

EVOLUTION AND ITS RESISTANCES: TRANFERENCES BETWEEN DISCIPLINES IN SCHELLING'S AND HEGEL'S SYSTEMS

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According to Novalis the “encyclopedization” of a field occurs when it is not just fitted into a larger architectonic of knowledge, but also reconfigures this whole. This paper begins with Hegel’s encyclopedic ambitions and Schelling’s parallel—if less systematic—project in his 1803/4 lectures on the method of academic study. It takes up Schelling’s First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature (1799), so as to look at the encyclopedic effects of the life sciences on a philosophy that has inevitably become interdisciplinary by trying to organize or at least interrelate all knowledge that matters in an “encyclopedia of the philosophical sciences”: an interdisciplinarity that makes Idealism a first version of “Theory.” More specifically, it focuses on the concept of “evolution” in Schelling’s First Outline: a word that did not have its current, Darwinian meaning, and that therefore allows us to think about more than one model of development, and more than one developmental paradigm for knowledge. In this text Schelling experiments with a model in which Nature evolves from the lower to the higher through a series of graduated stages (Stufenfolge), but he also explores a number of resistances to it. Given that the Stufenfolge provides the prototype for the evolutionary histories that both Schelling and Hegel project in other domains (history, art, mythology etc.), I conclude by taking up the consequences of these resistances for one such area: namely aesthetics as discussed by Hegel.

Encyclopedics and the Life Sciences

In the *Freedom* essay Schelling writes, “God is a life, not a being,” in response to his question as to whether creation has “a final purpose,” and if so “why does what is perfect not exist right from the beginning?”¹ What constitutes life and organization, whether different life

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forms form an ascent of and towards man, the role of disease and aberration, and where and when life begins: these questions trouble the life and earth sciences and have analogical effects on other areas. This paper explores the implications of the organicist transference in Schelling and Hegel, with reference to the idea of evolution as a process in which progress is put radically under erasure. For in this period history becomes the model for thinking other disciplines such as aesthetics or philosophy, which are no longer approached just transcendently as in Kant. But history as we understand it is itself generated by the philosophy of nature as the place where the “temporalization of the Chain of Being”² both discloses nature as having a history, and submits history to being read in the light of nature. History is no longer, as in the eighteenth century, a description that need not involve temporality; nor is it, as for Burckhardt in the mid-nineteenth century, a transverse section of time shielded from the desires and obstacles associated with longitudinal time.³ History in the thought-formation on which I focus, is generated through the evolution of natural history, by a disciplinary species-change, into what the Romantics called “physiogeny” or the history of nature as “preface and portion of the history of man.” I will return to this term elaborated by the British Coleridgean J. H. Green in response to Schelling.⁴ Suffice it to say that the fiction of nature as “preface” or allegory of the history of consciousness raises many questions about the figurality of paradigms of development that are normalized by being projected onto nature, and about the possibilities that nature itself raises for thinking them differently.

In speaking of the organicist projection I have in mind the use of one area to supplement another with which it cannot be identified: the use of human history to understand an opaque and resistant nature that Hegel describes as “the Idea in the form of otherness,” or

and Evolution in Hegel’s and Schelling’s Systems,” is appearing in *Marking Time: Romanticism and Evolution*, (ed.) J. Faflak and J. Lambier (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming).

¹ F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, (tr.) J. Love and J. Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 66.

² Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: The Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1942), 242.

³ Jacob Burckhardt, *Reflections on History*, (tr.) M. Hottinger (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1979), 32–33.

⁴ Joseph Henry Green, *Vital Dynamics: The Hunterian Oration Before the Royal College of Surgeons in London, 17th February 1840* (London: William Pickering, 1840), 43, 103.

the recognition that what Schelling calls the “ideal sciences” of philosophy and history must take account of their “real” counterparts as an “alien existence in which Spirit does not find itself.”⁵ Kant eschewed these disciplinary border-crossings that characterize post-Kantian idealism.⁶ But exactly because they are figural, they open a space for questions like those raised by Schelling about the purpose of creation. To think these issues as Schelling does through the history of nature, not as a confirmation but as a mirror-stage and primal scene of human history, is to recognize the answers given as hypotheses. This is also to say that we think something analogically through another discipline to keep it in the realm of speculation, and to experiment with possibilities not yet permitted in the original discipline.

Thus my aim in exploring the interdisciplinary impact of the life sciences is not to pick a “correct” model like Darwinian evolution and ask whether thinkers from Robinet to Schelling anticipated it. Such demonstrations remind us that in this period before the disaggregation of disciplines philosophers were well-read and even trained in science. But Idealism’s use of more than one evolutionary model is precisely what allows it to speculate analogically in other areas also in a state of ferment. Idealism is just as worth studying when its science is wrong as right. I therefore use the word evolution in a broad sense. Though well aware of debates around epigenesis and preformation, when Schelling writes that there is no evolution “without the involution that preceded it,”⁷ evolution simply means development. My aim, then, in discussing *Naturphilosophie* is to treat this discipline not as a topic within philosophy or science but a “way of doing philosophy in accordance with nature,” as Jason Wirth says. In the process the relations between what Foucault calls the empirical and transcendental are recast, as the empirical, rather than being determined *a priori* by the transcendental, writes back to it, reconfiguring philosophy itself.⁸

⁵ G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, (tr.) A. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 3, 13. See Friedrich Schelling, *On University Studies*, (tr.) E. Morgan (Athens: University of Ohio Press, 1966), 75, 115. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as US.

⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, (tr. and ed.) M. Friedman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 9.

⁷ F.W.J. Schelling, *Ages of the World* (1815), (tr.) J. Wirth (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 107.

⁸ Jason Wirth, “Mass Extinction: Schelling and Natural History,” *Poligrafi*, vol. 16, nos. 61–62 (2011), 59; Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1973), 319–23.

Idealism is a fertile site for exploring the interdisciplinary effects of the philosophy of nature, because it is a systematic, if self-questioning, programme for thinking disciplines in a larger whole: a project summed up in Hegel's project of an encyclopedia of the philosophical sciences.⁹ But what does this "encyclopedia" or circle of learning entail? For Kant, who gave a course on it, the system of knowledge is an architectonic in which "every science [has] its position," which is "determined *a priori*" by philosophy.¹⁰ Kant thus conceives disciplines as what Latour in *The Politics of Nature* calls "smooth" rather than tangled objects¹¹, under the governance of their "pure" part.¹² We grasp smooth objects separately, whereas tangled objects are reciprocally affected by other objects and produce risks and possibilities for knowledge. To Kant's goal of a smooth system we can oppose Novalis' *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopedia*, which gives the name "encyclopedics" to an interdisciplinarity that is not architectonic but in which the parts have effects on the whole. Thus the "encyclopedization" of a discipline occurs when the parts are not just fitted into a whole but react upon it. The "versability" of disciplines, their contamination by or "translation" into each other, as Antoine Berman calls it, exposes disciplines to their "unthought" through the recourse they often have to other disciplines from which they borrow to understand themselves.¹³ The result is a tangled system in which the part-whole relations are reciprocal and lateral, not hierarchical, and in which individual disciplines, rather than being restricted, professionalized fields, are general economies involved in feedback loops and capable of reorienting the whole.

Interestingly Latour frames his distinction between smooth and tangled objects within ecology, which involves a "crisis" of "objectivity" rather than of "nature" *per se*: a shift in how we understand

⁹ I use "encyclopedia" in the lower case when referring not to the three-part *Encyclopedia*, but to Hegel's broader encyclopedic project, including lectures in *Fachwissenschaften* such as aesthetics.

¹⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, (tr. and ed.) P. Guyer and A. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 491.

¹¹ Bruno Latour, *The Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, (tr.) C. Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 22–23.

¹² Kant, *Metaphysical Foundations*, 5.

¹³ Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia: Das Allgemeine Brouillon* (1798), (tr. and ed.) D. Wood (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), #460; Antoine Berman, *The Experience of the Foreign: The Culture of Translation in Romantic Germany*, (tr.) S. Hayvaert (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 14.

material and intellectual objects, including for my purposes discipline or fields. The term “ecology” refers to considering objects as entangled with other objects in their environment.¹⁴ But this shift in the very archeology of knowledge can itself be traced back to the long Romantic period, which saw a transition from smooth disciplines like mathematics to the tangled fields of the life and earth sciences as paradigms for knowledge. Kant’s smooth concept of disciplines precedes the entanglement in post-Kantian idealism of what Schelling calls the “real” and “ideal” sciences. (US, 103–04) For Kant a science may borrow “from another science,”¹⁵ but must digest its borrowings to evolve a science committed to its own self-reproduction and no longer troubled by foreign matter. This internal rationalization of a field is what Kant understands by architectonic, which he thinks in terms of the body as a whole that integrates all its parts. The architectonic of “all human knowledge,” must also be a system in which all parts are integrated.¹⁶ The result is what Derrida calls a whole “architecture of philosophy,” in which aesthetics, language, logic, history, metaphysics etc. are invisibly interwoven in a unified system.¹⁷

The early Schelling theorizes a similar, if more mystical, architectonic in his *On University Studies*, even as he jeopardizes it by his attempts to work it out in areas like speculative physics and medicine, and by the cross-disciplinary mirrors he uses to imagine the interconnections of knowledge. “Mirror” is Schelling’s figure, when he speaks of “art” as the “magic mirror of philosophy,” and Schelling experimented with several mirrors, later dismissing mathematics on the grounds that Kant’s fondness for it favours a “crystal” over the human body because it never falls ill.¹⁸ The mirror of art in Schelling’s early transcendental idealism is not so much an awareness of the role of figure in argument as it is aesthetics, the discipline that Baumgarten defines as the art of thinking beautifully. It is in this sense that Odo Marquard can say that *The System of Transcendental Idealism* “takes an aesthetic perspective on existence: it determines

¹⁴ Latour, *Politics of Nature*, 20–23.

¹⁵ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, (tr.) P. Guyer and E. Matthews, (ed.) P. Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 252.

¹⁶ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 691–92.

¹⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Points... Interviews 1974–1994*, (ed.) E. Weber, (tr.) P. Kamuf et. al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 212.

¹⁸ Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, (tr.) D. Stott (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 8; Schelling, “On the Nature of Philosophy as Science,” in *German Idealist Philosophy*, (ed.) R. Bübner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997), 212.

philosophy primarily as aesthetics.”¹⁹ Aesthetics as supplement to philosophy can transform history, for instance, from a real into an ideal science by “present[ing] real events in complete form” to “express the highest ideas.” (US, 107) With this in mind, Schelling uses physiology as a source of analogies for knowledge, but filters it through aesthetics. Thus he conceives the “totality” of knowledge according to the aesthetically organized figure of an “organic body” whose life flows from the “central organs” of mathematics and philosophy to “the outermost” disciplines. A further analogue for this unification is provided by comparative anatomy: the study of nature in terms of “the unity and inner affinity of all organisms,” which “originate in [a single] archetype.” Disciplines, similarly, are multiple types of a single archetype; or, following a Spinozist model, modes of one substance, “primordial knowing.” (US, 27, 42, 142) These interlocking models—aesthetics, comparative anatomy, physiology, Spinozist metaphysics—allow Schelling to organize the rest of his theoretical apparatus: the distinction between the ideal and real sciences as types of the same whose explosive difference is contained by the parallelism of eternal and temporal; the mapping off of historical and empirical from philosophical or “principled” knowledge; and the subordination of the empirical to the transcendental. (US, 74–75)

But all these analogues raise problems that only grow as Schelling more intensively exposes Idealism to science. As a figure for the assimilation of parts into a whole, physiology is an Achilles’ heel in Hegel’s *Encyclopedia*, allowing for a sub-system of the body, and the body of knowledge, to interrupt the whole.²⁰ This potential deviance of the part also comes up in texts by Schelling, who moves simultaneously on different tracks, constructing and deconstructing a problem from different perspectives. But in the lectures on academic study Schelling makes comparative anatomy and physiology “correlative disciplines” (US, 142), containing physiology’s invisible entanglement of systems within the visible smoothness of anatomical structure. Comparative anatomy with its tropes of consilience, metamorphosis and recapitulation is also a tangled discipline, as Adrian

¹⁹ Alexander Baumgarten, *Metaphysica* (Halle: 1779), #533; Odo Marquard, “Several Connections Between Aesthetics and Therapeutics in Nineteenth-century Philosophy,” in *The New Schelling*, (ed.) J. Norman and A. Welchman (New York: Continuum, 2004), 13.

²⁰ See Tilottama Rajan, “(In)Digestible Material: Illness and Dialectic in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Nature*,” *Cultures of Taste/Theories of Appetite: Eating Romanticism*, (ed.) T. Morton (London: Palgrave, 2004), 217–36.

Desmond's account of the different ways it was politically appropriated tells us. But here again, as in Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*, it is stripped of the more textured debates around transmutationism, evolution, even degeneration, that complicate the static model of anatomy. In short the early Schelling also imagines a smooth system of knowledge whose conceptual parts do not interrupt one another.²¹

Hegel too fantasizes a smooth system: what Derrida criticizes as an "auto-encyclopedia of Spirit." According to Rosenkranz, in the Jena years Schelling tried to work out the critical foundations of absolute philosophy, while Hegel worked on a "cycle of sciences."²² Hegel's system is diachronic rather than synchronic. Each discipline, though a "sphere" in its own right, is also a level or moment in an ascending series. Thus in the *Philosophy of Nature* mechanics, physics, and "organics" or the life sciences, are levels in a scale of disciplines that parallels the Chain of Being; together they form the "sphere" of the natural sciences, which is a level surpassed by the sciences of spirit. The encyclopedia or cycle of learning in which consciousness learns how to become spirit thus becomes an ascent from matter to spirit through the progression from the real to the ideal sciences. This ladder of disciplines is not unique. Coleridge, who never completed his projected *Encyclopedia Metropolitana*, saw his *Theory of Life* as part of a philosophy of nature that ascends from geology, physics and mechanics, through zoology and physiology. Brought together, these sciences comprise "the one absolute science of Life," and inaugurate "a new series beyond...physiology,"²³ the "ideal" series of philosophy and theology in Schelling's terms. In *Mental Dynamics* (1847), Coleridge's collaborator Joseph Henry Green echoes the title of his earlier *Vital Dynamics* (1840) to effect a transition from nature to spirit, as a specifically Coleridgean transi-

²¹ Adrian Desmond, *The Politics of Evolution: Morphology, Medicine and Reform in Radical London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

²² Derrida, "The Age of Hegel," in *Who's Afraid of Philosophy?: Right to Philosophy I*, (tr.) J. Plug (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 148; Karl Rosenkranz, quoted in Michael Vater, "Introduction," in Schelling, *Bruno or on the Natural and the Divine Principle of Things*, (ed. and tr.) M. Vater (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 82.

²³ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Theory of Life*, in *Shorter Works and Fragments*, (ed.) H. and J. de J. Jackson, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), vol. I, 516, 519n.; *Notebooks*, (ed.) K. Coburn and A. Harding, 5 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957–2002), vol. 4, 4517. *Shorter Works* is hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as SW followed by volume number.

tion from physiological to political “constitution.”²⁴ Green thus uses the Hunterian lectures, which were supposed to deal with the always troublesome life sciences, as a platform to institute the training of a clerisy, or what has been critiqued in Hegel’s work as *Bildung*, aesthetic ideology.

But Hegel’s system differs from Green’s in two ways. First it is highly tangled, as the levels double as spheres in their own right, and the ascending structure is complicated by its descent into proliferating microsystems that have to be recontained in an increasingly ramified macrosystem. Thus “organics” is a “level” in the *Philosophy of Nature*, but as a sphere in its own right is further divided into the sciences of the “terrestrial,” plant, and animal organisms. Hegel studies the animal (including the human) in terms of physiology rather than anatomy, and physiology in turn contains the sphere of pathology, which cannot clearly be assimilated as a level of normal physiology. The very organization of the *Encyclopedia* in stages is the symptom of the tremendous labour of the negative that Hegel experiences as he struggles to control difficult material. Culminating in illness and death, the *Philosophy of Nature*’s last section on pathology risks derailing the planned transition from nature to spirit.²⁵ The result is that though the disciplines are arranged in a progressing series, the parts are dynamically interconnected in the way described by Novalis, forcing us to rethink ideal sciences such as philosophy through such subsystems as medicine and aesthetics.

Second, Hegel’s system is profoundly temporal: adapting Lovejoy, we could describe what Hegel does as a temporalizing of the cycle of disciplines. The result is that history and evolution become underlying paradigms for thinking disciplines and their ideas in terms of their historicity, as still under development. To be sure Hegel dismisses evolution as a scientific rather than logical idea.²⁶ But as Rüdiger Bübner says, an “evolutionary history” was the “model for...Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*.”²⁷ What Schelling means by this word, which he repeatedly uses in the context of knowledge in his essay “On the Nature of Philosophy as Science,” is quite complex: a “historical” explanation, as Bübner puts it, a “living system” that is not just “a sequence of laws,” a process in which at different points

²⁴ Joseph Henry Green, *Mental Dynamics or Groundwork of a Professional Education, The Hunterian Oration Before the Royal College of Surgeons of England*, 15th Feb 1847 (London: William Pickering, 1847).

²⁵ Rajan, “(In)Digestible Material,” 217–36.

²⁶ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 21.

²⁷ Rüdiger Bübner, “Schelling: Introduction,” in *German Idealist Philosophy*, 163.

opposite things can be true, and most importantly a certain “asystasy” or “inner conflict” which, rather than progression or adaptation, is the very core of life.²⁸

Physiogony

I now want to take up one zone of entanglement in Idealism: the unstably transferential inter-discipline of physiogony, which projects anthropomorphic models onto nature so as to find in nature a history that confirms a vision of human history. This transference invisibly operates in other models of history. But its institution as a discipline that puts itself at risk by disclosing its figural composition is quintessentially idealist. For if the history of nature as “preface” to “the history of man” makes nature a “branch of self-knowledge,”²⁹ the ways nature makes us rethink the evolution of history and consciousness may prove unsettling. The curiously Hegelian enrolment of nature into the history of self-consciousness is from Coleridge’s friend Green, mentor of Richard Owen, the premier biologist of the Victorian period, who edited and brought under control the tangle of John Hunter’s papers. Green distinguishes three approaches to the study of nature. The first is physiography or the description of nature’s products, what we call natural history, which paradoxically involves classification and not history. The second is physiology, or the theory of the powers behind nature conceived vitally rather than mechanistically: *natura naturans* rather than *naturata naturata*. And the last is physiogony. Green gave the Hunterian lectures several times, and his task was to provide a narrative to explain Hunter’s cabinet of curiosities consisting of various fossil and skeletal remnants: a narrative that is the basis for modern museums of natural history. For Green, as for Coleridge in the *Theory of Life*, on which he may have worked with Green, physiogony thus becomes anthropology, as the history of nature is subsumed into a temporalized Chain of Being in which nature works her way up from “the *polypi* to the *mammalia*,” “labour[ing] in birth with man.”³⁰ Yet as we shall see, despite Green’s knowledge of Schelling, Schelling himself is drawn in a far more deconstructively speculative direction.

Green’s terms go back to Kant who uses two of them: physiography for *Naturbeschreibung* or the “description of nature” and

²⁸ Bübner, “Schelling: Introduction,” 163; Schelling, “On the Nature,” 215–16.

²⁹ Green, *Vital Dynamics*, 103.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 101–106.

physiogony for *Naturgeschichte* or what Green, via Schelling, calls the “history of nature.” Kant’s definitions are cautious. *Naturbeschreibung* is the “systematic” classification of nature: what we now know as natural history, which was not a historical science. Kant does not commit himself to his second term, *Naturgeschichte*, glossing the word history as both a “narrative” and a “description” of “events in nature.” As a narrative *Naturgeschichte* “trac[es] back...the connections” between “present-day conditions...and their causes,” “according to laws of efficient causality.” Since making this narrative one of origins would be a “science for gods,” Kant does not really stray from “physics” into “metaphysics,” though the very setting up of such boundaries flirts with the possibility of crossing them. Still Kant does not go in the metaphysical direction of Georg Forster whose 1786 essay occasioned Kant’s definitions, and who already imagines an “earth in labour” which generates organisms in an “unnoticeable gradation” that can be traced from man “down the chain of nature.”³¹ Indeed in an earlier definition, Kant had avoided deep or future history by defining *Naturgeschichte* in the older sense of history, as simply “a systematic presentation of natural things at various times and places.”³²

But for post-Kantians, Kant’s term was tantalizing. Commenting on the difference between Kant’s actual and potential use of *Naturgeschichte*, Schelling complains that Kant’s *Naturgeschichte* is not much different from a *Naturbeschreibung*. In an epigenesis of Kant’s term, Schelling thus tries to give it a “much higher meaning”: that of a “history of nature,” in which Nature “gradually brings forth the whole multiplicity of its products through continuous deviations from a common ideal...and so realizes the Ideal, not indeed in the individual, but in the whole.”³³ Schelling’s desynonymization of *Naturgeschichte* and *die Geschichte der Natur* anticipates Foucault’s distinction in *The Order of Things* between natural history and the history of nature. For Foucault natural history has nothing to do with temporality: though allowing for development, it does so by “traversing [a] preordained table of possible variations” in which time unfolds space. By contrast the history of nature entails a new sense of

³¹ Kant, “The Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy,” (tr.) G. Zöller, in *Anthropology, History, and Education*, (ed.) G. Zöller and R. Louden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 195–98, 214.

³² Kant, *Metaphysical Foundations*, 4.

³³ F.W.J. Schelling, *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature* (1799), (tr.) K. Peterson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 53, 68. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as FO.

historicity³⁴, especially once geology and biology, rather than physics and botany, become synecdoches for natural science.

Yet it would be wrong to credit Kant with the opening through which "Schelling and his disciples rushed."³⁵ Developmental models of nature's history as creative evolution precede Kant and are the subject of his critiques of Forster and Herder, who does make the history of nature a preface to the history of man. Kant criticizes these thinkers for lack of rigour and using imagination rather than Reason, thus keeping the study of nature at the level of an "art rather than a science."³⁶ Indeed these models go back before Herder to the temporalizing of the Chain of Being that begins with the *encyclopédiste* Jean-Baptiste Robinet's *de la Nature* (1761–8). Robinet introduces the idea of nature as evolving through time, accompanied by the metaphor of labour that Green will use: nature is "always at work, always in travail...fashioning new generations." Insofar as Robinet was the first to use the word "prototype,"³⁷ which becomes *Urbild* or *Idee* in Schelling³⁸, Robinet, though a preformationist, theorizes what Schelling calls a "dynamic preformation" (FO, 37n.), in which "germs created all together do not all develop together." In the resulting scale of Being, nature works with "a single model" such that different beings are "variations" of a generative "prototype," "graduated *ad infinitum*."³⁹ Robinet even questions the division of the chain of being into four classes (mineral, vegetable etc.) that persists in nineteenth-century comparative anatomy, where the preservation of these divisions or the construction of links between them constitutes what Adrian Desmond calls "the politics of evolution." That Robinet may not have been a good scientist is not the point. His fictions mark an important shift away from the deployment of nature within a closed pattern of metaphoric transfers that supports an entire system of aesthetics, history and the political. Not only does this shift allow a structure that was "rigid and static" to become open to change; the "*plenum formarum*," as Lovejoy says, also comes to be conceived "not as the inventory but as the program of nature, which

³⁴ Foucault, *Order of Things*, 275–77.

³⁵ Philip Sloan, "Introductory Essay: On the Edge of Evolution," in Richard Owen, *The Hunterian Lectures in Comparative Anatomy*, May and June 1837, (ed.) P. Sloan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 27.

³⁶ Kant, *Metaphysical Foundations*, 4.

³⁷ Quoted in Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 275; see also 271–80.

³⁸ Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 68.

³⁹ Jean-Baptiste Robinet, *Considérations philosophiques de la gradation naturelle de forme de l'être; Ou les essais de la nature qui apprend à faire l'homme* (Amsterdam: E van Harrevelt, 1768), 2, 12, 27.

is being carried out gradually,"⁴⁰ thus making nature and perhaps man imperfect, but within a narrative of increasing perfection.

So if the history of nature goes back to Robinet, and if Kant cautions against such metaphysical paradigms, how is Schelling original? Or why is Idealism post- rather than pre-Kantian? There are two related points here. First, Schelling's idea that there can be a *history* of nature crosses disciplinary borders that Kant maintains. But this does not mean that he made Kant's regulative ideas constitutive, the criticism often made against Idealism. On the contrary, Schelling is profoundly speculative and never hypostatizes ideas. The difference between Kant and Schelling is that Kant's emphasis on the dangers of interdisciplinary analogies is critical, where Schelling sees their value for concept-creation and makes transferences between disciplines constitutive for speculation. But this is not to say that these "Idealizations" ground the Ideas of Reason (in Kant's phrase) in the "archetypes of things-in-themselves."⁴¹ For the words "archetype" and "prototype," especially when attached to "Idea," are simply ways of giving ideas, which Kant offers and then withdraws as fictions, a real speculative charge, a phenomenological (not noumenal) reality.

In using encyclopedics as a thought-environment rather than closed system Schelling also differs from Green. Sloan sees Green as a cautious Kantian, because he maintained the three branches of the study of nature as distinct enterprises, in which the reality-claim of physiogony cannot be established. But Green also grounds the totalizing vision of his physiogony by making God the guarantor of the unfolding archetypes. The difference between German and British Idealism is summed up by Richards, who says that where Green ascribed the formative power in nature to god, the *Naturphilosophie* he adapted saw nature as teleologically structured.⁴² But to substitute a consilience between aesthetic and teleological judgment for a divine guarantee opens a different problem. For if nature is autotelic and autogenetic there is no guarantee where the process will lead; the aesthetic as a substrate of teleology might itself have to be radically rethought in accord with nature. This leads to my second point, that Schelling does not have a model for the history of nature that is more than conjectural. From 1797 to 1810 he produced a number of "systems," "outlines," "introductions" and "ideas" for a philosophy of

⁴⁰ Desmond, *The Politics of Evolution*, 18, 18–21; Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 242–44.

⁴¹ Sloan, "Introductory Essay," 27.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 28, 32–33; Robert Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 518.

nature. He made several forays into thinking the relation between nature and spirit, including an early *Naturphilosophie* that syncretizes nature and spirit, a transcendental idealism that synchronizes them, and the idealist materialism of *The First Outline* which begins to discern an originary contention or asystasy within spirit thought as a natural phenomenon, anticipating the *Freedom* essay and *Ages of the World*.

The *First Outline* is the text most engaged with the natural sciences, specifically physiogony (rather than just the physiology of *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*), and on this basis it can be placed in the debate on evolution.⁴³ To elaborate, Schelling's first reference is to "dynamic preformation," not evolution: he writes, "I do not yet want to evoke here the principle that no individual...but only *dynamic* preformation exists in organic nature, and that organic formation is not evolution, but the epigenesis of individual parts." Here Schelling reserves the word evolution for an individual preformation, in which the entire development of the individual preexists in the egg or sperm. He uses "dynamic preformation" for a development occurring through the "graduated series" of organisms, and equates this with epigenesis which he only uses incidentally. (FO, 37n.) But Schelling gradually sheds the term preformation, referring repeatedly to an "evolution of nature" which cannot be completed, a notion that marks an important shift in the meaning of the word evolution.⁴⁴ As Richards cautions we should not equate this dynamic evolution with species change⁴⁵; indeed dynamic evolution may be heterogenesis rather than transmutation. But whether Schelling anticipates Darwin is irrelevant, as he is clearly using a metaphor to explore an Idea of Reason in the Kantian sense: "The assumption that different organizations have really formed themselves through gradual development out of each other, is a misunderstanding of an *Idea*, that really lies in *Reason*." (FO, 49, my translation, emphasis mine) At the level of this 'Idea,' Schelling comes to prefer the word evolution because of the continuous historical process it intimates, and the suggestion of "one

⁴³ Robert Richards, *The Meaning of Evolution: The Morphological Construction and Ideological Reconstruction of Darwin's Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 27–29.

⁴⁴ Schelling uses the word "evolution" throughout FO, but initially in a general way (11, 16, 18, 21n.). He uses "epigenesis" only thrice (37–38n., 43), and preformation quite critically in footnotes (37–38n., 47n.). When evolution is used after these footnotes, it is with the greater specificity given by his discussion of the *Stufenfolge*, and sometimes in conjunction with "involution" (77, 187–88), with which preformation is at one point is equated (37n.).

⁴⁵ Richards, *The Meaning of Evolution*, 27–28.

production captured at different stages.” (FO, 39) He does not foreground the more technical term epigenesis, because while it may explain how evolution occurs, it does not capture his sense of a larger process at work in all phenomena.

Evolution in short is introduced as a metaphor, though not loosely since Schelling was a rigorous scientist. Its collateral importance lies in the work it does in areas that can be rethought in the light of nature: history, phenomenology, and the history of self-consciousness and its products, including aesthetics. But what is this evolution? At first Schelling may see it as a smooth process, involving “one organism” or “product,” just as Robinet says “Nature is a single act.”⁴⁶ In this model, also used by Coleridge in the *Theory of Life* and Hegel in the *Philosophy of Nature*, life proceeds from minerals and crystals, through insects and plants to man. This progression is enhanced by the recapitulation of phylo- in ontogenesis, which provides the basis for the *Aufhebung* so central to idealist phenomenology: once the “original tendencies” of the “formative drive” have been developed, Schelling says, they become inherited without having “to develop all over again in each single individual of the same class.” (FO, 46) For Coleridge who, like Schelling, concedes that the formative drive meets resistances on the way, every “grade of ascension” is accompanied by a regression that is, however, recuperated at a new level of integration (SW I, 548), which sounds very much like Hegel’s dialectic. Schelling refers to this model as “the graduated series of stages in nature” or *Stufenfolge*. And it is the basis for the phenomenologies of spirit that we find in his *Philosophy of Mythology* and Hegel’s accounts of the evolution of aesthetics, philosophy, religion, history itself, and nature.

So the graduated series of stages in nature is the hypothesis, even prototype, at the core of the *First Outline*, and the “Idea” that is the very formative drive of Idealism. But is this “deduction” borne out by nature? (FO, 7) For nothing is settled here. Despite the title *First Outline of a System...*, the text contains several competing systems. The “Second Division” alone contains a “First,” “Second,” and “Third Possible System.” The intensity of scientific detail in this text makes science a counter-science through which we must unthink what is hypothesized, counter-science being Foucault’s term for “a perpetual principle of dissatisfaction” that “flow[s] in the opposite direction” to the established sciences, and “lead[s] them back to their epistemo-

⁴⁶ Jean-Baptiste Robinet, *Considérations philosophiques de la gradation naturelle de forme de l'être; Ou les essais de la nature qui apprend à faire l'homme* (Amsterdam: E van Harrevelt, 1761), 2.

logical basis.”⁴⁷ Or as Hegel also says in frustration at the end of his odyssey through nature, the “ever-increasing wealth of detail” with which “spirit” has to contend in the philosophy of nature makes the latter “refractory towards the unity of the Notion.”⁴⁸

This is also to say that in the *First Outline* the model of graduated stages from Idealist biology and zoology, comes under pressure from other life sciences, including chemistry and medicine. Chemistry, for instance: as it moved away from physics and crossed paths with vitalism, it ceased to study tables of compounds and took up ungraspably volatile forces and affinities. It became a double agent that unsettled both physical mechanism and organicist teleology, forcing each to think itself from the outside. For Schelling chemistry is a disturbingly paranormal science, which gives us only “effects instead of causes” (FO, 110), thus putting brakes on our ability to know the in-itself. Its forces are neither inside nor outside, not quite alive or dead. This also makes chemistry a kind of symptom. For insofar as it is concerned with mixtures, as Michel Chaouli suggests, it is “the science of all sciences that forever mix and divide themselves,” such that a philosophy which takes up chemistry and is inf(l)ected by it can no longer “derive from pure, absolute principles.”⁴⁹

Here let me note two points about Schelling’s graduated stages. First the stages are not straightforward, but form a negative dialectic in which nature evolves as “one organism inhibited at various stages of development,” through a series of “deviations from a common ideal.” (FO, 43, 53) By inhibition (*Hemmung*) Schelling does not simply mean a delimitation or bounding line imposed on the formless for something to be produced. (FO, 42) Inhibition or “retarding force” (FO, 190), is also a tarrying with the negative that Schelling will elaborate in the 1815 *Ages of the World*, where, in more explicitly ontological and psychoanalytical ways, he contrasts the expansive and outpouring with “[s]omething inhibiting” a “darkening that resists the light,” or “obliquity that resists the straight,” an “involution” that resists “evolution.”⁵⁰ The result, as David Farrell Krell puts it, is creation as a series of “botched attempts to depict the absolute.”⁵¹

⁴⁷ Foucault, *Order of Things*, 373, 379.

⁴⁸ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 444.

⁴⁹ Michael Chaouli, *The Laboratory of Poetry: Chemistry and Poetics in the Work of Friedrich Schlegel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 208, 212–13.

⁵⁰ Schelling, *Ages of the World*, 6, 83.

⁵¹ David Farrell Krell, *Contagion: Sexuality, Disease and Death in German Idealism and Romanticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 96; cf. FO, 41.

But second, what happens to these “*misbegotten attempts*”? (FO, 35) In recapitulation, lower forms do not just disappear once sublated into the higher. Schelling raises this question of the survival of what does not fit in terms of the individual vs. the universal will. He asks how “these individual natures which have torn themselves away from universal Nature...can maintain [their] existence, since all of Nature’s activity is directed towards an *absolute* organism.” He seems to say they cannot. (FO, 53–54) “Nature” as a certain ruthlessness of the Idealist vision’s will-to-power, the unmasking of which forms the symptomatic core of Schopenhauer’s *World as Will and Representation*, assimilates those negative moments that stand in its way. Earlier Schelling had noted that “all *permanence* only occurs in Nature as *object*, while [her] activity...as subject continues irresistibly.” (FO, 17) If Nature as “subject” is the trope for, or personification of, what Schopenhauer calls will, what happens to nature as object and the counter-memory it poses to the narrative of sublation?

The pressure of this question is displaced to a later section on disease, which provides the perspective of the “organic individual,” who is a “*limit* to [Nature’s] activity, which Nature labors to destroy.” (FO, 41, 159) This discussion occurs in an Appendix to the Scottish physician John Brown’s theory of “excitability” as the cause of life, which Schelling describes as a “third possible” system, since he is unsure of its consequences for the graduated stages of nature. (FO, 68, 158, 220) Briefly, Brown’s *Elements of Medicine* (1788) classified diseases according to whether they arose from an excess or deficiency of excitability. But what makes him unique, as Krell suggests⁵², is his sense that disease is caused by “the same factors as life.” (FO, 160) Thus for Schelling disease, as “the concept of a deviation from some rule...or proportion,” is “relative”; every sickness is only a disease from a particular perspective, and may be normal from another. (FO, 159, 159n.) Romantic art, for instance, was thought deficient by Goethe and others in terms of Classical “health,” but might be its own form of aesthetic life. If the normal and pathological are part of a continuum, deviations from the “ideal” (FO, 53) cannot simply be left behind. Every stage of the evolutionary process must have its own validity, and may indeed make us rethink Coleridge’s “recension” as a process of division and multiplication in which nature actually “organizes to infinity,” forming spheres in which “other spheres are again formed.” (FO, 43–44)

The Germans were fascinated by Brown, but wanted to think the ideal or conceptual consequences of his empirical findings. In seek-

⁵² Krell, *Contagion*, 48–50.

ing the “principles” that might emerge from a dialogue with Brown’s excitability (FO, 66n.), Schelling thus applies the part to the whole, according to Novalis’ encyclopedics. Brown’s *Elements of Medicine* was a chemistry of the body oriented to treating nervous illness, and was limited to human physiology. Schelling extends it to the general economy of “physiology” in *Naturphilosophie*, understood as the study of forces operative in nature as a whole, where it disturbs the ascensionist biological narrative of Romantic physiogony with a more volatile chemistry. He applies the “individual” perspective “recovered” in the Appendix to “universal Nature.” (FO, 158–59) More specifically Schelling analyses excitability into “individual systems of *specialized excitability*” that make “organization”—and one could add the organization of his own system—an “infinite *involution*” of “system within system” that puts *evolution* under erasure. (FO, 127) Trying to reunify these systems, he posits a “gradation of forces” subsumed into “one force,” so as to conceive a “unity of FORCE of production” in nature,” that results in “one product.” (FO, 141, 149) And yet excitability is far too volatile to guarantee this purposiveness. Excitability is essentially an (im)balance between sensibility, irritability and reproduction. The “determinate proportion” momentarily established among these forces results in a product, but the constitution of this product upon an imbalance—for instance irritability in the polyp—results in an attempt to find a balance in another product. Yet once this balance is found, insofar as excitability is the “organic activity” that prevents life from being “exhausted...in its product,” this balance becomes an imbalance that requires a further product. (FO, 159–60) In the end, it is hardly possible to disentangle disease and life. And Schelling says as much when he concedes that disease is not “an unnatural state,” or alternatively, that life itself is unnatural, “extorted from Nature...a state enduring against Nature’s will...a perduring sickness.” (FO, 160n.)

Aesthetics

If life’s very vitality is a sickness at odds with evolution, or if evolution is based on that vitality, what does this mean for the products of consciousness, given that the history of nature explored in *The First Outline* is part of our self-knowledge? In conclusion I want to touch on one area affected by the resistances of evolution: the history of art, which breaks open the notion that the principles of aesthetics can be conceived *a priori* and transcendently. In Schelling’s early *System of Transcendental Idealism* aesthetics in Baumgarten’s sense of thinking beautifully underpins a vision of how nature unfolds

autotelically in accord with spirit. But as we have seen, Robinet also uses the metaphor of nature as artist, in a way that associates art with the unfinished. For Robinet the series of beings consists of "variations" on an original prototype which together comprise Nature's "apprenticeship in learning to make man" through a series of "imperfect sketches"⁵³ that Schelling calls "*misbegotten attempts*" at balance. (FO, 35) Although Robinet introduces this metaphor only in passing, his deployment of the figure of nature as artist intimates what will become a paradigm-shift from using aesthetics as a way of grounding nature, to rethinking art itself in accordance with nature and with a history that has itself been reconfigured by nature. Here I turn briefly to Hegel, since if Schelling theorizes evolution, it is Hegel who makes history and thus the resistances of evolution the very medium of his thought.

For Hegel art is supposed to be the "adequate embodiment of the Idea,"⁵⁴ a word ubiquitous in Romanticism, used by Kant, but singularized by Hegel so as to give it a certain drive, and also curiously unREFERRED, since Hegel's "Idea" is not the Idea *of* anything. As a concept in logic the Idea is "reason identical to itself." But in Hegel's auto-encyclopedia of disciplines, or the apprenticeship of consciousness in learning to become spirit, logic as "the science of the idea in and for itself" is only the opening proposition. Logic is followed by a phenomenology that has two divisions: the philosophy of nature or "the idea in its otherness," and the philosophy of spirit or "the science of the idea "as it returns to itself."⁵⁵ This schema promises an evolution from nature to spirit, in which nature provides the phylogenetic preface to the ontogenesis of spirit. But in practice the philosophy of spirit contains specialized systems of evolution which are not held together by the guarantee of recapitulation that allows one form of consciousness to build on another, so that the Idea must keep going through the same struggle to become identical to itself, only to begin again in a new discipline.

These disciplines include the philosophy of nature, its subsystems of animal physiology and pathology, the philosophy of history, and the history of philosophy itself, all of which develop rhizomatically

⁵³ Robinet, *Considérations*, 4.

⁵⁴ Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, 2 vols. (tr.) T. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), vol. I, 77. Hereafter volume I parenthetically referred to in the text as A.

⁵⁵ Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline*, (tr.) S. Taubeneck, in *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline and Critical Writings*, (ed.) E. Behler (London: Continuum, 1990), 54.

metamorphic connections that unsettle their arrangement in a scale or ladder. One of these disciplines is aesthetics, expanded outside the envelope of the three-part *Encyclopedia* as a specialized subsystem in which art must pass through a long history in which it fails adequately to embody the Idea, and indeed finds its *raison d'être* in this failure. Briefly, Hegel posits three shapes of art—Symbolic, Classical and Romantic—which involve different relations between “inwardness” and its “externalization,” or the “idea” and its “embodiment.” Or one could speak of three species or genera of art since the word *Gattung* does double service in both aesthetics and biology. In the earliest or Symbolic phase represented by the Oriental, art fails to achieve identity with itself because of a deficiency in self-consciousness that results in the Idea still being “indeterminate”; this problem is overcome in the Classical phase as art becomes “the adequate embodiment of the Idea” in plastic form. But in the Romantic phase form and content are again separated, now because of a deficiency in matter that repeats and reverses the problems of the Symbolic, “even if in a higher way,” since external forms have now become insufficient to present an idea that is now fully developed. (A, 77–81)

Theoretically the schema as a whole proceeds according to the graduated stages characteristic of the Idealists, even Schopenhauer, who bitterly unmasks the graduated series of beings and forces in nature not as an attempt at the adequate embodiment of the Idea, but as the “adequate objectivity of the will.”⁵⁶ Hegel’s narrative, moreover, seems organized by the dialectical embryology described by Coleridge in his account of the graduated stages of nature, where he writes that “the Vita uterina” of higher forms is found in the lower, which “present problems that first find their solution in a superior order.” “Parts are seen, the...full purpose” of which is “realized higher up in the scale,” so that the higher finds its “history” in the lower. (SW II, 1194) Thus the Classical claims to be the solution of the Symbolic, while the Romantic finds its history in the Symbolic.

Yet as I have argued before, the *Aesthetics* has the skewed form of a concave dialectic whose synthesis is in the middle. Classical art resolves “the double defect” of the Symbolic and achieves “the completed Ideal.” It is what “true art is in its essential nature.” (A, 76, 427) And yet Hegel finds its adequacy inadequate. Thus the Classical artist is “clear-headed,” but only because he receives his content pre-formed by “national faith [and] myth,” leaving him free to work on

⁵⁶ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 2 vols., (tr.) E. Payne (New York: Dover, 1959), vol. I, 371.

perfecting his forms. (A, 438–39) By contrast there is something more vital in Symbolic art, which “tosses about in a thousand forms,” as part of the labour of the negative in which consciousness is “producing its content and making it clear to itself.” (A, 438–39) Hegel thus returns to the dissonance of the Symbolic. He does so in the higher form of the Romantic, which is Christian and spiritual rather than pagan and uncouth. Yet the Romantic seems an alibi for revisiting the profoundly generative matrix of the Symbolic. Or if nothing else, it brings back the “problem” of the Symbolic, making the Classical, which resolved Symbolic deficiency, a problem of its own. But then the Romantic too proves inadequate, an ascension involuted in a recension, and so it must be abandoned for philosophy. Philosophy, in turn, fails to find its adequate form in Hegel’s *History of Philosophy*, which paradoxically ends with Schelling, who, Hegel complains, keeps beginning again and again.

Hegel does not use the terms of *Naturphilosophie* in the *Aesthetics*, but in the *Philosophy of Nature* he does put the constructive or artistic instinct in contiguity with the biological processes of excretion and the reproduction of the species.⁵⁷ This conjunction allows us to think art as part of “life” rather than “mind”: for Coleridge, “Mind” can be “logically defined” as a “Subject possessing its Object in itself,” whereas “life” in his bio-philosophical rendition, is “a Subject” that “produce[s] an Object” in order “to *find* itself.” (SW II, 1426–27) But let me suggest three lines of connection. *First*, as a graduated series of forms arranged in stages to articulate their differences, the history of art is not a narrative of creative evolution, since it cannot keep the form of a dialectical spiral; it is not a narrative of increasing complexity and integration, as in Herbert Spencer’s theory adapted from the Coleridgeans.⁵⁸ It is, though in disavowed form, a dynamic evolution mobilized by an excitability that produces a series of disintegrations. The sequence of forms can thus be thought in terms of Schelling’s sense that a product occurs through the momentary fixing of a proportion of forces, in the form of an imbalance that then seeks for balance. Thus the “restless fermentation” of Symbolic art (A, 438) evinces a hyper-irritability, generating the balance of the Classical. But then since excitability is what prevents life from being “exhausted...in its product” (FO, 160), the Classical gives way to the Romantic, which involves a disproportion of sensibility. And so on.

⁵⁷ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 406–409.

⁵⁸ Herbert Spencer, *First Principles* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1862), 112–29.

Second, Schelling had raised the question of how the individual can survive against universal nature. And Schopenhauer demystifies the graduated stages of nature in Idealist physiogony as an objectification of the will in which “a higher Idea” assimilates the “lower” through “*overwhelming assimilation*” even as the lower struggles to survive.⁵⁹ But if Idealist history is a kind of will-to-power, the history of art in Hegel is a kind of memory. For unlike Schelling, who confines the inhibition of the absolute organism in the *First Outline* to an Appendix, Hegel carries with the negative. In the *Phenomenology* he writes that “the *length* of this path has to be endured...[and] each moment has to be *lingered* over, because each is itself a complete individual shape.” And at the end he gives the name history to the “preservation” of the shapes that Schelling’s “Nature” assimilates, as he describes how history “presents a slow-moving...gallery of images, each of which, endowed with all the riches of Spirit, moves thus slowly just because the self has to penetrate and digest this entire wealth of its substance.”⁶⁰ Given the length of the *Aesthetics*, the levels in the graduated stages do become spheres in their own right. Indeed in the history of aesthetics after Hegel, a discipline that he took in a different direction from Kant and Baumgarten, Wilhelm Worringer and Alois Riegl would adapt Hegel to develop Egyptian art⁶¹, a level in the *Aesthetics*, into a sphere in its own right: a possibility Schelling recognizes when he says that a “determinate sphere of formation” in nature will again form “other spheres” within itself, since nature “organizes...to infinity.” (FO, 44, 44n)

And *finally*, this history that is Hegel’s contribution to aesthetics gives a place to art forms that are “defective” in terms of his own concept of art as unification; yet he also will not call this art “unsuccessful,” since the “shape which every content of the Idea gives itself...is always adequate to that content” at the time. (A, 74, 79, 300) More specifically, through the Symbolic, Hegel makes a space for the principle of inhibition in art, not as delimitation, but as involution, distortion, disfiguration. In other work I have explored how the category of Symbolic art can be used to think forms such as the Gothic which emerge as legitimate forms of art in the Romantic period, even though they violate—in quite different ways from the sublime—the norms of aesthetics as the art of thinking beautifully

⁵⁹ Schopenhauer, *World as Will*, vol. I, 145; cf. vol. I, 129, 134–35, 149, 153–54.

⁶⁰ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, (tr.) A. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 17, 492–93.

⁶¹ See Rajan, “Towards a Cultural Idealism,” 61.

and completely.⁶² *History* for Hegel is what slows down “nature’s” assimilation of difference. But history is a complex concept. In one sense it is an earlier *natural history* that allows for the autonomy of the individual existence insofar as it constructs categories for different forms without narrativizing them. In other words the principles of natural history remain as a resistance within physiogony’s desire to channel the gallery of forms into an evolution, and are a point at which the philosophy of nature inhibits what Philosophy wants to do with history. But in a sense it is this evolutionary history which Idealism projects in physiogony that is also the basis for thinking deviation in terms of its potentiality. For Hegel’s viewing of the lower through the “higher” is not just a way of dismissing the “lower.” It is a structure for reading forms through something beyond them, which is indeed not higher since the Romantic is less perfect than the Classical. Hegel sees forms of consciousness as still developing, dividing them into cultural stages partly as a heuristic tool for seeing art historically. Recognizing them as in process, he makes them sites for a labour of the negative in which the Idea is still trying to understand itself—a labour from which he cannot free the “higher.”

So what is the “Idea”? For the purposes of his *Logic* Hegel defines it as “Reason identical to itself”; but in his phenomenologies it is nothing but the drive to be the Idea. For Schelling too the Idea is exposed to its de-generation as an adequate concept and concept of adequacy. In the early *Bruno* it is conceived neo-Platonically and protected within “archetypal” as opposed to “productive” nature.⁶³ But in the *Freedom* essay Schelling relocates it in the ground⁶⁴, as a result of which it is no longer a “fixed model,” but is in “ceaseless motion and production.”⁶⁵ Using the terms Schopenhauer adapts, *Wille* and *Vorstellung*, but more idealistically, Schelling conceives the Idea as the will’s “inner, reflexive representation”: as the “first stirring” in which God “is realized,”⁶⁶ or as Habermas puts it in connection with Bloch, as “something not yet made good that pushes its essence forward.”⁶⁷ Taking up art forms that cannot adequately embody the Idea, Hegel thus recovers inhibition and “defectiveness”

⁶² Rajan, “The Work of the Negative: Symbolic, Gothic, and Romantic in Shelley and Hegel,” *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 52, no. 1 (2013), 3–32.

⁶³ Schelling, *Bruno, or on the Natural and Divine Principle of Things*, (tr.) M. Vater (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 125–26.

⁶⁴ Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 31.

⁶⁵ Schelling, *Bruno*, 134.

⁶⁶ Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 30; cf. *ibid.*, 30–32.

⁶⁷ Jürgen Habermas, “Ernst Bloch: A Marxist Schelling,” in *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, (tr.) F. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 71.

as potentiality. The fuller theorizing of this intuition is part of an unfinished evolution. But after Hegel, for whom paradoxically, Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* provides a condition of possibility, we can say of the very discipline of aesthetics what Coleridge says of natural forms: namely that in aesthetics, or indeed other fields, "parts" or possibilities emerge, the "full purpose" of which is "realized" only later. (SW II, 1194)

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