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Editors

Rethinking German Idealism

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no matter the sophisticated methods they have developed to bypass critical limits (intellectual intuition, positive philosophy, presuppositionless thinking). But this suggests that Kant would be just as critical of more recent developments in speculation and that he already has in his possession tools for a substantial critique of them. Would he not be inclined to think that the mathematically inspired metaphysics of Badiou and Meillassoux were simply performing the kind of 'rash conversion' (*TP*, 412; *Ak.*, 2: 416) of logical propositions through which philosophical principles traditionally became established through a fallacious exchange of subject and predicate? This danger is certainly one that Kant makes real. He could also put into question some analytic metaphysics, like that of Lewis, on the same grounds. And would he also not think that Latour's network theory, too, is ultimately a kind of substantialization of the intelligible in the material, just another variation of the 'theosophical dreams' in which there are 'intermediate thing[s] between matter and thinking beings' (*CPR*, B 270/A 222)? If so, various types of speculative realism, new realism, and new materialism—insofar as they also argue for a plurality of interactive material, 'vital' forces in being—would run a similar risk for him. While none of these new speculative positions have sought to naively ignore the critical limits Kant placed on thinking (just like Schelling and Hegel, they have sophisticated methods), rethinking Kant's critical philosophy through the *Inaugural Dissertation* serves to strengthen his own position and in the process highlights the potential irrationality of all speculative positions that come after him. Although I can only make these points polemically and in passing here, it is sufficient to demonstrate the extent to which Kant is indeed relevant today because he offers, just as much as ever, a lasting challenge to the future of speculation.

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The Meaning of Transcendental Idealism in the Work of F.W.J. Schelling

Alexander Schnell

1 Introduction

In the *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), which of course only represents one well-confined moment of his work taken as a whole, Schelling develops a completely original picture of transcendental idealism. This appears simultaneously as an interpretation and radicalization of the transcendental philosophy first provided by Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (and the transcendental knowledge that it implements) and as a critique of Fichte's transcendental idealism as developed in different versions of the *Jena Science of Knowledge*. In what follows, I would like to outline the transcendental idealism specific to Schelling by reconstructing its genesis and presenting its essential content, with the intention of determining in what ways it may still be relevant to contemporary debates.

Translated by Heidi A. Samuelson

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This may seem counterintuitive to some. Today all so-called 'philosophies of the subject'—which, in some sense, saw their heyday in the transcendental philosophies of the above-mentioned figures, but were in their way continued in the phenomenological tradition of the twentieth century—have fallen into disrepute. Faced with the necessity of taking into account the arguments posed against correlationism (elaborated by the 'speculative realism' of Meillassoux), the strength of the newly emerging ontologies in anthropology (introduced by the anthropologist Descola), the 'hard problem' of consciousness (developed by Chalmers), the independent life of objects or reality (Harman, Gabriel, and others)—to name just some of the main trends in which we are engaged—philosophies of the subject have indeed persisted in the forefront of philosophical debate, but only as a critical foil against which these new positions can articulate themselves. Everyone is determined to leave the subject behind for the real. But perhaps the philosophies of the subject needed this challenge to see both their own importance and come into their own. I say 'importance' because they teach us that realism should not be naïve or dogmatic. We cannot just return to pre-Kantian metaphysics, no matter how interesting these metaphysics may be. Nonetheless, the challenge of these new realisms shows that we need a more robust notion of the real *within* philosophies of the subject. Only in this way can they adequately do their task. But if previous endeavors of transcendental philosophy and phenomenology have failed to explain how we can have 'access' to a real 'beyond' us in a sufficient manner, where can we find additional resources? How can we meet the challenge?

My thesis is that turning to Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* in this context may prove helpful. This is because Schelling—responding to the subjectivism of Fichte's *Science of Knowledge*, according to which all reality is conceived as arising from the ego—attempts to delineate a new transcendental philosophy in which the experience of reality as independent from the ego is given its due, all the while respecting the transcendental constraints in a way more consistent than Kant did. Structurally speaking, Schelling is concerned, to put it in more contemporary terms, with the possibility of the *transcendental genesis* of 'transcendence': how something can be experienced as autonomous from us, even if it is nonetheless 'posited' by us. This is an interesting, underappreciated moment

in the history of transcendental philosophy that has parallels with the needs of any contemporary philosopher of the subject who wishes to stay committed to the subjective conditions of the legitimation of knowledge, but who also wishes to be a realist in a strong sense. For even if Schelling fails to meet the challenge by today's standards of what counts as 'reality,' his failure could help us find a way to think transcendence 'critically.' We learn from mistakes just as much as success. Let's now turn to an exegetical reconstruction of the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, before reflecting on the lessons it teaches us in the concluding section.

2 On Transcendental Knowledge

In his famous letter to Hegel, dated 6 January 1795, Schelling famously wrote: 'Philosophy is not yet finished, Kant has given the results; the premises are still lacking. And who could understand results without the premises?'¹ It is clear that these 'results' are those of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which had established the *a priori* conditions of knowledge and its limitations. But what exactly is meant by '*a priori* conditions of knowledge'? And, above all, what are these 'premises' that Schelling aims for?

The reception of post-Kantian transcendental philosophy usually considers the major contribution of Kantian transcendental idealism to consist in the in-depth determination and legitimation of the 'synthetic unity of the transcendental apperception' (= the transcendental ego) as the principle and 'highest point' (emphasized in the 'Transcendental Deduction of the Categories') of transcendental philosophy, a legitimation that had not been provided satisfactorily by Kant. Several post-Kantian philosophers have indeed pointed out a peculiar difficulty in Kant's text: The transcendental ego cannot be known 'to exist' in the strict sense, since existence is a category of modality and cannot, therefore, be applied to the principle that is beyond, or rather falls short of, any possible experience (the only place where the categories have legitimate use). Kant himself wrote—as Schelling acutely noted in the *Abhandlungen zur*

¹FWJ. Schelling, *Briefe und Dokumente*, vol. II, ed. H. Fuhrmans (Bonn: Bouvier, 1962–1975), 57.

Erläuterung des Idealismus der Wissenschaftslehre (Essays in Explanation of the Idealism of the Science of Knowledge) (1796 and 1797)²—that the ‘I think’ (the ‘I’ being a ‘purely intellectual representation’) implies a mode of existence that is ‘not yet a category, which is not related to an indeterminately given object, but rather to an object of which one has a concept, and about which one wants to know whether or not it is posited outside this concept.’³ Consequently, it is a question of knowing what type of ‘existence’ is to be attributed to the transcendental ego.

Commentators of post-Kantianism in general, and of Fichte and Schelling in particular, understand and interpret Fichte’s and Schelling’s efforts, marked with the intention of providing the missing ‘premises,’ as an attempt to clarify the status of the highest principle of Kantian philosophy, now reinterpreted as the ‘absolute ego.’ The subsequent development of these two thinkers continues in this manner until they move away from this initially shared project, moving toward a philosophy of absolute being (for Fichte), or of identity (for Schelling), and then later in even other directions. I would like to propose here an alternate interpretation of these ‘premises,’ one that will allow me to define the status of transcendental idealism in Schelling’s work in an extremely precise manner, and then offer some critical reflections on what lessons can be learned from it.

To do this, we must recall Kant’s definition of transcendental knowledge: ‘I call all cognition transcendental that is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our mode of cognition of objects insofar as this is to be [*sein soll*, or ‘ought to be’] possible *a priori*’ (CPR, B25). This definition clearly implies three senses of the concept of knowledge. First is the knowledge of objects, which Kant leaves aside because this knowledge is not the subject matter of transcendental philosophy, but instead of the particular sciences. Second is the type of knowledge—‘how we know’ objects—which must be possible *a priori*. More exactly, it is not a

²SW, I/1, 401 ff. Citations of Schelling provide the pagination of the English translation if one exists, followed by that of the *Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schellings sämtliche Werke*, vols 14, ed. Karl Friedrich August Schelling (Stuttgart and Augsburg: J. G. Cotta, 1856–1861). References to the K.F.A. Schelling edition are given by the abbreviation SW, division, volume and page number.

³Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* [hereinafter cited parenthetically as *CRP*], trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), B423.

question of knowledge that is possible *a priori*, but knowledge that shows the *necessary* conditions of the possibility of all knowledge (hence, the use of the verb ‘ought [*sollen*]’). Finally, there is a third type of knowledge, namely the one that occupies itself with the second, which intends it and which, in particular, must legitimize it.

This reading of the *Critique of Pure Reason* suggests that the second and third types of knowledge *are confused* in this work, most notably in the chapter on the ‘Transcendental Deduction of the Categories’ that is at its heart and core. It is, in fact, through the production of the *a priori* conditions of all knowledge (that is, time and space, the categories, and the famous synthetic unity of transcendental apperception) that all knowledge is founded⁴ and legitimized according to Kant.⁵ Now, this reduction of the legitimation of knowledge to the mere production of the *a priori* conditions of knowledge (albeit suspended in the ‘transcendental ego’) did not satisfy Schelling. Kant, of course, masterfully identified (in the second Preface to the first *Critique*) that it is the discovery of an *a priori* element that raises a discipline looking to produce knowledge to the rank of a science. But it is one thing to pose and establish the *a priori* conditions of knowledge (as does Kant) and quite another to explain what gives an *a priori* condition its *a priori* character (which remains to be done by Schelling). And we must in no case confuse the second and third types of knowledge. Here, then, are the ‘results’ of Kant’s transcendental philosophy: the identification of the *a priori* conditions of knowledge with regard to their content; the following are the missing premises: the attainment of the ‘knowledge’ that ultimately legitimizes our understanding of and that fully justifies its *a priori* character.

⁴This foundation is completed with the identification of the ‘transcendental schema’ in the chapter on the Schematism.

⁵At the very end of the Deduction of 1787, when, in a ‘brief summary,’ he recapitulates the fundamental objective of this chapter, Kant explicitly states that the deduction of the categories consists in the ‘presentation [*Darstellung*]’ of the determination of the phenomena in space and in time in general ‘from the principle of the **original** synthetic unity of apperception as the from of understanding in relation to space and time as the original forms of sensibility’ (CRP, B169). He asserts here, focusing on the extreme deduction delivered in paragraphs 24–26, that the synthetic unity of transcendental apperception refers originally to time and space, and, in particular, that it is this connection that first makes it possible that all sensible intuitions are subject to the categories as the only conditions under which the manifold can be synthesized in consciousness.

It is quite remarkable that it is still Kant's definition of transcendental knowledge that—despite the fact that its 'premises are still lacking'—indicates the path to be taken and, furthermore, that by taking as one's point of departure a common reinterpretation (but a fundamentally different implementation) of this definition, it is possible to characterize the specificity of Schelling's transcendental idealism on the one hand and that of Fichte on the other. So what is this common reinterpretation of transcendental philosophy?

Transcendental knowledge deals—in this reinterpretation—with what makes *a priori* knowledge possible. Now, what characterizes this apriority is that the universality and, above all, the *necessity* of knowledge depend on this connection between the *necessary* and the *possible*—more exactly, between the *categorical* and the *hypothetical*. This distinction is absolutely crucial. It enables us, in effect, to distinguish Schelling's transcendental idealism from Fichte's. For Fichte, the necessary must be found *in* the possible. In this way, he discovers the profoundly original figure of 'categorical hypotheticity' characterized by the 'Soll' in the *Science of Knowledge of 1804-II* and later in his doctrine of the image.⁶ In the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, however, Schelling proposes a different reading of the connection between the categorical and the hypothetical (or, in his terms, between the necessary and the contingent). It is this interpretation by Schelling that I will now describe.

This original figure of transcendental philosophy contains two principal moments, which respectively implement the original concepts of reflection and production. The first is obtained from a confrontation between what Schelling calls 'philosophy of nature' and 'transcendental philosophy' by considering, in particular, the attempts by 'nature' to reflect its objective productions. The second concerns transcendental philosophy properly stated or, more precisely, the attempts by the ego to reflect (in turn) on these productions (producing a return of a different sort). It thus appears that there is an important transcendental moment in the philosophy of nature itself, what I call the 'transcendentalization of nature.' When nature, by being 'raised to a higher power' in different ways, is raised to self-consciousness, it begins a second series of produc-

⁶On this point, see my work *Reflexion et spéculation. L'idéalisme transcendantal chez Fichte et Schelling* (Grenoble: J. Millon, 2009).

tions (which may be called the series of 'transcendental naturalization'): the self-objectifications of the ego.⁷ But, as we shall see, inasmuch as the position outlined in the *System* of 1800 still contains certain ambiguities (which I will consider later), we will have to turn to some passages in an important letter to Fichte from 19 November 1800 in which Schelling, *at the threshold of his system of identity (but before crossing this threshold)*, gives the clearest picture of his transcendental idealism.

3 The First Moment of Schelling's Transcendental Idealism

First, let us consider the *first* moment of Schelling's transcendental idealism. What makes knowledge possible, that is, the *reciprocal* meeting of subject (consciousness) and object (the unconscious)? In real knowledge, subject and object are united and identical. To philosophize is, more precisely, to explain what makes this knowledge possible. To do so, we must first perform an abstraction, which consists in separating and isolating the one from the other (the subject from the object). For Schelling, the rupture of this identity cannot take place for the benefit of one of two terms: The philosopher will have to explain knowledge as much from the subject as the object. Explaining the possibility of the connection between subject and object therefore demands (and allows) rising completely above the object—and also the subject. But since we have nothing other than these two terms, we start off first from one *or* from the other.

There are therefore only two possibilities given to the philosopher to explain knowledge. These two possibilities were indicated first by Fichte in Sect. 3 of the First Introduction to the *Science of Knowledge*.⁸ Either

⁷Note that these two series are not strictly symmetrical with respect to each other (as argued, for example, by Ernst Cassirer), but the second is the raising to a high power of the first, which means it is first raised to a higher degree of reflection. These two series do not relate to each other as do, for example, the two attributes of Spinoza's substance.

⁸J.G. Fichte, 'First Introduction to the Science of Knowledge,' in *Science of Knowledge*, ed. and trans. Peter Heath and John Lachs (Cambridge University Press: 1982), 8–9; J.G. Fichte-*Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* [hereinafter cited as *GA*], division I, volume 4, ed. Erich Fuchs, Reinhard Lauth, and Hans Gliwitzky (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1964–2012), 188–189.

one starts from the object, from nature, to then ask how the subject reaches it and coincides with it—and then we practice what Schelling calls the ‘philosophy of nature’ (which is in complete opposition to Fichte, who attributed this approach to dogmatism)—or one starts from the subject, from the ego, to ‘get’ to nature from there—which will correspond to the approach found in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*. In the Introduction to this book from 1800, Schelling details the first point of view, that of the philosophy of nature, which is carried out elsewhere—in his *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* (*Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*) (1797), in *Von der Weltseele, eine Hypothese der Physik der höheren Erklärung zur allgemeinen Organismus* (*On the World-soul: A Hypothesis of Higher Physics on the Explanation of the Universal Organism*) (1798), *Erster Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie* (*First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*) (1799) and in his *Einleitung zu dem Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie* (*Introduction to the Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*) (1799) as well as in some contributions to the *Zeitschrift für Physik spekulative* (*Journal of Speculative Physics*) (1800/1801), of which Schelling himself was the editor. Why is this privilege granted to the first point of view? Precisely because the philosophy of nature also has—contrary to appearances—a fundamental connection to transcendental philosophy.

We see, then, that Schelling characterizes the first point of view as consisting in starting from the object. However, Schelling is not satisfied with a mere descriptive analysis. On the contrary, he proposes to deduce the very concept of a philosophy of nature. The major difficulty with this deduction concerns the term ‘to annex [*hinzukommen*]’⁹: how should we conceive of the way the subject will ‘adjoin’ itself to the object in order to enter into a ‘union’—into a connection of ‘adequation,’ into an ‘identity’—with it? The issue is that Schelling’s philosophy of nature is a *radicalization* and a serious undertaking of the ultimate consequences of Kant’s theory of the understanding, that is, that ‘we can know a priori of things only what we ourselves put into them’ (*CRP*, B XVIII)—which is the same principle, so to speak, as Kant’s transcendental philosophy

⁹ F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism* [hereinafter cited parenthetically as *ST*], trans. P. Heath (University Press Virginia, 1978), 5; *SW*, 1/3, 340.

of knowledge.¹⁰ This means, as I have just mentioned, that clarifying the inaugural act of Schelling’s philosophy of nature requires us to pass through an understanding of transcendental philosophy. In virtue of a circularity that we stigmatize in general as having a vicious character, the philosophy of nature—even if it is necessary to abstract it (for methodological reasons) from transcendental philosophy—fundamentally refers to the latter. To develop this point, I shall now give a quick reminder of certain things Schelling has already dealt with elsewhere.¹¹

For Schelling (which also means: for Schelling as he reads Fichte), it is crucial to first determine that the ego is an absolute activity. Any determination of the ego presupposes a *self*-determination of that same ego. Consequently, as Schelling emphasizes, that which determines the ego is its own product. But how is this conceivable? Before we can distinguish between the ego (mind) and the non-ego (nature), we must first understand the essence or active nature of the ego. The ego is self-determining and posits an activity in itself. On the other hand, the ego, as it determines itself to be determined, posits an activity outside of itself. The latter must be raised (by it) as acting (*einwirkend*) on itself. We can then distinguish between two series in the understanding: an ideal series and a real series. The ideal series concerns only the ego—‘active’ and ‘determinate.’ The real series is active (*wirkend*)—but not in the sense where the ego would act, but rather in the sense where the series acts on the ego—while proceeding from the activity of the (absolute) ego. The difficulty (but at the same time the solution) lies here. Schelling plays on the double meaning of ‘*wirkend*’ in a certain way: at the same time as that which is acting and as that which is acted on. But it does not act here as a verbal slip because *activity-action* (that which the ego posits as acting on it from outside) is *only acting* (*wirkt*) (on it) *insofar as the ego determines it as active*.

¹⁰ Note that this is a radicalization, which in no way entails that, in reality, Schelling thereby leaves the field of what could still be called the transcendental in a Kantian sense.

¹¹ See in particular, *Abhandlungen zur Erläuterung des Idealismus der Wissenschaftslehre* (*Essays in Explanation of the Idealism of the Science of Knowledge*) (1796/1797). In the interpretation that follows, I will build on Steffens’ review of Schelling’s writings. See ‘Recension der neuern naturphilosophischen Schriften des Herausgebers,’ in *Zeitschrift für spekulative Physik* (*Journal of Speculative Physics*), vol. 1, book 1, ed. Manfred Durner (Hamburg: Meiner, 2001), 1–48.

As such, up to now we can still reconcile Schelling's point of view with Fichte's. However, Schelling will draw a major consequence from what has been established that will definitively alienate him from his mentor. He formulates it thus: *The real series (= the acting series) is an expression of the ideal series (= the determinate series)*. In this way, Schelling can reinterpret the identity of the two series. Consequently, what we see is connected with the passage just quoted from the second Preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason*: The real series 'expressing' the ideal series is, in effect, another manner of saying simply—not from the point of view of the 'subject' but from the 'object'—that we know *a priori* the things that we *ourselves put there*, except that the 'we' must be understood as the absolute ego. (This does not relieve us of the need to explain how Schelling can both give *autonomy* to the productive force of nature and affirm this identity between the two series. For more on this, see below.)

That is how Schelling can thus explain the way the subject 'adjoins' to the object that does not contain it, but excludes it. The other problem is, of course, the representability of the object (or nature). Schelling's objective, remember, is to explain the possibility of *knowledge* (*Wissen*). For him, such an explanation must account at the same time for the *Wissen* proper to the *Wissenschaften* (the sciences), leaving the possibility of a fundamental reform of the latter. However, the science that is proper to nature is *Naturwissenschaft* (natural science). The first point of view thus consists in realizing the principle of knowledge of natural science, that is, in finding a (or rather, 'the') *philosophy of nature*. What does this tendency to ensure that the object reaches the subject, the nature of intelligence, mean given our previous claims? It consists exactly in accounting for the *expression* of the ideal series in the real series, in putting the *a priori* into things, or, Schelling himself puts it, 'to bring *theory* into the phenomena of nature [*Theorie in die Naturerscheinungen bringen*]' (*ST*, 6; *SW*, I/3 340). In Schelling's interpretation of transcendental idealism, what I attend to here is the development of what I call 'the transcendentalization of nature' (knowing that this 'transcendentalization' does not deny nor leave open the transcendental perspective first given by Kant—and this is precisely because Schelling insists in an original way, on the identity

of the real series and the ideal series).¹² Why is it a 'transcendentalization of nature' and not a 'naturalization of the transcendental'? Precisely because Schelling intends to supplement transcendental philosophy with what appears as its objective side. Transcendental philosophy not only explains how, from the point of view of the subject (or in starting from it), *a priori* knowledge of objects is possible, but also, conversely, starting from the object, it establishes at the same time how objectivity 'reflects' and 'expresses' what was first identified and established by 'transcendental logic.' For Schelling, transcendental philosophy involves not only the 'formation' of the object by the subject (by the *a priori* forms of the subject), but also, and conversely, the representable representation, the theorization of nature, and the subjectification of the object. The philosophy of nature will thus establish the manner in which nature comes to its intelligibility and how the unconscious becomes conscious. In this way, we can actually identify here a new figure of transcendentalism before entering Schelling's system of transcendental idealism itself.

The originality of Schelling's philosophy of nature resides in highlighting the 'tendency [*Tendenz*]' (he also speaks of an 'urge [*Bestreben*']') of natural science 'to render nature intelligent' (*ST*, 6; *SW*, I/3, 341). Schelling discovers in this science of nature a teleological process of 'spiritualizing [*Vergeistigung*]' of all the laws of nature meant, ultimately, to open onto the laws of intuition and pure thought. This is a process of 'dematerialization' resulting in pure forms (which come from simple laws).¹³

How can we characterize this tendency toward the becoming-intelligent of nature more precisely? The crucial term here is that of 'reflection.' *Schelling places reflection already within nature*—and this is another determination of Schelling's sense of 'transcendental' (as 'nature transcendentalized'). Nature is self-reflective, reflection that is deposited in its 'products.' This means that, in itself, nature is already intelligence,

¹² And this figure is a direct response to the First Introduction of Fichte's *Science of Knowledge* where he claimed—at the beginning of Sect. 6—that 'dogmatism is completely unable to explain what it must' ('First Introduction,' 16; *GA*, I/4: 195).

¹³ Schelling evokes this by way of the series: optical phenomena (where the only 'substance' is the light), magnetic phenomena (which are completely immaterial), and gravitational phenomena (thus indicating the action of a single law).

but without having consciousness. The 'still life,' in particular, is such a product, but just dead and unconscious. The series (ascending) of the various 'deposits' in which the intelligent character of nature is reflected more and more clearly is none other than this process of 'dematerialization' discussed presently. The *telos* of this process, the supreme and ultimate reflection, is reason and humanity. This is where the identity as well as nature of intelligence is realized and becomes conscious of itself.

4 The Second Moment of Schelling's Transcendental Idealism

We come now to the second moment of Schelling's transcendental idealism. I will discuss it in three stages: (1) by describing its 'fundamental convictions,' (2) by comparing the mathematical method to that of transcendental philosophy, and (3) by precisely elaborating the self-objectification of the ego as an essential characteristic of this transcendental idealism.

Transcendental philosophy has knowledge as its object. *What* is knowledge knowledge of? Fichte answered the question thus: This knowledge is knowledge of 'facts,' of 'acts of consciousness,' whose 'geneticization' legitimizes all knowledge as knowledge (that is, it makes knowledge 'pure,' 'non-objective,' and 'in-itself'). The *Wissenschaftslehre* is a transcendental philosophy because it exhibits the conditions of the self-generation of *Einsicht* (insight). To identify these 'facts,' Schelling uses another term for them: that of the '*Grundüberzeugung* (fundamental conviction)' of natural consciousness. All knowledge expresses such 'beliefs,' and it is the task of transcendental philosophy to reduce them to only one—which is simply the 'first principle' of transcendental philosophy—that precedes them and from which all others can be derived. In this principle resides the first and absolute certainty that is rooted in transcendental idealism. Schelling enumerates several fundamental beliefs of all knowledge that will constitute this level of transcendental philosophy.

1. The first conviction—which is the same one, par excellence, of theoretical knowledge—concerns the identity of being and appearance. Things are not different from how we represent them to ourselves; there

is not, behind what is given to us, a world beyond that is distinct from it. Things are established immutably, and it is this determination to which our representations of the same things respond. In other words, the necessity, or the regularity, of the things in the world is such that we are always able to think of them. But how does this justify thinking? How can our representations correspond to objects that are qualitatively quite different from them? This is the first task to resolve—which is not so different, in fact, from the theoretical knowledge that deals with the condition of possibility of all experience.

2. The second conviction—that of practical philosophy—is that we can 'intervene' in reality, that is to say, we can ensure that what is primarily a ('subjective') representation obtains objective validity. This assumes that objectivity is modifiable and capable of conforming to what was initially 'freely' represented. The second task before us, then, is to explain how our representations, our thoughts, can influence reality. This is effectively practical philosophy since it is precisely the condition of our free acts.
3. I note here that a contradiction lies in the opposition between what is determining and that which determines or between what is modifiable and that which is not. In the first case, objects are determined and our representations conform to them. In the second case, objects are modified through determining representations. While, for Kant, this opposition stood on two completely different planes—on the theoretical plane that is only relevant to a transcendental approach on one side and that of practical reason on the other—to Schelling (again following Fichte), this acts as an opposition within the framework of transcendental philosophy. This is something well known but deserves to be highlighted. The precise problem here is, in fact, the fundamental conviction—the reality of external things—and, more particularly, the first presupposition just pointed to: if things are already determined in their being, we do not see how we could intervene in them, and if such an action were possible, then the things would lose their reality 'in themselves.' Hence, the third task of transcendental philosophy is the supreme task: how are all of our representations to direct themselves in accordance with objects, and how are these objects to direct themselves according to our representations? The solution should be sought in neither theoretical nor practical philosophy, but

in a philosophy 'which is the link that combines them both, and neither theoretical nor practical, but *both* at once' (*ST*, 11; *SW*, I/3 348). What is this philosophy? What characterizes it first and in its own right?

In other words, transcendental philosophy is first divided into two 'parts': the one that reflects our experience and one that reflects our freedom to act. These parts can be understood by their 'identity' such that if we rise to *another* level, the contradiction evoked can be removed. This other level is characterized by its *universality* and its radical difference from any *particular* or *individual* consciousness (as expressed already at the level of theoretical philosophy, as well as at the practical level, where it acts as *my* experience and *my* freedom, even if we consider them in their abstract generality). In the *Darstellung* of 1801, Schelling will call this universal level 'reason.' One may have thought that it is only here that he would complete his philosophical rupture from any heritage of consciousness still present in his thinking (that is, from Fichte), but this universal level already finds a matured expression in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*.

But how can Schelling connect these two levels—universal and particular—without the one being only a pure abstraction and the other a single hypostasis? The terms that are decisive here are those of 'activity' on the one hand and 'conscious' and 'unconscious' on the other. Schelling explains this identity, putting it first in a summary way, as an activity that is productive consciously in free action and unconsciously in the production of the world. This activity is not that of a concrete ego, nor that of a finite ego, and it is the consciousness of this activity that concludes it, because it appears to emanate from, or at least belong to, an ego now conscious of itself. Therefore, the unconscious character of this activity does not represent a privation. It is rather consciousness that is secondary to the absolute ego (that is to say, reason).

Schelling clearly affirms that only a *superior* philosophy can solve the problem of the identity between two distinct worlds: the ideal world and the real world, the world as it is modified by our representations and the objective world that regulates these same representations. This superior philosophy has for its subject matter the absolute ego (reason), which

is activity—productive activity. The following, then, is the relationship between the absolute ego and the finite ego in practical and theoretical philosophy. The free will of the finite ego is an *externalization* of the productive activity of the absolute ego—*conscious* externalization. But in the theoretical attitude of the knowing ego, this productive activity is equally at work—however, in an *unconscious* register. The ideal world and the real world are thus 'in harmony.' This harmony is only conceivable provided that we see that there is indeed here one and the same productive activity and that the alleged difference between the ideal world and the real world depends on the various ways in which the finite ego 'becomes conscious' of this activity.

Here, we reach a new dualism that is no longer the dualism between theory and practice, nor between nature and intelligence, but between *productive activity* and the *products* of this activity. But, I insist, this does not mean that Schelling will renew, through this new distinction, the opposition between practice and theory. This distinction is rather, it seems to me, between the infinite and the finite, or between the absolute and relative—and we know that *the* question of philosophy for Schelling has always been exactly this ever since *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* (1795), in which Schelling, who had just turned 20, poses the question: 'how can I come out of the absolute and go to its opposite?' This itself is just another way, however, according to Schelling's interpretation already set forth in *Vom Ich (Of the I)* (1795), of knowing how a judgment can be synthetic *a priori*. It is this question that dominates the *System* of 1800 where Schelling proposes an understanding of transcendental philosophy that it is supposed to answer this problem.

However, this consideration of nature (and of its products) according to this double mode of consciousness had already found expression in Kant's critical philosophy (the debt to the *Critique of Judgment* is obvious here)—that is, in *teleology* or in philosophy of natural ends. Schelling states explicitly that the products of nature are arranged according to *ends* without being accordingly *explainable* as these same ends ('*nature is purposive, without being purposively explicable* [zweckmässiges, ohne zu Zweckmässiges erklärbar sein]' [*ST*, 12; *SW*, I/3, 349])—which again is another way of saying that there is (in the will) the expression of a productive activity without it being conscious in the theoretical attitude. The

superior philosophy sought will focus first and foremost on the teleology that unifies theoretical and practical philosophy.¹⁴

To capture Schelling's transcendental idealism in an even more precise way, we should compare the approach of the mathematician with the transcendental philosopher. In this regard, the last paragraph of the Introduction to the *System* contains valuable methodological indications concerning the 'organ of transcendental philosophy' and, in particular, the notions of 'intuition' and 'construction.' Transcendental philosophy—but perhaps we should say instead 'philosophy in general'—has only one object. Schelling designates it as 'subjective.' This is the (only) immediate object of transcendental philosophy. It follows that it is the object of an intuition (intuition being, as we know, the representation specific to sensibility, under which an object is given to us immediately), which implies it is given to us before it is deployed in a discursive manner. But how are we to understand, in more exact terms, this mode of immediate givenness? The answer is given to us if we compare how the transcendental philosopher and the mathematician proceed in their work.

For Schelling (following Kant), the mathematician proceeds by construction. 'Construction' means 'seeing a (discursive) argument in the forms of intuition.' This 'seeing in' is unique in that the ('subjective') understanding is nothing but the unveiling of a property in the form of intuition (that is, something 'objective', something of which we are not the source, just as it is not we who engender the properties of a triangle). In other words—and it is thus that we usually conceive construction—in construction we see the universal in the particular. The unity is here, in terms of the *a priori*, the very same that is characteristic of sensation in terms of the *a posteriori*, as, for example, in the taste of something. It is *me* who tastes, but I always taste *something*. A sensation expresses the irreducible unity of something both 'subjective' and 'objective.' And it is the same in mathematical construction. Unlike an approach that proceeds by mere concepts (which characterizes, for Kant, the philosophical method), where the second term of the unity is lacking (and where

¹⁴ Note that this philosophy of natural ends is the very point of unification for theoretical philosophy and practical philosophy—thus, it is not merely unconscious.

there is no intuition that would find itself united with the discursive approach), mathematical construction is also characterized by the unity of something 'subjective' and 'objective.' However, for Schelling, the legitimation of the discourse of the transcendental philosopher requires reconsidering the relationship between the conduct of the mathematician and philosopher.¹⁵

Schelling first states what distinguishes these two modes of conduct in *negative* ways. For mathematics just as for philosophy (this should be emphasized, because in the *Darstellung* it is no longer the case), its object is by no means present *outside of knowledge* (ST, 13; SW, I/3, 350). There are many objects in intuition. The first difference is that for mathematics, this intuition is *external* while for philosophy it is *internal*. But this is not the fundamental difference. More importantly, the attitude of the mathematician is that of the realist. It is that the mathematician only deals with the *result* of their construction (the 'construct'), while the philosopher considers the *act of construction* itself.

By deepening this point, we can understand how the philosophical approach distinguishes itself *positively* from that of the mathematician. 'Construction' has a very specific meaning in (transcendental) philosophy. For even if the philosopher 'looks to [*sieht auf*]' the act of construction—and not so, to speak, its 'result'—this intuiting is *in turn a constructing*. '[T]he whole object of this philosophy is nothing else but the action of the intellect according to determinate laws' (ST, 13; SW, I/3, 350) and, at the same time, 'the objects of the transcendental philosopher exist not at all, save insofar as they are freely produced' (ST, 13; SW, I/3, 350). There is a circular relationship (not vicious!) between the productive acts of constructing and intuiting: '[t]his action can be grasped only through immediate inner intuition on one's own part, and this too is possible only through a production' (ST, 13; SW, I/3, 350).

The question we need to answer is to know how, in transcendental philosophy, the 'subjective' can become 'object(ive)'—because, in itself, meaning outside of this 'artificial' attitude, this objectification does

¹⁵ On Schelling's concept of 'transcendental construction,' see the doctoral thesis of Jürgen Weber, *Begriff und Konstruktion. Rezeptionsanalytische Untersuchungen zu Kant und Schelling* (Göttingen: Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen, 1998).

not occur. The subjective, we have seen, is *unconscious*. Its becoming-conscious is achieved in two ways that each time brings into play a different sense of *reflection*. The unconscious is reflected *through* or *by means of products*—or, more appropriately, they reflect it. Or—another possibility—the unconscious is reflected *in intellectual intuition*—and it is then a true *reflexive* return. In the first case, this ‘reflection’ is *external*; in the second case, it is *internal*. The reflection of the unconscious, thanks to the particular products, concerns art (being reflected in the unconscious is thought of as *an aesthetic act of the imagination*). Its reflection in intellectual intuition, however, concerns *philosophy* properly stated. Schelling, by drawing the consequences of the preceding, was concerned with the status of the external world, the reality of which is, *for common sense*, merely *presupposed*. For the transcendental philosopher, there is no real world. At most, there is an ideal world, which means we must adopt the aesthetic attitude (and thus do philosophy of art). Thus, there are no means for the philosopher to demonstrate the existence of the external world (this is impossible), but only to demonstrate what is the basis of this appearance. Compared to common sense, the philosopher’s task consists, then, in ‘lay[ing] bare the inevitability of its delusions’ (ST, 14; SW, I/3, 352).

To summarize Schelling’s intention, we could say this: Whereas the philosophy of nature ‘spiritualizes’ the laws of nature (by making them laws of the intellect), transcendental philosophy embodies the laws of the intellect. And the essential point is to show that what has reality only subjectively (in our intuiting) *must necessarily be reflected as being there outside of us*. Why ‘necessarily’? Because ‘the objective world belongs only to the necessary limitations which makes self-consciousness (the I am) possible’ (ST, 14; SW, I/3, 352). The circle closes itself—and this is what we must see: While we have seen all along that the philosophy of nature needed the principle of transcendental philosophy, it now appears that transcendental philosophy needs the principle of the philosophy of nature. Schelling’s transcendental philosophy thus effectively achieves an absolutely radical circularity (no one before him had been driven to this extreme) between the subjective and objective (as well as between that which is the principle of both).

This clarification of the method of the transcendental philosopher compared to the mathematician being completed, I can now identify in

more exact terms the figure of Schelling’s own transcendental idealism. Recall once again that it is characterized by two levels: first, by a ‘transcendentalization of nature’ (as in the work on *Naturphilosophie*) that points out the process of the different attempts of self-reflection by nature (a process through which the ideal series of the ego is expressed in the real series); second, by a self-objectification of the ego (by a kind of ‘naturalization’ or, better, of ‘objectification’ by the transcendental), where, once this process has reached its highest ‘power’ (*Potenz*) (= the act of self-consciousness, see below), self-objectification will give rise to productions of a new kind (which are the work of transcendental philosophy).

The search for the ‘premises’ of Kant’s transcendental philosophy sits at the second level—for Schelling, it returns to the question of knowing how, concretely, the transcendental ego can be conscious of itself. Thus, in this apprehending of self by the ego, the self-objectification of the latter is not instantaneous; it does not take place in a single action, but in a plurality of actions that constitute the ‘transcendental history of the ego.’ Transcendental philosophy is the philosophy that establishes the manner in which, *by the way the ego becomes its own object*, the transcendental ego is aware of itself. And what is decisive here, I insist, is that Schelling reinterprets, in his own understanding of transcendental philosophy, the necessary/possible connection (which I have already established above as the important thing for the most developed understanding of the transcendental) in terms of the conscious/unconscious distinction. What justifies this shift in terminology? Schelling does not see (contrary to Fichte), I have already mentioned, the necessary *in* the possible (the essential characteristic of Fichte’s reflection), but rather transcendental philosophy consists, in his view, in an assumption that makes it necessary to look for *conditions*. If these conditions are *really* ‘in’ consciousness, then the hypothesis is verified. Consequently, for him, the accession to the necessary results in the passage from the unconscious to consciousness. In a key passage of the *System of Transcendental Idealism*,¹⁶ Schelling specifies that the understanding of *necessity* depends on the degree of consciousness (and what appears as contingent only appears as such because the ego does not exactly have

¹⁶ Namely, at the beginning of solution II of the second period (in which Schelling gives the clearest indications of his transcendental idealism).

consciousness) (*ST*, 100; *SW*, I/3, 462–463), an indication that is without doubt *the* key to Schelling's transcendental idealism. According to the latter, the unconscious and the conscious are distributed between the 'natural' ego and 'transcendental' ego, a tension that will eventually be overcome as a result of the so-called transcendental history of ego.¹⁷

We understand from this the meaning of Schelling's definition of transcendental philosophy: In the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, Schelling defines this transcendental philosophy as a 'Potenzieren (potentiation)' phase of the ego, a process that brings about this latter point of view of the philosopher (*ST*, 90; *SW*, I/3, 450). Each power within this progression permitted the understanding of what, respectively, could make possible the inferior power. Hence, the specific method of transcendental philosophy: It proceeds at the level of each power of self-intuition of the ego and consists then in leading the ego—through which it will appear precisely as its own object—from *one* level (or one power) of this self-intuition to the *higher* level (or power) each time. The ultimate level (or power) is that one in which the ego will finally be composed of *all* the determinations that have already been contained in the *free* and *conscious* act of self-consciousness (an act that characterizes precisely the point of view of the philosopher). To do this, Schelling adopts in each case (that is to say, every time it comes to improving the process of potentiation) *first* the point of view of the philosopher before showing how the ego manages *in turn* what the philosopher has understood. The 'transcendental history of the ego' corresponds to a journey through the 'epochs (*Epochen*)' of the self-objectification of the ego, meaning it traces the route of the ego through which it comes to the transcendental knowledge thanks to the way, gradually, it becomes its own object.

This type of transcendental philosophy (in its difference from Fichte's) also implies a different understanding of the status and role of 'reality': for Fichte, reality is—negatively—a *deposit* of the activity of reflection and—positively—a *reflection of reflection*, whereas for Schelling, this reality is to be sought *in* consciousness, *in* the epochs constituting the transcendental history of the ego. This difference is crucial. The perspective (that of

¹⁷ This reconsideration of the categorical/hypothetical pair through this other conscious/unconscious pair is indeed essential and dominates the entire *System of Transcendental Idealism*. But the categorical/hypothetical pair is also involved in a specific place in the work: at the interface between the system of theoretical philosophy and the system of practical philosophy.

Schelling) of a reality *within* reflection is irreducible to one (that of Fichte) of a reflection beyond (or below) all reality. For Schelling, it is a matter of knowing what gives *reality* to the determinations of knowledge. And he responds to this precisely with the construction of a double ego: the philosophical ego ('we') and the finite ego (or 'ego' for short). It is the latter that *produces* the determinations of knowledge, which, I insist, are certainly already posed with and in the act of self-consciousness.

5 The 'Objective Subject-Object'

Despite these breakthroughs, the *System of Transcendental Idealism* has not yet managed to resolve all its ambiguities—in particular that concerning the status of self-consciousness and the relationship between the 'philosophical' ego and the 'finite' ego that produces the moments of knowledge that enable it to self-objectify. The position attained by Schelling immediately after the release of the *System* of 1800 and at the threshold of the 'system of identity' of 1801—a position that is expressed in a letter to Fichte from 19 November 1800¹⁸—can clarify these points.

Schelling explains his new point of departure (which is not at all irreconcilable, I believe, with that of the *System of Transcendental Idealism*) in this letter. The absolute, the supreme principle, is the absolute identity of subject and object. Now, *two* points of view are possible on this 'subject-object': it can be considered either as an 'objective subject-object' or as a 'subjective subject-object.' (*This double point of view does not betray the fundamental idea of transcendentalism as a correlation between a subjective dimension and an objective dimension in any obvious fashion.*) These are in a double relation of abstraction—the one with regard to the other. Self-consciousness designates, for Fichte as well as for Schelling, the identity of subject and object, an identity that, in its acting (in its self-posing), intuitively itself as such. In his letter from 19 November 1800, Schelling envisages from then on the possibility of being able *to abstract* the intuit-

¹⁸ J.G. Fichte and F.W.J. Schelling, *The Philosophical Rupture between Fichte and Schelling: Selected Texts and Correspondence (1800–1802)* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012), 43 ff.; Schelling—Fichte *Briefwechsel. Kommentiert und herausgegeben von Hartmut Traub*, ed. Hartmut Traub (Neuried: Ars Una, 2001), 178 ff.

ing activity—which explains how it is possible that the absolute ego can become conscious of itself *without falling into the split of the subject and the object characterizing finite consciousness*; this explains, in other words, simply how it is necessary to conceive the status of self-consciousness. And it is by this abstraction that we obtain the objective subject-object. The subjective subject-object is none other than the absolute ego of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, while the objective subject-object is the ultimate principle of philosophy (forming the heart of the ‘material proof’ for this). The objective subject-object is therefore obtained by abstracting the intuiting activity that characterizes self-consciousness. The subjective subject-object is an abstraction of another kind vis-à-vis the objective subject-object: It exists in the ‘higher power (*Potenz*),’ which means that the subjective subject-object *presupposes* the objective subject-object, but cannot become conscious of a higher degree of reflection (and which does not contradict the fact, of course, that the real series is an expression of ideal series [see below]).

Why does the *System* of 1800 nevertheless still begin with the absolute act of self-consciousness (that is, by the subjective subject-object *with* its intuiting activity)? Because it is the concrete and lively demonstration of the identity of subject and object (while the act of starting directly from the absolute position of the objective subject-object would return to a dogmatic act).

We can finally better understand the status of the ‘philosophical’ ego and ‘finite’ ego. The ego that produces the real content of knowledge is the objective subject-object; self-consciousness, the philosopher’s point of view, is the subjective subject-object. The second is only the *ratio cognoscendi* of the first, while the first is the *ratio essendi* of the second. The objective subject-object is instituted thus: as a supreme expression of the unity of the transcendental point of view of the philosophy of nature with that of transcendental philosophy itself.

6 Conclusion: The Achievement and Failure of Schelling’s Transcendental Idealism

Now for some concluding remarks. While Fichte’s transcendentalism interprets the search for the conditions of the *possibility of a priori* (= necessary and universal) knowledge as highlighting a categorical hypotheticity, Schelling conceives this relationship between the hypothetical and the

categorical as the attempt of the principle (= absolute ego or transcendental ego) to apprehend itself (and thus know itself as self-legitimizing). The fundamental difference between the two idealisms crystallizes in Schelling’s reproach to Fichte that his Science of Knowledge is *purely formal*. Schelling proposes a solution for avoiding this pitfall in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*. This implements a very different conception of reality. For Schelling, the *content* of knowledge is an integral part of the apprehension of the ego itself. The transcendental here intervenes on *two levels*: at the level of the series of attempts toward self-reflection by nature, as in *Naturphilosophie*, and at the level of the series of self-objectifications of the ego, as in *Transzendentalphilosophie* properly stated. Every moment of the first series has its corresponding moment in the second and vice versa. The ‘pivot’ is the act of self-consciousness, which serves as the arrival point of *Naturphilosophie* (the supreme ‘power’) and point of departure for *Transzendentalphilosophie*. The supreme power of the latter contains *all* the determinations that have already been included in the *free* and *conscious* act of self-consciousness. All this implements two kinds of production, two kinds of reflection, and also two kinds of egos (in his later language, two kinds of subject-object). In the first series of reflections, the one specific to the philosophy of nature, the ego *unconsciously* produces moments of self-objectification, which then appear to the ego as realities *independent* of it. The whole process here consists in raising the unconscious ego to the conscious ego—to ‘theorize’ nature, to ‘subjectify’ the object. In the second series, which is specific to transcendental philosophy, the ego takes the opposite direction. It produces the moments in which it self-objectifies. This entails two ‘egos’: a ‘natural’ ego (= objective subject-object) that operates these productions and a ‘philosophizing’ ego (= subjective subject-object) that understands this process. It is here that the categorical (necessary) and hypothetical (contingent) are distributed: for one (natural consciousness) is seen as contingent and the other (philosophizing consciousness) as necessary. The process ends when the two ‘egos’ merge, when all contingency is exhausted in the necessary, when unconscious productions are brought to transparent consciousness.¹⁹

¹⁹ Finally, note that time intervenes here as decisive: it is the ‘moment’ where self-consciousness (thus, the ‘pivot’ of the two series) blossoms and where it articulates thinking and reality. Hence, it clarifies why the distribution between the hypothetical and the categorical comes about under different ‘epochs’: it is expressed here by the specific temporality of the ‘speculative.’ The epochs are

With his idea of a 'self-objectification' of the categories and determinations of the 'subject,' Schelling adds an 'objective' supplement of immense significance to the subjective component emphasized in Fichte's conception of transcendental idealism. We cannot underestimate the importance of such a move. We can only conceive of the transcendental as having a 'realist' scope if the legitimation of knowledge does not end with an 'endogenous' dimension (a dimension that is essential because the subjective legitimation of knowledge depends precisely upon it). It must also reveal an 'endo-exogenous' character. By the term 'endo-exogeneity' of what gives and presents itself—that is, of the 'phenomenal field' as such—I hope to capture a fundamental characteristic of transcendental philosophy for Schelling: namely, the fact any element of this field is not only subject to an 'egological' transcendental genesis (as it is, for Fichte, by being carried out purely by the ego), but also that this genesis must account for realities that are 'apparently' independent. The *System of Transcendental Idealism* thus aims to provide the content and tenor of such a kind of knowledge of the real respectful of the constraints of the transcendental perspective. That this position is, in turn, ultimately one-sided (concerns itself only with the absolute ego) explains why the Fichtean conception of transcendental philosophy cannot be so easily abandoned, even by a transcendental philosophy that explicitly tries to do so, for through transcendental philosophy the ego does, after all, aim to apprehend itself in its own activity (here referring in particular to the third type of knowledge named by Kant).

Although philosophies of the subject have fallen into disrepute today for precisely these kinds of worries—'mind-independence' always risks being merely 'apparent,' a moment through which the ego simply apprehends *itself* rather than its *Other*—it is doubtful that we can, or would want to, simply return to a dogmatic realism. What Schelling so vividly demonstrates, however, is that for any such philosophy that tries to take

not simple 'syntheses' (as in Fichte's *Grundlage* of 1794/95), but the expression of the inscription of the real (specifically temporalized) in the operations of the transcendental philosopher. This figure of the transcendental is unpublished, profoundly original and—although Schelling did not pursue it personally—the greatest interest in the history of transcendental philosophy. For more on the status of time in the transcendental idealisms of Schelling and Fichte, see my work *En deçà du sujet. Du temps dans la philosophie transcendental allemande* (Paris: PUF, 2010).

the demands of realism seriously, the danger of succumbing to a type of Fichteanism is always present. Are we able to avoid falling into such a pitfall? Are the critiques of correlationism, idealism, and so on, ultimately right? Elsewhere, I have argued that what we need today is a transcendently 'generative' approach to phenomena: We must re-establish a certain kind of transcendental philosophy as first philosophy, now rethought in phenomenological terms, but under the stipulation that the 'back (*zurück*)' in the 'back to the things themselves (*zurück zu den Sachen selbst*)!' be replaced with a 'go forth (*hervor*)' or a 'beyond towards (*hinaus*).'²⁰ Such a task requires a new conception of the determinations of the subject, one that can do justice to the Otherness of phenomena, yet without making them into an 'evental' intrusion upon consciousness as some recent phenomenologists have done, taking the other extreme. For such a 'generative' approach, the *System of Transcendental Idealism* is still of profound relevance in terms of its critique of Fichte's formalism. It provides, for the first time, concepts through which the idea of an independent reality can be taken seriously in the vocabulary of transcendental philosophy. (Kant's own, it must be recalled, is here inconsistent with its own basic commitments in that it relies too much on the thing in itself.) But its scope of is nonetheless limited by the fact that the parallelism of the two series does not reach the depths of an actual *transcendental genesis of an independent reality*, thus falling short of the realist challenge.

While it certainly does not go far enough, the Schellingian approach to transcendental philosophy exemplified in his 'first system'—a text underestimated in Anglo-Salon research in classical German philosophy—nonetheless makes valuable contributions to the current debate apropos 'new realisms' (Meillassoux, Descola, Chalmers, Gabriel, Harman, and so on), provided, however, that we view it in connection to Fichte. This is because it hints at the possibility of a 'generative' perspective that would enable us to oppose the critiques of 'correlationism' (whether it be of the Kantian, Fichtean, Schellingian, or in particular phenomenological type) by *intensifying, radicalizing*, the very transcendental approach itself,

²⁰ For a more thorough development of these questions (in terms of what I call a 'transcendent reflexivity' and a 'speculative transcendentalism'), see Alexander Schnell, *La débiscence du sens* (Paris: Hermann, 2015) and *Wirklichkeitsbilder* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck [forthcoming]).

an approach that argues that 'reality' is not *presupposed* as autonomous or independent, but is first secured, *as autonomous and independent*, by a genesis (I use the term 'generativity' to reflect the relationship to the *transcendent*, something Schelling's achievement philosophy resolutely emphasizes). In this way, not only Schelling's achievement—a truly independent moment vis-à-vis the ego—but also his failure—how his gesture is, in the end, similar to Fichte's insofar as it does not enough to develop a genuine transcendence *generated* immanently—outlines both the problem and task for any philosopher who seeks to give a satisfying answer to how a subject can reach the real in a non-dogmatic fashion.

4

'Animals, Those Incessant Somnambulists': A Critique of Schelling's Anthropocentrism

Devin Zane Shaw

The resurgence of interest in the thought of F.W.J. Schelling is due in part to his attempts to construct a system of nature-philosophy that could express the living and dynamic powers of nature. Before figures in the phenomenological tradition, such as Heidegger or Merleau-Ponty, turned their attention to the question of nature, Schelling had recognized that modern philosophy, from Descartes forward, lacked a true philosophy of nature. We could note, for example, that when Schelling argues in 'Concerning the Relation of the Plastic Arts to Nature' that common concepts of nature reduce it to an 'indefinite quantity of objects,' to a receptacle for these objects, or to a source of goods to be exploited for human use, his critique clearly anticipates Heidegger's critique of the ways that technicity reduces nature to standing reserve.¹ Recent scholarship

¹F.W.J. Schelling, 'Concerning the Relation of the Plastic Arts to Nature,' in *The True Voice of Feeling: Studies in English Romantic Poetry*, by Herbert Read (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), 325; *SW*, I/7: 293. Citations of Schelling provide the pagination of the English translation followed by that of the *Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schellings sämtliche Werke*, 14 vols, ed. Karl Friedrich

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