INTRODUCTION: SCHELLING AFTER THEORY

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After years of neglect by English-speaking historians of philosophy, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775–1854) is finally being recognized as one of the most important of the German idealists.¹ Schelling’s long career began with the torrent of works he authored in *Naturphilosophie* (treatises that inspired, among many others, the young Hegel) and finished with the monumental lectures on the Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation. These last lectures are still largely untranslated but are widely recognized as sounding the death-knell of German idealism and the beginning of existentialism.² The experimental works of Schelling’s middle period (1809–1815) have received considerable attention as precursors of Heidegger and Lacan.³ With the founding of the North American Schelling Society in 2011, we can safely say the tide has turned.⁴

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⁴ The first meeting of the North American Schelling Society was held at the end of August 2012 at Seattle University. The second meeting was in August 2013 at the University of Western Ontario. The third was held in New York City in August 2014. The fourth meeting is scheduled for St. John’s Newfoundland, September 2015. For more information see [http://schellingsociety.org/]. A selection of the papers from the first meeting of NASS have been published in *Analecta Hermeneutica* [http://journals.library.mun.ca/ojs/index.php/analecta].
On the subject of Schelling’s philosophy, Heidegger writes, “Every philosophical work, if it is a philosophical work, drives philosophy beyond the standpoint taken in the work.” But this awareness of the necessary incompleteness and future urgency of speculative thought has its own dangers. For much of the twentieth century, even when he has been read for the future rather than in a purely exegetical way, Schelling has been a “vanishing mediator” between Idealism and its successors. For Fredric Jameson, who introduces the concept with reference to Max Weber, the “vanishing mediator” functions as a catalyst for the transition from the residual to the emergent, a model that privileges the earlier as a shadowy type of the later. Thus Heidegger’s own reading, which is limited to the Freedom essay (1809), focuses on the tension between freedom and system, and concludes, in effect, that the anthropological residues in Schelling’s text and the desire for system hold him back from becoming Heidegger and developing the analytics of finitude. In a similar vein, Schelling has been interpreted as an enabling figure on the way to Rosenzweig, and to Marxist, existential, or post-Heideggerian thought, including that of Jean-Luc Nancy into whose Experience of Freedom he has been so thoroughly sublated that he is only mentioned twice.

But picking up Jameson’s phrase, Slavoj Žižek sees the role of Schelling as vanishing mediator differently: as “render[ing] visible,” “as it were in a flash...something that was invisible beforehand and withdrew into invisibility thereafter.” As a “phenomenon,” a showing of something with which we are still struggling to come to terms in a missed encounter, Schelling is now increasingly seen as a thinker to whom we must return because, as Foucault says of Hegel, whenever we think we have passed beyond him, we “find ourselves

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brought back to him, only from a different angle."\textsuperscript{10} The recent founding of the North American Schelling Society (NASS) has crystallized a renewed and, we suggest, a new kind of interest in Schelling, marked by an increasing number of experimental books and articles on his work.\textsuperscript{11} Without subscribing to Žižek’s reductively Lacanian reading of Schelling, the essays collected in this cluster argue that regardless of whether the more recent work on Schelling explicitly engages him with or through contemporary “Theory,” in an archeological or structural sense this work comes after Theory, that is to say, the topics taken up and the way Schelling is read would not have been possible without Theory.

Of course, it is not that Schelling was entirely ignored in the English-speaking world until recently. In his own period Crabb Robinson

\textsuperscript{10} Michel Foucault, “The Discourse on Language” (1971), (tr.) Rupert Swyer, in \textit{The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language} (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 235.

(1775–1867) attended his lectures in Jena. And Schelling was read in German, when Hegel was still unknown, by a small group of Cole-
ridgeans, notably the German-educated comparative anatomist and surgeon, Joseph Henry Green (1791–1863), and Coleridge himself (1772–1834), who read whatever he could get, including the Freedom essay and The Deities of Samothrace, though not the late philosophy and Ages of the World, whose publication he awaited but which did not appear in his lifetime. Although Coleridge's understanding of Schelling was at first oriented by the System of Transcendental Ideal-

ism (1800), so that even the turn against Fichte was subsumed into the idealism that is "the soul of philosophy" without the realism that is its "body,"12 as Coleridge thought more about the Naturphilosophie and the Freedom essay, he became steadily more alarmed at the consequences of not giving the designing power in nature to God and allowing for an autotelic or even autogenetic nature. Coleridge (unlike others) saw that Schelling was a deeply anti-foundationalist thinker and anxiously aborted his lectures on the history of philoso-

phy (1818–19) before properly addressing Schelling, who was to have been their culmination.

Though he may have maintained a more complex secret relation-

ship to Schelling13, Coleridge's anxieties about pantheism and his turn against Schelling for being irreligious, which was almost un-
avoidable given the cultural context of Regency England, probably paved the way for the second wave of British idealism. In this sec-

ond, Victorian and early twentieth-century, phase (represented by J.H. Stirling, T.H. Green, E. Caird, F.H. Bradley, and others), Schelling was displaced by Hegel, and by a very particular Hegel aligned with the Philosophy of Right and a theory of the state. By contrast, the nineteenth-century American reception of both Hegel and Schelling was more complex and non-ideological than the British.14 The first


14 The reception of Schelling by C. S. Peirce is in particular need of research for the influence seems significant, not only for Peirce studies but also for the number of fields to which Peirce contributed, from the philosophy of science to semiotics. Peirce makes a passing reference to Schelling in "The Law of Mind." See The Essential Writings of Peirce, volume 1, (ed.) N. Houser and C. Kloesel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 313. In a letter to William James
translations of Schelling’s works into English appeared in The Journal of Speculative Philosophy and included On University Studies (1803/4), Introduction to First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature (1799), as well as various current commentaries on Idealism, which were by no means centered on Hegel.15 Although this archive has yet to be fully explored, what we can say is that, though the Journal is wide-ranging in its scope (discussing Schubert, Schopenhauer, Fichte, Baader, Rosenkranz and many lesser-known figures), Schelling is not taken up in any integrated way, something that can also be said of much twentieth-century work on Schelling.16

The renewed interest in Schelling’s thought now underway, which is attested by the influential anthologies, The New Schelling and Schelling Now17, has two aspects that we try to capture under the rubric of “Schelling After Theory.” Derrida describes “Theory” as “an original articulation of literary theory, philosophy, psychoanalysis, linguistics, and so forth,” thus characterizing it as an essentially inter- (rather than multi-) disciplinary endeavour but, one could say,
at a transcendental and not simply empirical level. The transferences and ligatures between disciplines, and the “intersciences” thus produced, result in a “transformed Humanities” or “new” Humanities” that Derrida describes at greater length in his essays “Titles” and “Sendoffs.”¹⁸ The essays collected here build on this interdisciplinarity of Theory in extending Schelling studies into domains other than philosophy, by recognizing that he himself extends philosophy in this way. Moreover, previous work on Schelling had either approached parts of his corpus—aesthetics, transcendental idealism, Naturphilosophie, the philosophy of mythology and religion—separately. Or they had provided surveys of his career in stages. But the current Schelling Renaissance sees the work, in its very difference from itself, as an integrity. Schelling worked on many tracks at once; he produced multiple introductions, first outlines, ideas for, and systems that are in dissensus with each other, thus provoking Hegel’s criticism that we search in vain for any text that presents his philosophy definitively. Bruce Matthews calls this process Schelling’s “organic form of philosophy,” in which even works like the System are not “discrete moments of logos” but part of the often contradictory “activity of a person constructing their own philosophical system.”¹⁹ Schelling himself wrote that contemplating knowledge in “a system” or “form of coexistence, presupposes...that originally...it does not exist in a system” and is an “asystaton...something that is in inner conflict.”²⁰ In the wake of Theory’s interest in writing or écriture, it has become clear that this “asystasy” is not inconsistency, but a new way of doing philosophy, and that the different areas and “stages” of Schelling’s work need to be continuously thought through each other.

In taking up Schelling after Theory, some of the essays in this cluster explicitly approach him alongside contemporary theorists or thinkers who have become part of the corpus of Theory. Thus John Vanderheide begins with Gilles Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche, the one nineteenth-century philosopher who has been privileged as post-metaphysical since the famous 1967 conference at Johns Hop-

¹⁹ Matthews, Schelling’s Organic Form of Philosophy, 3, 12.
kins that supposedly inaugurated “Theory” in North America. Vanderheide specifically takes aim at a hermeneutic that reads Schelling forward to Deleuze while sifting out the former’s supposedly essentialist metaphysics, and instead proposes an intellectual-historical model of “reverse engineering.” In this case it is Nietzsche who becomes something of a vanishing mediator, as Vanderheide uses the eternal return as the repetition of difference to think through the coexistence of the planes of past, present, and future in the *Ages of the World* and to bring out Deleuze’s unacknowledged debt to Schelling.

A subject of fascination for many theorists is the later Schelling’s position on the primordiality of chaos and its ontogenic (but not moral) primacy over order, structure and reason. This point is the occasion for Tyler Tritten’s confrontation of the late Schelling’s philosophical theology with Meillassoux’s speculative realism. Where Meillassoux argues for the necessity of contingency, Schelling, in Tritten’s view, makes an even more interesting argument for the contingency of necessity. Order, necessity, perhaps even the being of God, the *ens necessarium*, may be real, but that is not to say that they are *necessary*. Indeed, the fact that the existence of structure, reason, and God can be questioned—can be experienced with wonder as something that need not be—indicates that these are basically contingent. According to Tritten, Schelling’s notion of chaos is even more radical than Meillassoux’s for it indicates that nothing at all exists necessarily. Being itself is a contingent fact.

Schelling’s thesis concerning the radical contingency of order has been elaborated by Žižek as a pre-figuration of the Lacanian symbolic. Joseph Carew follows Žižek and examines how for Schelling order is always *after the fact*, barely concealing the contingency of its genesis, and therefore the possibility of its opposite, and lending ontological legitimacy to Lacan’s notion of subjectivity as a repressive reaction to the irrationality of its own beginnings.

Assuming an interdisciplinarity that was always in German idealist and Romantic philosophy, but to which we have become sensitive in the wake of Theory, further essays take up aspects of Schelling’s work and legacy that extend philosophy from being a purely eidetic or ideal science into being engaged with what he calls the “real” sciences, and they thus put philosophy in conversation with other fields through Schelling’s work. The essays by McGrath and Barentsen engage the relevance of Schelling for psychiatry and therapy.

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but in a post-Freudian key. For Gord Barentsen, the clear point of contact between Schelling and dynamic psychiatry is the philosophically underexplored Jung (not Lacan), for both Schelling and Jung, unlike Lacan, are interested in underscoring the continuity of psychic and natural structure. Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* describes life as a play of opposing drives but without extending the analysis into the dynamics of the psyche, a task Schelling takes up in the *Freedom Essay* and the *Ages of the World* drafts. Here Jung’s “archetypal psychology” becomes significant for Barentsen, offering “a therapeutics for both the nascent subject of Schelling *Naturphilosophie* and the ontoaesthetic subject of *Ages [of the World]*.”

Sean J. McGrath does not wish to restrict Schelling’s psychotherapeutic relevance to either Lacan or Jung but argues for a properly Schellingian analysis, one which would enable us to retrieve the largely forgotten heritage of Romantic psychiatry, in particular the dissociationist model of the psyche, which was strategically rejected by Freud and somewhat clumsily revised by Jung, but which has its own intelligibility and applicability. A Schellingian dissociationist psychoanalysis, McGrath argues, would depart from Freud *and* Jung in being both a metaphysical and a moral therapy.

Continuing the interest of post-Marxist thinkers like Bloch, Habermas and Žižek in Schelling, Jared McGeough goes back to Bakunin, who attended Schelling’s lectures in the 1840s only to profess disappointment at what he and other political thinkers such as Engels in his “Anti-Schelling” (1841) experienced as a missed encounter. In the heated atmosphere of the time, Hegel and Schelling were not just philosophers whose work could “be understood in their own terms,” but “sites of contest and struggle” that led to their cultural “reification,” in Schelling’s case as a religious conservative and relic of idealist metaphysics. Constructing a three-way conversation among Schelling, Bakunin, and contemporary post-anarchist theory, McGeough not only suggests that Bakunin’s reactive embrace of Hegel betrays him into a form of Reason in History at odds with Bakunin’s own desire for a philosophy of existence; he also suggests that despite its critique of classical anarchism’s “essentialism,” post-anarchism’s standard history of ideas repeats a dialectic of enlightenment that disavows Schelling. Importantly, then, McGeough reads Schelling’s ontological anxiety on its own terms so as to argue that the positive philosophy, and not just the middle work on which

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Theory has so far concentrated, provide unexplored resources for anarchism in combining a philosophy of contingency with one that “distinguishes itself through positive assertions”\textsuperscript{23} and a commitment to the actual rather than the merely theoretical.

Schelling himself, taking issue with Kant’s restriction of philosophy to the “lower” faculty, argues that philosophy cannot be a \textit{Fachwissenschaft}, or special discipline, because “philosophy is everywhere.”\textsuperscript{24} With this imperative in mind, Bruce Matthews also takes up how Schelling’s philosophy speaks to a wider world, one in the grip of ecological crisis and the dawning realization of the irreversibility of the human ecological footprint. The notion of the Anthropocene, the geological era constituted by human presence and activity on the planet, is typically announced with a sense of gloom; Matthews draws on the early Schelling to argue that the notion need not be apocalyptic. Schelling already described the human being nature’s consciousness of itself; thus the human being is in no way one being among others but the being whose burden it is to know itself as nature. Such an integrated understanding of human nature and mind might allow us to reconsider nature in general as the sacred whole of being without regressing to sentimental re-enchantment strategies.

Matthews’ work is characteristic of recent work on Schelling which grants his \textit{Naturphilosophie} a prominence that is in almost inverse proportion to an earlier modern tendency to dismiss it, along with that of Hegel, as a relic of pre-Darwinian and anti-experimental science.\textsuperscript{25} In contrast to the nineteenth-century mystification of \textit{Naturphilosophie} as asserting the unity of all things, the contemporary return to nature in Schelling studies focuses on it as a site of contingency and difference. Iain Hamilton Grant’s seminal \textit{Philosophies of Nature After Schelling} obviously comes to mind, but the turn is broader. We now recognize how closely Schelling was in touch with the science of his time (which cannot be neatly divided into empirical vs. idealist) and how much he can still be put in dialogue with science today. In the wake of a Theory that allows us to see how different fields are bound together (in Schelling’s special sense of \textit{das Band} or the copula, elaborated by Grant), and to see how one field is an intensification of another, the new emphasis on doing “philosophy

\textsuperscript{23} Schelling, \textit{Grounding}, 183.


in accordance with nature”\textsuperscript{26} has also penetrated our understanding of other areas in Schelling’s diverse corpus such as religion and aesthetics. It has reoriented other approaches to his work such as the deconstructive, or the broadly existential approach that goes back to Jean Wahl. And it has changed our very sense of how thought arises, given Schelling’s claim that mind unfolds from within nature, that “the system of nature is at the same time the system of our mind.”\textsuperscript{27}

In his essay in this volume, Grant explains the Schellingian premise of his own work, namely that the starting point of thinking, reflection, or consciousness, is not thinking and cannot be reflectively retrieved. Extending his analysis of nature-philosophy into Schelling’s later philosophy, Grant argues that nature-philosophy is positive philosophy to the extent that nature always precedes its own exhibition. Grant tracks Schelling’s various elaborations of the role of the copula in judgments to show how Schelling’s logic is a field logic, a logic that depends upon conditions which exceed its own powers of explication. As a result of this irrecoverable natural environing of thinking, the copula in a judgment produces an identity without end, for each iteration of the identity differs from its antecedent and its consequent.

Building on Grant’s claim for a “necessary bond between philosophy and physics” (or \textit{physis}), Daniel Whistler’s essay takes up Schelling at the metaphilosophical level and asks what practices of writing and reading are self-referentially applicable to Schelling’s texts. He suggests that “a dynamics of language” is an integral part of \textit{Naturphilosophie}, and that a reading of Schelling’s texts, rather than being allegorical in the sense of translating them into another discourse or concentrating on their “figurative remainders,” should be tautological or “literal.” While the word literal is polemical, it can be taken as a figure for reading Schelling on his own terms and for the resistance of those terms to being updated or “domesticated” into more familiar language. Thus literal reading would proceed according to “the Schellingian doctrine of potentiation (or repetition with intensification)”: a model that carries with it a Deleuzian intensification, but which (at least in Schelling’s case) also evokes Novalis.

\textsuperscript{27} F. W. J. Schelling, \textit{Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature as Introduction to this Science (1797), 2\textsuperscript{nd} edition (1803)}, (tr.) Errol E. Harris and Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 30.
Gabriel Trop's essay—though in a different register from the speculative realist one into which Whistler translates Schelling—provides an example of what such reading might entail. Like other contributors, Trop is concerned with the relation between different areas of Schelling’s corpus within an “architecture of philosophy”\(^{28}\) that has tended to domesticate them. Taking up Grant’s attempt to “read Schelling’s Naturphilosophie as a systematic process of ‘unconditioning,’” that is, to trace the archeological effects of the Naturphilosophie throughout Schelling’s corpus, Trop focuses on an aesthetics that, he argues, cannot be reduced to the philosophy of art. For in its earliest formulation, aesthetics actually claims to study “not simply the work of art, but everything that appears,” while \textit{ars pulchri cogitandi} (as an ethics of beautiful thinking, in Baumgarten’s well-known terms) is just one subdivision of this broader field: one that relies on analogy (\textit{ars analogi rationis}) so as also to make art a supplement to metaphysics. Eschewing Kant’s analogical and purely regulative coordination of the different fields, Trop therefore tries to recover the “primordial ontology of aesthetics” from its derivative epistemological, metaphysical and ethical orders, by thinking aesthetics for Schelling as already present in “\textit{physis} as a domain logically prior to \textit{techne}.” He is therefore concerned with aesthetics as it emerges from nature, as a “play of forces coextensive with the organization of matter itself,” and by extension is also concerned with a philosophy “in” rather than “of” nature.

The volume closes with two essays that exhibit both the interdisciplinary nature of Theory and the rich resource of still unexploited ideas Schelling offers the field. Rajan examines the early Schelling’s use of the pre-Darwinian concept of evolution and the ways in which it allows for an elaboration of multiple trans-disciplinary models of development. The Schellingian project of an encyclopedic study of the life-science is put into discussion both with Hegel’s better known system and Latour’s political ecology. Steigerwald closes the volume with a survey of Schelling’s usages of the notions of ground and grounding from the early nature-philosophy to the \textit{Ages of the World}, noticing that in each case what becomes apparent is not only that nothing is without a ground, but that, inasmuch as the nothing is co-posted with the very notion of ground, the work of grounding is itself a work of ungrounding.

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