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The Origins of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*

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The Origins of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*

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An abstract of
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Abstract

The Origins of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*
By Kevin Brennan

This dissertation explores the origins of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, focusing on his rigorous engagement with Kant's philosophy of nature in two of his early works: the "Timaeus" essay and *Of the I as Principle of Philosophy*. By providing a careful and extended look as the relationship between these texts and Kant's critical system, this investigation brings to light the specific conceptual transformations of Kant's system that establish the foundations for Schelling's mature *Naturphilosophie*. I begin with an overview of the complex question of nature within Kant's critical system. I argue that Schelling undertakes a transformation of the entire Kantian architectonic and that the *Naturphilosophie* is best understood as a transformation of the three domains of theoretical reason, practical reason, and reflective judgment, and of the principles that determine their interrelation. The second chapter examines Schelling's "Timaeus" essay, revealing a young Schelling who is fully immersed in the intricacies of Kant's philosophy of nature. I show how Schelling takes up Reinhold's project for a systematic revision of Kant's system and applies it specifically to the question of the systematic unity of nature by way of an inventive reading of Plato's *Timaeus*. In the third chapter, I highlight the role of Schelling's ongoing dialogue with Kant as an essential source for Schelling's independence from Fichte and emphasize the importance of Schelling's early published works for the development of his *Naturphilosophie*. In the fourth chapter, I provide a reading of Schelling's *Of the I* through the lens of § 76 of the third *Critique*. I argue that Kant's "Remark" is highly significant for Schelling's early thought, serving as a blueprint for Schelling's project of grounding the principles of theoretical reason, practical reason, and reflective judgment in the "I" as the first principle of philosophy. The result is what Schelling will call a "conceptually secure" transformation of Kant's system, and I show that it is on this foundation that the *Naturphilosophie* begins to emerge.

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Introduction

In his 1830 text *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, Schelling makes the claim that the "the transition to *Naturphilosophie*" was nothing other than the "utterly natural and conceptually secure...result of Kantian critique."[1] This claim is striking on many levels. To begin with, it offers valuable insight into Schelling's own understanding of his project for a *Naturphilosophie*. From this retrospective position of 1830, Schelling viewed his philosophy of nature as a seamless transition out of the Kantian critical philosophy. His insistence that this transition was "conceptually secure" indicates not only that the emergence of his *Naturphilosophie* was well grounded within the Kantian framework, but also that Kant's critical philosophy itself required this transition and furnished ample justification for the transformations that the *Naturphilosophie* was to bring about to the Kantian system. This claim is also striking for the degree to which it challenges the scholarly narratives that have come to surround Schelling's philosophy of nature and its place both within Schelling's work as a whole and within the broader movement of German Idealist thought. For despite an ever-increasing body of recent scholarship that has been devoted to reclaiming both the importance of Schelling as a philosopher and the relevance of his *Naturphilosophie*, two important questions remain by and large unaddressed. First, the question of the *origins* of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* continues to remain a puzzle, and no real consensus has been achieved on this important issue. Closely tied to this question, I argue is another: How should we understand the role of Kant's thought in the development of Schelling's

[1] *Einleitung in die Philosophie* (Schellingiana Band 1), ed. Walter E. Erhard, (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1989), 37. Quoted in Ian Hamilton Grant, *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling* (London: Continuum: 2006), *8.*

Naturphilosophie? It is because these questions have not been adequately addressed that Schelling's claim appears to us as nothing short of surprising. And the fact that his claim sounds so surprising to us, I argue, alerts us to the need to investigate these questions more closely.

The idea that the emergence of his philosophy of nature was the "utterly natural and conceptually" secure result of the Kantian critical philosophy poses a several challenges to contemporary scholarship. To begin with, it challenges us to gain a better grasp of the origins of Schelling's philosophy of nature: What are the questions that motivated this "transition to *Naturphilosophie*"? How did the demand for a philosophy of nature arise? What precisely were the "conceptually secure transformations" that transpired in order to clear the path for its emergence? Second, Schelling's claim challenges us to revisit the relationship between Schelling's early thought and Kant's critical system. For this assertion implies that Schelling discerned within Kant's own thought an internal impulse to transform itself in the direction of *Naturphilosophie*, for otherwise such a transition would not be "natural" and "secure". Precisely what elements within Kant's thought did Schelling find to support such a reading? To what extent were these elements foundational for Schelling's own thinking? What were those movements of thought in and through which this transition unfolded? Can we find their traces within Schelling's own writings?

This dissertation is an attempt to respond to the challenges posed by Schelling's claim and to the many questions that it raises. It does so by seeking to uncover the roots of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* in his early thought, and in particular in his rigorous engagement with Kant's philosophy of nature. By providing a careful and extended look as the relationship between Schelling's early works and Kant's critical system, this investigation helps bring to light the issues that motivated the emergence of Schelling's *Naturphilosophy*.

For Schelling's mature Naturphilosophie, investigating nature means uncovering the traces of the generative power of a *natura naturans* within a proliferation of its productions that gradually and increasingly reveal its capacities. Individual products cannot be isolated and dissected, but must be grasped in their relation to the whole of nature's productions. This applies no less to the activity of human thought and freedom. Against the Fichtean ideal of an absolutely self-grounding subjective idealism, Schelling insists that we cannot fully know our own selves or the ideality of our own minds apart from the discovery of its genetic constitution as reflected in the natural world. Nature must be appropriated as the "living ground" of mind in order for human thought and freedom to reach its full scope. By situating the emergence and development of Schelling's Naturphilosophie against the backdrop of the Kantian critical project, we discover in this encounter the origin of this principal goal of Schelling's philosophy of nature: to challenge the bifurcation of mind and nature, ideal and real, which characterizes the modern concept of nature. To see these themes emerge through Schelling's critical dialogue with the Kantian system is, I propose, both exciting and informative, giving us a better understanding both of the early Schelling and the mature *Naturphilosophie*.

This dissertation also aims to provide a contribution to the broader project of thinking the question of nature as a core philosophical issue. Schelling's philosophy of nature is, at heart, an attempt to rethink and reformulate the central philosophical conceptions of nature that have dominated modern post-Cartesian thought. By wrestling with the question of nature from within the context of Kant's transcendental philosophy, Schelling comes to recognize a demand for philosophy to *think nature* as its own living ground. In response to this demand, Schelling formulates an insightful critique of Kant's philosophy of nature and seeks to develop a new, positive concept of nature and the relation between nature and human thought, action, and freedom

that remains relevant today. By establishing the origins of Schelling's philosophy of nature within the context of the Kantian system, a context that is not only more familiar to most readers but also continues to shape the parameters of our thinking about nature today, we gain a welcome point of entry into an area of Schelling's thought that can be as difficult and obscure as it is relevant and rewarding.

In order to establish a starting point for the investigation, I begin with a synoptic overview of the complex question of nature within Kant's philosophy. Kant's philosophy of nature, I argue, is irreducible to the theoretical investigation of nature, but is tied to the complex Kantian architectonic that includes theoretical reason, practical reason, and reflective judgment. I go on to argue that Schelling's transformation of the Kantian question of nature is a transformation of all three of these domains, and that the *Naturphilosophie* cannot be reduced to a shift within the domain of theoretical reason alone. I argue that this leads us closer to the questions that motivate Schelling's philosophy of nature and helps clarify dimensions of the Schelling's mature *Naturphilosophie* that still provoke questions and require clarification. In particular: What is the connection between a philosophy of nature and a philosophy of freedom? How can a philosophy of freedom give rise to a philosophy of nature?

In this investigation I have opted for careful and close analysis of the Kantian text and of Schelling's early writings, seeking to put these in dialogue and attempting to trace those movements of thought through which Schelling seeks to bring about a transition within and beyond Kant's system. In following this methodology, I have limited the attention I give to important and relevant questions regarding, for example, Schelling's relation to other thinkers and texts. I have tried to highlight the importance of both Reinhold and Fichte where especially relevant, but I do not give a comprehensive account of Schelling's relation to these figures. This enables me to keep

the focus trained on the dialogue between Schelling and Kant that unfolds within Schelling's texts. A further limitation is that I take an in-depth look at only two of Schelling's works from this period. The first is Schelling's "Timeaus" essay, and the second is his *On the I as a Principle of Philosophy*. I argue that, of all Schelling's early works, these texts represent Schelling's most rigorous engagement with Kant's works and that they mark the most significant moments in the emergence of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*.

In the first chapter, I give a synoptic account of the intricate terrain of Kant's philosophy of nature. I aim to enter into the complex tensions of the question of nature from the perspective of the whole of the Kantian architectonic, taking up the three domains of theoretical reason, practical reason, and reflective judgment. The purpose of this exposition is to lay out the principal features of the Kantian system so as to provide a foundation for the chapters that follow. By entering into the Kantian terrain in this way, we are able to better appreciate how deeply Schelling was immersed Kant's philosophy of nature and to what extent he takes up and modifies Kant's positions.

The second chapter is devoted to one of Schelling's earliest works, his "Timaeus" essay. I argue that this text reveals a young Schelling who is fully immersed in the intricacies of Kant's philosophy of nature. I highlight the importance of Reinhold for Schelling's reception of Kant and present Schelling's reworking of Kant's philosophy of nature by means of an extended commentary on Plato's *Timeaus*. I show how Schelling takes up Reinhold's project of a systematic revision of Kant's system and applies it specifically to the question of the systematic unity of nature. By working through Schelling's text, we see how many principal themes from the mature *Naturphilosophie* begin to emerge through this transformation of Kant's philosophy of nature.

In the third chapter, I seek to establish the relevance of Schelling's early published works for

the development of the mature *Naturphilosophie*, arguing that the principal questions that give rise to Schelling's philosophy of nature begin to emerge in this period. In order to maintain this position, I contest the different narratives that would sever this early period of Schelling's thought from the mature philosophy, most of which center on a characterization of the early Schelling as being wholly dependent upon Fichte. Finally, I argue for the importance of recognizing the role of Kant's thought in Schelling's early works.

In the fourth chapter, I engage in an extended reading of Schelling's *Vom Ich* through the lens of § 76 of the third *Critique*. I argue that this text is highly significant for Schelling's early thought and show that its importance extends beyond what is commonly acknowledged. On my reading, this text was instrumental for Schelling in his attempts to undertake a reworking of the entire Kantian architectonic, seeking to ground Kant's theoretical reason, practical reason, and reflective judgment on the "higher principle" that they presuppose: the absolute I. By reading these two texts in close dialogue, we see the "conceptually secure" transformation of Kant's system unfold in detail as Schelling undertakes a systematic revision of Kant's philosophy that lays the foundation for the transition to the *Naturphilosophie*.

To conclude the dissertation, I begin with a juxtaposition of Schelling and Fichte and their respective accounts of the place of nature within the critical philosophy. I argue that Schelling's divergence from Fichte originates in his engagement with the Kantian framework for a philosophy of nature. I present Schelling and Fichte as two possible outcomes of the tensions present within Kant's own philosophy of nature and argue for the relevance of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* as a realization of a possibility within Kant's own thought that avoids the "annihilation" of nature that emerges in Fichte's thought.

Chapter One: Tensions in Kant's Philosophy of Nature

Introduction

In this chapter, I give a synoptic overview of the principal elements of Kant's philosophy of nature considered broadly as a complex question that is addressed from the three domains of theoretical reason, practical reason, and reflective judgment. The aim of this chapter is twofold. First, I intend to lay out the principal features of the Kantian terrain in order to show in the chapters that follow how Schelling can claim that his *Naturphilosophie* has a "conceptually secure" foundation within the Kantian critical philosophy. Second, I hope to emphasize the profound tensions surrounding the question of nature in Kant's philosophy. Here I will argue that Kant's philosophy of nature was a central component of his critical philosophy and that the complex tensions surrounding the question of nature for Kant are only understood when viewed from within the context of Kant's overall architectonic While I cannot hope to propose a thoroughgoing interpretive position that would take into account the myriad questions under discussion in Kant scholarship, I propose the more modest goal of drawing on contemporary scholarship in order to illustrate well-acknowledged tensions in Kant's thought and to suggest the import of these unresolved issues.

There is, of course, no denying the importance of Kant for the development of *Naturphilosophie* in Schelling and German Romanticism and Idealism in general. But while many accounts of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* tend to focus on isolated elements of Kant's system–the discussion of organism from the third *Critique*, for example–without keeping in view the question of nature as a central question that runs throughout the whole of the critical philosophy. According

to such a presentation, Schelling looks to be selectively choosing elements of Kant's texts and then pursuing his own speculative flights of fancy, having abandoned the sober boundaries of the Kantian philosophy. What I propose in the chapters that follow is a reading of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* as a response to the whole of Kant's critical philosophy. In order to do so, it is necessary in the present chapter to present an overview of the whole question of nature in Kant's philosophy.

I have adopted as a schema for organizing this presentation a simple threefold division following Kant's three *Critiques*: theoretical reason, practical reason, and the power of judgment.

I. Theoretical Reason

A. "Nature in General"

Among the most significant and consequential elements of Kant's critical philosophy is the delimitation of nature as the "sum of appearances" (B 163)[1], the sum total of the objects of experience. This designation, a cornerstone of Kant's philosophy, simultaneously accomplishes two principal aims of his critical project. First, it secures the a priori and necessary character of the principles of the modern scientific worldview by identifying the fundamental principles of modern science with those of human cognition. The objects of the natural world are all appearances standing under the a priori forms of sensible intuition and the categories of the understanding, both

[1] All references to Kant's works are given by volume and page if the Akademie edition, *Kants gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1900–), except for the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which is cited according to the standard A and B pagination of the first and second editions. All translations from the *Critique of Pure Reason* are taken from: *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

of which can be known with a priori necessity. Second, Kant preserves human autonomy in both the theoretical and practical domains. In the theoretical domain, Kant's position renders the spontaneity of human reason the condition of the necessity of the universal laws of natural science, since it is human cognition that actively contributes the lawful and necessary order to be found in nature. In the practical domain, the limitation of the universal laws of sensible nature, including the law of causality, to appearances only, leaves the realm of freedom, the realm of the intelligible and supersensible, free for its own distinct legislation. In what follows, we will rehearse these themes briefly in order to have in mind the parameters of Kant's idea of nature as appearance.

Kant's identification of nature with the sum of all appearances allows him to locate the lawfulness and regularity of nature in the forms of sensible intuition and in the categories of the understanding:

> Space and time are valid, as conditions of the possibility of how objects can be given to us, no further than for objects of the senses, hence only for experience. Beyond these boundaries they do not represent anything at all, for they are only in the senses and outside of them have no reality. (B 148)

> All possible perceptions, hence everything that can ever reach empirical consciousness, i.e., all appearances of nature, as far as their combination is concerned, stand under the categories, on which nature (considered merely as nature in general) depends, as the original ground of its necessary lawfulness. (B 164-5)

Objects of nature, therefore, consist in "everything that can ever reach empirical consciousness," and to be an appearance of nature is to be perception of the human cognitive faculty.

The essential idea of nature, then, is that of "lawfulness of appearances in space and time"

(B165), or a lawful connection of appearances. The very possibility of nature thus depends on the universal and necessary laws provided by the categories of the understanding and applied to the formal conditions of intuition (space and time). Without the order, regularity and unity provided by the understanding, there would be no lawful connection of appearances, no *nature*, but only a "rhapsody of perceptions, which would not fit together in any context in accordance with rules of a thoroughly connected (possible) consciousness" (A 156/B 195):

> By nature (in the empirical sense) we understand the combination of appearances as regards their existence, in accordance with necessary rules, i.e., in accordance with laws. There are therefore certain laws, and indeed *a priori, which first make a nature possible*; the empirical laws can only obtain and be found by means of experience, and indeed in accord with its original laws, in accordance with which experience itself first becomes possible. (A 216/B 263, my emphasis)

The transcendental laws that are the conditions of the possibility of experience are accordingly also the conditions of the possibility of nature. All determinate empirical laws of nature discovered through experience necessarily stand under these transcendental laws, since these are the very conditions of the possibility of experience itself. The source of the a priori and universal necessity of the laws of nature in lies in their being the conditions of the possibility of human cognition and experience; they are rooted in the forms of our sensible intuition and the categories of our understanding.

Kant's position thus entails what he calls a "daring" conclusion: it is the human understanding that is the lawgiver of nature:

> We must, however, distinguish empirical laws of nature, which always presuppose particular

> perceptions, from the pure or universal natural laws of nature, which, without having particular perceptions underlying them, contain merely the conditions of the necessary unification of such perceptions in an experience; with respect to the latter laws, nature and possible experience are thoroughly identical, and since in possible experience the lawfulness rests on the necessary connection of appearances in an experience (without which we would not be able to cognize any object of the sensible world at all), and so on the original laws of the understanding, it is, though it sounds strange at first, nonetheless certain, if I say with respect to the universal laws of nature: *the understanding does not draw its* (a priori) *laws from nature, but prescribes them to it.* (*Prolegomena* § 36, 4:320)

The thoroughgoing identity of the necessary conditions of possible experience and the universal laws of nature is, Kant argues, the sole basis for asserting the a priori validity of these laws of nature. Nature is thus a domain that is constituted by the conditions of our sensibility and understanding, and it is the latter that is the lawgiver of nature.

In order to get a sense of the "universal and necessary laws of nature in general," we can briefly summarize the main laws that Kant establishes in the Analytic of Principles from the Transcendental Analytic. The *mathematical* principles, those constitutive of intuition, correspond to first two groups of categories – Quantity and Quality. The first is developed in the section "Axioms of intuition," where Kant establishes that all objects of the senses, since given in space and time, are mathematically quantifiable extensive magnitudes. The second, "Anticipations of perception" establishes that all objects given as "real" in space and time are given as *intensive* magnitudes that are also mathematically quantifiable. Here we may note that the very same principles that are constitutive of intuition render the objects of intuition amenable a priori to the kind of mathematical quantification required by the natural sciences.

The remaining two groups of categories - Relation and Modality - provide the dynamic

principles that establish the universal and necessary laws of nature that result from the application of the categories to the sensible manifold. In the "Analogies of experience", Kant establishes three principal universal laws of nature: of *substance* (all change requires an underlying substance that is conserved in quantity and existence), of *causality* (everything that happens is determined by a cause according to a necessary rule), and of *community* (all objects in space must stand in a relation of reciprocal causal interaction).

The equation of the universal laws of nature with the conditions for the possibility of our finite understanding is grounded in Kant's critical analysis of the limits of human cognition. Kant considers the question of the contingency of the human faculties of cognition and any inquiry into the why or cause of this particular configuration to be beyond the scope of any possible investigation:

> But for the peculiarity of our understanding, that it is able to bring about the unity of apperception *a priori* only by means of the categories and only through precisely this kind and number of them, a further ground may be offered just as little as one can be offered for why we have precisely these and no other functions for judgment or for why space and time are the sole forms of our possible intuition. (B145-6)

Thus, the fundamental structures of human cognition – the forms of sensible intuition and the discursive nature of the understanding – function as the necessary condition not only of human knowledge but also of *nature in general* as the domain of all sensible appearances of nature.

B. Regulative Ideas of Nature

Kant calls reason a "faculty of principles" that is the source of concepts and principles that are derived neither from the senses nor from the understanding (A299/B355). Just as the understanding is the source of the unity of appearances, a "faculty of rules" that brings the manifold of intuition into rule-governed interconnection and unity by means of the categories, reason is the source of the thoroughgoing connection of the understanding, uniting its rules, concepts, and cognitions into systematic unity according to its principles. The "proper" principle of reason in general, Kant states, is "to find the unconditioned for conditioned cognitions of the understanding" (A307/B364). Reason's impetus to search for the unconditioned is manifest in its logical exercise, which Kant will in turn use as a clue for uncovering its 'real' or 'transcendental' use, just as the logical functions of judgment are used as the hint for discovering the categories of the understanding. In its logical use, Kant states, reason

> seeks the universal condition of its judgment (its conclusion), and the syllogism is nothing but a judgment mediated by the subsumption of its condition under a universal rule (major premise). Now since this rule is once again exposed to this same attempt of reason, the condition of its condition thereby has to be sought. (A307/B364)

Reason follows its logical principle of seeking a complete unity of cognitions by a continuous regressive movement towards ever more primary and universal principles and the ultimate goal of subsuming all conditions under a single universal rule. In what Kant terms the 'real' use of reason, this logical maxim of a regressive search for the unconditioned takes the form of bestowing a logical form upon the cognitions of the understanding, subordinating one cognition to another and lower rules to higher ones (A305/B362). Put another way, reason seeks to find the unconditioned for every conditioned cognition of the understanding.

Kant repeatedly emphasizes his claim that reason, in the 'real' employment of its principles, has as its object only the cognitions, concepts and rules of the understanding. Reason and its principles provide for no direct determination of experience or its objects, which are solely the products of the understanding and intuition:

> If, therefore, pure reason also deals with objects, yet it has no immediate reference to them and their intuition, but deals only with the understanding and its judgments, which apply directly to the senses and their intuition, in order to determine their object. (A306-7/B363)

Here we have a concise statement of the essential difference between the principles of the understanding and the principles of reason. In numerous passages of the first *Critique* and throughout his critical system, Kant develops this difference as the distinction between *constitutive* and *regulative* principles. The categories of the understanding "apply directly to the senses and their intuition," and the principles of the understanding that provide the rule for this application "determine their object." According to the constitutive principles of the understanding and intuition, for example, we can determine any object of possible experience as being mathematically quantifiable in extension, given in intuition according to some mathematically quantifiable intensity, a substance whose changes are governed by universal laws of cause and effect, etc. The principles of the understanding, accordingly, are *constitutive* of their object and provide a priori cognition of the objects of possible experience. In contrast, the principles of reason "have no direct determination of experience or its objects," and do no more than regulate the objects already furnished by the understanding and intuition.

As we have seen, Kant speaks of a purely logical principle of reason, its "demand" or "need" for a systematic unity of cognitions that would bring the understanding into "thoroughgoing

connection with itself" (A305/B362). With regard to these logical principles, Kant states:

> Yet such a principle does not prescribe any law to objects, and does not contain the ground of the possibility of cognizing and determining them as such in general, but rather is merely a subjective law of economy for the provision of our understanding, so that through comparison of its concepts it may bring their universal use to the smallest number, without justifying us in demanding of objects themselves any such unanimity as might make things easier for our understanding or help it extend itself, and so give objective validity to its maxims as well. (A306/B363)

The principles of reason in their purely logical use are *regulative* in the strongest sense, then, in that they are purely subjective maxims that do not constitute any objects nor have any objective validity, but merely organize fully constituted cognitions for the sake of a more effective empirical employment of the understanding. The logical use of reason provides no ground whatsoever for "demanding of objects themselves" any kind of order that would correspond to reason's systematic aspirations.

The picture becomes far more complicated when we consider the regulative status of the principles of reason in its "real" use. For in this use, for example, reason's demand for the unconditioned is applied not merely to the logical search for universal principles but more concretely to the regressive search for the conditions for given cognitions. This requires, Kant claims, that we must assume "that when the conditioned is given, then so is the whole series of conditions subordinated one to the other, which is itself unconditioned, also given (i.e., contained in the object and its connection)" (A307-8/B364). The assumption of a given series of conditions, each subordinated to the next, the entirety of which is itself unconditioned, is clearly something that is not derived from the principles of the understanding. The 'real' use of reason, then, gives

rise to synthetic propositions "of which the understanding knows nothing," inasmuch as its "cognitions and synthesis are always conditioned" (A308/B365).

Kant terms the principles of pure reason in this 'real' use *transcendent* with respect to appearances, insofar as "no adequate empirical use can ever be made" of these principles. By this he means that there can never be any empirical cognition of their object - the unconditioned. These principles do, however, have more than the merely subjective validity of the logical principles of reason, in that they warrant the assumption of synthetic propositions "of which the understanding knows nothing." The *regulative* status of these principles is, then, more complex than that of the merely logical principles of reason, since they are more than merely subjective maxims, yet not *constitutive* of determinate objects or of possible experience. As we shall see, this 'in-between' status of the regulative principles of reason remains problematic for Kant in the first *Critique* and will undergo significant modification in the third *Critique's* account of reflective judgment.

At the outset of the Transcendental Dialectic, Kant introduces the notion of the "transcendental ideas," ideas that arise from the principles of pure reason. While reason is not capable of generating any concepts on its own, Kant claims that "at most" it can "**free** a **concept of the understanding** from the unavoidable limitations of possible experience, and thus seek to extend it beyond the boundaries of the empirical" (A409/B435). Reason *un-conditions* the concepts of the understanding, thereby producing transcendental ideas that have no possible object in experience. The bulk of the Transcendental Dialectic, of course, is devoted to exposing the *dialectical illusion* that results from giving constitutive status to the transcendental ideas on the basis of the principles of reason and its search for the unconditioned, thereby exposing the errors of metaphysical illusion with regard to the ideals of reason.

The source of all dialectical illusion, however, is nothing other than *reason itself*, and Kant

insists that the transcendental criticism he offers of dialectical illusion could never eradicate transcendental illusion, but, at most, only keep it at bay. These are, Kant insists, *necessary* illusions of reason that attach naturally to reason:

> Here there is a natural and unavoidable dialectic of pure reason...one that irremediably attaches to human reason, so that even after we have exposed the mirage it will still not cease to lead our reason on with false hopes, continually propelling it into momentary aberrations that always need to be removed. (A298/B354)

Inasmuch as these ideas necessarily attach to reason, Kant goes on to claim, there must be a positive use for them. Accordingly, after exposing the dialectical illusions of reason, Kant must give an account of their proper scope and employment. This he does in the appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic, where he develops his account of the *regulative ideas* of reason.

As a counterpoint to the transcendental illusions, Kant develops a doctrine of the regulative use of the ideas of reason. Since these ideas "naturally attach" to reason and result from its principles, as we have seen, there must be a positive use for them. For Kant, the regulative use of the ideas are twofold: in scientific inquiry, which we will discuss here, and as the "foundation for morality in the practical use of reason"[2], as we will see in the second section on practical reason.

In the first section of the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic, entitled "On the regulative use of the ideas of pure reason," we can discern three principal regulative ideas proposed by Kant.[3]

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[2] Guyer and Wood, Introduction to *The Critique of Pure Reason,* 14.

[3] In the exposition of this text that follows, I am indebted to Paul Guyer's article, "Reason and Reflective Judgment: Kant on the Significance of Systematicity," *Nous*, vol. 24 (1990): 17-43. To be clear, Kant does not give a neat distinction between three separate ideas in this section. I am here following Guyer's interpretation in isolating three separate regulative ideas from out of Kant's remarks in the appendix. While Kant does indicate a

All three concern "the systematic in cognition": “If we take an overview of the cognition of understanding in its entire circumference, we find that that which reason quite uniquely orders and seeks to bring about is the systematic in cognition, that is, its connection according to a principle” (A 645/B 673).

The first demands the maximum *extension* of empirical inquiry and is first introduced in the "Antinomy of Pure Reason," where Kant takes up the "cosmological principle" that demands a given totality for a series of conditions. While Kant argues against taking this principle as an axiom for thinking such a totality as real and actually given, he goes on to insist that it remains a problem for the understanding that should provoke the subject "in initiating and continuing in accordance with the completeness of the idea, the regress in the series of conditions for a given conditioned" (A508/B536). In other words, this principle of reason becomes a rule, prescribing "a regress in the series of conditions for given experience, in which regress it is never allowed to stop with an absolutely unconditioned" (A509/B537). According to this regulative idea, then, no empirically given can ever be taken for the unconditioned condition of the series, and therefore no empirical boundary can be set as an absolute boundary for experience. It is, then, a "principle of the greatest possible continuation and extension of experience" (A509/B537).

In the Appendix, this demand for the maximum extension is again emphasized in the context of reason's interest in the systematic in cognition: the regulative ideas direct the understanding towards goals that lie outside the bounds of possible experience, Kant says, and "nevertheless still serves to obtain for these concepts the greatest unity alongside the greatest extension"

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variety of uses of the regulative idea of reason, it is not entirely clear how he means to categorize these different uses or how each should relate to the other. Therefore, I have found Guyer's classification to be of great assistance in clarifying Kant's position here.

(A644/B672). He goes on to suggest that the regulative ideas are "indispensably necessary" in provoking the understanding not to rest contented with the given objects of experience but to constantly seek to "go beyond every given experience" and to "take the measure of its greatest possible and uttermost extension" (A645/B673). Here, as in the other instances of the regulative use of the ideas, we see that the principles of reason give rise to ideas that can only be realized according to a logic of asymptotic approximation: "[the principles of reason] contain mere ideas to be followed asymptotically, as it were, i.e., merely by approximation, without ever reaching them." Without ever arriving at the unconditioned as a given within the field of experience, reason can nevertheless guide the understanding towards an approximation of the unconditioned by its rule to seek (unceasingly) the maximum possible extension of experience and the maximal expansion of the domain of the understanding.[4]

The second regulative idea Kant proposes is that of an explanatory minimum that requires the search for ever more universal and simple principles or causes. Reason's demand for the systematic in cognition, Kant claims, entails the idea of "the form of a whole of cognition, which precedes the determinate cognition of the parts and contains the conditions for determining *a priori* the place of each part and its relation to the others" (A645/B673). The unity of this form, Kant continues, cannot be that of a "merely contingent aggregate" but must be "a system interconnected in accordance with necessary laws" (A645/B673). The idea of an explanatory minimum comes in when Kant asserts the necessity of employing concepts of "pure substances" in order to bring about this systematic interconnectedness. Thus, for example, all determinate materials are reduced to the

[4] It should be noted that this expansion of the domain of the understanding is simply "more of the same" there is no qualitative expansion implied here, since the constitutive principles of the understanding hold firm. The expansion envisioned is merely one of quantitative augmentation.

more general idea of "pure earth" (by which Kant means *weight*). Reason fashions concepts that are not given in nature but are rather abstractions, universals to which the manifold of objects in nature can be reduced "in order to appropriately determine the share that each of these natural causes has in appearance" (A646/B674). This regulative idea of reason would prescribe generalization of these classifications of nature, ascending from particulars up to species, genera, and families; in short, towards the goal of increasingly simple and universal classificatory concepts. This minimizing of explanatory principles serves the overall goal of bringing the manifold of nature into the "form of a whole of cognition" and systematic interconnectedness.

While Kant gives the example of classificatory concepts to first illustrate this regulative idea, the idea is perhaps clearer when he discusses the idea of a *fundamental* power. The understanding is furnished with the concept of the causality of a substance, its "power", but is perfectly capable of assuming "almost as many powers as there are effects," interpreting even the "various appearances of one and the same substance" as the manifestation of so many different powers. Kant gives the example of the human mind, for which we could postulate a separate power for each function - sensation, imagination, wit, memory, etc. It is the logical maxim of reason, however, that "bids us to reduce this apparent variety as far as possible by discovering hidden identity through comparison," and searching for a fundamental power underlying all the various manifestations (A648-9/B676-7). This 'demand' of reason to search for hidden and underlying unity extends throughout the whole of the appearances of nature, and so the "comparatively fundamental powers" that are discovered "must once again be compared with one another, so as to discover their unanimity and thereby bring them close to a single radical, i.e., absolutely fundamental, power" (A649/B677). The essential idea is that, although the requirements of the understanding are satisfied as long as every appearance is subsumable under some causal law or

other, regardless of the existence of any relations among these causal laws, the unity of reason requires that understanding's causal laws be seen as expressions of the operation of some small number, ultimately one, explanatory force or agency.

The third conception of the regulative idea of reason is what Guyer calls a "general characterization of systematicity."[5] Kant claims that reason employs two logical principles that are potentially in conflict. The first is the logical principle of *genera*, which postulates a certain homogeneity or identity among the variety of appearances such that its manifold can be united into universal concepts. The second is the logical principle of *species*, which postulates an infinite variety in appearances such that the process of specification into species and subspecies would be indefinite and never arrive at the coincidence of universal concept and particular individual. In order to ensure that these logical demands do not come into conflict, Kant posits a third law, that of the "affinity of all concepts, which offers a continuous transition from every species to every other through a graduated increase of varieties" (A658/B686). This logical principle of affinity translates into the principle of *continuum formarum* - the continuity of forms in nature. This ensures that there is only one universal field of nature, and that

> there are no different original and primary genera, which would be, as it were, isolated and separated from one another (by an empty intervening space), but rather all the manifold genera are only partitionings of a single supreme and universal genus; … all varieties of species bound one another and permit no transition to one another by a leap, but only through every smaller degree of distinction, so that from each one can reach another; in a word, there are no species or subspecies that are proximate (in the concept of reason), but intervening species are always possible, whose difference

[5] Guyer, "Reason and Reflective Judgment," 23.

> from the first and second species is smaller than their difference from each other. (A658/B686)

Reason's competing drives – its ascent to higher genera and finally to a single highest universal, and its descent towards ever lower species and finally towards the infinite manifold of particulars – potentially end up at an impasse, Kant claims, with the extreme poles remaining empty concepts and no objects corresponding to any combination of the two. Uniting these tendencies into a systematic unity of forms requires the affinity of all concepts in a unified field, so that "all varieties are related to one another, since they all derive from all the degrees of the extended determination of a single, highest genus" (A657-8/B685-6).

There remain a number of fascinating intricacies to Kant's account of the regulative ideas we have been discussing, and several questions remain about how these distinct ideas relate to one another. At this point, we will turn to the important question of what degree of *objective* status these regulative ideas can have.

As we have already seen, Kant's insistence that these ideas have a regulative and not constitutive status does not mean they are entirely devoid of objectivity. As a helpful reminder of the non-constitutive character of these principles, we can look to the following citation outlining the necessarily *regulative* status of the principle of the *continuum formarum* we have just discussed:

> But it is easy to see that this continuity of forms is a mere idea, for which a corresponding object can by no means be displayed in experience, **not only** because the species in nature are really partitioned and therefore in themselves have to constitute a *quantum discretum*, and if the graduated progress in their affinity were continuous, they would also have to contain a true infinity of intermediate members between any two given species, which is impossible; **but also** because we could make no determinate

> empirical use at all of this law, since through it there is indicated not the least mark of that affinity, or how and how far we are to seek the degrees of its variety; rather, we are given nothing more than a general indication that we are to seek for it. (A661/B689)

The regulative idea provides only a rule for the empirical exercise of the understanding, directing its investigations and organizing its concepts without providing any ground for cognizing a priori a determinate corresponding object (e.g., a real fundamental power, the soul, the given totality of a world whole, a highest being) or for determining objects of possible experience.

While the regulative ideas do not have constitutive status for Kant, neither are they purely subjective and lacking in any objective validity. To begin with, Kant makes a crucial distinction between the merely logical principles of reason, and the *transcendental laws* that correspond to these logical ideas.[6] The logical principle that we descend from the genus into to the manifold of particulars, for example, only has any "sense and application" if it is in turn grounded in a "*transcendental law of specification*" that *imposes* on the understanding "the demand to seek under every species that comes before us for a subspecies, and for every variety smaller varieties" (A656/B684). The merely logical aspirations of reason, then, are not sufficient for issuing a determinate *rule* of the employment of the understanding. Reason does not simply take up the cognitions of the understanding after the fact and arrange them into a systematic unity according to its own whims and preferences; rather, it *gives a rule* to the understanding and directs its employment by means of transcendental laws. In this sense, it is productive of new experiences and new cognitions, even if only in an intermediary fashion and within the confines established by

[6] We have already seen a corresponding distinction in our discussion of the *logical* and *real* uses of reason.

the understanding. Reason actively directs the understanding towards the satisfaction of its own needs, imposing tasks upon it that could never be derived from empirical experience alone. Accordingly, Kant continues,

> this law of specification cannot be borrowed from experience, for experience can make no such extensive disclosures. Empirical specification soon stops in distinguishing the manifold, unless through the already preceding transcendental law of specification as a principle of reason it is led to seek such disclosures and to keep on assuming them even when they do not immediately reveal themselves to the senses. That there are absorbent earths of different species (chalky earths and muriatic earths) needed for its discovery needed for its discovery a foregoing rule of reason that made it a task for the understanding to seek for varieties, by presupposing nature to be so abundant that it presumes them. (A657/B685)

Left to its own devices, then, the understanding would halt its activity and investigation at the given objects it encounters; guided by the a priori transcendental law of specification, however, it continues to seek after further disclosures of nature. The transcendental laws prescribed by the regulative ideas, then, are productive of new knowledge by means of the *presuppositions* it warrants about nature. Under their sway, the understanding is led to *assume* the reality of objects not immediately revealed to the senses and to *presuppose* that nature has a definite character - in this case, a superabundance of forms. Thus, although the regulative ideas do not provide for the determinate cognition of any new *objects* (it can only lead to new discoveries through the intermediary of the understanding and its own means), it does "prepare the field" for the understanding (A657/B685) by "pre-giving" or alleging (*vorgeben*) (A650/B678) the objective reality of a nature that far exceeds the limited determinations of the "nature in general" provided

by the categories of the understanding.

For each logical principle of reason, then, Kant describes a transcendental law that functions as a regulative idea for experience, and in numerous instances he emphasizes the *objective* character of the 'alleged' nature prescribed by these regulative ideas. In his discussion of the logical law of the continuum of species, for example, he states that the merely methodological devices of the logical laws would be useless without the transcendental laws alleging some objective correlate *in nature* for the order and systematicity reason seeks:

> This logical law of the *continuum specierum*… presupposes, however, a transcendental law (*lex continui in natura*), without which the use of the understanding through the former prescription would only mislead, since the prescription would perhaps take a path directly opposed to nature. (A660/B688)

And with reference to the regulative idea of a systematic order derivable from the hypothesis of a fundamental power in nature, he states

> In fact it cannot even be seen how there could be a logical principle of rational unity among rules unless a transcendental principle is presupposed, through which such a systematic unity, as pertaining to the object itself, is assumed *a priori* as necessary. For by what warrant can reason in its logical use claim to treat the manifoldness of the powers which nature gives to our cognition as merely a concealed unity, and to derive them as far as it is able from some fundamental power, when reason is free to admit that it is just as possible that all powers are different in kind, and that its derivation of them from a systematic unity is not in conformity with nature? For then reason would proceed directly contrary to its vocation, since it would set as its goal an idea that entirely contradicts the arrangement of nature. (A651/B679)

The order that the regulative ideas prescribe to the understanding cannot be a mere projection of reason, but must have some correspondence *in nature*. If not, its "prescriptions would only mislead," taking "a path directly opposed to nature." As Guyer helpfully summarizes,

> Systematicity cannot be viewed solely as a feature of our conceptual scheme, which can be imposed on nature, understood precisely as that which is given to us, no matter what; the empirical data which nature offers must themselves be amenable to systematization if systematicity is to be attained. The systematizability of nature must be presupposed if we are rationally to adopt the regulative ideal of systematicity; it is not a product of adopting the regulative ideal. Thus, the regulative ideal can be characterized in purely logical terms as a structural feature of our knowledge, but satisfaction of the ideal commits us to a claim about the objects of experience themselves.[7]

Nature must be *amenable* to the systematic order prescribed by reason if the regulative ideas are to be applied to the exercise of the understanding, for otherwise these ideas would be irrational, offering no prospect for satisfaction in their empirical employment. Thus, although they remain indeterminate, offering satisfaction only asymptotically in experience, Kant goes so far as to claim that the principles of the regulative ideas are "synthetic propositions *a priori*" that have "objective but indeterminate validity, and serve as a rule for possible experience" (A663/B692). Here, as Guyer points out, the regulative ideas come rather close to the dynamic principles of the understanding, inasmuch as they provide an indeterminate objectivity that serves as a rule for possible experience.[8]

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[7] Guyer, “Reason and Reflective Judgment,” 27.

[8] Guyer, “Reason and Reflective Judgment,” 27.

In two passages from this section of the *Appendix*, Kant seems to push the objective character of the regulative ideas to the limits of the distinction between regulative and constitutive principles. Here he seems to suggest that the systematicity provided by the regulative ideas of reason is even necessary for the very possibility of experience, the primary criteria for constitutive principles. Kant writes:

> For the law of reason to seek unity is necessary, since without it we would have no reason, and without that, no coherent use of the understanding, and, lacking that, no sufficient mark of empirical truth; thus in regard to the latter we simply have to presuppose the systematic unity of nature as objectively valid and necessary. (A651/B679)

Apart from the systematic unity that reason demands and produces through the regulative ideas guiding the employment of the understanding, Kant here describes a general breakdown, if not of possible experience, then at least of cognition, "the coherent use of the understanding," and of empirical scientific endeavor. For this reason, the systematic unity of *nature itself* corresponding to the regulative ideas of reason we have outlined must be assumed as *objectively valid* and even *necessary*.

The second passage occurs in Kant's discussion of the transcendental law corresponding to the logical requirement of homogeneity among the manifold of appearances, such that their variety remains amenable to groupings and categorizations into genera:

> If among appearances offering themselves to us there were such a great variety – ...regarding the manifoldness of existing beings – that even the most acute human understanding, through comparison of one with another, could not detect the least similarity (a case which can at least be thought), then

> the logical law of genera would not obtain at all, no concept of a genus, nor any other universal concept, indeed no understanding at all would obtain, since it is the understanding which has to do with such concepts. The logical principle of genera therefore presupposes a transcendental one if it is to be applied to nature (by which I understand only objects that are given to us). According to this principle, sameness of kind is necessarily presupposed in the manifold of a possible experience (even though we cannot determine its degree *a priori*), because without it no empirical concepts and hence no experience would be possible. (A653-4/B681-2)

We can at least think, Kant claims, a scenario in which nature exhibits such a superabundant variety of existing beings that no finite human understanding has the capability of discerning any similarity among appearances. In insisting that this scenario "can at least be thought," Kant indicates that the principles of the understanding are not sufficient for ruling out this possibility *a priori*. Inasmuch as a manifold of possible experience in which we do not presuppose the actuality of the transcendental principle of sameness remains one without the possibility of empirical concepts and therefore one in which "no experience would be possible," it would seem to follow that the presupposition of this transcendental principle is in fact a *necessary condition for the possibility of experience*. If so, it would have the same constitutive status as the principles of the understanding, and the 'nature in general' that results from the constitutive principles of the understanding would receive important further determination.

While in these two passages Kant does seem dangerously close to blurring his crucial distinction between regulative and constitutive principles, he quickly draws back from these positions and reiterates the main argument of the Appendix: the regulative ideas of reason are grounded in an interest of reason that is ancillary to the essential task of the understanding of maintaining the unity of experience. As Guyer has argued, in the first *Critique* on the whole the

understanding remains sufficient for the production of a unified experience quite apart from the contributions of reason and can "succeed in subsuming empirical intuitions under empirical concepts without reference to any constraint of systematicity."[9] The principles of pure reason contribute only indirectly to the unity of possible experience, since they only apply to the 'finished products', as it were, of the understanding. They do not determine anything directly, but only "indicate the method according to which the empirical and determinate use of the understanding in experience can be made thoroughly harmonious with itself" (A 665-6/B 693-4).

As we will have occasion to see in the third section on reflective judgment, however, Kant will revisit this question in the third *Critique* and make significant modifications to his position. In short, as Guyer has argued, in the third *Critique* Kant is "more clearly drawn to the view that some sort of systematic harmony of natural forms, even though it can only be 'presupposed' rather than deduced to obtain in nature, is a condition of the application of the categories to any empirical manifold and not just an additional desideratum which is not itself necessary for the basic application of the categories to objects of experience."[10] We will discuss the implications of this shift in the third section.

II. Practical Reason

In the Canon of Pure Reason of the first *Critique*, Kant puts forward his doctrine of pure practical reason as the source of positive rules "that can serve as grounds for further thought and action

[9] Guyer, "Reason and Reflective Judgment," 28.

[10] Guyer, "Reason and Reflective Judgment," 40.

rather than a mere critique of unfounded thoughts and actions" (A796B/824). He reiterates his argument from the Transcendental Dialectic that the theoretical use of pure reason can only give rise to metaphysical illusions – which, as we have seen, can nevertheless be put to some regulative use. In its *practical* use, however, Kant claims that reason can supply a canon, a "sum total of the *a priori* principles of the correct use of certain cognitive faculties" (A796/B824). In contrast to theoretical reason, practical reason can provide pure principles of reason "that are the foundation of morality and the further assumptions necessary for us to act on these principles."[11] As we will see, the "further assumptions" required for morality include the systematic unity of nature and freedom, a systematicity that goes beyond the merely regulative idea furnished by theoretical reason and counts as a *necessary* postulate of practical reason.

The systematic *unity* of nature and freedom is nothing short of an impossibility for theoretical reason, an impossibility that Kant has labored to establish throughout the first *Critique,* especially in the "Antinomy of Pure Reason." Kant gives a helpful summary of this central tenet of the critical philosophy in his introduction to the third *Critique*:

> There is an incalculable gulf fixed between the domain of the concept of nature, as the sensible, and the domain of the concept of freedom, as the supersensible, so that from the former to the latter (thus by means of the theoretical use of reason) no transition is possible, just as if there were so many different worlds, the first of which can have no influence on the second. (5:175-6)

Since the understanding and practical reason are conceived as having "two different legislations

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[11] Paul Guyer, "The Unity of Nature and Freedom," in *The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy,* ed. Sally Sedwick (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 22. In the exposition of this section of the "Canon of Pure Reason" that follows, I am indebted to the interpretation Guyer puts forward in this article.

on one and the same territory of experience," with no transition (and thus, crucially, no interference) possible between them, the first *Critique* proved that there is no contradiction in positing the "coexistence of the two legislations and the faculties pertaining to them in one and the same subject" (5:175). This was accomplished, of course, in the Transcendental Dialectic's exposure of the dialectical illusions involved in any supposed contradiction.

In the Canon, however, Kant will seek to establish based on the principles of practical reason what, for theoretical reason, was necessarily an impossibility: the systematic unification of the domains of nature and freedom. In this section I will outline the important argument that Kant advances for this position and highlight the implications it has for his philosophy of nature.

The first point that needs to be emphasized concerns the concept of the "highest good." It is a well known fixture of Kant's practical thought that happiness alone cannot be the highest good, for "reason does not approve of it (however much inclination may wish for it) where it is not united with the worthiness to be happy, i.e., with morally good conduct" (A813/B841). It does not follow, however, that moral virtue alone counts as the highest good for Kant. On the contrary, Kant states that "morality alone, and with it, the mere **worthiness** to be happy, is also far from being the complete good. In order to complete the latter, he who has not conducted himself so as to by unworthy of happiness must be able to hope to partake of it" (A813/B841). The highest good, then, the final end of reason and the goal of all its striving, includes both the achievement of moral virtue, the worthiness of being happy, *and* the concrete realization of happiness as an achievement of that virtue. Accordingly, practical reason grounds principles of the *possibility of experience* that not only prescribe through the moral law that certain actions *ought* to happen, but also postulate a nature in which the realization of these actions and their consequent happiness *can happen*: "For since they command that these actions ought to happen, they must also be able to happen, and

there must therefore be possible a special kind of systematic unity of nature, namely the moral" (A807/B836, my emphasis).

The idea of an intelligible world – a world in conformity with all moral laws is what Kant calls a *moral world*. While this remains a 'mere idea,' it has "objective reality" inasmuch as it is a *practical* idea "which really can and should have its influence on the sensible world" (A808/B836). The idea of a moral world entails a just proportion between conformity to the moral law *and* the realization of happiness: "a system of happiness proportionately combined with morality." This 'system of happiness' would be the product of every rational agent acting in conformity with the moral law and rendering it actual within the sensible world. The realization of such a maximal happiness is thus radically contingent upon the exercise of freedom of all rational beings. This creates a dilemma for practical reason, according to Kant, since "the obligation from the moral law remains valid for each particular use of freedom even if others do not conduct themselves in accord with this law," and the "nature of things" - "mere nature" - offers no ground for postulating "the necessary connection of the hope of being happy with the unremitting effort to make oneself worthy of happiness" (A810/B839). In other words, practical reason risks positing for itself an entirely futile and irrational task: the unremitting effort to conform to the moral law with absolutely no guarantee or even hope that it will achieve its end of bringing about the realization this effort - the moral world.

It is in order to avoid this failure of practical reason that Kant argues for the necessity of positing, as a postulate of practical reason, the "ideal of the highest good," the idea of an intelligent author of nature that would ensure that nature is so constituted so as to be receptive to the strivings of moral agents and that happiness is distributed in accordance with morality. It is only in this ideal of a "wise author" or "regent" of nature, Kant claims, that practical reason can ground the idea of

a moral world in which happiness is in "exact proportion with the morality of rational beings" (A814/B843). This connection of happiness and morality is *practically necessary*, inasmuch as apart from it our endeavors to conform to the moral law become irrational and we have no ground for moral action. Kant concludes, then, that

> Reason sees itself compelled to assume such a thing [the distribution of happiness in accordance with morality under a wise author or regent], together with life in such a world, which we must regard as a future one, or else to regard the moral laws as empty figments of the brain, since without that presupposition their necessary success, which the same reason connects with them, would have to disappear. (A811/B839)

Reason connects striving in accordance with moral laws with their *necessary* success, without which they become merely "empty figments of the brain." Kant introduces the possibility that this necessary success must ultimately be deferred to "a world that is future for us," leading to another necessary postulate: immortality. This postulate does not, however, diminish the requirement that the moral laws be effective in the sensible world. Guyer, for example, maintains that here in the first *Critique*, notwithstanding the postulate of immortality, Kant's position remains the following: the moral action demanded by practical reason can be fully rational only if "we conceive of a single world – that in which we act – as being described by the laws of both nature and freedom, and of those laws as constituting a single system describing one and the same world."[12] As a postulate of practical reason, the idea of immortality would be contradictory if it led to the deferral of all effective action to a future life; the only ground the idea has is in its ability to render practical

[12] Guyer, "The Unity of Nature and Freedom," 25.

action in the sensible world rational. Indeed, Guyer argues that in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant gives even greater emphasis on the necessity of conceiving "the happiness that comprises part of the highest good" as "realizable *in nature*."[13]

The postulate of the "highest ideal" of God as the guarantor of a correspondence between moral worthiness and happiness does not, then, lead primarily to the ideal of an immortality in which this is achieved. In the second *Critique*, the idea of immortality becomes more strongly associated with the need to posit infinite progress in moral virtue. With regard to the maximization of happiness, the emphasis is placed on its realization in sensible nature, and thus on the idea of God as the moral and rational author of nature and of *nature* as a teleologically governed, systematic whole.

> The world must be represented as having arisen out of an idea if it is to be in agreement with that use of reason without which we would hold ourselves unworthy of reason, namely the moral use, which depends throughout on the idea of the highest good. (A815/B843)

Reason must *necessarily* postulate God as the *actual* ground of nature in order to ground the possibility of the realization of a moral world. The idea of God as moral author of nature does not ensure that the laws of sensible nature will produce an immediate connection between happiness and virtue. Rather, it guarantees that there is nothing in the workings of sensible nature that would render the human moral vocation of bringing this connection about through rational agency impossible.

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[13] Guyer, "The Unity of Nature and Freedom," 28.

In the *Critique of Practical Reason,* Kant further develops the idea of a "moral world," a world in conformity with the moral law, with the idea of a *supersensible* nature. The concept of a supersensible nature, like the idea of a moral world, is "nothing other than *a nature under the autonomy of pure practical reason*" (5:43). First and foremost, the idea of a supersensible nature refers to the intelligible nature of rational beings, who have both a sensible nature – existence subject to the laws of the sensible world – and a supersensible nature, which is "their existence in accordance with laws that are independent of any empirical condition and thus belong to the autonomy of pure reason" (5:43). Beyond this meaning, however, Kant importantly formulates the idea of a supersensible nature in the sense of the sensible world transformed by the activity of rational beings and brought into conformity with the moral law. Kant also calls this the *archetypal world (natura archetypa),* an idea of reason, in relation to which the sensible world is an *ectypal world (natura ectypa).* While rational agents must remain within the sensible world and cannot "infringe upon its laws," the gap opened up between the archetype and ectype issues forth in a *demand* that these agents bring about within the sensible world an ever-greater conformity to the rational ideal. The moral law, then, gives rise to the idea of "a nature in which pure reason, if it were accompanied with suitable physical power, would produce the highest good, and it determines our will to confer on the sensible world the form of a whole of rational beings" (5:43). This ideal of a transformed, re-ordered nature makes of the whole of the sensible world the object of practical striving, which is given license to motivate all available physical resources to further impose upon nature an enduring order that subordinates all of nature to the good of rational agents.

This supersensible nature remains an ideal, a task that can never be fully realized, but something to which the moral law commands we give ever-greater "objective" reality. There is no guarantee that this supersensible nature will become a reality, since, as we saw above, it is

dependent upon all rational beings joining together to form this new nature, and the laws of sensible nature alone are insufficient to realize the rational ideal. There remain two separate domains, then: the domain of sensible nature, governed by the laws of the understanding determining appearances as 'nature in general', and the domain of supersensible nature, governed by the concept of freedom and the moral law. As Kant will emphasize in a well-known passage from the *Critique of Judgment*, there remains a "great gulf" between these two domains. The faculty of the will seeks to overcome this gulf by subordinating sensible nature to the supersensible idea of a moral world, realized through practical striving.

III. The Critique of the Power of Judgment

A. First Introduction

In the two introductions to the *Critique of Judgment* Kant returns to a central problematic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, namely, the systematicity of the empirical laws and concepts of nature and their relation to the purely formal laws of 'nature in general' as determined by the categories of the understanding. The first *Critique* held this kind of systematic interconnection of empirical laws to be a regulative ideal of reason, a presupposition, for the sake of the organization and expansion of empirical investigation, that the determinate laws of nature have the form of homogeneity, specificity, and affinity. The main lines of Kant's argument for the presumption of this kind of systematicity in nature are repeated throughout the two introductions to the third *Critique* with two essential modifications: the various requirements of systematicity are all grouped under the general concept of a *purposiveness* of nature, and what had been presented as

an interest of *reason* is now an *a priori* principle of the faculty of judgment.

In section IV of the First Introduction, Kant begins by noting that the transcendental laws of the understanding require the systematic unity of nature not only with regard to nature in general but also in its particular laws: "in accordance with the thoroughgoing connection of everything contained in this totality of appearances," experience in general "is to be regarded as a system and not as a mere aggregate"[14] (20:208-9). This much can be derived from the transcendental laws of the understanding. There is, however, nothing in the transcendental laws of nature that require that its empirical laws form a system "that **can be grasped** by the human faculty of cognition, and that the thoroughgoing systematic interconnection of its appearances in one experience...is possible for human beings" (20:209). At this point Kant brings out a line of argumentation that he had developed in the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic of the first *Critique* and which appears several times in the two introductions of the third *Critique*:

> For the multiplicity and diversity of empirical laws could be so great that it might be possible for us to connect perceptions to some extent in accordance with particular laws discovered on various occasions into one experience, but never to bring these empirical laws themselves to the unity of kinship under a common principle, if, namely, as is quite possible in itself (at least as far as the understanding can make out *a priori*), the multiplicity and diversity of these laws, along with the natural forms corresponding to them, being infinitely great, were to present to us a raw chaotic aggregate and not the least trace of a system, even though we must presuppose such a system in accordance with transcendental laws. (20:209)

[14] All translations of the text are taken from: *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, trans. and ed. by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

The very possibility of experience requires that we at least be able to connect perceptions "to some extent" into some kind of regularity ("in accordance with particular laws") into an experience, but the a priori principles of the understanding provide no ground for precluding a nature that would appear to us as a "raw chaotic aggregate". So, while the categories of the understanding provide no objective grounds for avoiding this cognitive doomsday scenario, it remains a *subjectively* necessary presupposition that "such a disturbingly unbounded diversity of empirical laws and heterogeneity of natural forms does not pertain to nature" (20:209). This much is in large part continuous with Kant's position from the first *Critique*.

This "subjectively necessary presupposition" affirms that in place of an unbounded diversity in nature we find an affinity of empirical laws, such that particular laws can be subsumed under ever more general ones, up until the most general and universal laws of nature. Kant's position in the third *Critique* changes in that this presupposition of a systematic interconnection of all laws of nature that is comprehensible to human understanding is no longer a transcendental principle of reason, but of the power of *judgment*. Specifically, it is a principle for judgment in its reflective capacity.

The power of judgment, Kant states, is a faculty for subsuming the particular under the general; where the general or universal concept is already known or given, this is a determining function of judgment. In the third *Critique*, Kant introduces the notion of a *reflective* capacity of judgment, in which it is capable of finding a general concept or law for a given particular for which there is no general concept. In its search for laws and concepts for the sensible particulars, reflecting judgment must be guided by the basic principle that "for all things in nature empirically determinate concepts can be found," and that in all products of nature we can presume a form that is suitable for empirical laws that we can cognize and that stand in a relation of systematic

interconnection with all other empirical laws (20:211). Apart from this presupposition, reflecting judgment faces an impossible task, Kant claims, since it has no guarantee or even confidence that there is any order to be discovered in the manifold variety of appearances and the possibility of an infinite multiplicity of empirical laws with which it is confronted.

The presupposition of systematic order in nature is, Kant claims, a principle of the *purposiveness* of nature. The power of judgment requires not only the presupposition of order in nature, but that its self-articulation into determinate empirical laws is "suitable to our power of judgment" and possesses a "uniformity that we can grasp." The principle of the power of judgment is, then, a principle of a *purposive* arrangement of nature, that nature has employed a certain technique, or art, in order to bring about a systematic order that is, "as it were for the benefit of our power of judgment, in the suitability of its particular laws...for the possibility of experience as a system" (20:214). Kant gives a formal definition of this principle of the power of judgment as follows: "Nature specifies its general laws into empirical ones, in accordance with the form of a logical system, in behalf of the power of judgment" (20:216).

This principle is an a priori principle of the power of judgment for Kant, since there is no way that it could be discovered through experience, but remains a condition for the possibility of the employment of reflective judgment. Kant repeatedly emphasizes that this principle is a special concept of the reflecting power of judgment; the understanding provides no ground for any assertion of systematic order in nature, and, as we have seen, the possibility of an infinite variety of natural forms is perfectly compatible with the understanding's legislation of the transcendental laws of nature in general. And while reason does employ the regulative ideas of systematicity, Kant claims that it does not contain the concept of a *purposive* nature, the idea that nature fashions its forms through empirical laws in behalf of our form of cognition. This a priori principle of

purposiveness remains a subjective law for judgment: it does not provide an objective ground for determining objects in nature but only guides reflection and enables it to proceed with its activity of discovering determinate laws in accordance with the universal laws of nature.

Reflective judgment, then, is exercised in harmony with the understanding and its legislation of the transcendental laws of universal nature. Its capacity for discovery and classification is 'artistic' and 'technical', in contrast with the mechanical and universal legislation of the categories. Its ideal is to fashion a sort of genetic account of the specification of natural forms, descending from the universal laws of nature all the way down to the most particular empirical laws that are responsible for generating the sensible particulars of experience. The art of explicating this systematic unfolding of nature stands in contrast to the understanding's ability to do no more than catalogue a mere aggregate of events in the form of an unending series of linear causes. While reflective judgment must presuppose that its activity is none other than a harmonious continuation of the very activity of nature, Kant places strict limitations on this attribution of a technical capacity to nature: the categories of the understanding are firmly entrenched as nature's final legislation, and Kant will insist that any "technical" explanation of appearances in accordance with the subjective principles of reflection must always be consistent with a (at least possible) mechanical explanation of determining judgment for the same object. In fact, the determining power of judgment "would perhaps even like to know everything to be traced back to a mechanical sort of explanation" according to the principles of the understanding alone (20:218). Thus, the principle of reflective judgment ultimately remains only a heuristic principle that does not challenge the strict order of mechanical causality established by the categories.

The *a priori* principle of the power of reflective judgment, then, is that nature contains a logical purposiveness in the systematic interconnection of its empirical laws and concepts and its

conformity to "the subjective conditions of the power of judgment" (20:217). This principle of purposiveness does not provide any ground for an inference that would allow us to determine a particular product of nature as purposive; that is, we cannot extend this a priori principle to determine a priori that a particular form of nature should emerge as purposive in itself. As far as the power of judgment can determine a priori, all the products of nature could very well be mere aggregates that conform to (purposive) determinate laws. It does remain possible, Kant asserts, that there should be products of nature that are purposive not only with regard to the external laws that govern them, but also in their "inner structure," such that "their possibility must be grounded in an idea of them in our power of judgment" (20:217); these natural forms would be systems that are purposive in themselves. Such forms can only be given in experience, however, and are not known a priori. While the transcendental principle of judgment does not enable us to predict such forms a priori, it does allow us to recognize such forms as purposive when we discover them in experience, since it already provides "a ground for ascribing to nature in its particular laws a principle of purposiveness" (20:218). In fact, the main body of the third *Critique* will deal only with these concrete and determinate empirical forms, whereas the question of the systematic interconnection of empirical laws that gives rise to the a priori principle of reflective judgment will not receive further elaboration beyond the two introductions. The purposiveness of nature in its empirical laws leads us to "conceive in nature" the necessity of a *technique* of nature, a purposiveness that "is over and above its mechanical necessity," as an a priori principle. This principle provides the ground for discovering through experience a technique of nature in specific natural forms: the aesthetic forms of natural beauty and the and teleological forms of organic life.

B. Published Introduction

In the published Introduction, Kant gives greater prominence on the role of the power of judgment as an intermediary between the two cognitive faculties that Kant considers *legislative*: the understanding, which determines theoretical cognition through the concept of nature, and practical reason, which determines action through the concept of freedom. These two domains establish "two different legislations on and the same territory of experience, without either being detrimental to the other" (5:175). In the published Introduction, Kant presents the faculty of judgment as a kind of mediator that effects a transition between these two domains, and so is able to bring about the systematic unity of all the faculties of human cognition. As we have already seen, the following citation is well known for its initial claims regarding the separation of the two domains of nature and freedom; it is important to heed, however, Kant's subsequent assertion that some sort of *mediation* between them must be sought:

> Now although there is an incalculable gulf fixed between the domain of the concept of nature, as the sensible, and the domain of the concept of freedom, as the supersensible, so that from the former to the latter (thus by means of the theoretical use of reason) no transition is possible, just as if there were so many different worlds, the first of which can have no influence on the second: yet the latter should have an influence on the former, namely the concept of freedom **should** make the end that is imposed by its laws real in the sensible world; and nature must consequently also be able to be conceived in such a way that the lawfulness of its form is at least in agreement with the possibility of the ends that are to be realized in it in accordance with the laws of freedom. Thus there must still be a ground of the unity of the supersensible that grounds nature with that which the concept of freedom contains practically, the concept of which, even if it does not suffice for cognition of it either theoretically or practically, and thus has no proper domain of its own, nevertheless makes possible the transition from the manner of thinking in accordance with the principles of the one to that in accordance with the principles of the other. (5:175-6)

A transition between the domains of nature and freedom is an impossibility only from the perspective of theoretical reason, whereas practical reason cannot function under the presumption of such an "incalculable gulf." Practical reason must seek to realize its laws in the sensible world, and this requires that the domain of sensible nature have some supersensible ground that assures the agreement of its laws with the aims of practical reason. The presumption of such a supersensible ground of both nature and freedom is a *practical* postulate that has no theoretical value. What is added is the idea that some further mediation is required that would allow for a "transition" between the two domains, grounding the unity of nature and freedom in the idea of a supersensible ground of both. This mediation is, Kant proposes, to be found in the power of judgment.

Exactly how the power of judgment provides this mediation will be examined in detail when we discuss the "Methodology of the Teleological Power of Judgment" and from the third *Critique* and the concept of the Final End. For now, we can give an indication of Kant's position based on his preliminary remarks given in the published Introduction. The kind of causality that is effected in the sensible world through the concept of freedom is of a different order than the kind of linear, mechanical causality that is legislated by the concepts of the understanding. The term "cause" as it is applied to the concept of freedom, Kant states, "signifies only the ground for determining the causality of natural things to an effect that is in accord with their own natural laws but yet at the same time is also in unison with the formal principle of the laws of reason" (5:195). The full effect of this kind of causality, the ideal of a "supersensible" nature that is wholly directed by the laws of reason, is the *final end*, the goal of all the efforts of practical reason. Practical reason must postulate as a condition of its activity that sensible nature is hospitable to the realization of this end – that is, that the laws of sensible nature present no obstacle to this end and are even receptive

to the efforts of this supersensible order of causality.[15] While this remains a necessary postulate of *practical* reason, theoretical reason can offer no objective confirmation that sensible nature is so constituted. The best it can do is refute any arguments to the contrary, one of the principal accomplishments of the first *Critique*.

The power of judgment, Kant maintains, provides a mediating concept between nature and freedom in that it presupposes a priori the same thing that practical reason postulates: that nature is so constituted so as to render the realization of the final end *possible*.[16] Moreover, Kant states, the power of judgment presupposes this "*a priori* and without regard to the practical" (5:196) - independently of the demands of practical reason and as its own essential principle. In the concept of a purposiveness of nature, the power of judgment requires that an order of causality similar to the one grounded in the concept of freedom is not only as a possibility, but is actual in sensible nature. For Kant's account of the a priori principle of judgment as *purposive* employs a structure that is strikingly similar to the kind of causality he envisions for the concept of freedom. In both, the wholly contingent order of sensible nature operates according to the legislation of the categories, while at the same time it is guided and directed to an end that can only be grounded in

[15] In the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant importantly formulates the idea of a supersensible nature in the sense of the sensible world transformed by the activity of rational beings and brought into conformity with the moral law (5:43).

[16] "The effect in accordance with the concept of freedom is the final end, which (or its appearance in the sensible world) should exist, for which the condition of its possibility in nature (in the nature of the subject as a sensible being, that is, as a human being) is presupposed. That which presupposes this a priori and without regard to the practical, namely, the power of judgment, provides the mediating concept between the concepts of nature and the concept of freedom, which makes possible the transition from the purely theoretical to the purely practical, from lawfulness in accordance with the former to the final end in accordance with the latter, in the concept of a **purposiveness** of nature; for thereby is the possibility of the final end, which can become actual only in nature and in accord with its laws, cognized." (5:196)

a concept that precedes and unifies the causal series of sensible nature.[17] For the power of judgment, this concept is the purposive organization of the empirical laws of nature for the sake of human understanding as well as the purposive forms of particular products of nature (aesthetic and teleological). In the case of practical reason, this is the concept of the final end, the whole of nature organized and subordinate to the laws of freedom. While the power of judgment cannot cognize the objective reality of a purposiveness in nature, it firmly grounds the idea of a purposive sensible nature in a subjective need of reflective judgment, one that is a necessary condition of the possibility of (a scientifically grounded) empirical experience. Thus, the intellectual faculty of judgment, to a limited extent, *confirms* what is only a postulate for practical reason: nature is a realm constituted so as to render the final end of reason possible, and, as we shall see in the Methodology section, to actively promote it.

At the conclusion of the published introduction, Kant gives a helpful summary of the interrelation of the three principal faculties of the understanding, judgment, and reason and their systematic unity achieved through the mediation of the faculty of judgment:

> Through the possibility of its *a priori* laws for nature the understanding gives a proof that nature is cognized by us only as appearance, and hence at the same time an indication of its supersensible substratum; but it leaves this entirely **undetermined**. The power of judgment, through its *a priori* principle for judging nature in accordance with possible particular laws for it, provides for its supersensible substratum (in us as well as outside us) **determinability** through the intellectual faculty. But reason provides **determination** for the same substratum through its practical law a priori; and thus

[17] Realizing that the exact meaning of Kant's concept of *purposiveness* remains a matter of significant debate in Kantian scholarship, I am here sticking to the manner in which it is employed in this particular passage and acknowledge that a far more nuanced interpretation would result from detailed attention to the ways in which it is employed in other sections of the third *Critique*.

> the power of judgment makes possible the transition from the domain of the concept of nature to that of the concept of freedom. (5:196)

In order to limit the extension of the categories of the understanding to the sensible as mere appearances and not to things in themselves, the idea of a supersensible in general of is required as a *limit* concept. Kant repeatedly argues in the first *Critique* that the very possibility of *a priori* laws of nature requires that our understanding deal only with appearances; and this in turn requires that we can at least think the possibility of another, non-discursive (intuitive) intellect for which nature would be known not as mere appearance but in itself. We can presume that this argument for the intuitive intellect is what Kant has in mind in this passage, although any of the many ways in which the idea of the supersensible functions in the first *Critique* is structurally similar: it is an idea that is necessary for limiting the pretensions of the understanding to reach things in themselves rather than appearances, but which remains wholly *indeterminate*, about which we can cognize nothing at all. The power of judgment, on the other hand, offers some degree of *determinability* for the idea of a supersensible substratum from the side of the intellectual faculty. The idea of a supersensible substratum of nature acquires some measure of indirect objective validity as an active principle in sensible nature: even though this is strictly limited to a subjective necessity of the reflective judgment that can in no way determine particular objects of nature, it becomes a necessary condition for the possibility of the experience of *determinate* nature, and therefore well-grounded in (if not constitutive of) sensible nature. In this way, judgment provides a transition for the claims of practical reason, which seek to give full determination to the supersensible substratum as a moral author of nature that harmonizes the laws of nature with those of freedom. While reason requires this determination as a practical postulate for the sake of its own activity, judgment allows it to regard this postulate as well-grounded in the sensible order of nature, even

if it can never receive objective confirmation through theoretical cognition.

C. Organism

The second part of the *Critique of Judgment* is devoted to the "Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment", the capacity of the power of judgment for judging an internal purposiveness or teleology in particular "organized beings," or organisms. Whereas the a priori principle of judgment in general affirms a purposiveness of nature in the systematic organization of its laws, and the aesthetic power of judgment concerns only the form of particular objects, the teleological power of judgment affirms an "objective and material" purposiveness (5:366), an internal purposiveness in natural beings that can only be known through experience. In recognizing organized beings as natural products that "must nevertheless be thought of as possible only as ends," this power of judgment "first provides objective reality for the concept of an **end** that is not a practical end but an end of **nature**" (5:375).

In contrast with the concept of an external purposiveness in nature, according to which the existence of certain products is grounded in their usefulness for other products considered as ends, our experience of the internal purposiveness of organized beings leaves us with no choice but to judge that these products of nature are what Kant calls *natural ends*. A thing can only appear to us as an end, Kant states, when the mechanism of nature in accordance with the natural laws provided by the understanding is insufficient for explaining the causality responsible for the thing's existence: "A thing exists as a natural end **if it is cause and effect of itself**," Kant states, "for in this there lies a causality the likes of which cannot be connected with the mere concept of a nature

without ascribing an end to it" (5:370-1).

There are two ways in which Kant claims we can conceive of the causal nexus of a thing. The first is that of *efficient causality*: this is the mode of the mechanistic causality of nature that is legislated by the understanding, according to which we always find a *descending* series of causes, such that determinate effects follow determinate causes and can in no way be considered the causes of that which preceded them. In contrast, a causal connection according to *final causality* allows for a causal series that contains descending as well as ascending dependency, such that what is considered an effect according to the order of efficient causality is also considered a cause of that which it is also an effect. Such a causal nexus is for Kant only possible in accordance with a concept of reason, according to which reason posits an end for which it directs a series of efficient causes towards the realization of its purpose.

The principal characteristic of an organism that exceeds the order of merely mechanical, efficient causality is that the parts, in both their existence and their form, are "possible only through their relation to the whole" (5:373). The parts do not pre-exist the whole, nor are they capable of subsisting independently of the whole, such that they could first come into being and then be assembled into a whole as an aggregate. Conversely, the idea of the whole that determines everything that is to come about in it does not pre-exist the parts as in a product of art, where the concept of a thing exists for rational being who will then produce the thing in accordance with that concept. Rather, the organism has a formative power through which the parts are causes of themselves as a whole: "each part is conceived as if it exists only **through** all the others," and "as if existing **for the sake of the others** and **on account** of the whole" (5:374). In a work of art, it is an external cause that produces all the parts in accordance with the idea of the whole; in a natural end (an organism), each part produces the other in a self-organizing structure of reciprocal

causality (5:374).

The causal nexus of an organism is "strictly speaking," then, "not analogous with any causality that we know" and "is not thinkable and explicable in accordance with any analogy to any physical, i.e., natural capacity that is known to us." Furthermore, it is "not thinkable and explicable even through an exact analogy with human art" (5:375), that is through the final causality proper to the concepts and will of our rational agency. Thus, we can claim no *cognition* of organisms as the product of an order of causality in nature that exceeds the mechanical; the concept of a natural end is not a constitutive concept. At most it can function as a regulative concept that guides our investigations into nature "in accordance with a remote analogy with our own causality in accordance with ends" (5:375). This allows natural science to "supplement the inadequacies" of investigation into the particular laws of nature in accordance with purely mechanical laws (5:383), not in order to supplant these, but to further extend their explanatory capacity by leading research in directions pointed out by the regulative idea of a natural end. The experience of the organism as a natural end thus does not lead to the cognition of a different order of causality in nature and presents no real challenge to the preeminence of the mechanical order of causality.

The regulative principle of teleological judgment in particular products of nature justifies the formation of an expanded regulative idea of the whole of nature as a purposive whole after the example of the self-organizing, reciprocal causality of the organism. With the familiar injunctions that this is a merely regulative and not determinate principle, Kant states that the concept of a natural end "leads to the idea of the whole of nature as a system in accordance with the rule of ends" (5:379):

> Once we have discovered in nature a capacity for bringing forth products that can only be conceived by us in accordance with the concept of final causes, we may go further and also judge to belong to a

> system of ends even those things (or their relation, however purposive) which do not make it necessary to seek another principle of their possibility beyond the mechanism of blindly acting causes; because the former idea already, as far as its ground is concerned, leads us beyond the sensible world, and the unity of the supersensible principle must then be considered as valid in the same way not merely for certain species of natural beings but for the whole of nature as a system. (5:380-81)

If we were to find only one natural end in the sensible world, its existence would lead us to posit the idea of a supersensible principle that would be responsible for it. The idea of a supersensible principle of nature, however, must be extended to the whole of nature, and thus to the idea of the whole of nature as a systematic and purposive whole. Again, Kant insists that this idea is only a regulative ideal: the concept of nature as a purposive whole (not only with regard to the systematic organization of its empirical laws, but as a system of the products of nature considered as *ends*) becomes a *guideline* for "considering nature...in accordance with a new, lawful order, and for extending natural science in accordance with another principle, namely that of final causes, yet without harm to the mechanism of nature" (5:379). It does not lead to any objective assertion that such a principle is indeed the cause of nature. It does, however, lend further credibility to the postulates of practical reason in the same way that we have seen the power of judgment in general providing a mediating concept between the domains of the understanding and practical reason.

In the "Dialectic" of this second part, Kant establishes an antinomy of the teleological power of judgment, an antinomy that results from the familiar error of granting constitutive status to the merely regulative principles of reflective judgment. The thesis of the antinomy is as follows: "All generation of material things is possible in accordance with merely mechanical laws;" while the antithesis is "Some generation of such things is not possible in accordance with merely mechanical laws" (5:387). The predictable resolution of the antinomy consists in limiting the thesis to the

constitutive principle of the application of the understanding to mere appearances, and considering the antithesis as a merely regulative principle for the guidance of reflective judgment. This allows us to acknowledge the limits of our capacity to find a complete mechanical account for every appearance as a limit that is due entirely to the limitations of our discursive reason; for there is nothing preventing us from conceiving of an intellect that is fully capable of cognizing every appearance of nature according to mechanical laws. At the same time, the regulative status of the antithesis guides the reflective activity of judgment to extend our mechanical explanations as far as possible. The critique of the teleological power of judgment thus brings out the capacity of reason to harmonize a dual perspective on nature, one in which nature operates according to strict mechanical lawfulness, and one in which we are given license for a limited employment of the idea of a different order of causality at work in nature, an order of final causality understood by way of analogy with our own capacity for rational action directed toward ends.

In § 78 of the Dialectic, Kant argues for the unification of two poles of the dialectic of teleological judgment in the principle of a supersensible ground of both the mechanical and teleological orders. As we have seen, the experience of a natural end present in nature leads to the idea of an intelligent author not only of that end but also of nature as a systematic whole. From this we can think the union of the mechanical and teleological by considering the whole system of nature as a being produced entirely by the mechanical laws of nature, employed as a means through which the intelligent author has brought about the final end or purpose in nature. The idea is important for Kant's argument, since it implies that there need not be any contradiction in the principles of mechanical explanation and of teleological explanation, since the two could harmonize in an infinite intellect unconstrained by the limitations of our discursive understanding.

The Appendix to the Second Part, the Methodology of Critique of Teleological Judgment,

returns to the theme of the systematic unity of the three faculties of human cognition with a marked emphasis on the role of *practical* reason. Guyer gives a helpful summary of Kant's argument in this section:

> In order to form a unique conception of nature as a determinate system aimed at the promotion of any particular end, we must introduce the idea of something that is intrinsically final or an end in itself, something that is not just chosen arbitrarily as the endpoint of a system of final causes but that must be conceived as an end and that imposes on us a view of the other elements of nature as organized in its service.[18]

The concept of a *determinate* system of nature, a system of natural ends, is a necessary product of the teleological power of judgment, as we have seen. The idea is not coherent, however, unless we can conceive of some final end *in nature* to which all other ends are subordinate as means and towards which the whole system is directed. For apart form some final end, Kant argues there is no systematic purposiveness. Reflective judgment cannot, however, provide such a final end; the only faculty capable of discerning a final end is *practical reason*, which is able to recognize the moral activity of humans as the only unconditional end present in nature.[19] And so, "the teleological perspective that is necessitated by the intellectual puzzle of organisms opens up for us a possibility of seeing the whole of nature as a system, but this cannot be made determinate without appeal to morality;" and since morality in turn requires the postulate of a purposive nature, "the

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[18] Guyer, "The Unity of Nature and Freedom," 37. Guyer's position here is controversial from the point of Kantian scholarship. I am highlighting this interpretation in order to bring out at least the plausibility of this interpretation, inasmuch as, I argue, Fichte will ground his account of practical reason's striving to subordinate the whole of nature to human rational autonomy on this basis.

[19] For Kant's argument on this point, see § 81-83. Here is Guyer's summary: "What makes man an end in himself, namely the intrinsic value of free rational agency, is the only unconditional end that can be conceived to be the end of the system of nature as a whole." (Guyer, "The Unity of Nature and Freedom," 39).

possibilities of the scientific view of nature and the moral view of nature ultimately coincide."[20]

The overall arc of the Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment, then, begins with the experience of organisms as natural ends that seem to exceed the purely mechanical operations of the universal laws of nature, "enlarging the mind" (5:365) to recognize a more complex order of causality in nature. This self-organizing, reciprocal causality of organisms leads to the idea of the entirety of nature as a self-organizing, systematic whole and not a mere aggregate governed by purely formal and universal laws. This expanded vision of nature is, however, strictly enclosed within the boundaries of a regulative principle to be employed only for the sake of furthering our mechanical explanations of nature and offering a transition between the postulates of practical reason and our theoretical accounts of nature. The concept of organic causality is ultimately judged to tell us nothing about nature in itself and only presents us with an analogy of our own cognitive faculties in their need to represent complex mechanical interactions as grounded in a rational concept and directed by a rational agent. Thus, the ground of such an order of causality is designated as a supersensible ground *outside* of nature, directing the whole of nature towards some rational end by means of purely mechanical laws. This system of ends requires a final end, which can only be provided by morality and its recognition of human rational agency as the only unconditional end present in the sensible order of nature. The arc of the analysis of organisms thus comes to completion in the idea of the whole of nature subordinated to the moral ends of human rational activity. Whereas we seemed to begin with the idea of an end in and of nature independent of rational agency, we wind up with the subordination of the whole system of determinate nature to a final, human end.

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[20] Guyer, "The Unity of Nature and Freedom," 37.

This all remains a regulative idea, it must be emphasized, with the teleological principle of judgment helping to guide and expand scientific inquiry, and the postulates of practical reason motivating not any new cognition, but practical action:

> [The] final end is merely a concept of our practical reason, and can neither be deduced from any data of experience for the theoretical judging of nature nor be derived from any cognition of it. No use of this concept is possible except solely for practical reason in accordance with moral laws; and the final end of creation is that constitution of the world which corresponds only to that which we can give as determined in accordance with laws, namely the final end of our pure practical reason, insofar as it is to be practical. (5:454-5)

The idea of a final end grounds our practical efforts to bring about a constitution of the world and of nature that corresponds to the laws of practical reason while assuring us that sensible nature is receptive to such an activity. Joined with the idea that an intelligent architect has designed nature in accordance with purely mechanical laws so as to bring about this final constitution of nature, the path is cleared to utilize our scientific and technical grasp of the mechanisms of nature in order to bring about the further realization of our practical ends. Thus, the complex idea of a mechanical-teleological nature united in a supersensible principle gives rise to nature as what Guyer terms a "technical-practical" idea: sensible nature is a material resource over which we should seek the maximum technical control so as to bring about a "second nature"[21] in accordance with concept of freedom. The fundamental principle we find in the complex of regulative ideas resulting from Kant's combination of his moral-practical philosophy with his theory of reflective judgment is that

[21] The term actually comes from the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment in reference to the aesthetic ideas, but it remains paradigmatic in its conception of the relation between sensible, material nature and its trans-formation through human agency: "The imagination (as a productive cognitive faculty) is, namely, very powerful in creating, as it were, another nature, out of the material which the real one gives it." (5:314)

we can and should conceive of nature as a task awaiting our scientific and practical manipulation and transformation.

D. Intellectual Intuition

I will conclude this section on the third *Critique* with a discussion of § 73-77, a section that had enormous influence on Schelling in particular and on post-Kantian thinkers as a whole, since in their estimation it provided a real alternative to the synthesis of a "moral nature"[22] that we have outlined above and which culminates in Fichte's problematic account of nature. Inasmuch as this text becomes almost programmatic for Schelling's project for a philosophy of nature, it is also paradigmatic of the manner in which post-Kantian thought found ample resources within Kant for mustering his own insights in order to read him against himself and to transform the direction of his critical project, all in the name of the "spirit" of Kant.

In § 77, Kant aims to highlight the key to his resolution of the antinomy of teleological judgment, the insistence that the concept of a natural end and the idea of conflict between mechanistic and teleological explanations is grounded only in the special character of human understanding and not in the objects themselves. It is only on account of the discursive nature of human cognition, one that relies on the combination of universal concepts and particular sensible intuitions for any possible knowledge, that we have a need to account for the "lawfulness of the contingent" that we find in nature.[23]

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[22] Schelling will use this term in order to critique Kant's account of a nature made subordinate to human moral striving.

[23] To review Kant's position briefly, the whole category of the contingent arises only due to the constitution of our limited cognitive capacities. The universal concepts of the understanding are abstract and general, determining only the most essential characteristics of the objects of experience. The particular forms of nature and the laws that govern

In order to emphasize that the concept of a natural end and a purposiveness of nature result only from the particular constitution of our limited cognition and not from anything in the object itself, Kant resorts to a strategy he employed in the first *Critique* on multiple occasions: he discusses the possibility of a form of cognition radically different from our own that would be able to cognize the objects of nature free from the limitations of our form of intuition and understanding. In keeping open the possibility of such a cognition, Kant is able to maintain that we have no ground for asserting that the purposiveness we require is actually in nature itself. It is for this reason that Kant gives his account of an *intuitive understanding* that highlights the special and contingent character of our own form of intuition and understanding. Here I will give a brief exposition of Kant's account of the intuitive understanding and indicate what it was in this passage that led Schelling to make of it the ground for an alternate direction for a philosophy of nature, one that he claimed to be in the spirit if not the letter of Kant's philosophy.

Human cognition, Kant states, proceeds from the "analytic universal" of concepts to the particular given of an empirical intuition. Since the universal concepts of the understanding determine only the most general features of an object, the particular forms of nature have no ground for their complete determination in the universal: "it is contingent in how many different ways distinct things that nevertheless coincide in a common characteristic can be presented to our perception." (5:406) It falls to the power of judgment to find a ground for the determination of this

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their production are an *excess* of determination with respect to the universal and are wholly *contingent* from the perspective of the understanding: there is no ground for their particular form in the universal, which could have been determined in an infinite number of different ways. Reason nevertheless requires a unity of these contingent (from the standpoint of the universal) laws. Since it can find no ground for them in the universal concepts of the understanding, it must think this lawfulness of the contingent as *purposiveness*, as governed according to a concept that stands outside the mechanisms of the universal 'nature in general' and an intentional agency that realizes this concept through the universal mechanism of nature.

excess of the particular over the universal, a ground that is given in the principle of the purposiveness of nature, the lawfulness of the contingent. This principle of purposiveness guides the power of reflective judgment in its search for intermediate universals under which it can subsume given empirical intuitions.

In contrast with this discursive form of understanding, Kant describes an *intuitive* understanding that begins with the "synthetic universal," and "intuition of the whole as such" (5:407) and proceeds from this whole to the particular parts. For such an understanding, there would be "no contingency in the combination of the parts." While Kant does not explicitly draw the parallel here, we find in this account of the intuitive understanding a part-whole relationship that reflects the account of the organism, in which the constitution of each part and its mode of connection with the other parts is directly determined by the form of the whole.

The possibility of our thinking nature according to the model of this intuitive understanding, Kant continues, remains necessarily conditioned by the particular character of our discursive understanding. For the understanding, a "real whole of nature" can only be regarded as "the effect of the concurrent moving forces of the parts" (5:408), a "product of the parts and of their forces and their capacity to combine by themselves" (5:409). And since the understanding necessarily thinks these "moving forces of the parts" according to the mechanical laws of physics, as we will see in the *Metaphysical Foundations*, it finds no ground in the natural laws of matter that could possibly produce the natural ends it encounters in experience. For this reason, Kant claims that the only way we can think nature after the model of the intuitive understanding, as a whole that grounds the entire "constitution and mode of action of the parts," is by thinking of the whole as a product or effect of a *representation*, that is, as an end. This introduces another order of causality beyond that of the natural laws of matter, the order of teleological causality grounded in a

supersensible cause outside of nature.

This entire constellation of ideas, as Kant reiterates in a near constant refrain in this section, "is merely a consequence of the particular constitution of our understanding" (5:408). The very idea of an intuitive understanding itself is only a correlate of our need to recognize the contingency of this constitution by showing that there is no contradiction in the thought of a non-discursive faculty of cognition. For Kant, the determination of this idea of another form of understanding itself remains conditioned by our own understanding, which is necessarily and essentially committed to a purely mechanistic account of the natural laws of matter. It follows from this fixed point in the constitution of our understanding that the only way we can think of nature as a whole that grounds its parts, as a synthetic universal, is for that whole to be the product of a representation or idea that stands outside the whole and whose form is imposed upon the parts through purely mechanical laws. Since this determination of the idea of an intellectual intuition remains conditioned by our own contingent form of understanding, it remains possible that the two principles according to which we must judge nature - the mechanical and the teleological - are united without contradiction in the "supersensible real ground for nature" (5:409) in a way that remains necessarily unknowable to us. In this way, we can continue to employ both principles without fear of any contradiction arising between them.

Kant's introduction of the figure of an intellectual intuition is, as we have seen, carefully calculated to reinforce and guarantee the boundaries of Kant's critical position. For Schelling, the discussion in § 73-77 was an instance of Kant not being up to the measure of his own insights and contained the seeds for challenging and transforming the critical constraints of the Kantian system. Schelling will take up the emphasis Kant places on the radical contingency of the constitution of the understanding in light of the figure of a "supersensible real ground of nature" that remains

unknowable to us but "*to which we ourselves belong*" (5:409). The intellectual intuition corresponding to this "real ground" of nature presents, for Schelling, a viable path for human thought, a thinking of nature that is capable of exceeding the conditioned activity of the understanding and reconstructing the synthetic universal of nature, a world-whole that is in fact capable of grounding all the products and operations of nature without recourse to the intentional agency of a ground outside of nature.

We will be examining this transformation of the critical philosophy over the next three chapters. For now, we can point out the first step Schelling will take in the pursuit of such this project, one that is to a limited extent prefigured in section § 80 and which Kant calls "a daring adventure of reason" (5:419); that is, a reconceptualization the fundamental forces of *matter* such that they are not limited to the generation of a purely mechanistic causality, but also contain the seeds for an order of causality capable of producing "organized being". While Kant discusses this possibility numerous times throughout the Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment[24], he always insists that "raw matter" must necessarily be limited to purely mechanistic forces that can only give rise to the world described by Newtonian physics.[25] It is no surprise, then, that Schelling's

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[24] See, e.g., section § 80, where Kant discusses the project of a comparative anatomy that would be able to trace the continuity of forms in nature all the way from the human, "down to polyps, and from this even further to mosses and lichens, and finally to the lowest level of nature that we can observe, that of raw matter: from which, and from its forces governed by mechanical laws (like those which are at work in its production of crystals), the entire technique of nature, which is so incomprehensible to us in organized beings that we believe ourselves compelled to conceive of another principle for them, seems to derive" (5:419).

[25] The only other option that Kant can conceive of is *hylozoism*, which Kant calls the death of natural science: "However, the possibility of a living matter (the concept of which contains a contradiction, because lifelessness, inertia, constitutes its essential characteristic), cannot even be conceived;6 the possibility of an animated matter and of the whole of nature as an animal can be used at all only insofar as it is revealed to us (for the sake of an hypothesis of purposiveness in nature at large), in experience, in the organization of nature in the small, but its possibility can by no means be understood a priori. There must therefore be a circle in the explanation if one would derive the purposiveness of nature in organized beings from the life of matter and in turn is not acquainted with this life otherwise than in organized beings, and thus cannot form any concept of its possibility without experience of them. Hylozoism thus does not accomplish what it promises" (5:394-5).

first work his *Naturphilosophie*, the *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, will be a rewriting of Kant's *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* that seeks to establish an account of the fundamental forces of matter that is capable of grounding an account of nature as a self-grounding world-whole along the lines of the synthetic universal thought through an intellectual intuition.

Conclusion

The passage from a purely abstract and formal nature to *determinate* nature requires more than the legislation that Kant's categories of the understanding can furnish. The categories do not finally provide a *possible experience* of a determinate, empirical nature, but must be supplemented by the systematic contributions of both reason and reflective judgment. The insufficiency of the understanding calls into question the distinction Kant relies so heavily on – the distinction between regulative and constitutive principles. Can this distinction hold, and can Kant continue to maintain the primacy of the purely mechanistic account of nature legislated by the understanding? For Schelling, as we will see, the answer is a resounding no.

Even if, from the perspective of theoretical reason, it might seem that the preeminence given to the understanding (as well as the strict limitations placed on the demands of reason for the unconditioned) are on shaky ground, the ultimate primacy of practical reason provides ample support for this position. The demand for a "moral nature" suitable for the ends of rational agency undergirds the privilege given to the mechanistic account of nature inasmuch as nature becomes a "technical-practical" idea, raw material for the creation of a second nature subservient to human needs.

Although the primacy of the practical and the idea of a "moral nature" emerge as the

cornerstone of the systematic unity of nature and freedom in the third *Critique*, other accounts of nature still have room to breathe within Kant's philosophy. In the whole of nested systematicities that comprise the critical philosophy, every other account of nature (aesthetic, teleological, etc.) remains subordinate to the technical-practical perspective. Nevertheless, the subordinate accounts continue to linger and haunt the overall structure. Schelling will continue to think through these alternate accounts of nature present in and required by the Kantian system, and will ultimately seek to overturn the subordination of every facet of nature to the mechanical and moral perspective. In doing so, he will claim to remain "faithful" to the spirit if not the letter of Kant's philosophy of nature. In particular, as we will see in subsequent chapters, he will find ample resources and inspiration in Kant's account of reason's demand for the unconditioned and for a determinate nature forming a systematic whole; in reflective judgment's ability to trace a genetic unfolding of nature understood as a self-organizing whole; and in the idea of an intellectual intuition that can think the whole of nature as a synthetic universal, a world whole that is self-grounding and self-generating. In the fourth chapter, we will see the extent to which this 'continuation' of the critical project in Schelling's hands presents a striking contrast to the approach of Fichte, who will double down on the technical-practical elements of Kant's system so as to shut down entirely any other resources for thinking an autonomous, unconditioned nature.

Chapter 2: Schelling's *Timaeus* Essay and the Beginnings of the Philosophy of Nature

Introduction

The rediscovery of Schelling's commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*[1] effected a significant shift in the scholarly understanding of Schelling's early philosophical development, particularly the origins of his *Naturphilosophie*.[2] As Dalia Nassar has recently noted, questions concerning the origins of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* have tended to be dominated by the idea that this was a major *transition* in his thought, one that indicates a break with his earlier, primarily Fichtean, perspective.[3] For Nassar, this perspective obscures the fact that Schelling's earlier writings (particularly *Of the I as Principle of Philosophy*) form an essential key to understanding the origins of Schelling's philosophy of nature. This is true above all with respect to Schelling's *Timaeus* commentary, inasmuch as the text pre-dates Schelling's encounter with the work of Fichte and reveals a young Schelling that is fully immersed in the intricacies of the Kantian philosophy of nature. It also exhibits the extent to which Schelling had fully embraced Reinhold's project of a revision of the Kantian system. Thus, Schelling's "Timaeus" demonstrates a rigorous and mature engagement with the project of a revision of the Kant's critical philosophy. Accordingly, Schelling's reception of the Fichtean project did not take place on a tabula rasa, but in the context of a constellation of philosophical convictions and concerns that would color the manner in which

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[1] Schelling, *Timaeus* (Schellingiana Band 4), ed. Harmut Buchner. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1994 [1794]). All translations are taken from "Timaeus (1794)," trans. Adam Arola, Jena Jolissaint, and Peter Warnek, *Epoché*, Vol. 12, Issue 2 (Spring 2008), pp. 205-248, cited hereafter in text as "TE".

[2] Manfred Baum goes so far as to call for the complete rewriting of the story of Schelling's philosophical develoment. See Manfred Baum, "The Beginnings of Schelling's Philosophy of Nature," In *The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy: Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 199-215.

[3] See Dalia Nassar, "Pure Versus Empirical Forms of Thought: Schelling's Critique of Kant's Categories and the Beginnings of 'Naturphilosophie'," Journal of the History of Philosophy 52, no. 1 (2014): 113-134;114. We will examine this idea in greater depth in Chapter Three.

the Fichtean project would be taken up. The "Timaeus" thus provides interesting previews of the points where Fichte and Schelling will part ways. Instead of interpreting these as errancies on the part of Schelling, the new "story" of Schelling's philosophical development that the "Timaeus" opens up would suggest that these differences stem from convictions and approaches that were with Schelling from the outset of his philosophical endeavors – deep-rooted convictions that developed in pace with his appropriation of Fichte's innovations.

I. Reinhold's Influence

If the "Timaeus" is conspicuous for the absence of any Fichtean influence, it is even more so for the clear influence of Reinhold. Reinhold's importance for the early thought of both Fichte and Schelling has been well documented.[4] In Schelling's published writings, he is often highly critical of Reinhold, even if there are moments in which he acknowledges his debt to Reinhold and recognizes his importance for the development of post-Kantian critical philosophy. The "Timaeus" comes from a stage in Schelling's development from which Schelling had a deep familiarity with Reinhold's system, having worked for some time within the framework of Reinhold's project.[5] Indeed, there is ample evidence of this in Schelling's "Timaeus" commentary alone, inasmuch as he makes constant reference to Reinhold's theory of the *Vorstellungsvermögen*. While a detailed analysis of the Reinholdian positions that are to be found in the "Timaeus" would be out of place

[4] See, e.g., Fredrick Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte*, (Cambridge, MA: Havard University Press, 1987); and Paul Franks, *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

[5] See Baum, "The Beginnings of Schelling's Philosophy of Nature," for helpful indications of Schelling's early immersion in Reinhold's philosophical project.

here, I would like to focus on two key Reinholdian themes that are of central importance to my argument.

The first concerns Reinhold's role in the development of Schelling's understanding of the critical project in general and his interpretive stance with regard to Kant in particular. As hard as it might be to imagine from a contemporary perspective, Reinhold was widely held to have taken over the mantle of the critical philosophy from Kant in the 1790s. As Beiser notes, "In the period from 1789 to 1793 Reinhold had virtually supplanted Kant as the definitive spokesman for the critical philosophy."[6] After the initial success of Reinhold's *Briefe*, which was mostly explicatory of the Kantian system, Reinhold took up a more critical position with respect to Kant, arguing that Kant's system required a new foundation. This revision of Kant's system was generally regarded to have provided the strongest and most developed account of the critical philosophy to date. What I want to emphasize here is that Reinhold opened the door to the project of a "creative reinterpretation" of Kant, or of what Schelling will call in the Preface to *Of the I as Principle of Philosophy (Vom Ich)* the "need for an exegesis of Kantian philosophy derived from higher principles (VI, I/1 73).[7] This understanding of the direction in which the critical philosophy needed to be developed was enormously influential on Schelling (and Fichte) and determined the basic interpretive stance that Schelling would take up with respect to Kant. Furthermore, Reinhold's methodology for this reworking of Kant was decisive for Schelling. As Beiser notes,

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[6] Beiser, *Fate of Reason*, 228.

[7] All citations from Schelling's works are given from the *Sämmtliche Werke* edition and given according to the standard form of the part and volume followed by the page, unless otherwise indicated. All citations from *Vom Ich* will be indicated with the abbreviation "VI".

The text continues: "I believe that in the case of such a writer, one must explicate him according to the principles which he must have presupposed, and only according to them." As we will see, Schelling's early writings frequently echo this interpretive stance that was originally articulated by Reinhold.

> All of Reinhold's criticisms of Kant revolve around two main charges: that Kant does not fulfill his own ideal of science (*Wissenschaft*) or his own ideal of critique (*Kritik*). We can condense both of these points into a single sentence: Kant has not put his philosophy upon a firm scientific and critical foundation. Reinhold's critique of Kant is therefore strictly immanent; he evaluates him in the light of his own ideals. The basic problem with the critical philosophy, in Reinhold's view, is the discrepancy between its ideals and practices, its goals and performance.[8]

In the "Timaeus", then, we find that Schelling follows precisely this methodology of an immanent critique of the Kantian philosophy of nature. What is unique about Schelling's project in the "Timaeus" is that he engages in this immanent critique by way of a commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* (as we will see below, there are good reasons for doing so).[9] This means that Schelling's essay makes for an eminently challenging hermeneutical task. For while Schelling certainly does give a clearly Kantian reading of central Platonic ideas, he is, I will argue, primarily engaged in a project of "co-ideation"[10] whereby he seeks to give an immanent critique of Kant's philosophy of nature that is inspired by the Platonic physics. Whereas Ian Grant sees Schelling as 'testing' the Kantian philosophy against the Platonic physics of the All, I want to argue that Schelling is first and foremost setting tensions internal to Kant's philosophy of nature against themselves, thereby evaluating Kant against his own ideals and principles. Inasmuch as this all occurs in the context of a commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*, the interpretive challenges are significant. For now, I would like to highlight that this search for a version of the Kantian philosophy "derived from higher principles" and explicated "according to principles which he must have presupposed" is deeply

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[8] Beiser, *Fate of Reason,* 241.

[9] Yet another layer of this puzzle is that Schelling is often presenting Kant through the filter of Reinhold's philosophy.

[10] Grant, *Philosophies of Natur*e, 26.

inspired by Reinhold, even if it will continue well past Schelling's embrace of Reinhold's project.

Secondly, I would like to emphasize the specific direction this creative reinterpretation takes; that is, what specific aspect of the Kantian system that Schelling focuses on in the "Timaeus". Reinhold's principle criticism of Kant is that his system lacks a thoroughgoing systematicity.[11] It is Kant himself who, in the first *Critique*, puts forward the ideal of science as a systematic unity grounded in a single principle,[12] and it is Reinhold's charge that Kant fails to live up to this ideal both in its method and in the scope of its content.[13] Reinhold's solution is to formulate a single, self-evident first principle that will be capable of grounding all the elements of the Kant's critical system by way of a rigorous deduction. In his *Theorie des Vorsteullungsvermögens*, Reinhold advances the idea that Kant's work provided the correct results of a critical philosophy, but without supplying the premises necessary to justify them. His own philosophy would finally supply these missing premises, deriving the results of the Kantian philosophy from a first principle that is capable of bestowing unity and coherence upon the fragmented Kantian system. As we have already noted, however, Reinhold's project is primarily epistemological in character,[14] focusing on the unity of the Kantian *faculties* and the self-evident character of Reinhold's proposed

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[11] Alongside this criticism, Beiser summarizes two other principle elements of Reinhold's reformulation: "the insistence that philosophy begin with a single, self-evident first principle" and "the claim that only a phenomenology can realize the ideal of a *philosophia prima*." See Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 241.

[12] See B673, B861-2. We will return to this below.

[13] See Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 241. According to Beiser's summary, Reinhold argues that Kant's methodology is insufficient because it is merely analytic, beginning with the parts and achieving a whole only through 'random induction'. In contrast, Reinhold seeks to formulate a synthetic method that begins with a proper idea of the whole and then determines "the necessary order of its parts through a rigorous a priori deduction." In addition, the matter of Kant's philosophy is presented as being to narrow in its scope, since "it examines only the specific kinds of representation but fails to consider the concept of representation as such" and so fails to "grasp their systematic structure or how they relate to one another in a whole" (Beiser 241).

[14] "The theory of representation is essentially a single-faculty theory, stating that the faculty of representation is the single faculty of the mind, of which all other faculties are only manifestations" (Franks, *All or Nothing*, 251).

Grundsatz. In contrast, Schelling's appropriation of Reinhold's theory of the *Vorstellungsvermögen* ventures in the direction of the systematic unity *of nature*. Schelling extends the search for a single source and common root of all the faculties to a search for a unified nature, one that is not fragmented according to the different modalities of reason. In doing so, I will argue, Schelling remains faithful to the original context of Kant's ideal of the systematic unity of philosophy and identifies the philosophy of nature as a central element of the critical philosophy.

In the following section, we will briefly examine Kant's account of the systematic unity of reason before turning to Schelling's "Timaeus".

III. Kantian Background

A. Overview

As we have seen in the first chapter, Kant pursues the ideal of the systematic unity of reason in numerous sections of the first *Critique*, but the most extensive discussion is given in the Transcendental Dialectic, with the main focus occurring in the Appendix to this section. In the Transcendental Dialectic, Kant characterizes the activity of reason as a drive toward the unconditioned that seeks for after the highest unity of the empirical conditions of experience. As a result, Kant thinks the systematic unity of cognition under numerous transcendental ideas, each of which result from the "unconditioning" of different aspects of cognition.

> What reason quite uniquely prescribes is the **systematic** in cognition, i.e., its interconnection based on one principle. This unity of reason always presupposes an idea, namely that of the form of a whole of cognition, which precedes the determinate cognition of the parts and

> contains the conditions for determining *a priori* the place of each part and its relation to the others. Accordingly, this idea postulates complete unity of the understanding's cognition, through which this cognition comes to be not merely a contingent aggregate but a system interconnected in accordance with necessary laws. (A645/B673)

The resonances here with Reinhold's project are clear: the demand for systematic unity grounded in a single principle that determines the form of the whole of cognition.[15] This passage, which occurs at the outset of the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic, is one of the key statements that Reinhold will point to in support of his contention that Kant fails to fulfill the criteria he establishes for his own critical philosophy. What I would like to draw attention to is that Reinhold will develop this ideal of a first principle of systematic unity in a very different direction than Kant's most detailed discussion of the ideal here in the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic. Two principal differences stand out in particular. To begin with, Reinhold's central concern in establishing a *Grundsatz* for the critical philosophy is to fix a point of self-evident certainty that will function not only as a principle of systematic unity but also as a universally accepted starting point that will be a clear point of entry into the system. In contrast, Kant's principle of systematic unity is the highest *ideal* of reason that functions regulatively as a *focus imaginarius*[16] guiding the activity of the understanding. It is an ideal that can never be realized *in concreto* but is only approached asymptotically.

Secondly, as we have already noted, Reinhold develops the ideal of systematic unity almost exclusively in an epistemological register, seeking to formulate a principle that will give unity to

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[15] The theme of a form of a whole that precedes the parts connects also with the discussion of the *organic* from the third *Critique*. Kant will make this connection explicit in the *Architectonic* at the end of the first *Critique*.

[16] See A644/B672.

Kant's different faculties. Accordingly, he postulates as his *Grundsatz* a *principle of consciousness* and develops as his specific contribution to the critical philosophy a theory of the *Vorstellungsvermögen*, a fundamental power of representation that is the universal genus of all representation. In contrast, Kant's Appendix explores how reason's highest ideal of perfect systematic unity is employed as a regulative idea guiding the different paths of empirical cognition. The point of focus for Kant in the Appendix remains the role that the highest ideal of reason plays in the cognition *of nature*. Accordingly, the project of recasting the critical philosophy in search of a systematic unity – a unity that, according to Reinhold, it itself called for but fell short of – would seem bound to address the domain that, for Kant, was the principal object of reason and its goal of systematic unity: the cognition of nature.

When Schelling then turns to the question of the systematic unity *of nature* in the "Timaeus", laboring to make good on the ideal of a systematic unity of nature set forth in the Appendix, he is both initiating his own creative appropriation of Reinhold's project and filling in a gap in Reinhold's version of that project (a gap that, as we will see, continues in Fichte). Thus, the question of the systematic unity of reason is, for Kant, necessarily a question of the systematic unity *of nature*, so that the philosophy of nature is a central and not ancillary element of the critical philosophy. Schelling's search in the "Timaeus" for a principle of the systematic unity of nature is, I will argue, is in close dialogue with the Appendix and reworks its themes in a remarkably creative way. What the "Timaeus", accordingly reveals is that the early Schelling's understanding of the critical philosophy was deeply marked by the question of nature, such that every advance in the first principles of the critical philosophy will, for him, require an advance in the philosophy of nature.

B. Systematic Unity *of Nature*

As an ideal for the perfect unity of all our empirical cognitions, reason furnishes us "only with the idea of something on which all empirical reality grounds its highest and necessary unity" (A675, B703). It does not make any pretention to determining the nature of this ground, but simply thinks it as a *"Something"*, a transcendental object determined only according to its function as the ground of the highest and necessary unity of empirical reality. Thus, as Kant states, "It is reason's speculative interest and not its insight which justifies it in starting from a point lying so far beyond its sphere in order to consider its objects in one complete whole" (A676/B704). The ideal goal of thinking the objects of cognition as "one complete whole", reason's "speculative interest", is what gives reason license in postulating a single ground or principle of systematic unity. The highest ideal of reason is thus thought according to reason's aspiration to achieve ever-greater systematic unity in the various domains of empirical cognition. Accordingly, Kant states, "The proper vocation of this supreme faculty of cognition is to employ all its methods and principles only in order to penetrate into the deepest inwardness of nature in accordance with all possible principles of unity" (A702/B730). And again, "The regulative principle demands that systematic unity be presupposed absolutely as a **unity of nature** that is recognized not only empirically but also *a priori*, though still indeterminately, and hence as following from the essence of things" (A693/B721).

The essential aim of the highest ideal of reason, then, is to produce the systematic unity of nature. For Kant, reason goes about doing this by furnishing regulative ideas for the employment of empirical cognition in its different activities. In the "Timaeus", however, Schelling begins to draw out the problems that arise from this approach when attempting to think through nature as a

systematic whole. Thus, in the spirit of Reinhold's revision of the critical philosophy, Schelling seeks to uncover a principle of unity that underlies the disparate regulative ideas that Kant formulates in the Appendix and further develops in the third *Critique*. He does this by way of an immanent critique of Kant's philosophy of nature, by "putting it to the test" of the Platonic physics of the All[17]. As will become apparent in the chapters to follow, Schelling's attempts in the "Timaeus" to give a more thoroughgoing systematic unity to Kant's philosophy of nature will determine the essential lines of his own philosophy of nature.

C. Transcendental Ideal

As we saw in the first chapter, Kant first puts forward the notion of a single, highest ideal of reason under the heading of the Transcendental Ideal. The "aim of reason" in seeking after this highest ideal is to achieve "thoroughgoing determination in accordance with a priori rules" (A571/B579). Kant describes the transcendental ideal as "the one single genuine ideal of which human reason is capable, because only this one single case is an – in itself universal – concept of one thing thoroughly determined through itself, and cognized as the representation of an individual (A576/ B604). This ideal of reason remains a regulative idea, inasmuch as reason does not assert the existence of the object it postulates but thinks it only as a transcendental principle for use in its search for the perfection of empirical cognition:

> It is self-evident that with this aim – namely, solely that of representing the necessary thoroughgoing determination of things – reason does not presuppose the existence of a being

[17] Grant, *Philosophies of Nature,* 26-30.

> conforming to the ideal, but (A578) only the idea of such a being, **in order to derive from an unconditioned totality of thoroughgoing determination the conditioned totality, i.e., that of the limited.** For reason the ideal is thus the original image (*prototypon*) of all things, which all together, as defective copies (*ectypa*), take from it the matter for their possibility, and yet although they approach more or less nearly to it, they always fall infinitely short of reaching it. (A577-8/B605)

The transcendental ideal is thus postulated in order to lead the conditioned reality we encounter in experience back (as far as possible, asymptotically, since we can never realize this ideal *in concreto*) to the ground of an unconditioned totality from which the limited objects of experience receive their determination. The transcendental ideal thus leads us to think of all things as "defective copies (*ectypa*)" of an "original image (*prototypon*) of all things" from which they are derived. As we shall see, this is precisely the methodology that Schelling employs in his reading of the *Timaeus*: the demiurge looks to an original image, from which he produces the *ectypa* of the objects of nature. Schelling reads this as a transcendental principle for thinking the totality of the objects of nature. We must, he states, think as far back to the original ideal as possible (through the schema of the activity of the demiurge) and so uncover the transcendental principles underlying the products of nature.

D. Why Plato?

At first glance, it might seem to be a far stretch, or at the very least an odd juxtaposition, to embark on a project of developing a revision of Kant's regulative ideas of nature by way of a

reading of Plato's *Timaeus*. There are, however, a number of factors that make this seem an almost obvious choice.

To begin with, it is Kant himself who repeatedly points to Plato as a point of comparison for his own project. For example, when explaining his distinction between transcendental *ideas* and transcendental *ideals*, he appeals to the Platonic doctrine of the idea: "What is an ideal to us was to Plato an idea in the divine understanding, an individual object in that understanding's pure intuition, the most perfect thing of each species of possible beings and the original ground of all its copies in experience" (A568/B596). We must admit that human reason contains ideas, Kant argues, not as having the 'creative power' of the Platonic ideas but nevertheless having the practical power of regulative principles inasmuch as they ground "the possibility of the perfection of certain actions" (A569/B597). Despite this initial insistence that transcendental ideas only extend as far as the practical realm, the transcendental principles that Kant derives from the ideas of reason come rather close to acquiring a productive power similar to that of the Platonic ideas. For, as we have seen in the first chapter, the transcendental principle of the homogeneity of beings such that human reason can go about categorizing beings into genera becomes in the third *Critique* a necessary principle of reflective judgment: we must presume that the world was constituted according to this principle.

Furthermore, Kant's continual appeal to an intuitive intellect often seems to rely on this account of the Platonic ideas as a way of characterizing the activity of this intellect. Thus, while Kant takes distance from the Platonic theory of the ideas, this account remains of central importance for the overall unity of his philosophy. In particular, we can point to the account of teleology in the third *Critique*, which postulates the possibility of a supersensible ground of nature uniting mechanism and teleology. The manner in which this union is conceived, however, is in

large part a simple application of the Platonic theory of ideas (as understood here by Kant – Schelling will strongly disagree with this characterization, as we shall see). For the concepts that determine the species of each organic being are postulated as existing in the divine intellect and then realized through the universal laws of mechanism in some way that exceeds the comprehension of a human finite intellect. This characterization of the activity of the supersensible ground, however, which Kant admits is simply a 'natural' process of a finite intellect, is nothing other than the interpretation of the Platonic ideas as subsisting in a divine intellect as archetypes and producing their copies in the world of appearances. This manner of thinking the supersensible ground, not as it is in itself, but as a regulative ideal of reason, has, as we will see, serious consequences for a transcendental philosophy of nature, making it all but impossible to think past the antinomy between mechanism and teleology. In fact, I argued in Chapter 1 that this manner of thinking the supersensible ground is calculated precisely to reinforce that antinomy so as to defer its resolution to the domain of practical reason. Kant's presentation of the Platonic idea, then, obscures the degree to which it plays an important role in his philosophical system. Schelling's challenge to the interpretation of the Platonic doctrine of the idea, then, is a way of going at questions of central importance for Kant's philosophy of nature.

For whereas Kant holds the Platonic doctrine of the idea to be a theory of subsistent archetypes generating empirical copies, Schelling, in the "Timaeus", emphasizes Plato's attempts to theorize a physics of "the All" and to think the totality of nature, the conceptual order provided by the ideas *together with* the origin of motion and matter. Schelling's turn to the *Timaeus* thus issues a challenge to both Kant's interpretation of Plato as well as the work that this account of Plato does for Kant's system. Finally, it launches this challenge as an immanent critique, since many of the themes found in the Appendix and articulated by Kant are closer to the Plato of the *Timaeus* than

Kant might have intended.

The tie between Plato and what Kant calls the "natural procedure of reason" is made explicit by Kant in numerous instances. The theme of the 'natural' procedure of reason is central to Kant's argument in the Appendix. Reason, he states, has natural propensities that cannot be done away with and, while they often become the source of dialectical illusion, there must be a purposive and legitimate use of these natural tendencies in as much as they are "natural" and essential to reason.[18] In order to discover the rightful employment of these 'natural' products of reason, Kant flirts with a methodology by which he looks to the unanimous conclusions of the philosophers of the past. Where they were right, he says, they were simply following the natural procedure of reason, and the transcendental position must take up what was right in these philosophers and bring them to their culmination in the insights of the critical philosophy.[19] Plato figures prominently among those Kant indicates as having arrived at critical insights before the final appearance of the critical philosophy.

In the period immediately following Kant, this suggestion (which, in Kant, was perhaps merely meant to provide useful examples) led to a prominent trend among certain followers of Reinhold, that of seeking to demonstrate the ways in which the critical philosophy, and, in particular, Reinhold's *Elementarphilosophie*, was the "culmination of philosophical history, the

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[18] "Everything grounded in the nature of our powers must be purposive and consistent with their correct use, if only we can guard against a certain misunderstanding and find out their proper direction. Thus the transcendental ideas too will presumably have a good and consequently **immanent** use." (A642-3/B670)

[19] See, for example, the following: "We also find this transcendental presupposition hidden in an admirable way in the principles of the philosophers, although they have not always recognized it or admitted it to themselves." (A651/B679)

Also, see Kant's remarks on the necessity of employing the concept of a purposive ground of nature strictly within the bounds of transcendental necessity and without claiming to know anything about the ground in itself: "It also seems to have been a certain, though to be sure undeveloped consciousness of the genuine use of this rational concept of our which occasioned the modes and reasonable language used by philosophers of all ages in talking of the wisdom and providence of nature, and of divine wisdom, as if they were expressions with the same meaning…"(A701/B729)

final realization of the *philosophia prima et perennis*."[20] It is in this context, then, that Schelling enters into the genre of a "Plato interpretation" that uncovers the insights of the critical philosophy in Plato as a good Kantian *avant la lettre*.

Third, and most importantly, there is the theme of the regulative ideas that is put forward by Kant. The "greatest possible empirical use" of reason, Kant states, is "grounded" on the idea of "systematic complete unity". Although this idea can never find an adequate presentation in experience, it remains "unavoidably necessary for approximating the highest possible degree of empirical unity." Therefore, Kant concludes, "I am not only warranted but even compelled to realize this idea, i.e., to posit for it an actual object" (A676/B704). Kant is careful to insist that the object of this idea is not posited as existing, nor is anything asserted about how this object might be *in itself*:

> But reason cannot think this systematic unity in any other way than by giving its idea an object, which be sure, a mere idea, and is therefore not assumed absolutely and **in itself** as something actual, but is rather taken as a ground only problematically (because we cannot reach it through any concepts of the understanding), so as to regard all the connection of things in the world of sense **as if** they had their ground in this being of reason; but solely with the intention of grounding on it the systematic unity that is indispensable to reason and conducive in every way to empirical cognition of the understanding. (A681/B709)

The idea can never find adequate expression in experience, since it is the complete unconditioning of all the limitations of empirical experience; and yet, Kant insists, we *must* posit this idea as a determinate object. Kant's solution to this seemingly contradictory need is to posit this object as a

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[20] Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 228.

schematization of the systematic unity of experience. By means of an analogue of a schema of this highest ideal, we are able to derive the regulative principles needed for that sake of "the systematic unity of all cognitions of nature" (A674/B702).

> Thus I say the concept of a highest intelligence is a mere idea, i.e., its objective reality is not to consist in the fact that it relates straightaway to an object […]; rather, it is only a schema, ordered in accordance with *the conditions of the greatest unity of reason*, for the concept of a thing in general, which serves only to preserve the greatest systematic unity in the empirical use of our reason in that one derives the object of experience, as it were, from the imagined object of this idea as its ground or cause. Then it is said, e.g., that the things in the world must be considered **as if** they had gotten their existence from a highest intelligence. In such a way the idea is only a heuristic and not an ostensive concept; and it shows not how an object is constituted but how, under the guidance of that concept, we ought to **seek after** the constitution and connection of objects of experience in general. (A670-1/B698-9)

As a schematization of the ideal of reason, an "imagined object" that is thought as the "ground or cause" of the totality of the objects of experience, we can only think this object by way of analogy with the concepts of experience. As a result, Kant claims that it is fitting to employ a "subtle anthropomorphism" (A700/B728) in forming an adequate schematization of this ideal of pure reason and deriving effective regulative principles. Thus, we can speak of this world-cause as a being, as a Highest Intelligence, etc.

Not only, then, does Kant propose that we form an idea of this highest cause, but he also outlines a methodology by which we employ the schematized principle in order to "derive the objects of experience, as it were, from the imagined object of this idea as its ground or cause". This enables us to think the things of the world "**as if** they had gotten their existence from a highest

intelligence;" that is, the schema functions as a regulative principle that allows us to consider the totality of nature as a systematic unity that is given its order and coherence from a "highest intelligence". As Kant will reiterate, in employing a schematization of this "object in the idea", we are not making any claims about its real existence or "settling anything about what the ground of this unity is, or about the inner property of such a being." We are merely giving expression to "the systematic unity, which is to serve as the standard for the empirical use of reason" (A674-5/B702-3). In formulating a schematization of this object,

> I think only the relation, which a being, in itself unknown to me, has to the greatest systematic unity of the world-whole, and this is solely in order to make it into the schema of a regulative principle for the greatest possible empirical use of my reason. (A679/B707)

Through its regulative ideas, reason thus furnish a "substratum, unknown to us, of the systematic unity, order and purposiveness of the world's arrangement, which reason has to make into a regulative principle in its investigation of nature" (A697/B707). The necessity of this schematization comes from reason's need to formulate "regulative principles for its investigation of nature", and the adoption of this schema offers "a unique standpoint from which alone one can extend the unity that is so essential to reason and so salutary to the understanding" (A681/B709).

When Schelling thus seeks to refashion Kant's transcendental principles of nature into a higher unity, Plato's *Timaeus* appears to exemplify precisely the methodology that Kant here proposes. The activity of seeking to derive the grounding principles of nature from a single principle (the Demiurge), about whom remarkably little is asserted beyond its essential activity or function of grounding nature, is entirely in accord with the methodology suggested here by Kant. It is "reason's speculative interest," Kant states, that gives license to this method of "starting from a point lying so far beyond its sphere in order to consider its objects in one complete whole"

(A676/B704). And this is precisely Schelling's methodology in the "Timaeus": he follows Plato's lead in "starting from" a first principle of systematic unity, schematized according to a "subtle anthropomorphism" and thought only according to its function as ground of the systematic unity of the whole.

III. Schelling's "Timaeus"

A. Intro

In his 1804 obituary for Immanuel Kant, Schelling levels a criticism at Kant's theoretical account of nature that goes to the heart of the difference between it and Schelling's own *Naturphilosophie*. He writes

> To the formal aspect of his theoretical critique of reason he will later add his *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* as its corresponding real aspect, although without being able, following this detachment, to develop a true unity in the principles of the two parts and turning his natural science into a *philosophy of nature*, and without his being able even here to bring the universal into complete harmony with the particular […] His views on organic nature, as set down in the *Critique of Teleological Judgment*, remained entirely separate from natural science in general. (SW I/VI, 7-8)[21]

The *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, represents for Schelling an attempt on Kant's part to give his critique of reason a "real" aspect, demonstrating how the demands of reason ground an objective account of nature, of the *real*. This attempt fails, Schelling claims, because Kant was

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[21] Cited in Grant, *Philosophies of Nature,* 56.

not able "*to develop a true unity in the principles of the two parts*." Had he done so, he would have had a *philosophy of nature* instead of a mere account of natural science. This retrospective look at the relationship between Kant's theoretical account of nature and Schelling's own *Naturphilosophie* casts a very interesting light on Schelling's project in the "Timaeus". For, as I aim to show, the driving force guiding this text is the search for a genuine *unity* among the various and conflicting principles operative in Kant's account of nature. Inspired by Reinhold's search for a unified ground of the Kantian system, Schelling will carry forward this project into the domain of the philosophy of nature. In the "Timaeus", we see the seeds of Schelling's mature *Naturphilosophie* take shape as he searches for a unified transcendental ground of nature.

Kant's account of nature fell short in two specific ways, Schelling says above. First, he was not able to bring the "universal into complete harmony with the particular," a shortcoming that, as we saw in the first chapter, is directly tied to the second indicated above: Kant's view on organic nature remained completely separate from his account of natural science in general. That is, he was not able to bring the universal laws of nature into harmony with the organic products of nature. In order to account for the excesses of organic form with respect to laws of mechanism, he accounted for the "lawfulness of the contingent" with an appeal to a supersensible ground that was wholly outside the domain of natural science. Thus, organic form did not inform his account of the purely mechanical universal laws of nature, and the latter were wholly insufficient in accounting for organic form. In the "Timaeus", I argue, Schelling aims to resolve these two shortcomings by searching for a single ground of nature capable of unifying the orders of matter and organism, mechanism and teleology, and in so doing he establishes the main lines of his mature philosophy of nature. What is remarkable about the "Timaeus", however, is that Schelling arrives at this position by way of an immanent critique of Kant's own theoretical account of nature, setting the

third *Critique* discourse on organism against the demand for systematic unity articulated in the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic from the first *Critique*.[22] All this, as already mentioned, takes place in a discussion of Plato's "physics of the All," a model for a physics that presents a unified account of matter and organism. Accordingly, through the suggestions offered in Plato's *Timaeus*, and through an immensely creative reading of the Platonic text, Schelling attempts to think past the antinomy between mechanism and teleology toward a highest principle of nature, a *Grundsatz* capable of grounding the orders of mechanism and teleology in a single whole, the systematic unity of the All that seems to be demanded by reason in the first *Critique*.

Schelling begins the "Timaeus" with the Platonic distinction between *being* and *becoming*. For Plato, being is the object of pure intellect and, Schelling claims, all its "distinctive features" – eternal, unchanging, lying outside the sphere of any possible intuition or experience – "match the ideas of pure understanding and pure reason" (TE, 207). And just as Schelling lines up the Platonic ideas with the Kantian ideas of pure reason, so also does he identify the Platonic realm of becoming with the Kantian concept of the empirical, as that which "arises through experience" (TE, 207). Given these Kantian interpretations of the Platonic categories, Schelling is able to transform the central question of Plato's *Timaeus* into a remarkably fruitful line of inquiry for the Kantian philosophy: How can the ideas of pure reason become "co-efficacious" in nature, such that they can be considered the *cause* of the forms that are encountered in nature?

Schelling arrives at the question of the *causality* of the ideas by beginning with what he claims is one of Plato's fundamental principles: "Everything that comes to be, of necessity comes to be

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[22] In working toward the basic principles of his later *Naturphilosophie* by way of an immanent critique of Kant, the "Timaeus" offers strong support to Schelling's claim in the 1830 *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, that the "the transition to naturephilosophy" was nothing other than the "utterly natural and conceptually secure...result of Kantian critique."

by some cause" (TE, 207, citing *Timaeus*, 28a). The realm of becoming as a whole, then, had to have a cause. On Schelling's reading, Plato holds that the visible world has an existence that is "merely present to the senses" and is, as such, "entirely heterogeneous to all forms" (TE, 209). Schelling thus concludes that Plato

> could not possibly view the form of the world in its regularity and lawfulness as inherent in matter itself, nor as a form that was brought forth from matter. He must have held that this form of the world is in its essence something wholly other and distinct from all matter. (TE, 209)[23]

The form of the world must, then, be located in the intellect, and the entire visible world is to be thought as an *ectype*, a copy of the forms of the ideal, which are the *archetype* of the visible.[24] The demiurgos, then, "had an ideal before his eyes according to which he brought forth the world" (TE, 208). But the question remains: how did the demiurgos bring these forms into union with the "entirely heterogeneous" principle of matter[25] so as to realize these forms in the visible world? Some "third" was necessary to bring together "form" and "matter", and this was a form given to the world "which was an imitation of the original, pure form of the understanding" (TE, 209). This, Schelling states, is the principle of the "world soul" (TE, 210).

Schelling takes the notion of soul as the mediating principle between intellect and body, ideal and material, directly from Plato's *Timaeus.*[26] Plato's insistence that "it is impossible for intellect

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[23] There are echoes here of Kant's argument in the third *Critique* against hylozism.

[24] "[…] It is assumed that the maker of the world would have to have fashioned the world according to an ideal . . ." (TE 208)

[25] "At this point the pre-existing original matter of the world is presupposed. It is presented as something restless, moving without order or regularity, because it has not yet been imparted with the form of the understanding." (TE 209)

[26] "It's impossible for intellect apart from soul to become present in anything. Through this calculation, then, by constructing intellect within soul and soul within body, he joined together the all so that he had fashioned a work that

to come into being without soul," amounts to the following in Schelling's reading: "*understanding has in and of itself no causality,* such that if it were to become visible in something this can come to pass in no other way than when it is bound to some principle of actuality" (TE, 210).[27] Soul is thus understood as this principle of actuality in matter, and this leads Schelling to make a very interesting gloss on the term; he claims that: "ψυχή names nothing other than the original principle of motion" (TE, 210). The world soul is thus essentially an "original principle of motion" that gives order and form to the entirely irregular motion of the pre-existent matter of the world:

> Now, insofar as the form that god imparted to the world refers only to the form of the movement of the world, the world must also have had its own original principle of motion, independently of god, which, as a principle that inheres in matter, contradicts all regularity and lawfulness, and is first brought within the bounds of lawfulness through the form (πέρας)[28] that the divine understanding gave to it. (TE, 210)

The world that comes into being when the unbounded and wholly irregular movement (ἄπειρον) is given the definite limits (πέρας) of lawfulness and regularity is thus a *cosmos*, an ordered whole that Plato likens to a cosmic animal: "So then, in this way, keeping with the likely account, it must be said that this cosmos here in truth was born an animal having soul and intellect through the forethought of the god" (TE, 211 [Tim. 30b]). Using the analogy of a living being to describe the cosmos is especially fitting, Schelling claims, because "What Plato understands by ζῷον" is "what

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would be most beautiful and best in accordance with nature." ("Timaeus", 210) [Tim. 30b]

[27] We can see here a problematic the very much resembles Schelling's criticism of Kant's theoretical account of nature, that the was no bridge between the real and the ideal. Put another way, the theoretical forms of nature derived a priori could not be made effective or productive in the order of the real.

[28] As we will see below, Schelling introduces the account from the *Philebus* (30c) into his discussion of the *Timaeus*, reading πέρας as *form*, and ἄπειρον as *matter*.

as such possesses an original power of movement (ψυχήν)" (TE, 211). The cosmos is thus understood as an ordered whole that has the self-formative power of a living being, where this power is understood first as an original principle of motion, a *world soul* that is capable of bringing about a first and original organization of matter.

While these few basic interpretive glosses on the Platonic text might seem puzzling from the standpoint of a reading of the *Timaeus* alone, they acquire a good deal of importance when considered against a Kantian background. In order to see the full significance of Schelling's reading and the territory he is staking out within the critical philosophy, it will be helpful to review two passages from the third *Critique*. In the first, Kant indicates the primary reason why the *organism* cannot be thought merely on the basis of mere mechanism. An "organized being" is not a "mere machine," Kant states, since a machine

> has only **motive** power, while the organized being possesses in itself a **formative** power, and indeed *one that it communicates to the matter*, which does not have it (it organizes the latter): Thus it has a self-propagating formative power, which cannot be explained through the capacity for movement alone (that is, mechanism). (5:374)

For Kant, the laws of motion cannot account for the kind of *formative* power that is found in the organism, since such a formative power gives rise to the *organization of matter as such*, and does not simply modify the motion of a matter that already exists. Accordingly, the order of mechanism cannot account for the original coming into being of matter, it's coming into being as a determinate, organized existence. When Schelling reads the *world soul* as essentially an original principle of motion that first gives matter determinate form and organization,[29] he is thus uniting Kant's notion

[29] Plato's theory of a 'pre-existent matter' might seem to cause problems for the idea that the world soul is the ground

of a formative power with the order of mechanical motion into a single grounding principle. The notion of the cosmos as a 'living being' that possesses an "original power of *movement*" unites the idea of a formative power with the order of motion, two things that Kant thought in opposition.

In this next passage, Kant examines two possible explanations for the organic capacity for self-organization. He calls this an "*inscrutable property*" that might best be thought as an analogue of life. The problem with employing this analogy, however, is that it requires that

> One must either endow matter as mere matter with a property (hylozoism) that contradicts its essence, or else associate with it an alien principle standing in communion with it (a soul), in which case, however, if such a product is to be a product of nature, organized matter as an instrument of that soul is already presupposed, and thus makes that product not the least more comprehensible, or else the soul is made into an artificer of this structure, and the product must be withdrawn from (corporeal) nature. (5:374-5)

As we have seen already, Schelling finds agreement in the *Timaeus* that the form of organization found in the world cannot arise from matter itself. The second option Kant rejects here, however, is precisely the one that Schelling advocates: matter given life through an "alien principle standing in communion with it". Kant rejected this possibility, since it either presupposes an already organized matter, in which case the problem is just pushed further back, or else the soul is understood as "an artificer of this structure", in which case the product can't be said to arise *from nature*. Schelling's reading of the world soul responds to both of Kant's objections, since it is the very ground of organized matter and is also the ground of corporeal nature as such. For the latter

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of the appearance of matter as such, since there is something that precedes it. However, as we will see below, Schelling will give a transcendental reading to this notion of a pre-existing matter, such that it remains only an idea that can never achieve empirical existence and only exists as a necessary postulate for the understanding.

does not pre-exist soul but first comes into being through the form bestowed by it. The demiurgos as a schematization of the first principle is precisely the "artificer" of the entire structure and order of the visible world through the imposition of an essential form, that of the world soul.

B. The Ideal

Schelling next poses the question of the relation between the world soul and the ideal archetype, the pure form of unity that the demiurgos looks to when fashioning the world-soul that is to be united to matter and bringing about the cosmos as a "living animal." Holding to the principle that the visible world is an imitation of an ideal world[30], if follows that since the visible world has the form of a living being, the "ideal world must be grounded in the idea of a ζῷον," that of an ideal world, a "κόσμος νόητος" (TE, 211). Here Schelling shifts from an emphasis on the ground of the visible world as an original principle of movement, and follows Kant's lead in the Appendix[31] in thinking this principle as a "highest genus" that grounds all different genera of nature.[32]

This ideal world must encompass all individual determinations and parts of the visible world.

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[30] We can recall how this is precisely the methodology proposed by Kant in the Appendix as a way of schematizing the ideal of perfect systematic unity: "We have to consider everything that might ever belong to the context of possible experience **as if** this experience constituted an absolute unity … **as if** the sum total of appearances (the world of sense itself) had a single supreme and all-sufficient ground outside its range, namely an independent, original and creative reason, as it were, *in relation to which* we direct every empirical use of **our** reason in its greatest extension **as if** the objects themselves had arisen from the original image of all reason" (A673-4/B701-2).

[31] See the above section on the regulative ideals of homogeneity, specification, and affinity.

[32] Just as, in the Appendix, Kant proposes different ways in which the pure ideal of reason grounds different kinds of unity, each with a basis in particular activities of the understanding (the search for a fundamental power, the search for order and continuity among the different species and genera, the search for an all-encompassing order of the whole, etc.), so, too, does Schelling here also shift between different orders; the crucial difference is that Schelling seeks to locate a single source of unity among all these disparate orders.

> In its idea there also must be contained an original principle of movement; it must also be present in the idea as a ζῷον ἔμψυχον. At the same time it must hold within itself all the individual genera and kinds of creatures that the visible world contains, and grounding this world as an idea. It must hold within itself (as idea) all ζῶα as νόητα. (TE, 211)

The "pure and ideal archetype" that the world is modeled after thus not only gives rise to the ordered motion of matter (the order of mechanism) but also grounds the genera of all the living beings found in the visible world. The central question that Schelling will pose is the following: how can a single, highest "genus" ground the manifold genera and kinds of the visible world? How do all the ζῶα exist as νόητα in the ground of the ideal unity? This question gives rise to a remarkably creative reworking of the Kantian theory of the organism, and it is to this account of the organism that we will now turn.

C. Organism

The idea that each living being has a corresponding ideal archetype is inspired by the discussion of organism in the third *Critique*. This doctrine is echoed by Schelling when he states, "Every individual worldly being was thus not the work of *matter*, but rather . . . it was the work of an idea" (TE, 213). But whereas Kant's focus in the Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment focuses on the difficulties of reconciling the orders of mechanism and organism, he seems to leave behind altogether the question posed in the Appendix concerning the systematic order of the different species and genera (a question that was repeated in the Introduction to the third *Critique*, but not taken up further in the main text). The entire question of the systematic unity of the different genera and species is dominated in the "Critique of Teleological Power of

Judgment" by the theme of *purposiveness*. As we saw in the first chapter, the discovery of organic form in nature does not lead to an investigation into the organic form of the whole, but rather to an investigation into what *end* to which the whole might be ordered. Accordingly, the postulate of a supersensible ground in the discussion of the Antinomy of Teleological Judgment offers a schematization of the grounding principle of the order of nature according to which a highest intelligence realizes different species and genera through the universal laws of (mechanical) nature. Two questions remain unaddressed in this account of a supersensible ground: first, the question of *how* this comes about (a question that, Kant insists, necessarily exceeds the limits of our finite understanding). The second question is *how* these concepts of each organized being relate to the ideal unity of the supersensible ground as well as what the systematic order among them might be. Inasmuch as the notion of a "supersensible ground" is yet another schematization of the ideal of reason, a transcendental ideal of pure systematic unity, both these questions Schelling seems to indicate, require an answer. We will see how Schelling finds an answer for both through his reworking of the question of organic unity.

Beginning with the question of the systematic unity of the ideas that ground the individual beings of the visible world, we find that Schelling presents Plato's position in a way that is very much in line with the notion given in Kant's Appendix for both individual species as well as the notion of "pure elements."[33] Schelling states:

> Plato now assumes: (1) That the world, with respect to its lawfulness, is an expression of a higher lawfulness. (2) That every living being [Wesen] of the world is grounded in an idea,

[33] These are all asymptotic ideas that are never realized in full but which regulate our cognition of their approximations in appearances.

> which holds the character of the whole genus, without it being the case that the idea is ever completely arrived at through a particular kind of being. (TE, 212)

Schelling goes on to make an important qualification, however, regarding how we are to understand this notion of a grounding idea:

> Had Plato assumed that every worldly being is grounded objectively in an invisible, albeit physically existing, grounding being that contains what is distinctive to its whole genus, this would have been fanaticism — that is, it would have been the carrying over of the merely sensible, of what merely belongs to the empirical intuition, onto the supersensible. (TE, 212)

The immediate context of this remark is the polemical stance Schelling adopts throughout the essay against a contemporary named Plessing, who had published a commentary on the *Timaeus* in the spirit of a Kantian reading of the history of philosophy. Although it is generally agreed that Schelling misrepresents Plessing's position[34] as holding the Platonic doctrine of the ideas to entail the *physical* existence of the ideal archetypes[35], his arguments against the position (even if a straw man) remain important. We can leave off the question of any kind of *physical* existence of the ideal archetypes, and consider the more plausible interpretation that Schelling gives to Plessing's account of the "pure" or "ideal" elements. With respect to this question, Schelling states, "according to Plessing […] what is at issue here is the intelligible, substantial archetypes of the elements in their appearance" (TE, 234). The position that Schelling is essentially attributing to Plessing, and against which he is strenuously arguing, is a theory of the *substantiality* of the ideas,

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[34] See Baum, "Beginnings of Schelling's Philosophy of Nature," 207.

[35] While at first glance it is hard to understand what this might mean, Ian Hamilton Grant has done excellent work in pointing out how central the question of ideal archetypes was for the nascent field of Natural History (See Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*.)

such that there would be a single idea or archetype for each species in the world, a "substantial archetype" that is fixed and static and which grounds all its copies in the world. Such a position, Schelling claims, amounts to *fanaticism*, the "carrying over of the merely sensible, of what merely belongs to empirical intuition, onto the supersensible."

In order to make sense of this claim, it will be helpful to recall Kant's account of the three transcendental principles of the homogeneity (or affinity), specification (of manifoldness), and continuity (or unity) of natural forms. For Kant, all of these represent demands of reason that must be held together as transcendental principles for employment in the cognition of appearances. In other words, these each represent ideal poles that are approached asymptotically, and no one can be taken as constitutive and so preeminent with respect to the others. In contrast to the drive toward the affinity of forms in the formation of fixed genera, then, there is the principle of the manifoldness of forms and their specification into an infinite variety. These are both held together by the principle of a unity of forms, according to which we strive to realize the perspective of the "highest genus" determined from "the standpoint comprehending all manifoldness, as genera, species, and subspecies, under itself", while at the same time striving to discern an infinite variety in the specification of these different species and subspecies. All of these taken together result in a regulative principle of systematic unity that could never be realized in experience but remains a thoroughly transcendental idea that could only be postulated by pure reason: "*Non datur vacuum formarum*, i.e., there are no different original and primary genera, which would be, as it were, isolated and separated from one another (by an empty and intervening space), but rather all the manifold genera are only partitionings of one single supreme and universal genus" (A659/B687). The immediate consequence of this, Kant claims, is "*Datur continuum formarum*, i.e., all varieties of species bound one another and permit no transition to one another by a leap, but only through

every smaller degree of distinction" (A659/B687).

Postulating "substantial archetypes" as fixed and static ideas grounding worldly beings thus violates the transcendental principle according to which "there are no different original and primary genera" but that "all the manifold genera are only partitionings of one single supreme and universal genus." To ignore this transcendental principle is thus *fanaticism*, since it projects the conditions of empirical experience (we encounter separate and seemingly fixed species) into the supersensible ground (the ideal unity of reason as the unconditioning of experience).[36]

Of course, Schelling's task is to locate this same conclusion in the Platonic text, and his argument against Plessing takes place on that terrain. He finds support for his position by insisting that Plato does not conceive of separate ideas as the ground of worldly beings, but that every being is grounded in the single ideal of the cosmic animal:

> The world cannot be copied from of any particular kind of animal […] But the world is the imitation of a pure and ideal archetype, thus the imitation of that one idea of animal that grounds every particular genus and kind, that comprehends all genera and kinds, just as the visible world likewise contains all kinds of animals. (TE, 211)

Not only is the entire whole of the world grounded in the single idea of a cosmic animal, the "imitation of a pure and ideal archetype," but so is "every particular genus and kind." In order to understand how Schelling thinks this possibility, we will have to turn to the second question we posed above: How is it that the ideas of the different genera and kinds, themselves grounded in the

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[36] It is in Schelling's mature theory of the organic that Kant's transcendental principle of *specification* into an infinite variety of species turns into a *generative* principle of nature as infinite productivity that only temporarily pauses its activity in the generation of a single species. Here we see the seeds of this tendency in Schelling's philosophy of nature, by which Kant's transcendental principles (ideal for Kant) become genetic and historical for Schelling (in the real, in nature).

single idea of a universal genus, could come into being through the universal laws of nature?

Schelling begins to address this question by reviewing his account of the Platonic theory of the "origin of the world". Plato assumes a pre-existent matter with no determinate empirical form and, as a result, all worldly beings must be considered the work of the demiurgos and not the product of matter. It is only through the form of the understanding brought into unity with matter that the begins of the world came into existence (TE, 213). Schelling now adds an important point to his account:

> Plato only accepted the ideas that grounded worldly beings *to the extent that* these ideas could be the object of pure thinking, the expression of the pure form of the power of representation. He thus had to accept the ideas that as such ground the objects only insofar as these are also dependent mediately or immediately upon the pure form of the understanding. (TE, 213)

It is thus the "pure form of the power of representation"[37] that is the ultimate source of the archetypal ideas that ground worldly beings. These ideas are not "substantial archetypes" but are dependent "mediately or immediately" upon the absolute unity of the pure form of the power of representation.[38]

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[37] It is important to emphasize in this context that when Schelling casts the 'ground of the systematic unity of the whole order of nature' as the "pure form of the power of representation", he is arguing for a more thoroughgoing unity of Kant's first principle, and thus a first principle of nature that grounds the whole, the "All", and not separate and fragmentary paths of empirical investigation.

[38] It will hopefully be clear the extent to which Schelling's reading here is entirely in sync with Kant's Appendix. For there, we may recall, Kant postulates the ideal of reason, a single ground of the systematic unity of all cognition and of the whole of nature. Kant suggests that we give this pure ideal of reason a schematization in several ways, including by postulating an intelligent author of nature so as to consider all the objects in the world *as if* they had arisen from this world-cause of the order and harmony of nature. Here we see not only the same project of a 'schematization' carried out by Schelling, but also the identification of this single ground of nature with the pure form of reason. We will see below the extent to which Schelling interprets this pure form of unity through the lens of Reinhold's pure "power of representation" so as to formulate an ever-greater systematic unity of nature than Kant would allow, the unity of mechanism and teleology.

When the “master builder of the world” brought this pure form into unity with matter, Schelling continues, he “thereby brought into being not only the *universal* lawfulness of nature but also the lawfulness of the individual products themselves” (TE, 213).

This pure form of the power of representation, as the ground of the whole of the visible world, is simultaneously the ground of both the order of mechanism (the universal lawfulness of nature) as well as the order of organism (the lawfulness of the individual products themselves). Schelling makes this point even more strongly: "Or, to put it another way, he made the universal laws of nature harmonize with the productivity of the individual ordered products” (TE, 213). We can recall that this is more or less the manner in which Kant characterizes the activity of the supersensible ground in the antinomy of teleological judgment in the third *Critique*, since this intelligent cause must be thought as capable of realizing the concepts of organized beings through the mechanism of the universal laws of nature. Where Schelling diverges from Kant is in his characterization of the ideas or concepts that stand behind the organized beings of nature. “Every individual worldly being,” Schelling continues,

> was thus not the work of matter, but rather actually a product of the concordance of an individual pure law to a whole — that is, it was the work of an idea, a representation of the concordance of an individual pure law to a whole. (TE, 213)

What is striking in this quote is the way that Schelling interprets the idea that is the ground of the individual product. It is clear that he is thinking against the context of the theory of the organism given in the third *Critique*[39], and so we might expect to find Schelling making the same

[39] This connection becomes even more explicit in a passage just below, in which Schelling states “We must keep in mind that we, according to the subjective orientation of our power of knowing, simply cannot think the emergence of an organized being otherwise than through the causality of a concept or idea” (TE, 213), almost a word for word

straightforward appeal to a single concept as the cause or ground of the natural product. Instead, Schelling glosses *idea* here as "a representation of the concordance of an individual pure law *to a whole*." The representation is not that of a single subsistent archetype, but of the manner in which the individual might be realized through the causality of the whole. Schelling develops this idea further when he states that

> [If] this concordance of a pure law with the *productivity of a whole* takes place for its part according to rules, then the concordance of this law itself was for its part not a work of matter, but rather a work of a pure form of unity, a work of an intelligence. (TE, 213; my emphasis)

It is the productivity of the whole that is thought in the idea of the single product, a productivity that is brought into concordance or harmony so as to give rise to determinate products.[40] This productivity of the whole is itself the "work of a pure form of unity," the pure form of the power of representation that is the ideal archetype for the cosmic animal, the world as a whole of organic unity and order.

We noted in our discussion of Kant's antinomy of teleological judgment in Chapter One the striking omission in Kant's text, whereby he never makes the jump from the encounter with an organic product of nature to the idea of the whole of nature as an organic unity.[41] Instead, as we saw, the thinking of organisms goes in the direction of a purposive, teleological ordering of the whole towards the realization of a single, particular *end*. This move was, I argued, principally

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citation of Kant's third *Critique*.

[40] We can also recall here the above quotation from Schelling's Kant Obituary, in which he criticizes Kant for not being able to harmonize the universal with the particular.

[41] Indeed, Kant has strong reasons for not doing this. We will see in Chapter 4 how Schelling will address Kant's objections to such a move in his essay *Vom Ich*.

determined by Kant's concern to find a ground for the ends of practical reason in the natural order, such that the theoretical account of nature is finally subordinate to the concerns of practical reason. What we find here in Schelling's essay is a remarkably coherent argument for making the jump from the individual organism to the organic unity of nature as a whole. As we will see, he makes this move by bringing the third *Critique* discussion of organism into harmony with the ideal of systematic unity given in the Appendix.

Schelling goes on to make an explicit connection between the form of organic life with the organic unity of the whole in what follows. "Furthermore," he continues,

> We have to remember that Plato viewed the entire world as a ζῷον, that is, as an organized being, thus as a being whose parts are possible only through their relation to the whole, *whose parts are reciprocally related against each other as means and end*, and thus which reciprocally bring themselves forth according to both their form and connectedness. (TE, 213)

And again,

> We must think that everything that is contained within a being must be determined a priori and — just as the particular parts of the organized being bring themselves reciprocally in relation to each other and so bring forth the whole — on the contrary, the idea of the whole must be thought as determining a priori and in advance the form and parts in their harmony. (TE, 213)

While the references to the third *Critique* account of organism are unmistakable and illustrate Schelling's willingness to apply the theory of organic life, following Plato's suggestion, to a characterization of the whole of the visible world as a "living being," I would like to focus on the specific formulation that Schelling gives in the last line of the second citation: "The idea of the whole must be thought as determining a priori and in advance the forms and parts in their

harmony." While this might sound like it would come from the third *Critique*, it is instead taken from the first *Critique* in one of its many discussions of the systematic unity of reason.[42] What this shows is that Schelling is not simply making a speculative leap from the individual organism to the organic unity of the whole, but that he makes this move in light of reason's demand for the most perfect systematic unity of nature. Thinking the whole of nature as a perfect unity in which the parts (individual beings and the 'ideas' that determine them) arise through the very form of the whole eliminates (what was for Kant) the ineliminable dichotomy between the universal laws of nature and instances of organic life that permeates the Kantian philosophy of nature. This form of thought is able to think not only the unity of individual beings but also their interrelation among themselves, not as subordinate to an end determined extrinsically, but as a living and dynamic unity grounded in a principle of infinite productivity.

D. Matter

Plato's concern to give an account of the "emergence of the world," the "birth of this cosmos" (TE, 225), leads him to the question of the genesis or becoming of *matter*:

> Regarding the emergence of the world Plato had already previously distinguished (1) the archetype that grounds the world … and (2) the imitating of this archetype through the visible world … Now he speaks of a third, the matter of the world, that was presupposed by the second.

[42] "What reason quite uniquely prescribes is the **systematic** in cognition, i.e., its interconnection based on one principle. This unity of reason always presupposes an idea, namely that of the form of a whole of cognition, which precedes the determinate cognition of the parts and contains the conditions for determining *a priori* the place of each part and its relation to the others. Accordingly, this idea postulates complete unity of the understanding's cognition, through which this cognition comes to be not merely a contingent aggregate but a system interconnected in accordance with necessary laws." (A645/B673)

(TE, 226)

The imitations of the intelligible archetype in the visible world presuppose a *substrate*, that in which the forms are given and change; this is the "matter of the world." Schelling begins to investigate Plato's account of matter with a focus on the question of the *elements*: Is the matter of the world constituted out of the elements? The answer to this question must be negative, Schelling argues, pointing to the Platonic doctrine of the continuous flux of appearances. For the elements never appear in their complete purity but are always in a process of continuous transition from one into another.[43] The visible elements of fire, earth, air, and water, then, must all be grounded in intelligible and ideal elements.[44] The question thus remains: upon what are these ideal forms imposed?

> Prior to the creation of the world according to Plato's teaching there were namely no elements visible, because our power of knowing was not yet imparted to them. The original matter (the elements) moved in a way that was disorderly and unruly. The elements first acquired a determinate form through an understanding that gives order and thereby appeared as visible elements of the world. (TE, 238)

There is accordingly an "original matter" that pre-exists the determinate forms of the visible world, a "disorder and unruly" principle, and a "physics of the All" will seek to give an account for this

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[43] "That which is continually appearing in various forms but which appears usually as fire is not fire but rather always only something fire-like, nor is it water, but always only something water-like. Thus, neither can we give a determinate name to the elements, inasmuch as they are visible, precisely for the reason that they are always mutable. The elements flee from every determinate designation." ("Timaeus", 226)

[44] There are strong echoes here of Kant's brief discussion of the "pure elements" as an example of the ideas of reason at the start of the Appendix: "Such concepts of reason are not created by nature, rather we question nature according to these ideas … Admittedly, it is hard to find **pure earth, pure water, pure air**, etc. Nevertheless, concepts of them are required (though as far as their complete purity is concerned, have their origin only in reason) in order appropriately to determine the share that each of these natural causes has in appearances . . ." (A645-6/B673-4).

way in which this wholly indeterminate principle acquires a determinate shape and form. For Schelling, then, Plato's attempt to think the "receptacle of all becoming," the "nature that receives all bodies" (TE, 227) as an "empirical substance" or "substrate" opens the question of the genesis of matter as such, a question that will develop into the project of a transcendental *construction* of matter as his Naturphilosophie project develops.[45]

Far from being the postulate of an existing substance, the notion of an empirical substrate receives a decidedly transcendental treatment in Schelling's account. In the midst of his treatment of Plato's *Chora* as "empirical substrate", Schelling launches into a discussion of a passage from the *Philebus* (22e-25b) that, he claims, provides "Plato's central principles concerning matter". Schelling identifies the ἄπειρον from the *Philebus* with the *Urstoff* of the empirical substrate, while πέρας is presented as the form of unity through which this substrate is given determinate form (TE, 230). To these, Schelling states, Plato also adds two others:

> τὸ κοινόν, that is, that which arises through the binding together of the previous two, and τὸ τῆς αἰτίας γένος – the category of causality, through which both πέρας and ἄπειρον are bound together in τὸ κοινόν. Plato now considers these forms to be the forms of all existing things, and therefore also the forms according to which the origin of the world is to be conceived. (TE, 232)

Schelling goes on to claim that there are two ways in which we could conceive of these concepts as the essential forms according to which "the origin of the world is to be conceived." One possibility would be to take each of these each as separate substances, and idea that would be a

[45] As Ian Grant notes, this requirement of accounting for the genesis of matter and of body *as such* pushes physics past Kant's restriction to mere somatism (physics only deals with bodies) toward a dynamic account of matter. (See Grant, *Philosophies of Nature,* 28)

"nonsensical philosophy."[46] The other possibility is that these are all forms "that exist separately merely in the *power of representation* (also in the divine understanding, but only in these)" (TE, 235). Thus, just as for Reinhold the power of representation is the single ground of all representation, and the notions of "subject" and "object" have no meaning except inasmuch as they are grounded *as distinct* in the pure power of representation, so, Schelling claims, these four forms are the essential forms according to which we must conceive the world but that have no subsistent existence. They are "nothing but subjective forms under which the world is represented, … merely *formal* concepts of the world" (TE, 236).

The ἄπειρον, then, as an empirical substance that perdures and grounds all empirical change, is "a mere form of the understanding that we place into appearances" (TE, 239). As a "kind of dream that we cannot possible do away with" (TE, 239), it thus has a status that mirrors the transcendental ideals of reason, in that it is a kind of regulative ideal that must be postulated but is never realized *in concreto*. It cannot be thought as determinate independently from the form of πέρας, and these two forms are always united in determinate existence in the single ground of a world-cause, the αἰτία:

> The two forms πέρας and ἄπειρον are concepts under which the world is to be subsumed according to its form and matter — and with regard to what would bind these two forms together, one has to conceive of a cause in relation to the world that has ordered all things according to those forms, just as readily as we are compelled to conceive everywhere of a cause

[46] The idea of the ἄπειρον demonstrates this impossibility most clearly for Schelling. As essentially disordered and amorphous, the ἄπειρον could have no conceivable existence on its own either as a physical substance (for it would lack any πέρας or limits, a necessary condition of determinate existence) or as form in the ideal world (since it is essentially lacking in form and intelligibility) ("Timaeus", 235-6).

of individual effects.

We are thus returned to the idea of a single world cause, a pure form that is realized in the world as a whole just as much as it is in individual beings. The coming into being of matter, then, is grounded in the form of the whole, a form that we have seen has an essentially *organic* unity. The order of mechanism, the universal laws of nature, thus finds its ground in the order of organic unity, and both are united in the single ground of the pure form of the power of representation.

Conclusion

Reinhold's highly influential definition of the "task of philosophy" after Kant envisioned a reworking of the Kantian system in the direction of greater systematic unity, aiming for a science securely grounded in an unshakeable first principle. Schelling's "Timaeus" marks an invaluable glimpse into the ways in which Schelling takes up this project at the outset of his philosophical career. We find there an inventive and insightful application of Reinhold's general project and methodology that moves beyond Reinhold's narrow epistemological concerns in search of a systematic unity of nature. We have seen that this shift in the direction of post-Kantian philosophy was born of careful attention to Kant's system and the ways in which the question of systematic unity for Kant is necessarily a question of the unity of nature. Schelling locates resources within Kant's own thought that enable him to put forward a *philosophy of nature*, a transcendental science of nature that is grounded in a single principle of systematic unity. In the "Timaeus", Schelling explores these resources by way of a creative engagement with Plato's *Timaeus* and its attempt to think the becoming of being and a physics that has for its extension not any isolated domain of being, but the All, the whole of the cosmos. Schelling thinks through the deep resonances between

this text and Kant's Transcendental Dialectic, playing one off the other in a process of "co-ideation" that opens up a new path for the critical philosophy, one that will in due time develop into Schelling's mature *Naturphilosophie*. Most importantly, this revision of Kant's system opens the path to an account of nature that unifies the orders of mechanism and organism, the universal laws of nature and the "lawfulness of the contingent" manifest in organic life. Building on Plato's concepts of the *world-soul* and the whole of nature as a *living animal*, an organic unity, Schelling thinks the genesis of matter as well as the harmony of organic forms with each other and with the whole of nature together in the genuine unity of a single first principle.

This first principle is none other than the "pure unity of the power of representation." This term, borrowed from Reinhold, acquires in the "Timaeus" a sense that is permeated by the notion of a first principle of systematic unity that Kant articulates in the Transcendental Dialectic. As we have seen, this first principle is the *focus imaginarius*, the vanishing point that reason must conceive as the ground for the perfect unity of nature. While this remains a *transcendental* and not *transcendent* ground, one that gives no object absolutely but only regulates the exercise of empirical reason, it is not devoid of objectivity. We must postulate, Kant insists, this ground as effective in nature by means of the transcendental principles derived from this single idea. With this in mind, we can consider the deeply transcendental cast that Schelling often gives to his reading of the activity of the Platonic demiurgos, an active principle that Schelling interprets as a schematism of the pure form of the power of representation. We very well might wonder whether, at the end of the "Timaeus", Schelling is not proposing the unity of nature as just a regulative principle after the Kantian model, merely modifying the later. In order to give a final answer to this question, we will have to follow Schelling's development into his engagement with the Fichtean philosophy in the next chapter. For now, we can point in the direction of an answer to

this question. It is true that Schelling grounds the whole of nature in the pure form of the power of representation. This pure form, however, is not to be identified with the human power of reason. Schelling is clear in the "Timaeus" that this pure form is "communicated" to human reason in a limited fashion. As a result the general outline that we are left with is a single, unconditioned first principle that is the ground of both empirical reason as well as the order of nature. It is this structure, I propose, that will develop into Schelling's later theory of the *ideal* and the *real* as two parallel trajectories of the absolute. What we find in the "Timaeus" is thus not only the first beginnings of the *Naturphilosophie*, but also an outline of the unity of mind and nature in the absolute that will define Schelling's theoretical philosophy throughout the period of his mature *Naturphilosophie*.

In Chapter One, we indicated the degree to which Kant's account of nature is intertwined with his practical philosophy and the manner in which the question of freedom plays an essential role in the formulation of his theoretical account of nature. In the chapter that follows, we will take up Schelling's essay *Of the I as Principle of Philosophy* in order to see how Schelling's unification of mechanism and teleology in the "Timaeus" translates into significant shifts in the Kantian configuration of the relation between nature and freedom. That the two questions are deeply connected is clear not only from a close reading of Kant's third *Critique*, as we saw in Chapter 1, but even emerges as early as the "Timaeus". For there he depicts Plato as someone who is in search not only for the unity of nature, of matter and organism, but also "a philosophy in which the sensible and supersensible are both subsumed under the form of a single and most complete unity" (TE, 233). The unity that grounds mechanism and organism is also capable of uniting the orders of the sensible and the supersensible, of nature and freedom. Already in the "Timaeus", then, we find that Schelling is immersed in the question of the unity of nature and freedom and sees this as

intimately tied to the goal of a unified philosophy of nature. If we recall that the “Timaeus” preceded his encounter with the work of Fichte, we can see how Schelling’s reception of the *Wissenschaftslehre* was colored from the start by the problematic of nature and freedom. In what follows, we will see how Schelling in *Vom Ich* fashions Fichte’s new first principle of philosophy into a ground for the unity of nature and freedom.

Chapter 3: Schelling's Early Published Works as Groundwork for a Philosophy of Nature

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we saw the extent to which Schelling's retrospective claim that "the transition to *Naturphilosophie*" was nothing other than the "utterly natural and conceptually secure...result of Kantian critique" finds support in his one of his earliest writings, the "*Timaeus" essay*. Here, inspired by Plato's physics of the "All" and animated by Reinhold's call for a reworking of the Kantian system on the basis of revised first principles, Schelling attempts to advance Kant's philosophy of nature in the direction of a more thoroughgoing systematic unity. In this text, Schelling takes up Kant's own demands for the theoretical unity of nature, primarily his account in the *Transcendental Dialectic* from the *first Critique* and seeks to bring about a "conceptually secure" transition on the basis of Reinhold's newly formulated first principle. But while the "*Timaeus" essay* marks an important beginning of Schelling's transition to the *Naturphilosophie* and anticipates central themes of its mature formulation, it remains constrained by the limits of Reinhold's approach. For just as Reinhold's project for a revision of the Kantian system unfolds almost entirely within the domain of theoretical reason,[1] Schelling's "*Timaeus"*

[1] In a letter to Reinhold from July 2, 1795, Fichte suggests that the difference between Reinhold's system, derived from his Principle of Consciousness, and Fichte's own *Wissenschaftslehre*, can in part be attributed to the fact that Reinhold's perspective was limited to the first *Critique*. Addressing Reinhold, Fichte writes that he is "firmly convinced that if you [Reinhold] had constructed your system after the appearance of all three *Critiques* (as I did) you would have discovered the *Wissenschaftslehre*. You would have discovered the unity underlying all three *Critiques*, just as surely as you correctly discovered the (just as unobvious) unity of the critique of speculative reason. (I acknowledge that your Principle of Consciousness is, at any rate, an announcement of the unity of speculative reason, concerning which we do not at all disagree.)" (G III, 2:346), quoted in Eckart Förster, *The Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy: A Systematic Reconstruction*, Trans. by Brady Bowman, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 179-180.

essay likewise attempts to rework Kant's philosophy of nature primarily from within the standpoint of theoretical reason alone. As we saw in Chapter One, however, Kant's philosophy of nature consists in a complex architectonic in which not only theoretical reason, but also practical reason and reflective judgment, play an essential role, so much so that the theoretical concern for the systematic unity of nature cannot be separated from the concern of reason as such to achieve the systematic unity of theoretical and practical reason, *of nature and freedom*. Accordingly, in order to be a genuine "result of the Kantian critique" that is "utterly natural and conceptually secure," Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* would have to be a transformation of the entire Kantian architectonic: a revision not only of the theoretical account of nature, but also a reworking of the philosophy of nature from the standpoint of practical reason and especially from the standpoint of Kant's efforts to "bridge the gap" between nature and freedom in the Critique of Teleological Judgment from the third *Critique*. In the chapters to follow I argue that it is in his first systematic works[2], and especially in the *Vom Ich*, that Schelling undertakes just such a transformation and in so doing lays the foundation for the *Naturphilosophie*.

I. Interpretations of the Early Schelling

Schelling's first systematic works emerge in the immediate wake of Schelling's encounter with the early programmatic accounts of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. In these texts, as is well known, it is Fichte's articulation of the *Tathandlung* of the I as a first principle of philosophy that is capable

[2] Namely, Schelling's *Über die Möglichkeit einer Form der Philosophie überhaupt* (1794) [Hereafter: *Form-Schrift*], and *Vom Ich als Prinzip der Philosophie* (1795) [Hereafter: *Vom Ich*]. Together with his *Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kriticismus* (1795–96)], these texts are also commonly referred to as Schelling's earliest published writings.

of grounding the unity of both theoretical *and* practical reason that points the way for Schelling beyond the limitations of Reinhold's approach. The undeniably decisive impact of Fichte's early *Wissenschaftslehre* upon the development of Schelling's early thought,[3] however, has in the past led scholars to misinterpret his early published writings as derivative works that are entirely dependent upon Fichte, mere explications of the *Wissenschaftslehre* that make no independent contributions to or significant modifications of Fichte's project.[4] In what has become a classic challenge to such interpretations, Wolfgang Wieland argues that, while it is evident that Schelling's early published works presuppose Fichte's *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre* and the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* in both their content and development, Schelling goes on to develop positions in these texts that are so wholly independent from Fichte

[3] In a letter written to Hegel in January of 1795, during the time he was writing *Vom Ich*, Schelling's enthusiasm for Fiche's new philosophy is palpable: "Fichte will raise philosophy to a height from which most of the current Kantians will become dizzy… I am working now on an ethics *à la* Spinoza. It seeks to establish the highest principles of all philosophy, in which theoretical and practical reason are united. If I have the courage and the time, it will be finished by the next book-fair or at the latest by next summer. I will be lucky enough if I can be one of the first to greet the new hero, Fichte, in the land of truth!" (SW I/10, 73-4)

[4] For an excellent account of the secondary literature regarding the relation between the early Schelling and Fichte, see Dalia Nassar, *The Romantic Absolute*, pp. 161, and especially note 2 (305). Nassar notes that one of the first to characterize Schelling's early works as "entirely Fichtean" was Hegel. Fichte, too, seemed to share this impression after reading *Vom Ich*, stating in a letter to Reinhold that the work was nothing but "A commentary on my own" [GA 3/2, no. 295; quoted in Nassar, *The Romantic Absolute*, 161]. Nassar notes that earlier studies on Schelling tended to place strong emphasis on Fichte's impact on Schelling. Thus, Xavier Tilliette, in his *Schelling: One Philosophie de Devenir*, vol. 1, *Le System Vivant* (Paris: Vrin, 1970), argues that Schelling was, "at least in intention, a Fichtean." Likewise, Nassar notes, Ingtraud Görland claims that "it is actually not possible that Schelling broke through Fichtean philosophy and put forth his own; rather it was only a further development of Fichte's convoluted philosophy." [*Die Entwicklung der Früphilosophie Schellings in der Auseinandersetzung mit Fichte* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1973,7; quoted in Nassar, *The Romantic Absolute*, 305.] Eric Watkins includes Reinhard Lauth, *Die Entstehung von Schellings Identitätsphilosophie in Auseinandersetzung mit Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre (1795–1801)*, (Freiburg and Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 1975) and Fredrick Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781–1801*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002) among those arguing that "Schelling was heavily influenced by Fichte, engaged in an essentially Fichtean project, utilizing essentially Fichtean tools (terms, distinctions, assumptions)." See Watkins, "The Early Schelling on the Unconditioned," in Ostaric, *Interpreting Schelling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, 10). Beiser, however, does temper this characterization by emphasizing the inchoate differences between Schelling and Fichte in *Vom Ich*: "Despite his Fichtean convictions, Schelling's early tract departs from his mentor in important respects. In subtle and unconscious ways, the ground is already laid for the later break with Fichte." (472)

that "recourse to Fichte is only occasionally useful for their understanding."[5] And while a good deal of scholarship since the publication of Wieland's essay has come to challenge the "merely Fichtean" characterization of these texts[6], the latter has cast a long shadow on the interpretative framework through which Schelling's first systematic writings, and especially his *Vom Ich*, have been viewed. It is only recently that certain correlate elements of the interpretive framework arising from this characterization have also begun to be called into question and challenged. First and foremost among these elements is the unjustified neglect of these texts on the part of scholars, a tendency that was already criticized by Wieland some forty years ago.[7] Although the presumption that Schelling is merely rehearsing Fichte's early *Wissenschaftslehre* and that his early published works contain little of real significance, has by and large been refuted, Schelling's early published works continue to receive far less attention than they merit.[8] Recent scholarship has begun to remedy this neglect, bringing to light a greater complexity, nuance, and creativity in Schelling's reception of the early *Wissenschaftslehre* than had previously been acknowledged and

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[5] "Wenn der Anstoß zu ihrer Konzeption zweifellos auch von Fichte her kommt, so sind sie doch in ihrer Durchfuhrung keine Schulerarbeiten, sondern, wie man leicht sieht, so eigenstandig, daß ein Rekurs auf Fichte fur das Verstandnis nur noch gelegentlich von Nutzen ist." (Wolfgang Wieland, "*Die Anfänge der Philosophie Schellings und die Frage nach der Natur*," In *Materialien zu Schellings philosophischen Anfängen*, edited by Manfred Frank and Gerhard Kurz (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1975, 237-279, 245).

[6] Nassar points to a growing consensus over the past twenty years that "Schelling was *never* a fully-fledged Fichtean" (Nassar, *The Romantic Absolute*, 305). See this work, as well as her "Pure versus Empirical Forms of Thought: Schelling's Critique of Kant's Categories and the Beginnings of *Naturphilosophie*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 52, no. 1 (2014): 114, for a detailed breakdown of the different versions of this challenge in the secondary literature.

[7] "Die Beziehung zur ersten *Wissenschaftslehre* Fichtes hat aber diese frühesten Schriften Schelling's dem Interesse der Forschung in oft ungerechtfertigter Weise entzogen." (Wieland, "*Die Anfänge der Philosophie Schellings und die Frage nach der Natur*," 245).

[8] There are, of course, notable exceptions to this tendency, including Michaela Boenke, *Transformation des Realitätsbegriffs: Untersuchungen zur frühen Philosophie Schellings im Ausgang von Kant* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 1990). A symptom of this neglect appears in standard accounts of the notorious break or rupture between Schelling and Fichte, many of which begin the narrative with Schelling's published *Naturphilosophie* writings while ignoring Schelling's early published works.

demonstrating the foundational role that his early published works play in the development of Schelling's mature thought.[9]

Another key piece of the "merely Fichtean" interpretive framework that has been called into question concerns the manner in which Schelling's early published works have been understood in relation to his mature *Naturphilosophie*. As Dalia Nassar has astutely noted, the presumption that these texts are essentially Fichtean in character has led to a strong tendency to overemphasize themes of break or rupture in the development of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*.[10] The result is that Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* is often presented primarily as a departure from the transcendental philosophy of Fichte and thus as a break with Schelling's own earlier, supposedly Fichtean, position. From this perspective, it is taken for granted that in the course of his development toward the *Naturphilosophie* Schelling must have passed through some kind of rupture not just with Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* but also with his own early systematic works. Two important consequences follow from this interpretative framework. First, in seeking to investigate the origins of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, the focus of attention is directed toward locating points of rupture within Schelling's development, while scant attention is paid to elements of continuity and consistent development. Secondly, the first systematic works are, by virtue of being "Fichtean," understood to be prior to any alleged point of rupture that might be identified; accordingly, these texts are from the outset presumed to have little or nothing to do with the origin

[9] Dalia Nassar's recent works make an important contribution in this regard. See her monograph *The Romantic Absolute*, as well as "Pure versus Empirical," and "Spinoza in Schelling's Early Conception of Intellectual Intuition," in *Spinoza and German Idealism*, ed. Eckart Förster and Yitzhak Melamed (Cambridge University Press, 2012). Among other recent contributions to this emerging paradigm, I would like to also highlight Eric Watkins, "The Early Schelling on the Unconditioned," as well as Sebastian Gardner, "Fichte and Schelling: The Limitations of the Wissenschaftslehre?" In *The Cambridge Companion to Fichte*, edited by David James and Günter Zöller, (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 326–49.

[10] Nassar, "Pure versus Empirical," 114.

and development of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*.[11] The result, as Nassar states, is that "Schelling's writings before 1797 have been generally considered to bear little or no relation to his writings on *Naturphilosophy*."[12] In contrast with this standard account of the development of the *Naturphilosophie*, Nassar proposes an alternative perspective: that Schelling's "first systematic works offer significant insights into the way in which he comes to understand the meaning and goal of his philosophy of nature," and that "an examination of Schelling's early writings will shed important light on his later—often complex and seemingly problematic —views in the philosophy of nature."[13] The present work seeks to make a contribution to this new interpretive framework advanced by Nassar, showing that essential elements of Schelling's philosophical development toward the *Naturphilosophie* emerge in *Vom Ich* and that closer attention to this text opens up important new perspectives on Schelling's project for a *Naturphilosophie* as a whole.

A third piece of the "merely Fichtean" paradigm that stands in need of correction is its tendency to obscure the connection between Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* and the core problems of Kant's critical philosophy. Put another way, the interpretation of the early published works as entirely dependent upon Fichte renders the idea that the *Naturphilosophie* should be viewed as, in Schelling's words, a "result of Kantian critique" highly suspect or outright implausible. For so

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[11] This interpretation often remains in force even when the premise that Schelling's early systematic writings are entirely Fichtean has been called into question. Thus, for example, even though Beiser points out the distance between Schelling's early works and Fichte's position, as we have seen, he nevertheless goes on to present Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* as a rejection of Fichtean principles and therefore a break with the views of his earlier position. See Beiser, *German Idealism*, 491-505. Nassar also cites Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life*, 141-2, as an example of this position (see "Pure versus Empirical," 114).

[12] Nassar, "Pure versus Empirical," 114. Nassar goes on to point out that the one exception to this general rule is the attempt to discern the beginnings of the *Naturphilosophy* in Schelling's *Timeaus* essay. However, proponents of this interpretation "continue to accept the general view that Schelling's other early writings […] are Fichtean and elaborate a decisively different direction from the one he takes in the *Naturphilosophie*." In other words, the early published works are viewed as a temporary hiatus in Schelling's trajectory toward the *Naturphilosophie* and not as an integral part of its development.

[13] Nassar, "Pure versus Empirical," 114.

long as the *Naturphilosophie* is thought to follow upon a "Fichtean" stage of Schelling's development, it appears in one of two possible guises: either as a misapplication of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, such that Schelling's turn to the *Naturphilosophie* is the result of a distortion or corruption of his originally 'sound' Fichtean principles, or else as a rejection on Schelling's part of his earlier "Fichtean" position. In either case, the roots of the *Naturphilosophie* within Kant's critical system are in large part obscured, since its only possible origin is presumed to be an exclusively Fichtean framework. What follows from this is the idea that the *Naturphilosophie* is a kind of retrograde movement in the development of the critical system, a tangential spinoff from Fichte that is a departure from the primary trajectory of the critical philosophy's development. As Wieland has it, "the transition from Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* to the *Naturphilosophie* is then presented as a break, if not an uncritical step backward, from what has just been achieved through an incomparable effort of thought."[14] Against this perspective, I argue that the *Naturphilosophie* is grounded in the intense dialogue that Schelling undertakes with Kant in *Vom Ich*. In what follows, I aim to show that a close reading of the *Vom Ich* as a revision of the Kantian system helps bring to light an understanding of the *Naturphilosophie* as a response to central concerns of the critical system. Specifically, in Schelling's *Vom Ich* we see the emergence of the *Naturphilosophie* out of the concerns of the third *Critique* to establish the unity of theoretical and practical reason, of nature and freedom, and of mechanism and organism.

III. **Schelling's relation to Fichte**

Before proceeding further, I would like to make a few remarks regarding Schelling's appropriation

[14] Wieland, "*Die Anfänge der Philosophie Schellings und die Frage nach der Natur*", 245.

of the early *Wissenschaftslehre*. In seeking to foreground the foundational role that Schelling's engagement with *Kant* plays in the emergence of his position in *Vom Ich*, I in no way mean to diminish the importance of Fichte's early *Wissenschaftslehre* for Schelling's thought in his first systematic works. At first glance, it may seem contradictory to insist that Schelling is both deeply committed to Fichte's early *Wissenschaftslehre and* that, in his reception of that project, he diverges from Fichte in essential ways. This apparent contradiction, however, is grounded in the false dichotomy that either the early Schelling was entirely Fichtean or else he was not Fichtean at all. As I hope to show, a sound reading of Schelling's *Vom Ich* will require staking out a more nuanced position, one in which careful attention is given to the peculiar alchemy of Schelling's thought[15], which is on full display in this text. For, as we will see, while Schelling does indeed embrace Fichte's project of revising the Kantian system on the basis of the newly formulated first principle of the "I", he does so by establishing a kind of "reciprocal effect"[16] between Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* and Kant's own formulation of the critical philosophy. In this process, Schelling transforms central elements of Fichte's project, rendering both its first principle and its systematic development in a way that is decisively marked by his intense engagement with the text of Kant's *third Critique*. The result that we find in *Vom Ich* is a creative and original appropriation of Fichte's first principle that charts an alternate trajectory out of Kant's critical system from the one pursued by Fichte in the early *Wissenschaftslehre*. It is my contention that central elements of

[15] By this, I mean his ability to bring together an often-bewildering number of thinkers and perspectives and combine them into a new synthesis that is uniquely his own. In *Vom Ich*, we see that he brings together insights from Fichte, Kant, Jacobi, and Spinoza, and weaves these together into his own position, one that could be characterized as a 'faithful transgression' of every one of his interlocutors.

[16] As will see, Schelling adapts this key term from the theoretical part of Fichte's *Grundlage* and uses it in the context of his revision of Kant's practical reason. The idea stems from Kant's account of reciprocal determination as the kind of causality that is proper to the organism, in which part and whole are reciprocally causes of each other.

Schelling's divergence from Fichte in *Vom Ich* can in large part be attributed to the different methodologies that each pursues in their respective attempts to advance the critical system on the basis of Fichte's new first principle. For whereas Fichte will pursue a rigorous deduction of the system of the *Wissenschaftslehre* in the *Grundlage*, beginning as it were from scratch with the absolute first principles and proceeding to construct the *Wissenschaftslehre* through a meticulous chain of deductions, Schelling will seek to put the new first principles "to the test" by showing that they are indeed capable of grounding the "conclusions" of Kant's system. As Schelling states in the Preface to *Vom Ich*, he seeks to give "an exposition of Kant's philosophy based on superior principles" (VI, I/1 154). Schelling accordingly brings Fichte's first principles back into dialogue with Kant's works, resulting in a more hermeneutical approach that allows Kant's system to push back on the newly formulated first principles and to influence the form and trajectory of their development.

It is important recognize, however, that the two principal sources of Schelling's divergence from Fichte that I have identified above—his creative and original interpretation of Fichte's new first principle and his hermeneutical approach to the revision of Kant's system—are both inspired by Fichte's own principles and his own characterization of the early *Wissenschaftslehre*. In this way, we can see how Schelling could have been such an enthusiastic proponent of Fichte's early *Wissenschaftslehre* while simultaneously altering core elements of that project. Regarding the creative and original manner in which Schelling develops the key ideas of Fichte's early *Wissenschaftslehre*, it is helpful to keep in mind several aspects of Fichte's rhetorical presentation of the early *Wissenschaftslehre*. In these early texts, Fichte repeatedly emphasizes the schematic and inchoate nature of his system. The overall atmosphere of these early texts is one of excitement over Fichte's new discovery and eager anticipation for the future development of the system. The

specific trajectory and shape of that new system at this point, however, is still very much an open question. In *Concerning the Concept of the* Wissenschaftslehre, for example, Fichte gives only a schematic presentation of the core principles of his new system in a suggestive way without indicating the exact path for their development, providing only a hypothetical sketch of what will become Part III of the *Grundlage*[17].

While the *Grundlage* certainly lays out a definite trajectory for the shape of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, there are two points to bear in mind about this text. To begin with, Fichte makes it clear to his readers that this is a preliminary and somewhat hasty presentation of his system. Beyond the circumstances surrounding the writing and publication of the text, we must also keep in mind the character of the system as well as the proper mode of presentation. Daniel Breazeale points out that "Fichte always insisted on the freedom of the *Wissenschaftslehre* from any specific final formulation and from any specific technical vocabulary."[18] Fichte did not want the system to become a dead letter that could be memorized and mastered, and he considered it to be an essential characteristic of the *Wissenschaftslehre* that it should remain malleable and resist any kind of rigid or fixed formulation. As Breazeale puts it, "Despite its systematic scope and methodological rigor there is a remarkable openness to the *Wissenschaftslehre*, which for Fichte is not a fixed doctrine to be laid down once and for all in teaching and in writing, but an open system animated and sustained by a spirit of continuing inquiry and self- improvement."[19]

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[17] See Fichte's *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, translated as *Science of Knowledge with the First and Second Introductions*, translated by Peter Heath and John Lachs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). Citations from this text will be given according to *J.G. Fichte: Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaft.* Edited by R. Lauth, H. Jacob, and H. Gliwitsky. Stuttgard-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1964– and cited as "GL". All translations are taken frome Heath and Lacks translation.

[18] From the "Introduction" to Fichte, *The System of Ethics*, Translated and edited by Danieal Breazeale and Günter Zöller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), xii.

[19] Fichte, *The System of Ethics*, xii.

In the Preface to the *Grundlage*, Fichte notes that this open character of his system must be preserved even at the cost of potential misunderstanding and misinterpretation, stating that he intentionally left some points underdetermined:

> It is particularly necessary to recall, I think, that I do not tell the reader everything, but have also wished to leave him something to think about. There are numerous misunderstandings that I certainly anticipate, and that a few words of mine could have rectified. Yet I have not said these few words, because I wished to encourage independent thought. The Science of Knowledge should in no way *force* itself upon the reader, but should *become a necessity* for him, as it has for the author himself. (GL, I,98)

Since the foundation of the entire *Wissenschaftslehre* is the *Tathandlung* of the individual philosophizing subject, we would expect that the independent thought of each participant and each individual perspective on the system would be encouraged, and that is indeed what Fichte clearly states here. His appeal to the independent thought of his readers is accompanied by frequent invitations to would-be collaborators to join in the development of this new project. Fichte does not ask for "followers" who would recite his doctrines faithfully, but active participants in the construction of a system that will be developed from many different perspectives. Thus, in the *Concept* essay, he writes: "From the united efforts of so many excellent minds it is to be expected that this system will soon be described from many different angles and that it will be widely applied and will achieve its aim of reforming philosophy and thereby affecting scientific practice as such."[20]

[20] Ficthe, "Concerning the Concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre,"* in Ficthe, *Early Philosophical Writings*, translated by Daniel Breazeale (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 99.

Thus, upon Fichte's express "invitation", as well as the overall character of his system, it would indeed be strange for Schelling to embrace the *Wissenschaftslehre* by merely repeating the parts of the system that Fichte had already established as a passive disciple. Rather, in line with Fichte's own presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, we can understand Schelling's efforts in the early systematic writings as a collaborative participation in the construction of a new and largely undefined system and the pursuit of some of the "many different angles" from which the critical system might be developed.

Schelling's *Vom Ich* in particular can be interpreted as advancing the *Wissenschaftslehre* into new territory by applying the first principles to Kant's works and demonstrating that the newly formulated first principles are indeed capable of grounding the results of the Kantian philosophy. I have already claimed that it is Schelling's hermeneutical approach to the revision of Kant's system that leads to his principal divergences from Fichte. It is Fichte's own suggestion, however, which provides the backbone of Schelling's reading of Kant, as we will see shortly. For it is Fichte who first advances the idea that Kant's system must be interpreted as the work of a genius who proceeds from an intuitive grasp of the first principles of his system without ever explicitly formulating them.[21] Thus, regarding both his creative and original development of Fichte's system, as well as his methodology of setting the new first principles of the *Wissenschaftslehre* into active dialogue and engagement with the Kantian text, we can see that Schelling could have understood

[21] Fichte makes this suggestion frequently. For example, in "Concerning the Concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre*," Fichte writes: "The author remains convinced that no human understanding can advance further than the boundary on which Kant, especially in the *Critique of Judgement*, stood, and which he declared to be the final boundary of human knowing—but without ever telling us specifically where it lies. I realize that I will never be able to say anything which has not been already—directly or indirectly and with more or less clarity—been indicated by Kant. I leave to future ages the task of fathoming the genius of this man who, often as if inspired from on high, drove philosophical judgement so decisively from the standpoint at which he found it toward its final goal" ("Concept", in *Early Writings*, 95-6).

his work to be a "faithful" appropriation of the *Wissenschaftslehre* while simultaneously taking it into different directions than Fichte would come to pursue.

One final point should be noted in this regard. There is strong evidence indicating that, at the time Schelling was writing *Vom Ich*, he had not yet received (or worked through) the second part of the *Grundlage* in which Fichte puts forward his account of practical reason. Thus, while writing *Vom Ich,* all Schelling would have been aware of regarding Fichte's practical philosophy were the programmatic statements from the *Aenesidemus Review* and the *Concept*, in which Fichte outlines his notion of the primacy of the practical and the notion that practical reason alone is able to resolve the aporiae of theoretical philosophy. As I hope to show, Schelling's develops this notion of the "primacy of the practical" in a very different direction from the one Fichte articulates in the second half of the *Grundlage*, and this plays a central role in the overall trajectory of Schelling's divergence from Fichte. Given that Schelling was unaware of Fichte's solution to the relation between theoretical and practical reason, he could not be said to be explicitly contradicting Fichte's position. Thus, in this instance in particular, we see that the dichotomy between "faithful Fichtean" and explicit rejection does not hold.

IV. Schelling's relation to Kant

The centrality of Kant for the development of early German Idealist thought is, of course, so thoroughly taken for granted that it might seem to merely be a truism to point to Kant as an essential influence on the development of Schelling's thought. And yet, as Eric Watkins has recently argued, scholarly efforts seeking to establish the early Schelling's independence from Fichte have resulted in "a variety of proposals about which figures were most influential in the formation of Schelling's

earliest philosophical views."[22] While these efforts are without questions an invaluable contribution to our understanding of the early Schelling, Watkins points out that the crucial influence of Kant is conspicuously absent from most accounts. Apart from the general recognition that Kant's works provided a constant backdrop for Schelling's work, we find mostly discussions of the basic principles governing Schelling's relation to Kant, such as Schelling's assertion that his work sought to provide the missing premises to the results of that Kantian system, or that Schelling strives to develop the spirit underlying the letter of Kant's philosophy. The problem that Watkins identifies is that "these acknowledgments are often still quite generic and are rarely filled out with precise details about what features of Schelling's position derive from which specific aspects of Kant's position."[23] In failing to register the concrete and particular ways in Schelling's thought takes up and responds to *specific aspects* of the Kantian philosophy, then, the secondary literature has by and large tended to overlook the central role of Kant in the development of Schelling's early thought. In what follows, my goal is similar to that of Watkins: to remedy this omission by exploring the precise details of Schelling's engagement with Kant's philosophy.[24] In particular, I focus on Schelling's reading of one specific passage from Kant's third *Critique* that, I argue, plays an indispensable role in determining both Schelling's "conceptually secure" transformation of the Kantian system as well as establishing the parameters of Schelling's reception of the early *Wissenschaftslehre*. This is Kant's "Remark" in section 76 of the *Critique of Teleological Judgment*. By tracing in detail the impact of this text on Schelling's project in *Vom*

[22] Watkins, "The Early Schelling on the Unconditioned," 11.

[23] Watkins, "The Early Schelling on the Unconditioned," 12.

[24] Watkins focuses on the role that "Kant's specific views on the unconditioned" play in the formation of fundamental principles of Schelling's early thought. (Watkins, "The Early Schelling on the Unconditioned," 12).

Ich, we gain important insight into the emergence of foundational elements of Schelling's thought that will lay the groundwork for his mature *Naturphilosophie*.

V. Overview of § 76 of the *Critique of Judgment*

Schelling himself signals the importance of section 76 of the third *Critique* at the end of the VI, where he declares: "Perhaps there have never been so many deep thoughts compressed into so few pages as in the critique of teleological judgment, § 76" (VI, I/1 242). Despite the clear significance this passage holds for Schelling in the *Vom Ich*, surprisingly little attention has been given to this connection.[25]

In what follows, argue that Kant's § 76 plays an essential role in Schelling's *Vom Ich* and in the development of his philosophy as a whole. In particular, I claim that this passage has an important role in establishing the direction of Schelling's thought that culminates in the NP. This connection has not been fully explored in the secondary literature. In the following chapter I offer an extended exploration of the role this text plays in Schelling's *Vom Ich* and in establishing the foundations for the NP. This proposed reading helps to bring to light the principal themes driving Schelling's text. In addition, by foregrounding the role of Kant's § 76, we see more clearly the ways in which the foundations for the *Naturphilosophie* are being established in *Vom Ich*. In this

[25] One notable exception is Eckart Förster, who points to the importance of this passage for Schelling but draws questionable conclusions regarding its significance, as we will see in the next chapter. Other notable exceptions Dalia Nassar in "Pure versus Empirical" and Sebastian Gardner in "Fichte and Schelling: The Limitations of the Wissenschaftslehre?" in *The Cambridge Companion to Fichte*, David James and Günter Zöller (eds.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2016) 326–49.

way, we gain a better sense of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* as a response to central concerns of the critical philosophy; that is, as the "conceptually secure" result of the Kantian critique. The resulting perspective provides a more balanced perspective on the *Naturphilosophie* as a whole (particularly concerning the idea that the *Naturphilosophie* is a response to question of both theoretical and practical reason). In the remainder of the current chapter, I will give an overview of Kant's § 76 as well as an overview of the principal themes Schelling adopts from this passage. In the chapter to follow, I will focus on the role each part of § 76 plays in Schelling's revision of each of the principal domains of Kant's system: theoretical reason, practical reason, and teleological judgment.

Kant's "Remark" in § 76 the third *Critique* appears in the middle of the Dialectic of the Critique of Teleological Power Judgment. Kant presents this "Remark" as an elucidation of an idea that is central to his resolution to the antinomy of teleological judgment, that of the subjective necessity of the principle of teleological judgment. He concludes his argument on this point in § 75, and it will be helpful to briefly summarize his main point. The fundamental principle of teleological judgment can be described as follows: it is "indispensable for us to subject nature to the concept of an intention if we would even merely conduct research among its organized products by means of continued observation;" accordingly, "this concept is thus an absolutely necessary maxim for the use of our reason in experience" (5:398). This principle, Kant insists, must be understood as a "subjective fundamental principle merely for the reflecting power of judgment," and by no means can it be understood as an "objective fundamental principle" for the determining power of judgment (5:398). This maxim, Kant argues, is based entirely on the subjective constitution of our cognitive faculties. It cannot be used as the ground of any determinate judgment, such that it would allow us to assert, as objectively and dogmatically valid, that natural

ends – organisms – are indeed products of an intelligent cause. Although this is a subjective principle for reflective judgment, however, Kant wants to argue that we lose nothing by being unable to use this principle to make objective judgments, since it is "completely sufficient for every speculative as well as practical use of our reason in every **human** respect" (5:400). This principle is "ineradicably attached to the human race" (5:400), and so remains in force for all human cognition. Given that "we cannot make any objective judgment at all, whether affirmative or negative, about the proposition that there is an intentionally acting being as world-cause (as author)," this principle is all that is necessary for us if we are to restrict our judgments and remain "in accordance with what it is granted to us to understand through our own nature (in accordance with the conditions and limits of our reason)"(5:400).

Kant opens his "Remark" in § 76 by characterizing the section as a "digression" for the purposes of elucidation, even though the entire consideration "would certainly deserve to be elaborated in detail in transcendental philosophy" (5:401). He then launches into a dense paragraph that serves as a kind of treatise in miniature on the relation between reason and the understanding in general, and specifically between the ideas of reason and their proper employment by the understanding. This introductory paragraph is followed by three short "examples," each only a single paragraph long, intended to illustrate how this relation between the reason and the understanding plays out concretely. The three examples Kant gives are no less than the factually of theoretical reason, the faculty of practical reason, and the faculty of reflective judgment. In each example, Kant establishes a near-perfect parallel in which it is shown how the ideas of reason are employed within the separate domains of each faculty and in accordance with the subjective conditions proper to each. The "Remark" builds up to the final conclusion of the third example, which focuses on teleological judgment, that the concept of a purposiveness of nature is only a

subjective principle of reason that functions as a regulative principle for the reflective power of judgment. The goal of the "Remark," then, is clearly to give support to Kant's principal claim in this section concerning the subjectively valid principle of teleological judgment. In the process, however, Kant opens up some fascinating perspectives on the relation between reason and the understanding as well as the interconnection between each of the three faculties. The compact nature of these "elucidations" gives them a particularly intriguing character and certainly contributed in part to Schelling's assertion about this section: "Perhaps there have never been so many deep thoughts compressed into so few pages."

VII. Schelling's Hermeneutic of Kant

Before outlining the principal themes that Schelling derives from his reading of § 76, it will be important to discuss some of the unique hermeneutical principles Schelling employs in the interpretation of Kant that he develops in *Vom Ich*. In the Preface to *Vom Ich*, Schelling begins by reiterating the common theme that begins with Reinhold and runs continuously through Fichte and Schelling: Kant's philosophy remains incomplete inasmuch as it has not yet provided the critical philosophy with adequate first principles. As Schelling states in an oft-quoted passage from his letter to Hegel from January 6, 1795, "Philosophy is not yet at an end. Kant has provided the results; the premisses are still lacking and who can understand results without premises?"[26] The goal of *Vom Ich*, then, is to "depict the results of critical philosophy in its regression to the ultimate principles of all knowledge"(VI, I/1 152, translation modified). In setting forth the ultimate or

[26] Schelling to Hegel, letter from January 6, 1795.

highest principles of philosophy, which Schelling takes to have been established by Fichte's *Tathandlung* of the "I", the aim is to demonstrate that these principles do in fact provide an adequate grounding of the entire critical philosophy. Schelling goes on to describe his project in *Vom Ich* as a "putting to the test" of these highest principles, which will show themselves to be correct if they can not only produce the results of the critical philosophy that Kant had established, but also resolve the shortcomings and contradictions that remained in Kant's system.[27]

Schelling continues his Preface by enumerating the ways in which Kant's system remains incomplete and requires further grounding in higher principles. In each instance, Schelling seeks to show that while Kant arrived at the correct results, he did so only by presupposing superior principles that he grasped intuitively and did not go on to establish explicitly. Since the results of his philosophy were not properly derived from these superior principles, either they remain open to skeptical attack, or else they are given in distorted form and stand in need of correction, or both. Thus, for example, Schelling claims that Kant's deduction of the pure forms of space and time is based on subordinate principles that "must themselves depend on a higher form of synthesis" (VI, I/1153). Schelling also repeats his argument from the *Form-Schrift* that Kant's deduction of the categories "tell us at first glance that they presuppose superior principles" (VI, I/1 153-4). Finally, Schelling levels his principle criticism of Kant's system, which will become a central theme of the essay: that Kant did not sufficiently unite the domains of practical and theoretical reason.

It will be helpful to review Schelling's argument from the *Form-Schrift* that Kant's deduction of the categories as given in the *Critique of Pure Reason* presupposes higher principles that are

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[27] "… the many apparent contradictions in Kant's writings pointed out by his opponents should have been admitted long ago for they cannot be corrected at all except under those higher principles which, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, its author only *presupposed*." (VI, I/1 154)

not made explicit. Schelling's reasoning here reveals some important aspects of Schelling's complex hermeneutic of the Kantian corpus, which is at work both in the *Form-Schrift* and throughout *Vom Ich*. The text from the first *Critique* that Schelling has in mind when he states the text tells us "at first glance" that it presupposes higher principles is § 11 of the deduction of the categories, which appears just after Kant introduces the table of categories (B109-B113). Here, Kant begins a series of three "Remarks" by stating the following: "Subtle considerations about this table of categories could be made, which could perhaps have considerable consequences with regard to the scientific form of all cognitions of reason" (B109). Schelling gives a good summary of Kant's "subtle considerations," as well the significance Schelling reads into them in the following paragraph from *Form-Schrift*:

> It is surprising that he should depict the deduced forms as if they were not dependent on any principle, just as he had set forth the original form—abruptly, as it were—without tying it to a principle. All the more surprising is it to read his assurance that all these forms, which he classifies in four groups, have something in common; for instance, the number of forms in each group is always the same, three, and in all groups the third form originates from the combination of the first and second [category], and so on. This in itself implicitly points to an original form, under which all of them stand together, and which imparts to them all they have in common with regard to their form. (FS, I/1, 50-51)[28]

Schelling takes the "Remark" from the deduction of the categories in the first *Critique* then, as an explicit acknowledgment on Kant's part that there is an "original form of all knowledge" that

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[28] Schelling, *Über die Möglichkeit einer Form der Philosophie Überhaupt* (hereafter referred to as the *Form-Schrift*); translated as *On the Possibiity of a Form of All Philosophy* in *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge: Four Early Essays (1794-1796)*, trans. Fritz Marti (Lewis: Bucknell University Press, 1980). Citations from this text will be given from the SW edition and abbreviated as FS.

underlies his deduction of the categories. From this, Schelling concludes that it should therefore be possible to "indicate the connection of the particular forms of knowledge (which he presents in a table) with that original form" (FS, I/1, 50). Schelling takes this short "Remark," merely an aside for Kant, as a clear indication of the path of investigation that Kant ought to have pursued and thus as providing an outline for Schelling's own pursuit of that original form of reason. Kant himself failed to pursue these insights, Schelling claims, because "he himself was not quite clear about this original [form]" (FS, I/1, 51). Nevertheless, on Schelling's reading, this section reveals the depth of Kant's "admirable genius," according to which he had an intuitive grasp of the superior principles on which his system is based. Schelling understands his own project, then as an attempt to make these principles *explicit*: "Such passages in which such references occur like single rays of light which this admirable genius sheds on the whole corpus of the sciences vouch for the correctness of those traits by which Fichte (in the preface of his above-mentioned essay)[29] tries to characterize Kant" (FS, I/1, 50).

As a consequence of this understanding of Kant's genius, as well as his shortcomings in not making explicit what he grasped only intuitively, Schelling develops a rather complex hermeneutic of Kant's works. The Kantian system remains an unfinished work that points the way toward a complete system but which contains surprising omissions and gaps that need to be filled in. What

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[29] Schelling is referring to the following passage from Fichte's "Concerning the Concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre*": "The author remains convinced that no human understanding can advance further than the boundary on which Kant, especially in the *Critique of Judgement*, stood, and which he declared to be the final boundary of human knowing—but without ever telling us specifically where it lies. I realize that I will never be able to say anything which has not been already—directly or indirectly and with more or less clarity—been indicated by Kant. I leave to future ages the task of fathoming the genius of this man who, often as if inspired from on high, drove philosophical judgement so decisively from the standpoint at which he found it toward its final goal." ("Concept", *Early Writings*, 95-6)

Schelling takes over from Fichte both the idea that Kant was in possession of a genius "inspired as if from on high" by which he had an intuitive grasp of the highest principles of all philosophy, as well as the idea that Kant did not give a full and adequate account of these principles, often setting forth crucial elements "indirectly and with more or less clarity."

I would like to highlight here is the following: on Schelling's interpretation, the discerning reader ought be able to locate those moments in the Kantian text where his genius provides "hints" and "presentiments"[30] that shed "single rays of light" upon the principles that underlie the whole system. Schelling gives a clear statement of his hermeneutic principle for reading Kant just after providing his list of the shortcomings of Kant's system in the preface to *Vom Ich*. He states:

> I think the mere mention of all this will suffice to justify the need of an exposition of Kant's philosophy based on superior principles. Indeed I believe that, in the case of such an author, one must explain him according to the principles which he must have presupposed, and *only* according to them. Even in the face of the original sense of his words, one must assert the still more original sense of his thoughts. This essay proposes to establish the principles [on which Kant's thoughts rest]. (VI, I/1 154-5)

The investigations undertaken in *Vom Ich*, then, seek both to establish the principles that Kant's thought presuppose, and to provide an exegesis (*Exegese*) of the Kantian philosophy on the basis of these principles. Such a 'reading' of Kant's philosophy requires that his system be explained *singly and solely* (*einzig und allein*) on the basis of these higher principles, inasmuch as these are "everywhere presupposed"[31] by Kant. This hermeneutic gives license for what we might today call a "reconstruction" of Kant's position, but one that has no qualms about going against the original sense of his words in pursuit of the "more original sense" of the spirit of his thought. It also gives a privileged place to those instances in Kant's works where he seems to provide 'hints' or 'rays of

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[30] Kant's own terms; see, e.g., 5:360.

[31] Schelling will make this claim further on in *Vom Ich* with respect to Kant's discussion of intellectual intuition, as we will have occasion to see further on. Schelling's interpretation of intellectual intuition is perhaps the paradigmatic example of his principle of holding to the spirit of Kant's writings, even when this leads to conflicts with the letter of the Kantian text.

insight' into the original ground or higher principles that (for Schelling) undergird and give unity to his system.

Schelling will apply the same logic that he applies in this "Remark" from the first *Critique* deduction of the categories to his interpretation of Kant's "Remark" in section 76 from the third *Critique*. In addition to his explicit acknowledgement of the importance of this section in his footnote declaring the importance of this text, I argue that Schelling read § 76 as a privileged text within Kant's works, one of those "single rays of light which this admirable genius sheds on the whole corpus of the science." Schelling finds within § 76 a hint indicating how the whole critical system might be unified in a single first principle, which Schelling claims to have been fully determined by Fichte as the absolute I. In what follows, I will argue that Schelling uses this text as a blueprint for the task he undertakes in *Vom Ich* to provide a systematic revision of Kant's critical system, to "depict the results of critical philosophy in its regression to the ultimate principles of all knowledge" (VI, I/1 152, translation modified).

Conclusion: Overview of Schelling's Interpretation of § 76

Schelling's enthusiasm for this section of the third *Critique* mirrors, I have said, his enthusiasm for Kant's remark regarding the deduction of the categories, inasmuch as both seem to point to some implicit, underlying structure that unifies the elements that Kant names explicitly. In this case, Schelling reads into § 76 the idea of a single, unconditioned principle that grounds the three domains of theoretical reason, practical reason, and reflective judgment, each of which depends upon an idea of the unconditioned and employs that idea in a conditioned or schematized manner as a regulative idea. While Kant does not explicitly claim in § 76 that the unconditioned principles

underlying each of these three domains ought to be considered as one single principle, Schelling will read this section in light of the broader context of the third *Critique*, in which one of Kant's principal goals is to establish a higher unity of reason, specifically the unity of theoretical and practical reason, nature and freedom, through the concept of a supersensible ground underlying both.[32] Thus, in light of statements from Kant such as the following, in which he claims that we must "look beyond the sensible and to seek the unifying point of all our faculties a priori in the supersensible: because no other way remains to make reason self-consistent,"(5:341) Schelling will see within § 76 a strong hint pointing the way toward the proper determination of this unifying point in a single, unconditioned principle. This is, it should be noted, precisely what Fichte understood his *Wissenschaftslehre* to have accomplished; as Förster has pointed out concerning Fichte's own relation to Kant's third *Critique*, Fichte claimed that the essence of the *Wissenschaftslehre* consisted "precisely in the exploration of what for Kant was unexplorable, namely the common root linking the sensible and supersensible worlds, and in the real and comprehensible derivation of the two worlds [nature and freedom] from a single principle" (GA II, 8:32; W10:104)[33]. For Schelling, then, it is clear that the ideas of reason Kant refers to in § 76 can have no other ground than the absolute I. The "superior principles" that Kant presupposed but did not formulate explicitly are, on Schelling's reading, grounded in the first principles that Fichte establishes in the *Wissenschaftslehre*. The task Schelling sets for himself in *Vom Ich*, then, is to give an "exposition of Kant's philosophy" (VI, I/1 154) based on the absolute I as the first principle

[32] "[…]there must still be a ground of the **unity** of the supersensible that grounds nature with that which the concept of freedom contains practically, the concept of which, even if it does not suffice for cognition of it either theoretically or practically, and thus has no proper domain of its own, nevertheless makes possible the transition from the manner of thinking in accordance with the principles of the one to that in accordance with the principles of the other." 5:176

[33] Quoted in Förster, *The Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy*, 179.

of philosophy as a whole. It is my contention that Schelling takes § 76 as a blueprint for this project, since it is here that Kant himself indicates how each of the three faculties can be united in a single, unconditioned principle and how the principles and conditioned concepts proper to each can be correctly deduced from this principle.

While Schelling only mentions Kant's § 76 in his very brief footnote at the end of *Vom Ich*, there is ample textual evidence throughout the essay that Schelling was working closely with this "Remark," as we will see in due course. A central theme that emerges from Kant's § 76 is, as we have seen, the relation between the *unconditioned* ideas of reason and the *conditioned* forms of empirical cognition. Likewise, the relation between the unconditioned and the conditioned, the pure and the empirical, is the defining question that Schelling pursues in *Vom Ich* and the unifying thread of the essay. Indeed, for Schelling the entire task of philosophy consists in resolving this very question: "For the whole task of theoretical and practical philosophy is nothing else than the solution of the contradiction between the pure and the empirically conditioned I" (VI, I/1 176). I aim to show that Schelling develops key features of his position in dialogue with Kant's account of the relation between the unconditioned and the conditioned in § 76. In the following chapter I will take up Kant's three examples individually in greater depth.

Chapter 4: "The I as Principle of Philosophy"

Introduction

In this final chapter, I aim to place Schelling's *Vom Ich* in dialogue with § 76 of Kant's third *Critique* in order to draw out the importance of this "Remark" for Schelling's early thought. By reading Schelling's essay through the lens of Kant's "Remark," I aim to help bring to light the manner in which Schelling uses the ideas and insights present in Kant's text in order to transform Kant's position and to establish the "higher principles" that, according to Schelling, Kant's system presupposes. There are four main sections in this chapter, corresponding to the introduction to Kant's "Remark" as well as the three examples that he gives: theoretical reason, practical reason, and reflective judgment. In each section I begin with an analysis of Kant's text, followed by an exposition of Schelling's engagement with the themes established by Kant. What emerges is that in *Vom Ich*, Schelling undertakes a complex reworking of the three domains of theoretical reason, practical reason, and reflective judgment, seeking to ground each of them on the "I" as the absolute first principle of philosophy. It is upon this newly established foundation that the demand for the *Naturphilosophie* begins to emerge.

I. Reason as a "Faculty of Principles"

Kant begins his "Remark" in § 76 with a reiteration of the essential distinction between reason and understanding as faculties of the unconditioned and the conditioned respectively: "Reason is a faculty of principles and in its most extreme demand it reaches to the unconditioned, while

understanding, in contrast, is always at its service only under a certain condition, which must be given." (5:401) Here Kant brings to the fore the principal theme of the entire "Remark": how is it that reason's "extreme demand" for the unconditioned is to be reconciled with the necessary limitations of human cognition that are given in the conditions of the discursive understanding? Or, in the words of Schelling's subtitle, what is the proper role of the unconditioned within the limits of conditioned human knowledge?

Kant's response to this question is given in the form of his doctrine of the ideas of reason which serve as regulative principles guiding the activity of the understanding. In the first main paragraph of his "Remark" in § 76, Kant gives a wonderfully concise summary of his position in order to frame the principle issue he seeks to elucidate in this section, namely, that the ideas of reason hold a *subjective necessity* for the human faculties of cognition but do not provide any objective determination of an unconditioned ground. In what follows I will briefly comment on several points in this opening paragraph, reviewing the main lines of Kant's position and highlighting the principle themes that Schelling will take up, reinterpret, and transform throughout *Vom Ich*. Following this overview discussion, I will then proceed to examine separately the three "examples" that Kant discusses (corresponding to theoretical reason, practical reason, and teleological judgment) and the importance of these remarks for Schelling's project. It will be helpful to give the full paragraph in its entirety here before discussing points separately.

> Reason is a faculty of principles, and in its most extreme demand it reaches to the unconditioned, while understanding, in contrast, is always at its service only under a certain condition, which must be given. Without concepts of the understanding, however, which must be given objective reality, reason cannot judge at all objectively (synthetically), and by itself it contains, as theoretical reason, absolutely no constitutive principles, but only regulative ones. One soon learns that where the understanding cannot follow, reason becomes excessive,

> displaying itself in well-grounded ideas (as regulative principles) but not in objectively valid concepts; the understanding, however, which cannot keep up with it, but which would yet be necessary for validity for objects, restricts the validity of those ideas of reason solely to the subject, although still universally for all members of this species, i.e., understanding restricts the validity of those ideas to the condition which, given the nature of our (human) cognitive faculty or even the concept that **we can form** of the capacity of a finite rational being in general, we cannot and must not conceive otherwise, but without asserting that the basis for such a judgment lies in the object. We will adduce examples, which are certainly too important as well as too difficult for them to be immediately pressed upon the reader as proven propositions, but which will still provide material to think over and can serve to elucidate what is our proper concern here. (5:401)

When Kant states that "Reason is a faculty of principles" that "in its most extreme demand [...] reaches to the unconditioned," he is echoing an account of reason that he has given consistently since the first *Critique*, one that plays a key role in Schelling's account of the unconditioned and its role in a bringing about a philosophy that is *systematic*. To begin with, in the Canon of Pure Reason, Kant characterizes reason as an absolute and unrelenting demand, an "unquenchable desire to find a firm footing beyond all bounds of experience" (A796/B824); in other words, an extreme demand for the unconditioned. When this drive toward the unconditioned is left unchecked, it naturally leads reason into illusions and extravagant claims (thus Kant's statement above that "one soon learns that where the understanding cannot follow, reason becomes excessive"). The source of this error, as Schelling would say, is the attempt to render reason's demand for the unconditioned *objective*. To become objective, reason would have to employ the concepts of the understanding (since it would have to furnish an object of possible experience), and these concepts must be given "objective reality" by being given in sensible intuition, thus

rendering the unconditioned subject to the *a priori* conditions of sensibility and the understanding, and thus no longer *unconditioned*. Kant's first point, then, is to reiterate a central tenant of the transcendental philosophy: "Without concepts of the understanding, however, which must be given objective reality, reason cannot judge at all objectively (synthetically)." Reason can in no way lead to any direct cognition of objects or furnish principles that would result in objective cognition (constitutive principles). As we will see, Schelling will take this same point and give it a different emphasis: the unconditioned cannot be given within the conditioned, it cannot be made *objective*. That is, reason's extreme demand for the unconditioned can never be fulfilled within the conditioned domain of discursive cognition but will always seek "to find a firm footing *beyond all bounds of experience*" (A796/B824).

Kant goes on to emphasize the *positive* role that reason plays within human cognition in the form of the regulative ideas of reason. Although reason cannot furnish constitutive principles or objectively valid concepts, it does furnish "well-grounded ideas" that serve as regulative principles for the understanding. As we saw in Chapters One and Two, reason, in its drive for the unconditioned, initiates a regressive search for the unconditioned ground of every given condition. With regard to the understanding, reason thus seeks to "free a concept of the understanding from the unavoidable limitations of possible experience, and thus seek to extend it beyond the boundaries of the empirical" (A409/B435). As Henry Allison notes, "transcendental ideas arise from an inferential process that expresses the inherent dynamics of reason, and they characterize the various ways in which the culmination of this process (the unconditioned) can be conceived."[1] Importantly, the ideas of reason represent the various ways that the unconditioned can be

[1] Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 313.

conceived *on the basis of a given conditioned* that is proper to human cognition. Thus, in the above quote, Kant states that the "understanding restricts the validity of those ideas to the condition which, given the nature of our (human) cognitive faculty or even the concept that **we can form** of the capacity of a finite rational being in general, *we cannot and must not conceive otherwise*" (my emphasis). Since the ideas of reason are derived from the conditions of possible experience, extending concepts of the understanding valid only for things as appearances past the boundaries of all possible experience, we fall into transcendental illusion if we seek to take these ideas of reason to be determinations of things in general (not merely as appearances). This occurs when we take "the empirical principle of the possibility of our concepts of things as appearances to be a transcendental principle of the possibility of things in general" (A582/B660). Accordingly, Kant states in the passage cited above that the ideas of reason are restricted to the validity of the conditions of human cognition and do not provide the least basis for a judgment that would determine anything about an object beyond the boundaries of possible experience.[2] The ideas of reason thus express a merely subjective necessity of human cognition, although one that is valid "universally for all members of this species."[3]

A final point that I would like to emphasize before moving on to Kant's first example is the peculiar nature of the "objects" that reason furnishes for itself in the ideas of reason. It is essential to keep in mind that the ideas of reason *aim at* but do not *arrive* at the unconditioned for which

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[2] For example, with regard to the transcendental ideal Kant states that expressions such as "original being" and "the being of all beings" do not "signify the objective relation of an actual object to other things, but only that of an **idea** to **concepts,** and as to the existence of a being of such preeminent excellence it leaves us in compete ignorance" (A579/B607).

[3] Kant summarizes this point again at the start of the next section, § 77: "In the remark, we have adduced special characteristics of our cognitive faculty (even the higher one) which we may easily be misled into carrying over to the things themselves as objective predicates; but they concern ideas for which no appropriate objects can be given in experience, and which could therefore serve only as regulative principles in the pursuit of experience" (5:405).

reason strives. In their conception, they remain reflections of the determinate conditions that they seek to ground. So while they are expressions of the essential dynamic of reason, they remain *conditioned* approximations which serve as poles in a process of seeking an infinite approximation of perfect unity among all our empirical cognitions. Reason furnishes us "only with the idea of something on which all empirical reality grounds its highest and necessary unity" (A675, B703). An idea of reason does not make any pretension to determine the nature of this ground, but simply thinks it as a "something", a transcendental object whose sole determination is the ability to function as a ground for the pursuit of the highest and necessary unity of empirical reality. Thus, Kant is careful to insist that the "object" that we think in an idea of reason is not something we could "hypostatize" by positing it as existing, nor is anything asserted about how this mere "something" might be in itself. As we saw in Chapter 2, Kant will make an important clarification in the first *Critique* regarding the nature of these "objects" of reason:

> It makes a big difference whether something is given to my reason as **an object absolutely** or is given only as an **object in the idea**. In the first case my concepts go as far as determining the object; but in the second, there is really only a schema for which no object is given, not even hypothetically, but which serves only to represent other objects to us, in accordance with their systematic unity, by means of the relation to this idea, hence to represent these objects indirectly. (A670/B698)

Thus, the ideas of reason do not furnish us with an object given *absolutely*, something that could "hypothetically" exist but which we are simply incapable of cognizing due to the limitations of our cognition and our dependence upon sensible intuition in order to be given the *actuality* of a thing we have conceived hypothetically. Neither are they merely "empty thought-entities" (A670/B698), however. What is given in these ideas is a *schema* that acts as a *function*, something

through which other objects (objects of possible experience) are represented to us "in accordance with their systematic unity, by means of relation to this idea." Thus, the ideas are an indirect way of representing objects of possible experience: "In such a way the idea is only a heuristic and not an ostensive concept; and it shows not how an object is constituted but how, under the guidance of that concept, we ought to **seek after** the constitution and connection of objects of experience in general" (A671/B699).

The ideas of reason, then, do not purport to give us a supersensible object. Although they arise from reason's demand for the unconditioned, they remain conditioned by the subjective conditions of experience that they seek to lead to greater empirical unity. As a result, the ideas of reason are each differentiated according to the various cognitive and practical capacities that they seek to perfect.

In using examples that correspond with the three *Critiques* in order to illustrate this dynamic of reason Kant wishes to demonstrate that the process of generating ideas of reason as subjectively necessary principles is common to all three domains. Thus, it is not only theoretical reason and its use of the transcendental ideas that follows this essential structure, but also practical reason and reflective judgment. The goal, of course, is to show that reflective judgment employs these regulative principles in the same way as theoretical reason (that the a priori principle of reflective judgment can have a subjective necessity without determining anything about an object or about things in themselves). For Schelling this emphasis on a structure that is common to all three domains serves as an indication that there is a single ground that underlies all three of these faculties. This "hint" leads to the question: is there an "idea of reason," a principle or schema of unity, that would ground the whole of philosophy, and not just the individual domains separately? This is precisely what Schelling seeks to articulate in positing an unconditioned first principle of

the philosophy.

II. Theoretical Reason

A. Kant's First Example

Kant's first example concerns reason's "theoretical consideration of nature" and its assumption of "the idea of an unconditioned necessity of its primordial ground," (5:403) and thus places us squarely in the territory of the transcendental ideal from the first *Critique*. Kant begins by asserting that the categories of modality–possibility, actuality, and necessity–are rooted in the subjective conditions of our cognitive faculties. Our discursive understanding requires the exercise of both the understanding (for furnishing concepts) and sensible intuition (for giving us objects that correspond to them as actual). "Possibility" and "actuality", Kant claims, are necessarily tied to these two principal elements of our cognition: "[A]ll of our distinction between the merely possible and the actual rests on the fact that the former signifies only the position of the representation of a thing with respect to our concept and, in general, our faculty for thinking, while the latter signifies the positing of the thing in itself (apart from this concept)" (5:402).

The very idea of "possibility," then, depends on our use of concepts to cognize objects, and on the fact that we can think of the concept of something without it being actual for us. "Actuality," Kant states, signifies that we can posit an object "apart from this concept," which seems to have two separate meanings for Kant. First, it means something akin to "intuitions without concepts are blind": the mere givenness of an object that is merely 'actual' without being subsumed under a concept. Second, it indicates the contingency of an object even when it is given (since it is given

separately from the concept it remains possible for it to not be given). The conclusion that Kant is driving at in tying possibility and actuality to the separability of concept and intuition in our discursive understanding is the following: the very ability to distinguish between possibility and actuality is itself a contingent feature of our cognition; "Thus the distinction of possible from actual things is one that is merely subjectively valid for the human understanding, since we can always have something in our thoughts although it does not exist, or represent something as given even though we do not have any concept of it" (5:402).

It is in order to highlight the contingent nature of this particular feature of our cognition that Kant introduces the possibility of another kind of understanding for which these conditions did not apply and for which there would accordingly be no distinction between possibility and actuality at all:[4]

> For if two entirely heterogeneous elements were not required for the exercise of these faculties, understanding for concepts and sensible intuition for objects corresponding to them, then there would be no such distinction (between the possible and the actual). That is, if our understanding were intuitive, it would have no objects except what is actual. Concepts (which pertain merely to the possibility of an object) and sensible intuitions (which merely give us something, without thereby allowing us to cognize it as an object) would both disappear. (5:401-2)

We should note that Kant's hypothetical "intuitive understanding" is derived through the negation of the very conditions that Kant wants to claim are contingent for us, and therefore not necessarily applicable for all beings. A being for whom there is no distinction between understanding and

[4] Recall that Kant follows the exact same procedure in the first *Critique* where he seeks to draw attention to the contingent nature of our sensible intuition. In contrast to this, he posits the possibility of an "intellectual intuition."

intuition would possess an "intuitive understanding": an understanding that does not depend on a separate faculty of intuition and for whom all objects would be actual. I will be discussing Kant's idea of an intuitive understanding below and so I will not go into further detail at this time. What I would like to point out for now is the following: the two themes introduced here by Kant at the start of this first "example"—the purely subjective nature of the categories of modality and the limit concept of the intuitive understanding— play an enormous role in *Vom Ich*, so much so that many commentators take these themes to be the full extent of the importance of § 76 for Schelling's thought and the reason for his claim that, "Perhaps there have never been so many deep thoughts compressed into so few pages as in the critique of teleological judgment, § 76" (VI, I/1 242n). Without denying the importance of these themes,[5] I would like to make two observations. First, these two issues are only the first pieces of a much broader argument given here in the first example. The purpose of the example (while difficult to discern), depends on these but it is not reducible to merely establishing these points. Second, Schelling was a profound reader of Kant, and his interpretation of this section is based on a thorough reading of Kant's intention here. He did not simply cherry pick the ideas of the intuitive understanding and the contingent nature of the categories of modality and then run with them, as some commentaries seem to assume. Thus, if we want to understand the true import of § 76 for Schelling, we need to first understand Kant's full argument.

The conclusion that Kant draws from his analysis of the origins of the concepts of possibility and actuality and from his formulation of the "limit concept" of an intuitive understanding is the

[5] I will address the question of the intuitive understanding in the following section. While I will only touch upon the issue of modality briefly, Dalia Nassar gives an excellent account of its importance for Schelling's project in "Pure versus Empirical."

following: “Thus the distinction of possible from actual things is one that is merely subjectively valid for the human understanding, since we can always have something in our thoughts although it does not exist, or represent something as given even though we do not have any concept of it” (5:402).

In keeping with the overarching theme of the “Remark,” Kant identifies the very distinction between possible and actual things as having a “merely subjective” validity, a unique feature belonging to the conditions of our cognitive faculties but not determining anything about objects in themselves or about all possible forms of cognition. At this point Kant’s discussion begins to take a very interesting turn, and it is only now that we begin to get to his main point. Kant goes on to draw out a further implication of the claim that our ability to “*always have something in our thoughts although it doesn’t exist*” is grounded only in the subjective nature of our cognitive capacities: “The propositions, therefore, that things can be possible without being actual, *and thus that there can be no inference at all from mere possibility to actuality*, quite rightly hold for the human understanding without that proving that this distinction lies in the things themselves” (5:402, emphasis added).

Closely tied to our ability to “have something in our thoughts although it doesn’t exist” is the proposition that “there can be no inference at all from mere possibility to actuality.” We somehow seem to have landed into the middle of a discussion of the ontological argument, and we soon see why. Just as the hypothetical idea of an intuitive understanding was introduced in order to assert that the conditions proper to the discursive form of our understanding did not hold for all beings, Kant now turns to the idea of a being for whom the proposition “there can be no inference at all from mere possibility to actuality” does *not* hold (in contrast with our cognition, for which it must). The conclusion that Kant wants to draw, then, is that this proposition is only valid for objects

of *our* cognitive faculty and not for objects in general. It is in order to demonstrate this point that Kant continues:

> [This] is evident from the unremitting demand of reason to assume some sort of thing (the original ground [*Urgrund*]) as existing absolutely necessarily, in which possibility and actuality can no longer be distinguished at all, and for which idea our understanding has absolutely no concept, i.e., can find no way in which to represent such a thing and its way of existing. (5:402)

The first thing to note is that we are no longer speculating about a hypothetical form of cognition, but we are are dealing with "an unremitting demand of reason." As we saw in our discussion of the opening paragraph of § 76, this should bring to mind Kant's characterization of reason as striving, in its "most extreme demand," for the unconditioned. Here, reason's striving for the unconditioned leads to an "unremitting demand" for an original ground as existing with absolute necessity. Any impulse to immediately jump to an identification of this "original ground" with Kant's deduction of the transcendental ideal in the first *Critique* should be suspended, however, if we pay close attention to what follows: the unremitting demand of reason is to assume *some sort of thing as existing absolutely necessarily*, which means to assume something in which possibility and actuality *can no longer be distinguished at all.* In the case of such an unconditioned ground (unconditioned at least in the sense of not subject to the conditions of the discursive understanding and so not subject to any distinction between possibility and actuality), *our understanding has absolutely no concept*. That is, we cannot even represent such a thing to ourselves.

Kant goes on to point out exactly why the conditions of our cognition cannot even represent such a being in what I find to be a vertiginous (and brilliant) moment of the text:

> For if understanding **thinks** it (it can think it as it will), then it is represented as merely possible. If understanding is conscious of it as given in intuition, then it is actual without understanding

> being able to conceive of its possibility. Hence the concept of an absolutely necessary being is an indispensable idea of reason but an unattainable problematic concept for the human understanding. (5:402)

To even *think* of such an "original ground", to make of it an object of speculation by forming a concept of it, is already to make it merely *possible* and so fail to realize it. To have a intuition (that is not *intellectual*) of it is to have a mere blind awareness of it that does not lead to any thought or cognition. Such an original ground simply cannot be given within the conditions of our cognition, making it an unattainable problematic concept. Nevertheless, reason continues to demand such an original ground and it remains an *indispensable* (necessary) idea of reason.

Although we cannot in any way realize this idea within the conditions of our discursive cognition, it obtains a valid use for our cognition in the form of an idea of reason, which we conceive of as an object (an "object in the idea") "in accordance with the subjective conditions" of our cognition and "for the exercise of our faculties" (5:403). That is, by forming a concept of such a thing we obtain a regulative principle, a schema that guides and directs the exercise of our faculties. The point of Kant's example here is thus twofold. First, the idea of reason that we form of a primordial ground of nature could never give us an "ostensive concept" (or an "object absolutely"), since the very notion of a *concept* of such an unconditioned necessity automatically cancels itself out. And since there is no possible concept that we can form of such a thing, there can be no possibility of *hypostatizing* it (affirming or proving the existence of a thing conceived of as possible). Thus, reason's demand for an unconditioned can never provide for us a determination of anything beyond the boundaries of possible experience (the supersensible). Second, the ideas of reason that we do form and employ in our cognition are *conditioned*—they are conceived in accordance with the subjective conditions of our cognition, not as objects of

possible experience, but rather as "objects in the idea," schemas or principles that regulate and direct the course of our cognition of the immediate objects of experience. In this way, Kant's first example aims to show that the idea of an unconditioned necessity that is the primordial ground of nature is a purely subjective principle of the human understanding, yet one that has universal validity due reason's unremitting demand to assume such a thing.

B. Schelling's Interpretation

As noted above, the importance of this passage for Schelling is beyond doubt, given the frequent recurrence of the theme of modality throughout *Vom Ich* (often using the exact terminology and phrasing given by Kant[6]) as well as the central role Schelling gives to the idea of an intellectual intuition. In what follows I attempt to draw out several other principle themes that, I argue, Schelling derives from his reading of this passage and which play a no less important role in the development of his position in *Vom Ich*.[7]

First and foremost, Schelling understands Kant (correctly, I argue) to be drawing attention to the point that the transcendental ideas (and ideas of reason more generally, given that the next two

[6] Keeping this connection in mind helps to understand at least some of the puzzling formulations in *Vom Ich*. For example, "the finite I *ought to strive* to make actual everything that is possible in it, and to make possible whatever is actual" (VI, I/1 232). We will unpack the meaning of this in our discussion of practical reason.

[7] In what follows I do not aim to establish "direct" influence", namely, that Schelling formulated a specific idea or phrase precisely on the basis of Kant's text (thereby excluding all other possible sources). Although I feel there is enough evidence to make such a claim with respect to several of Schelling's statements in *Vom Ich* given what amounts to direct citations of Kant on Schelling's part, this is not the point I am after. Rather, I am seeking to establish that Schelling was in deep dialogue with the issues that Kant raises in § 76, issues of paramount philosophical importance that motivate his position. Gaining a better understanding of the questions and issues motivating Schelling's thought thus helps us to enter into the meaning of a valuable text that is at times opaque and often misunderstood. I argue that reading *Vom Ich* through the lens of Kant's § 76 helps to clarify precisely those points that are most enigmatic in the text.

examples deal with practical reason and reflective judgment) do not represent unconditioned objects, "ostensible concepts" that would present to us an unconditioned ground that we simply fail to cognize due to the limitations of our sensible intuition. Rather, they are, as we have seen, reflections of the activities proper to our subjective cognition; or, in Schelling's terms, *conditioned* ideas. Given the discursive nature of our cognition, it is not only our sensible intuition that is conditioned, but also our use of concepts, all of which only have valid application for objects of possible experience. Thus, for Schelling, the idea of an "unconditioned object" is itself an impossibility. We simply cannot form a concept of an unconditioned ground. Schelling will frame Kant's argument here with a different emphasis, insisting that what Kant is really getting at is the following principle: the unconditioned as such cannot be given within the domain of conditioned cognition (the domain of the empirical I, in Schelling's terminology). Schelling thus takes Kant to have established that the unconditioned is *wholly non-objective*. It cannot become an object for us and can in no way be established objectively. If the unconditioned is to be given at all, it must be given *as* unconditioned. As Schelling puts it, "the absolute can be given only by the absolute" (VI, I/1 163).

A second point concerns Schelling's repeated claim, which seems extravagant at first glance, that while Kant excludes the possibility that the unconditioned could be given within the domain of the conditioned, he continues to *presuppose* the unconditioned as a higher principle. In order to see more clearly why Schelling would have drawn such a conclusion based on this passage (and to what extent it is a fair reading of Kant), it is important to keep in mind Schelling's overall approach to Kant in *Vom Ich* as well as the principle goals he establishes for himself in the essay. As we saw in the last chapter, Schelling develops a unique "hermeneutic" in his reading of Kant, operating under the presupposition that Kant acts as a "genius" who proceeds from an intuitive

grasp of higher principles without actually articulating them or even having a clear understanding of them himself. Thus, Schelling states in the Preface to *Vom Ich*, "Indeed I believe that, in the case of such an author, one must explain him according to the principles which he must have presupposed, and *only* according to them. Even in the face of the original sense of his words, one must assert the still more original sense of his thoughts. This essay proposes to establish the principles [on which Kant's thoughts rest]" (VI, I/ 154-5).

Schelling's seeks to draw these implied principles out by means of a very close reading of Kant's texts, a methodology that, I argued in the last chapter, sets his project on a very different trajectory than the one followed by Fichte. Thus, when Kant states explicitly that reason, "in its most extreme demand […] *reaches to the unconditioned*" (5:401, my emphasis) and that there is an "unremitting demand of reason to *assume* some sort of thing (the original ground [*Urgrund*]) as existing absolutely necessarily" (5:402, my emphasis), Schelling clearly interprets this in light of his overall hermeneutic principle with respect to Kant: this is one of those passages that shed a "ray of light" upon the whole system in that is shows Kant's dependence upon a higher principle, an *unconditioned*, which he assumes or presupposes without making explicit.[8] For Schelling, then, this passage contains Kant's own admission that the highest principles of his system (the ideas of reason, not only here in their form as transcendental ideas of reason in its theoretical use, but also in their role within practical reason and reflective judgment) themselves *presuppose* a higher principle, an absolutely unconditioned which cannot be given at all within the domain of the

[8] The beginning of Kant's second example is another good instance of Kant's use the language of "presupposition": "Just as in the theoretical consideration of nature reason must *assume* the idea of an unconditioned necessity of its primordial ground, so, in the case of the practical, it also *presupposes* its own unconditioned (in regard to nature) causality, i.e., freedom, because it is aware of its moral command" (5:403, my emphasis).

empirical I.[9]

i. Kant's Presuppositions

To be sure, Schelling is correct in claiming that Kant does indeed "presuppose" an absolutely unconditioned, but only in its role as a *limit concept* that aims to highlight the contingent nature of our faculties and draw attention to the subjectively necessary principles that guide and direct our empirical cognition. Is Schelling entirely wrong in his assertion that Kant presupposes the unconditioned as a higher principle—the highest principle—of his system? So long as Schelling is understood to be committing the error of *hypostatizing* the unconditioned, of claiming the *existence* of a supersensible object, then there is no question as to the validity of his interpretation of the unconditioned. As we have seen, however, any careful reader of this passage would see the obvious inconsistency of such a conclusion. My argument is that Schelling is indeed a careful and insightful reader of Kant, and that his account of the unconditioned as the highest principle of philosophy is both deeply indebted to points that Kant intends to make here and that he develops an insightful and creative—if not 'faithful'—interpretation of the degree to which Kant does in fact "presuppose" the unconditioned as the highest principle of his philosophy. The following points will hopefully shed light on the degree to which Schelling's interpretation here remains a reasoned transformation and not a far-flung appropriation of Kant's position.

Reason's activity of forming its ideas and directing the understanding toward ends reveals, to

[9] Schelling uses the term "empirical I" to designate the finite I in contrast with the absolute I.

borrow Pauline Kleingeld's idea, an essentially "conative character" of reason itself.[10] Thus, in considering reason as a faculty of principles, we find reason to be itself a faculty of the unconditioned: in its demand for the unconditioned, reason is not ultimately searching after an *object* that would provide an unconditioned ground for its activity and knowledge, for it is *itself* this ground. As we have seen, Kant's whole intention in the first example is to demonstrate the impossibility of a truly unconditioned object of our cognition. In asking for the unconditioned, then, reason is inquiring after itself as the source of its power to posit an unconditional demand and to bring its cognitions and actions into an ever-greater systematic unity. In doing so, reason itself seeks to establish the boundaries and contours of its own activity through its own free action. It is in this sense, I propose, that we should understand Schelling's claim that Kant "presupposes" an unconditioned principle. For in claiming the "I" as the unconditioned principle underlying Kant's whole system, Schelling is not claiming some supersensible object that we grasp mysteriously through a mystical "intellectual intuition," but is aiming at an *activity* (Fichte's *Tathandlung*), the very freedom of the I to itself establish the boundaries of empirical cognition and to direct it toward a freely posited end. Another way of stating this is that Kant's system presupposes reason *itself* and its activity as unconditioned. This is, of course, nothing other than what Kant himself maintains and repeatedly states explicitly and clearly. In the following quote from the first *Critique*, for example, Kant identifies the proper *end* or *goal* of reason's entire strenuous effort in pursuit of the unconditioned:

> Reason is driven by a propensity of its nature to go beyond its use in experience, to venture to

[10] Pauline Kleingeld, "The Conative Character of Reason in Kant's Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 36, no. 2 (January 1998): 77-97.

> the outermost bounds of all cognition by means of mere ideas in a pure use, and to find peace only in the completion of its circle in a self-subsisting systematic whole. Now is this striving grounded merely in its speculative interest, or rather uniquely and solely in its practical interest? (A797/B825)

The goal of its "unremitting demand," then, is not a transcendent object but "the completion of its circle in a self-subsisting systematic whole." Schelling's search for an unconditioned first principle is likewise, as we will see, a search for wholly *immanent* principle that grounds the systematic form of philosophy in a self-subsisting whole. Thus, when Schelling claims that Kant "presupposed" the highest principle as an unconditioned, self-grounding activity of reason (what Schelling will call the *Absolute I,* following Fichte), it is to be expected that he, as a careful reader of Kant, would indeed have in mind this aspect of the Kant's account of the unconditioned.

What is beyond doubt is that Schelling is entirely in agreement with what Kant indicates at the conclusion of the above citation: it is reason in its *practical* aspect[11] that establishes the ends of all its striving and most clearly manifests the essential character of reason. Beatrice Longuenesse gives an excellent summary of this element of Kant's account of reason as a "faculty of the unconditioned":

> Reason in its practical use is most properly the "faculty of the unconditioned." First, it is the source of the highest principle under which all rules of determination of the will should be subsumed: the moral law. Second, it is the source of our positive concept of freedom as autonomy, therefore the source of the only positive concept we have of a cause which is

[11] Thus, Schelling will repeatedly claim in *Vom Ich* that Kant himself establishes that *practical* philosophy alone is able to "breakthrough" to the unconditioned, while theoretical reason can only objectify the unconditioned and so necessarily remains outside of it. See, e.g., VI, I/1 201-2, which I will discuss shortly.

> unconditioned by an antecedent cause: the autonomous will. Third, this practical use is what drives reason in its theoretical use to attempt to reach the unconditioned (unconditioned knowledge, which means also knowledge of the unconditioned).
>
> But practical reason is also the faculty of the unconditioned in another, more fundamental sense: it is itself in formulating its principle and postulating its objects, unconditioned. There is no further ground for formulating the moral law than reason itself as determining the will. This is how, from being described as the faculty of thinking the unconditioned, reason becomes described as being itself unconditioned: It is not determined by anything but itself.[12]

Longuenesse's third point here is of particular relevance for Schelling's understanding of the "primacy of the practical" in Kant's account of the unconditioned. For here she asserts that the striving of theoretical reason to impel its empirical cognition toward ever-greater systematic unity, including its activity of forming the ideas of reason in their regulative function, is grounded in reason's *practical* activity. This is also the conclusion of the quote from Kant given above (and of the Canon of Pure Reason in general): that it is the practical interest of reason which establishes the ends toward which theoretical reason guides and directs it empirical cognition. Longuenesse's point in the second paragraph indicates another insight that is fundamental to Schelling's understanding of Kant: there is practical dimension of reason that is even more fundamental than its activity of self-legislating the moral law, and the "primacy of the practical" is not simply a primacy of the moral. Rather, reason itself is practical in the sense of *unconditioned*: it is not determined by anything but itself, and it is this unconditioned activity that is the ground of both its ability to legislate the moral law and to formulate its own regulative principles in the form of the

[12] Beatrice Longuenesse, "Point of View of Man or Knowledge of God," in Sedgwick, *The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy,* 256.

ideas of reason.[13] In the next section, we will explore this idea of a distinction between two different senses of "practical reason". For now, I want to emphasize that Schelling's claim that Kant "presupposes" the unconditioned, in the sense that it serves as the ground and highest principle of his system, is best understood when we think of the unconditioned as *reason itself* in its activity of producing itself as a "self-subsisting systematic whole" that is not determined by anything but itself.

It is, of course, Fichte's formulation of this unconditioned as the absolute *I* that, for Schelling, finally brought this "implicit" principle, "presupposed" throughout the Kantian system, to its adequate formulation.[14] One of the striking things about Kant's § 76, and perhaps one of the aspects of this passage that led Schelling to muse "perhaps there have never been so many deep thoughts compressed into so few pages," is the way in which the formal structure of Fichte's first principles are reflected in the text.[15] Fichte's first principle, the absolute I is posited unconditionally, is reflected in Kant's insistence on the impossibility of the unconditioned being given within the objective or conditioned domain of human cognition. The unconditioned cannot be posited through concepts or given an objective proof. Thus, Schelling argues the following:

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[13] Compare this idea, for example, with the following quote from *Vom Ich*: "For the theoretical I strives to posit the I and the not-I as identical and, therefore, to elevate the not-I itself to the form of the I; the practical strives for pure unity by exclusion of all that is not-I. *Both of them can do what they do only inasmuch as the absolute I has absolute causality and pure identity*" (VI, I/1 176-7, my emphasis).

[14] While the connection between the question of the unity of reason in Kant and Ficthe's *Wissenschaftslehre* has received extensive scholarly attention, I argue here that the connection between Kant and Schelling on this theme merits further investigation. As I hope to show, Schelling's account of the first principle of philosophy as *unconditioned*, while certainly adopting many key elements of Fichte's position, depends on aspects of Kant that are not taken up by Fichte.

[15] Thus, Schelling's reading of this passage mirrors his reading of Kant's deduction of the categories in the *Form-Schrift* the we discussed above. The text itself presupposes an underlying principle that gives structure to its content but which itself is not made explicit. Once that underlying principle is recognized, one can then go back to the text and see that form reflected within it the text itself, thus confirming the connection.

> That there is an absolute I can never be proved objectively, that is, it cannot be proved with regard to that I which can exist as an object [the empirical I], because we are supposed to prove precisely that the absolute I can never become an object. The I, if it is to be unconditional, must be outside the sphere of objective proof. To *prove* objectively that the I is unconditional would mean to prove that it was conditional. In the case of the unconditional the principle of its being and the principle of its being thought must coincide […]. The absolute can be given only by the absolute; indeed, if it is to be absolute, it must precede all thinking and imagining. Therefore it must be realized through itself (§ 1), not through objective proofs, which go beyond the mere concept of the entity to be proved. (VI, I/1 167)

The echoes of Kant's first example from § 76 here are unmistakable. If the unconditioned is to be truly unconditioned, it must remain outside the sphere of objectivity (the conditions of human cognition); it cannot be *proven* (or, In Kant's terminology, *hypostatized*), since to render it an object of discursive cognition would be to render it *conditional*, to "go beyond the mere concept of the entity to be proved." Accordingly, the unconditioned, *if* it is to be *absolutely* unconditioned, must "precede" all thinking and imagining. Of course, for Kant, the fact that the unconditioned is necessarily beyond all thinking and imagining means that it is inaccessible to us an can in no way be *given*. For Schelling, however, Kant has articulated perfectly the criteria for positing such an unconditioned. Such a positing would entail, as we have seen, the absolute identity between concept and intuition, possibility and actuality (or more precisely, the non-difference of these conditions of our cognition). What is thought (concept) must be what is actual (intuition): the principle of being and the principle of being thought must coincide. This means that the very thought of the thing realizes itself and this is the only way in which it can be given: *The absolute can only be given by the absolute*. Here, then, in Kant's account of the "Urgrund," the absolutely necessary being, Schelling sees reflected the essence of Fichte's first principle: The Absolute I

must be posited unconditionally.

Fichte's third principle establishes what Schelling will call the "absolute synthesis", the form of all positing within the domain of conditioned human cognition. This domain is marked by the synthesis between the absolute positing of the I, which realizes itself through itself and excludes everything that is not itself, and the second principle, the absolute negation of this positing, completely empty and wholly dependent upon the first as its pure negation. These two principles are utterly unreconcilable, without the mediation of a third principle: the absolute I and not-I are posited as *limited*, such that a limited I is opposed to a limited non-I. For Schelling, the essence of thus synthesis is expressed perfectly by Kant's account of the ideas of reason: "understanding restricts the validity of those ideas to the condition which, given the nature of our (human) cognitive faculty […] we cannot and must not conceive otherwise." (5:401) That is, the unconditioned is limited, "schematized" in its synthesis with the not-I and given an objective form. Accordingly, Schelling will repeatedly refer to the conditions of the empirical I as "schemas" of pure being (the unconditioned)[16], and he will characterize this absolute synthesis which constitutes the domain of the empirical I in terms reminiscent on Kant's discussion in § 76: "All synthesis proceeds by taking that which is absolutely posited and by positing it anew but *conditionally* (with qualifications)."[17]

Schelling's claim, then, that Kant presupposes "at every step" the unconditioned as the highest principle of his system can find some support both in Kant's account of reason as "the faculty of

[16] See, e.g., his account of time as a schema of pure being at VI, I/1 228, and his description of the forms of possibility, actuality, and necessity as schematized forms at VI, I/1 224.

[17] Compare with Kant's "Now here this maxim is always valid, that even where the cognition of them outstrips the understanding, we should conceive all objects in accordance with the subjective conditions for the exercise of our faculties necessarily pertaining to our (i.e., human) nature" (5:403).

the unconditioned" in the most fundamental sense of its *practical* activity and in the "hints" of the principles underlying Kant's first example in § 76—the idea that the unconditioned would have to be posited *absolutely*, outside the boundaries of empirical consciousness, and the basic form of *synthesis* as a positing of the unconditioned within the domain of the conditioned (and so as limited by something outside of itself). But even though Schelling credits Kant with an intuitive grasp of these principles and of proceeding from them "after the mode of a genius" who does not need to explicitly formulate the highest principles but simply acts in accordance with them, he will nevertheless insist, following in the footsteps of both Reinhold and Fichte, that the critical system remains incomplete and distorted unless the highest principle of systematic unity is *realized* and the whole system of philosophy is derived from that first principle systematically. Thus, Schelling will claim that, despite his intuitive grasp of the unconditioned highest principle, Kant did not proceed to connect this principle to the other parts of the system and so unite them into a true systematic whole. It is to this criticism that we will now turn.

ii. Systematic Unity

In the previous section, I argued that Kant's discussion of the unconditioned as necessarily falling outside the domain of the human cognition and objective knowledge, as well as the methodology of forming the ideas of reason by positing the unconditioned within the boundaries of the conditioned—what Schelling will call *synthesis*, the process of instituting a *schematization* of the unconditioned—were evidence for Schelling of a higher principle underlying Kant's exposition. Moreover, Kant's reflections in the first example do not merely attest to the fact that Kant "presupposes" this higher principle. His account reveals essential characteristics of the nature of

the unconditioned as the wholly non-objective, for which there is no distinction between concept and intuition, and thus thinking and being.

Another equally important feature of Kant's § 76 that I want to highlight here is the following: in the three examples that Kant discusses, he aims to establish that the same relation—the relation between the unconditioned and the ideas of reason, posited in accordance with the conditions of human cognition—holds for all three faculties: theoretical reason, practical reason, and reflective judgment. I argue that this is highly significant for Schelling, since by so doing Kant seems to point to the underlying "original form"[18] of the unconditioned, which would be the ground of each faculty and the source of their unity. In this way, Kant's § 76 would point to the unconditioned as the "principle of philosophy", as the systematic unity of the *whole* of philosophy: theoretical reason, practical reason, and reflective judgment. Moreover, Kant seems to give an indication of the task that Schelling pursues in *Vom Ich*: not only to establish the absolute first principle but to demonstrate that it is is indeed the principle of the whole of philosophy. This is accomplished by providing a deduction of the principles grounding each of the domains of theoretical reason, practical reason, and teleological judgment from the *unconditioned* principle of the absolute I. Thus, I argue that we can characterize Schelling's project in *Vom Ich* as an attempt to provide just such a deduction pf the principles underlying theoretical reason, practical reason, and reflective judgment from the single unconditioned principle of the absolute I. Importantly, Schelling will claim that, since Kant provided only a conditioned principle for each domain, the principles that

[18] Cf. Schelling's remark from the *Form-Schrift* referenced earlier, in which Schelling maintains that the structure of Kant's presentation of the categories "implicitly points to an original form, under which all of them stand together, and which imparts to them all they have in common with regard to their form" (FS, I/1 105).

In the case of § 76, the underlying form would point to the underlying unity of *the ideas of reason*, as opposed to the categories of the understanding.

he provided are insufficient and stand in need of correction. By deriving the principles from the unconditioned first principle, Schelling will thus transform these principles and thereby effect a dramatic realignment the entire Kantian architectonic. It is out of this transformation that the demand for a *Naturphilosophie* emerges.

In order to see this, I think it is helpful to explore an image that Kant provides in his deduction of the transcendental ideas in the first *Critique*, that of the *focus imaginarius*. At the start of the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic, Kant notes that "Reason never relates directly to an object, but solely to the understanding by means of it to reason's own empirical use, hence it does not **create** any concepts (of objects) but only **orders** them and gives them that unity which they can have in their greatest possible extension" (A643/B672).

This is in contrast to the understanding, which "does not look to this totality at all, but only to the connection **through which series** of conditions always **come about** according to concepts" (A643/B672). As we have seen, the ideas of reason do not give us any objects that could possibly be given, but only a schema by which we order and direct the series of conditions that comes about in accordance with the categories of the understanding. Reason merely extends the given series of conditions to "that unity which they can have in their greatest possible extension." It is in order to illustrate this dynamic that Kant gives the image of the *focus imaginarius*. The ideas of reason, he states,

> have an excellent and indispensable regulative use, namely that of directing the understanding to a certain goal respecting which the lines of direction and all its rules converge at one point, which, although it is only an idea (*focus imaginarius*) – i.e., a point from which the concepts of the understanding do not really proceed, since it lies entirely outside the bounds of possible experience – nonetheless still serves to obtain for these concepts the greatest unity alongside the greatest extension. (A644/B672)

The question that Schelling seems to pose here is the following: by extending the "lines of direction" established within the domain of conditioned experience, can we ever arrive at a true point of unity? This procedure of receding regressively from the given conditions of experience will generate points of focus for each of the separate series of conditions unfolding within experience. Thus, for example, all of the "appearances, actions, and receptivity of our mind" are united in the "guiding thread of inner experience" (A672/B700), and this conditioned series of inner sense is given greater systematic unity through the idea of *soul*. Similarly, the ideas of the world in general (the cosmological idea) and of God (the theological idea) as the "sole and all-sufficient cause of all cosmological series" (A684/B714) will lead our investigations into nature according to the categories of the understanding in the direction of the greatest possible systematic unity. But what is it, Schelling asks, that brings these separate "lines of direction" themselves into unity? Or, more specifically, and in the context of § 76, what is it that brings the separate domains of theoretical reason, practical reason, and reflective judgment "into focus", such that they converge into a point of systematic unity? While Kant certainly does have an answer to this question, Schelling will argue that, inasmuch as he does not proceed from the highest principle of the unconditioned in his formulation of the ideas of reason, but rather proceeds regressively from the conditions given within empirical experience, that his projected unity is out of focus. The lines of direction each approximate a projected point of unity, but do not all collectively focus into a single point of unity. Thus, Schelling will level the following criticism:[19]

> A completed science shuns all philosophical artifices by which the I itself, so to speak, is taken

[19] This particular remark is directed at Reinhold, but I believe it applies equally to Kant, in that it is a criticism of their common methodology of beginning from the conditions given for the empirical I and concern Reinhold's inability to reconcile his theoretical philosophy with his practical philosophy (the same criticism Schelling levels against Kant).

> apart and split into faculties which are not thinkable under any common principle of unity. The completed science does not aim at dead faculties that have no reality and exist only in artificial abstractions. It aims rather at the living unity of the I, which is the same in all manifestations of its action. In that science all the different faculties and actions that philosophy has ever named become one faculty only, one action of the one and the same identical I. (VI, I/1 238n.)

It is only the living unity of the I, then, which is inaccessible to the "artificial abstractions" employed by Kant's reason in order to regulate the isolated series of cognitions (yielding the three transcendental ideas) as well as the "ideas" employed by the separate faculties (the transcendental ideal for theoretical reason, the highest ideal for practical reason, the supersensible ground of nature and freedom for reflective judgment, which are what are primarily at stake in § 76), that can bring about complete systematic unity among all of these different activities and domains.

Schelling thus proposes the absolute I as the true point of focus for the whole of Kant's system, a point which Kant himself insisted could not be given. With regard to the idea of a *focus imaginarius*, Kant goes on to remark that it is "a deception" to think of the regulative principles arising from the ideas of reason "as if these lines of direction were shot out from an object lying outside the field of possible empirical cognition (just as objects are seen behind the surface of the mirror" (A644/B672). Schelling will agree with Kant on this on one important point: it is indeed a deception to think of this point of unity as an *object*. But this does not mean that the point of unity cannot be given. The conclusion Schelling draws: this point of unity must be realized as an *unconditioned*, not given as an object but only through itself. In contrast with Kant's insistence that this point of unity could never actually be given, but only approximated, Schelling expresses the general enthusiasm inspired first by Reinhold's project of achieving such a systematic unity by way of a first principle, and then amplified by Fichte's proposal for an *unconditioned* first

principle, in the Preface to *Vom Ich*:

> It is difficult not to be, enthusiastic about the great thought that, while all sciences, the empirical ones not excluded, rush more and more toward the point of perfect unity, humankind itself will finally realize, as the constitutive law, the principle of unity which from the beginning was the regulating basis of the history of humankind. As the rays of human knowledge and the experiences of many centuries will finally converge in one focus of truth and will transform into reality the idea which has been in many great minds, the idea that the different sciences must become one in the end, just so the different ways and by-ways which humans have followed till now will converge in one point wherein humankind will find itself again and, as one complete person, will obey the law of freedom. (VI, I/1 158)

Here Schelling gives clear expression of the *desideratum* of that which Kant claims can never actually be *given*: finally, "transforming into reality" the idea which has thus far existed only in separate minds, implicitly "regulating" the empirical sciences but not yet able to perfectly unite the whole of human knowledge and experience into a single point of unity. Transforming Kant's "artificial abstraction" of the *focus imaginarius* into a *reality* is precisely what he proposes to do in establishing the absolute I as the highest principle of knowledge.

iii. The Non-Objective

As we have seen, Kant's ideas of reason all converge toward a central point of focus but stop short of the true center which remains closed off and inaccessible to cognition.[20] For Schelling, Kant is

[20] One can imagine a circle with radii emerging from the center. For Kant, the radii all being from the circumference (the domain of experience) and converge toward the center. If we place a smaller circle around the central point, we

exactly right on this important point: his system demonstrates that the unconditioned is not accessible to conditioned empirical thought. In this domain everything that is given is given as an *object* (everything is cognized through a concept that is not identical with its and given through sensible intuition), and the unconditioned cannot in any way become an object. Thus, what Kant demonstrates is that the unconditioned is essentially *non-objective*. For Schelling, however, this does not mean that the unconditioned cannot be *realized* in any way at all. The unconditioned can be realized through *freedom*, it can be realized in an intellectual intuition as having the form of the *I*. Schelling thus interprets Kant's insistence that the ideas of reason are only "objects in the idea", subjective principles that do not give us any *object* that would exist, to be a perfect articulation of the inaccessibility of the non-objective unconditioned to the domain of conditioned empirical thought, and *therefore* only accessible through *freedom*. He formulates this clearly toward the end of his *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*, written shortly after *Vom Ich*. Responding to his hypothetical interlocutor, he writes:

> You indict reason for not knowing anything of things in themselves, of objects of a supersensuous world. Has it never occurred to you, ever so dimly, that it is not the weakness of your reason but the absolute freedom in you which makes the intellectual world inaccessible to every *objective* power; that it is not the limitation of your knowledge but your unlimited freedom which has relegated the objects of cognition to the confines of mere appearances? (PB I/3 340)

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would say that Kant's radii do not go past this boundary but stop short of the center at separate points on the circumference of the inner circle (and so do not achieve unity but only approximate it). The circumference of the inner circle would delineate the boundary of what is conceivable "in accordance with the subjective conditions for the exercise of our faculties necessarily pertaining to our (i.e. human) nature" (5:403). Schelling wants to reverse the direction of the radii, such that they do not proceed from the circumference to the center, but from the center (the *unconditioned*) outward. Only then will the various rays of knowledge achieve true unity.

Schelling emphasizes here that it is not a limitation or a weakness of the subjective conditions of human cognition that are the source of our inability to cognize the "objects" of the supersensible world. Rather, this very fact is a manifestation of "the absolute freedom in you;" it is the unlimited freedom of the I that establishes the boundaries of objective knowledge, ensuring that the domain of the "supersensible world," the unconditioned, is accessible only through *freedom*.

Schelling echoes this idea in *Vom Ich*, when he writes with regard to the "Kantians" of his time who, Schelling argues, have distorted the true sense of Kant's philosophy with their interpretations of Kant's meaning:

> Therefore the representatives of the age promptly tried to tone down the first great product of this philosophy. They could do so without too much difficulty, because its language still seems to indulge the mood of the time. Consequently they saw [in the *Critique of Pure Reason*] nothing but the old established obsequiousness under the yoke of objective truth, and they tried at least to reduce its doctrine to the humiliating tenet that the limits of objective truth are not set by absolute freedom but are the mere consequence of the well-known weakness of man's mind and are due to the limitation of his power of perception. (VI, I/1 157-8)

We can characterize the "misinterpretation" that Schelling is challenging here as perhaps being more than a simple misuse of language on Kant's part, a concession he made in order to accommodate the age in which he wrote. On the contrary, it would seem to be an essential element of Kant's transcendental system. We begin from the given limitations of our discursive understanding and then proceed to derive from them the necessary conditions of any possible experience. The starting point is the *givenness* of these limitations, and in particular our dependence upon sensible intuition for the givenness of objects, the very key to Kant's position that we only cognize appearances and not things in themselves. Thus, Kant states the following in

the first *Critique*:

> But for the peculiarity of our understanding, that it is able to bring about the unity of apperception a priori only by means of the categories and only through precisely this kind and number of them, *a further ground may be offered just as little as one can be offered for why we have precisely these and no other functions for judgment or for why space and time are the sole forms of our possible intuition* (B145-6, my emphasis).

In the Preface to *Vom Ich*, Schelling lists this facet of Kant's system (that the boundaries and limitations of our cognitive faculties—the fact that our understanding is discursive and employs the categories, the number and kind of the categories, the forms of space and time) as one of its principle deficiencies standing in need of remedy. The project that Schelling sets for himself in *Vom Ich*, a project that will culminate separately in the *System of Transcendental Idealism* and the *Naturphilosophie*, is that of deriving the boundaries and limitations of our empirical cognition through *absolute freedom*; that is, from the side of the unconditioned, and not on the basis of the "weakness" of the human mind. Thus, Schelling states in the Preface:

> I believe that I may say to those followers of Kant who presume that he himself has established the principles of all knowledge, that they have comprehended the letter but not the spirit of their teacher if they did not discover that the *Critique of Pure Reason* cannot possibly be the way of philosophy as a science. As a science, philosophy takes its start from the existence of original conceptions (*ursprüngliche Vorstellungen*) not made possible by experience but explainable only through superior principles. (VI, I/1 153)

Schelling argues here that what Kant establishes in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is simply an articulation of what is possible for reason when beginning from the side of the conditioned human understanding (proceeding from the domain of experience and working regressively toward a

projected ideal unity—moving from the circumference toward the center in the example I gave above). What Kant has shown, Schelling argues, is that this approach cannot generate any real *system*. One cannot arrive at the unconditioned by starting out from the conditioned; one cannot begin from principles that are given within experience and are only possible within experience and proceed from these to the "principles of all knowledge." By showing the impossibility of this procedure (what Schelling takes to be precisely the point of § 76: the ideas of reason do not give us an unconditioned ground but merely subjective principles for the use of empirical cognition), Kant has demonstrated that the path to a true science must take another route; it must proceed from the unconditioned and from "original conceptions not made possible by experience but explainable only through superior principles." The only true science is one in which the "limits of objective truth" are not determined by the weakness of the understanding (from the side of the empirical subject), but established through absolute freedom.

To reiterate the point I made earlier: while this reading is certainly not a faithful interpretation of the *letter* of the Kant's text, Schelling has some grounds for insisting that it is faithful to its *spirit*. For as we have seen, Kant's understanding of the ultimately *practical* nature of reason has some similarities to Schelling's insistence that the boundaries of knowledge and experience be established through *absolute freedom*. Kant highlights the active role of reason in limiting itself and establishing the boundaries of its own activity in the following quote from the beginning of the Canon of Pure Reason from the first *Critique*:

> It is humiliating for human reason that it accomplishes nothing in its pure use, and even requires a discipline to check its extravagances and avoid the deceptions that come from them. But, on the other side, *that reason can and must exercise this discipline itself, without allowing anything else to censor it, elevates it and gives it confidence in itself,* for the boundaries that it

> is required to set for its speculative use at the same time limit the sophistical pretensions of every opponent. The greatest and perhaps only utility of all philosophy of pure reason is thus only negative, namely that it does not serve for expansion, as an organon, but rather, as a discipline, *serves for the determination of boundaries*, and instead of discovering truth it has only the silent merit of guarding against errors." (A795/B823, my emphasis)

The activity of determining the boundaries of empirical experience is thus an expression of the freedom of reason, its ability to determine itself apart from any external influence or force. Far from being a "humiliating" tenet, a necessary failure due to the weakness of our mind, Schelling argues that this is precisely and expression of the *absolute freedom* of reason. For Schelling, this exercise of reason not only "elevates it and gives it confidence in itself," but also elevates it into the domain of freedom, a domain that is entirely closed to objective cognition *because the freedom of the I itself* limits the scope of the conditioned understanding. The domain of the unconditioned cannot become objective but contains nothing other than the freedom of reason in its self-determination. This is nothing other than the freedom of the *absolute I*.[21]

The principles of knowledge furnished by the first *Critique* are all, according to Schelling, *derivative* principles that articulate the boundaries of objective knowledge and the limits of empirical cognition as grasped from the side of the conditioned, empirical I. Schelling's argument is that these all depend upon *superior* principles, which must be derived from the side of the

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[21] Thus, Schelling writes in *Vom Ich*: "*The essence of the I is freedom*, that is, it is not thinkable except inasmuch as it posits itself by its own absolute power (*Selbstmacht*), not indeed as any kind of *something*, but as sheer *I*. This freedom can be determined *positively*, because we want to attribute freedom not to a thing in itself but to the pure I as posited by itself, present to itself alone, and excluding all that is not-I. No objective freedom belongs to the *I* because it is not an object at all. As soon as we try to determine the I as an object, it withdraws into the most confined sphere, under the conditions of the interdependence of objects—its freedom and independence disappear. An object is possible only through some other object, and only inasmuch as it is bound to conditions. Freedom *is* only through itself and encompasses the nonfinite (VI, I/1 179).

unconditioned, that is, through absolute freedom. Only then will a true *system* be achieved and genuine unity be realized within the domain of experience. Accordingly, Schelling proposes to articulate how it is that the highest principle, the absolute I, can indeed be the "principle of philosophy;" that is, how it can provide a proper grounding for all the other principles of knowledge within Kant's system. As he indicates in the Preface, this would include a proper grounding of the a priori forms of space and time and a new derivation of the categories of the understanding.[22] I argue that the main goal of *Vom Ich* is to provide a similar grounding for the *ideas of reason* that Kant enumerates in § 76, and that Schelling takes this "Remark" as something of a blueprint for this project on account of its suggestion of a principle of unity underlying the three domains of theoretical reason, practical reason, and reflective judgment, as well as the specific indications it gives as to how to properly ground the principles of each domain individually.

Schelling points to this aspect of his project in *Vom Ich* when he states the following in the Preface just after his remarks on the a priori forms of intuition and the categories:

> Finally, even if it could be said that Kant's theoretical philosophy maintained the most conclusive concatenation among all its parts, still his theoretical philosophy is not connected with the practical by a common principle. His practical philosophy does not seem to be one-

[22] In the Preface, Schelling goes on to enumerate principles of Kant's system that he claims are only penultimate formulations that all presuppose and depend on *superior* principles, and ultimately on an unconditioned first principle. For example, Schelling states: "{S]pace and time, which are supposed to be only forms of intuition, cannot possibly precede *all* synthesis and therefore must themselves depend on a higher form of synthesis. Similarly, the derivative subordinate synthesis by means of the categories cannot possibly be thought of without an original form and an original content, which must be the basis of every synthesis if it is to be a synthesis at all. This is all the more obvious, since Kant's deductions teak us at first glance that they presuppose higher principles. Thus, Kant names the only possible forms of sense perception, space and time, without having examined them according to a principles (as for instance the categories according to the principle of logical functions of judgment). The categories are set up according to the table of functions of judgment, but the latter are not set up according to any principle" (VI, I/1 153-4).

> and-the-same structure with the theoretical; instead it seems to be a mere annex to his philosophy as a whole and, what is more, an annex wide open to attacks from the main building. Yet inasmuch as the first principle of philosophy is also the last, since all philosophy, the theoretical in particular, starts from the final result of the practical in which knowledge ends, the whole science must be possible, in its highest perfection and unity. (VI, I/1 154)

The heart of Schelling's criticism here is that theoretical and practical philosophy are not "connected by a common principle," and thus need to be united through the articulation of the highest principle of the unconditioned (precisely what Kant's § 76 suggests, on Schelling's reading). What Schelling does not state here is a point that I will argue for in section three of this chapter: Schelling will follow Kant's third *Critique* in positing the principle of *purposiveness* as the unifying ground of theoretical and practical reason, even if Kant's notion of *purposiveness* is significantly transformed in Schelling's appropriation. Thus, I argue, Kant's § 76 provides in large part the underlying structure of Schelling's *Vom Ich* and its attempt to transform the whole Kantian architectonic on the basis of the highest principle of the "I". Schelling seeks to establish this complete systematic unity by providing something of a deduction of the principles of each domain from highest principle of the absolute I.

C. Theoretical Cognition of Nature

As we have seen, Kant's first example in § 76 concerns reason's need in its "theoretical consideration of nature" to "assume the idea of an unconditioned necessity of its primordial

ground" (5:403). My argument is that Schelling reads each of the examples that Kant gives as simultaneously indicated the limits of objective knowledge as well as the proper form of that which can be given only through the absolute freedom of the I. In the case of theoretical reason, the limits of what objective knowledge can conceive, and therefore posits as a regulative idea, is the idea of a something that would be the necessary ground of the entire contingent order of nature, an *ens realissimum* or a supreme being. This can only be a regulative idea for us, Kant argues, since an absolutely necessary being would be one in which there could be no distinction between possibility and actuality, concept and intuition. For Schelling, Kant's argument that we simply cannot conceive such a being is entirely correct, since Kant is here naming the form of the unconditioned, which can in no way be given as an object. Thus, Kant's notion of a supreme being that is the unconditioned ground of nature is a merely *empirical* idea,[23] whereas the form of absolute necessity described by Kant points to the form of the unconditioned. This form of the unconditioned that Kant describes here is, I believe, what Schelling takes to be the proper principle of theoretical reason, the pure idea that should be the proper "vanishing point" toward which all of our empirical endeavors strive. This form is nothing other than the absolute identity between *thought* and *being*.

While Kant does not in any way name this identity as the form of the "*Urgrund*," it is easy to

[23] Schelling stipulates that his use of the term "empirical" differs significantly from the common usage. He writes in a note to *Vom Ich*: "The word *empirical* is usually taken in a much too narrow sense. Empirical is everything that is in contrast to the pure I, everything essentially related to a not-I […] *Pure* is what exists without relation to objects. *Experienced* is what is possible only through objects. *A priori* is what is possible only in relation to objects but not through them. *Empirical* is that which makes objects possible" (VI, I/1 176n.). Thus, Schelling's uses the term "empirical," then, to designate that which makes the synthesis between the absolute I and the not-I. Thus, it includes not only objects given through sensible intuition (the common sense of the term) but everything that is outside of the pure I, and thus everything that is "essentially related to the not-I," that is, that which is *objective* and deals with *objects* given to *subjects*. I understand Schelling to use the term in a sense that is analogous to the term "conditioned," as that which falls outside the domain of the pure I.

see how Schelling derives his reading from Kant's explanation of why it is that the manner of being at stake here is something for which our understanding "has absolutely no concept." Kant points out that, for our discursive understanding, objects are given to us through concepts, through which we *think* a thing, and sensible intuition, through which something is given to us a *real*, as *existing*. For the understanding, then, (and for Schelling, the empirical domain as a whole), there is a necessary separation between thinking and existing (and thus the possibility of a distinction between possibility and actuality). As we have seen, the first way in which Kant draws a contrast with the form of our discursive understanding is through the idea of an "intuitive understanding," for which there is no distinction between concept and intuition and "all objects [that are] cognize[d] would **be** (exist) […]" (5:403). We will turn our attention to this figure of the intuitive understanding briefly below. For now, I want to suggest that for both Kant and Schelling, the account of the "Urgrund" as "existing absolutely necessarily" is to be considered separately from the intuitive understanding and is not to be immediately identified with it. For Schelling, I argue that the importance of this distinction is the following: the intuitive understanding (intellectual intuition) names the form of the absolute I as such, as the unconditioned ground of the whole of philosophy (theoretical reason, practical reason, and reflective judgment), while the "Urgrund" is a figure for thinking the way in which the absolute I grounds the activity of theoretical philosophy in particular (just as Kant's example is meant to explain the origins of the regulative idea of a supreme being employed in our theoretical consideration of nature.

What is notable for Schelling about Kant's regulative idea of a supreme being is that, by presenting the unconditioned ground of nature as an *object*, it inscribes the separation between thought and being into a fixed and insuperable condition of the whole order of nature that is grounded upon this principle. This should be clear from the procedure by which Kant gives a

deduction of the ideas of reason: extending the given conditions furnished by the understanding and extending them toward and ideal ground of the series that is, therefore, *homogenous* to the series that it grounds.[24] Thus, the law of causality established through the understanding ensures that there is an infinite regress when we think of a series of causes, since every event is preceded by a prior cause, and nothing can be considered an absolute cause, a *causa sui*. A similar regress unfolds for the understanding in its attempts to think its objects: no object is given *through itself,* but everything is given through something other than itself, whether it be a concept of the understanding or a sensible intuition. Thus, in thinking the supreme ground of nature, the understanding can only thing of an *object* that is not given through itself, and thus a being in which thought and reality are separate. For Schelling, then, there is an intimate connection between the exclusively mechanical order of nature that is described by the understanding and the *objectively conceived* ground of nature, understood as a supreme being or *ens realissimum*. The order of being is thus reflected in the order of knowledge, but in a way that renders them both objective. In the following quote, Schelling gives a good account of the essence of the "objective" that underlies both orders of thought and being considered from the perspective of the conditioned (outside of the pure I): "The object as such never determines its own necessity, simply because and insofar as it is an object. For it is object only inasmuch as it is determined by something else. Indeed, inasmuch as it is an object it presupposes something in regard to which it is an object, that is, a

[24] Paul Franks, in *All or Nothing*, provides an excellent discussion of this point and its importance for the development of Fichte and Schelling's methodologies. He notes that the structure of Fichte's argument for the need to posit the first principle *absolutely* and not as a fact encountered within consciousness has a structure that is analogous to Kant's Antithesis of the Third Antinomy. For Franks, the point of Fichte's argument and that of the Antithesis of the Third Antinomy is the same: "an absolutely unconditioned condition" cannot be arrived at by way of a regression from a conditioned series. In doing so, one appeals to "an unconditioned that is *homoegenous* with what it is supposed to condition. Such a condition will turn out to be subject to the same conditions as what it is supposed to condition, and therefore cannot be absolutely unconditioned at all. At best, it can be relatively unconditioned […]." See Franks, *All or Nothing*, 226.

subject" (VI, I/1 165).[25]

The objective nature of Kant's supreme being is highlighted by his description of a truly *unconditioned* being, which, for which there would be no distinction between possibility and actuality, and therefore thought and reality, concept and intuition. Kant emphasizes that it is precisely the necessary separation of these elements for our discursive understanding that ensure that we cannot possibly conceive of such a being and its manner of existing. In the background of Kant's discussion we should hear echoes of the ontological argument, understood as a figure of the absolute identity between thought and being, concept and intuition: for, according to the argument, once we have the right idea of God in our minds, the existence or reality of that being should be immediately evident—*given*. Thus, Schelling comments *Vom Ich* that the ontological argument only fails so long as we think of God as an *object*, by means of a concept that is not identical with God's being. Here, Kant would seem to indicate something similar: the ontological argument cannot work for the discursive understanding, not because it is a deficient account of the being of an absolutely necessary being, but because our discursive understanding necessarily precludes the absolute identity between thought and being. In doing so, Schelling understands Kant to have given the exact manner of being that is proper for thinking the unconditioned. As Schelling states, "the unconditional should realize itself, create itself through its own thought; the principle of its being and its thinking should coincide" (VI, I/1 164).

Schelling offers an important criticism of any attempt to posit the idea of a supreme being as the "primordial ground of nature" in the following passage:

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[25] For Schelling, everything within the domain of the conditioned is *objective*, inasmuch it results from the synthesis between the absolute I and the not-I, in which they both mutually limit each other. For the empirical I, then, everything is given as object, as conditioned by the negations of pure identity (the not-I). It is for this reason that the unconditioned ground can only be given as pure I.

> [N]o object realizes itself. In order to reach the existence of an object I must go beyond the mere concept of the object. Its existence is not a part of its reality. I can think its reality without positing it as existing. Suppose, for instance, that God, insofar as some define him as an object, were the ground of the reality of our knowledge; then, insofar as he is an object, he would fall into the sphere of our knowledge; therefore he could not be for us the ultimate point on which the whole sphere depends. Also, the question is not what God is for himself, but what he is for us in regard to our knowledge. Even if we let God be the ground of the reality of his knowledge, he is still not the ground of ours, because for us he is an object, which presupposes some reason in the chain of our knowledge that could determine his necessity for our knowledge (VI, I/1 165).

To begin with, I would just like to highlight the strong echoes of Kant's § 76 in Schelling's discussion here. Clearly, the idea that the domain of the conditioned is essentially the domain of the *objective*—in which thought and reality are not identical but in which we must "go beyond the mere concept of the object" to arrive at the reality of a thing—is indebted to Kant's discussion in § 76 and its implicit reference to the ontological argument. Concerning Schelling's argument, it is important to note the real problem he identifies in positing an objective concept of God as the ground of nature; for, as he says, "the question is not what God is for himself, but what he is for us in regard to our knowledge." Even if we assert that God is in the ground of his knowledge (or, we may add, the primordial ground of nature), to assert that he is such *objectively* is to ensure that he is "not the ground of ours;" that is, the manner of his being or the manner of his being the ground of nature is given conditionally, and so dependent upon some other element of our knowledge. We will necessarily conceive this grounding in a conditioned, objective manner, and thus the whole order of nature that we cognize as grounded on this conditioned ground will be *objective*.

The account of the unconditioned that Schelling derives from this first example in § 76, then, is the absolute identity of thought and being.[26] With this in mind, it is instructive to look at § 1 of *Vom Ich*, in which Schelling begins his investigation with a very simple proposition: When we want to know something, we want to know at the same time that what we know is *real*: "Knowledge without reality is not knowledge." Schelling then asks: "What follows from that?" (VI, I/1 162) In this first section, Schelling then goes on to argue that this essential character of knowledge, as a demand for knowledge that is real, indicates a demand for an unconditioned first principle of knowledge. Schelling argues along much the same lines as Fichte in the *Grundlage*:

> Either our knowledge has no reality at all and must be an eternal round of propositions, each dissolving in its opposite, a chaos in which no element can crystallize—or else there must be an ultimate point of reality upon which everything depends, from which all firmness and all form of our knowledge springs, a point which sunders the elements, and which circumscribes for each of them the circle of its continuous effect in the universe of knowledge (VI, I/1 162).

But whereas Fichte will pursue this firm point anchoring the entire conditioned chain of knowledge in the self-certainty of the I, Schelling develops this train of thought in a different direction. He, too, will insist that the I form the basis of the certainty of all our knowledge; however, Schelling will insist that this *epistemological* ground must be identical with the *ontological* ground of all reality: "There must be something in which and through which everything that is reaches existence, everything that is being thought reaches reality, and thought itself reaches to the form of unity and immutability" (VI, I/1 162). That which gives unity and immutability to thought must be identical

[26] Kant's description of the intuitive understanding certainly contains understanding of the form of the unconditioned as well. In dealing with the question of the absolutely necessary *Urgrund* and the intuitive understanding separately, I do not mean to deny that they mutually reinforce each other in delineating this essential form of the unconditioned.

with that "in which and through which everything that is reaches existence." In other words, the ultimate principle of knowledge must be an absolute identity between thought and being. Schelling goes on: "This something (as we can problematically call it for the time being) should be what completes all insights within the whole system of human knowledge, and it should reign—in the entire cosmos of our knowledge—as *original ground (Urgrund)* of all reality" (VI, I/1 162).

Apart from the obvious terminological similarity to Kant's use of "Urgrund" to refer to the "absolutely necessary" being in § 76, what is more important about this passage is Schelling's insistence that this *Urgrund* must be the center of "the entire cosmos of our knowledge," and that, in order to do so it must also be the original ground of all reality. Schelling accordingly states further on: "The last ground for all reality is something that is thinkable only through itself, that is, it is thinkable only through its being; it is thought only inasmuch as it is. In short, *the principle of being and thinking is one and the same"* (VI, I/1 163). While this assertion that the principle of our knowledge and the principle of all reality must be *identical* raises a whole host of questions (some of which we will address in the sections that follow), I would like to emphasize what I take to be some important conclusions that follow from the above reading.

First and foremost, I argue that the above reading establishes a strong connection between Kant's first example in § 76 and Schelling's formulation in *Vom Ich* of the essential character of the first principle as *unconditioned*, and that this has important consequences for how we understand Schelling's early formulation of the "I as principle of philosophy. For Schelling begins his investigation with a determination of the highest principle as *unconditioned*; from there he goes on to give it a further determination as the wholly non-objective; and finally, he argues that it is only the form of the "I" that has this form of the non-objective, absolutely unconditioned. Thus, Schelling's methodology in establishing the "I" as the highest principle is very different from the

one followed by Fichte in the *Grundlage*. In short, it leads him to conceive of the I as the *Urgrund*, the absolute identity of the ideal and the real, the subjective and the objective. For Schelling, the I is not just the epistemological ground of the transcendental I, but also the ontological ground of all reality, and thus of *nature*. It is, of course, precisely on this point that Schelling and Fichte will part ways several years down the road. What is important to note here is that, on my reading, Schelling develops this understanding of the nature of the unconditioned as the identity of thought and being, at least to some extent[27], in meaningful dialogue with this section of Kant's § 76. Inasmuch as this account of the unconditioned goes on to play an important role in Schelling's later works, this connection sheds important light on a key development in Schelling's early thought. Indeed, we can consider the characterization of this essay that Schelling penned in the preface to the 1809 edition in which it was republished (along with the first publication of his celebrated *Freedom Essay*). Regarding *Vom Ich*, Schelling writes: "It shows idealism in its freshest form, in a sense which it may have lost later. At least the I is still taken everywhere as an absolute, or strictly as identity of the subjective and the objective as such, and not as a subjective I."[28] In light of this assessment, we can see Schelling's understanding of the unconditioned as the identity between the principle of knowing and the principle of being as a seed from which his mature thought will develop.

Secondly, with regard to the theoretical consideration of nature, we can also discern here the roots of Schelling's insistence that our theoretical account of nature be grounded in an *unconditioned* principle. In the early sections of *Vom Ich*, which we will not analyze in depth at

[27] I do not intend to rule out other elements that motivate Schelling's position here.

[28] Cited in Nassar, *The Romantic Absolute*, 306.

this point, Schelling argues that it is impossible for a system of freedom to posit a "thing-in-itself" as the ground of all reality and, (it is implied) of *nature*. For to posit the thing-in-itself, Schelling says, it to posit a principle of being that is necessarily beyond all thought.[29] It is to determine the absolute as absolute *object*, in which the separation between thought and being is fixed irrevocably. It is contradictory to pursue knowledge within such a system, Schelling argues. Thus, the first and ultimate principle of a system of knowledge, and a system of freedom, must be the identity of thought and being. What follows from this is that it is not sufficient to cognize nature as *mere appearances*, which entails the presupposition of the ground of nature as a "thing-in-itself", an ultimately unknowable and objective determination of the supersensible (reflecting the objective determination of the *ens realissimum* discussed above). Within a system of knowledge that has the absolute I as its highest principle, our theoretical cognition of nature must also be grounded in this unconditioned first principle. While Schelling does not draw this conclusion in this section of *Vom Ich*, I argue that it is here at the very start of Schelling's formulation of the absolute I as the identity of thought and being that the demand for a *Naturphilosophie*, as a theoretical account of nature that is grounded in an absolute principle, first emerges. This follows also, it will be recalled, from the theme of the first example from Kant's § 76. On the reading that I am proposing, Schelling seeks to ground the three domains Kant indicates in § 76 on an unconditioned first principle.

[29] Schelling's explanation of the impossibility of a thing-in-itself mirrors closely that of Ficthe. in *Vom Ich*, Schelling writes: "That absolutely counterposited not-I, in fact, is not absolutely unthinkable, as is the not-I presupposed absolutely (i.e., as antecedent to all that is I). But by itself it has no reality, not even a thinkable one. Just because it is counterposited to the I, it is posited as sheer negation, as an absolute nothing about which one can say nothing, nothing at all, except that it is mere antithesis to all reality. As soon as we try to give it reality, we transfer it from the sphere of mere antithesis to the sphere of the conditional, the sphere of what is posited in the I. Either it stands in absolute opposition to the I, as absolute not-I, that is, absolute nothingness , or it becomes something, a thing—that is, it is no longer posited absolutely but conditionally, posited in the I, that is, it ceases to be a thing in itself"(VI, I/1 188-89). The idea of an absolute object, something which necessarily beyond anything which we can think, cancels itself out, since it becomes pure negation. As soon as we think this pure negation (posit the not-I in the unity of the I), we are thinking of an absolute but an object, which is now conditioned and no longer absolute.

Following Kant's "hint", Schelling will thus articulate the unconditioned first principle of theoretical reason as the absolute identity between thought and being. In order to gain a sense of what this might look like, we will have to take up the remaining two examples from § 76 and Schelling's appropriation of them: practical reason and reflective judgment.

D. Intellectual Intuition and Intuitive Understanding

i. Kant's "Intuitive Understanding"

As we have seen, it is in order to highlight the contingent nature of our cognitive faculties and the principle that the categories of modality proper to them cannot be affirmed of things in themselves that Kant introduces his account of an *intuitive understanding*, the *possibility* of another kind of cognition different from our own for which the distinction between possibility and actuality would not exist. As with Kant's discussions of *intellectual intuition* in the first *Critique*, so also here: Kant does not intend to affirm the *actuality* of this hypothetical, since we could not even understand such a mode of cognition. His point is rather that these alternate forms of cognition are important *limit concepts* that restrict the pretensions that our own cognition might make to give an objective and necessary determination of things in themselves. For we have no grounds for excluding the possibility of another kind of cognition different from our own, since there is nothing contradictory in such a concept. As a result, we also have no grounds for maintaining that our own discursive form of cognition is the only possible one; thus, we cannot claim that our cognition gives us objective cognition of things in themselves, since they could be thought very differently by another kind of cognition. In the case of the intuitive understanding, we are presented with a

contrast to the discursive structure of our faculties:

> For if two entirely heterogeneous elements were not required for the exercise of these faculties, understanding for concepts and sensible intuition for objects corresponding to them, then there would be no such distinction (between the possible and the actual). That is, if our understanding were intuitive, it would have no objects except what is actual. (5:401-2)

If we were to eliminate the separation between our thinking and intuiting, such that any concept grasped by the understanding were also necessarily and simultaneously realized intuitively as a given reality, we would have "no objects except what is actual." There would no longer be any distinction between the possible and the actual, since there would be no gap between the concept as thought by the understanding and the intuition of an object as given that corresponds to the concept. Everything possible would simultaneously be actual (all conceptual objects of the understanding would be actualities), and everything actual would simultaneously be possible (all objects intuited and given in a representation would be simultaneously cognized and grasped by the understanding). Kant goes on to characterize the activity of such an intuitive understanding further on in the paragraph. He states that, for an understanding in which the distinction between thinking and intuiting, possibility and actuality, did not apply, "all objects that I cognize would **be** (exist), and the possibility of some that did not exist, i.e., their contingency if they did exist, as well as the necessity that is to be distinguished from that, would not enter into the representation of such a being at all" (5:403). For an intuitive understanding, all objects of cognition would necessarily *exist*. This not only means that there would not be any merely possible object (a conceptual object without any actuality); it also means that there would be no *contingency* in those objects of thought that were actual. In other words, if an object were to be cognized by the intuitive understanding as existing, there would be no contingency attached to this existence of the object.

There would be no possibility of the object *not* existing that would enter into the representation that the intuitive understanding would have of its object.

Schelling's adoption of the idea of an *intellectual intuition* is, of course, a central element of his "exposition of Kant's philosophy based on superior principles". It is in intellectual intuition that one is "elevated" to the domain of the absolute I and realizes it as the first principle of all philosophy. Schelling was well aware that Kant's many discussions of the notion of an intellectual intuition and an intuitive understanding were not meant to affirm the reality of such an intuition but were rather deployed as limit concepts. Schelling claims, however, that Kant's denials of intellectual intuition result from the standpoint he adopts in those places he discusses such a possibility; namely, the standpoint of empirical consciousness. Thus, Schelling will state the following:

> I know very well that Kant denied all intellectual intuition, but I also know the context in which he denied it. It was in an investigation which only presupposes the absolute I at every step and which, on the basis of presupposed higher principles, determines only the empirically conditioned I and the not-I in its synthesis with that I. (VI, I/1 181)

Kant's denial of intellectual intuition was, then, a denial that such a mode of cognition would be possible from the standpoint of the "empirically conditioned I," the I that results from the synthesis of the absolute I and the absolute not-I (the presupposed higher principles). This is precisely what we have seen in our discussion of the first example from § 76: given the discursive nature of human cognition and from within the domain of that standpoint, the idea of an intuitive understanding can only be a limit concept that we cannot even properly conceive. Schelling's aim in *Vom Ich*, however, is to arrive at the principles that underlie this form of empirical consciousness. Intellectual intuition is, for Schelling, precisely the mode of our access to the highest principle, the

absolute I, and so he would agree with Kant that such an intuition could not occur within empirical consciousness. Intellectual intuition, Schelling declares,

> can occur in consciousness just as little as can absolute freedom, since consciousness presupposes an object, and since intellectual intuition is possible only inasmuch as it has no object. The attempt to refute it from the standpoint of consciousness must fail just as surely as the attempt to give it objective reality through consciousness, which would mean to do away with it altogether. (VI, I/1 181-2)

For Kant to insist that intellectual intuition is impossible for the discursive intellect is no proof that such a mode of thought is completely impossible for us. It can neither be proved nor disproved from within empirical consciousness.

ii. Intellectual Intuition in Fichte

In order to get a clearer grasp of Schelling's conception of intellectual intuition in *Vom Ich*, it will be helpful to have a brief look at Fichte's use of the term prior to the writing of Schelling's text. The idea of an intellectual intuition in relation to the absolute first principle is suggested by Fichte in his *Review of Aenesidemus*. He employs the term three times in the essay without giving any detailed elaboration as to what he precisely means by the term. He did not use the term intellectual intuition in either the *Concept of the the Wissenschaftslehre* or in the *Grundlage*. It is only in his *Review of Aenesidemus* that Fichte puts forward the highly suggestive idea of intellectual intuition and its relation to the first principle, leaving the idea relatively open-ended and undetermined. This leaves the door open for Schelling to give his own interpretation of the idea in *Vom Ich*. Indeed, it will be Schelling's introduction of the term in *Vom Ich* that will bring about the considerable

enthusiasm and attention that the idea and the term acquires in post-Kantian philosophy.[30]

Fichte's first use of the term *intellectual intuition* in the *Review* occurs in the context of a discussion of whether the absolute subject is given in consciousness, or whether it rather something entirely outside the domain of empirical consciousness:

> The absolute subject, the I, is not given by empirical intuition; it is, instead, posited by an intellectual intuition. And the absolute object, the not-I, is that which is posited in opposition to the I. Neither of these occur in empirical consciousness […]. In empirical consciousness they are present only indirectly […]. One is never conscious of the *absolute* subject […] or of the *absolute* object […] as something empirically given. (I, 10)

The *intellectual* intuition by which the absolute I is posited is here contrasted with *empirical intuition*, or what is given within consciousness. It is unclear in this context whether Fichte is suggesting that such an intellectual intuition could ever be realized within empirical consciousness, since the absolute subject, the correlate of this intellectual intuition, is only ever present to consciousness *indirectly*.

This question is cleared up in the next passage, in which Fichte argues that the mind is likened to the Kantian "noumenon" insofar as "it is the ultimate foundation for any particular forms of thought at all," and so is the absolute ground for everything that occurs within consciousness. In a similar way, Fichte says, the mind can also be likened to a *transcendental idea*, but one that is absolutely unique with respect to every other: "It is a transcendental idea which is distinguished from all other transcendental ideas by the fact that it is realized through intellectual intuition,

[30] Xavier Tilliette has given the most thorough discussion of the ups and downs of the idea during this period. See his *Recherches sur l'intuition intellectuelle de Kant à Hegel*, (Paris: J. Vrin, 1995).

through the *I am*, and indeed, through the *I simply am because I am*" (I, 16). Unlike all other transcendental ideas, which are necessarily excessive with respect to the understanding and can only be realized within empirical consciousness mediately, as a regulative ideal to be approximated asymptotically, the absolute I is *realized* within consciousness in the unique intuition *I am simply because I am*. Thus, Fichte seems to say, the intellectual intuition through which the absolute I is posited does occur within consciousness as an utterly unique form of intuition that sets it apart from every other empirical intuition.

The third occurrence of intellectual intuition in Fichte's *Review* comes at the end of the text and in the context of a discussion in which Fichte is responding to the criticisms "Aenesidemus" levels against Kant's "moral theology, namely, the primacy of practical over theoretical reason." Fichte's use of the notion of an intellectual intuition has a strongly practical connotation, pointing to the autonomous self-positing of freedom that is the essential characteristic of the absolute I:

> Unlike an effective cause capable of producing something beyond itself, the ethical law is not at first directed at physical force. It is, instead, directed at a hyperphysical faculty of desire or endeavor (or whatever one wishes to call it). The ethical law is not at first supposed to produce any action at all, but only the constant endeavor toward an action, even if this action, hindered by the force of nature, should turn out never to have any *efficacy* in the material world. In other words, and in order to represent the elements of this mode of inference in their highest abstraction: If, in intellectual intuition, the I *is because* it is and *is what* it is, then it is, to that extent, *self-positing*, absolutely independent and autonomous. (I, 22)

Here we find strong echoes of the essentially *practical* character of reason in Kant that we discussed above, according to which a certain "conatus" of reason in its drive toward the unconditioned expresses its essential character as absolutely self-positing. Fichte here connects the

autonomy of reason in its "constant endeavor" to pursue the moral law, regardless of whatever hindrances it encounters within the external world. The ultimate goal of this striving is no particular action or consequence thereof, but simply the drive to posit itself, and in this way Kant's moral autonomy reveals a more fundamental character of reason as absolutely independent. Our very awareness of the demands of the moral law, the idea that one ought to engage in a certain striving without being influenced by the conditions given in the external world, is itself grounded in this essential character of the absolute I as self-positing. Thus, the Kantian account of freedom as moral autonomy is here shown to be intimately tied to Fichte's notion of the way the absolute I is *posited* in intellectual intuition. Intellectual intuition is the very activity of autonomous self-positing in its "highest abstraction," as it occurs in the *Tathandlung* of the absolute I.

These three very different uses of the term intellectual intuition indicate that it is not a form of empirical intuition or something that fits within the limitations of empirical consciousness, but that it is nevertheless given within consciousness to some extent in the unique activity of self-positing. The "content" of intellectual intuition, insofar as it is given to consciousness, is the "I am simply because I am." Additionally, intellectual intuition is strongly linked to the activity of practical reason, in that it is likened to the autonomous self-positing of freedom in its complete independence from external causality. While all of these uses of the term intellectual intuition are certainly related to each other, the exact definition of the term is left undetermined. The next word to be said about intellectual intuition is left to Schelling in *Vom Ich*.

iii. Schelling's Intellectual Intuition in *Vom Ich*

In § 3 of *Vom Ich*, Schelling introduces Fichte's formula "I am because I am" as he progressively

seeks to give a determination to the unconditioned principle, the absolute I. Here he insists that there can be no objective proof of this principle, since the absolute I cannot be an object nor can it ever become an object. The I is *unconditioned* (*Unbedingt*) only insofar as it is not rendered objective by being determined (*bedingt*) as a thing (*Ding*). Since it cannot be proved objectively, or given through anything conditional, the absolute I can only be given through itself. Before discussing the manner in which the absolute is "expressed" in the statement "I am because I am," Schelling gives the following argument about how the absolute I must be given. The I, he states,

> must be realized through itself (§ 1), not through objective proofs, which go beyond the mere concept of the entity to be proved. If the I were not realized through itself, then the sentence which expresses its existence would be, "if I am, then I am." But in the case of the I, the condition "if I am" already contains the conditioned "then I." The condition is not thinkable without the conditioned. I cannot think of myself as a merely conditional existence without knowing myself as already existing. Therefore, in that conditional sentence, the condition does not condition the conditioned but, vice versa, the conditioned conditions the condition, that is, as a conditional sentence it cancels itself and becomes unconditional: "*I am because I am*." (VI, I/1 167)

Schelling is rehearsing here Fichte's well-known example of how the self-positing of the I is given in the phrase "I am simply because I am," or just "I am I". But whereas Fichte's discussion of this theme in his early writings is strongly inflected by the Kantian notion of intellectual intuition from the first *Critique*, according to which the intuition creates its object, I argue that Schelling is influenced primarily by Kant's discussion of the intuitive understanding in § 76. For Schelling's discussion here is not focused on leading the reader to discover one's self to be an "I", to constitute oneself as an autonomous I through a recognition of one's own self-conscious activity. Rather,

Schelling focuses on the way that the discursive distinction between concept and intuition is completely eliminated in the statement "I am because I am". We can see this in the above argument if we consider Schelling's terminology of the conditioned and the condition in terms of concept and intuition, possibility and actuality. In this way, the conditioned would be the mere concept of a thing, the possibility of some mode of existing. It is only when an object corresponding to that concept is given in sensible intuition (the condition) that we can affirm the conditioned: a being that corresponds to the possible concept actually exists. Thus, in most instances, a statement like "If I am, then I am" would be true only when the condition is given: I have a sensible intuition of myself as actually existing, and therefore I can cognize myself as an existing "I". However, when it comes to the unique instance of the I, things are turned around: "But in the case of the I, the condition 'if I am' already contains the conditioned 'then I.' The condition is not thinkable without the conditioned." In other words, the actuality of the I is already given in the very concept of "I"; the conditioned (the mere concept) contains the condition (the intuition that provides an actual object corresponding to it). What I want to emphasize here most of all is that Schelling is unpacking the meaning of Fichte's "I am I" according to the logic of the intuitive understanding that Kant discusses in § 76. The significance of this will become clearer in what follows.

The conclusion that Schelling draws from this discussion is that the I alone has the form of non-objectivity: it simply cannot be given in abstraction, as an object "out there". An I is only an I when it is "spoken" as an expression of the spontaneous activity of a subject. An I cannot be grasped from outside according to the discursive mode of cognition, where we are given an abstract and general concept and then provided with the sensible intuition of some object that can be subsumed under that general concept. I can only cognize my "I" by becoming reflexively aware of my own act of being an I, and once I come to this intuition or awareness of my own subjective

activity, the *Tathandlung* of being an I, then my I is given in that very act of recognition. Thus, Schelling writes:

> An object receives its existence from something outside the sphere of its mere conceivability. In contrast, the I is not even conceivable unless it first exists as an I. If it does not so exist it is nothing at all. And it is not at all thinkable except insofar as it thinks itself, that is, insofar as it is." (VI, I/1 168)

and

> [i]t is by being thought, and it is being thought because it *is*; and all for only one reason—that it *is* only and is being thought only inasmuch as its thinking is its *own*. (VI, I/1 167)

For Schelling, then, Fichte's "discovery of the "I" as the first principle of philosophy is presented primarily according to the model of the intuitive understanding as outlined in § 76. Schelling emphasizes how, in the realization of the "I am because I am", the discursive distinction between concept and intuition, possibility and actuality, is eliminated. There is no mere concept of the I without the I simultaneously becoming *actual*; concept and intuition are inseparable in the *Tathandlung* of this *intellectual* intuition. Similarly, there is no possibility or actuality here, since there is no possible concept that might or might not be given as actual. Nor is there any bare intuition that might lack a corresponding concept, a pure actuality separate from any possibility: for the I is only given as actual in the realization of myself as an I, in the taking up of my own subjectivity. The proposition "I am because I am" collapses into the single *intellectual* intuition: "I am," the perfect union of concept and intuition, possibility and actuality.

Thus, in the intellectual intuition of Fichte's "I am," Schelling discerns the realization of what Kant had deemed an impossibility for human understanding: an intuitive mode of understanding

that has "no objects except what is actual" (5:402). In this one instance, the activities of thinking and intuiting are not "two different conditions for the exercise of the cognitive faculties" (5:403); we are given a limited instantiation of that mode of cognition about which Kant merely hypothesized, an understanding for which "all objects that I cognize would **be** (exist)" (5:403). In the "I am," we do not have to go beyond the concept of the object in order to determine its existence, as we would in any other exercise of the discursive understanding. This leads us to a wholly *unconditional* principle, since it is not given through anything other than itself. It is "realized through itself, not through objective proofs which go beyond the mere concept of the entity to be proved" (VI, I/1 167). This is the proper form of the unconditioned, since "the absolute can be given only by the absolute" (VI, I/1 167).

Accordingly, I propose that Schelling's presentation of Fichte's "I am I" is thoroughly dependent upon Kant's discussion of the intuitive understanding, as opposed to Fichte's elaboration of the idea in light of Kant's intuitive intellect. The consequences of this alternate starting point for the development of Schelling's account of the absolute I are far reaching, giving rise to significant differences between Schelling and Fichte's philosophical positions from the outset. For Fichte's emphasis remains on the *certainty* of the absolute first principle: in intellectual intuition, thought is creative of its object, and the intuition brings about the object with absolute certainty. Once we think the object, we have arrived at some foundation of our knowledge that it absolutely certain and which will function as the ground of certainty for the entire cosmos of our knowledge. In very general terms, we can say that Fichte's account of intellectual intuition aims primarily to establish the absolute I as the ground of self-consciousness, the ground of the transcendental I. We can discern the roots of this in Fichte's description of intellectual intuition in the *Review of Anesidemus* as the transcendental idea of the mind that is actual *given* or realized in

intuition.

In contrast, the emphasis for Schelling falls on the unconditioned character of the I as thewholly non-objective in which is realized the absolute unity between thought and *being*: the intuitive understanding has only those objects for its cognition that are actual, and all that is actual is the object of its cognition. What is given in my thinking of the "I am because I am" is not just the absolute I as the ground of all subsequent activity of the subject (Fichte), but the ground of all the identity of thought and *being*:

> *I am*! My I contains a being which precedes all thinking and imagining. It is by being thought, and it is being thought because it *is*; and all for only one reason—that it *is* only and is being thought only inasmuch as its thinking is its *own*. Thus it is because it alone is what does the thinking, and it thinks only itself because it is. It produces itself by its own thinking—out of absolute *causality*. (VI, I/1 167)

Thus, when the empirical I elevates itself to the intellectual intuition of its own I, what is realized is not only the absolute certainty of self-consciousness in which I elevate myself to an intellectual intuition of my own self (VI, I/1 183). This intellectual intuition of myself as an "I" culminates in the discovery that my I "contains a being which precedes all thinking and imagining;" that is, my own subjective I is contraction of an absolute I which is wholly unconditioned and precedes all discursive thinking of the empirical I. We are no longer thinking of a purely epistemological ground of all our subjective activity, but are elevated into the sphere of the absolute I, in which is realized the perfect identity between thought and being:

> Within that infinite sphere everything is intellectual, all is absolute being, absolute unity, absolute reality; in the finite spheres everything is conditionality, actuality (*Wirklichkeit*), limitation. If we break through these spheres (practical philosophy), then we are in the sphere

> of the absolute being, in the supersensuous world where all I outside the I is nothing, and this I is only One. (VI, I/1 215-6)

The absolute I is thus conceived not only as the epistemological ground of the transcendental subject, but also the ontological ground of all reality, *and* the ground of their identity.

A lot more work needs to be done to fill out the full implications of this claim. For now, I would like to indicate one reason why my emphasis on the role of Kant's § 76 for the development of Schelling's idea of intellectual intuition is important. In his recent work *The Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy,* Eckart Förster concludes his discussion of Schelling's philosophy of nature with a strong criticism that attacks the validity of the very foundations of Schelling's project. Förster bases his criticism upon an important distinction he brings to light between Kant's use of the terms "intellectual intuition" and "intuitive understanding". To be brief, Förster comes to identify Fichte's idea of intellectual intuition as the foundation of self-consciousness with Kant's account of intellectual intuition in the first *Critique*. Kant's notion of the intuitive understanding, in contrast, is directed more toward the idea of the absolute identity between thought and being, and so an original connection between the ideal and real, as we have seen. While I largely agree with his account of this distinction in Kant's own thought,[31] I find his application of this distinction to Schelling's thought to be highly problematic. For he will claim that Schelling's use of the term is restricted entirely to the meaning Förster associates with Kant's "intellectual intuition" from the first *Critique*, and therefore with Fichte's use of the term to indicate the ground of self-

[31] I hesitate to draw the boundary in as clear and fixed a manner as Förster seems to do. While each term carries different connotations for Kant, they both aim to be a limit concept highlighting the discursive nature of our cognition, and so there must be some points on which they terms can be used interchangeably. Thus, I do not find it to be at all problematic that Schelling uses the term "intellectual intuition" while indicating what Kant discusses under the term "intuitive understanding".

consciousness. The heart of his criticism of Schelling thus becomes: how can one take the insights derived from a (Fichtean) intellectual intuition of the *self* and proceed to apply those very same structures to an external nature?[32] The problem with Förster's criticism, I argue is that he does not acknowledge that this is precisely the question that Schelling is seeking to address according to his understanding of intellectual intuition as the identity of thought and being, and not just the ground of self-consciousness. Thus, Förster argues,

> The question however remains whether an intellectual intuition in which one abstracts from the intuiting subject can really amount to more than word-play. What exactly would such an intuition be, assuming it is possible? In the case of an intellectual intuition, being and thought are inseparable in the product since in contrast to sensible intuition it is a productive intuition. If we are now to abstract from the producing subject, then there would have to be a unity of being and thought which could exist without appearing as the product of a subject. . . A mode of cognition of this kind, rightly understood, is however no longer intellectual intuition, but something quite different: *intuitive understanding.*[33]

And since Schelling proposes only an *intellectual intuition*, Förster concludes, his philosophy of nature has no proper foundation. He simply transfers the structures of self-consciousness onto external nature without justification. From what we have seen, I hope that the problematic nature of this reading is clear. From the very start in *Vom Ich*, Schelling formulates his account of "intellectual intuition" precisely through Kant's account of the intuitive understanding. What Schelling intends with by "intellectual intuition" is nothing other than the identity of thought and

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[32] This is, indeed, a valid question, and one that was raised by Schelling's contemporary Eschenmeyer, as Förster notes.

[33] Eckhart Förster, *The Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy*, 248-9.

being that grounds both the structures of thought (the ideal, the transcendental I) *and* the structures of being (the real, the philosophy of nature). Intellectual intuition for Schelling is the absolute identity of these two, as is clear (I believe) from a reading of *Vom Ich* through the lens of Kant's § 76, regardless of whether he uses the term "intellectual intuition" or "intuitive understanding". It is especially puzzling that Förster would make this claim restricting the meaning Schelling's term "intellectual intuition" so narrowly, since Förster is one of the few scholars to draw attention to the importance of Kant's § 76 for Schelling in the first place. On my reading, one of the principal ideas that Schelling draws from § 76 is precisely the idea of the intuitive understanding. Förster's argument is helpful inasmuch as it shows why Schelling's reading of § 76 is so important for the question of the origins of his philosophy of nature: for if Schelling had grounded his philosophy of nature on a purely "Fichtean" intellectual intuition of the self, then the whole project would indeed be contradictory. What we have seen, however, is that at its very inception Schelling's notion of intellectual intuition is marked by Kant's account of an intuitive understanding as the identity between thought and being, ideal and real, transcendental philosophy and *Naturphilosophie.*

Before moving on to Kant's second example, *practical reason*, I would like to pick up one more thread from the preceding discussion. In Fichte's third reference to intellectual intuition in his *Review of Anesidemus*, we saw that Fichte appealed to the essentially practical nature of reason in its capacity for autonomous self-positing in order to explicate what he means by the intellectual intuition of the absolute I. I want to emphasize the importance of this dimension of intellectual intuition for Schelling as well who, in this regard, is in complete agreement with Fichte. We have already seen that, in positing the absolute I as the first principle of philosophy, Schelling intends to postulate the absolute identity of thought and being. We may rightly ask: What ground does

Schelling have for asserting this absolute principle? In short, one important dimension of Schelling's answer to this question is that, in intellectual intuition, one posits the absolute I as the identity of thought and being as an act of absolute *freedom*. That is, the positing of the absolute I has the character of a *postulate*, an expression of the autonomous self-positing, *practical* capacity of the I. Without addressing this important aspect of Schelling's understanding of intellection intuition at the depth it deserves, I will here limit myself to a few remarks.

Schelling clarifies this aspect of his position in an important remark in the "Anticritique" he published in response to a critical review of *Vom Ich*. He writes:

> The purpose of the author was none other than the following: to liberate philosophy from that stagnation into which it had unavoidably to lapse owing to ill-fated inquiries into *a first principle of philosophy*. He wanted to prove that philosophy can start only from free actions, and that abstract principles as the mainstay of this science could lead only to the death of all philosophy [. . .]. [T]he author considers philosophy as a pure product of a free individual, or as an act of freedom [. . .]. However, since the philosophical public seemed to have ears only for first principles, his own first principle in regard to his readers had to be a mere *postulate*. It demands the same free action as that with which, as he is convinced, all philosophizing must begin. The first postulate of philosophy, to act freely, seemed to him just as necessary as the first postulate of geometry [. . .]. Philosophy itself is only an idea whose realization the philosopher can expect alone from practical reason. (SW I/1, 242-3)

The parallel with the first postulate of geometry is one that Schelling will employ frequently in order to articulate this point: just as the very first postulate of geometry initiates the science and makes possible all that unfolds within in, the act of freedom by which one begins philosophy, the positing of the I, establishes the horizon within which the whole activity of philosophy will unfold. Since the I is not any abstract concept, it can only be known through an *act* (Fichte's *Tathandlung*),

the act of freedom whereby it gains insight into itself *as* an I. Through this insight into one's own "I-hood," however, we gain insight not just into the ground of self-consciousness but, as we has seen, into the form of the unconditioned as *absolute* I and the unity of thought and being. Thus, intellectual intuition does not give us any speculative insight into the identity of thought and being. The first principle of philosophy is not something that we can find or can be given to us. It is a *postulate*, something that we must bring about through our own act of freedom. In order to see how Schelling distinguishes this "absolute" postulate from the postulates of practical reason formulated by Kant, we must first turn to Kant's second example and Schelling's reception of it.

II. Kant's Second Example: Practical reason

A. Kant's account

Kant begins his second example by asserting a parallelism between practical reason and theoretical reason, both of which express reason's drive toward the unconditioned:

> Just as in the theoretical consideration of nature reason must assume the idea of an unconditioned necessity of its primordial ground, so, in the case of the practical, it also presupposes its own unconditioned (in regard to nature) causality, i.e., freedom, because it is aware of its moral command. (5:403)

And just as theoretical reason's inability to cognize an absolutely unconditioned ground of nature leads it to formulate an idea that is valid for the conditions of the human cognitive faculty, resulting in a subjective but universal regulative principle, so, too, does practical reason's formulation of

the moral law as a *command*, as an *ought*, result from a purely subjective condition of the human faculties. Namely, "the objective necessity of [an] action, as duty, is opposed to that which it, as an occurrence, would have if its ground lay in nature and not in freedom (i.e., in the causality of reason)" (5:403). These are the conditions in which we find ourselves: "the action which is morally absolutely necessary can be regarded physically as entirely contingent," and what ought to happen often does not happen (5:403). The result is that the moral law is, for us, expressed in the form of *commands*, and that reason expresses the necessity of the moral law "not through a **be**. . . but through a **should**-be"(5:403). Kant wants to argue that this imperative form of the moral law is entirely dependent upon the "subjective constitution of our practical faculty" (5:403). As in the first example, he seeks to highlight the contingent character of our practical faculty in this respect by contrasting it with a consideration of reason "without sensibility," that is, a causality of reason considered apart from its application to objects of nature, and thus

> as a cause in an intelligible world, corresponding completely with the moral law, where there would be no distinction between what should be done and what is done, between a practical law concerning that which is possible through us and the theoretical law concerning that which is actual through us. (5:403-4)

The idea of such an intelligible world, Kant continues, is an entirely "transcendent concept" for us, just as is the concept of freedom itself. That is, it is "not serviceable for any constitutive principle for determining an object and its objective reality" (5:404). Just as in the first example, though, we are able to generate a regulative principle ("schematize" it, in Schelling's sense of the term) for use in accordance with our sensible nature. In this way, the idea of an intelligible world becomes a *task*, an ought, in that we must strive to realize this to the greatest possible extent. It thus has a subjective but universal validity for the whole of humanity and is represented in a way

that is in accordance with the conditions of our reason and our sensible nature. As an idea of reason, it does not "*determine* the constitution of freedom" or give us cognition of freedom or the reality of an intelligible world objectively. Rather, it is the source of commands and so is productive of actions within the empirical domain.

B. Schelling's Interpretation

Of all three examples in Kant's § 76, it is this second example that, on my reading, leaves the clearest mark on Schelling's *Vom Ich*. The entirety of § 14 of Schelling's text, I argue, engages in direct dialogue with this passage from the third *Critique*, thus making the impact of Kant's comments here very clear. I propose that Schelling's discussion of this passage is of the highest importance, not only for development of his account of the absolute I, but also for the emergence of his philosophy of nature, pointing to an essentially *practical* dimension of Schelling's approach to the question of nature that is frequently left out of accounts of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*. One of the benefits of viewing Schelling's *Vom Ich* through the lens of Kant's § 76 is that the later points to the unity of elements in Schelling's text that can often seem disparate and unconnected. The same applies for Schelling's early thought as a whole, and I believe that § 14 from Schelling's *Vom Ich* provides an important piece of the puzzle, especially useful when trying to make sense of the relation between Schelling's account of practical philosophy and his project for a philosophy of nature, a question that runs throughout the period of his mature *Naturphilosophie* and is perhaps not resolved until the *Freedom Essay*.[34]

[34] A lot more would have to be said to back up these claims. I mean them here as a means of highlighting the importance of this text and to mark out an avenue for future research.

We can begin to unpack Schelling's reading of this second example by pointing to the formal similarities between Kant's first and second examples. In both cases, an unconditioned is opposed to the given conditions of our empirical I in order to highlight the necessary limitations of our empirical experience of cognition and action. And just as in the first example, Schelling here also reads Kant as indicating both the boundaries of the conditioned domain, the proper form of the unconditioned, and the reason for its inaccessibility for the empirical I. Kant formulates a merely conditioned idea derived from its basis in empirical experience which, Schelling claims, stands in need of correction. This comes about by positing a pure rather than an empirical idea, a goal which will give rise to action and orients the efforts of the empirical I.

In this case, Schelling takes Kant to be providing a perfect account of the unconditioned form of the *absolute freedom* of the I. After working through the various way in which we can provide a determination of the absolute I in §§ 7-13 as pure identity, unity, containing all reality, absolutely infinite, and as *substance*,[35]Schelling begins § 14 with the following declaration: "The highest idea which expresses the causality of absolute substance (of the I) is the idea of absolute power" (VI, I/1 195). Following Spinoza's account of absolute substance, Schelling characterizes the absolute freedom of the I as a causality that acts by "the intrinsic power of its essence [*Wesen*], by the necessity of its being [*Sein*]. It does not act owing to any determination by any reality outside of itself (any value, any truth)" (VI, I/1 196), and so without will, wisdom, or intention. Schelling defends this "sublime idea" of Spinoza's system from the criticism that it does away with our notions of freedom and law-directed action (moral law) by responding with a distinction that echoes Kant's own: the distinction between our empirical experience of the moral law as an

[35] Many of these determinations are derived through a methodology that approaches a kind of negative theology and have strong Spinozistic overtones. We will address the importance of Spinoza in a later section.

imperative and the idea of an unconditioned freedom that would not distinguish between the laws of freedom (morality) and the laws of nature. The idea of freedom as action in accordance with the moral law, just like the ideas of will, virtue, and happiness, are all appropriate only for an empirical I that is confronted with an external reality that opposes it and therefore experiences a split between the laws of being (what *is*) and the laws of freedom (what *ought to be*).

At this point in the discussion, Schelling launches into an *Annotation*, in which he takes on Kant's doctrine of the highest good, and it is here that the impact of Kant's discussion of § 76 proves to be decisive. Schelling begins with a simple formulation of Kant's doctrine of the highest good, and proceeds to construct a criticism of it based on the distinction Kant introduces in § 76:

> True enough, Kant spoke of morality and proportionate happiness as the highest good and ultimate goal. Yet he himself knew very well that morality without an ultimate goal has no reality and that it presupposes limitation and finiteness and is not thinkable as an ultimate goal in itself but only as an approximation thereof. (VI, I/1 196-7)[36]

In the second sentence here, we have a perfect recap of Kant's argument from his second example: morality "presupposes limitation and finiteness," since its essential form as *imperative* is only valid for the subjective conditions of our practical faculty. The very idea of morality "presupposes" these limitations. Schelling's conclusion is that it "is not thinkable as an ultimate goal in itself but only as an approximation thereof." In other words, it "presupposes" an unconditioned form, according to which there would be no distinction between *is* and *ought*, possibility and actuality. But whereas Kant only proposes the idea of such an unconditioned practical faculty as a limit concept, Schelling

[36] I have modified all of Marti's translations in this section; where he has translated *Glückseligkeit* as "bliss", I have changed the term to "happiness."

claims here that Kant's emphasis on the contingent character of morality as such points to a need for it to be grounded in "an ultimate goal," apart from which it would have no reality. Schelling will go on to argue that this ultimate goal is the absolute freedom of the I, which is thus the proper "idea" of practical reason and the one from which our empirical form of practical reason should take its bearings.

In adopting Fichte's general distinction between theoretical and practical reason, Schelling holds that the proper goal of practical reason is the re-establishment of the absolute I, to be achieved through the infinite striving of the empirical I to overcome the not-I. Thus, Schelling argues, Kant's ideal of the goal of practical reason must be transformed: it cannot be what is articulated in Kant's highest good—morality in perfect agreement with happiness—but it must be what Kant articulated as the unconditioned form of practical reason, the "intelligible world" in which there is no longer any distinction between the law of being and the law of freedom. Thus, Schelling states that "the absolute I demands that the finite I should become equal to it" (VI, I/1 198). The finite I must strive to achieve, as its ultimate purpose or end, the unconditioned freedom of the absolute I. And since, for the absolute I, the law of being (what is) is identical with the law of freedom (what ought to be), Schelling proposes that the proper schema of morality for the moral subject ought to be conceived as an infinite striving to achieve the identity of these two laws. The following passage is worth quoting to see how Schelling develops this position:

> For the nonfinite I there is no moral law, and in respect to its causality it is determined only as absolute *power*, equal to itself. Moral law, however, although it exists only in relation to finiteness, has in itself no sense or meaning if it does not set up, as the ultimate goal of all striving, the nonfiniteness of the I and its own transformation into a mere natural law of the I. The moral law in the finite being is first of all a *schema* of natural law whereby the being of the nonfinite is determined . . . Therefore the supreme law for the finite being is: *Be absolutely*

identical with yourself. (VI, I/1 198-9)

Again, on the basis Schelling's determination of the absolute I as the *absolute power*, nearly identical in form with Kant's "reason without sensibility" in which there is no distinction between what *is* (what Schelling calls here the "natural law of the I") and what *ought* to be (the law of freedom), Schelling argues that the proper goal of practical reason is not the fulfillment of the moral law (an empirical goal), but the realization of complete identity between what *is* and what *ought* to be.

The significance of this reorientation of the *goal* of practical reason is considerable. The essence of Schelling's critique of Kant's position here seems to be the following: Kant has correctly identified the necessary empirical form of the practical faculty as an opposition between the law of freedom and the law of being (the law of nature). What ought to happen often does not, and what does happen ought not to happen: thus, we must strive to bring about an ideal harmony between freedom and nature. Where Kant goes wrong, Schelling proposes, is in conceiving this harmony as the elevation of one of these poles over the other, the absolute autonomy of our moral striving and the absolute submission of the law of nature to this autonomy ("reason accompanied with sufficient power", as we saw in Chapter One). What is given in the ideal form of absolute freedom, however, is not the triumph of moral autonomy over nature, but rather the perfect identity of the law of freedom and the law of nature.

Although Kant had correctly formulated this in his account of "reason without sensibility" and the intelligible world, his "schema" of this ideal gets translated in a way that, according to Schelling is merely empirical and therefore insufficient. I discern two principal criticisms that Schelling levels against Kant's "schema" here. First, Schelling proposes that the ultimate goal of all practical striving is the highest good, understood as the perfect correlation between morality

and *happiness*. Schelling argues that many had misunderstood Kant to mean by this *empirical happiness* which would be the external conformity of nature to human ends as a reward for virtue. To this interpretation, Schelling responds "it is astonishing that nobody has yet denounced the moral perniciousness of a system which imagines empirical happiness as connected with morality, not through any inner connection, but only by external causality" (VI, I/1197n.). What Schelling is criticizing here is, however, precisely the *schema* that Kant proposes as the ideal that practical reason should strive for: yes, to pursue the moral law for its own sake and regardless of the prospects of any reward or punishment; but also, to hold out hope that one's moral striving will meet with a fitting correspondence from the external world. The problem Schelling focuses on here is that this correspondence is imagined to be brought about through *external causality*, not through any "inner connection" between the laws of nature and the laws of freedom, but through the action (imposition) of order by an external agent. This means both that human freedom is understood as a unilateral imposition of rational order on a passive nature, and that God is conceived as the author of nature who has essentially done the same: created nature as an order that is a fitting receptacle for this activity. Schelling will contest both concepts vehemently. In large part, his target will be the "Kantians" of his day, especially Schelling's former teachers at the Tübingen seminary, whom Schelling accused of trying to exploit Kant's practical postulates in order to smuggle into the critical system an "objective" notion of God. Schelling will insist that such readings are not the true meaning of Kant's system, even if there are grounds for such a reading in the "letter" of Kant's text. The true meaning of practical reason, however, its true goal and proper schematization, is otherwise:

> […] according to Kant, practical philosophy leads into the supersensuous domain because, in its turn, it annihilates everything that is theoretical [i.e., object] and reestablishes what is

> intuited intellectually (the pure I). But since we enter the supersensuous world only through the reestablishment of the absolute I, what can we expect to find there other than the I? Therefore, no God as an object, no not-I at all, no empirical happiness, et cetera, but only pure, absolute I! (VI, I/1 100)

Regardless of his rhetorical polemic against the "Kantians," however, Schelling is certainly leveling a strong criticism against Kant himself. Kant's formulation of the highest good cannot be the ultimate end of practical reason, because it fixes the dichotomy between nature and freedom. There is no real harmony achieved in the idea of the highest good, because the identity that is brought about is done so through a purely external and objective causality.

This leads to what I take to be Schelling's second principal criticism, already indicated briefly above. Kant's schema of practical reason elevates only one part of the opposition between what is and what ought to be and between the law of morality and the law of nature, and subordinates the later entirely to the former. In this way, no true identity is achieved and there is no "reestablishment of the absolute I," which would the absolute identity between the two. Thus, Schelling proposes a new "schematism" for the empirical I: "Therefore one could also say that the ultimate goal of the I is to turn the laws of freedom into laws of nature, and the laws of nature into laws of freedom, to bring about *nature* in the I and *I* in nature" (VI, I/1 198n.). The striving of the empirical I should therefore be directed at a twofold task: to bring about the *I* in nature (equivalent to Kant's account of the task of practical), *but also*, to bring about *nature* in the I. Thus, both poles of the opposition are to be raised into a greater unity. The later imperative can be taken in two ways, and I believe that Schelling intends them both. The first sense is a very Kantian idea: the law of freedom should become for us as fixed and stable as the laws of nature themselves. Thus, we bring about "nature" in the I by making our observance of virtue and the moral law an abiding and unchanging

disposition, a "second nature". The second sense, however, is Schelling's own and will be a principle that will separate him from both Kant and Fichte in significant respects: We must come to freely embrace the givenness of nature, both within ourselves and in the world surrounding us, and freely author its necessity. We must, Schelling says, make the law of being— which we encounter as *given* and as the fixed necessity of the law of nature—*constitutive through freedom* (VI, I/1 241). Schelling gives a very detailed "schematism" of this this goal of bringing about an absolute identity between the law of nature and the law of freedom which we will not take up at this time. The primary point I want to make is the following: Schelling employs the unconditioned form that Kant articulates in his second example in order to reformulate the proper end of practical reason, which is nothing short of the "re-establishment" of the absolute I. Since the absolute freedom of the I has the form of a perfect identity (or, more properly, the non-difference) between the law of nature and the law of freedom, the proper "schematization" of this form for the empirical I cannot simply be the elevation of the moral striving of the rational, autonomous subject over the laws of nature in order to bring about an external conformity of nature to human ends. Rather, Schelling claims, we must establish a "reciprocal effect"[37] between the causality of nature and our own free causality. We must bring our free causality into harmony with the causality that we encounter in nature: both are required for an adequate realization of the form of absolute freedom. In order to see what this imperative to bring about the unity of nature and freedom looks like, we will have to turn our attention to Kant's third example: teleological judgment, and Schelling's transformation of the idea of *purposiveness*.

[37] Schelling here reworks a central idea from Fichte's theoretical philosophy into a novel application to his own practical philosophy.

IV. Purposiveness

A. Kant's Third Example

Kant's third example, even though it is the culmination of the argument Kant has been formulating throughout § 76—that which he seeks to "elucidate" by means of the prior examples—is surprisingly short, presumably because Kant continues to develop the theme in the following § 77. In brief, Kant argues that the distinction between a natural mechanism and a technique of nature (i.e., a something manifesting a "connection to ends") is entirely dependent upon the form of our understanding, which "must go from the universal to the particular, and hence make no determining judgments, without having a universal law under which it can subsume the particular" (5:404). As a reminder, this is a problem we saw emerge in Kant's account of nature as appearances in the first chapter. For the categories of the understanding only furnish general concepts and universal laws for the cognition of nature, and the manifold of nature will always exceed the general categories we employ to cognize it. Thus, the particular we encounter in nature will always contain "something contingent with regard to the universal" (5:404). Reason, however, will continue to demand the unconditioned, and thus the unity and lawfulness of nature as a whole; and thus, it demands a lawfulness in "the connection of the particular laws of nature" that is not furnished by the understanding. It is this "lawfulness of the contingent" that Kant calls *purposiveness* (5:404). Thus, the very concept of a purposiveness of nature in its products is a result of the discursive nature of our cognition (its need to cognize particulars by means of universal concepts and laws). We must therefore employ this concept within our reflective judgments as a merely subjective principle, having universal validity for all human subjects, but

determining nothing about an "object" in itself.[38]

B. Schelling's reception

By now, the structure of Schelling's reception of this example that I am proposing should be familiar. Schelling will criticize the conditioned nature of the a priori principles of reflective judgment as providing an insufficient schema inasmuch as they are not grounded in the absolute I as a first principle. Again, Schelling understands Kant's argument well, namely, that he does not claim to be providing any determination of the supersensible ground, but merely an indication of the manner in which our conditioned understanding must think of that ground *so as* to guide and regulate the course of our empirical cognitions (in this case, reflective judgments). Schelling does not therefore charge Kant with failing to provide a proper *objective determination* of the unconditioned. Rather, his criticism is that he misconstrues the proper ground for our "ideas of reason," the basis upon which we must furnish for ourselves the regulative principles that guide our empirical cognition (and action). These, Schelling insists, must be posited, not on the basis of the weakness of our human cognition (on the givenness of the categories of the understanding and the a priori forms of sensible intuition), but on the basis of the absolute freedom of the I, the

[38] It will be recalled that, although Kant only names the question of "distinction between a natural mechanism and a technique of nature" in the example under discussion, the root of this very distinction (the essential character of the understanding as moving from universal to particular) is also tied to Kant's formulation of the a priori principle for reflective judgment of a subjective purposiveness of nature that Kant discusses in the Introduction. At stake in this idea is the question of whether nature as a whole is amenable to our desire for systematic cognition, or whether the manifold particularity of nature might not overwhelm our capacity to impose order and structure on our cognitions of nature. The subjective principle of purposiveness thus provides the regulative idea of a supersensible ground of nature that has so ordered nature such that it will harmonize with our cognitive capacities and our attempts to understanding it systematically.

absolute autonomy of the self to posit the boundaries of empirical cognition through freedom.[39]

Accordingly, Schelling's criticisms of Kant's theory of organic nature, of the idea of a supersensible ground of nature and freedom, and of a subjective purposiveness of nature will all center on the *objective* manner in which they are conceived. With regard to the organic, Kant argues, we have no way of representing to ourselves the unity of this manner of causality and the causality of mechanism; and since mechanistic causality is a necessary condition of our cognition of nature, we can only conceive of ground in which the two kinds of causality would be united after the analogy of *techne*, of the imposition of an idea through mechanical means, such that the form encountered in the object is thought of as an end. This characterization does not, of course, give us grounds for any determination of the ground of organic and mechanistic causality; it simply gives us a way to think of it that reflects the conditions of our own cognitive faculties. The heart of the problem for Schelling here is that in each instance (the organism, the systemic order of nature, the unity of nature and freedom), the split between a "causality of reason" and a causality through mechanism is made permanent, elevating objective causality through mechanism to a status that is not merited and that distorts the true nature of the causality of reason. For the causality through reason that is given in the absolute I is not the external imposition of form onto a passive other, but rather that of self-positing, self-productive freedom. It is this causality of reason that must be thought as the ground of the organic, of the systematic order of nature, and even the ground

[39] In this sense, Schelling has upended Kant's distinction between *regulative* and *constitutive*. Schelling will claim that we must make the fixed laws of the empirical domain (both of our cognition—transcendental philosophy—and of nature —*Naturphilosophie*) constitutive *through freedom*. That is, derived from their ground in the absolute I through the free activity of philosophical reflection. Thus, when commentators claim that Schelling seeks to make Kant's regulative principles *constitutive* (as is often asserted, e.g., in cursory treatments of the *Naturphilosophie*, when it is claimed that Schelling wants to make Kant's regulative ideals for thinking the organic "constitutive"), these claims are correct in a sense, but not usually the sense that is intended. Schelling certainly does not wish to render the regulative idea generated through absolute freedom subordinate to the conditioned domain of objectivity.

of nature and freedom. By positing the absolute I as the highest principle of philosophy, then, we can derive from this principle the proper form of a "causality through reason": self-positing freedom. The organic is no longer to be thought as the realization of an intention, the imposition of an external form or end through mechanical means, but the self-forming, self-positing power that is the essence of the unconditioned. Similarly, nature itself is not to be thought as being guided externally toward the realization of a systematic order that is in harmony with our faculties of cognition. Rather, it is nature itself that must realize this order through its own powers of self-productivity. The guarantee of a harmony between this order of nature and the self-productive system of our own thinking is also not to be thought as having been brought about through external causality, but is realized because both thought and being are grounded in a single principle.[40]

In order to see how Schelling recasts Kant's idea of purposiveness as the source of the unity between nature and freedom, I argue that it is helpful to keep in mind the formal structure that is laid out in Kant's "Remark" in § 76 and that I propose provides an important element to the underlying structure of Schelling's essay. As we saw with respect to Schelling's attempts to derive the essential form underlying Kant's account of the categories, he believes that Kant always formulates a third principle as combination of the first two. This, in the case of *purposiveness*, we might consider it to be that which brings about the combination of theoretical reason and practical reason, nature and freedom, and I argue that this is precisely the sense in which Schelling will

[40] Here is where we see emerge the question that Schelling will develop in the Introduction to his *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, in which he formulates the questions to which the *Naturphilosophie* is presented as a response: "[W]e require to know, not how such a Nature arose outside us, but how even the very *idea* of such a Nature has gotten *into us*; not merely how we have, say arbitrarily generated it, but how and why it originally and *necessarily* underlies everything that our race has ever thought about nature . . . For what we want is not that Nature should coincide with the laws of our mind *by chance* (as if through some *third* intermediary), but that *she herself*, necessarily and originally, should not only express but even realize, the laws of our mind, and that she is, and is called, Nature only insofar as she does so" (*Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, 41-2).

understand the proper role of this idea in a system grounded in the absolute.

But what sense could an idea like purposiveness, as a "lawfulness of the contingent," have for a system of the absolute? I argue that the key to understanding Schelling's appropriation of this element of the Kantian architectonic is Schelling's distinction between the empirical I and the absolute I. Schelling takes over Fichte's account of this relationship, claiming that the tension between the absolute unity of the I and the disunity of the empirical I, which is constitutively wrapped up with objects and the not-I, manifests itself in the infinite striving of the empirical I to recover the unity of the absolute I. This takes the form of the striving of the empirical I to "annihilate" all objectivity and reinstitute the unity through which it is even an I at all (the absolute I). This striving is proper to *practical* reason, which is able to break through to the absolute and reestablish the unity proper to it. In one of his footnotes to *Vom Ich*, Schelling provides an image in order to clarify the relation between the absolute and the conditioned domains that I think is very important for understanding his position. Schelling describes the sphere of conditioned being as a finite sphere that has opened up within the infinite sphere of the absolute, of all reality. This finite sphere is only possible by positing absolute negation within the sphere of absolute reality, and thus the finite sphere represents a limitation of both absolute reality and absolute negation. The finite sphere thus

> can be posited only as reality necessarily connected with negation. And by that the I becomes restricted. Though the sphere of the I is not entirely canceled, it becomes necessary to posit in it a negation, i.e. a limitation [*Schranke*]. Now, the finite sphere can strive to absorb the infinite, and to make itself the center of the entire sphere, a center from which issue both the rays of infinity and the limitations of finitude, which is a contradiction. If the struggle between the I and the not-I is expressed in the highest possible synthesis, then, in order to resolve it, nothing remains but the complete destruction of the finite sphere, i.e., an expansion of it until it

> coincides with the infinite sphere (practical reason). (VI, I/1 191n.)

In Schelling's assertion of the inherent contradiction in any attempt on the part of the finite sphere to "strive to absorb the infinite and to make itself the center of the entire sphere, a center from which issue both the rays of infinity and the limitations of finitude," I think we have a pointed criticism of Kant's entire methodology of seeking to ground the ideas of reason upon the inherent limitations of empirical I: a center from which issue the limitations of finitude (the boundaries empirical cognition and practical striving) cannot simultaneously be the source of the "rays of infinity," the ideal ends that reason as absolute freedom establishes for itself. The highest possible synthesis—the struggle between the empirical I and the absolute I, manifest in the empirical I's striving to reestablish the unity of the absolute, which is the proper form of practical striving for Schelling—can only be resolved by the complete destruction of the finite sphere. This is "schematized" for the empirical I as the infinite expansion of its limitations until it coincides with the infinite sphere. Thus, the goal of practical reason, as we saw, cannot be the complete annihilation of all objects (the not-I, or nature, which would take the form of the complete imposition of human rational autonomy upon the passive order of nature[41]). For that would be to make the finite sphere the center of both the limitations of finitude (a conditioned form of practical reason that fixes the opposition between nature and freedom) and the rays of infinity (positing this conditioned idea as the proper end and goal of the empirical I, and thus the form of the absolute I). Rather, the proper end of practical reason, which is nothing other than the whole striving of the empirical I upon which theoretical reason is also grounded, is not the annihilation of the not-I as

[41] In the conclusion to this dissertation we will take this theme up when comparing Fichte's account of nature to that of Schelling.

such, but of the *limitations of objectivity themselves*. What this means for the empirical I is that one should strive for an infinite expansion of these limitations until they coincide with the form of the absolute.

What, then, does this mean for Schelling's understanding of purposiveness? The pursuit of the unity of nature and freedom is just another way of pursuing the complete annihilation of the limitations of the absolute I. We ought to strive to overcome the distinction between them and so bring about a perfect unity between the two. As we saw in our discussion of practical reason, this means establishing a "reciprocal effect" between the two, such that we bring about nature in the I *and* the I in nature. My proposal is that Schelling's position entails that we establish a similar "reciprocal relation" between theoretical reason and practical reason. Thus, Schelling states,

> every increase in the reality of the I (every moral progress) is a reduction of the empirical limitations and an approach to identity with absolute reality, that is, to the total dissolution of the limitations. Since there is no imperative for the absolute I, no practical possibility, then if the finite could ever fulfill its task the law of freedom (of the imperative) would attain to form of a law of nature (of being). And vice versa, since then the law of the finite's being would have become *constitutive* only through freedom, and this law itself would inherently be a law of freedom. Therefore, the ultimate to which philosophy leads is not an objective by an *immanent* principle of preestablished harmony, in which freedom and nature are identical, and this principle is nothing but the absolute *I* we have seen, the he unity of nature and freedom, from which all philosophy has emanated. (VI, I/1 240-41)

In place of Kant's supersensible ground of nature and freedom, Schelling thus posits the absolute I as an *immanent* principle of pre-established harmony between the two domains. The immanence of this principle ensures that the harmony is not brought about through an external "third party,"

but that they are co-constitutive of each other. In my interpretation, this implies that there will always remain an "immanent pre-established harmony" (VI, I/1 241) between the degree of practical freedom we have achieved and our theoretical accounts of nature, and *vice versa* that our theoretical accounts of nature will determine the degree of freedom that we will obtain. We will explore this idea more in the conclusion to the dissertation.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued for the importance of Kant's § 76 for the development of Schelling's account of the absolute I as the principle of philosophy. I maintain that Schelling's project in *Vom Ich* can be fruitfully read as a reworking of the doctrine of the ideas of reason that Kant discusses in this "Remark". Whereas Kant's ideas of reason remain grounded in the conditions of the empirical I, Schelling argues that these must be derived from the absolute I posited through freedom as the ground of philosophy as a whole. As we have seen, this leads to a reworking of each of the domains that Kant gives as examples in his "Remark": theoretical reason, practical reason, and reflective judgment (purposiveness). These are each reformulated to according to the form of the absolute I, as the identity of thought and being, the identity of freedom and necessity (laws of nature), and the identity between nature and freedom (theoretical and practical reason) respectively. This whole structure is brought together under the idea of the infinite striving to realize the absolute unity if the I, a striving that is essentially practical and which grounds all the efforts, both theoretical and practical, of the empirical I. We have also seen that the demand for a *Naturphilosophie* emerges, often in an implicit way, at each stage of this complex reworking of the Kantian architectonic. In the reworking of theoretical reason as the identity of thought and

being, we find the demand for an account of nature that is grounded in the absolute I and not one that is grounded in the thing-in-itself as mere appearances. In the domain of practical reason, Kant's practical postulates guaranteeing a nature that is a fitting domain for the realization of the ends of practical reason are replaced with the absolute postulate, through which the I is posited as the identity between the law of nature and the law of freedom. The result is that we no longer demand a nature in conformity with our moral striving, but recognize an order of nature to which we must freely conform ourselves and make constitutive through freedom. Finally, a reworking of Kant's purposiveness on the basis of the absolute I yields the idea of an infinite striving of the empirical I to realize the form of the absolute I. In this striving, the absolute I becomes an immanent principle uniting nature and freedom, theoretical reason and practical reason, and establishing a necessary connection between these two domains. In the conclusion, we will return to these themes in order to evaluate the overall arc of Schelling's "conceptually secure" transformation of Kant's philosophy of nature and the light this investigation sheds on the origins of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie.*

Conclusion

Emphasizing the centrality of Kant's thought for German Idealism would seem to be a commonplace assertion that is to be taken for granted. And yet, I have argued that, with regard to Schelling's early philosophical development, and specifically with regard to the origins of his *Naturphilosophie*, the concrete and specific forms of Kant's influence have not received sufficient attention in the scholarship. I have argued that it is in and through Schelling's rigorous confrontation with Kant's philosophy of nature, both in the early "Timaeus" essay and most fully in his *Vom Ich*, that the origins of Schelling's philosophy of nature begin to take shape. In the Introduction to the *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, Schelling begins by stating that he wants to cause the problems and questions that motivate the *Naturphilosophie* to emerge before the eyes of the reader. In other words, he wishes to draw the reader into the questions that will give rise to his philosophy of nature, insisting that unless we understand the *demand* for the *Naturphilosophie*, we will never understand the project itself. In a similar way, I argue that awareness of the ways in which the demand for a *Naturphilosophie* emerges from Schelling's "conceptually secure" transformation of Kant's philosophy of nature is necessary in order to fully enter into the questions that motivate Schelling's mature *Naturphilosophie*. Indeed, apart from this understanding, our grasp of the *Naturphilosophie* threatens to remain incomplete.

In the first chapter, I sought to lay out the principal elements of Kant's philosophy of nature and to establish a central point: The full range of Kant's philosophy of nature includes all three domains the critical philosophy—theoretical reason, practical reason, and reflective judgment. The principal clue that this exposition gave for the investigation was the following: Any transformation of Kant's philosophy of nature that is to be considered "conceptually secure" and, indeed, "natural," must be a transformation not only of one of these domains in isolation from the others. Rather, just as in Kant these domains are interrelated in a complex architectonic that yields a many-layered, intricate idea of "nature", so also must Schelling's transition to a *Naturphilosophie* be understood as a transformation of the entire architectonic, of each domain

separately and of the principles that determine their interrelation.

In the second chapter, we saw that Schelling's early "Timeaus" essay sought to apply the central idea of Reinhold's project — to bring about a completed systematic unity of Kant's system through the formulation of a first principle — to the question of the systematic unity of nature. Schelling's creative reading of Plato's *Timeaus* together with Kant's ideas of reason and the regulative principles for the systematic unity of theoretical reason led him to wrestle with the limits of Kant's transcendental approach and seek to posit a greater identity between the structures of thought and the principles that are active within nature. Here we see Schelling struggling to establish an identity between thought and being in a general way and begin to articulate some of the principal themes that will occupy him in the mature *Naturphilosophie*, especially the question of *matter*. It is not until Schelling embraces Fichte's first principle of the I, however, that Schelling will develop the resources to establish such a principle of the identity between the systematic unity of nature proper to transcendental reflection and nature's own internal principle of systematic unity by which we know it to be self-forming and self-positing. The project begun in the "Timaeus" essay thus will be able to reach completion only on the basis of the complete transformation of the entire Kantian architectonic, a transformation that I argue takes place first and foremost in Schelling's *Vom Ich.*

In the third chapter, I sought to establish the importance of Schelling's early works for the development of his philosophy of nature by challenging some of the standard narratives in the secondary literature that have contributed to the neglect of his early works as a source for the development of his *Naturphilosophie*. In particular, I highlighted the important role of Schelling's ongoing dialogue with Kant as an essential source both for Schelling's independence from Fichte and for his turn toward the *Naturphilosophie*. I introduced here the idea that one passage in particular from Kant's third *Critique* was decisive for Schelling's transformation of Kant's philosophy of nature: § 76. This passage, I propose, is not only essential for the development of Schelling's thought; I also maintain that it provides us with an indispensable frame through which to view the many themes and issues that run throughout Schelling's *Vom*

Ich.

In the fourth chapter, I turn to an in-depth exploration of the role of Kant's § 76 in the development of Schelling's position in his essay *Vom Ich*. In what follows I will give a brief summary of the conclusions of this chapter and then proceed to a reflection on the importance of Schelling's position in *Vom Ich* for an understanding of his idea for a philosophy of nature by way of contrast with Spinoza, Fichte, and Kant.

II.

While the scholarship has noted the general importance of Kant's "Remark" in § 76 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* both for Schelling and for German Idealism more broadly, the extent of this importance is generally restricted to Kant's reference to an intuitive understanding and the subjective but universal status of the categories of modality. While these are without question essential components of Schelling's reception of this passage, I have argued that the full scope of its significance extends much further. I advanced the idea that Schelling understood this passage to be one of those privileged moments within Kant's writings in which his intuitive genius breaks through in a brief flash of insight, pulling back the veil on the higher principles that his system presupposes, even when Kant himself was not fully able to grasp them or their full consequences. Thus, when Schelling muses at the end of *Vom Ich*, that "perhaps there have never been so many deep thoughts compressed into so few pages as in the critique of teleological judgment, § 76" (VI, I/1 242n), I take him to have carefully considered the entire arc of the passage and the overall trajectory of the many "deep thoughts" encountered there, and not to have simply lifted one or two of them for his own purposes and entirely detached from their context. I proposed the thesis that Schelling read § 76 carefully and accurately to be a treatise in miniature of a core theme in Kant's system: the role of the "unconditional in human knowledge." And as this subtitle indicates, it is this very same theme that is the guiding thread of Schelling's treatise *Vom Ich*. Some of the many principles that Schelling derives from his reading of § 76 include the following points: the idea that Kant's system does indeed presuppose the

unconditioned as a higher principle upon which his philosophy depends; that the unconditioned cannot be given within the domain of the conditioned but must be posited absolutely—that the unconditioned cannot be made *objective*; that the ideas of reason, as regulative principles are essentially *practical*, inasmuch as they propose ideals and goals for action that have an imperative form and instigate within the empirical I an infinite striving; that the principles proposed by Kant remain conditioned approximations that do not set forth the complete end of reason and therefore that the ideas of reason and the principles of each domain of reason must be derived from a single unconditioned principle; finally, that the three domains of theoretical reason, practical reason, and reflective judgment must all be brought into a complete systematic unity that can only be achieved through the positing of an absolutely unconditioned first principle.

Many of these principles emerged with clarity for Schelling through his encounters with Fichte and Spinoza.[1] Nevertheless, I maintain that it would be a mistake to think that Schelling merely finds confirmation of his Fichtean principles here in § 76, and that the passage does no more than suggest that Kant had indeed relied on the principles to which Fichte had given explicit formulation. I argue that this passage proves to be decisive for Schelling's development of the first principles articulated by Fichte, leading him to pursue a trajectory that is very different from Fichte's own. For in formulating the "I as a principle of philosophy," Schelling will follow the blueprint established by Kant in § 76, that of pursuing a single unconditioned principle underlying *all three* domains of theoretical reason, practical reason, and reflective judgment, and deriving the principles of each from the absolute I as the principle of the whole of

[1] With regard to Fichte, it is important to keep in mind Schelling's remark in the *Form Schrift*, that "[t]he thoughts expressed in this essay have been renewed in my mind by the newest publications in the philosophical world. I had already pondered such thoughts for some time. I was led to them through the study of the *Critique of Pure Reason* [. . .]" (FS, I/1 87). That is, Fichte's early publications on the *Wissenschaftslehre* brought clarity and stability to insights that Schelling had derived from his own reading of Kant. With regard to *Vom Ich*, I argue that, while Schelling undoubtedly embraces Fichte's formulation of the highest principles of philosophy, he develops these principles along a different trajectory on account of his independent reading of Kant, specifically § 76. I will saw a few brief remarks about the important question of Spinoza's role in *Vom Ich* below.

philosophy. In what follows, I would like to briefly sketch an overview of the consequences of this position with respect to that of Spinoza, Fichte and Kant.

III.

The "Oldest Systematic Programme of German Idealism"[2] begins with the following declaration:

> An *ethics*. Since in the future the whole of metaphysics will collapse into morals — of which Kant, with his two practical postulates, has given only an example and *exhausted* nothing — all ethics will be nothing more than a complete system of all ideas, or, what amounts to the same, of all practical postulates. Naturally, the first idea is the representation of *myself* as an absolute free being. With the free self-conscious being a whole world comes forth from nothing — the true and only *creation from nothing*. At this point I will descend into the realm of physics. The question is this: how must a world be constituted for a moral being? I would like to give wings again to our physics, which progresses laboriously with experiments.[3]

I give this quote in full because it contains a number of central points that will provide a useful summary of some essential distinctions between Schelling's position and that of his other principle interlocutors.

To begin with, I would like to highlight an issue that I did not discuss in Chapter Four but which deserves to be developed in future work on the basis of what was established here. The opening reference in the above quote to an "*ethics*" is an echo of Schelling's desire, expressed in the Preface to *Vom Ich*, to "bring to realization the idea of writing a counterpart to Spinoza's *Ethics*" (VI, I/1 160). Indeed, the role of Spinoza in *Vom Ich* is decisive, so much so that a good

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[2] We will leave aside questions of authorship here. I propose here that, at least in the quotation given, it is an accurate reflection of the position staked out by Schelling in *Vom Ich*.

[3] Cited in *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, ed. Fredrick Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3.

deal of scholarship has claimed that what Schelling presents here is simply a Spinozism dressed up in Kantian garb. While I do not wish to understate the importance of Spinoza for Schelling's project in *Vom Ich*, my decision to focus solely on Kant reflects the conviction that what we find in *Vom Ich* is rather Kantianism expressed with the aid of a Spinozist conceptual framework. For while Schelling lauds Spinoza's account of substance as providing the "*Urform*" of the absolute, he is insistent in his conviction that Spinoza was in error inasmuch as he went on to determine substance as *absolute object.* It was Kant's critical philosophy which provided the necessary corrective to Spinoza by insisting that the unconditioned be determined *only through the I.* The first principle of philosophy must be the positing of the I, of "myself as an absolutely free being." Every other point of the system must descend from this starting point. While a great deal more needs to be said to fill out this position, I want to briefly emphasize two points we have discussed and that are relevant to this question. First of all, I would like to recall my argument that Schelling derives from Kant's § 76 the "blueprint" for the systematic unity of all the ideas of reason and all the principles of the different domains of reason, seeking to establish their unity in the freedom of the absolute I as a first principle of the whole of philosophy. The prospect for such a unity, we have seen, was indeed a *desideratum* for Schelling, and one which was given at least a formal articulation in Spinoza's *Ethics*, in which we find a "complete system of ideas." One of the most striking features of § 76 for Schelling, I argue, is that it, too, seems to articulate a "complete system of ideas," only now one that is grounded in the *absolute I* and not the *absolute not-I.* In this way, I argue that Schelling sees within § 76 not merely a shadow of Spinoza's substance, but rather the more complete and adequate formulation of the absolute determined as pure *I.*

This leads to the second point I would like to emphasize. In the footnote in which Schelling speculates about the compressed insight of Kant's § 76, he begins with a reflection on Spinoza that is, I believe, illuminating:

> Spinoza, too, wanted mechanism and finality of causes to be thought of, in the absolute

> principle, as contained in the same unity. But since he determined the absolute as an absolute *object*, he could never make comprehensible why it is that teleological unity in the finite intelligence can be determined only by the ontological unity in the nonfinite thinking of the absolute substance. And Kant was quite right when he says that Spinozism does not accomplish what Spinoza wants. (VI, I/1 242n.)

Here Schelling is referring to Kant's criticism of Spinoza in the *Critique of Judgment*, to the effect that Spinoza's system only provides for a unity of the ontological ground of nature but provides no principle for explaining the unity of ends that we encounter. On the surface, it seems puzzling that Schelling should endorse such a criticism, since, as we have seen, his account of the absolute I is in line with Spinoza's denial of any will, purpose, or intelligence (and therefore of any purposiveness) in the absolute. In short, if there is no possibility and actuality for the absolute, no contingency, then how could there be any "lawfulness of the contingent?" Schelling understands Kant's argument well, however, to be pointing to the fact that Spinoza cannot give an account for the necessity of the idea of purposiveness *for the finite intelligence*. What Spinoza fails to explain, Schelling claims, is the necessity of the *schema* that the empirical I must pursue in seeking to ground the unity of freedom and nature: an infinite striving to bring these into perfect harmony. It is this striving, I propose, that Schelling will call "purposiveness". For Schelling, such a striving is only possible on the condition that the "nonfinite thinking of the absolute substance" is itself the perfect identity of the laws of freedom and the laws of being. That is, that the absolute substance is determined as absolute *freedom*. Since Spinoza determines the absolute as object, there is no ground for the free striving of the empirical I. All of nature, and the whole of empirical I's own thinking, must be understood as following from the *objective* causality of the absolute substance. Nature will remain pure mechanism, and any hint of freedom or purposiveness in nature is a mere illusion. Thus, while Spinoza will present the formal unity of thought and being, mind and matter in an exemplary manner, he falls short of a proper determination of the absolute substance as *I*. It is Kant, with his insistence that we search for a

supersensible ground of nature *and* freedom, that points the way to the proper determination of the absolute. In this way, I argue, it is essential to read Schelling as articulating a determination of absolute substance first and foremost through the lens of Kant's critical architectonic, and specifically of § 76.

Whereas Kant was correct in insisting that we posit the unity of both nature *and* freedom in any account of the unconditioned, Schelling will argue, as we have seen, that Kant falls short in two principle ways. First, he proposes only that we should think of the ground of nature *as if* it were in unity with the ground of human freedom; he does not go on the posit this principle as an absolute principle unifying his whole system. It remains one principle balanced (and restricted) by the principles of theoretical reason and practical reason. Secondly, Kant's thinking of this unity remains *conditioned*, inasmuch as the unity between nature and freedom is thought *objectively*, in that it is to be brought about through the *external causality* of a principle of a highest intelligence who has so ordered the world such that these principles will be in harmony. Schelling is fully aware that Kant is only proposing this as *regulative idea* that will guide our empirical investigations of nature and does not pretend to determine anything about a supersensible object in itself. Schelling's criticism is precisely of the *schema* that follows from this regulative principle, according to which the highest degree of unity we can hope to grasp (theoretical reason) and accomplish (practical reason) is a unity that is achieved through external, objective causality, and therefore never a perfect *identity*. Just as Kant correctly argued that the objective thinking of the understanding cannot in any way enter into the domain of the unconditioned, so will Schelling argue that neither should the regulative ideas that provide the *schema* for our theoretical and practical endeavors be restricted to the objective conditions of the understanding. The forms of thought and action pursued by the empirical I should be grounded first and foremost in the free causality of the absolute I, posited as the proper ideal to be pursued within the domain of the empirical I.

Schelling will laud the overall accomplishments of Kant's system. In particular, he will embrace Kant's ability to close the door on any determination of the supersensible ground of

nature as an absolute *object*; that is, Kant has established a negative prohibition against any determination of the absolute *objectively*, and in this way has established that we must at least be able to *think* of the ground of nature as a unity of nature and freedom as a subjective principle. Moreover, his practical postulates ensure that our thinking about nature does not stray into any account in which nature would be determined so as to foreclose the possibility of human moral striving. However, for Schelling the principle fault of Kant's position is that he fixes in place the dichotomies of theoretical reason (thought and being) and practical reason (freedom and nature), as well as the unity between them (purposiveness, which grounds their unity in the principle of a supersensible ground that is conceived in an objective manner conceived as acting through merely external causality) and establishes them as the furthest limits past which we cannot strive.

In Chapter Four, I pointed to Schelling's reading of the second example from Kant's § 76 as an overlooked yet decisive element of Schelling's appropriation of this passage. For it is in this example that Kant emphasizes a distinction between a conditioned form of practical reason, the moral striving of the empirical I against an external nature, and an "unconditioned" form of practical reason, for which there is a perfect identity between what *is* and what *ought to be*, between *freedom* and *nature*. The proper schema of this absolute freedom for the empirical I cannot be, Schelling concludes, the mere triumph of one pole of this opposition over the other, but it must be the identity of the two. The result is that the empirical I must not only seek to establish the "I in nature," that is, seek to impose the order of human rationality upon nature, but it must *also* seek to realize "nature in the I," it must seek to recognize the necessity of what is given to it as a precondition of its own being and its own existence, and seek to make this necessity "constitutive through freedom." That is, it must seek to freely author the necessary conditions of its own being. Any account of freedom which is reduced to just one of these poles will be a distorted freedom, a inadequate "schema" of the absolute I.

It is here, then, that we see the deep roots of Schelling's difference from Fichte. We can characterize Fichte's position briefly, in this context, as a collapsing of the tension between these two poles, a rendering as an absolute principle the one, "subjective" side: realize the "I in

nature." Indeed, In Fichte's *Grundlage*, the absolute I, posited hypothetically in the beginning of the investigation, would seem to be exhausted completely in his account of practical reason as the goal of the empirical I's striving to completely "annihilate" the not-I, to render nature wholly subject to the rational autonomy of the human subject.[4] After the explicit break between Schelling and Fichte, Schelling will criticize Fichte on precisely this point in a letter in which he states:

> It is sufficiently known to me in what small region of consciousness nature might fall according to your idea of it. It has for you absolutely no speculative significance, only a teleological one. But should you actually be of the opinion, e.g., that there is light only so that rational beings when they talk to one another can also see each other, and there is air only so that when they hear each other they can also speak to each other?[5]

Schelling charges Fichte with reducing the entire teleological significance of nature to the end of human rationality as such: light is ultimately thought as the precondition for rational subjects to see each other, air is reduced to the precondition of human rational discourse. Nature is emptied of any internal "telos" and is entirely subordinated to the human end. Thus, Fichte will famously express the *desideratum* that the whole of nature, down to every last particle of matter, should come to bear the stamp of human freedom. In response to the question from the Oldest System given above, "how must a world be constituted for a moral being?"—or, in other words, "What *nature* for a moral being?"—the Fichtean response would be: a purely passive, mechanical nature that is wholly amenable to the striving of autonomous rational subjects.

In Chapter One, I concluded the discussion of Kant's philosophy of nature with the

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[4]There are, of course, more nuances that this to Fichte's position. A future development of this project would be to explore this connection in greater detail.

[5]Schelling, letter to Fichte, Oct. 3, 1801, cited in J.G. Fichte/F.W.J. Schelling, *The Philosophical Rupture between Fichte and Schelling: Selected Texts and Correspondence* (1800-1802), trans. and ed. Michael G. Vater and David W. Wood (Albany: SUNY, 2013), 64.

suggestion that Kant's tends in the same direction as the trajectory we have just outlined with regard to Fichte, inasmuch as places strong emphasis, especially § 84 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, on the idea of a *final end* of nature that receives its determination in relation to human autonomy. I also argued that Kant's position on this point is highly nuanced and in need of careful consideration, inasmuch as it serves a purely regulative function that remains in a productive tension with the other elements of Kant's account of nature, thereby providing greater nuance and balance that Fichte's position would entail. I claimed there that Schelling's transformation of Kant's philosophy of nature would motivate other resources within Kant's account that would lead to a very different outcome. In this regard, I think that Sebastian Gardner makes a very helpful suggestion when he proposes that the opposition between Fichte and Schelling

> tells us something about the deep structure of the Kantian idealist project, just as Locke and Berkeley reveal something fundamental about the nature of empiricism. And insofar as they present us with a kind of antinomy – that is, insofar as their rival forms of post-Kantianism seem equally warranted – some insight into their systematic opposition is needed.[6]

That is, Fichte and Schelling represent two possible outcomes of Kant's position, both of which can find equal warrant within Kant's system. Thus, in tracing the distinction between Schelling and Fichte's respective developments of the idea of nature, we gain insight into the many tensions that remain at play, and Schelling would say, ultimately ambiguous, in the form Kant's system achieved.

The most important criticism that Schelling directs at Kant, then, might very well be the following: that he left this ambiguity unresolved. His account leaves open the possibility of the Fichtean resolution of a nature that is subordinated entirely to the one pole of rational human

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[6] Sebastian Gardner, "Fichte and Schelling: The Limitations of the Wissenschaftslehre?" In *The Cambridge Companion to Fichte*, David James and Günter Zöller (eds.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 338.

autonomy. In failing to give a complete determination of the highest principle as absolute I, Schelling would claim, Kant has given an incomplete answer to the question "What nature for a moral being?" His practical postulates demand one element of an adequate answer to this question: a nature that will not foreclose on the necessary conditions of moral striving. However, these postulates "*exhausted nothing*": they are only a limited expression of the absolute form of practical reason, a one-sided expression of only one pole of that the empirical I must pursue.

As we saw at the end of Chapter Four, Schelling claims that we must establish a "reciprocal effect" between both poles of this opposition: not only that we must establish the *I* in nature, but also that we must establish *nature* in the I. The absolute I was proposed as the "immanent pre-established harmony" between these two principles, between nature and freedom. The whole of "creation," Schelling will claim, can be nothing other than the infinite striving to re-establish the absolute unity of the I, and therefore the absolute unity of these principles. In contrast with Fichte, then, Schelling will follow Kant's suggestion in the third *Critique* that we must think of nature having a supersensible ground that is identical with the ground of freedom. This principle proves to be decisive for Schelling's thought: nature must itself be grounded in the absolute freedom of the I no less than the transcendental freedom of the empirical I. This principle must be posited absolutely, and the solution to the problem of transcendental freedom for Schelling hinges on the assertion that

> [b]ecause a causality of the empirical I is possible only within the causality of the absolute I, and because the objects likewise receive their reality only through the absolute reality of the I, the absolute I is the common center in which lies the principle of their harmony [. . .] both the objects and the empirical I owe their reality solely to the nonfinite reality of the absolute I. (VI, I/1 240)

Nature is to be grounded in the freedom of the absolute I no less than the empirical I. Schelling does not mean this as a dogmatic assertion, however, an "objective" determination of a supersensible ground of nature. He insists that this is an *immanent principle* of a pre-established

harmony between nature and freedom. What does this mean?

Schelling makes a claim in *Vom Ich* that has strong Fichtean overtones and could easily be misconstrued as endorsing the one-sided Fichtean primacy of the practical we discussed above, that

> Even theoretical philosophy is possible only in regard to the same causality of the I that is realized in practical philosophy, because its serves only to prepare the practical philosophy, and [adequately] to secure the objects proper to that causality of the I which practical philosophy determines. (VI, I/1 238)

Theoretical philosophy serves to "prepare the practical philosophy and to secure the objects proper to that causality," and so prepares the terrain for the exercise of practical striving. Here, then, is another way of stating the question: "What nature for a moral being?" It would seem that this question asks after only the following determination: What is the nature that we must posit in order to fulfill the demands of a moral being? I propose that Schelling's principle of an immanent preestablished harmony between nature and freedom does not simply fix the idea of a moral being and make that the center from which our theoretical determination of nature must proceed. Rather, I argue that this principle establishes a necessary correlation between the two accounts: our theoretical account of nature *and* our understanding of what is means to be a moral being are *both* terms that are at question here. In other words, the meaning of "nature" and "moral being" are both to be determined, and *reciprocally*. Just as our understanding of a moral being, of freedom, will lead to a certain theoretical determination of nature, so will a certain theoretical determination of nature be determinate of our understanding of a moral being–of freedom. Thus, for Schelling, Spinoza's determination of nature as pure mechanism reflected his conviction that the moral being was an effect of absolute substance and must annihilate its own causality in favor of an objective absolute. And, *vice versa*, the restriction of his understanding of

causality to mere mechanism led him to posit a purely objective absolute.[7] Schelling is therefore insisting on a necessary connection between our understanding of freedom and our understanding of nature. We cannot think the freedom of the absolute *unless* we are able to think of a nature that is grounded in the freedom of the absolute I and in which we are able to discern the contours of a freedom that is not of our own making. For the finite I is necessarily and essentially dependent in its being upon nature as irreducibly *given*, and we must come to think *this* ground as the ground of our freedom. Through his reading of Kant's § 76 in *Vom Ich*, Schelling will come to the conclusion that, to the question "What nature for a moral being?", a system grounded in the absolute I must respond: a nature that is grounded in the absolute, the theoretical cognition of which must be capable of discerning the contours of freedom understood as self-forming, self-positing causality. Thus, the demand for a *Naturphilosophie* emerges here in Schelling's systematic revision of the Kantian architectonic as grounded in the *absolute* postulate of the I, which must formulate a theoretical philosophy that will "prepare" a nature that is "fit" for a moral subject. To be a system of *absolute* freedom, the nature that emerges from this theoretical account cannot merely be a passive and mechanical nature, for that would be fitting only for a moral being in a limited and incomplete sense. It must be a theoretical account of nature that cognizes nature itself as unconditional, self-positing freedom. Of all the themes we have discussed and that foreshadow the development of the mature *Naturphilosophie*, this is the one I would most like to highlight as providing the overall framework within which the *Naturphilosophie* will emerge. A broader goal of this project, which will continue past this dissertation, is to explore in greater detail the many other themes that have emerged in this

[7] Thus, Schelling makes the following assertion in the *Freedom Essay*: "[Spinoza's] arguments against freedom are entirely deterministic, in no way pantheistic. He treats the will also as a thing and then proves very naturally that it would have to be determined in all its activity through another thing that is in turn determined by another, and so on, *ad infinitum*. Hence the lifelessness of his system, the sterility of its form, the poverty of concepts and expressions, the unrelenting severity of its definitions that foes together excellently with the abstract means of presentation; hence his mechanistic view of nature follows quite naturally as well. *Or does one doubt that the basic views of Spinozism must already be essentially challenged by a dynamic notion of nature?*" (SW, I/7 349; emphasis added).

investigation in parallel with their mature development in the *Naturphilosophie*. In future work, I hope to show more explicitly the connections between these early beginnings and their mature development.

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