This essay reexamines aspects of F. W. J. Schelling’s philosophy in the context of the recent resurgence of academic interest in anarchist theory, with emphasis on how Schelling’s thought relates to founding anarchist thinker Mikhail Bakunin. Through an examination of aspects of Schelling’s ontology and his critique of Hegel, I discuss how Bakunin’s objections to Schelling can be tempered, all while providing the framework for a “philosophy of existence” which informs Bakunin’s own departure from a Hegelian “philosophy of essence.” I then propose how Schelling’s ontology might go beyond Bakunin to speak to the non-foundationalist aspects of anarchist thinking today.

This essay reexamines F. W. J. Schelling’s philosophy in the context of the resurgence of academic interest in anarchist theory. Given Schelling’s interest for post-Marxist thinkers, from Ernst Bloch to Jürgen Habermas and Slavoj Žižek¹, this essay asks how the recent “anarchist turn”² entails a reconsideration of Schelling’s thinking generally and, specifically, his impact on founding anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, who attended Schelling’s Berlin lectures in the 1840s. Questions about Schelling’s possible “anarchism” have previously been broached in two suggestive, if undeveloped, remarks. The first comes from Habermas, for whom the philosophy of Schelling’s middle-period (1809–1815) contains “barely concealed anarchistic consequences”³; the second comes from an recent essay by Jesse Cohn and Shawn Wilbur inquiring whether anarchists today might benefit

³ Habermas, “Dialectical Idealism,” 46.
from re-examining what “Bakunin might have learned from Schelling’s call for a ‘philosophy of existence’ in opposition to Hegel’s ‘philosophy of essence.’”⁴ What follows develops these remarks to offer insight on the “anarchistic consequences” within Schelling’s thinking, their significance for Bakunin, and how Schelling might emerge as a possible future for anarchist philosophy.

Schelling is not (directly) a political thinker; yet, I suggest that anarchy does form part of his ontology. “Anarchy” primarily functions on two levels in Schelling. First, when Schelling speaks of a being that “excludes every foundation,”⁵ his ontology can be called *an-archic* in the etymological sense of *an-archē*, without foundations. Second, though Schelling does not articulate a determinate political position, this ontology could structure new ways of envisioning political life. I explore this *an-archic* ontology in three stages: first, I address Bakunin’s objections to Schelling and to Idealism; second, I argue that Schelling’s critique of Hegel, along with his concepts of evil, rotary motion, and “unthinkable” being, frame a philosophy of existence that informs certain aspects of Bakunin’s own departures from Hegel. Finally, I propose some ways in which Schelling looks beyond Bakunin in anticipating some of the insights of recent “post-anarchist” theory.

Before moving into the argument proper, it may be helpful to offer a provisional definition of anarchism. Traditionally, anarchism is defined as (1) anti-statism, the belief that life without a state is not only desirable but possible, and (2) anti-authoritarianism, the *a priori* rejection of all authority.⁶ A closer examination of anarchist thought presents a more nuanced picture, however. According to Paul McLaughlin, anarchists are not simply anti-state, but are interested in the “more fundamental problem” of “authority and its legitimacy” as such.⁷ In this respect, anarchism participates in the critique of a metaphysics that derives its authority from first principles or *archē*, and from which the origin of any phenomenon is correlative to its domination by first principles. The anti-authoritarian

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⁴ Jesse Cohn and Shawn Wilbur, “What’s Wrong with Postanarchism?” (2010), [http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/Jesse_Cohn_and_Shawn_Wilbur_What_s_Wrong_With_Postanarchism.html](http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/Jesse_Cohn_and_Shawn_Wilbur_What_s_Wrong_With_Postanarchism.html)


axiom also requires qualification. Glossing Bakunin’s anecdote that one defers to “the authority of the bootmaker...in the matter of boots” without allowing “him to impose his authority,” McLaughlin notes that anarchists do not “rule out the possibility of any legitimate authority” but are “doubtful about its legitimacy in each and every case.” Jamie Heckert similarly comments that anarchism avoids “rushing into what values” a politics affirms, instead recognizing “the power and importance of anti-, of no”: “to say ‘no’, first, is to carve out a space to say maybe, yes or even ‘many yeses.” Such refusals bear a certain Schellingian resonance. In the 1815 Ages, Schelling too speaks of the need for a “No that resists the Yes” in the latter’s “endeavour towards so-called Enlightenment.” Schelling’s insistence on this “No” implicitly re-emerges in Bakunin’s radicalization of Hegelian negativity. For the moment, one observes that anarchists do not call for the abolition of all authority. Rather, authority relations are acknowledged only in their contingency: “there is no fixed and constant authority, but a continual exchange of mutual, temporary, and...voluntary authority.” (Bakunin, GS, 33) This emphasis on contingency, as we shall see, is also at the core of Schelling’s ontology.

The historical connections between Schelling and Bakunin are well-known: Bakunin spent the summer of 1841 studying Schelling, attended the Berlin lectures, and had discussions with Schelling’s Russian pupil Danylo Vellansky. Nonetheless, a certain forgetting of Schelling is evident in the commentary dealing with Bakunin’s philosophical background. What has been written usually capitulates to orthodox interpretations of Schelling as a representative of “Absolute Idealism” and to his late reputation as a “dull conservative.”

The near-disappearance of Schelling from Bakunin’s intellectual history originates in Bakunin’s own explicit rejections of Idealism after the publication of his first mature philosophical text, “The Reaction in Germany” (1842). There, Bakunin critiques what he

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8 Mikhail Bakunin, *God and the State* (New York: Cosimo, 2009), 32. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as GS.
13 Ibid., 64.
perceived as the most reactive forces in German culture, including Schelling’s contemporaneous lectures on “positive philosophy”: “In politics, [reaction] is called Conservatism” and “in the science of speculation, Positive Philosophy.” Bakunin is even more unequivocal in his rejection of Idealism in God and the State (1871, 1882), arguing that “the Schlegels, the Tiecks, the Novalis’, the Werners, the Schellings” fail both for their indifference to politics and for their tendency to side with the monarchy, the Church, and the aristocracy on those occasions when their Idealism did become political. (GS, 80) Philosophically, “Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel” each commit the error of attempting to derive the real from the ideal, whereas for Bakunin “the ideal...is but a flower, whose root lies in the material.” (GS, 9) Combining Hegel’s view of the real as rational with Schelling’s earlier view of history in System of Transcendental Idealism (1800) as a “progressive...revelation of the absolute” that begins with humanity’s “step out of the realm of instinct,” Bakunin expresses a post-Darwinian inversion of Idealism which sees humanity as both “the highest manifestation of animality” and the “gradual negation of the animal element”: “it is precisely this negation, as rational as it is natural...at once historical and logical...that constitutes and creates the ideal.” (ibid.) This unfolding of nature’s immanent laws provides the basis of humanity’s revolutionary potential, insofar as it undermines any theological conception of a power external to nature. As Eric Voegelin argues, for Bakunin this model of development decisively departs from Schelling and Hegel’s “derivative Christianity,” which sought an “‘inner return’ toward the ground of the soul”; conversely, Bakunin sees historical and natural evolution as the “legitimating basis for [political] action.”

Certainly, Bakunin’s criticisms are not without some justification. In his 1797 “Explicatory Essay of the Idealism in the Science of Knowledge,” Schelling espouses just such an “inner return,” arguing that “originarily we only understand ourselves, and...for those of us seeking to understand ourselves, there remains only one assertion: not that spirit arises from matter but that matter arises from spirit.”

From a wider perspective, however, such objections have a limited application to Schelling's thought, especially after 1809. In both the Freedom essay and the 1815 Ages, Schelling asserts the very “realism” Bakunin later champions against the idealists. In Bakunin's view, the only conception of matter viable for Idealism is that of an “inanimate, immobile thing,” stripped of “its active relations or forces...in contrast to the beautiful fancy they call God.” (GS, 12–13) But this would be a difficult position to attribute to the middle-period Schelling, who insists on a “nature—in God...inseparable, yet still distinct, from him”: “God has entirely more vital motive forces in himself than the...abstract idealists attribute to him.”18 Similarly, the 1815 Ages finds Schelling criticizing Idealism for failing to “acknowledge the priority of Realism.” (W3, 107) Anticipating Bakunin's image of the ideal as “a flower, whose root lies in the material,” Schelling cautions against Idealism's desire for “the bloom...without the hard covering that enclosed it,” evolution without the prior “involution” which “drives [nature] from the root to the fruit.” (W3, 21) With such qualifications in mind, we can now turn to the question of what Bakunin may have taken from Schelling's “philosophy of existence,” as opposed to Hegel's “philosophy of essence.”

To begin, we can briefly specify the manner in which Hegel can be called a “philosopher of essence.” In the Science of Logic (1812–16), Hegel states, “the truth of Being is Essence”19; however, for Hegel essence is not a hidden substratum behind appearances, as it is for traditional metaphysics. Essence is by definition the negation of appearances; however, we know of essence only via its appearances. Essence is only its manifestation, its negating itself as other. Insofar as appearance is necessary for essence, appearance now becomes part of essence's identity as that which essence becomes as other in order to relate to itself. Dialectically, essence is this very process of “immanent self-relating” which generates the “infinite movement”20 by which being unfolds as “subject” rather than substance. As Hegel puts it, the properly dialectical paradox is that “things really are not what they immediately show themselves.”21 Hence, reflection discerns an immanent movement in which an immediate or given

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21 Hegel, Hegel's Logic, 163.
content becomes “actualized” by unfolding its necessary laws of self-development and thereby grasping the essence of the given as part of larger, more complex universality. This universality is the Notion, “the principle of its distinctions” insofar as all distinctions come to be reflected as “inner distinctions” of the Notion itself.\textsuperscript{22} Hegel understands the opposition between necessity and freedom in a similar fashion. Being’s self-transformation is necessary insofar as it follows its own immanent laws, but it is also free in the sense that a force external to the process itself does not determine this process. As Markus Gabriel observes, the reflexive necessity that grounds Hegel’s conception of essence theoretically grants logic the capacity to “reveal the totality of its presuppositions with its own resources,” which in turn promises the “complete self-transparency” of the logical system.\textsuperscript{23} Herein lies the logical basis for Bakunin’s critique of Idealism; turning the Hegelian dialectic against itself, Bakunin identifies the Notion’s immanent laws of self-development with nature as such, grounding his anarchism in a decisive rejection of all forms of transcendence.

According to Schelling, it is precisely this movement from logic to nature Hegel is incapable of making, since he relies upon a strictly logical conception of being. The problem becomes especially acute in Hegel’s attempt to transition from the Logic to The Philosophy of Nature. According to Hegel, the “idea freely releases itself” into nature\textsuperscript{24}; prefiguring Bakunin’s critique of Idealism’s attempt to derive the real from the ideal, Schelling already questions how the idea could possibly take this “difficult step into reality,” given that the conditions for its release are only available within the domain of logic. In Schelling’s view, Hegel attempts to smuggle “nature through the backdoor of the Idea” (GPP, 59) and thus his conception of nature remains purely “hypothetical,” enclosed within the sphere of “sheer [logical] possibility.” (GPP, 151)

Schelling contends that Hegel’s explanation of the essence of existence as it manifests in reflection begs the question, because it attempts to explain the origins of consciousness via the resources of consciousness itself. Conversely, Schelling argues that “nowhere does it appear as if order and form were what is original but rather as if initial anarchy had been brought to order” (FS, 29): “the impression [we get from] this completely contingent thing which we call the world cannot possibly be the impression of something that has

\textsuperscript{22} Hegel, \textit{Science of Logic}, vol. II, 244, 249.

\textsuperscript{23} Markus Gabriel, \textit{Transcendental Ontology} (London: Continuum, 2011), 121.

\textsuperscript{24} Hegel, \textit{Science of Logic}, vol. II, 486.
emerged through the necessity of reason.... It contains such a preponderant mass of that which is not reason, that one could almost say that what is rational is what is accidental." (GPP, 2) The world is not grounded in necessity but contingency, what Schelling variously calls "anarchy," the "indivisible remainder" (FS, 29), the "obliquity that resists the straight," the "No" that resists the "Yes" (W3, 6), the paradoxically groundless ground that constitutes being's "unprethinkable" existence as "that which purely and simply exists." (GPP, 202) As "unprethinkable," that which simply exists is "independent of every idea" and therefore can never become entirely transparent to itself. Hence existence cannot be construed as an essence in the traditional sense or in Hegel's revised sense of reflected mediation. Where existence occupies the former role of essence, being requires "no foundation at all," since "it would not be...the absolute prius, if one could reach it from anything else." (GPP, 202–203)

Schelling's an-archic conception of being's contingency shifts the relationship between being and thinking. If for Hegel the process of reflection allows for a certain symmetry between Being and thinking, in Schelling reason can "posit being in which there is still nothing of a concept...only as something that is absolutely outside itself...ecstatic." (GPP, 202) The ecstasy of reason means that the necessity posited by reflection is accidental insofar as thinking only begins from its destination before this "Other," the unmediated existential "fact of the world." (GPP, 69) As Emile Fackenheim suggests, Schelling's characterization of facticity as contingent means that being can express itself "in an indefinite number of ways, rationality being but one of them."25 The result is that existence cannot be incorporated by a single logical system. In Schelling's view, a Hegelian philosophy of essence is an "entirely self-enclosed science that has arrived at an unchanging conclusion"; conversely, a philosophy of existence "cannot in the same sense be called a system...because it is never absolutely closed." (GPP, 182–83) Instead, Schelling articulates a non-hierarchical model of thinking in which each particular system "will exert...no different authority than what every other object exerts on the science that deals with it." (GPP, 183) As "still incomplete," a philosophy of existence moreover "opens onto a future." (GPP, 182) Rather than the Hegelian movement through which logical possibilities are actualized in the process of reflection's returning to itself, Schelling calls for a "potentialization of the actual" in which reason confronts its ecstatic dispossession. In this respect, Schelling antici-

pates what Simon Critchley calls a “hetero-affectivity” that disturbs any “simple claim to autonomy,” a “constitutive undoing and dispossessing” of reason. It is precisely this dispossession, prefigured in Schelling’s ecstasy of reason, which for Critchley generates the “motivational force to enter into a political sequence.”

Further, for Schelling, it is only in the dispossession that potentiates a future that one can locate a space for freedom. Because the Hegelian system posits reflection as essence’s immanent self-mediation, it can resolve the contradiction between freedom and necessity only within the logical form of necessity itself. The absence of anything truly “Other” means that it lacks the tension required to generate a proper motivational force, which Schelling identifies as the “discontent” that marks the “fate of all life”: “were there only unity and everything were in peace...everything would sink into listlessness...[for] everything that becomes can only become in discontent...[and] everything that lives is only conceived and born in violent struggle.” (W3, 89–91) Freedom is only possible as “violent struggle,” a process Schelling figures in the Freedom essay as the subject’s incessant struggle between principles of good and evil. Within this struggle Schelling inscribes a proto-deconstructive potential within the freedom for evil, which is a freedom in which the part takes precedence over the whole, as when a part of the body becomes diseased and begins to function “for itself” rather than in harmony with the rest of the organism. (FS, 18, 34–8, 66) Schelling’s innovation here is to think evil as a “vital force” in which “the powers...typically associated with the good, such as rationality...come to serve...the ever-varying whims of physical desire.”

At the same time, evil bears a subversive potential, in that it “threatens actively to undermine” the “palliative normativity that legitimates the whole.” As such, evil may very well describe a resistance to the whole, thus forcing a rethinking, and potential reorganization, of what legitimizes itself as whole.

By the 1815 Ages, Schelling further criticizes the “palliative normativity” of contemporary idealisms whose “predilection for the affirmative” represses the fundamental existence of “something conflicting...this Other.” (W3, 6) In the cosmic history that makes up the Ages, “this Other” takes the form of a “rotary motion” in being, a circulation of conflicting “wills” whose negative dialectic inhibits the being’s capacity to fully overcome its “dark” inheritance of non-

26 Simon Critchley, Infinitely Demanding (London: Verso, 2007), 120.
27 Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt, Introduction, in FS, xxii.
28 Ibid., xxiv.
knowledge. Rotary motion consists of “negating” and “affirming” wills which “posit outside and above themselves a third, which is [their] unity.” However, “having arrived at its peak, the movement...retreats back into its beginning; for each of the three has an equal right to be that which has being.” (W3, 19) To posit the synthesis as “above” negating and affirming principles transforms synthesis into another antithesis: “Just as antithesis excluded unity, unity excluded antithesis. But precisely thereby the ground was given to that alternating movement, to that continuous revivification of the antitheses.” And since each “will” has an “equal right” to exist, there can be “neither a veritable higher nor a veritable lower.” (W3, 36, 20) The “rotary motion” of the Ages can be read alongside evil from the Freedom essay: where the freedom for evil manifested itself in the part’s capacity to undermine the normativity of the whole, rotary motion “commences with the rotation” of “each single, particular nature...about its own axis” and away from whole” (W3, 92). Rotary motion is not merely destructive, however, but also creative: in its rotation away from the whole it generates new wholes, actualizing Schelling’s view “that nothing in the universe be oppressed, limited, or subordinated. We demand for each and every thing its own particular and free life.”29 The rotary motion functions as a (self-)critical structure whose incessant circulation of antitheses cannot generate within being any permanent, hierarchical order.

The anarchistic consequences embedded within Schelling’s philosophy of existence look forward to certain counter-Hegelian moves in Bakunin’s anarchism. To be sure, Bakunin is often more explicitly Hegelian than Schellingian; indeed, in “The Reaction” Bakunin identifies Hegelian “contradiction and its immanent development” as the “chief category of the governing spirit of our times,” and Hegel himself as “the greatest philosopher of the present time.” (RG, 47) Bakunin is perhaps at his most Hegelian in his notion of “absolute science” in God and the State. The “sole object” of absolute science “is the mental reproduction...of the natural laws inherent in the material, intellectual, and moral life of both the physical and social worlds, these two worlds constituting but one and the same natural world.” (GS, 34) Ideally, absolute science would reproduce “to its fullest extent...the system or co-ordination of all the natural laws manifest-ed by the incessant development of the world.” (ibid.) Nature, in turn, is a “self-ordained...[,] magnificently organized world in which every

part [has a]...*logical* relation to all the others."[^30] Though Bakunin admits that one's own knowledge may never be “equal to a comprehension of the whole” (GS, 32), his overall conception of absolute science as the mental reproduction of an immanent totality appears as a materialist revision of Hegel's reflexive logic of being, albeit radicalized towards an anarchist vision of society.

Yet, in radicalizing Hegel, Bakunin also recuperates elements of Schelling. In “The Reaction,” Bakunin qualifies his view of Hegel as “the greatest philosopher of the present time” in a distinctively Schellingian way; for Hegel is also

the highest summit of our modern, one-sided, *theoretical* cultural formation: as this summit he has already gone above theory—granted that at the same time he is still within theory—and has postulated a new, practical world which will bring itself to completion by no means through a formal application and diffusion of theories already worked out, but only through an original act of the practical autonomous Spirit. (RG, 47)

Bakunin’s description in this passage parallels Schelling’s appraisal of Hegel’s “negative philosophy” as having perfected a certain phase of philosophical development, and in doing so, calls precisely for a “positive philosophy” of existence for which the free act is paramount: “man was born to act, not to speculate, and...therefore his first step into philosophy must manifest the arrival of a free human being.” (GPP, 57) The arrival of this being, Schelling argues, is precluded by any logical conception in which individuality is a mere “moment” of the system’s self-actualization, since “of itself, reason cannot realize or prove any actual, real being...for example, the existence of *this* plant or *this* stone.” (GPP, 210)

It is just such a “free being” that Bakunin seeks in “The Reaction”’s idea for a “practical autonomous Spirit.” To bring this being into focus, Bakunin resists what he perceives as the overly “positive” outcome of the Hegelian *Aufhebung*. For Bakunin, positive and negative cannot be mediated by third term; rather, the antithesis must remain radically incommensurate, for “negation has no other program than the destruction of whatever order prevails at the time” and cannot “externally be recognized with that which, according to its innermost nature, it must destroy.” (RG, 41) Bakunin thus sees radical negation as the ground of dialectical contradiction itself:

“Contradiction is not an equilibrium but a preponderance of the Negative. The Negative, as determining the life of the Positive itself, alone includes itself the totality of the contradiction.” (RG, 44–6, 49) Abandoning the “Hegelian trichotomy” in which opposites give way to a “higher, mediated third,” Bakunin brings to mind Schelling’s rotary motion in his argument that “the higher third...[is] implicit in the Negative thesis.” Bakunin thus prioritizes “negation as the...bearer of Spirit’s creative principle,” since the “creation of the future...demands the destruction of the existing reality.” This leads to Bakunin’s famous conclusion: “let us...trust the eternal Spirit which destroys and annihilates only because it is the unfathomable and eternal source of all life. The passion for destruction is a creative passion, too!” (RG, 57)

Bakunin’s “creative destruction” carries within it traces of the destructively creative negativity of Schelling’s rotary motion, whose equally unfathomable and “violent struggle” bears the source of life’s creativity. In turn, Bakunin transvalues Schelling’s conception of evil, associating it with a Miltonic or Blakean characterization of Satan as a “negative power...to rebel” within the “positive development” of human history. (GS, 10) This rebellious power is contingent both as the power by which contradiction’s radical negativity emerges from its ground to unsettle the present order of things, as well as contingent with respect to its actual consequences. In God and the State, Bakunin thus surreptitiously revives Schelling’s view of human freedom as a never-ending struggle between light and dark principles: “Real humanity presents a mixture of all that is sublime and beautiful with all that is...most monstrous.” (GS, 27) Bakunin similarly recalls Schelling in his “Protestation d’Alliance” (1871), which discloses a non-rational instinct within human existence that complicates Bakunin’s own post-Hegelian desire for an “essential” subjectivity: “Every man,” Bakunin writes, “carries within himself the germs of...[a] savage instinct...in its primitive essence...and every germ, as we know, because of a basic law of life, necessarily must develop and grow.” Bakunin’s description recalls Hegel’s view of an “inborn germ of death” within organic life that makes it inadequate

31 Ibid., 49.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., 51.
“to the universal,” while the “savage instinct” echoes Schelling’s description of rotary motion in the *Ages* as a “barbaric” principle that prevents being’s complete self-disclosure (W3, 106). At the same time, Bakunin’s use of the French word *germe*, which typically refers to a seed or embryo, also evokes Schelling’s use of the German *Keim* in the *Freedom* essay to refer to the “germ and seed from which a higher world is developed,” something “hidden in [the] eternal yearning” of the “initial anarchy” of the ground whose emergence might make possible different configurations of the whole. (FS, 33, 44)

Bakunin’s acknowledgment of a germ that potentially disrupts the universality of human essence and is somehow also a seed of development registers an ambivalence with respect to his Hegelian conception of “absolute science.” In *Federalism, Socialism, and Anti-Theologism* (1869), Bakunin will critique Hegel’s tendency to deduce “nature...from logic,” while in *Statism and Anarchy* (1873) Bakunin maintains a proto-Schellingian argument against “Idealists of every stripe” who attempt to defend “science over life.” Moreover, in the very same text that Bakunin advocates absolute science, *God and the State*, he also argues “science cannot go outside of the sphere of abstractions.” Like Schelling, Bakunin argues that science is concerned only “with individuals in general” rather than, as Schelling puts it, “*this* plant or this stone”: “Abstraction being its very nature, it can well enough conceive the principle of real and living individuality, but it can have no dealings with real and living individuals.” (GS, 56–58) Hence, Bakunin calls for a “revolt of life against science” whose purpose is not “to destroy science...but to remand it to its place” (GS, 59) as one system of knowledge among many, rather than *the* system. For Bakunin, the revolt of life against science is the resistance of life as existence, “unfathomable,” “fugitive, temporary, but real” (GS, 57) in its infinite variety, diversity, and contingency, a being neither “predetermined nor preconceived” but “open before human spontaneity.”

Bakunin’s ambivalent, often implicit, recuperations of Schelling expose what Saul Newman calls a “contradiction at the heart of

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36 Mikhail Bakunin, quoted in McLaughlin, *Mikhail Bakunin*, 207.
anarchist discourse” itself, namely, that a thoroughgoing anarchism compromises any politics, including anarchism itself, based upon a notion of essence. Instead, Bakunin’s post-Schellingian “barbaric principle” reveals political subjectivity to be “constituted by a desire” which “makes it unstable.” The instabilities within Bakunin’s struggle to think a negativity that is creatively destructive destabilizes his own desire for anarchism as an absolute science, marking the return of the repressed Schelling that looks forward to contemporary anarchists like Newman. For the latter, the fundamental insight of anarchism is the idea that the social “can have no stable meaning—no origin, and no grand dialectical movement towards a conclusion.... [I]dentify—social or individual—can never be completely constituted: it is always grounded in a lack...preventing it from achieving fullness.” In this context, the “anarchistic consequences” within Schelling can be said to look forward to a “post-anarchism” that revises the presuppositions within late nineteenth-century anarchism. Post-anarchism is a “supplement to anarchism, something that works persistently at its limits,” while “being motivated by the same anti-authoritarian ethos” In turn, post-anarchist theory attempts to think an ethics without foundations that in certain ways brings it closer to Schelling. For Simon Critchley, post-anarchism opens a space for thinking about the possibility of “action without principles,” which is generated by a “demand at the heart of my subjectivity that defines that subjectivity by dividing it and opening it to otherness.” As an encounter with an other that unsettles the “sovereignty of the self-transparent, self-coinciding ego,” this ethics without ground also points to gaps within the political such that “the State cannot...set itself up as Whole.”

Such ideas bear traces of Schelling’s demand for a philosophy that begins by acknowledging a reason divided from itself, a demand that post-anarchists see as harbouring the potential to hinder political manifestations of archē. Critchley speaks of this an-archic potential when he refers to democracy not as a “fixed political form,” but as a “deformation of society from itself through the act of material political manifestation.” The (non)logic of this deformation is prefigured

40 Ibid., 51.
42 Critchley, Infinitely Demanding, 130.
43 Ibid., 54.
44 Ibid., 129.
in Schelling’s deformation of being, which manifests a palpable dissensus within itself that risks its own democratization, generating zones of “violent struggle” within itself in its incessant revivification of antitheses. In this respect, Schelling ostensibly looks farther than Bakunin in anticipating some of the insights of post-anarchism. Regardless, in the end it is perhaps Schelling himself who is an irreducible remainder in the history of anarchism, a figure whose significance for that history remains to be thought through.

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