

Fanaticism and Production: On Schelling's Philosophy of Indifference

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Schelling's work in the period leading up to and including the philosophy of identity, that is to say from his first published writings in 1794 to the essay on freedom of 1809, is deployed in a conceptual space determined by four critical instances: the question of the organism as presented in Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, the debate on Spinozism which traversed and polemically polarized post-Kantian philosophy, Fichte's doctrine of the primacy of practical reason, and the anti-mechanistic investigation of the natural sciences. The often experimental appearance of the writings from this period is symptomatic of the tensions arising out of the conflicting demands imposed by these lines of questioning, often leading Schelling to abrupt redefinitions, partial overhauls and implicit disavowals. Within this often labyrinthine work-in-progress certain fundamental tendencies can nonetheless be delineated, as can certain moments of singular invention which show Schelling incisively displacing the very terms in which the post-Kantian debates had hitherto been posed. Between the *Wissenschaftslehre* and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Schelling's philosophy of nature and his system of identity briefly indicated the possibility of a destitution of the metaphysics of subjectivity and the constitution, through the "immanentistic affirmation of the infinite",¹ of a philosophy capable of inquiring into the impersonal being of production, genesis and individuation.

Alain Badiou has remarked, with reference to Deleuze, that all great philosophers erect the apparatus of categorial oppositions only to determine a point of subtraction, which then comes to re-absorb the ends of the evanescent dichotomy.² If this is so, then we could ironically affirm of Schelling that he is the greatest of them all, insofar as it was he whom, with the concept of (point of) indifference, gave the highest role to the operation alluded to by Badiou.³ It was this that allowed him to undermine

¹ G. Semerari, *Introduzione a Schelling* (Laterza, 3rd edn, 1996), p. 83.

² A. Badiou, 'De la Vie comme nom de l'Être', in É. Alliez et al., eds, *Gilles Deleuze, Immanence et Vie* (Paris: PUF, 1998), p.27.

³ For a provocative characterization of Deleuze's univocal ontology as a philosophy of indifference see F. Botturi, 'Filosofia della in-differenza. Univocità e nichilismo in G.

the constraints of a discussion hampered by the representational dualism of subject and object, and to draw out possibilities latent in the post-Kantian field that had been stifled by the insistence on the centrality of both subjectivity and faith, the connivance of which Schelling denounced in his 1805 Aphorisms (§ 53). It is from the concept of indifference, and from the way it comes to determine Schelling's appropriation of the thematic of the Absolute, that one must start in order to grasp the shift it induces from the Kantian separation of practical and theoretical philosophy, of a morally founded theism and teleology on the one hand and a transcendently founded mechanistic natural science on the other, to an interpenetration of physics and ethics which testifies to Schelling's constant engagement with Spinozism, an engagement which resonates in the following motto: *Return to Physics and recognize yourselves in the Eternal*.⁴

It is by now widely recognized that Spinoza's figure has played a vital role in the contemporary resurgence of a certain transcendental, and one might even want to say, *an-historical* materialism. The Spinozist event, as assumed by Althusser, Balibar, Deleuze, Macherey, and Negri functioned as an operator, indissociably intra- and extra-philosophical, in a sustained strategy aimed at undermining a certain theological turn, both in the sense of a political *and* of a negative theology, that was but the intimate obverse of the postmodern neutralization of metaphysics. Spinoza's intercessive function, that is to say his role both as event *and* operator - productive *and* polemical - did not however make its first appearance only in the context of the so-called *pensée-68*. Testifying to the resistance opposed by this very an-historical materialism to any attempts at historical reduction, Spinozism had made a violent irruption in the last quarter of the 18th century into a philosophical context which had come to be hegemonized by Kant's transcendental philosophy, especially insofar as the latter both supported and was supported by a tenuous political and philosophical pact with the forces and institutions of religion. Occurring while the Kantian foundations were still fresh, and I am thinking particularly of the interventions of Lessing and Herder - who actually forced Kant into that most bewildering of compromise formations that came to be crystallized in the concept of organized beings as presented in § 65 of the *Critique of Judgement* - this irruption was actually prepared, in a fashion which can't but strike us in its humour, by the compulsive ritual of exorcism which German philosophy had submitted itself to with regard to Spinozism. So as

Deleuze' *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica* 78-79 (1986), 4/5.

⁴ Quoted in Semerari, p.73.

to grasp fully the stakes implicit in what came to be Schelling's appropriation of Spinozism, I will here quote at length from F. Beiser's indispensable account of both the Pantheism controversy - in whose wake Schelling came to read Spinoza - and of the intellectual climate which preceded it:

Until the publication of Jacobi's *Briefe über die Lehre von Spinoza* in 1785, Spinoza was a notorious figure in Germany. For more than a century the academic and ecclesiastical establishment had treated him "like a dead dog" as Lessing later put it. The *Ethica* was published in Germany in 1677, and the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* in 1670 (though it appeared anonymously, Spinoza was known to be the author). Until the middle of the eighteenth century it was de rigueur for every professor and cleric to prove his orthodoxy before taking office; and proving one's orthodoxy demanded denouncing Spinoza as a heretic. Since attacks on Spinoza became a virtual ritual, there was an abundance of defamatory and polemical tracts against him. Indeed, by 1710 so many professors and clerics had attacked Spinoza that there was a *Catalogus scriptorum Anti-spinozanorum* in Leipzig. And in 1759 Trinius counted, probably too modestly, 129 enemies of Spinoza in his *Freydenkerlexicon*. Such was Spinoza's reputation that he was often identified with Satan himself. Spinoza was seen as not only one form of atheism, but as the worst form. Thus Spinoza was dubbed the 'Euclides atheisticus', the 'principis atheorum'.⁵

To this should be added the immediately political nature of German Spinozism; as Beiser himself puts it, "Spinoza represented the extreme left wing in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century religious and political conviction".⁶ And N. Merker, paraphrasing Edelmann, one of the first German Spinozists, writes: "[the affirmation of Spinozism] was a strategic weapon used to incriminate feudal social oppression by striking historical Christianity [understood] as the ideological cover of that very oppression".⁷ There were reasons then why this "dead dog", which

⁵ F. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 48.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁷ N. Merker, *Le origini della logica hegeliana* (Milano, 1961), p. 387. Quoted in Semerari, p. 21.

Lessing spoke of, had to be put on the rack. Hegel himself in a letter to Schelling from 1795, will write of the “storm that is gathering above the heads of the oppressors and gods of the earth”.⁸ It is in the same year, on 4th February to be exact, that Schelling, in a letter of response to Hegel - a letter which contains *in nuce* many of the themes that will preoccupy Schelling in the period up to the essay on freedom - assumes his own fidelity to the event of Spinoza. In a similar tone of wonder and excitement as is to be found in Nietzsche’s letter on Spinoza to Overbeck in 1881 (30th of July) which, let us remember, begins with the exclamations: “I am amazed, delighted! I have a precursor, and what a precursor!”,⁹ Schelling announces: “I have become a Spinozist!”.¹⁰ Like Nietzsche, Schelling follows the remark by tempering it, in his case by presenting his as an inverted Spinozism, a Fichtean appropriation of the concept of the absolute he had found in the *Ethics*. As we shall see, this Fichtean mediation will itself be undone, opening the way for what is perhaps the first true understanding of the singularity of Spinoza’s thought. For the time being, however, it suffices to note, keeping present to mind the political significance of Spinozism alluded to above, that the Schellingian concept of the Absolute, even as it is found in the letter, which is to say in an embryonic form, is entirely aimed at the destitution of the transcendence of a moral God as it had been legitimated by Kant and appropriated, dogmatically but under the hypocritical veil of critique, by the Tübingen theologians whom Hegel and Schelling were both itching to dethrone. Against the dry partition of a mechanistic *theoretical* philosophy and a theistic *practical* philosophy, terms he continued to use while nonetheless avowing his desire to compose an *Ethics* in the Spinozian spirit, Schelling seemed to be proposing an intimate link between Physics and Ethics, in that ontological turn which has consistently qualified the most interesting interrogations of the Kantian system. The consequences were radical. In

⁸ J. Hoffmeister, ed., *Briefe von und an Hegel*, Vol. 1 (Hamburg, 1952), p. 15. Quoted in Semerari, p. 30.

⁹ In *Spinoza: Un philosophe pour notre temps - Magazine Littéraire* 378 (Nov. 1998), p. 44.

¹⁰ Hoffmeister, p. 22. Quoted in G. Semerari’s introduction to F. W. J. Schelling, *Lettere filosofiche su dommaticismo e criticismo* [*Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kriticismus*] (Laterza, 1958, new edn, 1995), p. xvi. All references to this text will be given in brackets with the number of the letter. German edition in F. W. J. Schelling, *Werke* Vol. 1 (Stuttgart and Augsburg: Cotta, 1856) pp. 281-341. English edition in F. W. J. Schelling, *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge* (Associated University Presses, 1980), pp. 151-218.

the same letter to Hegel, he wrote the following:

There is no personal God, and our supreme effort lies in the destruction of our personality, the passage into the absolute sphere of being.

The lines which follow allude to the distinction Schelling was trying to draw - given the shared repudiation and disdain for *personality* as such, be it human or divine¹¹ - between his stance and that of Spinoza, a distinction which would serve as the object of the *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* (1795-1796):

but this passage is not eternally possible - therefore practical approximation to the Absolute - and therefore immortality.¹²

The question of ethics was thus predicated upon an interrogation of the ontological relation obtaining between finite and infinite being. In the *Philosophical Letters* this Spinozistic scheme was to be inverted and displaced through the *theoretical* undecidability between the critical (Kantian-Fichtean) and the dogmatist (Spinozist) positions and the necessity of what Schelling referred to as an “*anticipation* by practical decision”.¹³

The *Philosophical Letters* begin precisely with the attack on the idea of a moral god, seen by Schelling as an illegitimate appropriation of the theism supported by Kant in the third Critique. This moral god, argues Schelling in sympathy with the appendix to Book I of the *Ethics*, is merely an ontologization of a need pertaining to the sphere of *personality*. Grasping the properly *tragic* character of the Kantian system, in its exposition of the separated status of subjectivity, of its non-coincidence with the Absolute, Schelling violently demeans those of its supposed

¹¹ In his introduction to the Italian edition of Schelling's *Bruno* Aldo Valori reads this question of personality as providing the defining trait for a certain pantheism, “which is finally nothing other than the *exclusion, from the universe, of a personal god*”. F. W. J. Schelling, *Bruno o il Divino e il Naturale Principio delle Cose* (Torino: Fratelli Bocca Editori, 1908), p. vii. In terms of the Schelling-Deleuze ‘axis’ it might be of interest to note that Valori claims a certain affinity between Schelling's conception of the Absolute and the sociological work of Gabriel Tarde, which is of course of considerable importance to the Deleuzian project (p. xii).

¹² Hoffmeister, p. 22.

¹³ F. W. J. Schelling, *Lettere ...*, p. 45.

interpreters who sublimate their need for *security*, for a morality having its foundation in a transcendent *personal* god, into the ontological hypostasis thereof. This is what he refers to as the “system of weak reason” (Letter II) writing to its fictional supporter, the interlocutor of the *Letters*, that a mere “breath of dogmatism [i.e. of Spinozism] would overthrow your house of cards”. This weak reason is such precisely insofar as it seeks to cover over the truly *practical* character of the idea of god within the critical system. God, writes Schelling, is for a true critique “not an object of *truth*, but only an object of *action*” (Letter I). The philosophical demand born of critique, “necessarily leads me beyond all the limits of *knowledge*, in a region where I do not *find* an already secured ground, but must *produce* it myself, in order to remain firmly on my feet” (Letter VI). To assume this “primacy of the practical” is the aim of the *Philosophical Letters* in their entirety.¹⁴ It is also the perspective from which the attack on Spinozism - from a clearly Fichtean stance - will be made. To understand the terms in which the confrontation between Fichte and Spinoza is posed, as well as the manner in which these very terms will come to lose their relevance to the Schelling of the Identity philosophy, it is first necessary to grasp the interpretation of Kant which sustains Schelling’s first approach to the question of the Absolute. This interpretation turns around the question of synthesis. The following is the key passage with regards to the relationship obtaining in Schelling’s early philosophy between the Kantian problem of synthesis, the Spinozist concept of the Absolute, and the dualism of One and Multiple, Subject and Object which sustains the interpenetration of these two themes:

The *Critique of Pure Reason* effectively began the [philosophical] struggle moving from that one point alone [...] the *originary* contrast within the human *spirit* [...] the exiting from the Absolute. *How do we arrive at formulating synthetic judgements in general ?* asks Kant right away at the beginning of his work, and this question lies at the bottom of his whole philosophy, as a problem which properly touches the point that all philosophies have in common. Differently expressed, indeed, the question is as follows: *how is it possible in general that I exit the Absolute and go to its opposite ?* *Synthesis*, in fact, is born in general only because of the opposition of the multiple to the originary unity. Without [this] contrast no

¹⁴ M. Vetö, ‘La Primauté du Pratique selon Schelling’ in *Études sur l’Idéalisme Allemand* (L’Harmattan, 1998), pp. 251-84.

synthesis is necessary; where there is no multiple there is only unity; but if the multiple were originary neither could there be any synthesis. (Letter III)

The Kantian synthesis is thus conceived of as the symptom of a fall, a rent in the unity of being. While the *absence* of (ontological) transition from the infinite (One) to the finite (Multiple) can be theoretically accounted for, and it so by Spinoza, insofar as his is “the only solution possible” to what Schelling regards as the “demand of each and every philosophy” (Letter VII), the inverse transition, which is theoretically undecidable, is shown up in all its problematic character by Kantian synthesis. To return to the Absolute, to dissolve both personality and the finitude of the multiple, effectively signifies the destruction of the very conditions for the *proprium* of consciousness, that is, synthesis itself. In Schelling’s own terminology: every synthesis strives to become pure thesis. To what Schelling reads as the demand of every ethics, *that one may pass from the finite to the infinite*, correspond two possible paths, critical and dogmatist. While the latter seems to demand the dissolution of the (finite) subject into the (infinite) of objectivity - the ontological One-All - the former’s answer consists in the *infinite approximation*, as Schelling had written to Hegel, to the Absolute, in the asymptotic striving towards an effectively *impossible* coincidence of finite subject with Absolute subjectivity. It was this position of subjectivity which allowed Schelling to regard critique as the only bulwark against the ethical nihilism of the Spinozist dogmatism, whose one true ethical command he considered to be “Annihilate yourself!” (Letter VII). Though dubbing this philosophy characterized by its thirst for annihilation “fanatical [*schwärmerischen*]” (Letter VIII),¹⁵ Schelling’s sympathy for the aims of Spinozism, from his letters to Hegel onwards, was there for all to see. With it he regarded himself as sharing

¹⁵ It would be of some interest to compare Schelling’s treatment of “fanaticism” with the one presented by Kant in the *Critique of Judgment* [Ak. 275] where it is juxtaposed to the sublime (the *negative* “exhibition of the infinite”) as its illegitimate *positive* counterpart, “the *delusion* [*Wahn* ... or] *mania* [*Wahnwitz* ...] of wanting to SEE beyond the bounds of all sensibility”. For the ‘romantic’ reception of fanaticism see Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria* (London: Everyman, 1997), p. 19: “Cold and phlegmatic in their own nature, like damp hay, they heat and inflame by co-acervation, or like bees they become restless and irritable through the increased temperature of collected multitudes. Hence the German word for fanaticism (such at least was its original import) is derived from the swarming of bees, namely, Schwärmen, Schwärmerey.”

that single-minded pursuit of *intellectual intuition*,¹⁶ that apprehension, impossible for Kant, of reciprocity, to the point of reciprocal dissolution, of subject and object, of intuitant and intuited, that vision from the point of view of *pure production* which was going to define philosophical practice in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*.¹⁷ At this point however, Schelling, holding on firmly to the postulate of a fall from the Absolute, could only read Spinoza in terms of a type of intellectual intuition which strove to undo the finite subject into an objective infinite. His criticism of the Spinozist position on these grounds, while articulated in a rather illuminating phenomenology of the contradictions which inhere to a will-to-nothingness - which always imagines itself as rejoicing from its own non-being, still suffers from the Enlightenment appropriation of Spinoza as the thinker of mechanical necessity, almost as if he were the expression of a truncated Kantianism, a Kantianism without-a-subject calling out for the remedies of faith. Whereas Schelling's most interesting engagement with Spinoza will come six years after the *Letters*, in the Supplement to the Introduction of the *Ideen*, the remarks contained therein regarding the *subjectivist* approximation to the Absolute are of considerable importance, especially insofar as they reveal a Schelling thinking subjectivity *on the verge of annihilation*.

What in fact saves the critical approximation to the Absolute from Spinoza's supposed "fanaticism [*Schwärmerei*]" is its recurrent *limitation* in the moment of *reflection*. Reflection comes to suspend an intellectual intuition, which, if untrammelled, would simply mean that, writes Schelling, "I would cease living" (Letter VIII). Schelling's lucidity with respect to the "humanist" critics of Spinozism lies in the recognition of a properly *fanatical* core at the heart of all true philosophy, together with the paradoxical *suspension* of all ethics on the verge of an annihilation, a passage to non-being, which is nothing other than the moment of Absolute being itself. He can thus write:

Where all resistance ceases, is infinite extension. But the intension of our consciousness is in inverse proportion to the extension of our

¹⁶ "Intellectual intuition is the absolute principle of all philosophy, the one real ground and firm standpoint in both Fichte as well as in Schelling." G. W. F. Hegel, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy* (SUNY, 1977), p. 173.

¹⁷ In other words, "there is nothing here to distinguish the designating intensity from the designated intensity". P. Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle* (Chicago, 1997), p. 64.

being. The highest moment of our being is for us the passage to non-being, the moment of *annihilation*. Here, in the moment of absolute being, the highest passivity is united with the most unlimited activity. Unlimited activity is - absolute repose, Epicureanism accomplished.¹⁸ (Letter VIII)

While remaining Fichtean in this opposition of being and consciousness, and in his understanding of the relationship between (pure) activity and limitation, Schelling's originality lies precisely in realizing the intimate kinship between the critical and dogmatic approaches to the Absolute. He exhibits the will-to-nothingness harboured by both as they attempt, through the practice of intellectual intuition, to reach the "point of view" of absolute production and the immediacy of experience. The "more this experience is immediate, the closer it is to disappearing" writes Schelling in Letter VIII. Schelling's conclusion is of great insight, insofar as his presentation of the ethical *persona* is deeply paradoxical. For while the beatitude of being at one with the infinite being is commensurate with an "infinite boredom" (Letter VIII), if not with death itself, the commandment which closes the *Letters* is by no means alien to the dangers of dogmatism, rather, it gains its urgency precisely from their almost indiscernible difference between it and the critical approach supported by Schelling. He writes:

My destiny within critique is - *strive to be immutably yourself, strive towards unconditioned freedom and unlimited activity* .
Be! Here lies the highest demand of critique. (Letter IX)

What first appears to be an ethics of Promethean autonomy reveals itself, upon closer inspection, as altogether something else. In the beginning of the same letter, Schelling had stated "I cannot suppress the object" - the aim of the subjectivist or critical approximation to the Absolute - "without thereby removing the subject, *as such*, that is to say, any personality whatsoever" (Letter IX). In the light of this statement we can draw out the following paradoxical conclusion: *to be immutably oneself is to infinitely strive after the destruction of one's own personality*. What precisely

¹⁸ This formulation returns, six years later (3rd October, 1801), in a letter to Fichte which seeks to explain the concept of *absolute indifference*. J. G. Fichte - F. W. J. Schelling [ed. by F. Moiso], *Carteggio e Scritti Polemici* (Napoli: Prismi, 1986), p. 133.

separates this ethics of critique from the one of dogmatism is its being based on a *tendency* and not an immediate act of annihilation. For the ethical or practical approach to the Absolute not to turn both contradictory and nihilistic, a minimal difference with regard to Absolute Identity is needed. For Schelling this lies in the minimal resistance of the consciousness- and personality-inducing object with regard to the *impersonal* being of the self's (or Absolute Subject's) unlimited activity. To import two terms from the work of Deleuze-Guattari, what we have here is the distinction between an absolute deterritorialization as *line of abolition* and a *becoming-zero*¹⁹ as experience and construction of a minimal difference - which for Deleuze-Guattari finds one of its highest expressions in monochromatic painting when it builds "the percept as a minimum before emptiness".²⁰ What does not allow Schelling himself to explore in further detail the space between a nihilistic dogmatism and a critique read through the notion of an impersonal, active self - and which comes to be expressed in the seemingly formalistic affirmation of *pure* production, *pure* activity - is namely the either/or, *internal to Kantianism itself*, between the differentiation of subject and object, one and multiple, and the absolute indifferenciation of a *pure* activity which cannot bear any determination whatsoever. This minimal difference which does not immediately sink into the boredom of infinite being cannot be truly thought unless there is a concept of difference and of determination which is not caught in the aforementioned dualisms. In ethical terms this then translates into the question: *how to think the dissolution of personality beyond the contradictions of ethical nihilism* ? The situation of man, of the ethical *persona* as presented in the *Philosophical Letters*, is defined precisely as

¹⁹ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la Philosophie?* (Paris: Minuit, 1991), p. 160.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 171. In a recent seminar at Paris VIII (10/02/1999), Alain Badiou, in an attempt at a synoptic view of philosophy in the 20th century has forwarded the distinction between a philosophy marked by its *passion du réel* and one which aims at the construction or *mise-en-scène* of a minimal difference. While the former, according to a severe internal logic cannot but be caught in an infinite work of purification [*épuration*], the latter, in treating the real as a stage and not as an identity to be reached (inevitably, albeit paradoxically, by annihilation), shifts the focus to the problem of eventality and construction, to those moments which are *subtracted* both from re-presentation and from the homogeneity of a supposed identity. The ethico-political significance of this distinction between *minimal difference* and *maximal destruction* is, as Badiou stresses, of the utmost importance. Its acute resonance with themes present in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* , testifies again to Badiou's sustained engagement with Deleuze.

lying in that fine threshold between an intellectual intuition whose coherent result is death and a living personality caught in the sterile dualism of subject and object. Like in the parallel distinction established by Deleuze-Guattari in *What is Philosophy?* between chaos and *doxa*, man struggles out of the constraints of personality but must struggle not to succumb (in)to the Absolute. The sphere of the ethical, facing towards the Absolute, which is to say, *on the verge of annihilation*, must therefore turn around the problem of limitation, in Schelling's Fichtean terminology, around the construction of a minimal difference, the retention of a minimal degree of territorialization, in Deleuze-Guattari's terminology.

The constitution of a philosophy of nature, beginning in 1797 with the *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, was going to have a significant effect in displacing the terms of the ethical and ontological questioning of the *Philosophical Letters*, as well as serving to cut the ties which bound Schelling to Fichte's project. The concept which was going to operate this shift was that of (*absolute*) *indifference*, also referred to as *Subject-Object*. The emergence of the concept of indifference as a defining element of Schelling's thought was itself a result of the intense research undertaken by Schelling into the most recent developments in the natural science. The Dutch physicist Anton Brugmans, in the course of experiments on magnetism, whose results were published in 1765, had observed that a metal rod to which a magnet was applied possessed *points of indifference* which when touched by the magnet would not result in a change of polarity at either end. From these findings Brugmans drew the conclusion that *mutually implying polarities*, manifesting themselves as relationships of force, were constantly at work, though prey to a neutralization or suspension in *points of indifference*.²¹ Applied to the problem of subject/object dualism, which, as we saw, had to a certain degree hampered the otherwise radical approach of the *Philosophical Letters*, the concept of indifference, at first, allowed Schelling to propose a continuum between the two terms of the dichotomy. This opened the way for a dual, genetic approach to the constitution of both empirically existing subjects and objects as relative differentiations upon a *line* from which both terms could be abstracted as constructive principles but never simply defined in their isolation. In a heterodox appropriation of the Spinozist question of

²¹ See F. Moiso, *Identità, Differenze, Indifferenza in Schelling* in V. Melchiorre, ed., *La differenza e l'origine* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1987), p. 100ff. Reprinted as Chapter 3 of F. Moiso, *Vita, Natura, Libertà. Schelling (1795-1809)* (Milano: Mursia, 1990).

parallelism, Schelling could then present his Philosophy of Nature and his System of Transcendental Idealism as complementary approaches to an Absolute conceived of as the indifference between a doctrine which sought to “make the *objective* primary, and to derive the subjective from it” and one which moved from “the opposite direction, that of *proceeding from the subjective, as primary and absolute and having the objective arise from this*”.²² The brilliant insight arising from this lay in the postulate that both the science of the object (nature-philosophy) and the science of the subject (transcendental philosophy), which were after all to be considered as *genetic fictions*, contained within themselves a *point of indifference*, which could also come to be understood as a threshold beyond which each would convert into its counterpart. What is perhaps most important in this dual work is not the *a priori* deductions of both fields, which, while mustering an immense amount of material and of philosophical inventiveness inevitably appear forced in their schematic presentation of a “history of self-consciousness”²³ and a “history of the material becoming of nature”.²⁴ Rather, it is precisely in the investigation around the *points of indifference* which appear in both and which constitute that *field of impersonal production* which comes to traverse and undo subject-object dualism as the only “object” of philosophy, be it in its epistemological, ethical, or ontological reflections. In the *Darstellung* Schelling juxtaposes Fichte’s tarrying with reflection to his own philosophy which attempts to think “from the point of view of production”.²⁵ What this statement implies is thus the definitive abandonment of any project maintaining itself within the strictures of Kantian dualism, even in terms of thinking difference from an original *polarity* of subject-object, in favour of a thinking wholly concerned with thinking *from* indifference.

Before concerning ourselves with the effects of this momentous decision upon the structure and development of the Schellingian *corpus* (which admittedly may sometimes appear to us more in the guise of an *exquisite corpse*) and with the aporias that this very decision brings in its wake, namely due to the inability to fully think beyond representation, it might be useful to preface our discussion with some remarks on the transformations undergone by Schelling’s relationship with Spinoza.

²² F. W. J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism (1800)* (University Press of Virginia, 1978), p. 7. Hereafter abbreviated to *STI*.

²³ *STI* 49.

²⁴ F. Moiso, p. 103.

²⁵ Quoted in J. G. Fichte - F. W. J. Schelling, p. 143 n. 10.

In the 1803 Supplement to the Introduction of the *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* Schelling firmly establishes the opposition between Spinoza and Fichte, provoked by Fichte himself in the course of their troubled correspondence,²⁶ with a singular gesture which supports the claim that it is only *here*, eight years after his letter to Hegel, that Schelling has truly become a Spinozist. He writes:

Spinoza has lain unrecognized for over a hundred years. The view of his philosophy as a mere theory of objectivity did not allow the true absolute to be perceived in it. The definiteness with which he recognized subject-objectivity [= *indifference*, A.T.] as the necessary and eternal character of absoluteness shows the high destiny implicit in his philosophy, whose full development was reserved to a later age.²⁷

As a privileged heir to the event of indifference signalled by Spinoza's doctrine of parallelism, Schelling goes on to attack Fichte, whose philosophy has led to a moral de-ontologization of the Absolute which remains trapped in the frame of representation, in what he could have also referred to as *personality*, to use a term from the *Philosophical Letters*, of which this text constitutes a crucial though by no means simple inversion:

Fichte's philosophy was the first to restore validity to the universal form of subject-objectivity, as the one and all of philosophy; but the more it developed, the more it seemed to restrict that very identity, again as a special feature, to the subjective consciousness; yet as absolute and in itself, to make it the *object* of an endless *task*, an absolute *demand*, and in this way after extracting all substance from speculation, to abandon it as just empty froth, while proceeding, on the other hand, like Kantian theory, to reconnect absoluteness with the deepest subjectivity, through action and faith.²⁸

The destitution of all transcendence and consequently of all *personality* had been Schelling's first aim, ever since his early correspondence with Hegel and the attack on "weak reason" in the *Philosophical Letters*. This

²⁶ See Fichte's letter of 15th January 1802 in J. G. Fichte – F. W. J. Schelling, p. 150.

²⁷ F. W. J. Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* [1st edn 1797, 2nd edn 1803] (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 53-54. Hereafter abbreviated to *IPN*.

²⁸ *IPN* 54.

resurgence of faith, product *and* aim of the philosophies of reflection, could not be tolerated. Driving Schelling's philosophy of indifference was the recognition of the intimate link between the transcendence of an object to a subject postulated by the theoretical side of the philosophies of reflection, and the theological transcendence which their practical side infinitely strove towards. Heidegger, in his 1928 Lectures on Leibniz gave possibly the clearest exposition of this fundamental connivance between theology and epistemology:

[O]nce the epistemological conception of transcendence is granted, whether expressly or implicitly, then a being is posited against the subject, and it stands over against the latter. Among the beings posited opposite, however is something which towers above everything, the cause of all. It is thus both something over against [the subject] and something which transcends all conditioned beings over against [the subject]. The transcendent, in this double sense, is the Eminent, the being that surpasses and exceeds all experience. So, inquiry into the possible constitution of the transcendent in the epistemological sense is bound up with inquiry into the possibility of knowing the transcendent object in the philosophical sense. The latter inquiry, in fact, is, in a certain sense, the impulse for the former. [...] All theological metaphysics, but also all systematic theology, operates through the entanglement of both problems of transcendence.²⁹

By thinking indifference *as* production to be the only true "object" of philosophy, Schelling attempted to cut through this epochal entanglement, and, *a fortiori*, with those Kantian residues in his own thought which had distorted his use of Spinoza in the *Philosophical Letters*. As he wrote in a vicious, albeit apparently collected, manner to Fichte "you have been forced [...] to transfer [the Absolute] into the sphere of faith, of which, in my opinion, it can be no more a question in philosophy than it is in geometry".³⁰

Having wrested Spinoza from his critical slumber, it was nonetheless never a matter for Schelling of a simple return to Spinoza. It is in this light that we should understand his gnomic pronouncement in the Munich

²⁹ M. Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 162.

³⁰ [3rd October 1801] J. G. Fichte - F. W. J. Schelling, p. 134.

Lectures, “Spinoza’s philosophy [...] is, like Hebrew, a script without vowels”.³¹ Though explicit treatments of Spinoza are rare in this period of Schelling’s work, I believe we can legitimately turn to his Munich Lectures of 1833-34 to gather exactly what proved insufficient in Spinozism for a stance committed to investigating the “point of view of production” and for which the “A and Ω of all philosophy is freedom”.³²

If we try to think freedom in terms of the tasks allotted to philosophy already by the time of the *System of Transcendental Idealism* we soon realize that its definition is at a considerable remove from any consideration linking it to a primarily representing subject. Philosophy as “free construction”,³³ as a discipline whose very object is genesis, *suspends* itself, through what Schelling terms the “transcendental artifice”, in that production which, as will be clear from the theory of productive intuition, precedes any intelligence, any subjectivity whatsoever. It has been rightly said that Schelling’s transcendental philosophy is, primarily, a “retrieval of the unconscious”.³⁴ Insofar as consciousness is constituted, to a certain degree, by the foreclosure of *its* constructive aspect, philosophy, through its “artifice”, *repeats* the path from blind activity to self-consciousness, and, in Schelling’s words, “in becoming aware of the concept as an act, attains to the *concept of a concept*”.³⁵ Insofar as it distinguishes itself from common sense, and from its philosophical *symptom*, Kantianism,³⁶ this philosophy seeks to wrest the process of production from its objectal cage, the product. Be it concepts, objects, or representing subjects, the hypostases of production must not be thought as teleologically binding production itself. Production as *potentia* must *not* be “the name of a being-appropriated-for-the-end”.³⁷ Inversely, the product itself is to be conceived, *constructed*, “from the point of view of production”, as a provisional concretion of or upon the process of (free)

³¹ F. W. J. Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 69.

³² From a letter to Hegel. See n. 5.

³³ *STI* 29.

³⁴ Semerari, p. 53.

³⁵ *STI* 9.

³⁶ It can be argued that from Fichte to Hegel, “productive” alternatives to Kant’s static “constitution” of the transcendental (the terms are borrowed from H.-J. Krahl), have sought to interpret the role of the thing-in-itself within the realm of objectivity as arising out of the necessary illusions which characterize common sense. It is in this acceptation, as a moment immanent to common sense, that Kantianism can be referred to as its *symptom*. I thank Edoardo Luppari for discussions had around this issue.

³⁷ É. Alliez, *Les Temps Capitaux Vol. I.* (Paris: Cerf, 1991), p. 42.

genesis, as what Schelling terms a “productive product”.³⁸ Freedom as production must be understood, not as choice - which would imply a subjective position absent from a level bereft of all products as such - but as a *potentia* which is *not* pre-determined, *drawn out* by its actualizations.³⁹ The *self*, which is to be carefully distinguished from an *intelligence* or a *subject*, is this very production in the *STI*. Its two definitions, as *eternal becoming* and *producing without limit*, testify to Schelling’s monumental effort, even while still in Fichte’s wake, to think production beyond its Greek matrix: beyond transcendence construed either as the primacy of an effect or product or as the exteriority of form to matter.⁴⁰ Philosophy as a suspension-in-production is thus geared towards resisting the tyranny of the actual, as that which covers over the activity which gave rise to it and leads to these effects or illusions of transcendence which are engendered by the separation of subject and object. We are now ready to understand the retroactive significance of those passages in Schelling’s late lectures which refer to Spinoza’s substance as a “being (*das Seyende*) without potentiality”, “powerless being”, and his system as one of “complete quiescence”.⁴¹ The clue to this matter will come from one of Deleuze’s seminars, in the form of what may be an implicit avowal of an insufficiency of Spinoza which bears some interesting resemblances to Schelling’s own. Deleuze makes the following remark:

The necessity in Nature is that there will not be any relationships

³⁸ *STI* 38.

³⁹ On this question of *potentia* see Paolo Virno’s *Il Ricordo del Presente* (Bollati Borlinghieri, 1999) and G. Agamben’s *Bartleby o della Contingenza*, in G. Deleuze, G. Agamben. *Bartleby. La Formula della Creazione* (Quodlibet, 1993).

⁴⁰ For a insightful determination of the concepts of *poiesis* and *praxis* which can serve to illustrate the foreignness of Schelling’s thinking with regards to an Aristotelian (or a Marxist, or a Heideggerian) concept of production, see Ch. 8 [*Poiesis e Praxis*] in G. Agamben, *L’uomo senza contenuto* (Rizzoli, 1970; new edn Quodlibet, 1994). Schellingian production appears to us alien to the either-or between a *praxis* bound to the concepts of *actus* and *actualitas* [precisely insofar as it thinks *potentia*] and a *poiesis* bound to a Heideggerian acceptance of *aletheia* [insofar as Schellingian production is aimed at a destitution of transcendence it cannot abide by a concept which is defined by Aristotle as production whose end is *not* production itself]. See pp. 105-110 in *L’uomo senza contenuto*. On *praxis* and *poiesis* in Aristotle see also É. Alliez, p. 32.

⁴¹ F. W. J. Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 65-66.

which are not effectuated [*effectués*]. The entirety of the possible is necessary, which means that all relationships have been or will be effectuated. [...] Nature is the totality of effectuations of all possible, and therefore necessary, relationships. This is identity in Spinoza, the absolute identity of the possible and the necessary. (13.01.1981)

Now, if we turn to the Munich lectures, we can understand what is meant when Schelling, to support his critique, states that Spinoza's is a system in which "the cause has completely merged into the effect".⁴² For Schelling, in Spinoza's system of necessity a suspension in production, even an artificial one, is unthinkable. There is simply nothing which would allow one to abstract production from product, which would allow an unlimited activity as pure cause to hold itself suspended before its effects. The reasons further adduced by Schelling in this 1833 text to support his claims against Spinozism, show him instead retreating to the positions held before that momentous threshold in German Idealist appropriations of Spinoza, the Supplement to the *Ideen* referred to above. "The God of Spinoza", writes Schelling, "is still lost in substantiality and thereby immobility. For mobility (or possibility) is only in the subject. The subject of Spinoza is just object".⁴³ It is evident that, at this point, Schelling could no longer stand behind that fraught and tenuous, but nevertheless singular project of bringing together, through the indifferenciation of transcendental and natural-philosophy, the concepts of indifference and production into a philosophical endeavour truly beyond the legacy of Kantianism. To a certain degree the Schellingian project foundered precisely because of its radical character. In trying to think past the dichotomy of subject and object, Schelling found himself in a conceptual vacuum of sorts, unable to give due consistency to an inquiry which sought to break with the damning alternative between the articulation of subject and object on the one hand and the "night when all cows are black" on the other, as Hegel famously sniped at his former collaborator.

In Schelling's first formulation of indifference, in which the Fichtean notion of activity and limitation is filtered through the idea of a continuum between two reciprocal polarities, production remains, to a certain degree, harnessed by subject/object dualism. As we remarked above, it is precisely when concerned with the *points of indifference* within either regime,

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 69.

subjective or objective, that Schelling attains his greatest originality. Within the *STI*, engaged as it is with the history of self-consciousness, it is when dealing with the self as the unconscious “ground” of intelligence, and with its unlimited activity as “objective” that Schelling touches upon instances foreign to his Kantian heritage. Nevertheless, the play of activity and limitation, which as we saw functioned in the *Philosophical Letters* to draw the decisive boundary between critique and dogmatism, again binds Schelling to thinking the production of subject and object in common sense on the grounds of an “originary conflict” which cannot but be traced upon the product itself. Schelling can thus state the following:

[I]f there is a continual producing in the self, this is possible only in that the condition of all producing, that original conflict of opposing activities within the self, is reestablished *ad infinitum*.⁴⁴

Two things should be noted. (1) The self is still, to borrow a term from Merleau-Ponty, a “unity of transgression”,⁴⁵ a constant positing and transcending of boundaries, of which objects-as-products are merely temporary concretions. Though consistently more elaborate in scope, and focusing significantly on the unconscious as a *point of indifference*, the terms (i.e. the form given to limitation) remain those in which reflection was presented in the *Philosophical Letters* as holding the self back from the infinite boredom of the Absolute. (2) Production, conceived of as *in* the self, remains bound to its etymological roots, it is literally a *bringing-forth*. It is only due to this interiority, which jars nevertheless with the definition of the self as unlimited, blind activity, that Schelling can proceed to *unfold* the self from its originary conflict *as* originary identity and *deduce* the stages of a history of self-consciousness. Though adamant about separating philosophy from a doxa “for whom in all activity of the mind there is nowhere anything unconscious” and from its “ordinary moral bringing-forth,”⁴⁶ one cannot but see in this transcendental argument the *potentia* of production dragged by a teleology which forces it to account for the pseudo-reality of subject/object dualism in representation *as* common sense. Notwithstanding the claims made in the Introduction to the *STI* for a philosophical constructivism in which the product “exists at all

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 113.

⁴⁵ From *Notes de Travail* in M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le Visible et l’Invisible* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p. 254.

⁴⁶ *STI* 75.

only in being constructed” and the singular slogan regarding “the identity of being and producing”,⁴⁷ Schelling does not succeed, by thinking the *self* as the site of this identity, in sufficiently distinguishing the field of production from which intelligence emerges, like everything else “as [a] modification of an activity limited in various ways”,⁴⁸ from that subject which is but one of its products. The self cannot be the mere larva of a subject if, as Schelling proposes in the *General Note upon the First Epoch* we are to think “the identity of the dynamic and the transcendental”.⁴⁹ To put it in Deleuzian terms, at this stage production, suspended from its dependence on the teleology of actualization, remains immanent *to* - in this case to a self which is still by and large a striving towards subjectivity. Yet, as Schelling had written in the *Philosophical Letters* “I cannot suppress the object [= the product, A.T.] without thereby removing the subject, *as* such, that is to say, any personality whatsoever” (Letter IX). How then is one to think *impersonal* production?

We have already noted the persistence, throughout his apparently fragmentary itinerary, of certain themes first appearing in Schelling’s letter to Hegel of 1795, among these the primacy of freedom, the dissolution of personality and the question of Spinozism. In 1801, again in a letter, this time to Goethe, Schelling introduces a concept of great importance in the articulation of the philosophy of nature upon the problem of production: *metamorphosis*. There Schelling refers to the possibility of a pre-organic, chemical metamorphosis and boldly states that “everything is development, nothing enters matter from the outside”.⁵⁰ It should be no surprise that a philosophy which takes as its task “the suspension of dichotomy”⁵¹ should strive towards the destitution of what maybe defined as the very schema for dualism: hylomorphism. In his *Comparison of Schelling’s Principle of Philosophy with Fichte’s* Hegel recognizes this attack as one of the guiding traits of the philosophy of indifference, “if the matter, the object” he writes, “is itself a Subject-Object, then the separation of form and matter can drop out, and the system, like its principle, is no longer merely formal, but formal and material at the same time”.⁵² In one of the same series of supplements to the 1803 edition of the *Ideen* in which he had broken with all interpretations of Spinoza which

⁴⁷ STI 29.

⁴⁸ STI 32.

⁴⁹ STI 91.

⁵⁰ F. W. J. Schelling, *Briefe* (Bonn, 1962), pp. 240-41. Quoted in Semerari, p. 70.

⁵¹ G. W. F. Hegel, p. 155.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 159.

took him as a philosopher of the object and of mechanism, Schelling depicts philosophy as having almost never been able to think matter beyond hylomorphism, beyond transcendence:

The great difficulty of this inquiry might also be inferred from the very fact that, from the inception of philosophy up to the present day, in very different forms, admittedly, but always recognizably enough, matter, in by far the majority of so-called systems, has been assumed as a mere given, or postulated as a manifold, which has to be subordinated to the supreme unity, as an existing stuff, in order to comprehend the formed universe in terms of the action of the one upon the other.⁵³

Upon this question of matter, which in an anonymous poem of 1799 Schelling had termed the “unique truth [...] element of all thought, beginning and end of all knowledge”,⁵⁴ come to crystallize the issues regarding the articulation of indifference and production which we have been concerned with hitherto. With the passage from indifference as originary duality and conflict (which we may call its Fichtean stage, insofar as it is bound up with the question of limitation) to indifference understood in terms of potencies, production finally comes to be thought outside the reference to representation, in what can truly be referred to as an impersonal fashion. In the midst of the philosophy of identity, it seems almost as if the privilege still accorded to self-consciousness in the *STI* is reversed.⁵⁵ First Schelling states that “philosophy will no longer be able to exclude its eternal relationship with nature” (§ 28).⁵⁶ Then follows the most lapidary denial of the very foundations for the philosophies of subjectivity or reflection:

44. The *I think, I am*, after Descartes, is the fundamental error in all knowledge; thought is not my thought, being is not my being, for nothing is but of God and of the all. [...] 46. Reason is not a faculty,

⁵³ *IPN* 179.

⁵⁴ F. W. J. Schelling, *Confession de foi épicurienne de Heinz Widerporst*, in P. Lacoue-Labarthe & J.-L. Nancy, *L’Absolu Littéraire* (Paris: Seuil, 1978), p. 252.

⁵⁵ See *STI* 6, 16.

⁵⁶ Section numbers in Arabic numerals refer to *Aphorismen zur Einleitung in die Naturphilosophie* (1805) in F.W.J. Schelling, *S.W.* VII, pp. 140-197. Section numbers in Roman numerals refer to *Aphorismen über die Naturphilosophie* (1806) in *Ibid.*, pp. 198-244.

an instrument, it is not used; in a general sense, there isn't a reason which we would possess, but only a reason which possesses us.

A return to fanaticism? In his most sympathetic text Hegel had already warned Schelling, while trying to keep indifference tamed through the working of a mere skeleton of the dialectic, against that very fanaticism which “holds fast to this intuition of colourless light”, “where everything finite is drowned in the infinite”.⁵⁷ Schelling's answer in his 1805 *Aphorisms* was to quote Plato, defining the philosopher over against the crowd, as he who “keeps his eyes riveted on the divine”. As if in an imaginary dialogue we could complete this exchange with Hegel's reiteration of his hydrophobic perception of the Absolute in the *Phenomenology*, describing Schelling as “dipping the material into this placid element from the outside”⁵⁸ and perhaps with what sounds like a recognition of youthful failures in the Munich lectures, when Schelling remarks that “no one can hope to progress to the true and complete in philosophy who has not at least once in his life lost himself in the abyss of Spinozism”.⁵⁹

While in this abyss of Spinozism, nevertheless, Schelling confronted issues which have only recently, in the demise of the philosophies of representation, regained their urgency. He did so precisely insofar as, for a time, he did *not* think that, as Hegel remarked, “[p]hilosophy must give the separation into subject and object its due”.⁶⁰ The passage from the model of conflict to that of potency as regards the concept of indifference was a key factor in this momentary escape from Kantian and Fichtean dichotomies. In a rare reference to Schelling, Deleuze pinpointed *this* as the move from a still dualistically ordered differentiation to a differentiation by “derivation and potentialisation”.⁶¹

Within the so-called philosophy of identity, indifference, or the “absolute identity of subjective and objective” could no longer be thought either in terms of “synthesis” or “equilibrium” but only as a “total being-one” (§ 67). “[A]ny type of consideration where the *subject* subsists as subject”, wrote Schelling in the 1805 *Aphorisms*, was to be unequivocally denounced. Indifference was now to be thought in terms of a “uni-totality”

⁵⁷ G. W. F. Hegel, p. 156.

⁵⁸ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford, 1977), p. 9.

⁵⁹ F. W. J. Schelling, *On the History ...*, p. 66.

⁶⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *The Difference ...*, p. 186.

⁶¹ G. Deleuze, *Différence et Répétition* (Paris: PUF, 1968), p. 247.

(§ 60), in terms of a *Deus sive Natura* considered as “infinite position of the infinite positions of itself” (§ 83). Considering the fundamental error of metaphysics thereto to be the movement from things to God, or, in the terminology of the *STI* from products to production, and not vice versa, it is clear that Schelling could no longer apply the Fichtean concept of difference by limitation to account for the becoming of nature. Any *effect* of limitation was now to be thought of in terms of a logic immanent to production itself, the logic of potencies. Insofar as Schelling freed himself from the task of founding doxa in its latent Kantian structure, a task still present in the *STI*, production could be approached in terms of its intensive differentiation, its *metamorphic* character, and *not* as that originary conflict which, as can be seen from the *Philosophical Letters*, was still intimately bound to the Kantian problem of synthesis. Detaching the question of absolute indifference from that of synthesis was furthermore linked to that other aspect in the determination of nature as production, the critique of hylomorphism. What hylomorphism was eminently unable to account for was indeed metamorphosis itself, which, as Schelling argued, “shows that between substance and form there could not be the same bond that exists between two equally real things”. What the hylomorphic reduction of substance or matter to mere *material* [*Stoff*] disregards is, Schelling writes, “the manner in which substance itself *is* all things essentially and indivisibly” (§ LII). The nihilation of either matter or form, the real and the ideal, and the consequent inability to apprehend the nature of metamorphosis, is thus founded on a denial of univocity. Without grasping the *Deus sive Natura* as the affirmative within every affirmation (§ 105), “the one and same being in the all (God) which is unity and infinity, the objective and the subjective, the centre and the circumference” (§ 175), production and metamorphosis will inevitably be thought of in terms of the exterior stamp of an ideal upon a real which, as in Fichte, is reduced to mere “empty froth”. The interpenetration on the verge of indifference of ideal and real is demonstrated by Schelling with regards to the eye, as an exposition within nature of the inanity of the Fichtean separation of being and consciousness. “Being and seeing”, writes Schelling, “do not behave the one with regards to the other as factors which would be reduced to zero, and nonetheless the organ is neither simple being abstracted from sight (or it would be nothing but matter), nor simple sight abstracted from being (without which it would not be an organ); on the contrary it is entirely being and entirely seeing. *In* its being it is also a seeing, *in* its seeing also a being” (§ 70). We are again

confronted with this concept of *point of indifference*, no longer in terms of the conflict of polarities but rather in the interpenetration of the “*potential*” differentiations of a substance considered as “*totally* real and *totally* ideal” (§ 73). The difficulties in approaching the Schellingian investigation of production as metamorphosis in nature arise precisely at this point, with the question of univocity. I will conclude by indicating its problematic nodes. Univocal substance as nature is defined in fact as a “substance without affections” (§ 200), what Schelling elsewhere imagines as a canvas upon which colours are merely deployed, without affecting the indifferent being of the canvas itself. The determination is unilateral. As Schelling puts it with regard to Spinoza in his Munich Lectures, God is all but all is *not* God. Thus we have in the aphorisms a tri-partite “structure” of (1) a “substance without affections” which only *potentially* contains its differentiations and is itself identity “without-potency” (§ 203, § XXV) (2) a totality of determinations by potentialization, unilaterally posed by substance and (3) the illusory non-being of the system of merely exterior products, the sphere of finite relations in which no singularity obtains and reigns the mere reciprocal determination of finitudes. Having destituted hylomorphism, subject-object dualism and the transcendence of God, the danger persists of neutralizing a production which had to be articulated independently of the determinations of subjectivity in terms of limitation, with the im-position of a substance which pacifies intensive differentiation through its function as *compte-pour-un* (count-as-one), to use a term coined by Alain Badiou.⁶² As if there were something to be *contained* in the “infinite position of infinite positions” Schelling introduces as the other attribute of God besides infinity, that of unity (§ 148) or uni-totally. Inevitably, the hylomorphic model undone with regards to metamorphosis returns, and God, though in his Absoluteness neither One nor Multiple, that is literally *absolved* from the function of synthesis is nevertheless endowed with the faculty of imagination [*Einbildungskraft*] literally of in-formation with regards to the multiplicity of (its) differentiations (§

⁶² “Le compte-pour-un (la structure) institue en effet l’omnipertinence du couple un/multiple pour toute situation”. A. Badiou, *L’être et l’événement* (Paris: Seuil, 1988), p. 32. It is only when, through the imagination as power of in-formation, nature and production are under the sway of the *compte-pour-un* that Schelling’s system can be regarded as “de part en part organique”, as J.-F. Courtine writes in ‘De l’*Universio* à l’*Universitas*: le déploiement de l’unité’ in *Extase de la Raison* (Paris: Galilée, 1990), p. 117. As we hope to have shown throughout the course of this essay Schelling attains his greatest originality precisely when he forsakes an organismic account of nature and production for an impersonal (indifferent) and metamorphic one.

XXIV). It is precisely here that production, to be deployed impersonally beyond the subjective and objective polarities comes to be closed in upon itself, unto that substance which albeit in its univocity Schelling continues to think in terms of a *centre* expressed by all its modifications, itself remaining untouched. The unilateral, despite Schelling's precautions, comes to provide that very transcendent security which had been so abhorred as the inmost character of weak reason: even *this* God is still too personal. The space of production and metamorphosis, having been exposed through the concept of indifference to an impersonal being, nevertheless comes to be articulated, in the absence of a categorial apparatus truly alternative to the one inherited from the tradition, upon the same terms and functions which it had sought to dispose of. Indifference, freed from its dependence on an originary conflict traced upon the very products whose genesis it was to account for, that is to say, freed from the need to do justice to common sense representation, fails precisely at the point of its ontological or univocal conversion, when, having presented a form of differentiation alien to representational dualism it folds back upon its uni-totalization.⁶³

This uni-totalization cannot but betray the project of thinking "from the point of view of production", almost as if once having abandoned the schema of limitation which pertained to subjective production, and opted for a differentiation alien to the dualism of the latter, Schelling had to have recourse to the nihilism of absolute, unilateral peace. Yet it is precisely in the space between these approaches, a space often internal to the texts themselves, that Schelling attains to that status, alluded to in the introduction to this paper, of being the first philosopher in the wake of Kant to undo, in great part through his appropriation of Spinozism, the strictures of representational dualism. To do this, to escape the teleological tyranny of the actual, the primacy of product, without eventually absolving it into indifference-as-unity he did not and could not fully accomplish. The exposition of a space for inquiry - beyond the Kantian alternative between

⁶³ We may perhaps see in this exemplary failure, in what was nevertheless an absolutely singular attempt to evade the demands of representation-as-*doxa*, the reasons at the core of Deleuze's crucial determination of philosophy as a "theory of multiplicities" in which the AND of empiricism and constructivism undermines the ONE of the ontologies of principle and foundation. See G. Deleuze and C. Parnet, *Dialogues* (Paris: Flammarion, 1996), p. 70. The theory of production in *Anti-Oedipus*, for one, depends on this destitution of a dualism of one and multiple in its attempt at evading the sway of a production understood retrospectively from its actualization. Much the same could of course be said with regard to the question of individuation.

representation and the inanity of dissolution - a space in which nature could be conceived no longer as phenomenon but as metamorphosis and production grasped as something other than the inevitable effectuation of its products, this however is enough to fully recognize Schelling as a precursor of the most vital instances of contemporary thought. In its kinship with fanaticism, as *ethical* approximation to the Absolute and *positive* exhibition of the infinite (*contra* Kant), Schelling's philosophy moved for a time towards the investigation of a nature no longer conceived in terms of (transcendent) phenomena but instead, as he wrote to Fichte, grasped "from the point of view of production" - in a *physics* which could finally account for the metamorphoses of matter, for the impersonal nature of production as well as for the production, and not the mere appearance, of nature itself ("*la nature comme processus de production*"⁶⁴). To think, in the interpenetration of Physics and Ethics, beyond personality, while resisting the infinite peace and infinite boredom of the absolute, to grasp, as Schelling himself wrote, the "impersonal moment" which traverses the arts and sciences:⁶⁵ this then is the task bestowed to us by the philosophy of indifference, in its failures as in its inventions.

⁶⁴ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Anti-Oedipe* (Paris: Minuit, 1973), p. 9.

⁶⁵ From *Philosophical Empiricism*, quoted in Semerari, p. 177.