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# Schelling and Romanticism

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## About the Contributors to *Schelling and Romanticism*

**David L. Clark** is Professor (effective 1 July 2000) in the Department of English at McMaster University and has twice been Visiting Professor at the Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism at the University of Western Ontario. He is completing a book entitled *Mourning Schelling: On the Remains of Idealism*, of which his essay in this volume is a part.

**David S. Ferris** is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature and Humanities at the University of Colorado at Boulder. He is the author of *Theory and the Evasion of History*, *Silent Urns: Romanticism, Hellenism, Modernity*, and the editor of *Walter Benjamin: Theoretical Questions*.

**Jan Mieszkowski** is Assistant Professor of German and Humanities at Reed College. He is currently completing a book about labor, performance, and political praxis in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, provisionally titled *The Ideology and Imagination of Production*.

# Schelling and Romanticism

## Introduction – Tragic Freedom: Romanticism and the Question of Schelling

David S. Ferris, University of Colorado

1. Within the study of Romanticism, Schelling has been best known for his unacknowledged contribution to Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*. Although this contribution has been copiously documented by later criticism, the dense and philosophic character of Schelling's mode of exposition did not invite serious reading of his work. Indeed, rather than being read, Schelling became, as the Collected Coleridge is ample witness to, a series of footnotes in the study of Romanticism. Being so confined, it is not surprising that Schelling's work has had little presence in the study of Romanticism despite the fact that Schelling ranks as one of the three major figures in the philosophical and aesthetic history of this period. To ignore this history is to ignore the full context from which and within which Romanticism developed. The avoidance of this history is perhaps nowhere more present than when we use the word Romanticism to refer only to British Romanticism. Although the ideological sources of this nationalization still remain largely unrecognized within the criticism of the period, it is not the purpose of this collection of three essays to address this issue. Instead, these essays, Jan Mieszkowski's "[Tragedy and the War of the Aesthetic](#)," my "[Indifferent Freedom](#)," and David L. Clark's "[Mourning Becomes Theory: Schelling and the Absent Body of Philosophy](#)," have focussed on Schelling's treatment of a topic that has long been acknowledged as a central aspect of the Romantic period: freedom. Yet, rather than reiterate its thematic or even its ideological presence in the period, these essays have chosen to recognize and thereby confront the essential question of freedom, its presentation. In this way, freedom is displaced from its mythical role in order to open the question of its relation to experience, the question of its presence.
2. Schelling's treatment of freedom dates from his early writings. It first appears in the tenth letter of his *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* (published 1795-96) where it is articulated in relation to literature, in particular, Greek tragedy. This relation is reiterated later in his *Philosophy of Art*. This work, although not published until the appearance of his collected works in 1859, was developed from a series of lectures given between 1799 and 1805. It is in the initial years of this period that Schelling also completes the major work for which he is most known, his *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Published in 1800, this work established the basis on which his lectures on art and its relation to freedom would develop during subsequent semesters until, in 1804-1805, it reached the form in which it was subsequently published. The work in which Schelling focuses exclusively on freedom, *On the Essence of Human Freedom*, is published four years later in 1809. This latter work is the most difficult of Schelling's reflections on this topic. No longer does literature serve as a mediating device and no longer is the individual the principal stake of the argument. Instead, what is undertaken is a complete reorientation of freedom away from its imprisonment within the opposition between determinism and free will. No longer is freedom defined as the mere presence or absence of a will. In place of this opposition which offers no alternative, Schelling conceives of a freedom without which neither determinism nor free will could be supposed. So conceived, Schelling has, in effect, opened the question of how the world and the place of the individual within it has been thought. As such, freedom becomes the condition of thought as it is displaced from its teleogocial throne at the end of a history unable to know its own end.
3. This group of works, which spans a fourteen-year period at the height of European Romanticism, represent the period's most sustained reflection on freedom. That this occurs in the Romantic period is, of course, hardly coincidental; however, the understanding of freedom presented through these works

and culminating in Schelling's treatise, *On the Essence of Human Freedom*, seems a world away from the vague paeans to liberty that have populated the critical landscape of Romanticism. Schelling's presentation of freedom is precise and rigorous in its argumentation. It offers a considerable antidote to those evocations of freedom that serve all too easily as the straw men of ideological criticism. By so doing, Schelling's reflections on freedom raise the stake of all ideological criticism to a level that will no longer suffer gladly the merely negative freedom such criticism has been powerless to avoid. At some point, if ideological criticism is to account for the freedom in whose name this criticism is made, it would have to pursue the path taken by Schelling. Otherwise it is doomed to the unceasing recognition of ideologically tainted versions of the past. To negate an ideology by exposing it through criticism is not to account for the freedom this criticism lays claim to as its badge of authenticity. There then remains the question of such a freedom as well as the question of where and how such a freedom is to occur—a question in which the historical and the philosophical are both implicated. This is essentially a Romantic question and preserving it as a question is perhaps the most historically accurate account we can give of its appearance in this period.

# Schelling and Romanticism

## Tragedy and the War of the Aesthetic

Jan Mieszkowski, Reed College

1. Over the past two decades, interest in the "aestheticization of politics" has turned philosophical discourses on perception, taste, and beauty into important research areas for the study of ideology, state violence, and social justice. While this may be due to efforts to broaden literary studies to include more political and cultural issues, the disciplinary assumptions at work are not new. Aesthetics is a discourse in which the autonomy of the cognitive faculties with regards to material reality is both forcefully confirmed and denied. In marking the limit of a purely rationalist model of representation and experience, it demands that we analyze judgment not simply as a logical operation, but as a complex economy of pleasure and pain. To identify and explore the subversive possibilities of aesthetics, in short, is a thoroughly classical gesture.
2. Yet even with the most innovative configurations of affect and intelligibility, it is hard to dispel the suspicion that aesthetics may ultimately be a reactionary field, the flight of critical thought from real exigencies via the fanciful whims of the imagination. At the end of the eighteenth century, as the Idealist reconceptualization of negativity which continues to shape modern theory began, these difficulties were explored in one of the oldest figures for the interactions of reason, affect, and violence: tragedy. Juxtaposing the work of Friedrich Schelling and Friedrich Schiller, this essay will examine tragedy as a specific disruption in the relationship between aesthetics and politics. The disruption takes place at the site of art's "militarization," the point at which the medium and the mechanics of expression divide, not in indifference, but in strife. This conflict, I will argue, marks the emergence of a language that demonstrates its aesthetic and political authority only by undermining its very status as language.
3. Recent scholarship has announced a Schelling renaissance. A thinker who influenced the nineteenth century from Feuerbach to Nietzsche is finally getting his due in the twentieth century, proving himself to be more than just an intermediary step in the development of philosophy from Leibniz to Hegel. Far from simply equaling his better known contemporaries, Schelling, once criticized for failing to develop a single coherent system, is lauded for doing more than simply repeating and refining a model established by others. In these terms, he is the only member of his generation to point the way beyond a philosophy of the subject, exposing speculative thought to a range of implications and possibilities one would not expect to find until Marx or Kierkegaard.
4. This trend in the criticism may simply represent a change in the reading of Schelling, or it may be part of a broader reevaluation of Idealist thought. Nowhere is this question more confusing than with the concept of system. With post-Kantian thought, our routine association of the term with notions of methodology or regularity drawn from the natural sciences is misleading. In an early review of Fichte's *Science of Knowledge*, Schelling writes: "System we call only such a whole [*Ganzes*] as supports itself [*das sich selbst trägt*], something contained within itself [*in sich selbst beschlossen*] [that] presupposes [*voraussetzt*] no external ground for its movements and its coherence" (*Treatise* 101-102)<sup>[1]</sup>. This "system" is the opposite of an investigative or experimental procedure that processes external data. It cannot be reduced to a function of observation, distinguished as a particular perspective, or defined by its capacity to incorporate or assimilate an "other." Anything but insignificant in its pretensions, this system may dictate the workings of the cosmos, but it cannot be evaluated in terms of how it presents itself to something outside itself or how it constructs meaning through or from an "object." It is in this

sense that the human spirit is systematic:

For if the human spirit is primordially autonomous, it is a being that not only supports (*trägt*) within itself the *ground* but also the limit (*Grenze*) of its own being and its reality, and whose limits consequently cannot be determined by anything external, a self-contained and intrinsically complete totality, a monogram, as it were, of freedom constructed out of the infinite and the finite. (*Treatise* 100)

The familiar Kantian idea of autonomy as something you freely give to yourself as if you already had it is here formulated as an agency that grounds and limits itself by presupposing nothing more or less than the anticipation of the presupposition of itself. To presuppose itself as anything more than its own presupposition would require this entity to compromise its primordial autonomy by exposing itself to limits and grounds not uniquely its own. The question is whether Schelling thereby replaces inquiry into the grounds of grounds with inquiry into the presupposition of presuppositions. Does he equate presupposition and ground? Or to ask this another way: Will this self-limiting/self-grounding autonomy prove to be inherently self-destructive and dissolve in its own particularity, or can this system constitute a ground for schemas of self-reflection and self-production on which a rationalist logic and epistemology can be founded?

5. During the 1790s, these problems were explored in debates about how many philosophical systems exist and whether one can "choose" among them. Schelling's *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*, written in 1795 (approximately two years before the passages cited above), has long been recognized as a crucial intervention in these arguments. The text is organized as a series of letters addressed to a fictional interlocutor whose imaginary commentaries serve as the impetus for each subsequent contribution. In the most general terms, the discussion develops as a contrast between criticism and dogmatism, an opposition which is also described as idealism versus realism and Kantianism versus Spinozism. For Schelling, the two projects share a common goal, namely, the perfecting of human knowledge through the articulation of a single absolute principle that would dissolve any contradiction between subject and object. Criticism demands that the objective order vanish in the self's intellectual intuition of itself, while dogmatism insists on the absolute identity of the object at the expense of the subject.
6. From the start, it is clear that Schelling is not simply denigrating one project at the expense of the other. Indeed, his first move is to proceed against the Kantians of his time and locate in the first *Critique* the possibility, even the necessity, for both a system of criticism and a system of dogmatism. For Schelling, Kant's philosophy is radical not because it sets forth a single, homogenous system, nor because it synthesizes different systems into a coherent whole, but because it gives rise to two absolutely opposed systems. Schelling's analysis develops not as the effort to subsume philosophy under one lone principle, but following Fichte, as the attempt to explain the inevitability of opposition or clash (*Gegensätzlichkeit*).
7. Several questions thus present themselves: Do criticism and dogmatism cancel one another out, stabilize in a balanced equilibrium, or prove to be utterly indifferent to one another's existence? Can we speak of one system "contaminating" the other, or do the two merge in a productive dialectic? The stakes are high, for as Schelling emphasizes, philosophy is nothing other than the workings of this inter-system dynamic. To the extent that the essential plurality of system cannot be sustained, there can be no freedom of thought, no creativity, and no praxis of reason (*Philosophical* 170).
8. This final qualification about praxis is crucial. While both criticism and dogmatism privilege the absolute synthesis of subject and object as their ultimate goal, this does not, as has often been assumed, amount to the empty hypostatization of a tautological statement of identity. Schelling stresses that

neither criticism nor dogmatism tolerates what Kant would call a theoretical solution to its demand. The demand to realize the unconditioned absolute leads beyond the capacities of cognition to the realm of freedom and practical philosophy. Criticism and dogmatism unite, writes Schelling, in their demand for an "object of action," in their demand "for the action by which the absolute is realized," the free act by which subject and object, pure and practical reason, are made one ("Philosophical Letters" 190-91).

9. Philosophy, whether as criticism or dogmatism, begins in and as a demand, but this demand does not posit the absolute as an object the spirit will encounter (in which case we would still be dealing with theoretical philosophy and questions of knowledge), and it does not present itself as a paradigm for conceptual logic (in which case the demand would simply be a transcendental principle of the understanding and have nothing to do with freedom whatsoever). The demand for the absolute demands only the ground and limit of its own demand, i.e., it asks for that in virtue of which it will be a *demand*, for the very difference between knowledge and action, between pure and practical reason. The demand demands the grounds of demand. This does not mean that criticism's demand for absolute subjectivity or dogmatism's demand for objective identity is a self-realizing performance, a circular schema in which the absolute act of synthesizing subject and object proves retrospectively to have been identical with the demand for it. In contrast to such a reflexive model, the demand for the act of the absolute confers upon the absolute no form and no content; it does not figure or prefigure it, and it does not lay down the parameters of its own enumeration. The demand exists, then, only as the permanent negation of its status as either subjective or objective thesis, as the denial that it is a proposition of criticism or dogmatism.
10. From this standpoint, Schelling is in a position to distinguish between criticism and dogmatism. The former system, he explains, never regards itself as having achieved the absolute, and in fact, it views the goal for which it strives as essentially unrealizable. Once criticism views its goal as something, which can be achieved, it becomes dogmatism. This may mean that for criticism, the demand for absolute synthesis is identical with the impossibility of realizing the demand, in which case criticism is an action, which takes place only by failing to actualize itself. This would in turn suggest that criticism exists as a self-grounding, self-limiting system precisely by not existing, or, more damningly, that criticism, in treating its goal as unrealizable, confirms that its goal has in some sense always already been reached. If this is so, then criticism is always (also) dogmatism.
11. Schelling does not have a great deal to say on these points. The ninth letter ends here, and the tenth begins by taking us back to the initial problem which prompted the first:

You are right, one thing remains: To know that there is an objective power which threatens our freedom with annihilation, and, with this firm and certain conviction in our heart, to fight against it exerting our whole freedom, and thus to go down. You are doubly right, my friend, because this possibility must be preserved for art even after having vanished in the light of reason; it must be preserved for the highest in art. (*Philosophical* 192).

The imaginary interlocutor's initial objection at the beginning of the text was that a philosophy grounded in a moral good undermines the possibility for sublimely tragic struggle. At that point, Schelling argued that such a position misunderstands the Kantian conception of God and the postulates of pure practical reason. By the tenth letter, however, it has still not become clear how freedom and an aesthetic capacity are to co-exist, and it appears that neither criticism nor dogmatism can provide a definite account of the power which makes possible a struggle against the infinite, an account, that is, of how the subject will answer the imperative "Be!" without abandoning itself to the absolute.<sup>[2]</sup> Indeed, Schelling's abrupt designation of art as the one region in which this possibility can be preserved has put reason on the defensive, highlighting its failings rather than celebrating its capacities.

12. Schelling's subsequent discussion of Greek tragedy has been viewed as the most important contribution of the *Philosophical Letters*, often to the point that the passage is read as a complete doctrine in its own right, in isolation from the rest of the work. With the Greeks, explains Schelling, the hero is punished for succumbing to the power of fate. This fate is an inherently superior power ("eine Übermacht"), a power against which the hero fights ("kämpft"), but in the face of which he could never hope to be successful (192-93). For Schelling, it is this defeat and this defeat alone that constitutes the recognition of freedom. Only when the hero is lost before the fact, only when he enters into a conflict in which he is, as it were, always-already defeated, does he demonstrate that he is free.
13. Peter Szondi has described this argument as a recuperative movement in which freedom arises phoenix-like from the ashes of disaster, confirming its steadfast authority against all odds (45). In these terms, the loss involved in Greek tragedy is not absolute; if anything, it is a figure for the productive force of negativity, whereby Schelling's theory of tragedy is said to be a forerunner of the Hegelian dialectic. The problem with such an interpretation is that while freedom may be recognized, affirmed, even honored, it definitely does not triumph. There is, Schelling stresses more than once, never any reconciliation of freedom and fate. Nor is there an exchange of determinations whereby extending the logic of freedom inexorably leads us to the standpoint of fate, or vice versa. Freedom and fate are not specular opposites, and they are definitely not stand-ins for criticism and dogmatism. Echoing Kant, who muses at the end of the second *Critique* about the permanent state of fear and trembling which would attend a more direct, unhampered relation to the moral law, Schelling hastily reminds us that this tragic dynamic is conceivable only within the strict limits of art, and were it ever to take place as a human event, then humans would have to become a "race of titans" to survive its consequences (*Philosophical* 194).<sup>[3]</sup> In other words, the fact that the loss of freedom is in some sense "restricted" to art does not make it any less of a loss. Freedom is won through its failure, but it must continue to distinguish itself from this failure, or it is no longer freedom. Only a resistance which risks everything is evidence of freedom, but only a resistance which fails to risk everything—which fails, in other words, to risk its own failure—is free rather than objectively necessary. This is why Schelling views the essential incompatibility of freedom and failure with such concern. In Greek tragedy, freedom is not "rescued" by some "negation of negation"; it is rather articulated as negation's failure to relate determinately to itself, as negation's repetition of itself rather than its turn against itself. In these terms, the essence of art is hopeless struggle ("Kampf") (*Philosophical* 192-193). We speak today, perhaps far too casually, of the aestheticization of politics, but here the demands of philosophy run up against the barbarization, even militarization, of the aesthetic—something, which for Schelling was evidently much scarier than a lapse into the fanciful representations of *Schwärmerei*.
14. To be sure, this is not the dimension of his text that Schelling himself championed. When he returns to these problems in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art*, he describes tragedy as the collision of freedom and necessity, but now the conflict is resolved such that the two impulses triumph and lose, culminating (or perhaps collapsing) into absolute indifference (251-63). In a similar fashion, the *System of Transcendental Idealism* ends with the determination of artistic production as the infinite opposition of the conscious and the unconscious, a determination in which art becomes the construction of *knowledge* as such (esp. 219-32). In both cases, freedom is essentially exposed to its other and is permanently open to demise, but tragedy is now the pinnacle rather than the limit of reason.
15. These changes in Schelling's work can be understood as evidence of the increasing importance of art for philosophical understandings of the self. At the same time, it is important to note that in these two later texts, the perspective on tragedy is the perspective of criticism, whereas the tenth of the *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* retains traces of Schelling's insistence on the inevitability of two essentially different systems. Could there also be, we wonder, a dogmatic, or at least a non-critical, tragedy?
16. In the dramas of German Classicism, reason's exposure to the challenge of tragedy and its potential



transformation of humanity into a race of titans is explored in terms of a linguistic praxis that would be neither subjective nor objective, neither critical nor dogmatic, yet which would confront us with a power in virtue of which we would face the possibility and impossibility of who we are. Two scenes from Friedrich Schiller's *Maria Stuart* will illustrate the point.

17. Schiller's œuvre, like Schelling's, is a sustained engagement with Kantian thought. In contemporary discourse, Schiller has played the role of the bad Kantian. At best, he is said to highlight the dualistic facets of his predecessor's work without regard for the subtleties of the arguments; at worst, he is accused of turning the transcendental analytic into an account of empirical hopes and fears in the quest for a more entertaining theater. Nothing about these criticisms is in any sense new; they were regularly heard during Schiller's lifetime. A first glance at *Maria Stuart* indicates why this might be the case. Delicately combining passion and intrigue, drive and whim, the play is an aesthete's delight, the crowning triumph of an impulse that strives to articulate formal with psychological structures in a seamless union of the sensuous with the intelligible that confirms the vital integrity of dramatic production and its idealizing representation of a universal humanity. This *Trauerspiel* seems to have little to do with the Greek dramas in which Schelling locates an unyielding power of fate, and it appears to contain only the faintest echo of the inhuman voice of conscience or the haunted will we find in Kant or Hegel.
18. The highpoint of *Maria Stuart* is neatly situated at the center of the middle act where the two protagonists, Mary and Elizabeth, confront one another in a duel of identity and difference. Catholic faces Protestant, beautiful seductress faces virgin monarch, legitimate heir faces unlawful ruler, only to find that their stylized contrast provides the impetus for a more complex relation between self and other in which each confirms her autonomy only through her simultaneous incorporation and rejection of her foe. Plot and character are thus neatly aligned in the phenomenalization of a specular ideal that in turn glorifies the presentational powers of the stage.
19. Still, as is often the case in Schiller, the ramifications of this balancing act are far from clear. On the one hand, the scene can be viewed as the turning point of the characters' respective fortunes. As Mary gains inner freedom and becomes more beautiful, Elizabeth loses her moral authority and becomes more like a phantom. As Mary accepts death and approaches martyrdom, Elizabeth nears political impotence, becoming a figure of incompleteness, imbalance or failure. On the level of form and substance, the economy of gain and loss through the final two acts is exactly self-contained.
20. On the other hand, it is equally plausible to suggest that the confrontation of the two queens contributes little to the course of the plot. Mary's fate was sealed from the beginning, which is to say that throughout the play the very difference between freedom and fate is constantly at risk of being suspended. In this respect, the scene in which the two meet face to face in verbal combat is a testimony to the impossibility of establishing a genuine exchange between them. "It has happened [Es ist geschehen]", announces Lord Leicester when the two women first encounter one another on the field, not simply celebrating the fact that his intrigues have brought them together, but also spelling out the play's major ideological hope: when Mary and Elizabeth are on stage with one another, it is imperative that something happen (336)<sup>[4]</sup>. Something *ought* to happen; exactly *what* happens may be of secondary interest. Precisely what does *not* happen is a genuine clash between the two, a clash in which one sovereign challenges the other on her own terms. In Schelling's language, *Kunst* does not become *Kampf*. This is not because Mary and Elizabeth meet one another as a consequence of the scheming of others rather than on their own initiative, nor is it because they secretly like or admire one another. More crucially, Mary and Elizabeth defend incompatible accounts of the relationship between language and the praxis of freedom.
21. From the perspective of Mary Queen of Scots, it has been of paramount importance from the start of

the play that she speak to Elizabeth and plead for clemency. Now, face to face with her adversary, it is more important that Elizabeth speak and free her: "Pronounce those words / Which you have come here to pronounce," says Mary, adding, "Pronounce those words! Say to me: Mary, you are free! [Sprecht es aus, das Wort, um dessentwillen Ihr gekommen. [Sprecht dieses Wort aus: Sagt mir, Ihr seid frei, Mary]" (339-40). As long as Elizabeth reveals that she has come in order to say something, as long as she has met Mary for the sake of her *Wort*, there is hope for the prisoner. Elizabeth thus proves to be a confounding sovereign not because she lacks rivalrous impulses or decision-making abilities, but because she refuses to cede to a linguistic paradigm in which her speech would have the power to make demands. Elizabeth speaks a language in flight from performance, in flight from its power to liberate, in flight from its very status as language. The key to her stance is her conviction that no utterance can inaugurate an exchange in which it could ensure a return on its speculation: "What pledge would guarantee you for me if / I were so generously to set you free? [Welches Pfand gewährt mich?]" (339). To Elizabeth's mind, there is no counter pronouncement that will answer her pronouncement with a security deposit: *Kein Wort wird zum Pfand gesetzt*. The pronouncement of freedom inaugurates no system of checks and balances. It is radically a-legislative.

22. In its singular freedom, a truly liberating utterance can submit nobody, not even itself, to a law or principle. Accordingly, the pronouncement of freedom neither confirms nor denies freedom. "One word," pleads Mary, "and all will be *as if it never happened* [Ein Wort macht alles ungeschehen]," not only stating a conviction about Elizabeth's power to set her free, but also making clear that once this pronouncement is articulated, there is nothing else to be done—or more precisely, everything will be undone, since, among other things, Mary's freedom will have been freed from the pronouncement that would set it free (340).
23. The language of freedom is to be a language free from language, a language so free that in its very demonstration of freedom's dependence on language, it frees freedom from this dependence. This "Wort" will transpire in such a way that nothing happens or will have happened. To argue, as do the characters throughout the play, that it is only in and because of the monarch's language that we know that something like freedom is possible at all suggests that it is only in the destruction of the language of freedom that freedom is realized, only in language's essential non-occurrence. The climactic encounter of the two queens in the third act thus becomes increasingly mechanical as Mary becomes more and more aware that it doesn't really matter *what* Elizabeth says to her as long as she enters into an economy in which her pronouncements can do *some-thing* that happens as *no-thing* or make something *un-happen* without itself *happening*.
24. To be sure, Elizabeth's flight from performative speech is by no means self-evidently a success. The issue reimposes itself in the final act of the play when, after her lengthy wranglings about Mary's fate, Elizabeth hands her secretary Davidson Mary's death warrant with her (i.e., Elizabeth's) signature on it. Arguably, this gesture is at odds with everything that has just been said about the play. Far from situating herself outside a system of exchange in which the freedom of words garners a freedom that is anything but more words, Elizabeth appears to have set her name into play against her foe, or at least, against the name of her foe. The subsequent discussion of Elizabeth's actions, however, complicates matters. Seeing the death warrant, Davidson exclaims: "You have decided?" Elizabeth immediately rejoins: "I was *supposed* to sign it. I have done so. A piece of paper does not yet decide. A name does not kill [Davison: Du hast entschieden? / Elisabeth: Unterschreiben sollt ich. / Ich habs getan. Ein Blatt Papier entscheidet / Noch nicht, ein Name tötet nicht]" (368). Whereas Lord Leicester previously worried that while something ought to happen, it might not, Elizabeth now argues that the fact that something *ought* to happen should remove any concern as to whether it actually has. Elizabeth thereby reverses Mary's logic according to which the queen's speech, the possibility of freedom, would destroy itself in the realization of freedom.

25. Appalled by the monarch's account of the situation, Davidson vehemently protests that in this case Elizabeth's name on this piece of paper, a death warrant, decides everything and does kill. His queen calmly replies that the paper is now in his hands, and he will be responsible for what befalls the Scottish woman. Panicking, Davidson asks what he is to do with the writ, whereupon Elizabeth answers, "It is a death warrant. Its name says it all [Es ist ein Blutbefehl. Sein Name spricht es aus]" (369, translation modified). More, Elizabeth tells Davidson, she will not say, adding, in an allusion to her earlier conflict with Mary, that she has already pronounced "das Wort." The pronouncement of freedom—"Blutbefehl"—*is* a freeing pronouncement, provided, of course, it is treated as anything but something which has been validated or signed for. The word "performs" its magic only divorced from a structure of intention or responsibility that would authorize it to perform anything. The word performs, but only in its impotence, only in its relational bankruptcy, divorced from any magic of signatures or titles, royal or divine, which could distinguish it from any other word or establish it as a meaningful proclamation or command.
26. One could object to this reading of *Maria Stuart* by arguing that within the broader designs of the play, the problems raised by Elizabeth's interventions are wholly reincorporated into a psychological schema in which Mary's revenge is all but complete. In the closing scene, the Scottish queen receives communion, and her priest assures her, "The word is dead; belief gives life [Das Wort ist tot, der Glaube macht lebendig]" (380). Elizabeth, in turn, is left without friends, lovers, or advisors, her sovereignty intact but her life in shambles. It is nevertheless unclear if the priest's pronouncement describes Mary's triumph, i.e., her freedom, or Elizabeth's, i.e., her ability to speak the word that kills the word. In Schiller, the unrestricted freedom of the word proves, ironically, to mark the very absence of ambiguity, undecidability, or polysemia. This is a formalism, and it is a reduction; but it cannot be labeled an idealism any more than it can be called a materialism. The word, the free word—the word of language's freedom, the demand for the act whereby language would be free—is the name for language's infinite exposure to a stasis, to an economy in which words neither substitute for nor displace other words, an economy in which language facilitates no distinctions—transformations, anamorphoses or anything else—that would ground the difference between a language of events and an event of language. "Es ist geschehen." "Ein Wort macht alles ungeschehen." In her odd behavior, Elizabeth, Queen of England, offers a glimpse of a free *dogmatic* language, a language that renders undecidable the question of whether its performative power is autonomous in virtue of its capacity to escape its status as free or its status as language. This is tragedy: the militarized aesthetic, the *Kampfkunst der Freiheit*.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> German references are from *Sämtliche Werke*, volume 1.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Szondi interprets this passage as evidence that "Schelling himself seems to have perceived that neither of these possibilities [criticism and dogmatism] sufficiently recognized the power of the Objective, since even where the Objective is triumphant, due to the absolute passivity of the subject, it owes its victory to the subject" (44).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Critique of Practical Reason* (153-155).

<sup>4</sup> German references within quotations from Schiller are derived from *Schillers Werke*, edited by Benno von Wiese and Lieselotte Blumenthal.

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# Schelling and Romanticism

## Indifferent Freedom<sup>[1]</sup>

David S. Ferris, University of Colorado

1. Before writing his better known text, the 1809 work *On the Essence of Human Freedom*, Schelling had taken up the question of freedom in relation to art, in particular, the way in which Greek tragedy had already formulated Schelling's idealist understanding of freedom. In the tenth letter of the *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*, Schelling provides a concise presentation of this relation of tragedy to freedom and, despite the youthfulness of this text (it is written in 1795-96 when Schelling is twenty-one years old), it provides the basic outline of his later remarks on freedom and art as discussed in his lectures from 1804-1805 (subsequently published in 1859 as *The Philosophy of Art*)<sup>[2]</sup>.
2. Schelling's turn towards Greek tragedy as a model for his understanding of freedom repeats the frequent gesture of his work towards art as the place in which the historical development of philosophy can be fulfilled<sup>[3]</sup>. The tenth letter of the *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* [*Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kritizismus*], which contains Schelling's first account of the relation of freedom to art, begins with just such a gesture towards the aesthetic:

There is an objective force (*Macht*) that threatens to destroy freedom . . .to struggle *against* it, and in this way to succumb to it is to call forth freedom in its entirety . . . this possibility (*Möglichkeit*), which has been long invisible beneath the light of reason, must be preserved for art, for what is highest in art. (106)

As Schelling's words indicate here, to understand freedom according to possibility is to preserve it from the forces, the objective forces that would everywhere restrict freedom by subordinating it to the mere existence of an object of experience.

3. By taking up the question of freedom in this way, Schelling has, in effect, taken up what is the only philosophical question that remains after Kant's *Critiques*. This question is the question of philosophy itself and, after Kant, this becomes the question of its own possibility, that is, the question of the possibility of a ground for knowledge that would not rely on merely guiding principles or as the *Critique of Judgment* concludes when faced with a radical conflict within judgment: "we can do no better than eliminate this conflict."<sup>[4]</sup> The adoption of such guiding principles prevents a sliding back into a pre-Kantian attempt to discover the truth of reason, God, etc., in an objective representation. Briefly, this attempt to understand the absolute in terms of an object is precisely the dogma from which philosophy is to be freed for both Kant and Schelling.<sup>[5]</sup>
4. Although the Kantian critique seeks to define the possibility of human knowledge in a way distinct from dogma, its overcoming of dogmatic prejudices does not protect it from an impasse that arises from its own critical intentions. The difficulty that produces this impasse is not the difficulty of locating something conceptual in an object. To see the impasse in this way is to place Kant's critique, as Heidegger observes, "negatively under the presupposition that beings as a whole must be knowable in the sense of experience or else not at all" (*Schelling* 54). As Heidegger explains, what experience means in this instance is an understanding that views whatever exists in terms of an object<sup>[6]</sup>. Hence, whenever concepts such as God or freedom are subject to experience, they are to be knowable as objects or not at all. As Heidegger remarks, this represents not just a negative view of Kant's critical

project but it is also based on a presupposition that is not supported by what Kant says. Heidegger continues:

Kant has only shown that what is meant by the Ideas is not knowable *if* it is an object and can only be made certain of as an object in the experience of things of nature. Kant has not shown that what is represented and meant in the Ideas, is an "object." (*Schelling* 45).

The difficulty posed by Kant does not arise from limiting the dogmatic reign of objects in the realm of thought. Such a difficulty can only induce a crisis in the relation of thought to object. Nowhere does it raise the question of a thought no longer conceived within a positive or negative relation to the world of experience and its objects. Indeed, the refusal to judge thought in terms of an objective world puts thought into a crisis that it can easily recover from by becoming the history of its own inadequacy. As Heidegger points out, the unknowability that informs this sense of inadequacy is only tenable if the existence of the Idea is not distinguished from our experience of nature: to say that the thing-in-itself is not knowable if it is an object is not to say that it is an object. It is in the opening created by this distinction that Schelling's remarks on freedom are to be located. But, as Schelling and Kant are also aware, whenever experience is refused as an arbiter of thought, there arises a question about judgment since judgment is now effectively cut off from the traditional source of its authority: judgment must occur without reference to anything capable of confirming its judgments. Only by emphasizing its inability to rely on an external source such as experience can judgment appear to overcome this difficulty. It is this step that leads to the systematic development of thought that characterizes philosophy after Kant, a development in which thought is to experience itself as itself and on the basis of this experience, a self-knowledge that obviates the need for judgment is to arise<sup>[7]</sup>.

5. It is the philosophical account of this recourse that takes place in the tenth letter of Schelling's *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*, an account that faces the question of a knowledge that, to cite Heidegger on Kant again, "must know that it is not supposed to know objects, but rather to know what is non-objective, but still not nothing at all" (*Schelling* 45).
6. At this point Schelling's relation to the legacy of Kant's critique can be seen most clearly. If what Kant regarded as unknowable is no longer thought of as an object, then, the ability to think something that is non-objective but not nothing becomes the task of thinking freedom itself since any account of the non-objective is an account of its freedom from the objective. To take up this task is to involve thought in a contradiction: freedom cannot be thought without the necessity of the objective but freedom cannot be thought in terms of the objective.
7. In his attempt to systematize such a contradiction Schelling will resort to the aesthetic as not just the place of its manifestation but the form of its existence. It is this role that Schelling would give to art in the opening paragraph of the *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* when he speaks of freedom as a possibility that "must be preserved for art, for the highest in art." The necessity that governs this preservation emerges almost immediately when Greek tragedy, as the example of a contradiction, first appears in Schelling's argument:

One has often asked how the reason of the Greeks could have tolerated the contradictions of their tragedy. A mortal, by fate determined a criminal, yet himself struggling against fate is horribly punished for a crime that was the work of fate! The ground of this contradiction, what makes it tolerable, lies deeper than one suspects, it lies in the strife between human freedom and the might (*Macht*) of the objective world, a strife to which the mortal necessarily succumbs when the might of this objective world is overpowering. (106)

The contradiction Schelling presents as the distinguishing characteristic of tragedy takes place through an individual who admits to a crime that is the result of fate. The capacity to admit to and thereby become the agent responsible for crime defines the individuality of the tragic hero. The expression of this individuality is, in Schelling's argument, the moment in which freedom occurs because it is a moment in which innocent protagonists choose to accept responsibility for a crime of which they are innocent. In the same moment, freedom is both asserted and lost but, since this moment depends on the protagonist's choice to accept a role, freedom and necessity occur as the result of the protagonist's acceptance of a performance demanded by fate or necessity. To know that this is necessary is all that the protagonist need know<sup>[8]</sup>. In such knowing, as Schelling puts it, the choice becomes tolerable (*erträglich*) because to recognize it as necessary is to recognize it as part of a larger strife: "the strife between human freedom and the might of the objective world." Here, the tolerability of admitting to a crime one is not responsible for arises from the protagonist's understanding that freedom and individuality are both essentially aesthetic, that is, they are only knowable within an aesthetic form that demands the death of its hero. As such, the hero, the tragic individual becomes the aesthetic medium of a freedom that can only be realized by the denial of this same individual<sup>[9]</sup>. For Schelling, the individual succumbs to a history they must choose if their freedom is to be known both to history and for history. Knowledge of this freedom is what survives in art thereby making a history of the aesthetic the history of a freedom that succumbs to and is thus preserved by the downfall demanded by its own presentation.

8. As Schelling's remarks make clear this is a demand made by the aesthetic form of a work of art. By being an aesthetic object, the work of art thus becomes the place in which the history of freedom is written as the limiting of freedom. In the work of art, this limiting occurs by means of its form, that is, it occurs by adhering to the formal conditions of existence of any work of art. In the tenth letter, Schelling makes these formal conditions play a defining role in the tragic hero's acceptance of fate:

By letting its heroes *struggle* against the superior might of fate, Greek tragedy recognizes human freedom; in order to avoid crossing the limits of art, it must *succumb* to fate [Um nicht über die Schranken der Kunst zu springen, musste sie ihn *unterliegen*] (107)

To recognize human freedom is to recognize art as the aesthetic medium of not just freedom but also the individual for which freedom exists. Thus, the aesthetic tells the story of the necessity of succumbing to fate if the aesthetic is to exist as such a medium. Here, fate becomes the means by which the aesthetic is known to be aesthetic--a knowledge that may be traced back to the moment when the protagonist of tragedy takes on the role of a criminal. But what this knowledge gives rise to is, as always, of more importance because it is there that what is at stake is invariably revealed.

9. When Schelling writes that, "Even Greek tragedy could not maintain defeat and freedom side by side" he appeals to Greek tragedy as the highest example of an art in order to assert that even this highest example remains incapable of a synthesis in which defeat and freedom can coexist. Again, the reason for this inability is the aesthetic form of art since any such synthesis would erase the struggle in which the individual is brought to an experience of freedom<sup>[10]</sup>. Indeed, to ignore this inability is to cross the limit demanded by art as the limit of its form, of its difference to an objective world that would subject it to the banality of mere existence.
10. Why freedom must be experienced in an aesthetic form as the erroneous judgment of the individual on itself becomes clearer as Schelling recapitulates his remarks on Greek tragedy. It is at this point that Schelling explicitly reveals the dialectical development of his argument as a characteristic of the aesthetic work. It is the loss of freedom that signifies the occurrence of freedom in an act that defines the individual as the exercise of a will. Schelling writes:

This was a noble idea to admit that man consents to accept a punishment even for an inevitable crime and, in this way, displays his freedom by the loss of this same freedom and puts an end to the struggle by a declaration of his free will. (107)

By means of its defeat freedom comes to exist as what subjects itself to necessity and the force of the objective. But, rather than signify a return to the dogma in which a concept is defined by the objective, Schelling distinguishes this act of subjection from dogma by means of the act through which the protagonist of Greek tragedy accepts fate. As we have already seen, this act only has significance for Schelling to the extent that it is performed by a hero who cannot be held guilty of the crime for which this act takes responsibility. In this context, the act of taking responsibility and succumbing to fate points all the more strongly to the freedom that is lost and through which such an act can only take place (for, as Schelling would argue, if one were not free how could one choose necessity?). It is this articulation of freedom that Schelling refers to when he states that, "Here, as in general, Greek tragedy is the rule/standard" [Wie überall, so ist auch hier die griechische Kunst *Regel*]" (107). And the rule of Greek art is nothing less than the rule of an art that must always reenact the sacrifice of freedom in order to preserve the aesthetic as the form of such reenactment (and therefore the form in which freedom occurs even if this occurrence can only happen as negation, as the loss of the experience of freedom).

11. How the aesthetic may become a model of freedom becomes clear when Schelling discusses the humanity of the Greeks and their relation to nature. This discussion of the human relation to nature is at the same time a continuing determination of the form of art. Not only is the vocabulary used the vocabulary for discussing art and literature but the problem broached is that of aesthetic representation. Schelling writes:

[Man] indicates the objective world by determining limits across which he must not step. In representing an object to himself, in giving a form and a continuing existence to it, he dominates it. . . . as soon as he crosses these limits, as soon as the object is no longer representable, that is, as soon as man ventures beyond the limits of representation, he feels lost and prey to the terrors of the objective world. To an object without limits he can no longer give a form. (107-108)

The necessity of form affects both the work of art and any attempt to understand the objective world. To be human, as Schelling explains it here, is to recognize this necessity. Since what makes Greek tragedy the highest art is also a recognition of this necessity, then it is through the recognition of its limit as art that Greek tragedy attains the highest level. To put this another way, it is only by recognizing that it cannot be confused with or determined by the objective world that literature can be an art rather than, for example, sociology, history, etc., which each would view literature as if its aesthetic representation of an objective world could be taken for granted.

12. The understanding of the aesthetic Schelling presents in the tenth letter of the *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* is indispensable to the concept of freedom presented in this letter. This aesthetic is so necessary that Schelling's concept of freedom would be unthinkable without it since then this concept would require an objective representation of its own. The aesthetic gives freedom a means of representation that allows freedom to be recognized while avoiding the necessity of appearing for itself (if it could, as Schelling is aware, there would be no such thing as fate and therefore no limit for freedom to struggle against). Here, freedom is thought not simply as an effect of the aesthetic but as an effect of the self-limitation of the aesthetic, as an effect of why the aesthetic is so limited. In this instance, the aesthetic not only allows freedom to be thought but through its formal limit it preserves freedom as the persistent but elusive subject of its own representation. That the aesthetic retains freedom as its subject can be deduced from this limit since it is this limit that provides the model to



think whatever exists as different from the objective world while at the same time recognizing that what is being thought is not nothing. It is into such a category that freedom falls. What this means is that the question of freedom may only be conceived according to the aesthetic. This is why Greek tragedy, as Schelling observes, gives a rule for the appearance of freedom that is also general. (Schelling writes: "Wie überall, so ist auch hier die griechische Kunst *Regel*"). Generalized according to the aesthetic, freedom continues to exist as a retreat from the limit that allows it to be thought and at the same time requires this retreat as a condition of such thought.

13. The freedom described by Schelling poses the question of what literature is when it can only exist in its difference to an objective world and when, because of this difference, its significance is restricted to the expression of a will. In the final analysis, what is expressed here is a will to history for it is to such an outcome that Schelling's protagonist succumbs in a history that demands the failure of the individual will. In this failure, the will and its freedom exists for Schelling as it resists the objective world it cannot be a part of. By making art the privileged example of this will to an individuality that can only take place by succumbing to what demands the end of individuality, Schelling will in effect define the aesthetic as a mode of representing what is not itself an object but which is yet not nothing. This understanding of the aesthetic, as Schelling's example demonstrates, enables the concept of freedom he defines. Defined in this way, freedom becomes what must be recalled from the aesthetic, but when the aesthetic is also the means of recall, the only choice is to succumb to its limit, for it is only in recognizing such a necessity that freedom can be recalled. Although this is articulated by Schelling as a formal issue, it gives rise to no mere formal problem—at least if one considers how our inability to resolve it fosters the most rampant dogmatism; or if one wants to be more literary, it fosters the most practical readings (at least in the Kantian sense), that is, readings whose concern with what ought to be confuse freedom with a groundless moral imperative that would view the objective world as the judge of the aesthetic and thereby become theoretically irrefutable and groundlessly correct. In the end who would dare refute the tragic hero's freedom to become a tragic hero, who would dare give Oedipus back his eyes? Only in this blindness, this blindness of fate without which Schelling's concept of freedom would itself die does freedom appear but then it appears as what cannot appear as itself. In this aspect, Schelling's freedom reveals itself to be a freedom that can only be derived from a form that threatens its existence. In response to this threat Schelling's freedom has no choice but to deny the form of its own existence in order to survive. This denial, as Schelling clearly sees, can be nothing else except the act of a will. In the end, it is by this act that freedom attains existence by denying itself. In this way, it becomes something rather than nothing but in so doing freedom is no longer free since it has become the performance of an act whose significance lies in a repeatability that always recalls its last occurrence in order to assert its freedom. In such a freedom, an indifference is at work, an indifference to freedom itself for it matters not in what form freedom has occurred only that it has occurred (and here the tense is crucial, freedom becomes the recall of what it is to be free). Such an indifference sustains the whole possibility of a discourse on freedom, which is to say, the possibility of philosophy itself.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> A longer version of the following essay in which the relation of Schelling's remarks on tragedy and freedom are discussed in the context of Romantic Hellenism is forthcoming in *Silent Urns: Romanticism, Hellenism, Modernity* (Stanford University Press).

<sup>2</sup> In his remarks on Greek tragedy from *The Philosophy of Art*, Schelling refers to his earlier work as follows: "This, as presented here as well as in my own *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*, is the innermost spirit of Greek tragedy" (254). Unlike Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, Schelling's remarks on tragedy have generated little critical or interpretive attention even though

Schelling is the first to shift tragedy away from an affective and into a properly philosophical aspect. Only Peter Szondi has recognized this watershed in Schelling. See Szondi's brief remarks on Schelling's understanding of tragedy in "The Notion of the Tragic in Schelling, Hölderlin and Hegel" (43-46).

<sup>3</sup> See for example, Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* (229-233).

<sup>4</sup> This elimination is offered as a solution to the antinomy of taste in '57 of the *Critique of Judgment*. Since judgments of taste make an appeal to universal assent they lay claim to a universal principle even though such judgments are judgments of taste precisely because they do not follow any such principle. It is this contradiction that Kant needs to eliminate in order to account for judgment according to a universal principle but, as Kant confesses here, if such an account were attained there would no such thing as a judgment of taste and therefore nothing for the universal principle to account for: "It is absolutely impossible to provide a determinate, objective principle of taste that would allow us to guide, to test, and to prove its judgments, because then they would not be judgments of taste" (213).

<sup>5</sup> As Kant observes, and Schelling will reiterate in the course of the tenth letter, dogma has a considerable attraction precisely because it is irrefutable: dogma requires an objective representation that cannot be determined by what it represents, hence, it can neither be proved nor disproved (e.g., the social construction of reality, science, the earth, the universe etc.).

<sup>6</sup> What this means in the realm of art is spelled out by Heidegger in "The Age of the World Picture" when he remarks: "A third equally essential phenomenon of the modern period lies in the event of art's moving into the purview of aesthetics. That means that the art work becomes the object of mere subjective experience (*Erlebnis*), and that consequently art is considered to be an expression of human life" (116).

<sup>7</sup> That self-knowledge is to be the defining object of thought for Kant and subsequent philosophy is announced by Kant in the first preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant speaks of this work as "a call to reason to undertake anew the most difficult of all its tasks, namely, that of self-knowledge" (9). This call, as the history of philosophy confirms, is essentially Greek since it is Socrates who first formulates this as the primary task of philosophy in the imperative *gnothi seauton*. On this imperative in the romantic period see my "The Ghost of Coleridge Past" in *Theory and the Evasion of History*.

<sup>8</sup> What Schelling describes as freedom underwrites the sense of history elaborated by Frederic Jameson in *The Political Unconscious* when he asserts that "History is the experience of Necessity" and then goes on to say "Necessity is the inexorable form of events" (132). In both cases, necessity is the means through which freedom is to be experienced (this history for Jameson is a history free from its "thematization or reification as a mere object of representation"). On the formal and therefore aesthetic category that Jameson must evoke here (and which Schelling already recognizes as essential to such an experience of freedom) see, Samuel Weber, "Capitalizing History."

<sup>9</sup> In this respect, Schelling's remark gives a more philosophical interpretation of Winckelmann's desire to write a history of art that would no longer be a history of individual artists.

<sup>10</sup> As this sentence implies, what is at stake in freedom is its experience and, above all where its aesthetic representation is concerned, the stake is the inimitability of freedom. Here, the question Winckelmann broaches in relation to Greece (how its inimitability is to be imitated) can be seen as a formulation of the essential problem of freedom posed by art. On freedom and its experience, see Jean-

Luc Nancy's superb reflection, *The Experience of Freedom* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), especially p. 205, n. 9, for remarks addressed specifically to the relation of art to freedom.

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# Schelling and Romanticism

## Mourning Becomes Theory: Schelling and the Absent Body of Philosophy

David L. Clark, McMaster University

In the body, the knot of being is tied which dualism does not unravel but cuts. Materialism and idealism, each from its end, try to smooth it out but get caught in it. The central position of the problem of life means not only that it must be accorded a decisive voice in judging any given ontology, but also that any treatment of itself must summon the whole of ontology. —Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology*

1. What shall it profit a philosopher, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own body?
2. One of the arguments that I would like to sketch out very briefly here is that this is the nascent phenomenological question that Friedrich Schelling asks in the wake of his philosophy of nature, a question whose opening to thought gains considerable momentum with the publication of his masterwork, *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom* (1809). In the *Freedom* essay —written as it is in a mood of "melancholy [*Schwermut*]" —we see auguries of what might be called Schelling's dis-spirited thinking about embodied existence, a philosophy of life or of the "living ground [*lebendigen Grunde*]" (30; 7: 356)<sup>[1]</sup> that emerges first in the negative form of an often ambivalently executed critique of German idealism. That idealism, Schelling argues, suffers principally from disavowing the irreducibly corporeal nature of existence; in his words—which cannot in this instance be either simply figurative or literal—the philosophies of spirit have renounced "flesh and blood [*Fleisch und Blut*]" (30; 7: 356). Living spirit is embodied spirit: this Schelling had learned from Jacob Boehme, whose scandalously anthropomorphic imaginings of a yearning, craving, and troublesomely incarnate God gave Schelling a richly affective rhetorical and conceptual framework with which both to enliven or corporealize a European philosophical scene otherwise completely lacking in "depth, fullness, and vitality" ("Ages" 89), and to read the body of philosophy after Descartes symptomatically for these absences. *Sehnsucht* [longing], *Sucht* [addiction], *Schwermut* [heavy-heartedness], *die tiefe unzerstörliche Melancholie alles Lebens* [the deep, indestructible melancholy of all life], *das Regellose* [the unruly], *der regellosen Bewegung des verstandlosen Prinzips* [the unruly movement of the irrational principle], *Schärfe des Lebens* [life's intensity or keenness]: these and other terms of "Korporisation" (*Of Human Freedom* 65; 7: 387) form a language of the body that Schelling's text mobilizes against and within the discourse of philosophy.<sup>[2]</sup>
3. Anticipating by more than eighty years Nietzsche's summary judgement of Western thought as so much "Egyptianism" (35), Schelling characterizes the systems of his contemporaries as "vain artifice," and scoffs at the monumental tombs that they have built in the name of a "dead philosophy seeking the essence of things in forms and concepts" ("Ages" 90, 89). Now the real problem with the dead, as Lacan reminds us, is that you cannot shut them up. The thanatological philosophies of spirit that Schelling here wishes were dead are in fact very much alive—hence the reiterated forcefulness of his censure. The quickness of these dead philosophies is evident not only in the imposing form of Hegel, under whose shadow Schelling could still be said to be struggling, but also, more anxiously and melancholically, in the "Hegelianism" that Schelling himself once powerfully advanced and was never able completely to disavow. Whether dead, or alive, or perhaps living on within Schelling's project, the philosophies of spirit can sometimes trigger a lurid rhetoric of renunciation that reminds us that his critique of idealism (culminating in his ferocious denunciation of the "monstrous" Hegel in the lectures *On the History of Modern Philosophy*), was always in some sense felt as well as thought. The

irreducible idealistic remainder in Schelling helps explain the cutting violence of the language of loss that surfaces at key points in his negotiation with the philosophical tradition he inherited, his heartfelt disavowal of the systems that he diagnosed as themselves founded upon similarly feeling-full acts of disavowal. As Schelling argues in lectures that he delivered > in Stuttgart to explain his essay on freedom, philosophical idealism is at > root a 'war against all Being' (*Stuttgart* 232), a lightning raid which > reduces the body of the world to ashes. Such fury against what resists and exceeds conceptualization is for Schelling the paradigm of "evil" as a "positive" or angrily active presence in the world. Why "war"? Which is to say, why the wrathful affect of this disavowal? In the essay on freedom, Schelling insistently figures this assault as an attack upon the living body, and, in doing so, helps explain the phenomenology—the felt outrage—of its purposiveness:

Modern European philosophy as a whole, from its beginning (in Descartes) has this common flaw: for its nature does not exist, it lacks a living ground. Spinoza's realism is in this regard as abstract as Leibniz's idealism. Idealism is the soul of philosophy; realism its body; only the two together constitute a living whole. Never can the latter [i.e., realism, as the *Leib* of philosophy] provide the principle, but it must be the ground and the means in which the former actualizes itself, assumes flesh and blood. If a philosophy lacks this living fundament—which is usually a sign that the ideal principle too was originally only feebly at work in it—it loses itself in the kind of system whose attenuated concepts of aseity, modifications, etc., stand in sharpest contrast to the vital force and fullness of reality. Yet wherever the ideal principle actually works its effects to a high degree [. . .] it generates a turbid, wild enthusiasm that irrupts in self-mutilation or—as with the priests of the Phrygian goddess [i.e. Cybele]—self-emasculat[i]on [*da erzeugt es einen trüben und wilden Enthusiasmus, der in Selbstzerfleischung, oder, wie bei den Priestern der phrygischen Göttin (i.e. Kybele), in Selbstentmannung ausbricht*]. (7: 356-7)

4. Much could be said about this scene, as David Farrell Krell's illuminating commentary on it amply suggests. (It is Krell's more accurate translation that I cite here ["Crisis"].) There is something oddly sympathetic and symptomatic about the passage, as if the contempt underlying idealism's disavowals were contagious, itself becoming the object of Schelling's contempt. We might note by way of evoking a philosophical context for Schelling's rhetoric that slighting allusions to Cybele and her cult were certainly not unknown among the Germans. In the Athenaeum fragments, for example, Schlegel castigates the French for their abstraction and superficiality, their "fetish[istic]" attachment to "joyless" formality. "Who doesn't recognize in this portrait the priests of the temple of belles lettres who have the same sex as Cybele?" (45), he asks. (What that sex might actually be, and how it plays out in Schelling's allusion, is a question worth considering more fully. For Schlegel's immediate purposes, as indeed for Schelling's, though, the point is that Cybele's sex is not male.) At one level, a "joyless" fetish, like military intelligence, would seem to be a complete contradiction in terms, but it is a contradiction that inadvertently speaks to a paradox about the excessive and recursive nature of desire that Schelling exploits in the Freedom essay's figure of enthusiastic self-mutilation: namely, that bodies are those curiously profligate sites in which the mastery of desire is itself desirous. With Schelling's comparison, however, the stakes are considerably higher than in Schlegel, since it is not the French who are demonized as simultaneously unsexed and effeminate, but modern European philosophy in its entirety. As Krell points out, this is only one instance of what amounts to a bloody-minded leitmotif of disfigurement and castration woven into the complex texture of the Freedom essay—a leitmotif that deserves to be read much more closely than I can manage here, especially for the ways in which it performs a certain amount of philosophical labour beyond that of Schelling's ostensible argument. What deserves emphasizing is that this rhetoric forcefully registers his suspicions about idealism's triumphalist faith in the power of the philosophical imaginary to spiritualize reality, without remainder, into idea and form. As Schelling comes increasingly to recognize (although never without equivocation), reality is much more than formal intelligibility; it is also an open-ended question of

existence and of the brute confrontation with the enigma of the actual. On the way to developing what he eventually names positive philosophy, Schelling confronts the ineluctable operation of the negative within existence: this includes the unsublatable power and reality of evil acts, the irrational and other-than-rational, the irreducible remainders that haunt spirit with the memory of matter, as well as "the uncanny" and "the unconscious" — we might recall that the latter two terms are effectively put into the circulation of German philosophy by Schelling. To this list — in effect, the philosophemes of human finitude — we might add one other term: the lived body, especially its affects. Modern European philosophy is what it is, Schelling contends, precisely through the disavowal of these alterities, but at its own risk — as his violent rhetoric of self-castration vividly suggests. When thinking disavows "flesh and blood," when idealism is most spirited and abstracting, it suffers a kind of hubris, a prideful "falling off" that the philosophical body paradoxically experiences as the opposite, as an act of mastery. Like the Phrygian priests, idealists misrecognize loss for gain, but in an affectively imbued manner that leaves behind trace elements marking the violence of this disavowal as well as its incompleteness. For a symptomatic reader like Schelling, idealism's abjection of its *Lieb* is never neutrally a given, never coolly a *fait accompli*, but always an ongoing task whose very rage remembers at an affective level what it otherwise tries to forget in the realm of "rule, order, and form" (*Of Human Freedom* 34). Five years after the publication of the essay on freedom, Schelling continues to rail against the work of his contemporaries in the same pugnacious manner; but we should not let his polemicism blind us to the way in which he keeps his eye resolutely focussed not only on how European philosophy conducts its work but also the tellingly choleric way in which it is executed: "You have maligned nature for deploying the senses, for failing to create man on the model of your own abstractions," he writes; "You have abused and maimed [*geschändet und verstümmelt*] his nature to suit yourselves; in insolent fury you have raged against her, like those who in earlier times castrated themselves for heavenly bliss [*verschnitten un der Seligkeit willen*]"<sup>[3]</sup>

5. A strange logic organizes these figures of disfigurement, where fury directed against the feminine so easily reverts to bliss, and where spirit marks flesh with the denial of flesh. Hegel too had mobilized the figure of Cybele. In his early theological writings, she is the dazzlingly invisible divinity of the mystery faiths (which include the hidden god of the Jews as well as the sources of sublimity in Kant) who "prevents her priests from the possibility of 'knowing' her — sexually or intellectually" (Hamacher 56). The feminine is a vacuous, undisclosable, and fetishistically invested otherness that at once saps her worshippers of energy and sharply delimits their command of the world. In Schelling, on the other hand, the feminine other which is nature must also play several roles, lack and deprivation to be sure, but also plenitude in the form of a grounding potency whose disavowal is the source of philosophy's faint-heartedness. By failing to attribute to nature its vitality, the male philosophers suffer a loss that Schelling does not hesitate to call "womanly": by excluding the feminine, idealism somehow manages to "feminize" itself.<sup>[4]</sup> According to masculinist assumptions that certainly do not need to be rehearsed here, Schelling makes femininity stand for both fullness and lack, fertility and castration, the origin of power and the sign of weakness. In Hegel we see a somewhat different ambivalence: the hidden divinity who emasculates (male) thinkers is herself "emasculated" (i.e. gendered female), and because of that her worship can only be false, an empty idolization of nothingness that leaves men "unmanned," as Hegel says, "in body and in spirit" (cited by Hamacher 55). Schelling queers the same figure by requiring the feminized real to play several roles: as the living fundament and source of actualization, she is richly potent, and thus antithetical to what Hegel makes of her. She is also symbolically castrated, but that cut goes in two ways: i) as I have said, Schelling's masculinism compels him to identify femininity with lack; ii) yet the figure of a castrated goddess also registers the exclusionary violence of modern European philosophy. What idealists do to themselves reproduces what they have always already done to the real, i.e., "wild[ly]" re-rendering it/her so that it/she can be incorporated into the spiritualized body of idealistic thinking. Where in Hegel the castrated Cybele is the emptiness that distracts, in Schelling she is the fullness that excites an attack in the form of a ritualistic consumption

of her body.

6. We might well be curious about the community of ambiguously gendered but decisively sterile philosophers that Schelling sees around him, the men who are said to be hysterical and effeminate because they disavow—or rather, they are always disavowing—the feminine. These gelded philosophers bring to mind another euphemistically named group described in the opening lecture of *Lessons on the Method of Academic Studies*, where Schelling shamelessly identifies the threat to the university's organic social system with a certain dangerous (a)sexuality. Beware the "sexless bees [*geschlechtlose Bienen*]" among "us," he warns, i.e., the ones who pass for virile and productive philosophers but who have not been granted the capacity to create. These sterile thinkers lend nothing to the fecund "totality" of the beehive, Schelling contends, but rather wallow in their own "inorganic excretions" (*On University Studies* 11; 5: 217).<sup>[5]</sup> What Krell rightly calls the "curious recoil of the castration imagery" ("Crisis" 19) in the *Freedom* essay, the queer way in which modern (masculine) philosophy feminizes itself the more it spurns the feminine, is partly explained if we treat the object of Schelling's phobic reaction not only as un-sexed but also as members of a third sex. Let me call them gay scientists. These "shallow Precieux [*seichter Schöngelster*]" (*Of Human Freedom* 81; 7: 401), as Schelling scathingly puts it, are creatures who are more at home in the temple of belles lettres than in the more virile academy. — All the better, so it would seem, to throw into relief Schelling's philosophical manliness, his sturdy willingness to embrace what the aesthetes and mere pretenders to philosophy would deny, namely the irreducibility of ardent affective life. As Schelling says, only a public that has un-manned itself refuses to accept the fact that "the passions," far from being the object of morality's disavowal, are "the very strength of virtue itself and its immediate tools" (*Of Human Freedom* 81). (And here we might recall Schelling's prominently heterosexual presence in the hive of the German university; after all, he was the busy bee for whom Caroline Schlegel left her husband).<sup>[6]</sup>
7. What then are we to make of these ritualistically pierced male bodies in Schelling's figure? What other inscriptions are their vulnerable surfaces made to bear in his philosophical imaginary? The sheer viscosity of this fantastic scene is telling: passionate frenzy on the verge of possession, ceremonial (i.e., reiteratively significant) acts of self-amputation—this complex figure in effect re-members the bodies that the idealists have forgotten and dis-membered, for although, like seraphim, they claim to have sublated "flesh and blood," in Schelling's symptomatic reading they have flesh enough to harm themselves. Schelling puts to us that modern European philosophy is constructed through a fiercely exclusionary mechanism, so that idealism invents its integrity not only in opposition to the alterity of the "real" but also by rendering the "real" as insignificant to the work of philosophy. In characterizing idealism as destroying something as proximate—and as irreducibly distant—as its own body, Schelling also suggests that what is excluded is not simply an exterior to the interiority of spirit, but bounds that spirit as its constitutive outside from within. Operating as the absent body of idealism, the real is the unconscious of philosophy that both enables its articulation but disables its absolutist pretensions. As such, the "real" troubles idealism as the ongoing chance of its trespass and recontextualization. In other words, the fact that Schelling attacks idealism's instrumentalization of nature in bodily terms reminds philosophy that the body is not one object among many, but precisely a surface that is narcissistically invested with significance. Contrary to what the idealists believe, bodies matter; indeed, they matter absolutely, a fact that Schelling puts to us by identifying God as fully embodied and also, more radically, by claiming that corporeal life exceeds even his powerful grasp. As Schelling says, God's will "to universalize everything, to lift it to unity with light to preserve it therein"—that is, his impulse to be in the world in the manner of modern European philosophy; in Schelling, God can take on a distinctly Fichtean and Hegelian personality—necessarily confronts an irreducible counter-force, namely the "will of the deep," a resistant negativity whose forceful effect is "to particularize everything or to make it creaturely" (*Of Human Freedom* 58; 7: 381). In order to deny its creaturely genealogy, then, idealism must ensure that the Word is stripped of its flesh. This melancholic and emasculating work Schelling

sees in modern European philosophy's reduction of God into "a mere moral world-order" and in its calculated refusal to believe that "he has in him quite other and more vital activating powers than the barren subtlety abstract idealists ascribe to him" (*Of Human Freedom* 30). (Contemporary theologians like Jean-Luc Marion argue that this deracinating "idolization" of God continues through Heidegger, notwithstanding Schelling's example and opposition.)<sup>[7]</sup> Lacking the grounding of a fully realized philosophy of nature (that is, a philosophy capable of admitting to God's life<sup>[8]</sup>), frenzied idealism seems out of control; yet at the same time it is utterly in control and about nothing but control, creating as it does a closed circuit of desire in which the spirited renunciation of the flesh has itself become the source of a secret, masochistic pleasure in the manner of the Phrygian priests. But far from this desire being the engine of the dialectic, the means by which the philosophical subject—paradigmatically masculine—self-consciously confirms himself, it is instead the secreted source of that subject's unworking.

8. In a text that will have important things to say about the nature of desire and longing, and especially about mourning and melancholia, one could argue that in identifying idealism's asceticism as an encrypted love of the flesh, Schelling here diagnoses philosophy after Descartes as suffering from a melancholic attachment to the body that is displaced into a disgust with its most libidinally invested parts. Because of idealism's ambivalent and unrecognized dependence on the feminized other, its improperly grieved loss leads to the sorts of outrages that Freud associates with unsuccessful mourning: notably, manic self-beratement and self-laceration, and the hallucinatory identification with the lost object so that the subject assumes the shadowy form of the beloved. Here, the male philosophers preserve and conserve what they unsuccessfully mourn through the heightened mimicry of a spectralized feminine, thereby becoming—in a manner of speaking—what they disavow. Or rather, they appear to become what they disavow, since these men are characterized as imposters, philosophers caught up in a (dis)embodied form of drag, whose ideas are better suited, as Schelling says, for the gynaeceum, the "lady's boudoir" (*Of Human Freedom* 19; 7, 401). But if the idealists really are like the priests of Phrygian goddess Cybele, then their culthood is strange indeed, for the goddess to whom they are dedicated was born both male and female. Horrified by this indeterminately gendered creature, the gods who witness this birth castrate Cybele, interpellating him/her into the Symbolic order through a viciously normalizing act that the goddess in turn angrily visits upon her male followers. Perhaps behind Schelling's insistent allusion lies another story, the body of which is mostly denied by virtue of his misogyny: read against this fantastic background, modern European philosophy's revulsion with the real is a displaced expression of an older exclusion, a melancholic self-laceration that disavows an original, dreamily bisexual body, a sexual difference that is more ancient than any ontological *Scheidung*.<sup>[9]</sup>
9. What would it mean then for philosophy to take on flesh and blood, to get a life? If idealism suffers from a certain absence, then it is always possible for a philosophy of flesh and blood to seek in embodiment the consolation of simple self-presence, thereby substituting one generality for another. As Schelling points out in his Cybele allusion, realism can be as abstract as idealism. Schelling's philosophy is itself never entirely free of the risk of this sort of symmetrical inversion, especially in the later work, organized as it is around oppositions of "positive" and "negative" that make such a substitution—which we could call "Hegelian"—all but irresistible. Perhaps this is one of the lessons that Marx takes from Schelling in his own critique of Hegel's disavowal of "life": a philosophy of life will not break with a philosophy of spirit as long as life is treated as the other of spirit, which is to say caught within the orbit of spirit's negative determination. To break orbit, life will need to be reconsidered as that which exceeds the antithetical oppositions of corporeality and spirituality, materialism and idealism, life and non-life—that is, as a resistant negativity that refuses to be worked over and worked through by the dialectic.<sup>[10]</sup> And, indeed, we see signs of such a reconsideration in the *Freedom* essay, where Schelling suggests that grasping corporeality in a radical fashion means talking



about unquenchable desire and irreducible loss down to the very ground of God; it means reinscribing creatureliness as an indeterminate "nexus of living forces [*ein Band von lebendigen Kräften*]" (*Of Human Freedom* 41; 7: 365) rather than a simple substance that might punctually and irrevocably be brought into the light of reason. After Boehme, Schelling argues that human freedom has its source in a more primordial act of embodiment, namely God's self-originating struggle to become a determinate being out of his darkness. But what is the sex of this being? In a surprising move that, in the final analysis, probably exceeds the philosophical tolerances of the *Freedom* essay, Schelling calls the dark, originary ground "longing" [*die Sehnsucht*]. It is a designation that triggers a dense unfurling of metaphors, as if Schelling were averting his eyes from the prolific site of God's nativity. Among other things, this longing is the unruly, "the surging, billowing sea" (*Of Human Freedom* 35) and the birth place that Schelling explicitly associates with the Platonic *chora*, a complex association that I have discussed elsewhere ("Tropics of Negativity"). Out of primal longing is born an image of wholeness in which God first recognizes himself as an individuated entity, and thus sets himself upon the manly path of self-consciousness. Or rather, God mis-recognizes himself, since longing does not spring from an already constituted body; instead a body image emerges out of the projection of unruly, primordial desire. Moreover, in this mirror stage, God not only construes himself as distinct and intact; he also mistakes himself as male, even though Schelling's language insists that the energetic source of this reflection is feminine. On the far side of this specular moment, God is masculine, but on the near side he is a she. It seems to me that through this looking glass, we are witnessing the staging of a number of phantasmatic effects, each of which depend upon the violent exclusion of an alterity figured as feminine. We do not see the birth of God as much as the genesis of a certain masculinization of desire, the harnessing or transformation of (feminized) longing into the dialectical work of (masculine) self-consciousness, or what Hegel calls, in the *Phenomenology*, "Desire in general" (para. 167). (We might quickly recall here that in his *Aesthetics*, Hegel goes out of his way to denounce and delimit melancholia and longing as symptomatic merely of a wasteful Romantic irony: "That longing," Hegel writes, "is only the empty, vain subject's desire of nullity, and he lacks the strength to escape from this vanity and fill himself with the content of substance" [67].)

10. Whatever God imagines himself to be, Schelling is careful to insist that primal longing is never entirely reducible to the Apollonian shapeliness envisaged in the mirror stage. "[T]he world as we [. . .] behold it, is all rule, order, and form," he writes;

But the unruly [*das Regellose*] still lies in the ground as if it could break through once again, and nowhere does it appear as though order and form were original, but rather as if something initially ruleless had been brought to order. This is the incomprehensible ground of reality in things, the irreducible remainder [*der nie aufgehende Rest*] which with the greatest exertion cannot be resolved into reason but always remains in the ground. (*Of Human Freedom* 34; 7: 360)

A residue of longing remains in the form of a materiality that is forever unresolved by reason, and that survives as the disavowed condition of reason's possibility. This resistant remainder throws into relief the provisionality of the Law—i.e. "the world of rule, order, and form"—, its revealingly anxious and contingently reiterated attempt to discipline what haunts it from within. There is no overcoming this resistance to the Law, because the Law is itself this resistance, the productive grasping for the dark ground that is ever more about to be grasped, and that, in truth, grasps us as creatures of desire. Having always already withdrawn from the nature of things, longing is the radical loss that sets existent life—including God's existent life—upon its mortal way. Schelling's rhetoric is once again conspicuously affective: human beings "never gain control" of their dark nature, he writes: "This is the sadness which inheres to all finite life [. . .] Thence the veil of sadness [*der Schleier der Schwermut*] which is spread over the whole of nature, the deep indestructible melancholy of all life" [*die tiefe unzerstörliche Melancholie alles Lebens*] (*Of Human Freedom* 79; 7: 399).

11. Indestructible melancholy and irreducible longing are Schelling's figure for the agonistic rapport that existent beings share with what conditions them, but which forever eludes them as an originary lack. Importantly, this is not a veil that can be lifted, not a pathologized melancholy against which one might imagine the work of a more proper mourning, a mourning whose pretended "success" was for Schelling the ultimate failure of modern European philosophy. Indestructible melancholy in fact names an impossible mourning. Impossible, because the lost object is absent from the start, and thus utterly unsalvageable, a form of yearning that Schelling has the resolve to concede was never punctually present. How "properly" to negotiate with a loss that was never, as it were, a gain? Even God cannot renounce this loss, cannot end the interminable clinging to his own ground so as to become all in all. Life, as life, must negotiate interminably with a loss for which there can be no complete recompense, no eventual renunciation, not if the living are to remain alive. Of course, the fact that the subject cannot obliterate its relationship to the ground upon which it is dependent does not prevent it from trying and claiming to do just that, which is to say from attempting carrying out a campaign, in the name of spirit, against that which grounds and resists spirit. This disavowing—but finally impossible—effort Schelling describes as the structural conditions for evil itself, and it is why, in a counter-intuitive move that attracted Heidegger, he points out "It could indeed be argued that evil is the most spiritual [*Geistig*]" phenomenon, "for it wages the most vehement war against all Being (*Stuttgart* 232; 7: 469) . Under these conditions, mourning cannot be anything but interminable. As Derrida says in a different context, "this is the law, the law of mourning, and the law of the law, always in mourning, that it would have to fail in order to succeed" ("Force" 173).
12. Although both before and after the period of the Freedom essay Schelling proves himself quite capable of referring to the body in more Hegelian terms as merely the "tool" or "implement of spirit [*Werkzeug des Geistes*]," as Krell points out (19), I think it is still possible to find the conceptual origins of his revisionary understanding of corporeality in the *First Outline of a System of Philosophy of Nature*, where we witness Schelling describing life in dynamic terms as the exchange of forces. Here, he argues, the thinking subject is not opposed to the world of objects, but is itself a lively part of the living nature it would analyze. Because knowledge of nature is irreducibly a situated knowledge, that is, produced by an entity that is itself corporeally immersed in what is being investigated, the field can never be completely grasped. Something always drops out, yet continues to make its presence felt, and that "something" Schelling names "the universal productivity" [*der allgemeinen Produktivität*] (3: 289) of which human embodied existence, like all living phenomena, is a kind of moment by moment inhibition or repression.<sup>[11]</sup> As Andrew Bowie points out, the productivity is not "a separate inaccessible thing in itself (even though it is not an object of knowledge) because it is also at work in the subject, as that which moves the subject beyond itself" (36). Interestingly, Schelling implicitly associates this irreducibly displaced subject, this subject always somewhere else than it appears to be, with an "eddy" [*Wirbel*] (3: 289) in a stream. Human corporeality, as the supreme instance of living nature, is the site of constantly shifting surface resistance through which the currents of certain unconscious depths are only transversally "visible." For Schelling, life is a kind of "hovering" [*Schweben*] (3: 277), a sustained activity of deferral and differance which is "prevented," as he says, "from exhausting itself in its product" (cited by Bowie 41). In developing this kind of rhetoric of absent presences, I would argue that Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* is responding to the Cartesian indifference to embodiment with a corporeal model that Drew Leder has recently called the "dys-appearing body" (69-99), that is, a body whose flickering presence is felt but not known. For Schelling, as for Leder (whose work, as Tilottama Rajan has argued, constitutes an extension of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology [Rev. 262-3]), the body is effectively missing in action; or better, embodied life is a species of virtual phenomena, its permanence not one of substance but of dynamic process, the unstable site of a churning eddy whose elements are constantly being exchanged. Still, where the *Naturphilosophie* can speak of corporeality in relatively abstract terms of "products" and "productivity," the later Freedom essay concretizes and complicates matters by being more insistently

concerned with affect, the universe of feeling that it unabashedly places at the heart of things. The epistemological problem of the subject unable to see itself seeing is reconfigured as an ontological question of being in the world in a mode of agonistic loss. Drawing heavily from Boehme's theosophical mysticism, that is, from a pronounced distance outside of the discursive regime of modern European philosophy, Schelling mobilizes a symptomatic language to reframe the disembodied discourse of idealism. Unruly and originary longing and unappeasable melancholy: these are the affective dispositions around which Schelling's essay revolves in its reflection on the nature of existence, both human and divine, dispositions, which like nausea in Sartre, or perception in Merleau-Ponty, evoke borderline states that bring out the mutual dependence of subject and object in the experience of felt life, and that remind us that we are possessed by the bodies that we possess. This sense of corporeal dis-possession is perhaps no more strongly evident than in Schelling's decision to characterize individual embodiment, which is to say the point of maximal particularization at the farthest distance from the universal affairs of spirit, in terms of an originary craving or addiction [*die Sucht*]. As Heidegger observes in his lectures on Schelling, "man" is uniquely the instantiation of "the deepest self-craving of the longing of the ground [*der tiefsten Eigensucht der Sehnsucht des Grundes*]" (*Schelling's Treatise* 141; 42: 244). A realized philosophy of flesh and blood could then be said to characterize the embodied subject as a form of addiction to oneself—that is, if the priority and integrity of the "self" were not precisely what is put into question by Schelling's notion of a longing and a craving for which subjectivity is in fact a kind of (side-)effect. "Eigensucht" is a curious contradiction in terms, for addiction constitutes the dispossession of the composure, ownership, and autonomy implied by "Eigen." How does one "have" a body (of one's own)? How does God have a body? In the form of a compulsion, Schelling scandalously says, indeed, a perfect, ferocious addiction that Ronell would call a "pure instance of Being-on-drugs: it is only about producing a need for itself" (25). The work of mourning is of course another name for the complete inability to renounce one's needs, and that work could not be more interminable when addiction is a matter of craving oneself (i.e., the embodied self as the site of the craving for itself, insatiable as such). Under these heavy-hearted conditions, addiction does not follow clean and sober health, no more than mourning follows death; instead, mourning and addiction work upon life, and are indissociable from it.<sup>[12]</sup> We see why for Schelling corporeal existence is awash with "the deep indestructible melancholy of all life" [*die tiefe unzerstörliche Melancholie alles Lebens*] (*Of Human Freedom* 79; 7: 399).

13. Of course, in describing the fundamental structures of reality in terms of the lived body, Schelling opens himself up to the charge of anthropomorphism. In defense of Schelling, Heidegger responds by pointing out that anthropomorphism presumes some comprehensive knowledge of what it is to be human. That is exactly the kind of knowledge that Schelling's essay puts into question, and never more so than in attributing a pre-thetic primacy to longing and melancholy. Heidegger smartly asks:

For who has ever verified the supposition that longing is something merely human? And who has ever refuted thoroughly and with sufficient reason the possibility that what we call longing, which is where we are, in the end is something other than we ourselves? Does not longing conceal something that denies us any grounds for limiting it to humankind, something that would sooner give us cause to grasp it as that in which we human beings are unfettered out beyond ourselves [*über uns weg eingeschränkt*]? Is it not precisely longing that proves the human being to be Other, other than a mere human being? (*Schelling's Treatise* 124; 42,216)

Heidegger's leading questions urge us to grasp the more "authentic" man of disembodied Dasein, the one resolutely oriented toward—and thus fundamentally othered by—the question of being. But as Levinas says, this "Dasein [. . .] is never hungry" (134) (and, we could say here, never addicted, never longing and languorous), and is so dangerously benumbed to the life of the so-called "merely human" that it never feels the pain of fleshly loss. I cannot say that Schelling altogether avoids this kind of

denegating idealism, and that his attractiveness to Heidegger, in particular the *Rector* of the 1930's, is therefore accidental. But we need not go down Heidegger's sexless path of thinking to grasp his point — that Schelling's longing is not exhausted by the thought of the subject, and especially not the thought of "man." What, then, is that "something other than only a man," the alterity that haunts and disrupts the boundaries of the "human"? Schelling's text answers tentatively, but in a sexed and symptomatic language that anticipates Kristeva more than it does Heidegger. Like Schelling, Kristeva evokes the Platonic *chora* as a figure for the always already there, the unruly that (un)works the world of rule, order, and form while also being constitutive of it. For Kristeva, the *chora* contests the primacy of the Logos, and puts the self-sufficiency of the "father" into question. In so far as Schelling's irreducible remainder operates as a negativity that refuses to be absorbed into the Symbolic order of the law, it is analogous to Kristeva's notion of the Semiotic. Heidegger in fact refers to Schelling's longing as "the nameless," as that which is "lacking the possibility of words" (125), a characterization that recalls Kristeva's notion of melancholy and other, related dispositions, as an obstructed form of signification. In Tilottama Rajan's phrase, these dispositions constitute "a language stuck in the body, signifiers that have not yet become linguistic" (Rev. 263).

14. The "something other" that originary longing evokes and commemorates for Heidegger nevertheless compels the subject to become what it is only through the circuit of the Symbolic. As Schelling repeatedly says during the last thirty years of his philosophical career, in coming into existence, the subject unhappily takes on a role, puts on a face: it "cannot grasp itself as what it is, for precisely in attracting itself it becomes an other, and this is the basic contradiction, we can say the basic misfortune, in all being" (*On History* 115). In a sense, Schelling's anthropomorphisms mimic this structure of substitution, putting a human face on the primal yearning and addiction that that face also necessarily disavows. Zizek<sup>[\*]</sup> reads this crucial turn of thinking in Lacanian terms; as he says, the price of the subject's positing of itself out of the ground of obscure longing and in the form of the Word is "the irretrievable loss of the subject's self-identity" (47). After Lacan, Zizek characterizes this structure of identification and loss as "symbolic castration," a term that should remind us not only of the self-inflicted fate that Schelling conveniently attributes to the members of the cult of Geist, but also that thinking of loss in terms of "castration" — "symbolic" or not — may not be entirely appropriate given the sexual complexity of Schelling's primal scene. Perhaps Derrida is more useful to us here, especially the work of the last decade that reflects so movingly on the trace-structure as a form of "grieving" that is older than the subject. I have said that for Schelling mourning and melancholia do not wait for death; they are at work in life, and as life; in talking this way throughout this paper, I in fact recall Derrida's argument that the "subject" — among all other philosophemes — is a "bereaved memory" of a radical other that was never punctually present, a commemorative figure for a nullity that "will never allow itself to be reanimated in the interiority of consciousness" (*Memoires* 65). What is other and radically absent resists the closure of our memory, exposing it to a resistance that was there, as it were, from the start, indeed, as the start of the subject. It cannot be remembered; yet it cannot not be remembered, and it is in the midst of this curious aporia that Derrida situates a bereavement that is neither entirely mournful nor melancholic, a process by which "we people the 'present'," as he says, "with figures of death" (*Memoires* 59). Derrida: "The self appears to itself [Schelling: "it becomes an other"] only in this bereaved allegory, in this hallucinatory prosopopeia — and even before the death of the other actually happens, as we say, in `reality'" (*Memoires* 28-9). Perhaps this is the other-scene of Schelling's anthropomorphisms, in excess of their role as phenomenological markers designed to relocate the philosophical subject in lived experience; beyond the absent body, as it were, they register a more original "materiality" and answer to a more fundamental obligation.
15. But this is another paper, and one that risks disavowing the body that I am claiming Schelling ambivalently recalls. Quickly by way of concluding, I'd like to suggest that Schelling's notion of a primal longing raises the possibility of an alternative modelling of desire, one that plays out as

"feminine" to the "masculine" forms of longing and loss that structure desire in a line connecting Hegel to Lacan. As Judith Butler argues, in this dominant lineage, desire is typically engendered as masculine, and figured as the pursuit of mastery through the appropriation, consumption, and negation of "what is different or unassimilable in the Other" (377, 379). For Schelling's purposes, the Phrygian priests of modern European philosophy embody the spiritualizing violence and recursive loop of this desire, desire that even puts the resistant negativity of the body to efficient good work by libidinally investing its very disavowal, that is, by secretly deriving pleasure out of the ascetic renunciation of pleasure. Primal longing, on the other hand, promises a form of desire that refuses to absorb and to reinvest loss in the manner of the philosophers of spirit. As an unresolved remainder, it is a negativity that will not be economized by the engine of the dialectic. In Kristeva's psychoanalytic terms, it is a loss that is always already introjected rather than incorporated, hived or encrypted "inside" embodied creatures where it is magically preserved and denied. In Schelling's language, longing is the indeterminately locatable dark matter that is neither wholly inside nor outside God, and whose uncertain agency silently unsettles the distinctions—masculine/feminine, body/spirit, mourning/melancholia—upon which the intelligibility and the ideological investments of the thetic world rest. It is the abjected waste and interiorized Other that God must interminably put behind himself, the embarrassing "caput mortuum" (*Of Human Freedom* 89), invested with powers of horror, that marks a certain structural in-efficiency within the dialectic. Lacking the possibility of words, this unused and unusable negativity nevertheless makes itself felt in Schelling's text—apprehended rather than comprehended—as the residue of an affect, as melancholy. A burning fire shut up in the bones, this desire is finally a figure for the Law's anxiety and in-efficacy. Melancholy is the unspoken sign both of the Law's incapacity to bring all of the depths into light and sense, and of its inability to give up that Apollonian desire for mastery.

16. Schelling ultimately flinches from the most radical implications of his own anthropomorphisms, so that the alternative genealogy of desire to which I have so briefly referred here functions like a Kristevan genotext within the phenotext of the Freedom essay. In returning idealism to the question of embodiment, Schelling unavoidably confronts the concomitant question of sexual difference; but he also holds the question away, and economizes it to the degree that his argument is itself complexly interpellated into the patriarchal structures of the Symbolic order. In that sense, the Freedom essay is emotionally radical but philosophically conservative about the nature of negativity; it is, in other words, simultaneously a "work of mourning and [a] work about mourning" (Derrida, *Memoires* 115). Recent readings of Schelling have increasingly emphasized the continuities between his critique of idealism and the dispersion of the subject in post-structuralism. But the promise of an alternative genealogy of desire rooted in a phenomenology of the body might remind us that the disembodied ultra-textualism that is sometimes identified with recent theory may itself register a melancholic disavowal of that very genealogy.

#### Works Cited

<sup>1</sup> German references are from the *Sämmtliche Werke*; parenthetical references for citations in which the German is included list page(s) for the English translation first, and follow this with volume and page number(s) for the corresponding text from the *Sämmtliche Werke*. Although for the most part I have used Gutmann's translation of Schelling's *Philosophical Investigations into the Nature of Human Freedom* (entitled *Of Human Freedom*), I have in some cases adopted elements from two other sources where Gutmann's translation proves inadequate: Priscilla Hayden-Roy's more recent translation for *The German Library* and selected passages translated by David Farrell Krell in "Crisis."

<sup>2</sup> I recall here Foucault's distinction between "language" and "discourse" outlined in *The Order of Things* (43).

<sup>3</sup> Schelling's remarks come from an unpublished essay of 1812, cited by Krell (31 n.6).

<sup>4</sup> Krell: "At the outset I shall leave in suspense the curious fact that precisely when the (masculine) modern philosopher ignores (feminine) nature he sacrifices his own (masculine) nature" (18).

<sup>5</sup> But aren't most bees "sexless," i.e. infertile workers (that are chromosomally female)? "*Geschlecht*" here hovers indeterminately between connotations of fecundity, productivity, and sex. On the one hand, Schelling's slur follows logically from his masculinist identification of sexlessness with femininity: the infertile thinkers are for him also "womanly." On the other hand, his figure of the fecund hive of the university is dreamily illogical, since it requires him to masculinize (and "fertilize"?) a communal space that is in fact mostly inhabited by infertile ("*geschlechtlose*") female workers whose management of the male drones (the fertile bees) is the chief source of its radically cooperative sociality. Schelling can only unsex his colleagues at Jena by sexing the creatures to whom his colleagues are held up and found wanting, sterile. See also note 6.

<sup>6</sup> Schelling:

Whatever cannot be incorporated into this active, living whole [i.e., the ideal university] is dead matter to be eliminated sooner or later--such is the law of all living organisms. The fact is, there are too many sexless bees in the hive of the sciences, and since they cannot be productive, they merely keep reproducing their own spiritual barrenness in the form of inorganic excretions. (*On University Studies* 11; 5: 217)

A certain continuity joins these polemically cutting remarks to the later essay on freedom, notably i) the conspicuously sexualized and corporealized figuration of philosophical labour, and ii) the thought that life means not only reproduction but also excretion. Yet the freedom essay returns to these tropes of fertility and waste with a difference. In the 1809 text sexlessness is not the threatening symptom of thinking that refuses to conform to the totalizing law of the living organism (i.e., the law that treats resistant negativity as death to the university's imagined life) but the very mark of a conforming to ideals of totality and totalization that has deadened the mind of Europe; and, as we shall see, excreted waste and the *caput mortuum* are not so much terms for what stands over and *against* life (i.e., "inorganic"), as the irreducible remainder that quickens life from within and that materially remembers--as the by-product of life's interminable work with non-life--the ways in which the organic and the inorganic are folded one into the other.

"Sexless bees" appear again as a figure in *Philosophy and Religion* (1804): "For above all Germans are prone to enthusiasm, resembling sexless bees, though only therein, since they industriously seek to carry away and rework that which blossoms and is produced independently of them" (cited by Gutmann, *Of Human Freedom* 100 n335).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, my discussion of Schelling's importance for Marion's critique in "God Without Ground: Schelling, Marion."

<sup>8</sup> Schelling calls for a philosophy of nature that includes God's nature (or more precisely the "nature" that is where God is) thus: "Since nothing is prior to or outside of God, he must have the ground of his existence within himself. All philosophies say this, but they speak of this ground as of a mere concept, without making it something real and actual. This ground of his existence which God has within himself is not God viewed absolutely, i.e., in so far as he exists; for it is only the ground of his existence, it is *nature*--in God, a being which, thought inseparable from him, still is distinguished from him" (*PI* 32).

<sup>9</sup> It may be possible, then, to read the essay on freedom in a way that Krell suggests with respect to the later *Ages of the World*: "I believe that it would also be possible to show [ . . . ] that Schelling's *Weltalter* sketches lead him beyond the merely abstract assertion of God's embodiment (which is something altogether different from orthodox phallic Incarnation) to the question of the essential bisexuality of divinity" (31 n6).

<sup>10</sup> For useful discussions of Marx's insight into this problem and into the "philosophy of life" (that I am suggesting he inherits and adapts from Schelling), see Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (especially 187) and Warminski.

<sup>11</sup> The ways in which this *die Hemmung* anticipates cognate figures of denegation in Freud would take up another paper. But see Krell's extremely suggestive remarks on the subject in *Contagion: Sexuality, Disease, and Death in German Idealism and Romanticism* [90-99].

<sup>12</sup> For a much more developed discussion of the figure of addiction in Schelling, see my "Heidegger's Craving: Being-on-Schelling."

\* Technical note:  is the proper spelling here, achieved in this note by use of an image. Hypertext Markup Language does not currently support the "z" character in its character entity set.

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