productive reading of Schelling and Heidegger alongside one another, but also clarifies some of the more obscure facets of Schelling’s work in the identity-philosophy, showing that Schelling is not as vulnerable to some of the longstanding critiques waged against him, from Hegel to Heidegger himself.

Johnston notes that “Schelling’s merit is to show how the rigid ontological partitioning between the ideality of the mind and the reality of the body can be surmounted without, for all that, throwing the proverbial baby out with the bath water” (“The Sould of *Dasein*” 4). As is the case with any pair of opposites, Schelling’s identity-philosophy seeks to establish the fundamental identity of soul and body—that each exists through its other, cannot exist without its other, and ought not be thought in complete isolation of its other—while maintaining their respective difference, and thus not collapsing them into a homogenous “one.” The nature-philosophy, incorporated into the identity-philosophy, argues for the emergence of the conscious subject from a natural or “real” ground. But one should mistake this account of emergence as entailing an

annihilation of heterogeneity. “Subjectivity arises from materiality,” Johnston emphasizes, “but, after-the-fact of this genesis, the ideal subject remains irreducible to its primordial, real ground” (“The Soul of *Dasein* 4).

This philosophical commitment of Schelling’s, that the ground that makes possible a thing’s existence does not retain control over the nature of that thing once it has emerged, will continue to play a central role in later periods of his career (as we will see in Chapter 4 below). What is especially novel in Schelling’s presentation of the identity of soul and body, and thus warrants special attention, is his recasting of such divisions as *res cogitans/res extensa* and noumenal subject/phenomenal subject with the concepts of possibility (or potentiality) and actuality. He defines the soul, contrasting with the “thinking thing” of Descartes and the noumenal subject “in itself” of Kant, as the “infinite possibility of everything that is actually expressed in the thing” and “the possibility of all that is expressed in the body as actuality” (*Bruno* 179, 184). By thinking the mind-body relationship in this way, he two are upheld in their difference while their interrelation and interdependence are accounted for. These terms, moreover, map on rather smoothly to the concepts of “transcendence” and “immanence” that would be embraced by like-minded thinkers a century or more later.

2.5: The Problem of Knowledge: Thought and Being

In order to grasp what is at stake in Schelling’s *On University Studies* (the subject of the next chapter), it is important to clarify at least three central aspects of the *Bruno*: Schelling’s treatments of the opposition of infinite and finite, of the identity of knowing and intuition, and of the relation of the soul to the body. A grasp of the first subject, the relation of finite to infinite, will allow us to see more clearly the way in which the various

subject matters of university study are unified in the principle of absolute identity. The second and third aspects concern the possibility of knowledge of nature generally, and of the possibility of insight into the idea of the absolute, in which all particular concepts and objects are unified. The nature and possibility of knowledge is, of course, crucial for a program that is to organize an institution that has knowledge as its primary aim. The third problem—the relation of soul to body—has been addressed above, and while the second one—identity of thought and being—has been treated to some extent, it would benefit from some further elucidation here. I will then turn the problem of the infinite and the finite below.

Some further consideration of the identity of thought and intuition (also called at times the identity of ‘ideal’ and ‘real’), which is called the “principle of knowing,” and will provide a fitting point of entry into the difficult task of grasping the relationship between the infinite and the finite.³² A few points worth noting anticipatorily here: first, the suggestion that knowledge consists in the identity of thought and intuition is deceptively ambiguous. Schelling emphasizes a distinction between “absolute cognition” and “finite cognition,” which will be discussed at some length below. While it would appear that Schelling is operating within a framework of a correspondence theory of knowledge—that knowledge exists where thought corresponds to intuition or being—the distinction between absolute and finite cognition raises the questions of what exactly the object of knowledge is, and of for whom it is available, among others.

Before addressing those problems, however, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the assertion of the identity of thought and intuition. Within the context of the *Bruno*,

³² In fact, Schelling suggests early on in his treatment of the identity of thought and intuition that “it seems to me to say exactly the same thing as [the] expression, ... ‘the identity of the finite and the infinite’” does. (*Bruno* 140)

Schelling intends for this identity to occupy priority of place within Fichte's system, whereas it would be subordinated to the identity of identity and difference within Schelling's own system of absolute idealism. Schelling claims that, "since we make the identity of all opposites our first principle, 'identity' itself along with 'opposition' will form the highest pair of opposites. To make the identity the supreme principle, we must think of it as comprehending even this highest pair of opposites" (*Bruno* 137). The assertion that identity is the "supreme principle" remains problematic; Schelling's defense will be addressed below. For now, I will address the problem adhering to the identity of thought and intuition itself.

In order to bring this problem into a clear light, it will prove helpful to turn to a contemporary text of Schelling's, the *Ideas on a Philosophy of Nature as an Introduction to the Study of This Science*.³³ In a section under the heading, "On the Problems to be Solved by a Philosophy of Nature," he describes the human being as originally fully concrete, undisturbed by skeptical problems of the possibility of knowledge: "At this time man was still at one with nature. ... Originally there is an absolute equilibrium of forces and consciousness in man. But through freedom he can annul this equilibrium in order to reestablish it through freedom" (*Ideas* 168-169). It is through such a free act, as for instance the posing of a philosophical question, that the chasm between thought and being is first introduced.³⁴ Schelling might have later made appeal to a (now famous) line from his erstwhile friend Hölderlin on this account, that "where the danger is, so too the

³³ The First Edition of this text appears in 1799; the Second Edition, from which I will be drawing here, appears in 1803.

³⁴ Sartre's lengthy phenomenological analysis in *Being and Nothingness* of the appearance of nothingness through the free act of questioning bears, I think, considerable resemblance to this. I would suppose that Sartre arrives at his position by way of Hegel; it is possible that Schelling is a predecessor in the succession of this idea. It would be worth examining Fichte's work for earlier appearances of this account.

saving power grows”: it is through the same freedom that disrupts the unity of thought and being that the gap will be bridged. For the Schelling of the early 1800’s, this is a primary aim of philosophy. He even goes as far as to suggest that philosophy is therapeutic in this regard, and to imply that skeptics—at least of the academic type—are toxic: “*mere* reflection is a mental disorder in man, and when it takes control of the whole person it kills the seed of his higher existence and the root of his spiritual life, which proceeds only from identity” (169). To remain suspended in a state of disconnection from nature is debilitating. Schelling has Kant in his sights here also: “Reflection makes the separation between man and the world permanent by viewing the latter as thing-in-itself, attainable neither by intuition nor imagination, neither by understanding nor reason” (169).

Schelling calls the “first philosopher” the one who first recognizes a capacity for distinguishing between self and world, thought and being.³⁵ He uses the example of the relationship between object and image—an example that appears multiple times in the *Bruno* as well. He contrasts ordinary consciousness with the reflective philosophical view on this account:

When I [here referring to human being in the natural state] represent an object, the object and representation are one and the same. And it is only this inability to separate the object from the representation while one is representing it that convinces common understanding of the reality of external things...

³⁵ *Ideas*, 170.

The philosopher annuls the identity of object and representation by asking: how do representations of external things arise in us? With this question we transfer the things *outside* ourselves, we presume them to be independent of our representations. Yet there is supposed to be a connection between them and our representations. (170)

While the common understanding holds the correct viewpoint—identity of thought and nature—it is neither praiseworthy nor desirable, because it holds this view uncritically and thus without justification. In order to arrive at the truth of identity, one must have reason to hold that view. And in order to recognize the truth of identity, one must first view it as problematic. This is the vocation of the philosopher. With the recognition of both the independence of an external world, and the need for causal interaction with that world, the problem of identity takes a severely secure foothold.

So how does Schelling propose to respond to the problem of the opposition of thought and being? In the *Ideas* and especially in the *Bruno*, Schelling uses a series of disjunctive arguments in order to reveal the limits of (respective) opposing points of view, and thus to point to the superiority of the standpoint of absolute idealism. In this way, he engages in an early form of the dialectal method that would later be perfected by Hegel. Take, for example, his swift summary in the *Ideas* of the problem concerning the nature of matter, whether it is finitely or infinitely divisible:

If matter outside you is actual, then it must *consist* of infinitely many parts. If it does consist of infinitely many parts, then it must be assembled from these parts. But our imagination has only a finite measure for this assembling. Thus infinite assembling must occur in finite time. Or the

assembling began somewhere [and is thus not infinite], i.e., there are final particles in the process of dividing. But in fact I only find more and more of the same kinds of bodies and never get further than the surface. The real seems to flee from me or to slip from under my hand, and matter, that first foundation of all experience, becomes the most insubstantial thing we know. (175)

This example, for one, serves to discredit the understanding as the appropriate faculty for addressing this issue. Posed by the understanding, this question offers two apparently mutually exclusive possibilities, each of which turns out to be absurd. This example serves also to reveal a deeper, and more general problem; that is, how do we come to have representations of external things at all, if indeed our representations have their origin outside of us at all?

One possible response to this problem is to rely on empirical observation as the foundation of our knowledge of nature. But this, Schelling notes, is circular. The question asks how our representations of things arise; empirical observation takes for granted that they arise from the influence of external nature: “let us first see,” he suggests, “if empirical principles are at all sufficient to explain the possibility of a system of the world” (177). Schelling’s response is, of course, negative. “The question negates itself,” he asserts, “for the most we know from experience is that a universe exists; with this statement the limits of our experience are given” (177).³⁶ He further clarifies the problem by posing another disjunct, this time focusing more squarely on the ordering of our representations. The question here is a species of the problem of the identity of our

³⁶ Schelling’s reasoning here bears resemblance, I think, to a portion of Spinoza’s version of the ontological argument. Schelling differs from Spinoza, however, in refusing to accept a “one-sided” conclusion.

representations with the things they are supposed to represent; in this case, the question concerns whether the succession of our representations is objective or subjective, that is, whether the succession is grounded outside of us or in us.

After noting that, at the very least, it is necessarily true that our representations are inseparable from the succession in which we experience them, Schelling offers two possibilities:

Either succession and appearances both arise simultaneously and unseparated *outside* us;

Or succession and appearances both arise simultaneously and unseparated *within* us.

Only in these two cases is the succession that we represent to ourselves an actual succession of things and not merely an ideal succession of our representations. (182)

Schelling proceeds to show that both claims are ultimately inadequate or at least unsatisfactory. The first alternative is marred by a few fatal flaws. For one, it is in its initial presentation scarcely philosophical (by Schelling's standards, in any case). This is because it does not even attempt to establish a justificatory ground. "In this system," he notes, "the things-in-themselves succeed one another, and we are mere observers" (182). This assertion rests upon the uncritical assumption that this "observation" produces representations in us of the supposedly external succession, but how this is so is the question at hand. As presented, the first option is plagued by unsatisfying circularity.

Schelling argues that even a philosophically amended version of this alternative (that "succession and appearances both arise simultaneously and unseparated *outside* us")

would prove unsatisfactory—or worse, as he says, “unintelligible.” When fit into a properly philosophical framework, this alternative is revealed to assert that a succession of representations occurs independent of any (finite) subject, “but a succession that proceeds in the things themselves, independent of finite representations, is completely unintelligible to me” (183). The problem is two-fold: first, it is difficult, if even possible, to think coherently of representation without a subject for whom it is represented. Second, the notion of a succession of things-in-themselves is in itself contradictory, for it suggests an unfolding in time of events, but without the finite perception necessary for the act to be *in time* at all. An unconditioned (“in itself”) intuition of the succession wouldn’t be a succession at all:

For if we posit a being that is not finite, i.e., not bound to the succession of representations, but rather embraces all of the present and the future in one intuition, then for a being of this sort there would be no succession in the things outside it, for there is succession only under the condition of the finitude of the faculty of representation. (183)

Sub specie aeternitatis, there is no succession of representations, and the question at hand is left unaddressed.

The other alternative—that the “succession and appearances both arise simultaneously and unseparated *within* us”—is attended by its own problems. This alternative generates its own dichotomy: we can “maintain that things exist outside us independent of our representations,” or we can “assert that even the appearances themselves become and arise simultaneously with the succession only in our representations” (183). The first of these alternatives characterizes the dualism belonging

to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, at least according to Schelling's interpretation, and thus carries with it the basic problems of Kant's critical philosophy. For one, it entails skepticism, and a skepticism inferior to the one propounded by Hume, for at least Hume is honest in his skeptical philosophy. The account that embraces Kant's dualism—establishing and distinguishing between phenomenal appearances and noumenal things-in-themselves—requires that “we declare the objective necessity with which we imagine a determined succession of *things* to be a mere deception” (183). We are left with representations of things, without access to that which is supposed to be represented. More importantly, the succession is supposed to have objective necessity, but all of the features of “succession”—relations in space, changing within time, determined by causality—are stripped from the realm of things-in-themselves. And yet, “these things must *act* on me and give rise to my representations” (184). A representation of the thing-in-itself is impossible, for the thing-in-itself lacks all that belongs to “that manner of representing peculiar to finite beings” (184).³⁷

In a fashion typical of his approach to philosophy at this period, Schelling seeks to have it both ways. He argues that the objectivity of the succession is grounded within the nature of our “spirit”:

We have no choice but to attempt to derive the necessity of a succession of representations from the *nature* of our spirit, i.e., of the finite spirit as such, and to let the things themselves arise in the spirit simultaneously with the succession, so that this succession is truly objective. (186)³⁸

³⁷ What remains “is a representation that hovers midway between something and nothing, i.e., that does not even have the credit of being absolutely nothing” (184).

³⁸ A further task will be to show that an identical (and thus also objective) ground belongs to nature also.

Schelling argues that this task motivates the system presented by Spinoza. Spinoza's response to the problems inherent in Cartesian dualism—specifically, interaction between independent substances—relies upon assuming a single substance as the starting point of the system. Thus, the ideal and the real—thought and thing—are identical.

Spinoza's system of identity, however, is one without difference: "instead of explaining on the basis of our nature how the finite and the infinite, originally united within us, proceed reciprocally from each other, he immediately lost himself in the idea of an infinity outside us" (186). This notion of infinity is paradigmatic of what Hegel would later call the "bad infinity" or "spurious infinity," a critique that, while more nuanced in Hegel's hands, maps smoothly onto Schelling's concerns here. To be too concise, the notion of an infinity that does not contain within it the finite is not infinite at all, for it is limited—there is always thought to be something other or beyond. Schelling's response is to insist that we observe that origin of the infinite within us: "It is the necessary result of our finitude that these representations *succeed* one another," that is, an experience of succession is possible because we do not have the view from eternity; "but the *endlessness* of succession proves that it proceeds from a being in whose nature finitude and infinity are united" (188). Thus, the experience of a succession of representations characterized by objective necessity is possible on the basis of a unified soul and body.

Similar arguments are found in the *Bruno*, and like those from *Ideas*, the discussion transitions, seemingly inevitably, from the dichotomy of thought and object to that of infinite and finite. For instance, Schelling there poses the question concerning the

relation of intuition to concept, of the respective nature of each, and finally the possibility of their having an actual relationship at all:

... how can you posit one intuition as determined by another, if you do not assume that the first intuition can be differentiated from the second, and the second from the first? Will you not have to suppose that difference is coextensive with the whole sphere of intuition, so that each sensory representation would be individual, and no one intuition wholly like another? ... Now, on the other hand, call to mind some concept, a figure or whatever you want. Tell me, is this concept ever altered in its details or specified the way the series of your sensory representations is...? Or is it not the case that this concept remains one and unchanged, appropriate in the same way to plants or figures that are quite different, or indifferent toward them all? (*Bruno* 141)

Understood in this way, difference and finitude are predicated of intuition, while the concept is characterized by indifference and infinity. How, then, to unite them?

Schelling's proposal appeals to a third kind of thing, the "idea." To be sure, Schelling does stress that thought and intuition are "intrinsically identical, united prior to all distinction, not just put together in some third thing" (142). On the one hand, he is echoing Kant's assertion that, "Thoughts without content are empty, and intuitions with concepts are blind."³⁹ But he also argues that the idea, while having its own intelligible status, does not have existence as an entity independent of the pairs it unites.⁴⁰ The idea, rather, *is* the identity of concept and intuition: "inasmuch as it unites multiplicity and

³⁹ *Critique of Pure Reason*, B75.

⁴⁰ To refer to the idea as "something," then, is a potentially misleading and unfortunate result of the limitations of language—a theme that persists throughout Schelling's work in the identity-philosophy.

unity or finitude and infinity, [it] is identically related to both factors” (*Bruno* 143). The concept (the act of thinking characterized by infinite possibility) and intuition (the finite particular in its actuality) find that identity in the idea that constitutes the fundamental principle of knowledge. Thus, Schelling calls “the idea of all ideas,” namely, the absolute, the “one sole object of study” of philosophy (143).

2.6: The Infinite In-Forms the Finite

There is a view, common among some German Idealism scholars, that Schelling’s middle period work effectively refutes Hegel’s seemingly monumental accomplishments, from the *Phenomenology* to his 1815 *Science of Logic* (before it had even been composed). Heidegger, for example, calls Schelling’s *Human Freedom*, “The treatise which shatters Hegel’s *Logic before* it was even published!” (Heidegger, *Schelling’s Treatise* 97). Though it has some merit, this view overstates the matter, for reasons I will address later. At this point, however, it will prove useful to elucidate some affinities between Schelling’s work during his identity-philosophy era and the mature work of Hegel. This will serve two purposes: first, it will help to clarify, in ways that Schelling does not do at this point in his career, what is at stake in his idealist system; second, it will allow for a clearer presentation of what constitutes the departure of his later philosophy from his earlier work.

In 1815’s *Science of Logic*, Hegel first tackles the problem of infinity and its relation to finitude in “The Doctrine of Being”—the first book of the *Logic*—giving it extended treatment in that book’s third chapter. “The infinite,” Hegel notes by way of presenting the initial and problematic characterization of it by consciousness (determined by the understanding), “is held to be absolute without qualification for it is determined

expressly as negation of the finite” (Hegel, *Logic* 137). The problem is immediately apparent: by thinking the infinite as “not finite,” a limit is introduced into that which is defined in terms of limitlessness. The finite stands out as something other than the infinite, suggesting that the infinite comes to an end where the finite begins. This formulation, however, contradicts the supposed meaning of infinity. Hegel refers to this way of thinking infinity as “spurious infinity,” and differentiates it from “the genuine Notion of infinity, ... the infinite of reason” (137). The spurious infinite is a product of the understanding, which conceives it as what the finite strives to be. On this view, the finite “is limitation posited as limitation,” and thus is a determined “something” delineated by its relation to other finite things (139). When thought in itself, the finite drops its defining character of limitation: “it is a purely self-related, wholly affirmative being” (139). Negating finitude in this fashion gives way to the concept of infinity, wherein limitation and determination dissolve.

From the standpoint of the understanding, this bad infinity is esteemed as “the highest, the absolute Truth” (139). The understanding arrives at this view and takes the matter to be resolved—that infinite and finite are established in their proper conformity—“but the truth,” Hegel argues, “is that [the understanding] is entangled in unreconciled, unresolved, absolute contradiction” (139). This is because this treatment of the infinite-finite dichotomy treats each member of the pair on its own, such that we have infinite on the one side and finite on the other. This is, of course, contradictory. Put another way, thinking the infinite in this way results from considering it as “beyond” the finite. Wherever the finite comes upon its boundary (for it is essentially characterized by limitation), this is where the infinite is found. The infinite is given its own, separate

place; again, this establishes a limit to infinity. This view, moreover, gives way to another contradiction, for in any attempt to think the infinite as “beyond,” the understanding inevitably posits a “beyond” to this “beyond” (142).⁴¹ Again, we encounter only confusion and contradiction.

Hegel’s response to this in the *Logic* echoes the treatment offered by Schelling in *Bruno*. When we recognize the source of the problem—that the infinite is treated as a being distinct from the finite—we have already a hint to its solution. The mischaracterization of “infinite,” again, perceives it as “not the whole but only *one* side; it has its limit in what stands over against it; it is thus the *finite infinite*” (144). The understanding inevitably produces this spurious infinity because it as a faculty of differentiation: it seeks to make distinctions between things, rather than recognizing things in their more fundamental unity. For the proper concept of infinity, we turn to reason, a faculty of identity. The infinite of reason has the finite within it, not opposed to it. The infinite is not to be thought as a line extending without cessation, but as a sphere always returning to itself, in which every moment of finitude is expressed.

For this reason, there is not a genuine problem, after all, of deducing the finite from the infinite (or of establishing the existence of finite things without annihilating them in them infinite). Hegel concludes, “*there is not* an infinite which is first of all infinite and only subsequently has need to become finite, to go forth into finitude; on the contrary, it is on its own account just as much finite as infinite” (153). Compare this to *Bruno*, wherein Schelling dedicates considerable effort to establishing the actuality of

⁴¹ This account of infinity Hegel calls “progress to infinity,” and consists of a “perpetual repetition” of the negation of the finite (*Logic* 142).

finite things within the context of the infinite.⁴² “The finite,” Schelling argues, “is not opposed to the infinite within [the] absolute identity. ... And neither is the infinite itself limited, nor does it restrict the finite; both are one thing” (*Bruno* 158).

Of course, the task Schelling sets up here is explaining the appearance of finite things at all. A chief failure of Spinoza’s metaphysics, on Schelling’s view, is that the former could not or did not adequately account for the existence of individuals apart from or even within the one substance. Schelling notes that “even if the finite is in reality perfectly identical with the infinite, ideally it never stops being finite; thus the absolute identity of all things also contains within itself the difference of all forms {of appearance}” (159). This claim that the finite is “in reality” identical with the infinite reference the adequacy of the thing to its concept in itself, while the determinacy of finite things, in their relations to other things, arises for consciousness. The latter point is expressed in the claim that “ideally [the finite] never stops being finite.” That is, the distinction between the thing as it appears and as it is in itself is a distinction belonging to phenomenal appearance itself—that is, for relative consciousness.

The appearance, then, of discrete individuals is characteristic of finitude itself, which, moreover, is essentially characterized by temporality. From the standpoint of absolute knowing, everything is as it is eternally, while from the view of the finite things unfold in time and thus are distinguished from each other. Even still, the particular, finite thing actualizes in time what is infinitely possible in its concept: “the finite first posits itself and its temporality as real by actualizing this difference [of real and ideal]; hereby it also establishes the actuality of everything contained in its own proper concept as mere

⁴² On the face of it, this might seem to indicate a basic contrast between Hegel’s and Schelling’s respective treatments of the infinite-finite dichotomy, but in fact they arrive at the same conclusion.

possibility” (159). So, not only does the infinite contain within it the finite, the finite also has in its nature the infinite as well. Again, this theme that permeates the identity-philosophy: every particular is a refraction of the universal. “Thus,” Schelling insists, “every single thing exhibits the whole universe, each in its own way” (166).

The proper notion of the infinite-finite relationship is thus distinguished by Schelling from what Hegel would call “spurious infinity,” for the infinite is inherently “incapable of limitation” (145). When the notion of infinity is improperly applied, as for instance in accordance with time (“generated within time”), it is understood as a progress, “impossible to complete” (145). Hegel in 1815 is in agreement with the Schellingian treatment of the infinite-finite relationship from 1802. Does Schelling’s later philosophy overturn his earlier view? If so, we might have evidence supporting Heidegger’s assessment, that Schelling “shatters Hegel’s *Logic*” before the latter is written.⁴³ I argue that he retains this view of infinity, at least within a certain context. That argument, however, is best saved for a later chapter.

2.7: Fractured Identity

As the *Bruno* dialogue draws to a close, Schelling employs mythological language to represent the task as it has been accomplished so far, and the aim of the project yet to be completed:

Now when we have scaled this peak and behold the harmonies light of this cognition, ... the destiny of the universe will not be hidden from our eyes, how the divine principle will withdraw from the world and deliver the matter married to form over to stern necessity; nor will the stories all the

⁴³ Of course, if the later Schelling remains consistent on this view of infinity, it does not demonstrate that Hegel’s system is preserved. It does, though, make for an interesting test case.

mysteries give out about the fate of a god and his death remain obscure for us, those tales of the suffering of Osiris, for example, and those of the death of Adonis. But above all, our eyes will be turned toward the higher deities, and achieving participation in their sublime mode of being through contemplation, we shall be truly perfected and satisfied, as the ancients expressed it; for we shall live within this resplendent sphere not just as refugees from the lands of mortality, but as ones who have received the initiation into immortal excellences. (222-223)

Here we find Schelling's idealism bedecked in his romanticism, expressing in poetic flourish and with recourse to mythology philosophy of absolute identity. Philosophy, having perished by the hands of the dualistically-oriented moderns, finds rebirth in the identity philosophy. And while the resurrection of philosophy involves a return to the unified vision of the ancients, it does so having undergone a transformation. The insight into the absolute now is a higher one, for it has conquered the separation that was introduced by modern philosophy, and has retained something of that separation by accounting for oppositions within their proper context. The identity-philosophy promises a kind of return to Eden, overcoming the rootlessness and alienation that so concerned Schelling's romantic peers.

But this peace would be short-lived. Near the conclusion of *Bruno*, Schelling characterizes the task of philosophy as "the challenge to cultivate the sturdy seed of [the] principle of indifference to its fullest flower" (222). Perhaps it would be truer to say, however, that the seeds sown were those of discord. As is well known, Schelling's intellectual collaboration with Hegel would disintegrate within only a few years, for

reasons both superficial and genuine. More importantly, Schelling's own identity-philosophy would fracture by the close the decade under the weight of even his own developing philosophical commitments.

In offering three possible interpretations of the absolute in his *German Idealism*, Beiser also lays the groundwork for his critique of the identity-philosophy. The first of these interpretations is the “dual-aspect doctrine,” which adopts features of Spinoza's philosophy and holds that “the subjective and objective, the ideal and real, or the mental and physical are simply different *attributes, perspectives, or explanations* of one and the same thing” (Beiser, *German Idealism* 561). In other words, the oppositions listed are not real ones, but are apparent for consciousness only. The second interpretation is called by Beiser the “hylozistic” or “vitalist” interpretation, which holds that “there is a *real* difference between the subjective and objective, the mental and physical, although it is only a difference of degree rather than kind” (562). Under this model, subjective or conscious activity is granted a higher status than the objective or unconsciousness activity, insofar as it reveals a higher “degree of organization and development” (562).⁴⁴ Finally, Beiser advances the “Platonic” interpretation, which holds that “the absolute consists in reason, the archetype, or the idea, and this is neither mental nor physical, neither subjective nor objective, because an intelligible form is neither kind of entity or property” (562). According to this interpretation, the oppositions—subject-object, mental-physical, and so on—are united because they are all manifestations of the same thing, the absolute.

⁴⁴ Note that this implies teleology, because purposiveness would be the criterion by which the difference between higher and lower organization is measured.

As Beiser notes, there are apparent problems with each of these interpretations. The disadvantage of the dual-aspect doctrine is that Spinoza's theory explicitly prohibits "any interaction between the mental and physical, which are regarded as completely independent forms of explanation of one and the same thing" (561). Given that Schelling's aim is to overcome mind-body dualism and thus to explain their interaction, this consequence of Spinoza's doctrine seems unacceptable. Throughout *Bruno*, however, Schelling insists that the relations of oppositions within the absolute should be thought conceptually, rather than being reduced to relations of cause and effect. That is, thought is not to be grasped as an effect of which nature is the cause, or vice versa.

The vitalist interpretation faces the difficulty that it fails to acknowledge the development of Schelling's thought from his earlier philosophy of nature to his identity-philosophy. While his vision of nature as a dynamic and organic system (which is supported by the vitalist interpretation) retains a place in his system of absolute identity, it is as one pole of the absolute, not the absolute itself. Finally, the problem of the Platonist reading is the problem facing the three interpretations taken together: they are all ultimately incompatible with one another.

While I lean heavily toward adopting the Platonist interpretation—primarily because I think this is the one best supported by the *Bruno* text—I do want to note that I do not necessarily share Beiser's opinion that the mutual incompatibility of these interpretations presents a real problem for Schelling. Rather, one could and perhaps should side-step this apparent problem by suggesting that Schelling may have offered these various and even contradictory accounts of the absolute in order to short-circuit the kind of dualistic thinking that he finds so problematic, and to encourage a kind of

thinking that may lead to an intellectual perception of the absolute.⁴⁵ As Beiser himself notes, in response to the question of which interpretation best suits Schelling's identity-philosophy: "Appropriately enough for a philosophy that wants to overcome all oppositions, all and none of them" (*German Idealism* 564).

Schelling, of course, offers his own self-interpretation of his identity-philosophy project, suggesting that while it (identity-philosophy) should be considered completely correct from a certain standpoint, it is only the "negative philosophy" that paves the ground for a "positive philosophy" of existence. The meaning of such an assessment will be elucidated in the context of my comparison of Schelling's later work with his identity-philosophy. Prior to that, however, I turn to Schelling's 1802-1803 *Lectures on the Method of University Studies*. In what follows, we will see some of the precise ways in which Schelling's commitments in the identity-philosophy inform his vision of university organization and purpose. In that discussion, the light shines the other way also: an analysis of Schelling's conception of university study reveals much about his identity-philosophy commitments. As a result of the portrait of Schelling's philosophy that will continue to take shape in the next chapter—viewing the general (identity-philosophy) in the particular (university institution)—the crucial problems or limitations that reside in the identity-philosophy will continue to reveal themselves. This will better allow us to perceive what may have motivated Schelling to undergo some basic transformations in his thinking by the time of the publication of *Human Freedom* in 1809.

⁴⁵ It is also worth noting on this subject that the content of the absolute—if "content" is even an acceptable term here—does not admit of explicit description; for, if we are to attempt to offer a conscious account of something, we are already positing a subject-object dichotomy, and in this case we are attempting to make the absolute into an object of explanation.

Chapter 3: The Idea of the University

3.1: Historical Setting: The Need for Education

By the time Schelling delivers his lectures *On University Studies* in Jena in 1802, the debate over the status and proper task of the university has been raised and engaged by many of his immediate philosophical predecessors. Figures such as Kant, Schiller, Fichte, and others have already weighed in on the topic in the form of published texts and publicly delivered addresses. Kant had argued in the first *Critique* for the view that philosophy should be returned, from its subordinate role as “handmaiden to the sciences,” to its position upon the “throne,” and would reiterate these views in such documents as 1798’s *Conflict of the Faculties* and 1784’s “What Is Enlightenment”? In Jena, by the late 1780’s, Kant’s philosophy had gained such traction that many of the University’s pre-eminent figures had tasked themselves with disseminating the Kantian philosophy. It was under the influence of Kant, then—Kant’s philosophy generally and his view of philosophy’s relation to other disciplines in particular—that Schiller, Fichte, and Schelling in turn would deliver inaugural lectures expressing their respective visions of appropriate university study.

The intellectual and social climate surrounding the University in Jena played a crucial, if primarily negative role in the forms these inaugural lectures would take. In his *German Romanticism and its Institutions*, Theodore Ziolkowski tells of the rowdy and licentious students inhabiting the university towns throughout Germany in the 18th century, and none surpassed the student body at Jena in this respect. In a survey of popular literary texts from Germany in this time, Ziolkowski presents numerous descriptions of Jena students concerned far more with drinking, fighting, and seducing

women than with intellectual enrichment. A 1744 novel by Friedrich Wilhelm Zachariae follows its central character Raufbold from his expulsion from Jena to his arrival in Leipzig: “At Jena...it has been his role to carry a big sword, to brawl in the marketplace, to sing in public, to booze day and night, to cheat his creditors, to curse constantly, and never to study” (Ziolkowski 228). We learn also of a form of hazing common in Jena in the mid- to late-1700’s, “the conferring of the degree of *Doctor cerevisiae et vini* (doctor of beer and wine)” (229). The ritual was intended to mirror (and evidently mock) the doctoral exams, as the “candidate” was required to consume as much beer as his appointed committee of three opponents. Having successfully completed this examination, the candidate was free to sign his name with the title of *Dc.* (229).

Some initial attempts to combat this culture in towns such as Jena incorporated the use of force. Even these efforts were, for a time, considered only as a last resort and executed reservedly, for the university towns depended largely upon the students for their economic vitality. These students, then, really seemed to run the asylum. Eventually, Goethe was called to change the culture in Jena. This calling arose initially from within, on the basis of his affinity for the region (having moved to nearby Weimar in 1775) and his conviction that a flourishing intellectual culture would most likely arise within the context of robust university life. For this to happen, however, the power would have to be shifted from the students to the faculty. A committee—formed to address the problematic student culture at Jena and chaired by Goethe—recommended such a power shift and spelled out steps by which that shift would be executed (Ziolkowski 231). Those steps included expanded powers of expulsion of problem students, as well as the prevention of admission of students who had been expelled elsewhere. Yet because of the

aforementioned economic reliance of the local population and university professors on the students, these recommendations proved largely ineffectual. As a result, the relations between the University and its student population remained toxic, and as the tensions would occasionally reach a boiling point, violent conflicts would erupt between students and local security.

As a result, “a number of students inspired by the democratic ideals of the [French] Revolution organized in an effort to do away with duels at Jena, proposing the establishment of a student court that would be empowered to deal with affairs of honor” (232). While this proposal held promise, it met with resistance from university faculty and other administrative figures who were unwilling to surrender any power to students whatsoever. The student body once again flexed its economic muscle, threatening to transfer en masse to the University at Erfurt (232). A compromise was reached in response to this act, though nothing much changed with regard to the troubled climate in Jena. In fact, this anarchic situation reached its crescendo shortly after Fichte’s arrival in 1794. In response to his public lectures, in the spring of that year, on scholarly responsibility, representatives from the student fraternities approached Fichte with the intention of renouncing their activities and dissolving their societies. Fichte, however, quickly spoiled this newfound trust by making the fraternities’ proposals a public matter (without their consent), and the spirit of diplomacy turned again into one of anger and resentment. The students “disrupted [Fichte’s] lectures, shattered the windows of his house, ... insulted his wife on the streets, and threatened him with violence” (232-233). The government responded with unprecedented military action.

It was in this context that the intellectual and artistic movement known as Early German Romanticism, or *Fruhromantik*, arose. It may at first blush seem surprising that such an important and intellectually stimulating movement as German Romanticism would blossom in a German university town, especially one as bawdy, decadent, and chaotic as Jena. Upon closer look, we can see that these very conditions, along with the fortuitous presence of nearby figures like Goethe, that inspired this movement—even if negatively. For while it is quite difficult to pin down a defining feature of German Romanticism—there seems to be a different Romanticism for almost every Romantic—one concern of all its figures is *Bildung*. “The romantics’ fundamental ethical ideal was *Bildung*,” argues Beiser, “self-realization, the development of all human and individual powers into a whole” (*Romantic Imperative* 25).⁴⁶ This general description of *Bildung* (as understood by the romantics) overlooks the peculiar difficulty of translating the term into English, which Beiser addresses shortly after introducing it:

Depending on the context, [*Bildung*] can mean education, culture, and development. It means literally “formation,” implying the development of something potential, inchoate, and implicit into something actual, organized, and explicit. Sometimes the various connotations of the term join together to signify the educational process or product of acculturation, or the ethical process or product of self-realization. (*Romantic Imperative* 26)

Bildung, then, signifies both the ethical aim of education and the educational path by which that aim is fulfilled.

⁴⁶ Note the inclusion, in this general description, of both the universal (human) and particular (individual).

If we understand *Bildung* in terms of education, and recognize the centrality of commitment to *Bildung* among the major figures of German Romanticism, we can more easily perceive the aptness of this movement to a place like Jena in the 1790's. While Romanticism is often cast more generally in terms of a response to the fragmented and rootless nature of modern existence, the state of affairs in Jena was a particularly visible manifestation of such fracturing and upturned rootedness. If the situation at Jena was symptomatic of the deeper modern ailments with which Romanticism is concerned, then it was also the proper site to seek a remedy. As Ziolkowski notes, "precisely because the students at Jena had pushed matters so far that extreme measures had to be taken, the situation there showed the first real signs of improvement" (233). More specifically, Schiller identified a source of the Universities' cultural disease: a lack of receptiveness among the students to education (233). Clearly, the first step toward a rehabilitation of the University lied in a transformation of the student culture that would ready the students for *Bildung*.

In recognition of this, the romantics picked out *Bildung* as the ethical ideal. Friedrich Schlegel calls it the "highest good, and the source of everything useful" (Beiser, *Romantic Imperative* 88). A highest good, of course, is that good around which all other goods and activities are arranged. This concept was subject to lengthy analysis and rich elaboration by Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. There, Aristotle defines the highest good as "that at which all things aim," directly or indirectly. Such a good, he notes, is ultimate rather than intermediate (that is, it serves no end beyond itself). The highest good is also self-sufficient, so that it does not derive its meaning from anything beyond itself, and nothing can be added to it which would improve it.

Aristotle identified the highest good with happiness—*eudamonia*—a good both intrinsically and universally desirable. Given the kind of good that happiness is, it is not difficult to see the reasoning behind this identification. Happiness is something that everyone wants, and it is not wanted for the sake of something beyond itself. It would be strange to think of happiness as something that could be bettered by adding some other kind of good to it. If we are to think of *Bildung* in terms of education—and the leading romantics of the time surely did—it is much more difficult to perceive how it could be considered the highest good. Education would seem to be better described as an instrumental good than a final one. Doesn't learning always aim at an end other than itself? A person learns to ride bicycle in order to have a form of transport more efficient than walking, learns a trade in order to make a living, perhaps even learns geometry for the sake of the enjoyment of intellectual contemplation. Education has its value in being a means, which evidently contradicts the definition of a highest good.

As Beiser notes, this understanding of education is consistent with one embraced by those romantics who also called it the highest good. While on the one hand seeking “to unite all their efforts for the sake of [this] one single overriding goal,” the central figures of the German Romantic circle also saw in it a value for its possibility to transform society (*Romantic Imperative* 88). Such figures, including Novalis, Schlegel, and Schelling, initially found untempered inspiration in the French Revolution, hopeful as they were for the institution and expansion of ideals like liberty and equality. As the 1790's wore on, however, the situation in France deteriorated and these ideals failed to manifest. Their enthusiasm cooled. “The romantics,” Beiser tells us, “became especially troubled by the anomie, egoism, and materialism of modern French society, which

seemed to undermine all ethical and religious values” (*Romantic Imperative* 88). While those ideals remained desirable—in fact, morally imperative—the means to them no longer seemed clear. In their disappointment, the romantics sought a new solution to the problem (of striving for social and political progress without becoming ensnared in the anarchy and turmoil that had taken hold in France), and found it in education: “If all the chaos and bloodshed in France had shown anything, they argued, it is that a republic cannot succeed if the people are not ready for it” (*Romantic Imperative* 89). The value of education is its transformative capacity.

Although not uncontroversial, this view of the centrality of education is quite plausible. An educated citizenry is best equipped to act in the interest of the whole—the community and the state.⁴⁷ The problem for our understanding of the romantics lies in the apparent tension between this view of the instrumental value of education and their stated commitment to the identification of education with the highest good. Thinking again of the situation of the student conduct at Jena, it is fairly easy to see that the leading figures there would be concerned with the (trans-)formation of the student, in order to ready him for the specific aim of the university. And while that aim is, of course, education—such the question over *Bildung* might be seen as an education that makes one ready for education—that aim in turn surely is a means to something further. Just as most people today view a college education as a means to a more rewarding career, so was it generally the view in Germany in the latter half of the 18th century. So how could the romantics of the Jena circle reconcile this with the view of education as final and self-sufficient?

⁴⁷ Note here the implicit assumptions concerning the relation of universal to particular—in this case, the community and the individual citizen.

In response to this problem, Beiser emphasizes the connection of *Bildung* to “self-realization,” “the development of all one’s characteristic powers as a human being and as an individual” (*Romantic Imperative* 91). Education is not merely a means to self-realization, but also that end itself. The good of self-realization is one that could reasonably be called the highest. It is ultimate, as “it does not derive its value as a means to some higher end, such as the common good or the state,” and it is complete, “since an individual who attains it lacks nothing, having achieved everything of value in life” (*Romantic Imperative* 91-92).⁴⁸ The leading figures of Jena framed the value of education in this way, as is evident from, for example, Schiller’s excoriation of those who understood university study primarily as a means to a career. Schiller distinguishes the “professionally oriented student” or *Brotgelehrte* from the more exalted “philosophical mind” (Kiolkowski 239). The “bread-student” fails to acknowledge the intrinsic value of education, limiting himself to learning only what pertains to his specialization, by which he plans to earn his daily bread. Such a view of education is certainly not worthy of the name “highest good,” as it derives its meaning from ends beyond itself.

Schiller also notes that such an understanding of the value of education is an obstacle to progress: “Who has cried out more at reformers than the mob of bread-scholars? Who holds up the progress of useful revolutions more than they?” (Kiolkowski 239) This critique initiates a trajectory of arguments for university reform at Jena that would continue through Fichte to Schelling’s 1802 lectures on the subject, which begin with the dramatic description of the student’s malaise:

⁴⁸ This view of the highest good as education is, formally at least, compatible with Aristotle’s: happiness *can* be a means to something other than itself (such as when someone desires to be happy in order to be more productive, or to be kinder to others) while nonetheless being an end in itself.

It is at the very beginning of his university career that a young man first comes into contact with the world of science. The more taste and inclination he has for science, the more likely it is that this world will strike him as a chaos, a confused mass, a vast ocean upon which he is launched without star or compass. Students who really enjoy clear sight of their goal are unfortunately rare exceptions to this rule. What usually happens is that the better-organized minds throw themselves haphazardly into every conceivable study. Striking out in every direction at once, they never get to the heart of any one subject, which is the only way to attain a many-sided, well-rounded culture. At best, by the end of their academic career they are rewarded with insight into how fruitless their labors have been—they see how much they have learned to no purpose and how essentials they have neglected. Lesser minds, meanwhile, practice resignation from the outset, keep to the beaten track, and at most try to assimilate—applying themselves mechanically, merely memorizing—only as much as they suppose will be profitable in their future trade or profession. (*University Studies* 5-6).

This passage is most explicitly a diagnosis of what Schelling takes to be a dire problem confronting the organization and activity of the university model of his age.⁴⁹ The university as it presently stands, he claims, fails the best young minds, and encourages a machine-like existence in the rest of its students. This problem is not merely accidental,

⁴⁹ It is likely that anyone closely affiliated with the state of the contemporary university would find something uncomfortably familiar in passages such as these. Indeed, the author of *University Studies* would perhaps be even more distraught in 2013 than 1802, as the splintering of academic disciplines and the ever-increasing specialization of knowledge has made the hope for a unity of knowledge even more distant.

he will argue; rather, the sickness reaches down to the root—the principles upon which the university of the day is founded. Along with critiques like the one formulated in the passage above, and a series of more specific critiques of particular branches of science, Schelling offers throughout the *University Studies* positive proposals for remedying the university's ills.

Before turning to a discussion of Schelling's proposals, however, it is worth noting two subtle gestures contained within the passage above. First, Schelling contrasts here two approaches to university studies: one that "[s]trik[es] out in every direction at once," and one that would "get to the heart of . . . one subject." It is only the second path—getting to the heart of a subject—which is truly suited for acquiring a "many-sided, well-rounded culture." This "well-rounded culture" (or "well-rounded education") is evidently of much significance for Schelling (and this only becomes more evident throughout the *Lectures*). It is, of course, a reference to the *Bildungsfrage*, a concern of much currency in the age, as we have seen from the earlier discussion. The concern is over how best to cultivate, formulate, and educate an individual; specifically, over whether and how the university achieves this goal. Given Schelling's inclusion of this concern in his opening lecture, it is clear that he aligns himself with those who believe that the university should have as one of its chief purposes the proper formation of the young individual.

There is an apparent tension in Schelling's insistence that the proper approach to developing a well-rounded culture is focusing one's research on the core of a single subject. The tension arises because, on the face of it, "striking out in every direction" seems better suited for "many-sidedness" than does all-encompassing concern for one

subject. In fact, Schelling's proposal even brings together the contraries, "one" and "many," in an unexpected and perhaps seemingly ill-advised way (ill-advised, in that it would seem that this approach would prove ineffective for achieving his stated goal). Yet, as we have seen in the previous chapter, this apparent tension is resolved by appeal to Schelling's identity-philosophy. If the universal is always refracted in the particular, then "single-minded" devotion to one subject will lead to knowledge of the universal. Only by way of a genuine engagement with a particular matter will one arrive at a true understanding of the interconnectedness of the whole.⁵⁰ Moreover, the very opposition of "one" and "many" in this context could only be supposed from a position that neglects the more fundamental identity of identity and difference.

Also noteworthy is his characterization of the university's products, specifically those who fall under the heading of "lesser minds": they "at most try to assimilate—applying themselves *mechanically*, merely memorizing—only as much as they suppose will be profitable in their future trade or profession." Along with the echo of Schiller's criticism of the *Brotgelerhte*, I cannot help but hear a resonance with Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, in which he formulates a system of nature opposed to the mechanistic conception favored in his day. (This understanding of nature is one that, at least fundamentally, Schelling retains throughout his lifetime.) It is plausible to infer from this early passage, at least provisionally, that Schelling believes that the troubling symptoms he is addressing result from a basic misunderstanding of nature and of human being's relation to nature.

Near the end of the third lecture, Schelling notes his intention to show "how all the sciences are interlinked and how their internal organic unity is expressed objectively

⁵⁰ This is evident from Schelling's account of intellect intuition.

in the external organization of universities” (40-41). We encounter indications of this plan much earlier, however—as early as the first lecture, and even in the title of this first lecture, “The Concept of Absolute Knowledge.” There he notes, for instance, that

[the] pivotal issue upon which everything else turns . . . is the idea of an intrinsically unconditioned knowledge, one and entire—the primordial knowledge . . . true ideality is ipso facto true reality; there is no other ideality.

This essential identity of the real with the ideal . . . is the assumption upon which all true science is founded. All that can be proved is that without it there can be no science, that the merest claim to knowledge implies search for this identity, for resolution of the real in the ideal. (9)

Schelling later adds a footnote to this passage: “And vice versa, the possibility of fully translating the ideal into the real.” The claim is that what he takes to be true science is founded on reciprocally comprehending the real in the ideal and the ideal in the real—both of which are in a relation of indifference from the standpoint of the absolute. Thus, the organization of the university and its purpose ought to reflect this underlying unity, this “idea of an intrinsically unconditioned knowledge.” This is, of course, the standpoint developed in the *Bruno*.

Not only the scientific research of the university, but also the education of the university student ought to be grounded in this idea. “In science and in art,” Schelling claims, “the particular has value only insofar as it implies the universal and absolute . . . The student trying to make himself a good lawyer or physician loses sight of the far

higher purpose of learning, which is to ennoble one's mind through knowledge" (6). It would seem as though he places priority on the universal over the particular, perhaps even an inherent priority. He follows this, however, with the argument that

Mathematics, and especially geometry, clears the mind for purely rational cognition, independent of practical application. Philosophy, which comprehends the whole man, is even better suited for freeing the mind from the limitations of a one-sided culture and for elevating it to the realm of universal and absolute. However, it must be observed that the broader sciences have no necessary bearing upon a given student's field of specialization—at least, science at its most universal does not trouble to make such a relation clear. (6)

This suggests the inverse of the earlier claim: the universal has value, perhaps, only insofar as it is expressed in the particular. I take it that Schelling's point is that education of the university student should reflect the absolute by heeding the particular in the universal and the universal in the particular, the real in the ideal and the ideal in the real, at every stage.

3.2: What Is a University For?

In the concluding paragraphs of the First Lecture, Schelling applies some lessons from the identity-philosophy to correcting some misconceptions of the purpose of university study. The predominant misconception held by the student is that the value of an education lies in its products—for example, in vocational training, or in any other tangible or "practical" benefits. This, of course, recalls Schiller's polemic against the "bread-scientists," who degrade the value of knowledge to a mere means to engagement

in practical affairs, especially gainful employment.⁵¹ On Schelling's view, this reductive view of education fails to understand the deeper, truer relation of knowledge to action, taking instead a merely finite and relative view. In order to conceive of knowledge as a means to the end of action, one must hold them to be in opposition to one another, in such a way that the separation is an objective feature of their relationship, and that knowledge and action are in themselves independent.⁵² Schelling supposes that this view arises from a pre-philosophical attitude: "Those who regard knowledge as the means and action as the end derive their idea of knowledge from everyday activities, in which knowledge indeed serves as a means to action" (14). Consequently, the theoretical work done in the university setting exists for the sake of such goods as the improvements in agriculture, carpentry, health, politics, and so on. These "shallow apostles of practicality in science" "think that geometry is fine, not because it is the most self-evident science, the most objective expression of reason itself, but because it teaches how to measure fields and build houses or is useful in plotting the courses of merchant ships" (15).

The truly philosophical attitude rejects this devaluation of knowledge. This attitude, of course, is for Schelling the one that recognizes genuine knowledge as expressing the absolute standpoint. From the perspective of the identity-philosophy, the opposition of theory and practice is dissolved: "if knowledge is the ideal embodiment of the infinite in the finite, and action of the finite in the infinite, at the level of the Idea or being-in-itself each expresses the same absolute unity or primordial knowledge" (13-14). Even a provisional acquaintance with the meaning of "absolute" reveals the fault in the

⁵¹ It is worth noting, here or shortly below, another parallel between the era covered here and a situation we face today, namely, the glut of overeducated graduates.

⁵² The pair of opposites, "knowledge" and "action," derive from the more general pair, "thought" and "being," or "ideal" and "real."

“practicality” view described above. For if knowledge and action are considered to be antithetical (as in the “means-end” view), then the supposition of absolute knowledge (which is the supposition of the identity-philosophy) entails also absolute action. Yet if there is to be absolute action, it cannot depend upon knowledge for the form it takes, as absolute means unconditioned by anything other than itself. “The world of action,” Schelling notes, “like that of knowledge, is a self-contained absolute world” (14).

In the foregoing, we witness the first expression of Schelling’s grounding of the university in his absolute idealism. This initial expression works primarily as a corrective. In the following Lecture, “On the Scientific and Moral Purposes of the University,” Schelling develops the vision of the university founded upon the principles of identity-philosophy somewhat more positively (though his discussion here remains rife with scathing criticism of problematic university institutions and customs). He references the notorious students who are given to disruption of the proper academic functions of the university:

Men who are there [at university] only to assert themselves in other ways [than the undertaking of scientific advance]—by extravagance, by wasting their time in frivolous amusements, in short, the same sort of privileged idlers as are found in civil society (and they are chiefly responsible for rowdiness at universities)—ought not to be tolerated. Whoever cannot prove his diligence and readiness to work should be expelled. (29)

While Schelling’s preliminary step toward university reform focuses on enforcement aimed at weeding out the troublemakers (who, he implies elsewhere, are incapable of genuine learning in any case), his more substantive recommendations

emphasize the duties of those who are responsible for the education of the students. In fact, Schelling dedicates more text to arguing for the expulsion of bad teachers than of bad students. This expulsion, though, could be characterized as “self-expulsion”:

No teacher worthy of his vocation will demand respect on any other grounds than the superiority of his intelligence, the breadth of his learning, and the zeal with which he seeks to communicate them. It would be an ignorant, incapable teacher who could wish to be respected on any other grounds. ... The scientific spirit once awakened among students reacts favorably on the whole body of the university, because the higher their expectations, the more the unfit teachers will be frightened away and the fit encouraged to greater efforts. (22)

When the proper climate is instilled in the university, the inept teachers will be forced to recognize their unfitness to educate and will select themselves out of the profession. The mention of the “scientific spirit” in this context gives us a clue to what makes a teacher unfit—namely, that such a teacher lacks this spirit. Lacking a scientific spirit (the character of which will be described below), the unfit teacher aims simply to pass on information to the student concerning conclusions reached through the history of scientific discovery so far. “A teacher who merely transmits [knowledge],” Schelling claims, “will often give a radically false version of what he learned” (26). This kind of teacher comes to the science externally, never grasping the essence or most fundamental justifications for the products of that science. He aims to communicate the conclusions of previous scholars and researchers, without first grasping the work through which those conclusions were reached. He is one “who lives within his science as though on another’s

property, who is not himself in possession, who has never acquired a sure and living feeling for it who is incapable of sitting down and reconstructing it for himself” (26).

In his critique of the unfit educators, Schelling makes reference to “historical exposition of [a] science”: “A man incapable of reconstructing the totality of his science for himself, of reformulating it from his own inner, living vision, will never go beyond mere historical exposition of the science” (27). Schelling’s distaste for such “historical exposition” is twofold. For one, this approach to science is incapable of contributing to its progress. But even where scientific advance is not the aim, “historical exposition” is problematic, because of the likelihood, on Schelling’s view, that the exposition will miss its mark or fail to communicate what is essential about the science. In order to understand this second concern, we must grasp what Schelling means by “historical exposition.”

Schelling critiques a certain historical approach to science for discussing science rather than doing it. “Historical erudition,” he notes, “becomes an obstacle to true knowledge; what it asks is no longer whether a thing is true, but whether it is in conformity with some derivative of the original insight” (20).⁵³ He is concerned that a true grasp of nature (and reality generally) is being replaced by an appeal to the authority of great scientists and thinkers of the past:

Aristotle in his writings on natural science interrogated Nature directly; in later times this direct approach was so completely forgotten that Aristotle took the place of Nature, and his authority was invoked against Descartes, Kepler, and others who spoke in the name of Nature herself. Even today

⁵³ Schelling also refers to this “derivative” as an “imperfect copy.” The Platonic overtones here are intriguing. On the one hand, this is consistent with Schelling’s Platonism during this period. On the other, Plato’s notion of objects belonging to the visible world and of artworks as imperfect copies is incompatible with Schelling’s view on these matters.

the majority of so-called scholars hold no idea important until it has passed through other brains and become historical, a thing of the past. (20-21)

The criticism of “historical erudition” is tied into the themes of suspicion of and discontent with modernity shared by the romantics. “The modern world is in every way, especially in science, a divided world which lives both in the past and in the present” (19). The diagnosis of division and fragmentation in the modern world is common to the romantics. Schelling advocates a return to enduring recognition of the unity of all in the absolute, the forgetting of which, he argues, is the malady at the root of the division. The reference to the historicizing of science, implicit in the just-quoted passage, is made explicit quickly thereafter:

The modern world had behind it a vanished world of the most magnificent scientific and artistic achievements. Separated from this ancient world by an unbridgeable gulf, it was linked to it only by the bond of historical tradition, not by internal bonds of continuous organic growth.⁵⁴ (19)

As a result of science of the modern era taking as its starting point an inquiry into the scientific and artistic feats of the past, science at first is undertaken as a kind of historical scholarship, marveling at and describing the victories of knowledge won in the ancient world. This scholarship, valuable in its own right, comes to be considered the equal of original research. Consequently, many university figures endeavor primarily to become acquainted with science as it has been done previously, rather than working to

⁵⁴ Note also the terms, “unbridgeable gulf,” “external” and “internal.” These terms are highly charged and intimately tied into the general problems taken up by Schelling in these Lectures, as well as his other works of the period. The “unbridgeable gulf” calls to mind the separation of subject from object that initiates philosophical consciousness.

advance it. In taking this path, Schelling argues, these scholars fail to even truly understand the work of science itself. Finally, in their capacity as “educators,” these scholars seek only to pass down their understanding of the conclusions of prior scientific investigation, but lacking a genuine knowledge of and “internal bond” with science, they communicate falsely, and the student is not granted access into the world of science itself.

The true teacher, then, must not rest at an external acquaintance with science, but must submit herself to a living grasp of it. For this, she must engage the “science of science”—philosophy—and comprehend the situation of all in the absolute. Schelling begins his account of a worthy educator by assuming, for the sake of argument only, the popular view of the task of a university, namely, an “institution for the transmitting of knowledge, ... where a young man learns all that has been accomplished in science down to his day” (26). Supposing the transmission of knowledge to be the sole task of the university, it remains imperative that this “be intelligently effected” (26).⁵⁵ Some necessary conditions must be met by anyone who seeks to transmit knowledge, let alone expand it. For one, Schelling claims, “the university lecturer is supposed to explain his subject genetically,” that is, in terms of its historical development. This comes as no surprise, as Schelling himself was committed to, for instance, a genetic account of self-consciousness from the lower potencies of nature in his philosophy of nature and identity-philosophy.⁵⁶ Given that instruction consists of the (temporal) elucidation of the

⁵⁵ “Otherwise,” Schelling asks, “why should lectures by living men be at all necessary?” An interesting question today, in a climate of ever-expanding online university education opportunities, such as (especially) MOOCs (massive open online courses), and videos of lectures shown in classrooms, etc.

⁵⁶ That Schelling takes a genetic approach to his philosophy in the 1790’s and early 1800’s, I discussed in Chapter One; I will present a lengthier case for this in Chapter Four.

science itself, we should expect that Schelling would argue that the method of instruction should mirror the method by which the knowledge is acquired.

More specifically, Schelling insists that the transmission of knowledge, if it is to be successful, must re-create the acquisition of that knowledge: “the lecturer does not merely give results, ... but shows—in the higher sciences at least—how these results were reached, and at every point builds up the whole science, as it were, before the student’s eyes” (27). In reconstructing a science genetically—which, of course, requires a fundamental (and historical) grasp on that science—the teacher points the way to the science for her student, “not as something ready-made, but as something the student must rediscover for himself” (28).

The argument, then, is that a teacher worthy of her task—the transmission of knowledge—must be able to reconstruct the history of her science genetically, which means that she must have a thorough and intimate grasp of it. If so, it turns out that her task extends far beyond the mere transmission of knowledge to the student, and thus that the purpose of the university cannot rest solely in such transmission. On Schelling’s view, an adequate grasp of a science for a university educator amounts to mastery. He compares this to training in a trade: “In every craft, ... proofs of completed apprenticeship are demanded before one is to practice it as a master” (28). Why shouldn’t this be true of a university teacher as well? And if mastery of a science is a necessary condition for teaching it, then historical knowledge of a science is insufficient. To master a subject, one must be a participant as well. Effective transmission of knowledge presupposes “personal creative understanding” of the subject, on Schelling’s view, which is to say, not only representing the science but furthering it also.

This view is expressed in 1800's *System of Transcendental Idealism* as well. Schelling notes early in this work that the transcendental methodology employed there “consists, in short, of a constant objectifying-to-itself of the subjective” (9). As Peter Warnek reminds us, Schelling throughout “demands that the reader undertake a series of acts of intellectual intuition, a movement of self-positing and self-transgressing, in which the history of the development of spirit and nature in their unity is *repeated*, undertaken *in time*, and thus enacted discursively” (177). The kind of knowledge Schelling seeks to transmit in the 1800 text cannot simply be handed down from author to reader, teacher to student; it must be reconstructed historically, that is, genetically, by both parties. “The self,” asserts Schelling, “is nothing else but a *producing that becomes an object to itself*, that is, an intellectual intuition” (*System* 28). The reader who hopes to learn from this—which, it bears recalling, is the condition of philosophizing at all—must have the capacity for such an act. “It is not apparent why the gift for philosophy should be anymore widespread than that for poetry, especially among that class of persons in whom, either through memory-work, ... or through dead speculation, destructive of all imagination, the aesthetic organ has been totally lost” (14). The presentation and comprehension of the system of philosophy, if genuine, arises from and as the free activity of the participant. The teacher cannot simply repeat the conclusions of the science, but must be taken up by the science itself.

The aforementioned popular view of the university's purpose, then, was mistaken, because it is too limited. To perceive Schelling's vision of the university more clearly, we can look for analogical models in both the contemporaneous *Bruno* and the later *Clara*, which will also offer us the benefit of noting a thread of continuity from Schelling's

identity-philosophy through his post-idealist period. If we recall the comparison of sections of the later *Clara* to arguments presented in *Bruno*, from the previous chapter, we can perceive a basis for applying those models to the position advocated in *University Studies*.

As we saw in the earlier discussion of Schelling's 1810 *Clara*, the soul serves, in the arguments presented in that text, as a point of articulation between spirit and body. Spirit and body, of course, are treated as opposites existing in a relationship of identity. The soul is the unity of spirit and body; while it is not reducible to spirit or body, it has no being without both spirit and body. (It is significant also that this is true of spirit and of body also: each is not reducible to, but also does not exist in isolation from, soul.) Schelling also argues, in *Clara*, that the soul participates in the finite and the infinite, again without reducing the soul to either. This argument defends against the concern expressed by some that "they eventually pass over into God completely, and finally they even disappear within him" (*Clara* 52). As I noted in the earlier discussion, Schelling argues in response that, while the finite may belong to the infinite (for it is, in any case, not "beyond" the infinite), it is in itself not reducible to the infinite. Just as a "speck of dust...is certainly completely suffused by the magnet's strength, ...[yet] nevertheless still has something in it that it does not have from the magnet," the finite thing retains something—namely, its finitude—that distinguishes it from the infinite.

It was my position in the previous chapter that this discussion in *Clara*, echoes a central argument from *Bruno*. The "spirit-soul-body" triad presented in *Clara* maps on smoothly to that, in *Bruno*, of "idea-concept-thing." In *Bruno*, soul is thought as the concept of a thing, and thus participates in the infinite and the finite. For one, this allows

Schelling to argue for identity of thought and nature without dissolving their difference. Along with that upshot, Schelling is also able, on his view, to establish the particularity and finitude of a thing while emphasizing its relationship of identity with the infinite. In the context of the present discussion, the model is best expressed as follows: while a thing is in itself finite and particular, it participates in infinitude and universality through its concept (or its potentiality for what it is, in its own actuality, not itself); while a concept is in itself characterized by infinity, it nonetheless is differentiated by its relation to other concepts; opposing concepts stand in a relation of identity from the standpoint of the absolute idea.

We can now see this triad expressed in Schelling's vision for the university: University-teacher-student (student body). His model for the university presents it as an externalized representation of the absolute itself, such that its research aims to clarify and objectify absolute knowledge.

3.3: Identity Crisis in the University

In the sixth Lecture, "On the Study of Philosophy," Schelling offers a clear and explicit account of what he believes to be a fundamental flaw in Kant's philosophy, echoing his own earlier criticisms of the false limits of philosophy established by Kant. In doing so, he introduces a discussion of the importance of comprehending soul and body in their identity. "Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*," Schelling argues, "is found wholly on the assumed absoluteness of logic; in this work reason is subordinated to the understanding" (*University Studies* 64). Schelling's criticism of Kant on these grounds, inspired in part by Reinhold and Fichte, and shared at this time by Hegel, has been well established. The shortcomings of Kant's philosophy and its conclusions concerning the

limitations of possible knowledge derive largely from this unjustified assumption.

Schelling and others pursuing a similar post-Kantian line were especially scathing in their frequent suggestion that Kant attempted to develop a system of philosophy by picking piecemeal from logic textbooks. The ground supporting this edifice, they argued, had not been adequately established. This vice of Kant's philosophy, which motivates basically the idealist philosophy of the young Schelling in his desire to overcome it, will later prove to be something of a virtue, as I will discuss in the chapter following this one.

The problem, on Schelling's view, of subordinating reason to the understanding is by now quite clear. The products of the faculty of understanding are characterized always by division and understanding. For this reason, the understanding is appropriate for cognition of experience: what we encounter in experience matches the either/or of the understanding. Reason seeks to know the whole in its unity and totality. For Schelling, though, the limits to knowledge posited by the understanding are inapt for reason, which he calls here "a mode of absolute knowledge," and which gives us intuition of absolute identity (64). He notes Kant's objection to teachers of logic who would "soften the natural aridity of logic and give the students, by way of introduction to this subject, a brief survey of anthropology and psychology" (64). The problem, presumably, is that such a path into logic treats logic as empirically based, as though the rules of logic depend upon the particularities of empirical consciousness.

On Schelling's view, however, there is something peculiarly appropriate about this association of logic to psychology, at least as the "so-called science" of psychology is undertaken (65). The inquiries conducted in the name of psychology, he claims, "rest upon the assumption that soul and body are opposites," as the understanding represents

them (65). A true science of the soul would dispense with such rigid distinction and begin from a recognition of the more fundamental “absolute unity of soul and body, i.e., the Idea of man” (65).⁵⁷

The fault in the empirical approach to psychology lies, unsurprisingly, in physics as well—or, we might say, the problem lies in the fabricated fault asserted between psychology and physics, a division deriving from the treatment of thought and nature as irrevocably separate. Physics and psychology should be investigated each through the other, for they share identity in the absolute idea. But physics, “as it is today, deals only with the body and assumes that matter and nature are dead” (65). A consistent criticism waged by Schelling against many philosophical and scientific predecessors and contemporaries emphasizes this tendency to think matter as purely corporeal. Corporeality, he contends, rests upon the more fundamental matter; when it is thought as identical with matter (i.e., when matter is reduced to the corporeal), a mechanistic view of nature is a natural conclusion. “The true science of nature,” though, “cannot be based on such premises but only on the identity of soul and body in all things” (65).⁵⁸ This position, central to his nature-philosophy and identity philosophy, and a premise upon which his university program is based, retains importance for Schelling during later periods of his work.

This discussion of the failures of inquiry into psychology and physics in their respective isolation provides a context for a more general critique of “one-sidedness” in

⁵⁷ Schelling offers an amusing but telling remark here: “it is easy to see what can result from explorations of something that does not exist, namely, a soul without a body.” This is fully consistent with his philosophical commitments during the identity-philosophy period and the “post-Idealist” period as well. It may also be offered as a critique of some of Schelling’s own philosophical engagements.

⁵⁸ Important footnote to this line: “For the living element in things, just as in the soul, is solely in the Idea.”

scientific investigation.⁵⁹ Schelling argues that “a one-sided philosophy,” be it empirical or analytical, “cannot lead to absolute knowledge because it treats its object from a limited point of view.” It is not that a given science is flawed because it investigates too narrow a subject matter, but because it treats its subject matter in isolation and takes itself to be absolute, rather than derivative or reflective of the more fundamental absolute identity. What results from this is a distortion:

A genuine speculative philosophy can be one-sided, too, when it takes as its absolute principle a particular form of the fundamental identity, conceived at a subordinate stage of reflection (for this identity recurs at all possible stages, changing in form only). Such a philosophy is speculative because it can rise to the universal pure and simple merely by going beyond the limits of its conception and by ceasing to regard the particular form of identity as the absolute. It is one-sided insofar as the picture it draws of the whole remains distorted. (66)

This criticism not only points out the path to overcoming this flawed one-sidedness, it also suggests an appropriate form of one-sidedness, namely, specialization. The mention here of the “identity [that] recurs at all possible stages” indicates the proper orientation of a science to its subject matter—with the absolute in view—and that a given science can, if properly undertaken, go through the particular to the universal.

In fact, a kind of one-sidedness has its proper place in science. It lies in the specialization necessary for uncovering of the wealth of truths lying in a particular region of inquiry. This specialization remains unproblematic so long as the study maintains its

⁵⁹ The arguments against one-sidedness would continue to be carried out by Hegel throughout his career as well.

recognition of its place within the absolute. In the Seventh Lecture, “Philosophy vs. the Positive Sciences,” Schelling calls attention to the difference of infinite and finite cognition:

An intelligence that could in a single cognitive act apprehend the absolute whole as a system complete in every part, including both the ideal and the real aspects, would thereby cease to be finite, would apprehend all things as actually one and, for this reason, would not apprehend anything as determinate. (75)

Such a perspective would be characteristic of a divine intellect. While the task of philosophy is to establish and reveal the absolute as the basis for knowledge, it trades in the realm of the ideal, and is thus in need of a real counterpart:

The real (as opposed to ideal) aspect of primordial knowledge is represented by the other sciences, but in them all things are isolated and separated; they can never actually be unified in the individual, only in the species. (75)

The task of the individual sciences, then, is to reconstruct the historical unfolding of their respective domains. The properly organized university is one in which these specialized reconstructions are removed from their relative isolations and oriented toward the absolute center.

3.4: The Unraveling Absolute and the Fracturing University

Frederick Beiser’s recent article, “Mathematical Method in Kant, Schelling, and Hegel,” examines the treatment of mathematics—and of the question concerning its distinction from philosophical practice—in order to correct a common misinterpretation

of Hegel's well-known criticisms of Schelling from the *Phenomenology*. As the story goes, Hegel casts the Schellingian Absolute as the "night in which all cows are black," namely, characterized by a notion of indifference lacking in dialectical rigor and without the richness of individuality and particularity encountered in experience. As Beiser shows, Hegel's basic critique is not of the content of Schelling's system, but of the method Schelling employs in explicating it: "The crucial disagreement in fracturing their alliance was not ... ontological but methodological" ("Mathematical Method" 255). The methodological problems motivating Hegel's critique, Beiser argues, derive from Schelling's insistence, contra Kant, that the application of the mathematical method to philosophy is both possible and apt. This commitment guides Schelling's output during the years of the identity-philosophy (including the years of his collaboration with Hegel), and is quite evident in the *Bruno*. It also features prominently in *University Studies*, particularly the fourth chapter, "The Purely Rational Sciences: Mathematics and Philosophy." An implication of Beiser's argument is that the consequences of Schelling's attempt to retain the mathematical method as a model for philosophy drives a transition between the identity-philosophy and Schelling's middle-period work. To see how this is the case, I will next examine Schelling's understanding of the relation of mathematics to philosophy, and its implications for university study, before turning to an account of its flaws.

At the outset of the fourth Lecture, Schelling asserts a claim that is iterated in some way in every Lecture of *University Studies*: "The absolute unity of primordial knowledge is both the source of all the sciences and their final destination" (42). As we have seen extensively, Schelling's vision of the university is organized around the

centrality of the absolute, such that the task of each of the sciences is to reveal the real side of the absolute in the way appropriate to itself. In this fourth Lecture, he uses the metaphor of a bodily organism to express the difference of relation of the various sciences to the absolute:

Those sciences which reflect primordial knowledge most directly, which come closest to it, are, so to speak, the sensorium of the organic body of knowledge. We must start from the central organs and trace the life that flows from them through the various channels to the outermost parts.⁶⁰

(42)

Given that Schelling, at this stage, insists on the accessibility of the Idea of the absolute through reason, and that the title of this Lecture emphasizes the “purely rational” nature of mathematical science (along with philosophy), we should not be surprised to find that mathematics is a science closest to the center of the system of knowledge.

Schelling’s method of establishing the (relative) priority of place of mathematics is by now a familiar one: the route passes first through the opposing territory, examining the contrasting case and discovering what distinguishes it, so that the positive moment in which his view is asserted is all the clearer and more effective. As is often the case in these Lectures, the contrasting and misguided approach is the empirically based one. As he notes here, empiricism’s fault lies in the transitory quality of its objects of inquiry, which makes the knowledge derived from it “dependent, relative, and subject to constant change” (43). Schelling’s Platonism is evident in this criticism, and in his response to it: empiricism is inadequate because it makes its starting point the particular, and never

⁶⁰ It is noteworthy that Schelling uses a case of organic nature to explain relationships inhering in the ideal. It may also prove fruitful to attend closely to the hierarchy of the sciences being established here, if in fact “hierarchy” is an apt descriptor.

takes leave of the particular. In a sense, empirical science treats the particular as absolute, in that it is treated as the sole existing object of enquiry. Particular empirical objects are in their nature transitory, however, and for Schelling (like Plato) this contradicts the ground of genuine knowledge: “The *essence* of knowledge is one, the same in all things, and for that reason cannot be determinate” (43).⁶¹

In this discussion, Schelling distinguishes between form and essence, as he is concerned to show that the empirical approach considers form apart from essence (rather than in their identity). Hoping to discover knowledge of particular entities, empiricism emphasizes their formal difference from one another, that is, the way that objects are determined by the differing forms they take. This emphasis is made at the expense of perceiving the particular entities in their unity. This approach fails to see the “same” in everything, and thus fails to attain to true knowledge (43). The problem is not that this kind of investigation treats particular entities in their difference, but that it stops there. “Where the form is not recognized in and through the essence,” Schelling argues, “we are dealing with an actual thing which is not conceived on the basis of its potential being” (43). As we saw from the earlier discussion in *Bruno*, knowing a thing entails knowing its concept, which is its universality and thus its potentiality for being the things which, in its particular form, it is not.

Beiser directs our attention to Plato’s influence on Schelling’s (and Hegel’s) position on intellectual intuition. “Following Plato,” Beiser notes, “Schelling and Hegel think that reason consists in a faculty of intuition or contemplation” and “contrast intellectual intuition with sensible intuition, reason with sensibility: whereas senses intuit

⁶¹ The language here echoes Parmenides; the influence may also trace back to the Neo-Platonist Plotinus.

... appearances of things, reason intuites the forms, ... objects as they really are and in themselves” (“Mathematical Method” 246). While the assertion of a rigid distinction between the appearance of a thing and the thing as it is in itself would be contested by Schelling (and perhaps Beiser does not mean to distinguish them in serious ontological ways here, as his language allows for the possibility that a thing’s phenomenal and intelligible characters are different aspects but equally valid), Beiser’s description of intellectual intuition here is appealingly clear and concise. He offers a further point of analogy: “again with Plato, Schelling and Hegel understood that the power of intellectual intuition is best exemplified and exercised in mathematics” (“Mathematical Method” 246). This claim is open to some interpretation, and certainly open to debate.

Beiser supports his assertion concerning Schelling’s priority of mathematics for intellectual intuition by an appeal to Schelling’s *Further Presentations from the System of Philosophy*, which includes a treatise on intellectual intuition, as well as the method, modeled on geometry, employed in *Presentation of My System of Philosophy* (“beginning with axioms and definitions and drawing consequences from them” (“Mathematical Method” 247)). The *Presentation* was published in 1801; while *Further Presentations* was not published until 1802, the essays that comprise it were both composed in 1801.⁶² While Schelling’s choice to model his *Presentation* on the geometrical method seems like compelling evidence that mathematics is for him the paradigm for intellectual intuition (and for philosophy generally), this position is undermined by Schelling’s use of the dialogue form to explicate the identity-philosophy in *Bruno* a year later (a presentation

⁶² See Michael Vater’s introduction to *Further Presentations* in *Philosophical Forum*, Volume XXXII, No. 4, 2001.

which, it should be noted, is clearer, more robust, and more fully worked out than that found in *Presentation*).⁶³

More importantly, by the time he presents the Lecture in *University Studies* on mathematical method, he seems to have clearly backed off of this view. While mathematical science remains “close to the center” of primordial knowledge, it is not *the* closest: that distinction belongs solely to philosophy. If Beiser means by “best exemplified,” “highest expression” of intellectual intuition—and it seems that he does—then Schelling rejects this by 1803. But “best exemplified” could also indicate that mathematics offers the most objective demonstration of the power of intellectual intuition, which is consistent with Schelling’s treatment of it in *University Studies*: “mathematics is the most perfect objective expression of reason itself” (47). This is certainly an exaltation of mathematical science, but the qualification must be added that the objective is but one aspect of the absolute idea. Mathematics does, of course, express clearly the identity upon which it is founded, but it still does not attain to the heights of philosophy. “The world of mathematics,” Schelling writes, “is merely a copy; the absolute identity of primordial knowledge is present in it only in a reflected form and, hence, separated from the rest” (48).⁶⁴ As Derrida notes in discussion of *University Studies*, “Mathematics *resembles* philosophy. Its intuition is not immediate but reflected” (67). Mathematics seems to have suffered a fate, by 1803, similar to that of art.

⁶³ The presentation in dialogue, of course, emphasizes the Platonic undercurrents of Schelling’s philosophy, while the geometrical method reminds us of the importance of Spinoza. Schelling would, of course, retain central features of the content of Spinozism in his work, while abandoning the formal method.

⁶⁴ Schelling continues, distinguishing philosophy from mathematics: “The science which has no archetype except primordial knowledge itself is necessarily the science of all knowledge, that is, philosophy.”

Even if Schelling prioritizes philosophy over mathematics, the two sciences remain in close proximity. Beiser notes that Schelling “regard[s] mathematics as proof of the possibility of intellectual intuition” by drawing on “three features of a mathematical demonstration, each of them stressed by Kant”: “in a mathematical demonstration we construct our objects in intuition; ... we construct an object that serves as proof of a universal theorem; ... [and we] do not simply calculate according to the laws of identity” (“Mathematical Method” 248). These features of mathematical demonstration are offered as evidence of intellectual intuition because they suggest knowledge “consist[ing] in the perfect unity of universal and particular [and] possibility and reality” (“Mathematical Method” 248). Of course, where Kant points to these characteristics to distinguish rigidly between the methods of mathematics and philosophy, Schelling emphasizes their connection.

That Schelling would stress the affinity between mathematical method and philosophy should not be surprising; on his view, any science properly undertaken is grounded by its relation to philosophy as “the science of science.” Beiser’s account of Schelling’s departure from Kant here claims that Schelling is “content ... with pointing out that the intuition involved in construction cannot be a sensible intuition, and therefore can only be an intellectual intuition” (“Mathematical Method” 249). While Beiser develops his argument for Schelling’s justifications (mistaken, on Beiser’s reading) for differing with Kant on this matter, it is worth noting again that this is consistent with Schelling’s general affiliation with Kant’s philosophy during this period of his (Schelling’s) career: his engagement in speculative metaphysics does not result from a

flat dismissal of Kant's critical philosophy, but from both respecting the reasons behind the limits established by that philosophy and thoughtfully transgressing them.⁶⁵

Schelling appeals to one of his favorite of Kant's texts, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, Beiser tells us, in defending his application of mathematical construction to philosophy. In that very text, Kant himself applies the method of construction to philosophy. Kant, however, adds an important caution by way of a distinction between pure and applied natural science:

While a pure or general doctrine of nature develops synthetic a priori principles and concepts, a specific doctrine of nature applies these principles and concepts to specific objects of experience. Of a specific doctrine of nature Kant insists that it can be a science only to the degree that mathematics is possible for it, so that its principles and concepts must be constructible. ("Mathematical Method" 251)

This distinction, though, has some rather strange implications: a pure philosophy of nature cannot undertake the construction of concepts, but can and must provide the principles upon which the applied philosophy of nature constructs its concepts. In any case, Schelling's refusal to adhere to this distinction turns on a more general commitment of his, which we have seen in related contexts: Schelling rejects any meaningful separation between theory and application, and thus has no business with this rigid distinction between pure and applied philosophy of nature.

The problem with the application of the method of construction comes into clearer light when Beiser traces the movement of Hegel's philosophy away from his earlier

⁶⁵ Beiser notes this complicated relationship: "Here we see Kant in his usual paradoxical role for post-Kantian philosophy: first he challenges it with his critical limits; but then he inspires it to go beyond them." ("Mathematical Method" 250)

affinity with Schelling's identity philosophy. As Beiser argues (against some common interpretation of the philosophical break between Schelling and Hegel), Hegel's rejection of Schelling's version of idealism follows from a recognition of the limits of the method of construction (with which Hegel would exchange dialectic). The basis for Hegel's dissatisfaction with Schelling's (and Hegel's own earlier) methodology lies in the act and end of having an intellectual intuition. "An intellectual intuition," Beiser notes, "consists in seeing the particular as part of a whole, in grasping how its identity depends upon the whole of which it is only a part" ("Mathematical Method" 253). This is, of course, the task of reason, "to comprehend something by showing how it depends on the whole" ("Mathematical Method" 253). Reason has access to the organic unity of the universe, which is carved up into limited oppositions only by the understanding. Identity and difference both are given to reason, whereas the intuition of sensibility perceives objects in relations of distinction from one another. An intuition of identity of particular and universal can only be accessed through reason.

This account of intellectual intuition is consistent with the treatment given to it in the previous chapter. Beiser offers a further account of what is at stake in an intellectual intuition, one that perhaps depends on a more controversial interpretation (in that there is a risk in attempting to flesh out, concretely, what is going on with intellectual intuition), but also points to a genuine problem facing Schelling's identity-philosophy. In an intellectual intuition, Beiser suggests, "I consider the object for its own sake, as it is in itself, apart from its relations to other objects" ("Mathematical Method" 253). This statement expresses Schelling's willingness—insistence—on surpassing the Kantian restrictions on the use of reason; it also contains an apparently curious claim, that

intellectual intuition focuses its contemplation on objects independent of their relation to other objects. Isn't the insight of intellectual intuition into absolute identity of the whole, wherein particulars exist unseparated from all others? The aim, though, is not to see an object in isolation from the whole, but to see the reflection of the whole in the particular object. It is, moreover, an insight into the object that does not rely on perceiving the object in terms of what it is not—that is, as differentiated from other things.

To have an intellectual intuition, Beiser continues, I “must abstract from all properties or determinations of the object, because they relate it to other things; they consider it from one angle, under one aspect, never treating the thing as a whole or unity” (“Mathematical Method” 254). The end is that the thing is stripped of its relative particularity and comprehended in its identity with universality in the absolute. From here, the construction begins:

[We] proceed to analyze it, to divide it into its part. Since each particular is identical with the universe as a whole, what is true of the whole is also true of each of its parts. Since the whole is the unity of the ideal and real, the universal and particular, each of its parts will have to reflect this; each of them will have to be analyzed into moments of ideality and reality, universality and particularity. ... The analysis or division will continue until we see the entire universe reconstructed before our eyes.

(“Mathematical Method” 254)

The method of construction seeks to present the universe fractal and total. On Beiser's reading, Hegel's criticism on Schelling lies in this method, not in Schelling's take on the absolute. Hegel argues that Schelling's method “fail[s] to consider the object for its own

sake”—a pretty serious shortcoming, given that “considering the object for its own sake” is the central task in the whole operation (“Mathematical Method” 254). The reason for this shortcoming is that what is particular to the particular thing is bracketed in the intellectual intuition, so that what is left are the most general properties that can be predicated of any object whatsoever: “‘ideality,’ ‘reality,’ ‘indifference,’ and so on” (“Mathematical Method” 255).

The result of this shortcoming is that, while rigid and unbridgeable dualisms may be dissolved, so too is the richness of the manifold things in experience (and the manifoldness of these things themselves). That there is plurality and particularity in the world is accounted for, but the content seems to vanish, and there looks to be no path to restoring it. “We cannot,” continues Beiser, “reintroduce determinations through analysis when we have already abstracted away from them in the first place. From a purely formal and undifferentiated unity nothing concrete and differentiated can come” (“Mathematical Method” 255). While this might appear to be an unfair description of Schelling’s system—Schelling insists on identity *and difference* in *Bruno*!—it does account for Schelling’s difficulty in articulating the deduction of the finite from the infinite in *Bruno*. Schelling attributes this difficulty (and other similar ones) to the limitations of language for the task. Beiser’s reading of Hegel reveals the possibility that there are deeper issues than linguistic inadequacy. Schelling is correct to emphasize the necessity of thinking the infinite and finite together, but faces serious work in maintaining concrete finitude of finite things in the context of the infinite. Perhaps the system as he developed it in earliest years of the 1800’s was not up to this work.

The conclusion of Beiser's argument concerning the difference between Schelling and Hegel overturns a common misinterpretation of what motivated their break: "The crucial disagreement in fracturing their alliance was not," he argues, "ontological but methodological" ("Mathematical Method" 255). The difference lies not in their views on the nature of the absolute (for they both construe it in terms of the identity of identity *and difference*—Schelling does not think it terms of pure unity devoid of differentiation), but in their respective means of presenting it (dialectic contra construction). "Schelling and Hegel were in principle at one on the crucial issue of the nature of the absolute. For Hegel, the problem was that Schelling did not have a methodology to secure this metaphysics" ("Mathematical Method" 255). Stripping the particularity from the particular in order to make it identical with the universal ultimately deprives the thing of the uniqueness that makes it what it is.

The famous "night in which all cows are black" barb from the *Phenomenology*, then, accuses Schelling of lacking the proper logical equipment to articulate the richness of things within the context of the absolute whole. Schelling is correct in identifying the absolute as the condition of knowledge, and in casting the absolute in terms of identity of identity and difference. The fault lies in his presentation. A more serious criticism, perhaps, arrives a bit later in the *Phenomenology*, at the moment the subject asserts pure being as the richest and truest object of inquiry. As it turns out, pure being is the poorest, because it lacks any real content, bare as it is of differentiation. Schelling's attempt to begin with an insight into the absolute, and a construction of objects from it, seems to suffer from this problem. Schelling insists on the logical necessity that, for instance, the infinite contain within in it the finite, and this insistence is justified. Unfortunately, his

chosen methodology prevents him from articulating the finite with sufficient concreteness.

In *Human Freedom* of 1809, Schelling revisits this question. As we shall see in the next chapter, he insists there that these criticisms of his identity-philosophy derive from a misinterpretation of that system, though this misinterpretation is perhaps fueled by his own failure to present the philosophy properly. In any case, though there are clear and important lines of continuity from the earlier material of Schelling to this middle-period text, much of what we find in this essay (along with other texts from this period) is quite new and innovative. With regard to Schelling's vision of university organization, we must conclude that, if the identity-philosophy founders, his proposed university program goes with it. And, in any case, as Iain Thomson notes (of the battle waged over the guiding purpose of the university), Schelling's "faith in the 'system' proved less influential on posterity than Schleiermacher and Humboldt's alternative" (100). In what follows, I examine the implications for education of Schelling's own later recognition of the limits of his earlier philosophical orientation.

Chapter 4: Human Freedom and the Communication of Philosophical Knowledge

4.1: *Human Freedom: A New Beginning?*

In his 1833-34 *Munich Lectures on the History of Modern Philosophy*, Schelling remarks of his earlier identity-philosophy (as expressed for example in *University Studies* and *Bruno*) that, “On the one hand, it seems impossible that this system is false, but on the other hand, one will sense something in it that prevents one from declaring that it is the ultimate truth. He will recognize that it is true within certain limits, but not unconditionally and absolutely true” (*Bruno* 71). Thus Schelling himself came to reject his earlier identity-philosophy, if even in a qualified way. What reasons does Schelling have for this criticism? And perhaps more importantly for my purposes, what implications might this have for his philosophy of education? Are there fundamental elements of his philosophy of education that can be rescued from the “fall” of the identity philosophy?

These are the central questions that I address below, in this chapter. In the preceding, I have offered an interpretation of Schelling’s earlier identity-philosophy, arguing that the chief problem motivating his work during that period arises out of the influence of and in response to Kant’s critical philosophy, and that above all Schelling’s insistence upon absolute identity aims to bridge the divide resulting from the dualism characteristic of modern philosophy from Descartes through Kant. That is to say, the central problem addressed in the identity-philosophy is epistemologically oriented: if knowledge consists of the union of thought and being, then rigid dualist gap between them must be overcome—without, for all that, dissolving entirely the distinction between the two orders (of ideality and reality). Schelling’s response to this problem invokes a

robust metaphysics. The condition for the possibility of knowledge is the absolute. Schelling, then, along with the other prominent post-Kantian idealists, transgresses the boundaries to knowledge established by Kant (and seemingly, as many critics argue, collapses back into pre-critical dogmatism) by insisting that knowledge of that condition of experiential knowing—which lies outside of the domain of possible experience itself—namely, of the absolute, is possible.

After establishing this interpretation of the motivation and argument of Schelling's identity-philosophy, I turned to an examination of his vision for university study of the same period. There, I clarified the central ways in which this vision is rooted in the broader philosophical concerns and conclusions of the identity-philosophy. Schelling argues, in his *University Studies* lectures, that the university should be founded upon the principle of absolute identity: that the university should be organized on the basis of the recognition of the absolute identity of the various sciences, that philosophy—as the science *of* science and thus as the absolute science—should be the guiding science of the university, everywhere and nowhere, and that the research and teaching within the university should reconstruct the historical-genetic unfolding of the absolute as it is reflected by the various particular sciences. By the end of that discussion, though, I also addressed some of the problems inhering in the identity-philosophy itself, problems which would lead Schelling to conduct a re-evaluation of his own work. By the time of the publication of his 1809 treatise on human freedom, Schelling had moved away from some of the commitments underpinning his identity-philosophy. In doing so, given the intimate connection between his general identity-philosophy and his view of university

education, it is likely that some of views on education and the transmission of knowledge would have to be reformed, at least. As I argue below, this is in fact what happened.

I take Schelling's later self-criticism as a cue for a new reading of his 1809 *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*, and thus also as a starting-point for this chapter.⁶⁶ If the identity-philosophy of *Bruno* is fundamentally problematic, this implies a fundamental problem with Schelling's *University Studies* project as well, in so far as the latter finds its ground in the identity-philosophy. Surely, Schelling recognized those "limits" to the identity philosophy earlier than 1833; such a recognition must be assumed as a motivation for the new developments of his thinking we encounter in *Human Freedom*. To what extent is *Human Freedom* an attempt to remedy (or even move beyond) certain issues of the *Bruno*—and thus also *University Studies*? How might the Schelling of *Human Freedom* have regarded the project of his earlier *University Studies*? It is from this perspective that I read *Human Freedom* in what follows.

The value in reading *Of Human Freedom* as a kind of educational text—that is, as expressing something like a philosophy of education—has been raised elsewhere, for instance in Peter Warnek's essay, "Reading Schelling after Heidegger: the Freedom of Cryptic Dialogue." Warnek argues for an interpretation of Heidegger's encounter with Schelling as a lesson concerning hermeneutic engagement with philosophical texts in general. Though itself not an article on Schelling's education philosophy as much as it is a treatment of interpretation at its limit, Warnek's essay does offer a discussion of

⁶⁶ The historical reception of this text supports this position, as the 1809 essay is often viewed as a transitional work between Schelling's idealist and post-idealist philosophy. (Of course, the term "transitional" should be used cautiously here, as *Of Human Freedom* is often said to stand in isolation—a claim that I don't support, and perhaps was merely the basis for Hegel's attempt to disregard it.)

Schelling's concerns with the transmission of philosophy—itsself an inherently “educational” subject.

Although Warnek's article focuses on Heidegger's engagement with Schelling—a theme that will be discussed in the following chapter of my project—I will take his analysis of Schelling's worries about the possibility of the communication of philosophy as another cue for my own reading of *Human Freedom*. If I raise the question, “What kind of philosophy of education might Schelling have endorsed in 1809?”, I do so primarily negatively. That is, I aim to show what essential features of his 1802 program for the university would need to be abandoned by the author of the 1809 essay. Although I am reluctant to speculate about precisely what kind of university program Schelling might have formulated in 1809, there are perhaps some clues in *Human Freedom* of important ways in which Schelling's philosophy of education evolved between 1802 and 1809.

In order to accomplish the goal of this chapter, it is necessary to show precisely what threads of Schelling's thought are continuous from *Bruno/University Studies* to *Human Freedom*, while also emphasizing the important and fundamental differences between these two periods. While it is clear that Schelling comes to reject the philosophy of identity as it is formulated in his earlier texts, such as *Bruno* and *University Studies*, I argue that he nonetheless remains committed to some fundamental features of it.

In this way, my reading of *Human Freedom* differs from some others, such as Kyriaki Goudeli, who advances an interpretation of the treatise “in terms of Schelling's immediately later works, namely the *AW* and *The Deities of Samothrace*,” and who argues that Schelling in 1809 “performs a spectacular break with his own previous

system” (109-110). It seems evident to me that, despite some important differences with his earlier texts, Schelling does retain some basic threads of the identity system in his *Human Freedom*. I will address some of these threads below; prior to that discussion, however, I need to say a bit more about the problems that face the earlier identity-philosophy, which motivate Schelling’s re-evaluation of it.

As Werner Marx argues in *The Philosophy of F. W. J. Schelling*, Schelling held the view that the “task of philosophy” is to “‘overcome’ the traditional oppositions such as reason and sensuality, intelligence and nature” (34). That is, Schelling aimed to dissolve the mind-body problem, believing such dichotomy to be a kind of sickness of modern philosophy. His method for accomplishing this task depends upon the assertion of the absolute identity of, for instance, mind and nature. Genuine knowledge, he claims, consists in the identity of subject and object, mind and nature, thought and being. If we adopt the standpoint of the absolute, the dualism of mind and body disappears, and along with it goes any skepticism such dualism might motivate concerning the possibility of knowledge of nature.

This appeal to absolute identity brings with it its own problems, however. While the possibility of knowledge is perhaps guaranteed, it is so only from the standpoint of the absolute, not for the individual. Moreover, Schelling now faces the problem of explaining the origin of the finite world, and its relationship to the absolute. Schelling attempts various maneuvers to resolve this problem (of explaining the origin of the finite out of—or within—an absolute that is in itself infinite), but all of these invariably seem to result in some other unwanted dualism. “If he made the absolute the cause of the finite, he divided it,” Beiser succinctly notes, “and if he made the finite its own cause, he gave it

a reality that limited the absolute” (*German Idealism* 576). This, we can assume, was the problem Schelling himself saw in his earlier system of identity: “it is true within certain limits,” and within those limits—the limits of the perspective of the absolute itself—“it seems impossible that this system is false.” In the end, however, the system fails to account for the standpoint of the existing individual, and this account is what is needed.

Beiser argues that this dilemma “eventually drove Schelling away from the philosophy of identity and toward his new philosophy of freedom” (*German Idealism* 576). While I agree with Beiser to an extent—namely, that this problem forces Schelling to make some significant changes to his approach—I am not willing to follow him all the way. There are some threads of continuity from Schelling’s earlier identity philosophy that appear in his 1809 *Human Freedom* that are not compatible with the rigid distinction that Beiser is making. In fact, *Human Freedom* can be read in part as a new approach to explaining the origin of the finite world, while remaining committed to the view that absolute identity is true. Schelling’s understanding of the absolute undergoes serious revisions, sure, but it is not necessarily abandoned.

This characterization of Schelling being “driven away from the identity-philosophy and to the new philosophy of freedom” overlooks some essential consistencies in Schelling’s project over the course of that first decade of the 19th century. Even if we acknowledge the important differences we encounter between Schelling’s earlier and later outlooks, we can nevertheless recognize some essential and significant threads of continuity as well, not least of which is his attempt to wed Spinoza’s monism to Fichte’s radicalization of Kantian idealism. Going back to his works of the mid-1790’s, Schelling was committed to articulating a Spinozism of freedom. That is, as

discussed above, Schelling from the start aligned himself, in the midst of the pantheism controversy initiated by Jacobi, with those who saw in Spinoza's philosophy the kind of grounding principle that could complete the Kantian critical project. Schelling rejected Jacobi's conclusion that Spinoza's brand of monism entailed fatalism and thus nihilism, and offered a nature-philosophy that draws upon Spinoza's metaphysics as, initially, a complement to Fichte's idealism (guided as it was by the belief in the primacy of practical philosophy, and thus in freedom as a demand of morality).

While Schelling does move toward a philosophy of freedom in 1809, then, it is not as radical a departure as some have argued. We can see that his arguments in *Human Freedom* are still, in part, a response to Jacobi's Spinozism controversy, as well as to the Third Antinomy of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Schelling dedicates considerable effort in *Human Freedom* to a critique of Spinoza that seeks to disentangle Spinoza's monism and fatalism, in order to show that it is possible to embrace pantheism without surrendering a commitment to the existence of human freedom. In fact, I read Schelling in 1809 as correcting an earlier overemphasis on the Spinozistic philosophy of nature, by counterbalancing it with an emphasis of the "freedom" side of the nature-freedom dichotomy. It is plausible to suppose that, driven by his earlier rebellion against his former mentor Fichte, Schelling neglected to give proper due to the importance of a robust notion of freedom in the articulation of his identity-philosophy, and that he came to recognize this as the source of (what he took to be) the predominant misinterpretations of his earlier work—misinterpretations that his former collaborator Hegel would capitalize on.

It is my contention, then, that the philosophy of identity marks both one of the more important differences between the Schelling of 1802 and the author of *Human Freedom*, as well as one of the points of continuity between the two. Although he remains committed to identity-philosophy in 1809, his understanding of the logic of identity seems to have undergone some significant revisions by this time. This is best seen in those passages early in *Human Freedom* in which he undertakes to correct some prevalent misunderstandings of pantheism. One of the primary misconceptions concerning pantheism, Schelling argues, is one that invites a criticism like that which Hegel famously waged against Schelling's identity-philosophy—that its worldview is a “night in which all cows are black.”⁶⁷ That is, a popular misinterpretation of the pantheistic assertion, “God is all,” is that it negates individuality. According to this account, “things are as naught, . . . this system does away with individuality . . . in this case there would be nothing but pure, unclouded divinity” (*Human Freedom* 15-16).

Even more important to Schelling, and even more in need of rejection, is the claim that pantheism is an inherently fatalistic system and thus entails a negation of human freedom. His response to both of these misinterpretations—that which denies individuality and that which denies freedom—is the same, and relies on what he calls the “true conception freedom” and the correct, “higher application of the law of identity” (17, 13). Schelling suggests that “if, at the first glance, it seems that freedom, unable to maintain itself in opposition to God, is here submerged in identity, it may be said that this apparent result is merely the consequence of an imperfect and empty conception of the law identity” (18). While he concedes that the individual in the pantheistic system is

⁶⁷ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Preface. Schelling's correction of prevalent misconceptions of pantheism can thus also be seen as a sort of response to Hegel's criticism of Schelling's own philosophy as well.

characterized by dependence, this does not in itself suffice for the denial of its (the individual's) freedom or autonomy. "Dependence," he argues, "does not determine the nature of the dependent, and merely declares that the dependent entity, whatever else it may be, can only be as a consequence of that upon which it is dependent" (18). That is, the individual relies on something aside from itself for its coming into being, but this does not in itself preclude the possibility of its self-determination.⁶⁸ In fact, he notes, "it would indeed be contradictory if that which is dependent or consequent were not autonomous. There would be dependence without something being dependent, a result without a resultant" (18). That is, the individual is thinkable only in relation to the whole, but at the same time is thinkable *as* individuated only in distinction from the whole.

Schelling's response to the objection that pantheism entails the denial of freedom, especially the discussion of the relation of ground and consequent, rests upon his understanding of the law of identity. "The reason," Schelling notes, "for such misinterpretations [as have plagued pantheism, as well as other systems] is found in the general misunderstanding of the law of identity or of the meaning of the copula in judgment" (13). He offers several examples of propositions including the copula, which are often misunderstood (mistaking sameness for identity, for instance), and proceeds to correct them. Consider the case of the identity of freedom and necessity: Schelling notes that, upon hearing such a claim, many tend to interpret it to mean, "Freedom is nothing but a force of nature, a mainspring which like all others is subordinate to mechanism" (14). In other words, the proposition that asserts the identity of freedom and necessity is

⁶⁸ In this passage of *Human Freedom*, Schelling comes surprisingly close to anticipating Sartre's brand of existentialism: "Every organic individual, insofar as it has come into being, is dependent on another organism with regard to its genesis but not at all with regard to its essential being" (18).

often understood (mistakenly in Schelling's view) as a mere reduction of freedom to necessity—that is, freedom is redefined in terms of necessity, as the same as necessity.⁶⁹ By contrast, Schelling argues that the proper understanding of the claim that “freedom and necessity are one” is that, “in the last instance the essence of the moral world is also the essence of the world of nature” (13). That is, we ought to rethink nature in terms of freedom—freedom is manifest in nature insofar as the latter is a self-organizing and creative whole—and likewise for freedom in terms of nature. Such rethinking, however, should not be reductive.

I return to this problem below. Before moving forward, however, I'll offer a few more prefatory remarks: In his *Reason and Existence: Schelling's Philosophy of History*, Paul Collins Hayner suggests that, “While there is no way of proving conclusively that it was any one factor which motivated this shift [from his earlier rationalist metaphysics to an evolutionary theology from 1809 forward] in Schelling's philosophical perspective, it does not seem absurd to suggest that at least part of the answer lies in Schelling's desire to provide more adequately for a historical treatment of reality” (168). In fact, Hayner does more than suggest that this is not absurd; he argues throughout his book that Schelling's development as a philosopher is best understood through the framework of the attempt at a philosophy of history. Hayner claims that abandons his Fichtean commitments, and his nature-philosophy because they fail to account adequately for history, and that in turn he abandons the identity-philosophy for the same reason. While the importance of the role of history in Schelling's work should not be underestimated, I

⁶⁹ Schelling also remarks that the same mistake is rarely made in the other direction, “that apparent necessity can itself be a case of freedom,” suggesting perhaps that his opponents are so committed in advance to the mechanistic view that they are unable or unwilling to give genuine consideration to the one for which he is arguing.

do not agree with Hayner that this is the best lens through which to understand the movements throughout Schelling's career. As I have argued throughout, Schelling's work, at least up to 1809, is better understood in terms of epistemological concerns growing out of his reading of Kant, and that he responds to these concerns by offering a far-reaching ontology that seeks to overcoming the dualisms of the modern era. Nevertheless, Hayner's suggestion offers a helpful hint for grasping what is at stake in *Human Freedom* (and beyond): Schelling is concerned to allow for a robust notion of freedom, one that is compatible with a genuine "history," rather than a fully rationalist unfolding of causally determined events. *Human Freedom*, aiming to demonstrate the possibility of such a human freedom, argues for a history of the universe that is meets the criterion of freedom also.

Finally, I think that one of the fundamental differences between Schelling's thought in 1802 and in 1809—a difference central to a possible shift in his philosophy of education—concerns the introduction of the "dark, unruly" ground in 1809; the claim that "the unruly lies ever in the depths as though it might again break through, and order and form nowhere appear to have been original, but it seems as though what had initially been unruly had been brought to order," indicates a ground that is prior and inaccessible to reason (*Human Freedom* 34). This "unruly," Schelling claims, is conceptually prior to order and form, and is, he continues, "the incomprehensible basis of reality of things, the irreducible remainder which cannot be resolved into reason" (34). This complicates the possibility of the transmission of philosophical knowledge.

4.2: The Genesis of Knowledge (and Knowing of Genesis)

In her article, “Schelling and Nietzsche: Willing and Time,” Judith Norman stresses a feature of Schelling’s middle-period philosophy—a period to which she refers as “philosophy of will” and which includes *Human Freedom* and *Ages of the World*—that she considers central to this period (and thus a feature that distinguishes this from the earlier identity-philosophy): “Schelling was particularly insistent that his philosophy of will began from the bottom, and he makes a point of contrasting his bottom-up genetic model of development with a Neo-Platonic top-down model of production” (93). This account of the difference between middle-period works of Schelling and his earlier philosophical approaches might strike a reader as in stark opposition to the account of Schelling’s earlier work that I’ve given above. Aside from emphasizing a thread of (Neo)-Platonism throughout some of those identity-philosophy texts—an interpretation I endorse—Norman’s suggestion that a place for genesis is novel to his later works appears to efface the importance of Schelling’s nature-philosophy in his earlier system. The nature-philosophy, one could even argue, is among Schelling’s most important contributions during that earlier period, and is often genetically presented: the organic emerging from the inorganic, and consciousness in turn emerging from the organic. “Philosophy becomes genetic,” writes Schelling of nature-philosophy in the 1803 edition of his *Ideas*, “it allows the entire necessary sequence of our representations to arise and take its course before our eyes” (189). It is, moreover, a central feature of Schelling’s identity-philosophy that one can work in either direction—bottom-up or top-down, from real to ideal or vice versa—so long as the context within the absolute is kept in view.

My interpretation, though, does not stand in as much tension with Norman’s as it may seem. This becomes clear if we can properly disambiguate the term “genetic,” so

that its application to the earlier nature-philosophy and its application to nature-philosophy's treatment in *Human Freedom* are sufficiently differentiated. The fundamental difference between the genetic account of nature as it appears in the earlier material and as it appears from 1809 on can be expressed as follows: in the identity-philosophy, genesis is articulated from within the system, while in Schelling's post-Idealist work, the system itself arises from and is made possible by a prior genesis.

Before unpacking the difference in the way that the term "genetic" functions within Schelling's later work from the proper application of it to the earlier philosophy, it is necessary to review a few essential features of Schelling's nature-philosophy and identity-philosophy. Schelling's systematic presentation of emergence of ideality from reality in texts such as the *First Outline* of 1799 offers an unequivocally genetic account of ground and natural history of consciousness. As Johnston notes in his examination of Schelling's successful and nuanced overturning of the dualisms plaguing Cartesian and Kantian metaphysics, "Schelling maintains [in the nature-philosophy] that self-conscious spirit is the culminating manifestation of a gradual historico-genetic process of emergence out of the ontological immanence of 'unconscious' nature" ("The Soul of *Dasein*" 6-7). As we will see below, this position—along with some important implications of it for the status of, for example, the emergent self-conscious subject—is retained by Schelling into the later periods of his career. In any case, there can be no doubt that Schelling in his early years is at least committed to the view that organic nature (the "real") gives rise to consciousness (the "ideal"), and that this "giving rise" is properly characterized by genesis.

A quite similar account remains in the identity-philosophy Schelling develops in the years immediately following—not surprising, for a central task of that philosophy is to reveal the proper context of the nature-philosophy and of the so-called subjective idealism of his former philosophical model Fichte, namely, the wedding of a Spinozistic objective idealism to a Fichtean subjective idealism. Identity-philosophy, as Johnston concisely describes it, seeks to establish “‘the identity of identity and difference,’ namely, the notion that the ‘Absolute’ *a la* the ‘Idea’ or ‘Concept’ encompasses all possible, thinkable oppositional levels” (“The Soul of *Dasein*” 7). Throughout the works from this period, there are recurring assertions aiming to make explicit the inextricable tie between the frameworks of nature-philosophy and identity-philosophy. For example, from the eleventh Lecture of *University Studies*:

Insofar as nature is the real aspect of the eternal act by which the subject becomes its own object, the philosophy of nature is the real aspect of philosophy as a whole. (122)

Nature is thus inherently one; there is one life in all things, all equally endowed with existence by the Ideas. Nothing in nature is purely material; everywhere soul is symbolically transformed into body, though one or the other may be preponderant at the phenomenal level. (123)

Despite the insistence of the compatibility or even unity of the nature- and identity-philosophies, there is an at least apparent tension involved. While the nature-philosophy offers a clearly genetic account of the emergence of the ideal from the real, the identity-philosophy seems equally clear in its commitment to the possibility that the process can be traced in the other direction as well. Thus, Schelling would seem to

remain committed to a top-down deduction of the real from the ideal (an approach that is consistent with a mainstream interpretation of Fichte's development of idealism). If so, it would seem that Schelling has at least one foot stuck in the Cartesian metaphysics he seeks to surpass.

The claim that, from the standpoint of identity-philosophy, one can proceed from either pole—the real or the ideal—to its opposite, and thus comprehend its relation of identity to its opposite in the absolute is correct, but if its nuance is neglected, it is vulnerable to misinterpretation. Schelling's position is that we can trace the developments that lead from nature to a culmination in consciousness—that is, we can elucidate the historico-genetic emergence of mind from nature; we can, working in the other direction, explicate the nature of particular things by begin with their (universal) concepts. The already emergent mind can turn back to its material basis in order to grasp its relation to the latter. So, while a top-down approach to an inquiry into nature is possible, it is not the sole procedure of philosophy.

Where Schelling takes leave, in his later work beginning with *Human Freedom*, of the earlier thinking of genesis lies in his growing recognition of the impenetrability of the ground from which the ideal emerges. Referring, in the "Foreword" to *Human Freedom*, to his earlier works, Schelling claims that he "has never set up [a finished and completed] system, but has only presented special aspects of one," and that the earlier presentations are "fragments of a whole" (4). This is consistent with the full title of his 1797 work, *Ideas on a Philosophy of Nature as an Introduction to the Study of This Science*. Initially presented in the context of his development of a nature-philosophy as a complement to the idealism of Fichte, "This Science" might refer to the philosophy of

nature in particular, or to the project of completing the idealism laid out by Kant that characterized the work of the major figures of German Idealism. In any case, when the work is edited and presented again in 1803, Schelling was already deeply involved in the articulation of identity-philosophy. He had already come to see nature-philosophy, not as a complete system of its own, but as a path into that grander and further-reaching identity-philosophy.

In the *Ideas*, as elsewhere in the early corpus, hints of what is to come emerge from time to time, not yet crystallized but foreshadowing the later work nonetheless. “Philosophy,” Schelling says there, “is nothing other than a *natural science of our spirit*” (189). On the one hand, this is an insistence that ground for a demonstration of the identity of the ideal with the real lies wholly within us—an assertion that is problematic within the context of *Human Freedom*. But this is also an insistence that, to be comprehended, a philosophy system must be reconstructed, beginning to end, by the individual who seeks to know it. This is, as we have seen, a claim he extends to any particular science in *University Studies*. In the *Ideas* he claims “there is no more separation between experience and speculation,” echoing at once the rejection of any strict divide between theory and practice, and the argument that in order truly to study philosophy one must put oneself in question along with putting the subject matter in question (189). “We contemplate the system of our representations,” he notes, “not in its *being*, but in its *becoming*,” reminding us that as finite beings we articulate in time what is already complete and eternal in itself (189). Schelling reiterates this view in the opening lines of his 1810 *Stuttgart Seminars*: “In what way is a system at all possible? Answer: there has long since already been a system, before humans thought of making

one—the system of the world” (206). With the above line from *Ideas* Schelling also gestures at an encounter with the difference between being and becoming that, on Heidegger’s reading of *Human Freedom*, outstrips even Nietzsche.

It is my contention that there are features of Schelling’s view of what is proper to the transmission of philosophy that are continuous from his early career into his work from 1809 and forward (though some essential differences appear in this context that cannot be dismissed). I will address this issue below; it is first necessary, however, to attend to the radical transformation that his work undergoes, beginning with *Human Freedom*. Returning, then, to the question: what is the difference between the Schelling who, in the *Ideas*, “does not begin *from above* (with the putting forth of principles), but *from below* (with the experiences and with the examination of previous systems)” (202), and the Schelling who inquires into the problem of genesis in *Human Freedom*?

4.3: Ground and Existence

In his 1936 lectures on Schelling, published as *Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, Heidegger offers some “Introductory Remarks” on the fractured friendship between Schelling and Hegel. Heidegger there suggests that “the greatest thinkers never understand each other at bottom, just because they want *the same thing* in the form of their of their unique greatness” (*Schelling’s Treatise* 13).⁷⁰ The phrase, “never understand each other at bottom,” translates the German, “*im Grunde einander nie verstehen*.” That is, Heidegger proposes that great thinkers are *in their ground* incapable of agreement, for they want the same. It is presumably no accident that

⁷⁰ This remark, like another from these lectures that I mention below, is an interesting case in that it might be read as Heidegger’s assessment of his own relationship with the great historical thinkers.

Heidegger references the *ground* in his assessment of the break between Schelling and Hegel, as a central theme of Schelling's *Human Freedom* is the nature of "ground." As Peter Warnek notes, the "failure [of understanding] lies in the very ground of thinking," and for this reason, "the very grounding character of the ground [must] be rethought," a demand issued by Schelling (164).

Though initially not explicitly announced, Schelling takes up this question concerning "ground" and its relation to the grounded early in *Human Freedom*. His early treatment of the issue arises from the engagement with the tension between freedom and system—the theme motivating the treatise—and passes through a defense of his own, earlier identity-philosophy. In addressing the "inevitable problem" of the incompatibility of "the concept of freedom and a total world view," Schelling arrives upon an oft-asserted viewpoint: "Pantheism is the only possible system of reason but is inevitably fatalism" (9-10). In this brief slogan, many find their warrant for abandoning a commitment to reason or to freedom. Schelling's task is to hold them together, but on the way he aims to reveal the shortcomings of this dismissal.

Schelling recognizes that pantheism and fatalism are compatible, but rejects the assertion that the former conclusively entails the latter, for reasons that will be addressed shortly. He also, though, notes that any notion of God that includes omnipotence faces the same problem:

In maintaining freedom, a power which by its nature is unconditioned is asserted to exist alongside of and outside of the divine power, which in terms of their ideas is inconceivable. As the sun outshines all other

celestial lights in the firmament, so, but to a greater degree, infinite power extinguishes all finite power. (10-11)

Far from being the system that precludes freedom, pantheism is the view that hopes to rescue a coherent notion of freedom from its nullification in the view asserted in the passage above. Human freedom cannot be maintained in complete independence from an omnipotent God, but only “by saying that man exists not outside God but in God, and that man’s activity itself belongs to God’s life” (11). Of course, the common interpretation of pantheism, often associated with Spinoza—that pantheism “constitutes a total identification of God with all things”—does plausibly entail a dissolution of human freedom (11).

Such an interpretation, however, fails to comprehend Spinoza altogether. As Schelling notes, for Spinoza “God is that which is in itself and is conceived solely through itself; whereas the finite necessarily in another being and can only be conceived through it” (12).⁷¹ The reference to “another being” is to God; a finite entity does not exist on its own and through its own power but being other to itself, namely, infinite being. Thus, finite things, “whatever their relation to God might be ... are absolutely differentiated from God through the fact that they can exist only in and dependent upon another being (namely himself)” (12). The question, then, concerns “what this relation might be.”

The response to this question is already hinted at in the reference to dependence. Schelling’s argument against the preclusion of freedom by pantheism, which serves to correct at the same time misinterpretations of his earlier philosophy, targets what he calls “an imperfect and empty conception of the law of identity” (18). This misconception of

⁷¹ Spinoza expresses this, for instance, in Proposition 11 of Part 1 on *Ethics*.

the law of identity does not properly understand what “is” is. Schelling offers a few examples in which this law is applied, including

the proposition: the Good is the Evil—by which is meant: Evil has no power to exist in itself; that which is real in it, considered in itself, is good. This statement is held to mean: the eternal difference between right and wrong, between virtue and sin, is being denied, and from the point of view of logic they are the same. (13)

Throughout this section of *Human Freedom*, Schelling insists upon a distinction between sameness and identity. In a footnote, he takes Reinhold to task for “laboring endlessly in this maze wherein he confuses identity with sameness,” and showing a “*lack on conscience*” in his treatment of the philosophies of Spinoza and Schelling in his work (14-15). Reinhold’s offense lies in an assertion that, for “Spinoza and Schelling [the task of philosophy] consists in showing the unconditioned unity of” infinite and finite, while for Plato and Leibniz it “consists in demonstrating the subordination of the finite to the Infinite” (15). Schelling’s task throughout the identity-philosophy, whether or not it can be considered successful, was to show that pairings such as infinite-finite exist in absolute identity without losing their qualitative distinction, that is, without totally reducing one to the other.

To grasp Schelling’s employment of ground in relation to that which it grounds, we can look to the contrast between the two ways of reading the proposition, “the Good is the Evil.” Schelling does not fully unpack this claim until the treatise is near its end—“evil in itself, that is regarded at the root of its identity, is goodness; just as goodness, on the other hand, regarded in its division or non-identity, is evil”—for he needs to articulate

the problem to which this assertion responds before its meaning can become clear (80). A few anticipatory words can be offered by way of clarification, nevertheless. While the reconciliation of freedom with system is the problem that motivates *Human Freedom*, it becomes clear before long that the question concerning the nature and possibility of evil plays an equally significant role. Schelling carefully elucidates the shortcomings of previous thinkers' attempts to address the problem of evil, including Spinoza (who, in the "Appendix" to Part 1 of *Ethics*, dismisses the problem of evil as a pseudo-problem arising from misconceptions of God and the natural order), Kant (who locates the evil of human beings in heteronomous counter-pressures to autonomy), and Fichte (who couches evil in an "inertia in our own nature" (*System of Ethics*, 190)).

We can see Schelling's narrative in *Human Freedom* develop in response to these views on evil. Spinoza's dismissal of evil extinguishes freedom also, which is a conclusion Schelling cannot accept. Kant's affirmation of the existence of radical evil is at odds with his own account of human freedom, such that an apparently irresolvable tension arises:

Experience shows us that man as a *sensible being* has the capacity to choose *in opposition to* as well as *inconformity with* the law, his freedom as an *intelligible being* cannot be *defined* by this, since appearances cannot make any supersensible object (such as free choice) understandable. We can also see that freedom can never be located in a rational subject's being able to make a choice in opposition to his (lawgiving) reason, even though experience proves often enough that happens. (*Metaphysics of Morals* 52)

This tension arises from “the profoundest difficulty” of “the entire doctrine of freedom” (*Human Freedom* 26). For the problem of evil is also the problem of freedom: “the real and vital conception of freedom is that it is a possibility for good and evil” (26).

Schelling notes that “a view such as would be fully adequate to the problem with which we are here concerned, could only be developed from the fundamental principles of a genuine philosophy of nature” (31). On his own account, then, the “profoundest difficulty” must be addressed by reference to the philosophical accomplishments of his earlier work of a decade prior.

The “fundamental principles” cited here include the position of teleology within nature itself, which is crucial for resolving the freedom-necessity tension. As Peter Dews notes in *The Idea of Evil*, for Schelling “only in purposiveness can causality and freedom be metaphysically reconciled” (65). While this reference to the conclusions of the earlier nature-philosophy is informative, Schelling evidently recognizes their limitations by the time of *Human Freedom*. The reconciliation of freedom and necessity in natural teleology, as developed in the earlier work, comes at the cost of the more robust notion of freedom sought in *Human Freedom*—the concept of freedom adequate to moral responsibility. The recourse to purposiveness *in nature itself*, by itself, too closely resembles the account of evil offered by Spinoza: “a process that is ‘free’ in the sense of not being externally determined, but unfolding in accordance with its own immanent law, is nonetheless not free in the morally significant sense” (Dews 63).

For this reason, Schelling needs to develop this account of natural purposiveness, and does so with considerable novelty by introducing universalizing and particularizing “wills,” striving in conflicting directions, and generating tension that inheres in reality

itself. This account of purposiveness arises in response to two unsatisfactory alternatives: the kind of dualism incapable of unity (which cannot account for a freedom that is efficacious in relation to nature), and a monism incapable of duality: “either there is no common ground for [being as it is in its ground and in its existence]—in which case we must declare ourselves in favor of absolute dualism; or there is such common ground—and in that case, in the last analysis, the two coincide again” and lose their distinction (*Human Freedom* 87). Schelling needs to have it both ways: he seeks to preserve the difference between opposites (for failing to do so would, for example, strip evil of its moral relevance) while maintaining a view of the whole in which both exist (namely, share a common “ground”).

It is in this context that Schelling makes recourse to what he calls the “groundless”:

Reality and ideality, darkness and light, or however else we wish to designate the two principles, can never be predicated of the groundless *as antitheses*. But nothing prevents their being predicated as non-antitheses, that is, in disjunction and each *for-itself*; wherein, however, this duality (the real twofoldness of the principles) is established. (88)

He posits the groundless (or “primal ground”) as “a being *before* all basis and before all existence” (87). Here we confront the opposition of “ground” and “existence,” which are held apart in the groundless, not antagonistically (though that possibility is established also, which will emerge as evil), but differentiated so that the possibility of their unity will emerge:

The groundless divides itself into the two equally eternal beginnings only in order that the two which could not be in it as groundless at the same time, or there be one, should become one through love; that is, it divides itself only that there might be life and love and personal existence. (89)

This account may call to mind a familiar attempt to explain away the problem of evil, namely, that we cannot understand one thing except through its opposite, and thus evil must exist as a means to the experience of the good. While this may be true to some extent, we also encounter here a more vital reading of the system of identity developed a decade earlier, for the genesis of the opposing principles of universality and particularity is now given a dialectical articulation.

The function of love in *Human Freedom* is illuminating, both literally (in that it is the principle of light) and for the purposes of this project. Its contrast to (and dialectical engagement with) the ground informs the relation of ground to existence. Schelling refers to the “secret of love”: “that it unites such beings as could each exist in itself, and nonetheless neither is nor can be without the other” (89). The will to love is universalizing. It brings together what otherwise exists in a relation of opposition. And yet, things cannot be unified without their being opposed. Thus, while universality is conceptually (and, it turns out in *Human Freedom*, morally) prior, it is incomprehensible without particularity. The wills striving to universality and to particularity, then, reach back into eternity, for each presupposes the other. In the groundless they are indifferent.

Schelling continues, “as duality comes to be in the groundless, there also comes to be love, which combines the existent (ideal) with the basis of existence” (89). Love brings into unity ideal “existence” with its real “ground.” To understand fully what is at

stake here, these terms as Schelling employs them at this stage in his career must be clarified. “Existence” stands for the discursively relatable world of possible experience, while “ground” is the real basis for such experience. Existence is rational; ground of existence resists total rational articulation. In *The Indivisible Remainder*, Žižek ties existence to reason: “in the *Freedom* essay, God’s existence is identified with *Logos* (it is only through emitting a Word that God comes to exist *stricto sensu*; the pre-logical ‘nature in God’ is merely the obscure Ground of Existence)” (40). This is a surprising identification, for reason has traditionally been thought in terms of ground—as in the principle of sufficient reason. Existence, the expansive will to universality, depends upon something other for its existence (that is, for itself) to manifest, a contractive will to particularity. This is ground. Žižek notes a provocative implication of this: “Reason can thrive only on a foreign, ‘irrational’ Ground of the rotary motion of drives from which it draws its life-force” (75).⁷²

Reason relies upon something other than itself—something antagonistic to its nature—for itself.⁷³ Schelling hinted at this in earlier works, such as in the lines from *System of Transcendental Idealism*:

I seek to ground my knowledge only *in itself*, I enquire no further as to the ultimate ground as to the ultimate ground of this primary knowledge (self-consciousness), which, if it exists, must necessarily lie *outside* knowledge.

⁷² Žižek’s formulation of “the rotary motion of drives” refers more directly to the account developed by Schelling in *The Ages of the World* drafts, but this notion is already implicit in *Human Freedom*.

⁷³ It is important to note, though, that this reference to something “irrational” should not be read as an invitation to abandon reason altogether (as Schelling remains critical of such a response). As Hayner argues, “reality must be recognized as being *more than* rational; that reason alone cannot determine existence” (98). The entire fullness of being cannot be deduced from concepts, as dogmatic rationalists (perhaps including Schelling at an earlier stage) would have it.

Self-consciousness is the lamp of the whole system of knowledge, but it casts its light ahead only, not behind. (18)

When he offers these words in 1800, he intends to provoke attention to a problem that demands solution, namely, the justification for the critical project of Kant. As Heidegger formulates it in his Schelling Lectures, “Kant did succeed in a critique, that is, at the same time a positive essential determination of knowledge as experience, but he neglected the foundation of the essence of that knowledge which was carried out as critique” (*Schelling’s Treatise* 41). This remains a problem for Schelling, but his orientation toward the problem transforms radically by the time he composes *Human Freedom*. For one thing, what was once considered (by Schelling) a vice in Kant’s work—the failure to elucidate the justificatory ground of critique—now approaches virtue. The ground of experience cannot be fully elucidated, for the “elucidation” is a concept proper to experience, and is made possible by the emergence and separation from the ground.

This is not to say, though, that Schelling simply returns to the Kantian view of the limits of possibility of knowledge (just as little as he collapses into pre-critical dogmatism). As Johnston remarks in *Zizek’s Ontology*:

The basic gist of [Kant’s] Copernican revolution amounts to re-centering the experiential real upon the activities of the cognizing intellect, instead of on any kind of ontological edifice beyond the boundaries of epistemological subjectivity. Schelling, on the other hand, insists that this revolution must itself be overturned. ... He contends that Kant’s results require a supplementation that Kant himself would exclude as illegitimate.

Rather than being the ground of experience, reason is parasitic in relation to its encounter with something outside its own self-enclosed confines.⁷⁴

(75)

The terms “ground” and “existence,” employed as they are in *Human Freedom*, are ontologized forms of the ground-consequent relation addressed early in the essay.⁷⁵

Consider again the proposition, “the Good is the Evil.” Schelling insists that the misinterpretation oft-committed takes this to mean, “there is no difference between the meaning of ‘good’ and that of ‘evil’”; he corrects this misinterpretation by arguing that what is truly meant is that “evil has no power to exist in itself; that which is real in it, is good.” But how do we arrive at this corrected view, on the basis of the original claim (“the good is the evil”)? Schelling appeals to the ancient understanding of logic: “The profound logic of the ancients distinguished subject and predicate as the antecedent and the consequent” (*Human Freedom* 14). He offers another example by way of elucidating this relationship:

If one says: A body is a body; he is assuredly thinking something different in the subject of the sentence than in its predicate. In the former, that is, he refers to the unity, in the latter to the individual qualities contained in the concept, body, which are related to the unity as the *antecedens* to the *consequens*. (*Human Freedom* 14)

⁷⁴ The “overturning of the revolution” has a Hegelian ring, echoing a “reversal of reversal.” This is not the only case of Schelling employing such a maneuver; contradictory essence of evil works on the same ‘logic.’

⁷⁵ The dyad of ideal-real moves to the side stage in *Human Freedom*, conceding the main stage to the ground-existence relation. It should be quickly noted, though, that these pairs do not seamlessly map onto one another. Time is a category belonging to existence, which would indicate a close proximity of existence to the real. But existence is also the arena of ratiocination, bringing it closer to the ideal. In fact, the concepts of ideality and reality both belong to existence.

The unity of “body” is conceptually prior to its particular attributes, as a ground to that which it grounds. It is also crucial, for Schelling, that we recognize that the copula does not only express identity but also difference—retaining a commitment of his identity-philosophy from the time of his collaboration with Hegel.

If we apply this interpretation to the claim, “the good is the evil,” we find that the good is the unity, from which the *particularities* of evil may result. The good is prior to the evil, and the evil depends upon the good for its being. Finally, there is not between them a relationship of pure identity, but difference also. So, in some way not fully explained yet, evil has good as a condition of its existence, but is not the same as good. Schelling unpacks this in a discussion of the relation of a dependent to that upon which it depends, expanding the argument from the realm of the logic of judgments to that of being⁷⁶. The context of this discussion is the problem of the possibility of freedom from the standpoint of pantheism. The pantheistic claim, “God is all things,” might be interpreted to mean that every existent thing is utterly submerged in identity with God, and that freedom is dissolved in this submersion. Again, on Schelling’s view, this misunderstands the “is”:

That for which the Eternal is by its nature the ground, is ... dependent and, from the point of view of immanence, is also conceived in the Eternal. But dependence does not exclude autonomy or even freedom. Dependence does not determine the nature of the dependent, and merely declares that the dependent entity, whatever else it may be, can only be as a

⁷⁶ “Existence” would be a better term here, in that it references what Schelling would later call the “positive philosophy” of existence, but in the present context it risks confusion with “existence” as the technical term world the world structured by reason.

consequence of that upon which it is dependent; it does not declare what this entity is or is not. (18)

Much is said in this brief passage. For one, Schelling anticipates, or at least opens a door for, the basic framework of Sartre's brand of existentialism—which Sartre adopts, without attribution, from Heidegger—that existence precedes essence.⁷⁷ On this view, I am responsible for myself because, though the original facticity of my existence depends upon something other than me (and is thus outside my power), *who* I am is a consequence of my own free acts. In his essay, “Schelling and Sartre on Being and Nothingness,” Manfred Frank emphasizes these parallels, noting that, when Sartre advances the claim of the priority of existence over essence, his “real but unconscious model ... is Schelling, who understood freedom as the independence of the essence from the That” (“Schelling and Sartre” 165). Schelling's later assertion, discussed below, of a self-determinative act, an “act which determines man's life in time but does not itself belong in time but in eternity,” further prefigures Sartre's existentialist claims concerning my own self-creating acts.

Zizek calls attention to Schelling's struggle to think freedom robustly, maintaining a serious commitment to the “whole” which precedes its parts (that is, system as necessity) while retaining respect for moral responsibility: Schelling

endeavors to articulate the most radical dimension of human freedom. ...

[He draws] attention to the mysterious paradox of our ethical reasoning:

when one encounters a truly evil person, one cannot avoid the impression

that in accomplishing his horrifying acts he is merely following the

⁷⁷ Heidegger articulates this view of human existence in *Being and Time*. Though Sartre popularizes this view in his later advocacy of existentialism, he derives it from Heidegger in what amounts to plagiarism (and then derives from it conclusions that Heidegger rejects).

necessity inscribed in his nature; that it is not in his power to act differently—he is simply ‘made like that’; the mystery reside in the fact that—notwithstanding this impression, and in apparent contradiction to it—we hold him fully responsible for his acts, as if his evil nature itself is contingent on his free choice. (*Indivisible Remainder* 17)

In his attempt to maintain a coherent notion of moral responsibility, Schelling makes nature contingent upon freedom. This is a remarkable reversal of his earlier nature-philosophy commitments, which nevertheless continue to reside in *Human Freedom*. Schelling’s maneuver, again, forecasts some of the later existentialist analyses. In *Human Freedom*, Schelling responds to the “apparent contradiction” by gesturing at a choice before time:

The act which determines man’s life in time does not itself belong in time but in eternity. Moreover it does not precede life in time but occurs throughout time (untouched by it) as an act eternal by its own nature. ... Though this idea may seem beyond the grasp of common ways of thought, there is in every man a feeling which is in accord with it, as if each man felt that he had been what he is from all eternity, and had in so sense only come to be so in time. (63-64)

Sartre, in “Existentialism Is a Humanism,” also describes self-determinative choice as an act prior to factual thrownness, seeking, as Schelling is here, to establish responsibility in the face of the impression that character conditions choice, by making one’s character one’s own responsibility.

On the one hand, Schelling's reference to an act not in time but in eternity makes possible freedom in a fashion echoing Kant. For Kant, freedom is an unconditioned condition, spontaneously entering the causal series. As such, it belongs to the noumenal realm, to which notions such as "time" do not apply. In a typically Schellingian manner, he adopts this Kantian view and adapts it to a discussion of issues beyond the limits established by Kantian critical philosophy. In doing so, however, Schelling substitutes one paradox for another. He resolves the seeming contradiction of holding someone responsible for actions that are produced by the necessity of nature (namely, a character just "made like that"), but at the cost of positing an act outside of time that informs time itself.

This paradox reaches all the way to the root—a root that lies in the unground. Before returning to that subject, though, it is worth noting that this notion of a human act prior to time is at least to an extent consistent with a theme that stretches from the identity-philosophy to *Clara* (the latter being close to contemporary with *Human Freedom*). Temporality is, for Schelling of the identity-philosophy, predicated of the real, of things, for time can only be thought in the context of the finite. The soul considered in itself is purely ideal, and thus infinite and exclusive of time. The soul is never purely in itself, though, as Schelling insists both in the earlier work and in works from this middle period. The soul is possibility but always embodied in the actual. It is in this sense that even the soul is mortal, for it is always in time also.⁷⁸ As I discussed earlier, this is a view that is essential to both *Bruno* and *Clara*.

While there is considerable and important similarity between Schelling's identity-philosophy view of the soul and that of the middle period works of *Human Freedom* and

⁷⁸ See Johnston, 2003.

Clara, the passage above from *Human Freedom* introduces a significant difference.

Schelling's identity-philosophy was not equipped to take seriously eternity before time in the way that he does by 1809, namely—to use Žižek's turn of phrase—as a “past that was never present”:

What is done eternally ... must be eternally (at any time always-already) done, and is therefore inherently past—that is, it has to belong to a past that was never present. ... The paradox of such an ‘eternal past’ is constitutive of *time*: there is no time without reference to a past which was never present. (*Indivisible Remainder* 21-22).

What unfolds in time, for existence (and thus characterized by reason), is dependent upon an act in a past to which it can never have access. This act is free: the entire world of existence, capable of rational elucidation, arises from brute contingency. The fact of the *that* of existence cannot be raised into the sphere of rational inquiry.

This confrontation with the basic contingency of existence marks the most significant departure of Schelling's thought from his earlier philosophical commitments. It is dramatically expressed in a passage appearing midway through *Human Freedom*:

Following the eternal act of self-revelation, the world as we now behold it, is all rule, order, and form; but the unruly lies ever in the depths as though it might again break through, and order and form nowhere appear to have been original. ... This is the incomprehensible basis of reality in things, the irreducible remainder which cannot be resolved into reason. ... Out of this which is unreasonable, reason in the true sense is born. (34)

The conceptually mediated reality of existence owes itself to, emerges from, a ground upon which it cannot cast back its light.

This account echoes a traditional philosophical-theological problem of the time-eternity relation, namely, the problem of God as *causa sui*. Dews remarks that Schelling gives this problem an “ingenious twist,” noting that “Schelling takes this formula to mean that God contains his own cause, but is not *identical* with it” (66). Dews’ claim is accurate only if we understand “identical” in the sense Schelling warns against, that is, pure sameness. God is his own cause, but in existence is also different from it. We circle back, then, to Schelling’s treatment of ground-consequent relation. Schelling proposes that “God contains himself in an inner basis of his existence, which, to this extent, precedes him as to his existence, but similarly God is prior to the basis as this basis, as such, could not be if God did not exist in actuality” (33). God is the ground of existence—his own and of human being—and the ground is prior to but not fully determinative of existence. That is, the ground makes possible that which is dependent upon it, but the dependent then frees itself from the condition of the ground in its existing.

This formulation sounds like a cosmic version of Aristotle’s adage, that the son is the father of the father.⁷⁹ And it certainly doesn’t resolve the problem of circularity inherent in the notion of God as ‘cause of itself.’ It is rather an embrace of that circularity, though one which, as Dews says, “identifies a necessary fracture *within* this circularity” (66). Contra Kant, the circularity of God is not a confusion arising from the transgressed limitations of human reason, but rather belongs to God himself. It must be emphasized that what Schelling says of God in this and related cases is true, if at least in

⁷⁹ Schelling likely has the contradiction of the trinity in mind.

a modified sense, of human being. “Man’s act of decision,” Zizek notes, “his step from the pure potentiality-essentiality of a will which wants nothing to an actual will, is therefore a *repetition* of God’s act” (21). This is one feature that allows for a secularized reading of Schelling’s work, despite its explicit theological currents. As Johnston notes of Zizek’s reading of Schelling, “the theosophical bent of this Schellingian text”—
here referring here to *Ages of the World*, but true also of *Human Freedom*—“its explicit thematic focus on God, is treated in Zizek’s psychoanalytically influenced borrowings from it as allegorical/metaphorical, as a cosmic, grand-scale narrative of the ontogenesis of subjectivity” (*Zizek’s Ontology* 78).

There is, beyond the “problem” of circularity, another evident contradiction at work within *Human Freedom*, one that poses potential problems for the reading I am giving. The use of the term “ground” seems to extend in conflicting directions at different stages of Schelling’s argument. Recall that, in his discussion of the subject-predicate relationship in a judgment, Schelling emphasizes that the subject/ground is the unity that produces the predicate/consequent. The ground, then, is the unity prior to the particularities of the subject expressed in the consequent. In the treatment of the ground-existence relationship, though, this ordering seems to be reversed: the will of existence is an expansive striving, characterized by a desire for universality (which one would naturally associate with unity), while the will of the ground is contractive, striving for particularity. In fact, Schelling concludes that evil is the product of the human being’s attempt to inverse the proper relationship of universality and particularity—the subordination of the universal to the particular (namely, the particular that the human

being itself is), the will of existence to the will of the ground. This occurs in response to the encounter with all-encompassing universality:

It is God's will to universalize everything, to lift to unity with light or to preserve it therein; but the will of the deep is to particularize everything or to make it creature-like. It wishes differentiation only so that identity may be come evident to itself and to the will of the deep. Therefore it necessarily reacts against freedom as against what is above the creature—just as he who is seized by dizziness on a high and precipitous summit seems to hear a mysterious voice calling him to plunge down. (*Human Freedom* 58-59)

The human flees from the universalizing will of existence in order to preserve its own self-hood. “This reaction is almost inevitable,” Dews notes, for “existence, in its pure freedom, threatens me with loss of identity” (68).

This account of the human's flight from freedom into the factual ground resonates with the discussion of the soul in *Clara* discussed earlier, wherein it is proposed that union with God is terrifying because it would seem to entail the annihilation of the individual self. It also marks another point of similarity with Sartre's phenomenological analyses from *Being and Nothingness*, namely, Sartre's account of “bad faith.” On Schelling's account, the attempt to preserve selfhood in the face of universalizing existence comes at the cost of the denial of freedom (though in this denial human freedom does not cease to exist):

The terror of life drives man out of the center in which he was created; for being the lucid and pure essence of all will this is consuming fire for each

particular will; in order to be able to live in it man must mortify all egotism, which almost makes necessary the attempt to leave it and to enter the periphery in order to seek peace for his selfhood there. (*Human Freedom* 59)

This is startlingly close to that mode of bad faith, in Sartre's philosophy, which consists in a flight from transcendence into immanence, or freedom to facticity. Out of the fear of the implications of freedom, the individual over-emphasizes one aspect of herself, claiming that "that's just who I am." I mention this resonance with Sartre to highlight another feature of Schelling's view in *Human Freedom*, which is the ambiguity of the human being. Bad faith is possible, for Sartre, because the human is ambiguous—characterized by *both* transcendence and immanence. Evil is possible for the human being, Schelling argues, because the human being is characterized by a duality of principles, and becomes actual when the universalizing principle is subordinated to the particularizing one.⁸⁰

The problem remains: how can the ground be unity and that which disrupts unity for the sake of particularity? It may very well be that Schelling does not adequately address this, and that his account is plagued by an unintentional contradiction. Žižek suggests this possibility:

In 'Philosophical Investigations,' this relationship between the obscure Will of the Ground and the illuminated, effectively existing Will is not yet

⁸⁰ We might be tempted to locate Schelling's thought here more closely with the Heidegger of *Being and Time* and "What Is Metaphysics?", insofar as anxiety is revealed by the encounter with the nothing, which is Schelling's claim as well (for Schelling, the anxiety of life arises from the confrontation with freedom, and freedom is ultimately a radical "nothing" of groundlessness). This would be a productive analysis, though it seems that there is a crucial difference: for Schelling, the flight is into self-hood, while for Heidegger the flight is away from one's genuine self into inauthenticity.

thought through, so that Schelling's position is, strictly speaking, contradictory. That is to say, his answer to the question, 'What does the obscure Will aspire to?' is: it strives for illumination, it yearns for the Word to be pronounced. If, however, the obscure Will of the Ground itself aspires to *logos*, in what precise sense is it then *opposed* to it? (*Indivisible Remainder* 61-62)

That is, the will of the ground strives for existence (and this is why it is the ground of existence), while at the same time opposing itself to existence (such that it is not itself existence, and existence can be revealed in its own right). It is this latter striving that is particularizing, contra the universalizing will of existence. Žižek argues that Schelling's view in *Ages of the World* is equipped to handle to this problem better than *Human Freedom*, while conceding that Schelling's position is nevertheless more nuanced than the contradiction, as Žižek formulated it, might indicate: "the Ground is in itself ontologically hindered, hampered; its status is, in a radical sense, *pre-ontological*: it 'is' only ... in the mode of its withdrawal" (*Indivisible Remainder* 62).

Perhaps Schelling's position in *Human Freedom* is even more nuanced than that. We find descriptions of the ground at various stages of the treatise that suggest a resolution to the (apparent) contradiction. For instance:

Just as in man there comes to light, when in the dark longing to create something, thoughts separate out of the chaotic confusion of thinking in which all are connected but each prevents the other from coming forth—so the unity appears which contains all within it and which had lain hidden in [the ground]. (36)

The remarkable resonance of this passage with Schelling's earlier work, especially the conclusion of the 1800 *System*, is informative. Recall from the earlier discussion of *System* that the artwork radiates absolute identity *after* separation, whereas in nature the identity does not aspire to the heights of art because its identity does not pass through difference (in consciousness). The comparison with nature is made in *Human Freedom* also:

The first effect of reason [*Verstand*] in nature is the separation of forces, which is the only way in which reason can unfold and develop the unity which had necessarily but unconsciously existed within nature, as in a seed.⁸¹ (36)

There is a "hidden unity" in the ground, but it cannot be revealed until it unfolds in separation. For this reason, the will of the ground particularizes. In existence, what has emerged in this separation strives for union again. Of course, what is in existence cannot return to the ground; as Žižek notes, the "unconscious" names that past which was never present.

At this point, Schelling encounters another contradiction, related to the one earlier exposed by Žižek. This one, though, Schelling acknowledges and seeks to resolve. Existence emerges from the ground, at which point it is no longer reducible to the ground. This is only possible, however, because the will of existence strives a direction contrary to that of the will of the ground. Existence can only arise from the ground *because it already strives in the contrary direction*. The circularity is evident: existence becomes what it is on the basis of what it already strives for. Thus, the will of existence

⁸¹ "*Verstand*" should be translated by "understanding" here, as the faculty of understanding is that faculty that reifies oppositions that are unified in reason.

must already have a kind of independent being prior to its emergence from the ground. Schelling asserts that the will of the ground and the will of existence are “two equally eternal beginnings” (*Human Freedom* 89). The equi-primordiality of the two is established in a “groundless” relation of absolute indifference. Thus Schelling requires recourse to the abyssal un-ground, in which each—ground and existence—are “predicated as non-antitheses, that is, in disjunction and each *for itself*” (88). The indifference of opposing drives in the abyss of the un-ground is, finally, the possibility of freedom.

The commitment to a genetic philosophy, incubated in the identity-philosophy, achieves its robust life in *Human Freedom* and after. And there are two distinct genetic accounts in these later works: the one that exhibits the rational structures of reality, which holds much in common with the earlier works, and the one that seeks to articulate the inarticulable, the supposition of the dark abyss from which reality emerges.

4.4: The Un-Grounding of Education

In his essay, “Theology of Translation,” Derrida says of Schelling’s university (as envisioned in 1802-1803) should “be thought in the logic of uni-formation, which is also a poetics of translation” (69). He emphasizes Schelling’s insistence that the university be founded on the originary unity of the absolute, such that the ideal be fully translatable into the real (which requires teachers who can first translate the real, for themselves, into the ideal). The university would be grounded in the “living totality” of the absolute idea, and its task includes the transmission of philosophical knowledge—that is, knowledge of the absolute and comprehension of the situation of the sciences within it—to students who have the capacity for it.

The year following the presentation of the *University Studies* lectures, Schelling leaves Jena for Würzburg, which he in turn leaves three years later for Munich. While serving as General Secretary of the Bavarian Academy of Arts there, Schelling composes *Human Freedom*. As I hope to have shown in the preceding discussion, this treatise, while maintaining some important threads of continuity with his earlier work, nevertheless represents some points of radical departure from those prior philosophical commitments. Foremost among these transformations is the introduction of (to use a term Schelling coins a few years later) an “unprethinkable” ground of the system of reason. What was once seen as an intolerable problem in Kant’s critical philosophy—the absence of a justificatory ground for the critique—is now positively embraced as a brute, factual contingency: reason has a ground which it cannot rationalize. As Warnek notes, Schelling initiates a departure from the “metaphysics [that] has continually sought the ground, and could be defined as the dream of attaining its own ground in the self-grounding ground” (164).

What implications does this have for his earlier vision of the university? Can he remain committed to the vision of a university organized around the fundamental unity of the absolute? What kind of philosophy of education is consistent with the arguments presented in *Human Freedom*? Schelling offers some hints, including a footnote appearing late in the treatise:

The author never desired through founding a sect to take away from others and least of all from himself, the freedom of inquiry in which he has always declared himself and presumably always will declare himself to be engaged. ... Many things could have been defined more precisely and kept

less informal; many things could more expressly have been saved from misinterpretation. The author failed to do so in part purposely. (91)

Schelling also notes here that the content of the treatise is intended “as in a dialogue.”

What are we to make of an author who explicitly admits that he refrained from a clearer presentation of his vision, and did so intentionally?

Schelling has undoubtedly distanced himself far enough from earlier central philosophical assumptions that he could not retain the vision of university reform that he detailed in the *University Studies* lectures. But I first want to call attention to some features of likeness between his understanding of education in 1802 and in 1809. In the same footnote excerpted above, Schelling says of the treatise and its audience, “Whoever cannot accept it from him in this way, or does not wish to, had better take nothing from [the author] at all and seek other sources” (91). This statement echoes his earlier insistence that students must be receptive to philosophy in order to learn from it. This emphasis on readiness for learning goes beyond this in its similarity to the earlier work, as is evident from the reference to the “freedom of inquiry” he does not wish to strip from his readers. In *University Studies*, as well as other texts from the era (such as the 1800 *System*), Schelling claims that the genuine student is one who will perform the philosophy in order to learn it. The reader of the *System*, and the spectator to *University Studies*, must perform acts of intellectual intuition if there is any hope of grasping the content being delivered. In the same vein, the reader of an essay on freedom must engage in an interpretation itself characterized by freedom.

That likeness gives way to a crucial difference, however. If the intended audience of *Human Freedom* is composed of those who fully manifest freedom, they are those also

who must encounter an abyss, for freedom is possible only on account of the abyss or unground. In his essay, “Reading Schelling after Heidegger,” Warnek follows Heidegger’s assessment concerning the criterion of the greatness of a work such as *Human Freedom*, that “it is great only because it remains impenetrable, inexhaustible, and untranslatable” (171). This is in stark contrast with the depiction of the identity-philosopher Schelling by Derrida, who articulates a “theology of translation” grounding that early work. In the peculiar case of a work on freedom that demands its own re-enactment as a condition of reading it, that is, that it is read freely, Warnek remarks that “it puts into question the possibility of its own readability, its own transmission and repeatability” (172).

In this way, Schelling’s characterization of his text as dialogical is informative. A true dialogue consists of free engagement by both parties. Schelling provokes his reader to enter into a lively conversation with the text, rather than a passive absorption of its content. To say that the treatise develops “as in a dialogue” is to say that he does not intend to transmit its conclusions authoritatively. The reader of the text must pose questions to the text, answer to the questions posed by the text, and put herself into question in her engagement with the text—all as one would if in a dialogue with another. A genuine dialogue, moreover, is not repeatable—it unfolds freely according to its own contextually provided essence.⁸²

Schelling’s treatise on freedom is motivated by the need to think together what seems to be mutually exclusive: necessity (system) and freedom. This problem has occupied his work for at least a decade, but it receives its most robust treatment in

⁸² This point is made by Heidegger, in his dialogue, “Conversation on a Country Path,” which names an “inconspicuous guide who takes us by the hand” along “the silent course of a conversation that moves us.” (Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, 60, 70)

Human Freedom. “As both the articulation of the demand,” engendered by reason, that freedom be demonstrated within the context of the system that seems to preclude it, Warnek notes, “and as the failure to satisfy that demand, Schelling’s text can be said to confront the crisis of reason at an extreme moment” (174). Rather than transmit a doctrine, *Human Freedom* invites its reader to experience this failure as the breakdown of the power of reason itself. “Reason,” Warnek continues, “grounded in a ground it knows not, becomes a stranger to itself” (175).

In the 1815 draft of *The Ages of the World*, Schelling continues to articulate these reservations concerning the possibility of a transmission of philosophical knowledge. For instance, within the context of a discussion of the transition of inorganic to organic nature, as well as the interpenetration of the corporeal and spiritual:

Whoever has to some extent exercised their eye for the spiritual contemplation of natural things know that a spiritual image, whose mere vessel (medium of appearance) is the coarse and ponderable, is actually what is living within the coarse and ponderable. The purer the image is, the healthier the whole is. This incomprehensible but not imperceptible being, always ready to overflow and yet always held again, and which alone grants to all things the full charm, gleam, and glint of life, is that which is at the same time most manifest and most concealed. Because it only shows itself amidst a constant mutability, it draws all the more as the glimpse of the actual being that lies concealed within all things of this world. (61-62)

Most remarkable here is the suggestion that what makes knowledge of things possible itself withdraws from experience, and resists the conceptualization characteristic of knowledge. In the opening words to the same text, Schelling asserts that, “The past is known, the present is discerned, the future is intimated,” and that knowledge “is the development of a living, actual being” (xxxv). He maintains the view from *Human Freedom*, then, that a system of reason emerges from a prior ground, which cannot in turn be brought into the clear light of conceptual mediation. He affirms the position that what “lies concealed” can only be glimpsed, and that his task consists in an intimation to his reader of that which cannot be fully discursively communicated.

Two other passages from the 1815 *Ages of the World* merit attention here. The first is a Socratic insistence on the humble acknowledgement of ignorance:

The beginning of all knowledge lies in the knowledge of one’s ignorance.

But it is impossible that the person posits himself or herself as ignorant without thereby inwardly making knowledge into an object of their desire.

Positing oneself as that which does not have being and wanting oneself are therefore one and the same. (16)

The beginning of knowledge for the individual person is a repetition of a more primordial beginning, and calls our attention to the curious structure of a beginning in itself—namely, that for a beginning *to be* a beginning, it must become what it is not, that is, it must transition into that for which it was to be a beginning. Again, the ground of knowledge lies in what is not known: “Precisely that which negates all revelation must be made the ground of revelation” (16).

The other passage appears near the end of the *Ages of the World* draft, and takes the form of a scathing critique of, on the one hand, sober academics, and on the other, purely mystical romantics. It includes also an endorsement of a measure of madness:

Nothing great can be accomplished without a constant solicitation of madness, which should always be overcome, but should never be utterly lacking. ... One could say that there is a kind of person in which there is no madness whatsoever. These would be the uncreative people incapable of procreation, the ones that call themselves sober spirits. ... But there are two kinds of persons in which there really is madness. There is one kind of person that governs madness and precisely in this overwhelming shows the highest force of the intellect. The other kind of person is governed by madness and is someone who really is mad. (103-104)

This standard of assessment is consistent with themes from *Human Freedom*. A genuine and productive encounter with the world is unavailable to the person characterized by completely sober rationality, for the world is *in itself* characterized by turbulence—though that turbulence is, for appearance at least, tamed. A comprehension of the nature of reality depends upon a capacity for freedom, and freedom is possible because of the never-fully-determined primal ground of existence.

It is clear that by this middle period of his career Schelling no longer harbors the optimism about the transmission of philosophy that characterized the work from the period of *University Studies*. While he then perceived the audience to be severely limited—as Derrida notes of Schelling’s view, philosophical knowledge can only be given to one who has a “gift” for it—at least there were some who are receptive to the

transmission (71). “What chance,” Warnek asks on Schelling’s behalf, “does something written have of conveying or *transmitting* a philosophical truth if the truth is not, strictly speaking, something that can be transmitted?” (179) Warnek expresses this worry in the context of reading *Human Freedom*. But the problem of the transmission of philosophical knowledge—which includes knowledge of the ground that unifies the system—is thematized by that very treatise. While that ground cannot be resolved into a system of reason, it seems that Schelling remains open to the possibility that a teacher—such as the author of *Human Freedom*—can open the student up for a confrontation with that ground. This opening is provoked in the question, “Why is there meaning at all? Why not rather meaninglessness?”⁸³

In the concluding paragraphs of *Human Freedom*, Schelling seems to back away from the disconcerting implications of his treatise, seeking to preserve the power of reason and the hope for philosophy. “Only in personality is there life,” he says, “and all personality rests on a dark foundation which must, to be sure, also be the foundation of knowledge. But only reason can bring forth what is contained in these depths, hidden and merely potential, and elevate it to actuality” (95-96). For all that, Schelling’s treatise carries in it a caution, for in the depths of the indifference of the unground lies freedom, which he calls the capacity not only for good, but also for evil, and this can never be put to rest by the faculty of reason.

⁸³ This question is posed by Schelling in his later work, including the *Philosophy of Revelation*. See, e.g., Hayner, 1967, 93.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1: Significance of the Preceding for Understanding Heidegger on Education

In “Theology of Translation,” Derrida observes that “Schelling cannot find words harsh enough for the wish to utilize knowledge, to ‘end-orient’ it by making it serve other ends than itself, or subject it to the demands of ‘alimentary’ professionalization” (69). As we saw in the discussion of his *University Studies* lectures, Schelling is dramatic in his critique of those who view education merely or even primarily as a *means*, including the subordination of education to professional aims. In his essay, “The Principle of Reason: the University in the Eyes of its Pupils,” Derrida groups Schelling with Heidegger in this regard: “In modern times, Kant, Schelling, Nietzsche, Heidegger and numerous others have all said ... unequivocally: the essential feature of academic responsibility must not be professional education” (151). While certainly not unique to these two figures (as Derrida mentions “numerous others”), this affinity between Schelling and Heidegger provides a starting point for an inquiry into their relationship, such that our understanding of each can be enriched.

There can be little doubt that Schelling’s importance for Heidegger’s thought is noteworthy (in fact, a good deal of the credit for the revival of interest in Schelling’s philosophy in recent years is due to Heidegger, along with Žižek more recently). There have been numerous studies undertaken in the last few decades on the significance of Schelling for Heidegger’s philosophy (both the early and late stages of the latter thinker).⁸⁴ There are of course the records of this significance in the transcripts of Heidegger’s seminars on Schelling, most notably the 1936 seminar, available in English

⁸⁴ See, e.g., Clark, 1997; Johnston, 2003; Warnek, 2005; etc.

translation as *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*. In her preface to the translation, Joan Stambaugh suggests that, "Schelling is one of the thinkers to whom Heidegger has the most affinity." In a note from his 1941 seminar on Schelling, Heidegger insists that, "We must bring closer the mode of thinking within which the present discussion with Schelling moves. It is not important to emphasize a 'perspective of one's own' nor to defend an 'originality' which appears threatened" (*Schelling's Treatise* 189). Such an utterance seems to indicate that Heidegger himself may have felt some anxiety over the proximity of Schelling's thought to his own.

While the influence of Schelling for Heidegger's work has been addressed from various perspectives, the question of the connection between their respective philosophies of education has been decidedly neglected. On the one hand, this seems surprising: the central role that education plays for Heidegger's general philosophical commitments (at the very least, for his early period) is, I think, well argued by Iain Thomson (among others: see below), if still contentious. Moreover, the problems facing university education in their respective ages that Schelling and Heidegger recognize and seek to remedy are evidently similar. On the other hand, it is perhaps not so surprising at all that this connection (between Schelling and Heidegger on education) has been relatively unexplored: Heidegger's philosophy of education has been given close attention, but its history is also deeply controversial. A convincing case can be made for an essential connection between Heidegger's philosophy of education and his political engagements with National Socialism in the 1930's.⁸⁵ It might seem like risky business then for someone interested in presenting a compelling analysis of a philosopher's views on education—especially when said philosopher is in need of help escaping "history's

⁸⁵ And such a case has been made. See Thomson, 2005.

dustbin,”⁸⁶ as could be said of Schelling—to draw a connection between that philosopher’s views and those of Heidegger.

It seems to me, though, that some deep and important connections are to be discovered there. In these concluding remarks, I seek to outline a possible analysis of the significance of Schelling’s philosophy of education for Heidegger. One of these connections is grounded in what might be called a common goal: the recovery of the unity of knowledge within the various pursuits of university research. In his 1929 inaugural address, Heidegger notes,

The scientific fields are quite diverse. The ways they treat their objects of inquiry differ fundamentally. Today only the technical organization of universities and faculties consolidates this burgeoning multiplicity of disciplines; the practical establishment of goals by each discipline provides the only meaningful source of unity. Nonetheless, the rootedness of the sciences in their essential ground has atrophied. (“What Is Metaphysics?” 94)

This description of the fractured character of academic study echoes the one Schelling offers in 1802. The problems within academia motivating these two thinkers are at least analogous, specifically the lack or the loss of an “essential ground” unifying the many specialized disciplines, which holds undesirable consequences for the student facing “a confused mass [and] a vast ocean,” as well as the researcher whose object of investigation has become severed from the whole.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ This insult comes from Engels, in response to Schelling’s Berlin lectures of the 1840’s.

⁸⁷ Also of concern for both, I think, is the over-estimate of the practical contributions of research at the expense of the free pursuit of theory. This is most likely itself a consequence of the neglect of the recognition of a fundamental unity of the whole of knowledge.

Perhaps the strongest evidence I can offer at this stage for the existence of some deep connections between Schelling and Heidegger on the issue of university education is the apparent parallel in the development of their respective philosophical careers at certain stages. That is, as I argue above, Schelling's program for university education in 1803 was fundamentally informed by his identity-philosophy of the time, which he had not fully worked out, and which he was later forced to reformulate by 1809 (and ultimately abandon). As a result of this, Schelling would have been, I think, forced to surrender some essential features of his university education program. Similarly, Heidegger's program for university education in the late 1920's and early 1930's was essentially informed by his philosophical project of the time, fundamental ontology.⁸⁸ As Thomson argues, Heidegger fails to heed his mentor Husserl's "prophetic warning of a 'great danger.' Because the 'spiritual need of our time has, in fact, become unbearable,' Husserl cautioned, '*even a theoretical nature will be capable of giving in to the force of the motive to influence practice more thoroughly than his theoretical vocation would permit*'" (104). Thus Heidegger too advanced a program for university reform that had its basis in a philosophical project that had yet to be worked out. Heidegger ultimately finds himself forced to abandon his earlier project of fundamental ontology, which would entail also the surrender of his earlier philosophy of university education. Moreover, at the very time that Heidegger is becoming aware of the failings of fundamental ontology, he is giving close attention to Schelling's *Of Human Freedom*. This very possibly suggests a recognition on Heidegger's part of a lesson contained within the development of Schelling's thought in the first decade of the nineteenth century—unfortunately, a lesson discovered too late.

⁸⁸ This project had been underway, Thomson notes, since as early as 1911 (Thomson, p. 84ff).

Iain Thomson's perspicuous and convincing book, *Heidegger on Ontotheology: Technology and the Poetics of Education*, situates Heidegger's philosophy of education and ambitious vision for the university within the controversy over his association with National Socialism. Thomson forges a middle path between the extremes of what he calls the "'accuse or excuse' dichotomy," which "still structures the field of competing interpretations, obliging scholars to take sides, as though with either the prosecution or the defense" (78-79). At one pole stands those who identify Heidegger's philosophy with his politics, with the aim of dismissing the former, while at the other pole are those who seek to disentangle Heidegger's philosophy from his politics, with the aim of preserving his philosophy, but with the dangerous result of losing sight of the relevance of their connection.

Thomson "take[s] the worry that there is something politically dangerous about Heidegger's philosophical views on university education as [the] point of departure" for his inquiry into the connection of Heidegger's philosophy to his politics, "because Heidegger's views on the university constitute the troubling domain in which his philosophy most directly intersected with his politics" (87). As Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg emphasize:

the same Martin Heidegger whose involvement with Nazism and its devastating effects on the university provokes our dismay, had committed himself to making the university a site for the transformation of human existence, a source of dynamism and creativity, in which thinking and philosophy would overcome the distress that afflicted Germany and the West. (78)

As I emphasize below, this is a point of striking similarity between Heidegger and Schelling in their respective visions of university reform. In any case, Heidegger's idealistic hope for the university and its place within the larger community opened the door for his political engagements. For this reason, understanding this connection—between his philosophically-based commitment to the university's future and the political climate that encouraged him—better illuminates for us the reasons behind his disastrous politics of the 1930's (without, of course, excusing them).

What features of Heidegger's educational philosophy, then, informed his Rectorate and attendant affiliation with Nazism? Thomson tracks Heidegger's views on the university, found in writings and addresses from 1911 through the early 1930's, as well as the cultural and political climate of those two-plus decades. One feature of note is Heidegger's attempt to answer the *Bildungsfrage*, which was, of course, central to the debates over the university in Germany a century earlier (and, as we saw in my earlier discussion, sparks Schelling's own reflections on the task of the university). "Heidegger implicitly *answers* this *Bildungsfrage*," Thomson observes, referring to a 1911 article, "when he suggests that ontological questioning will help students stay focused on developing that which is most their own and thereby avoid the alienating entanglements of the modern world" (90). In referencing "his insistence that radical questioning, *Grundfrage*, is the veritable basis for the selfhood of *Dasein*," Milchman and Rosenberg also call our attention to Heidegger's appeal to ontological questioning as the answer to the *Bildungsfrage* (80). They go as far as to recommend a reading of Heidegger on the basis of this connection: "we need to acknowledge, and condemn, Heidegger's surrender

to the lure of Nazism, even as we ought to recognize, and take seriously, his goal of re-founding the university as a site for radical questioning” (96).

Schelling and Heidegger, at relatively similar stages in their respective careers, diagnose the ailment of alienation (and its resultant symptoms) in their respective cultures, and share in common a response that emphasizes the role of the university. In so doing, they both view the proper task of the university as including the transformation of the student through a kind of questioning that is oriented toward the root—philosophical questioning, which seeks to bring to light the fundamental unity of knowledge. This comparison risks oversimplification of both figures, and for that reason a future study could undertake a richer and more detailed investigation of the affinity between these two great thinkers on the question of pedagogy and its philosophical bases. At least, though, such connections indicate the potential fruitfulness of such a study.

That study would explore the similarities as well as serious differences of historical circumstance surrounding Schelling and Heidegger. As I mention above, both are concerned with the alienation characteristic of modern life. Schelling’s concern is shared by his German Romantic circle, and this view is inherited by Heidegger, largely by way of Nietzsche. As a result, both figures emphasize the importance of a spiritual leadership to assist in the path to meaning (though, as Thomson observes, Heidegger was initially skeptical of philosophy playing such a role, allying himself with Max Weber in this regard (98-99)). As Heidegger’s views on the university developed throughout the 1920’s, he became increasingly committed to, in Thomson’s words, “the ideal of the German university as a place in which life and research are harmoniously integrated, a

dynamic communal institution with a shared sense of its own substantive, unifying mission” (99).

Such a view recalls that of the Schelling who emphatically rejected any rigid distinction between theory and practice, and who insisted that the university not permit such distinctions in its purpose or functions. This is unsurprising, perhaps, insofar as Heidegger does inherit the legacy of German Idealism and its call for a “distinctly German university” (99). The failure of this legacy, though, is as important for understanding Heidegger’s educational philosophy as his affinities with the Idealists, for it distances him from them:

In historical actuality, ... neither the German Idealists’ reliance on the underlying unity of the scientific subject matter nor Humboldt’s emphasis on a shared commitment to the educational formation of students succeeded in unifying the university community cohesively enough to prevent its fragmentation into increasingly specialized disciplines. (101)

As Thomson argues, Heidegger’s project consists of an attempt to “*combine* (his versions of) these two strategies” (101). On my reading of Schelling’s university program, however, an attempt at such a combination had already been asserted: the founding of a university within the unity of the absolute and the task of the university to cultivate its students are, on Schelling’s account, inextricable features of the genuine university. The future study I am proposing would inquire into whether Heidegger’s neglect of this permits him to pursue an aim he might have otherwise avoided.

Of course, the political climates facing Schelling and Heidegger were quite different. Schelling was caught up in a fervor inspired by the French Revolution, while

Heidegger grappled with a Germany facing spiritual crisis and economic collapse following the First World War. Understanding their respective visions of the university would have to account for these diverging historical influences. And, given that my aim is to situate the university reformation projects within the broader philosophical commitments of these two thinkers, a substantive comparison of their respective philosophical works would be essential. A good place to begin here is Adrian Johnston's article, "The Soul of *Dasein*: Schelling's Doctrine of the Soul and Heidegger's Analytic of *Dasein*." Johnston argues that Schelling's doctrine of the soul, developed in the 1802 *Bruno* (as well as the contemporaneous *University Studies*), anticipates some important features of Heidegger's work in such texts as *Being and Time* and *Kant and the Problems of Metaphysics*. Most notably, there is considerable resemblance between their respective strategies for overcoming the Cartesian-influenced dichotomy of the human subject (into phenomenal and noumenal dimensions) developed by Kant.

There should be, however, some reluctance in emphasizing this relationship between Schelling and Heidegger. The similarities notwithstanding, a study of the sort I am proposing would have to examine the extent to which Heidegger truly read Schelling by the time of the publication of *Being and Time*. Not controversial, however, is the fact that Heidegger did closely read (at least some of) Schelling's work by 1936, when he gives a lecture course on Schelling's *Human Freedom*. The timing and subject matter of this course are noteworthy. Why does Heidegger turn to Schelling as his own thought undergoes its own (self-ascribed) "turn"? And why to the "post-idealist" work of Schelling, in particular?

Thomson demonstrates that the philosophical foundations upon which Heidegger sought to build his newly envisioned university in 1933 were unstable. Heidegger, in the years immediately prior to his Rectorate, undertook the project of “fundamental ontology,” that is, the task of uncovering the meaning of being in general. Fundamental ontology was to ground the “regional ontologies” of life, history, and so on, and these in turn “underlie the positive sciences’ various ontological posits” (115-116). Heidegger saw himself as the philosophical leader who would uncover the fundamental ontology upon which the university’s scientific research would be based, and thus as Rector sought to impose this vision from above. As Thomson argues, this project was ill-fated, in large part at least, because Heidegger had not accomplished the philosophical project of fundamental ontology prior to his assumption of the Rectorate:

The main *philosophical* problem ... is that Heidegger got ahead of himself. For he had not yet actually worked out *how* the ontological posits fit into the regional ontologies, or how the regional ontologies fit into an underlying fundamental ontology, *before* he assumed this mantle of political leadership. (117)

In the years immediately following his resignation as Rector, during the period of transition from his earlier to his later orientation in thinking, Heidegger comes to view the sought-after fundamental ontology as a “conceptually inexhaustible ontological ‘presencing,’” and that this would not have allowed for the authoritarian imposition of a research framework as he had attempted during that most involved moment of his political career.

Had Heidegger pursued his project of fundamental ontology further, then, prior to embracing a political role in order to reform the university according to his (incomplete) philosophical outlook, there is reason to believe that events would have unfolded otherwise than they did. As Thomson argues, Heidegger's deepest problem did not lie in the research program he was developing itself, but in

the philosophically misguided commitment to a substantive fundamental ontology underlying and informing that program in 1933, as well as the politically inept and, [Thomson argues], philosophically objectionable manner in which Heidegger sought to enact this insufficiently clarified research program by enthusiastically instituting the "leadership principle" at Freiburg University. (122)

It was not the commitment to orienting scientific research toward, and on the basis of, ontological inquiry that was problematic, but the top-down approach taken by Heidegger, especially given the incompleteness of the groundwork for that approach. And it is not that he would have been justified in that approach *had* the fundamental ontology been carried out further; rather, Heidegger would have likely come to see that such an ontology couldn't justify that approach.

Again, it is during this "turn" following the Rectorate debacle that Heidegger gives special attention to Schelling's philosophy, and in particular the philosophy from the period of the Schelling who was undergoing his own basic re-assessment and transformation. Thomson calls upon us to learn from Heidegger's errors:

I thus take such deeply problematic aspects of Heidegger's early views on the university to be, at best, Confucian "bad examples" (so to speak), that

is, *dangers* to be understood, learned from, and so steered well clear of by those of us seeking to develop the more promising vision of education suggested by his later work. (129)

The work that I have done in the foregoing project might lay the groundwork for a contribution to the task that Thomson articulates in *Heidegger on Ontotheology*. Given some of the affinities between the respective philosophical trajectories of Schelling and Heidegger, and given their shared commitment to university reform, understanding Schelling's philosophy of education and underlying philosophical outlooks will allow us to understand more fully the case of Heidegger, and better to learn from it. While this comparative reading has not been worked out here, it is my hope that my work will inform a future such reading.

5.2: Final Remarks

In the preceding, I began with an exposition of Schelling's absolute idealism, specifically as it is presented in his 1802 *Bruno* dialogue. This laid the foundation for the discussion of Schelling's philosophy of education in his 1802 *Lectures on the Method of University Studies*. In an analysis of those *Lectures*, I showed the direct implications of his identity philosophy for his plan for a reformation of the university; that is, I showed that and how his philosophy of education in 1802 is rooted in his more general philosophical commitments of that time. I then traced the developments and transformation of his idealism in his 1809 essay *Of Human Freedom*. In my explication of this later text, I have argued for the implications of the transformations of his philosophical commitments for his earlier philosophy of education. In other words, I hope to have shown that certain basic features of Schelling's earlier educational program

would have to be abandoned in light of these later developments in his philosophical project.

Along the way, I hope to have achieved several other goals as well. First, I understand this project as one of historical scholarship. That is, I aim to bring into clearer light the nature of Schelling's philosophy of education in particular, and his philosophy in general as it developed over the course of the early 1800's. Moreover, I see myself in this project as contributing to the work being done by those who are bringing to light the relationship of Schelling to later thinkers, specifically of the twentieth century. The research presented here, while valuable in its own right, also lays the groundwork for future studies of Schelling's relationship to other major historical figures of philosophy, such as Heidegger, enriching our understanding of each through the other.

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