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## Is Schelling's Nature-Philosophy Freudian?

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Freudian psychoanalysis is to a significant degree the disenchanted form of Schelling's philosophy of nature.

Otto Marquard

I.

Marquard has apparently answered the question in our title. But even if we agree that Freud is the early Schelling disenchanted, we can and perhaps must still ask: is a disenchanted Schelling still Schellingian? The question could well be put to Slavoj Žižek, who has carried the disenchantment of Schelling further than anyone else.<sup>1</sup> Žižek shows how Schelling's neo-Kabbalistic notion of the contraction of being, which makes the finite order possible (God's decision to become a creator and thus bring an end to eternity), mytho-metaphysically dramatizes Lacan's developmental psychology: after the cut of the logos, the interdiction of the Father (le nom/non du Père), the pre-Oedipal unity of the child with the mother contracts into the ineffable and inassimilable "real" so that symbolically mediated ego-life can begin. To be sure, Žižek does not claim that Lacan's psychoanalysis is based on Schelling; rather, he claims, that Schelling can be fruitfully read through Lacan. There is however more to the story. Žižek never mentions Lacan's collaboration with Alexander Koyré, the foremost interpreter of Boehme in the Twentieth Century, and he repeatedly underplays the significance of Boehme for Schelling. Lacan had read Koyré's *La Philosophie de Jacob Boehme* as early as 1929 and participated in Koyré's seminar in 1934. The two became close collaborators in the 1950s.<sup>2</sup> These historical facts are essential to understanding why Žižek's cross-reading of

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<sup>1</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder: On Schelling and Other Matters* (London: Verso, 1996); idem, *The Abyss of Freedom* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); Adrian Johnston, *Žižek's Ontology: A Transcendental Materialist Theory of Subjectivity* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Burgoyne, "From the Letter to the Matheme: Lacan's Scientific Methods," in *The Cambridge Companion to Lacan*, ed. Jean-Michel Rabaté (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 77.

Schelling and Lacan works so well: Boehme's theosophy or Christian Kabbalism is a common denominator between Schelling and Lacan.

Essential to Žižek's reading of Schelling as a Lacanian *avant la lettre* is the discontinuity Žižek sees between the middle Schelling's proto-Lacanian notion of Grund and the early Schelling's proto-Jungian notion of nature as unconscious spirit. Žižek interprets Grund as the fictionalized origin of God, "the Signifier," which stabilizes the symbolic by excluding itself from it. By means of this phantasmic theogony, the middle Schelling illustrates the positing of nature by subjectivity as the negative which positivizes its own vacuous pseudo-life, repeating in the dramatic fantasy of the birth of God the primal act of subjectivity constituting the symbolic by repression of the real and projection of the Big Other. The early Schelling's concept of nature as unconscious spirit out of which consciousness teleological evolves is the very fantasy of pre-subjective cosmological order that the later theogony unmasks.

What fascinates Žižek most in the middle Schelling is how ground, a self-conflicting nest of cycles of expansion and contraction, the "rotary motion" of conflicting drives, must be "repressed" if consciousness is to exist. The decision that resolves the conflict is forever lost to the self, a "vanishing mediator" that must sink into unconsciousness the moment the decision is made. Lacanian consciousness is not a synthesis of conflicting desires but a displacement of drives—not a resolution of unconscious conflict, but a symptom of subjectivity forever out of sync with itself. For Žižek, the unconscious in the middle Schelling can no longer be thought of as the visible spirit of the nature-philosophy; it is instead the decision that is simultaneously the birth of consciousness and the ejection of ground. On this view, nature does not precede subjectivity; rather, it comes to be at the precise moment that subjectivity separates itself from its pre-symbolic life; the illusion of a natural order begins with the decision of the subject to be for itself, a decision that can only be made by setting up the in itself as that which the subject is not. Adrian Johnston calls this "a transcendental materialist theory of subjectivity:"<sup>3</sup> transcendental because it begins with subjectivity and asks after the condition of its possibility; materialist because it discovers that the condition of the possibility of subjectivity is a denial of materiality. The denial is never entirely successful for the repressed always returns as irreducible remainder, reminding us that the ideal is a lie we tell ourselves in order to secure a place for subjectivity in a universe of unintelligible matter.

In Žižek's reading, the eternal cycle of potencies in Schelling's God—the rotation of three mutually exclusive possibilities for will—becomes the infinite reflection of a primordial psychotic subject who cannot decide who or what it is, divided as it is by conflicting drives and incapable of authentic action because it lacks the requisite self-identity to act. Schelling's manifest argument, for Žižek, is that God can only be self-conscious if he allows for difference in being—that is, if he allows for the division of himself from his ground; of

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<sup>3</sup> Johnston, *Žižek's Ontology*, 69-122.

himself from creation; of every creature from every other. Psychoanalysed, the latent meaning of Schelling's argument is that subjectivity must repress its Oedipal psychosis if it is to exist at all. The life of the subject can therefore only be a divided life in which subjectivity stands over and against itself on some level—threatened, haunted, and erotically drawn to that which it is not, the pre-verbal mother–infant dyad (hypostasized as “nature”), that with which it could be united only at the expense of itself.

Žižek's psychoanalytical reading of Schelling (more accurately, a psychoanalysis of Schelling) highlights the radicality of the middle Schelling's ontology, which breaks with traditional metaphysics by grounding being in drive. We see how and why ground is not an ontological foundation in a traditional sense, not a substance or a natural network of causes. Ground is less real than what it grounds: beneath that which exists lies that which does not exist but “longs” to. To say ground exists “prior” to being is to make a category mistake, applying a category, “existence,” which is an ideal determination, to the real. The ground longs for existence, which means that it lacks existence. Where for Boehme and Schelling this indicates a mysterious purpose hidden in the deep unconscious of God requiring limitation, negation, and finitude for the sake of love and community, for Žižek it indicates something far less sublime: at the origin of subjectivity lies a repression of the primordial absence of being necessary to consciousness. Žižek is the first, says Johnston, to overturn the common interpretation of psychoanalysis as a variety of determinism.<sup>4</sup> Freedom is primordially pathological, formless and abyssal, that is why we habitually repress it. Žižek is particularly adept at demonstrating how Schellingian freedom does not choose between good and evil; as the capacity for both, freedom is beyond good and evil. The problem of the formal identity of good and evil is another puzzle that Schelling inherits from Kant. Schellingian freedom does not respond to a pre-existing order of values; inasmuch as it makes possible the distinction between good and evil, freedom is itself neither good nor evil but equally open to both. What this means for Žižek is that evil must reside at the core of every good act as its repressed other: the good act is not one that has expelled the possibility for evil from freedom but has rather put it to use in another way. The subject's inexhaustible capacity to repress freedom, to substitute functional neurosis for pre-subjective psychosis and to virtualize its life is not something to be overcome, for it makes subjectivity itself possible. In order for the subject to exist, it must repress the indifference of primal freedom, banish freedom's anarchic openness from consciousness, and allow the absence it leaves in its wake (the real) to function as a ground.

Schelling's breakthrough to dialectical materialism is ostensibly recalled before it begins as Schelling falls back on esoteric notions of polarity and premodern sexual cosmology, that is, as Schelling reverts back to nature-philosophy. What Schelling truly discovered, says Žižek, eluded him. The real is not stuff that is idealized but the gap or break in the symbolic that indicates the

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 115.

contingency of the ideal. The ideal generates the real as the condition of its impossibility. The two cannot be grounded in an indifferent absolute without obfuscating their intimate dialectical entanglement with each other. For this reason Žižek ultimately prefers Hegel to Schelling, albeit a Hegel standing on his head, not the arch-rationalist herald of “the march of spirit” but the thinker of negativity par excellence, the one who carries forward Schelling’s breakthrough to the essential role of the negative in the construction of identity.<sup>5</sup> Žižek’s Hegel is an atheist masquerading as a Christian—not because Hegel is hiding from the truth, but for the sake of performatively unmasking the dissimulation inherent in all theories of the transcendent. Schelling’s failure in Hegel’s eyes is not, as is commonly said, to have resolved the ideal–real dyad into a point of indifference between them—the indifference of the ideal and the real is Hegel’s clue to their dialectical entanglement with one another; rather, Schelling’s failure is to have hypostasized this point of indifference into the Godhead outside of all dialectical process. Schelling’s absolute indifference is an instance of Lacan’s Big Other, the fantasy by which subjectivity both consolidates itself by negation of the real and conceals its own inherent negativity from itself (constitutive repression), only Schelling fails to recognize the vacuity of the construct. In Žižek’s view, this Schellingian fantasy of transcendence is corrected by Hegel, for whom the dialectic of the ideal and the real is purely immanent. The Hegelian third (repeatedly misinterpreted by Hegelian rationalists as a purely affirmative synthesis that restores identity) replaces Schelling’s indifferent absolute with a spirit that is eternally “out of joint” because it has absorbed the real into the ideal and rendered it a constitutive moment of itself.

Žižek calls the breakthrough that slips through Schelling’s hands into Hegel’s ready grasp “die Grundoperation des Deutschen Idealismus,” a single insight working its way through Kant, Fichte, and Schelling until Hegel finally gets it right, but one that can only be fully understood in light of Lacan: the notion of “the ‘primordially repressed’ vanishing mediator which generates the very difference between the Real and the Ideal.”<sup>6</sup> In the Schellingian theogony the negative is the moving principle of life and mind: God introduces negativity, first potency, lack, so that something positive might come to be as a result of the effort to overcome it. But the something that comes to be is not simply a return to the God that posited the negativity in the first place; what “returns” is something other than God. Hence the negative is not merely cancelled; it is also preserved as the mediator of the next level of structure. Schelling, in Žižek’s reading, misses the merely transitive significance of negativity and hypostasizes the negative into “the dark principle” essential to the luminosity of “the light principle.” For Žižek this represents a regression to premodern dualistic cosmology. Hegel corrects Schelling in this respect, for the Hegelian dialectic abandons transcendence in favour of an immanentized absolute: that which moves the first moment into division is not its incompleteness when measured

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<sup>5</sup> Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder*, 98.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

against the prior fullness of an absolute that is neither the one nor the other; rather, the movement is the logical result of the incompleteness of the first to itself. Hegel does not need a transcendent ground because Hegelian logic “moves”: a principle can be “othered” in itself, contained within itself as its own negation. The negative has no place outside the dialectic of the three principles: that which makes mediation possible, the negative, disappears in the mediation itself, proves itself to be not-different from what is mediated. Negativity drops out as a distinct moment in Hegel, shows itself to be nothing but the one side of the absolute in transition to the other side. Negativity is not overcome (as in the mainstream reading of Hegel) but revealed to be the truth of the whole.

Žižek concludes that the Schellingian absolute is an “idealist-ideological” fiction related to premodern banalities about the complementarity of light and darkness, or to Jungian “New Age” libido-theory. The Schellingian “idealist-ideological” dialectic insists on a conjunctive sense of the “and”: darkness and light, feminine and masculine. The “and” here conjoins two really distinct and opposed structures, which can only be distinguished by positing the indifferent absolute. By contrast the Hegelian “and” is “dialectic-materialist” (or, we might add, nominalist): the Hegelian “and” is not a conjunctive that presupposes a disjunction, but an identifier. Darkness is (from a certain perspective) light; the feminine is masculine. There is no assumed point of indifference behind the opposites but only the endless (and senseless) alternating of the one into the other. When he refuses to draw the atheist consequences of his insights, Schelling becomes complicit in reason’s substitution of a comforting fiction for the “horrible” truth of constitutive repression. Žižek sides with Hegel because the eldest of the Tübingen trio finally does away with the transcendent God and squarely faces the unconsoling fact of the insubstantiality and negativity of every identity, even the identity of the absolute itself.

Žižek reads Schelling against himself, like the Lacanian analyst who does not place great stock upon what the analysand consciously intends to communicate, but adverts to how he speaks (“the subject of the enunciation” by distinction from “the subject of the statement”) and finds unintended significance therein. For example, when Žižek re-describes Schelling’s eternal cycle of potencies as “the chaotic-psychotic universe of blind drives,”<sup>7</sup> he effectively pathologizes the Schellingian absolute. Schelling is unwittingly confessing the primal crime of subjectivity, the murder of the real, in the disguise of a grand narrative about the beginning of time; he is the Lacanian hysteric, telling the truth about himself by lying. Schelling describes eternity as “the original equivalence” of ipseity and alterity in the absolute, the original indifference of the absolute to the No and the Yes, which excludes time, events, and growth.<sup>8</sup> Where Žižek sees this as the original psychosis of infancy, which must be repressed if ordinary neurotic subjectivity is to function, Schelling describes it as the bliss and

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>8</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, tr. Jason M. Wirth (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), 9.

harmony of heaven which must be left behind if life in time is to begin. In Schelling's understanding of it, eternity is not a being at war with itself, but just the opposite, an order of being free of contradiction and strife. It follows that the psychology of dissociation founded upon this metaphysics does not assume constitutive repression: the Schellingian self must divide if it is to grow and live, and division means that some aspects of the self inevitably sinks back into unconsciousness as others take centre stage, but this dissociation is not subjectivity defending itself against horror by substituting the safety of the symbolic for the chaos of the real; rather, the dissociation is for the sake of becoming conscious in a new way, that is, for the sake of an increase in being.

We introduce the notion of positive and negative dissociation, which is only implicit in Boehme and Schelling, in order to amplify the therapeutical significance of Boehmian-Schellingian metaphysics. The tendency in psychoanalytical and psychotherapeutical literature is to speak of dissociation in a purely negative sense: to dissociate from x is to render x unconscious and so a threat to the ego. Lacanian psychoanalysis demolishes ego-psychology, but goes to the other extreme, into a merely negative theory of subjectivity as lack, constitutive repression, the self's necessary and tragic absenting of itself from itself. Positive dissociation is the growth in consciousness made possible by the contraction of some aspect of the individual's identity, which henceforth becomes the past, a dissociated other which is never "sublated" by consciousness (cancelled and preserved), but subsists in the self as a grounding potency. Positive dissociation is not only the production of unconsciousness but also and primarily the production of consciousness: to dissociate from x is to render x an object of consciousness or to make x conscious, for when x is attached to the I in such a way that the I has no distance from it, consciousness of x as such is not possible. Consciousness presupposes dissociation from that of which it is conscious. Negative dissociation is the dissociation that does not produce life and consciousness but the opposite, the dissociation from the dissociation growth is demanding of us, or wilful unconsciousness, the paragon of which is Boehme's figure of Lucifer. Boehmian-Schellingian dissociation is teleological, the dissociated parts of the self working together behind the scenes for the sake of the flourishing of the whole in which they inhere. Jason Wirth describes this as "the conspiracy of life": "the breathing out of the dark abyss of nature into form and the simultaneous inhaling of this ground, the retraction of things away from themselves."<sup>9</sup> The metaphor of "conspiracy" is perfect, for the dissociated parts of the self are really distinct and in no way determined to work together, and yet, when the Schellingian personality thrives, they surreptitiously collaborate in the production of consciousness.

Most problematic for Schellingians is Žižek's a-cosmic reading of the middle Schelling, which effectively divorces the middle from the early Schelling. Schelling published the Freedom essay in 1809 as an appendix to his first

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<sup>9</sup> Jason Wirth, *The Conspiracy of Life: Meditations on Schelling and his His Time*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), 2.

collected works without announcing any axial divergence from the thrust of his early work. It would seem that he regarded Freedom as continuous with both the nature-philosophy and the identity-philosophy. In the 1827 Munich lectures Schelling summed up his philosophical career thus far as a sustained investigation into the being of nature without any breaks or reversals. There is no doubt that the phases of Schelling's work do not cohere into a system, but this is not to say that the work is marked by violent breaks. Even the 1809 personalist turn, with its sudden appropriation of Boehme, is continuous with the central aim of the early work, to overcome the modern divide between nature and spirit. Boehme's great achievement, doubtless aided by the fact that he did not read the philosophy of his contemporaries (which was moving via Descartes in the opposite direction), is to think matter and spirit as one. The point of Boehme's positing potency, drive, and desire in God is to set up divine archetypes for natural processes and thus to overcome the Jewish-Christian tendency to deny an essential connection between materiality and divinity. Schelling writes "ground or nature" (significantly re-phrasing Spinoza's *Deus sive natura*), and given that he spends most of his early career discussing "nature," we ought to take him at his word.<sup>10</sup> The split-off part of God, the excised other of subjectivity, is nature in the full cosmological sense of the term, matter, potency, force, drive—the non-verbal material order that precedes and exceeds subjectivity.

For Žižek, by contrast, there is no nature in this cosmological sense, no "order" that precedes subjectivity. The notion of nature as the infinite material matrix of possibilities is the romantic fantasy produced by the constitutively repressed subject for the sake of sustaining its virtual existence, the subject in effect concealing its own virtuality from itself behind a cosmological screen. There is no productive cosmological polarity generating a hierarchy of being, no teleology directing the evolution of consciousness from the unconscious. Modern science, which discloses matter as the residue of an unthinkable accident, is the truth of matter, the truth that matter has no truth; there is no non-verbal order of things, no meaning or purpose served by life and the appearance of consciousness. In Schelling's later emphases on the violence of beginnings, the contingency of reality, and retroactively posited origins, Schelling ostensibly expresses this axiom of disenchantment without knowing it, like the Freudian dreamer enjoying his repressed secrets in a censored form acceptable to consciousness. Schelling, in Žižek's psychoanalytical reading of him, actually discovers that the nature which obsessed him in his early work is nothing but the trace of the repressed life of the pre-subjective subject, essential if the latter is to be conscious of itself, that is, he discovers the flaw in his early naturalism, but he disavows the discovery by constructing a meta-narrative of God's birth from ground. Hegel, by contrast, goes the full distance with the Schellingian breakthrough to the negative and makes the interplay of the virtual (self-positing) ideal and the equally virtual (self-positing) real the whole of reality, with no telos

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<sup>10</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Inquiries into the Essence of Human Freedom*, tr. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), 27.

behind the show of the absolute's ceaseless activity of self-overcoming. As Freud's dreamer unconsciously generates an elaborate narrative to represent and at the same time conceal from consciousness a difficult truth, Žižek's Schelling constructs his theogony of ground–existence to express and conceal the truth of constitutively repressed subjectivity.

II.

Psychoanalytical suspicion is a two-edged sword: on the one hand, it can give the analyst access to a repressed truth which the analysand unconsciously camouflages in everything he says; on the other hand, it places the analyst in a position of unimpeachable sovereignty over the analysand and precludes mutuality, the possibility that the analyst himself has something to learn from the analysand. Žižek might defend himself from such a critique by arguing that Lacanian suspicion does not mean that the analyst is always right, but rather, that the analysand is always wrong.<sup>11</sup> But however implicated in the dissimulations of the unconscious the Lacanian analyst may be, one thing is never in question: the Lacanian theory of the unconscious. As a hermeneutical technique, suspicion can become a way of protecting the reader from thinking otherwise, a defence against the text, a way of reading which ensures that the reader is never touched by the world of the text. Suspicion achieves distance at the cost of participating in the thought of that which is being interpreted, raising the reader above the text, which is at the same time rendered powerless. Such is Žižekian suspicion: Žižek has no more to learn from Schelling himself, Schelling as a thinker, than he does from Keanu Reeves; the Freedom essay is read with the same immovable cynicism and psychoanalytical sovereignty with which Žižek approaches the bits and pieces of pop culture that interest him equally. The Ages of the World is no different in principle from Avatar; both are symptoms of constitutive repression, to be decoded by the analyst-sovereign who alone maintains an unblinking gaze on the hidden truth of the matter.

Žižek's psychoanalysis of Schelling belongs to a long tradition of reading Schelling as a misguided genius, stammering and sputtering mostly metaphysical, theosophical, and mystical nonsense, but occasionally, in spite of himself, saying something of real importance, which he himself does not quite understand, but which more disciplined thinkers, say Kierkegaard, Marx, Heidegger, or Lacan, rescue for philosophy. Thus do Jaspers, Heidegger, Habermas, and Frank read Schelling: his undisputed importance for the history of philosophy lies elsewhere than he thinks or intends, respectively in existentialism, in the overcoming of metaphysics, or in setting the stage for Marx's dialectical materialism. Jaspers puts the thesis of 'Schelling's failure' succinctly: "Schelling was hardly aware of what he was driving at, and his

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<sup>11</sup> Slavoj Žižek, (1997) "Desire: Drive=Truth: Knowledge," in [www.lacan.com/zizek-desire.htm](http://www.lacan.com/zizek-desire.htm), accessed 2 May 2011.



meaning is only discoverable by those who have acquired Kierkegaard's light."<sup>12</sup> Substitute "Nietzsche," "Marx," or "Lacan" for "Kierkegaard" in this sentence and you have respectively the verdicts of Heidegger, Habermas/Frank, and Žižek. Schelling on this view is not so much the philosopher of the unconscious as an unconscious philosopher.

Whatever the fruit Žižek's Schelling reading has borne (not the least of which is to have rescued Schelling for another generation of readers from the obscurity into which he habitually falls), I believe that philosophy and psychology need a deeper reading of Schelling, a more Schellingian reading of Schelling, a Schelling not selected, cut, and pasted according to pre-given criteria of psychological coherence, but one that can make available all of the psychological resources his thought contains. Rather than reading Schelling against Schelling, I propose that we read Schelling through Schelling, permitting Schelling's various writings on the unconscious to interpret themselves, the way the discontinuous pieces of the Jewish-Christian Bible are permitted to interpret themselves in the late Schelling's *Philosophy of Revelation*.<sup>13</sup> When Schelling is read in this way, Žižek's stark alternative between the teleological unconscious of nature-philosophy, on the one hand, and the *Freedom essay's* self-constituting unconscious on the other, is shown to be a choice that Schelling himself urges us not to make. When we place the early Schelling in dialogue with the later Schelling on the unconscious, we see that two perspectives are possible: a realist perspective, which would see matter as prior to consciousness, a cosmological matrix of potency, and a transcendental perspective, which would see consciousness as prior to matter, positing it for the sake of its own self-definition. Both perspectives are justified because the unconscious decision to be a subject is at once a free decision of self-positing spirit and an event in the history of nature. The unconscious as a natural stratum teleologically giving rise to self-conscious spirit is spirit described *ad extra*, from a third-person perspective. To the metaphysician's gaze, it can only appear as the material latency of spirit, which evolves into consciousness through a natural process of division and recombination, the way life evolves from the division of cells. The unconscious as contracted self and ejected past which founds the individual's identity is spirit described *ad intra*, from a first-person perspective, transcendently experienced, not as some night of being that precedes the self (how could that be experienced?), but as the self's act of separation from that which it is not, the act that has always already occurred and is continually being repeated, which spirit experiences, paradoxically, as a free act. That this presupposes the self's being present at the moment of its coming into being is one of the temporal conundrums in which we inevitably entangle ourselves when we attempt to think freedom. Which view is more accurate? Both and neither, and here we return to

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<sup>12</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Man in the Modern Age*, tr. Eden and Cedar Paul (London: Routledge, 1951), 160.

<sup>13</sup> This is the hermeneutical principle that governs my *The Dark Ground of Spirit: Schelling and the Unconscious* (London: Routledge, 2012), from which this paper is extracted.

the early Schelling's original impulse, to give both a transcendental philosophical account of the absolute (ad intra) and a natural philosophical account (ad extra).

When we interpret the Schellingian unconscious as a unified developing theory, we disengage an unusual convergence of metaphysical, psychological and theological positions. Metaphysically, Schelling is a co-inherentist. We coin the word to describe a position on the relation of mind to matter which is neither idealist nor realist and which cannot be identified with the psycho-physical parallelism of his followers (e.g.,, Gustav Fechner). For Schelling, matter and mind are really distinct but co-inherent: they are neither causally reducible to each other nor do they mirror each other; rather, matter co-inheres in mind as its substance and ground and mind co-inheres in matter as its formal logical structure. Psychologically, Schelling is a dissociationist, in the lineage of Paracelsus, Boehme, Janet, James, Peirce, and Jung. For the dissociationist multiple identities are not a problem; everything depends upon the relations of the personalities to one another. In a positive dissociation, the other personalities are permitted their space of operation and become collaborators in the flourishing of the self; in a negative dissociation, the other personalities are denied consciousness and go insane, vying with each other for possession of the self and precipitating its breakdown. Theologically, Schelling is a Trinitarian, but not in the historical immanentist style of Hegel, rather in the transcendentalist style of Baader. The triad is not exhausted in the dialectical play of the three terms; a still point at the centre of the triad is constellated by the movement of the three terms, a point which is not one of the three terms but which subsists as the arche and telos of the whole. Finally, in this sympathetic reading of Schelling through Schelling, a coherent psychology of the unconscious comes into view, a speculative psychology of the unconscious, i.e., one which begins in metaphysics and finds confirmation in the empirical (by distinction from a metapsychology, which forms hypotheses on the basis of the empirical). Its fundamental thesis is as follows: negative, subject-oriented desire (neither death drive nor narcissism but introverted life drive) obstructs positive, object-oriented desire for the sake of a precarious production of that which is irreducible to both the ego and the other. Just as in the nature-philosophy negative force obstructs positive force so that infinitely productive nature (*natura naturans*) might be revealed, just as in the philosophy of freedom, ground obstructs existence so that love might be revealed, just as, in Schelling's late philosophy, first potency obstructs second potency (literally crucifies him) so that God might be revealed, the negative features of the human psyche, the inferior qualities, selfishness, vice, insurmountable neuroses, etc., are not accidents, absurdities or reactions of the subject to a universe that has no place for it, but conditions of the possibility of finite personality. Our vices fuel our virtues; our complexes are key to our character. Such a unique psychology—it shares features of Freudianism, Lacanianism, Jungianism, and even behaviourism, without coinciding with any of them—is relevant in its own right and on its own terms.

### III.

We return to the original question: to what extent is Schelling's nature-philosophy Freudian? Let us recapitulate the basic concepts of nature-philosophy before submitting them to a comparison with Freud's metapsychology. Despite the progressive turn away from transcendental philosophy in the progress of his nature-philosophy, from a Fichtian supplement to Kantian idealism to a full blown realism, Schelling never abandons the transcendental method vouchsafed to consciousness by virtue of its capacity to self-reflect. Reflection may be ultimately inadequate to grasping the absolute but it remains the principal tool of philosophy. Philosophy must use it until it can no longer proceed and reflection itself begins to reveal its own limits. Spinoza's lack of a transcendental method causes him intractable problems. He grasps the ideal only in contradistinction to the real, ; both are merely given for Spinoza without any clear sense of why they are given, that is, of why the ideal–real opposition exists in the first place. In Schelling's view, Spinoza's crucial insight into the correlativity of the ideal and the real should have lead him into "the depths of his self-consciousness." Instead Spinoza literally loses himself in the object.<sup>14</sup> Even in the 1799 First Outline of a System of Nature-Philosophy, where Schelling attempts to explain everything on the basis of natural laws alone, transcendental method remains central: Schellingian natural laws are not empirically deduced; rather, as self-explanatory principles, they can only be transcendently deduced. "What we call reason is a play of necessary, unknown natural forces that are higher than us," Schelling writes, but this never becomes a license for him to abandon transcendental method.<sup>15</sup> It is precisely because reason is a play of the unknown natural forces responsible for everything that it has access to them.

Schelling's transcendental deduction of natural laws proceeds on the assumption that the subjectivity that intuits their necessity is equally their product. When we no longer assume a mind–matter dichotomy but rather assume that mind and matter are two sides of one preconscious reality, the a priori ceases to be purely reflective of subjective conceptualizations and mind-dependent patterns of organization. Fichte had shown that if one takes away the ghost of a thing-in-itself which forever relativizes a priori judgements, the categories of reason become categories of being. Schelling's and Hegel's "objective idealism" is founded upon this move. But where Hegel hitches the Fichtian revolution to a rationalist trajectory, Schelling sees in it the undermining of every rationalism: no longer a secure possession of the self-reflecting subject, the a priori is the ground that always recedes from the reflective gaze; instead of serving as the transparent logical pre-structure of the Cartesian "I think," the a priori coincides with the unconscious, or at least that part of it that can be indirectly deduced.

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<sup>14</sup> F.W.J Schelling, "Ideas on a Philosophy of Nature as an Introduction to this Science," tr. Priscilla Hayden-Roy, in *Philosophy of German Idealism*, ed. Ernst Behler, The German Library, vol. 23 (New York: Continuum, 1987), 186-187.

<sup>15</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*, tr. Keith R. Peterson (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004), 31.

Material nature now tells us as much about the structure of the subject as the structure of the subject tells us about nature. The theory of infinite drive manifesting itself in natural polarities is not a scientific hypothesis based on empirical facts, but a metaphysical hypothesis based on transcendental facts.

Schelling's application of transcendental method to nature-philosophy is worth dwelling upon because it underscores the role of psychological introspection in Schellingian nature-philosophy, indeed the origin of the latter in the former. Without introspection nature-philosophy is scarcely possible:

The positive force first awakens the negative. Therefore in the whole of nature no one of these forces appears without the other . . . In our experience there are as many singular things (likewise particular domains of force) as there are different degrees of negative reaction. The common attribute of everything earthly is this, that it is opposed to the positive principle that streams from the sun. In this primordial antithesis lies the seed of a universal world-organization. This antithesis is merely postulated by the doctrine of nature. It is not capable of empirical but only of a transcendental deduction. Its origin is to be sought in the primordial duality of our spirit.<sup>16</sup>

It is not that we understand nature on the analogy of transcendental patterns of consciousness, or vice versa; it is rather that the dynamic of production through polarity, which is empirically and externally experienced in natural processes, is transcendently and internally experienced in consciousness. Where early psychoanalysis hypothesizes the laws of psychic energy on the analogy of physical energy, Schelling assumes the non-difference of psychic and physical energy: what we deduce about mind through introspective or transcendental methods holds true for matter because only the identity of mind and matter can explain both. The dynamic play of polarities, which is the secret of natural productivity, is hidden from both empirical cognition and reflection, but the hidden side of nature is also the hidden side of the subject. Subjective idealism mistakes the ratio cognoscendi of nature-philosophy for a ratio essendi: because the subjective idealist understands himself and nature through consciousness, he mistakenly assumes that consciousness is the foundation of reality. When mind and matter are quantitative differentiations grounded in a third term, access no longer indicates a founding relationship.

Allied to Schelling's transcendental restoration of the non-subjective intelligibility of nature is his ontological extension of Kant's notion of teleology. The teleological structure of nature in Kantian philosophy is merely regulative, not constitutive; nature appears teleological because only thus can the mind understand it. Nature in itself should not be assumed to be teleological, purposive

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<sup>16</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, "Von der Weltseele, eine Hypothese der höheren Physik," Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe, Werke 6, ed. Kai Torsten Kanz and Walter Schieche (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 2000), 91, italics mine.

and designed. While on first glance, this sounds like sensible scepticism, what troubles Schelling is how Kant denies the existence of the organism as such, for the telos that makes the organism an organic whole is assumed by Kant to be merely a regulative idea, i.e., a subjective imposition on sense data. In short, there is no genuine life outside the human experience of it, or at least none that we can know. The experience of life as such, self-organized being, every part of it teleologically oriented to the whole of which it is a part, and every whole in turn oriented to nature itself as part to whole, cannot, in Schelling's view, be explained by Kantian subjectivism. The organism cannot be reduced to the sum of its parts because it is only the life of the whole which explains the existence of the parts. The parts cannot be simply efficient causes of the whole, for were they not guided to a single end, the organism would never have come to be. The notion of the organic whole is a conceptual structure, and as such, ideal—this much of Kant Schelling agrees with—but subjectivity experiences this structure as given in matter, it does not impose it upon it. A flower, a tree, or a bird, reveal themselves to us as life unfolding out of itself, life living on its own terms, in no way merely the effects of a subjective synthesis of sense data. As Schelling puts it in Kant's trenchant phrase, "It organizes itself."<sup>17</sup> We experience telos in nature because we must think teleologically about nature, but teleology is not only regulative, it is also constitutive. The mystery resides in the fact that teleological form is not arbitrary, imposed, or merely projected: it manifests itself in our thinking because nature actually is so designed.

This notion of constitutive teleology allows Schelling to expand Kant's nature-philosophy into what Grant describes as "a properly dynamic, field-theoretical theory of nature."<sup>18</sup> Every finite organism is related to every other upon which it to some degree depends such that nature itself must be regarded as a self-enclosed whole, an organism in its own right, a being which is the cause and effect of itself. Such organization is not explicable mechanistically; only the hypothesis of a single teleological principle of life explains it.<sup>19</sup> We are to overcome the mechanist-vitalist dichotomy and the related separation of the inorganic from the organic by understanding the universe itself as a living whole, an unconscious subject which intends the anorganic as the condition of the possibility of the organic. The visible divisions of being into anorganic and organic, mineral, vegetable, and animal, nature and spirit, are the distinctions of the members of a single life. The species of minerals, plants and animals are so many different degrees of the organization and development made possible by the interplay of an a priori coordinated dualism of positive and negative force, attraction and repulsion, expansion and contraction. Nature is a hierarchically organized living whole, beginning with the lowest and simplest forms and rising through increasingly complex levels of organization until it reaches self-consciousness, each higher level presupposing and depending upon the lower.

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<sup>17</sup> Schelling, "Ideas on a Philosophy," 190.

<sup>18</sup> Iain Hamilton Grant, "Introduction to Schelling's *On the World Soul*," in *Collapse VI*, ed. Robin Mackay (Falmouth, UK: Urbanomic, 2010), 65.

<sup>19</sup> Schelling, "Von der Weltseele," 68-69.

The difference between mind and body is one of degree, not kind: spirit is the highest degree of organization of forces active in matter; matter is the lowest degree of organization of forces active in spirit. The decisive question becomes: What is the telos governing the dual forces of nature? The answer Schelling proposes underscores the unity of nature-philosophy with both the transcendental philosophy that preceded it and the philosophy of freedom that succeeded it: the principle is self-manifestation. Nature is driven to reveal itself, a goal it can only fully achieve if it gives rise to self-consciousness.

Nature in itself is a primordial unconditioned unity which divides itself into opposing forces in order to become manifest. One force is expansive and directed outward to infinity, the other is contractive and directed inward to a single point. The opposed forces collaborate in striving to bring about a return to the original unity and, at the same time, in blocking that return by producing finite beings. The end result is endless manifestation and concealment, ceaseless activity, which consists in tension (blockage of flow) and release (freeing of flow). Nature is never more active than in this self-opposition between production and product, flow and form. Just as the Fichtian subject posits the object as the resistance point it needs in order to actualize itself as an act of infinite striving, nature posits itself by setting up an infinity of points of resistance, productivity congealed into products, which it then continually destroys. The infinite activity of nature manifests itself to the degree that it is “inhibited” by individuals: the expansive power of *natura naturans* is infinitely countered by the contractive power of *natura naturata*. The logic of Schelling’s nature-philosophy rests on the assumption that an endlessly expansive force can only sustain itself by limiting or inhibiting itself. “Where there is no unity of form, there is also no real opposition, and where there is no real opposition, there is no productive power.”<sup>20</sup> The duality of expansive and contractive drives nature forward into ever new productivity, just as the expansion and contraction of the heart muscle keeps the blood flowing through the body. The flow asserts itself against the obstructing products by sacrificing each individual to the species and generating an infinity of new products.

The positive force in nature is a collective power distributed throughout the universe, attracting matter to matter and impelling individual beings towards self-transcendence. It is, in a certain sense, external to the organism, agitating it into extroverted appetitive activity and meeting resistance in a negative force internal to the organism. The latter preserves the individuality of the organism. The negative force is not another form of object-oriented desire. It does not have an object as such; it is rather the negation of the positive force, which it presumes, the resistance to attraction and the forward movement of life. The positive and the negative forces are mysteriously coordinated: the positive self-transcending force is held in check by the negative self-withdrawing force such that living beings develop definite boundaries and individuate. But the negative self-withdrawing force, which strives towards equilibrium, is continually

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 225.

frustrated as the organism is, despite itself, enticed into appetitive activity. The coordination of these two opposed forces indicates the single principle operative in both them, present everywhere but never itself fully determined as a being or individuated. The unifying principle of nature is not a force, for a force cannot exist without an opposing force, and the principle is not one of a pair of opposites but the common ground of all opposites. It is, Schelling says, in a somewhat sudden exposure of his esoteric proclivities, that which ancient philosophy called “the world soul.”<sup>21</sup>

Of greatest interest to the history of dynamic psychology is the language Schelling employs to describe this animating principle behind natural polarity: Schelling calls it “drive” (Triebe), or more precisely “developmental-drive” (Bildungstrieb),<sup>22</sup> later, “infinite drive” (unendliche Trieb).<sup>23</sup> The soul of the world is a drive to self-manifest which is universally distributed in nature. It presupposes a material upon which it works even if it itself is not bound to any particular matter. It is not a determinate drive, not sex drive, nor is it associated with any other qualitative determination; it is, Schelling adds, a *qualitas occulta*.<sup>24</sup> The developmental drive directs the traffic of nature, subordinating the individuation of matter, without which it could not live, to the higher end of life itself. “The restless universal drive” (der rastlose Umtrieb) is the cause of the movement of life, first out of itself, and then back on itself, a circular movement in which it is impossible to determine what is earlier and what later: the rotation of processes—which will return as the three potencies in Ages of the World—makes of every organism a closed system in which everything happens at once, and which mechanism is helpless to explain because there is no order of causality here, no before and after.<sup>25</sup> The drive is not blind but intelligent in an unconscious way.<sup>26</sup> It must be ubiquitous, even though it is only effective where it finds a determinate receptivity. It must be formless since it can take on any form. It is identical with the innermost essence of the living being, “an ever active drive of internal feeling,”<sup>27</sup> and, at the same time, “the common soul of nature” (die gemeinschaftliche Seele der Natur).<sup>28</sup>

The universal drive keeps nature itself alive by engendering a basic instability of forces: nature cannot rest either in the single product or in plurality and diversity, but must endlessly seek to return to unity, which means it must also endlessly disrupt that unity by pluralizing. The conflict between the two forces is a disequilibrium which the organism naturally tries to overcome, but the achievement of equilibrium would represent the end of life. Everything finite resists change and development to some degree and organizes itself around a

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 216-217.

<sup>23</sup> Schelling, *First Outline of a System*, 47.

<sup>24</sup> Schelling, “Von der Weltseele,” 219.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 257.

static centre, a knot of inert identity; at the same time it harbours within it an impulse toward infinite development that impels it out of itself in the direction of endless self-differentiation. If these opposed tendencies were equal, they would cancel each other out; therefore, disequilibrium must be built into the equation. Life is disequilibrium, not balance. “The immediate goal of nature . . . is the process itself, nothing other than the constant disturbance and restoration of the equilibrium of the negative principle in the body: what develops out of this process [the individual animal] is accidental to the process.”<sup>29</sup>

The highest expression of material nature is the animal: here alone does life in the proper sense—that which moves from within—appear. The universal force of attraction animates the animal within a coordinated system of living beings; the negative force individuates it, enclosing life within a certain configuration of determinate matter. Life itself disturbs the animal, drives it outside of itself in actions of reproduction and nutrition, continually upsetting the animal’s internal balance, which the animal pursues in everything it does, but which, if it were to definitively achieve it, would bring about its death. The aim of the animal’s life is individuation, which is reached, Schelling adds, in sexuation.<sup>30</sup> The division into sexes is the “last stage of individuation,” “the one and the same homogeneous principles externalizing into two opposed principles,” and in effect repeating the condition of the animal’s genesis, the antagonism of opposites.<sup>31</sup> After the division, the equilibrium is restored via the production of the offspring. Sexuation serves a double purpose of life and death: it is the means of inhibiting *natura naturans* (through the production of *natura naturata*), but also serves the end of freeing the flow and destroying *natura naturata*, for the result of sex is not the self-preservation of the propagating individual but the propagation of the species, not the survival of the reproducing organisms but their sacrifice. Despite its resistance to diversity, each thing enacts the pattern of infinite production by tirelessly seeking to reproduce itself. At the moment of its most profound individuation in sexuation, the animal begins to dissolve again back into the universal—it births its own replacement.

Isn’t Schelling saying the same thing that Freud will say a century later, that the goal of life is death? Hasn’t Schelling broken through to the death drive with his notion of a negative force that resists the positive force, with the result that the individual organism wills in effect its own death? Passages such as the following seem to suggest this Freudian reading: “The same forces which have for a time maintained life finally destroy it too.”<sup>32</sup> Surely this is the Freudian death drive?

The activity of life is the cause of its own dissolution. It is extinguished as soon as it begins to become independent of external nature, i.e.,

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>32</sup> Schelling, *First Outline of a System*, 68.



unreceptive to external stimulus, and so life itself is only the bridge to death.<sup>33</sup>

But on closer reading there is no true analogy with Freud. First of all, for Schelling it is the erotic principle, distributed throughout a living cosmos (as opposed to being concentrated in an atomistic ego, as in Freud), which if unchecked by the negative force, the principium individuationis, the No of the individual to endless exteriority, would bring about the total death of nature.

It indeed sounds paradoxical, but is no less true, that through the influences which are contrary to life, life is sustained. Life is nothing other than a productivity held back from the absolute transition into a product. The absolute transition into product is death. That which interrupts productivity, therefore, sustains life.<sup>34</sup>

The negative force is not a resistance to life but a will to individuation, a will to concrete, determinate existence, which, by blocking the ecstatic flow of *natura naturans*, congeals *eros* into a finite being and prevents it from totally emptying itself into *natura naturata*. For Schelling, curiously, it is the positive force which appears to intend death for its aim is to return to the original unity of the absolute. The negative force prevents the return by blockage and individuation of a finite centre of force. The *reditus* of *natura naturans* counteracts the will to live of the organic product; it “labours to destroy” the individual.<sup>35</sup> But the positive force cannot be said to aim at death in anything other than a superficial or descriptive sense, for the drive toward unity never exists alone; it only exists as endlessly counteracted by the drive toward multiplicity. Both efforts are coordinated in the overarching *telos* of nature, to become manifest.

Life, Freud notes, in one of his least original thoughts, is a disturbance of equilibrium. At the same time that it is externally stimulated into the activities that constitute life, the organism longs to return to the peace of the inorganic; it is internally driven to free itself from the tension of erotic excitation. Freudian *eros* is a natural impulse to differentiate, a will to exteriority, a world-building drive, opposed by an antithetical drive that aims at the restoration of a primitive stage of inorganic equilibrium. Freudian *eros* is fundamentally egocentric object-oriented energy rooted in the ego; while it impels separate parts of living matter to one another and holds them together, it is hardly a universally distributed energy that animates all of nature, as is Schelling’s positive force. The difference is decisive for it marks the exact place where Freud departs from organicism, asserting instead the arbitrary and ultimately tragic nature of individual life. The Freudian death drive is not a principle of individuation, as is Schelling’s negative force; it is rather a reactive entropic drive that compels the arbitrarily existing organism to

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>34</sup> Schelling, *First Outline of a System*, 62.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 41.

retreat from the horror of life and return to the more primitive state of matter out of which it inexplicably emerged. Freud effectively brackets teleology and abolishes organicism, refusing to see the dual drives as anything other than reactions of matter to the accident of life. The consequence of Freud's concentration of eros in the ego is that the human being no longer belongs to a greater whole, but is ultimately an absurd eruption of self-reflective and self-interested life in a mindless universe.

Schelling, like Boehme and Oetinger (among countless other organicists), insists on the place of the individual organism in the world-whole and the positive and productive role of the negative individuating force in the drama of life. For Schelling, the "reservoir" of eros is not the ego but the universe itself. The negative force is not a death drive but a finitizing drive which contracts universal eros into the individual so that life itself might be sustainable, might be lived by someone, rather than dissipate in an endless exteriority. Schelling's negative force is not narcissistic in the Freudian sense because it does not have the ego as its object, nor is it perverse or undeveloped, primitive or regressive. The Schellingian negative force does not desire death; it rather resists the other for the sake of life.

This axial difference between Freud and Schelling can shed light on the Freud–Jung dispute on the question of libido. For Freud, libido is not a neutral or formless energy; it has a predominant form: sexual. Art and religion are therefore not essentially different expressions of eros; they are, rather, necessary substitutes for sex desired without limit. Hence the Freudian analysis of dreams, myths, art, and religion always seeks to uncover the sexual drive that has been disguised and at the same time expressed in the image. The dream is not fully analyzed until all of its complex imagery has been unmasked as subtle subterfuges by means of which the psyche satisfies its need to express an essentially simple drive in images acceptable to the dreamer. Thus also are artworks to be interpreted, thus is religion to be interpreted, ultimately civilization itself is to be interpreted as an elaborate substitute for sex, a system of libidinal control, i.e., sublimation/repression. Just as the ego forbids the expression of certain excessive sexual desires by generating an image that seems to be about something else, the dream, but which in essence is formally identical with the sexual desire, so does civilization forbid us our sexual excesses while offering us a substitute in the form of art, philosophy, cuisine, drugs, religion, etc.

It follows that for Freud, sexual libido is formally identical to artistic and religious libido: what the artist, the mystic, the philosopher desires is originally sexual. Jung objected to this reductive approach, which seemed to him to exaggerate the significance of the sex drive and underestimate or deny altogether the other forms that psychic energy can take. For Jung, libido has no predominant form; it is not structurally or qualitatively determinate; rather it is a neutral energy that animates the psyche and can take any number of different forms. The difference from Freud does not consist in Jung's claim that libido takes many forms—of course Freud agrees on this point; the difference consists in Jung's

claim that these alternative forms of libido are irreducible to each other; the differentiations of libido are to some degree not merely manifest but essential. Artistic, religious, and sexual libido can be irreducible to one another, really different determinations of libido for Jung, because Jungian libido in itself is, to use the Schellingianism, indifferent to art, religion, and sex.<sup>36</sup> Jung's hypothesis of libido as a general, indeterminate élan vital is based on the realist Neoplatonic logic which we have identified as essential to Schelling's thought: any set of beings that are differentially related must share a common ground which is not identified with any one of them. If any two entities are opposed, then they must be both related and different; that is they must manifest opposed configurations of some common element. For Schelling, nature is oppositionally different from spirit; positive natural force is oppositionally different from negative natural force; object is oppositionally different from subject; an individual entity is, in its individuality, oppositionally different from any other individually entity. There must be some common ground which relates all beings and orders of being while being different from each of them. This common ground is the absolute, which is indifferent to the various forms it takes, that is, it is indifferent to nature, spirit, you, me, etc. This does not mean that the absolute is formally or structurally identical to each of its manifestations. Indifference is not sameness. Because the absolute is indifferent to the nature which it grounds, there is no contradiction in it also grounding nature's opposite, spirit. To return to the nature-philosophy, Schelling's negative and positive forces are not different expressions of the same sexual energy, but different forms (determination, potentizations) of one self-identical being, which, in its indeterminacy, is indifferent to both.

Freud's life and death drives are not essentially differentiated, but rather, only manifestly different, that is, in content different but formally the same. There is nothing wholly other to eros expressing itself in death drive; death drive is just the diminution of eros; eros become uninterested, losing steam, entropically bottoming out. Hence there is no need to posit a third term beyond the opposites of life drive/death drive, and Freud's libido theory does not lead to metaphysics, as Jung's does. Schelling's opposed natural forces, by contrast, like Jung's various forms of libido, are essentially or formally different, that is, they are wholly different directions of force or will: the positive force wills the one; the negative force wills the many; the two opposed intentions are directed, however, by a deeper telos: that spirit should become visible. To return to Jung, cultural forms are formally different manifestations or determinations of libido, which must therefore be understood as in itself formless, indeterminate and indifferent to the many forms it can take.

Notwithstanding his refusal of teleology, Freud's "speculative biology" is situated squarely in the German philosophical tradition, a point of which Freud

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<sup>36</sup> C.G. Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious: A Study of the Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido, a Contribution to the History of the Evolution of Thought*, tr. Beatrice M. Hinkle (London: Kegan Paul Trench Trubner, 1916). See also C.G. Jung, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, tr. R.F.C. Hull, *C.G. Jung Collected Works* (London: Routledge, 1960), volume 8, paragraphs 3-66.

seems to have been to some degree aware. There has been much said about the unfortunate translation of *Trieb* in Freud as “instinct” by Strachey. For our purposes, the problem is not that, as Lacan would have it, the translation naturalizes the Freudian drive—Freud’s naturalism strikes us as an essential feature of his thought. The problem is that the translation conceals the continuity of Freud’s metapsychology with German philosophy. *Trieb* is the centrepiece of the German idealist and post-idealist traditions. Boehme’s meaning when he speaks of the *Trieb* which impels the unground to divide itself into opposing directions of will would be entirely obscured if we translated *Trieb* as “instinct.” Similarly when the early Schelling speaks of the primordial movement towards self-manifestation which coordinates all natural forces, the world soul, as *Trieb*, he is plainly not speaking of instinct. Schellingian *Trieb* is instinct-like in as much as it is unconscious intention, but it is prior to instinct and more basic than any object-oriented intention; it intends the infinite; it is the will that is responsible for the existence of animals and instincts, the will that is no longer associated with the subjective capacity to choose but which the middle Schelling identifies with primal being (*Ursein*). When one includes Fichte, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in this heritage, one can say without exaggeration that classical German philosophy (pre-idealist, idealist and post-idealist) is *Trieb*metaphysik.

The speculative biology of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* underscores the intimate historical and systematic relationship between nature-philosophy and psychoanalysis. But Freud’s is a nature-philosophy without telos. The first organisms arose out of the inorganic because of some external event, an accidental cosmic excitation.<sup>37</sup> They lived for a short time and then returned to their former inorganic state. For no reason at all these primitive organisms were compelled to repeat the conditions of their birth, to recreate the tension of external excitation and the pleasure of release from tension, a compulsion that is countered by the opposite drive, to return to the inorganic. In Schelling, by contrast, we are working in a theologico-metaphysical key: the emergence of the polarity of forces which makes life possible is no accident but the means towards the self-revelation of absolute life.

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<sup>37</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, tr. C.J.M. Hubback, ed. Ernest Jones (London: The International Psychoanalytical Press, 1922), 47-49.