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**Subjects of the Unconditioned:
Kant's Critical Metaphysics and Aesthetics and Their
Reconstruction in Schelling's Identity-Philosophy**

By Luke R. Moffat

A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Philosophy

University of Kent

Submitted 24/02/2017

Word Count: 88, 982

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank Edward Kanterian, for helping me make this thesis a reality. His tireless support, patience and knowledge have inspired me, and guided me in difficult times. Edward is a true philosopher, and knows more about Kant than anyone I have met. I would not have been able to do this PhD without him. I would also like to thank Ian Cooper, who has given me invaluable insights into the labyrinthine world of Schelling's philosophy. Thanks to David Corfield, for taking the time to engage with my ideas, and teaching me about homotopy type theory. Thanks to Julia Tanney, for challenging me, even when I did not realise it. Thanks to Iain Grant, for first revealing to me the value of philosophical adventures. Thanks to Jacqui Martlew, for always offering support when I had no idea what to do. Thanks to my family, my deepest tree roots, who have been there through everything. Thanks to Mireya Escalante, whose unending spirit of generosity got us through the final months. Thanks to my wife Maria, for showing me the way.

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And should I then presume?

And how should I begin?

T.S. Eliot

Introduction to the Thesis

This thesis is about nature, in a certain sense. However, it is not a work of natural philosophy. Instead, this thesis uses nature as a lens, or refractive mirror, through which to examine an altogether more inscrutable idea. The unconditioned. There are various ways in which one can “get started” with this idea, so to speak. In order to get started here, I must first put the unconditioned into a very specific context: the years 1781 – 1804, and two German philosophers, Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling.

Both Kant’s and Schelling’s works are difficult, and diverse in their objects of study. There are four chapters in this thesis, and any one of them could have easily been extended to become a thesis in its own right. There is a wealth of varying opinion on both Kant and Schelling, not just in the years that I cover, but also across the whole of their intellectual (and often personal) lives. Despite the difference of scholarly opinion regarding each philosopher’s work, I found in my research that the idea of the unconditioned kept re-emerging, sitting there stubbornly on the corner of the page, or in my peripheral vision. In searching for ways to comparatively examine Kant’s and Schelling’s philosophy, it was the unconditioned which, in some yet to be articulated manner, sunk into the foundations of my thinking.

Before getting started proper, therefore, it is incumbent upon me to bring the unconditioned into view. Firstly, the word: unconditioned, which in the original German is *das Unbedingte*. What first struck me about this idea is how it transforms in the change of hands from Kant to Schelling. Kant speaks almost exclusively in his critical philosophy of the unconditioned. Schelling, on the other hand, speaks of another similar yet not quite identical idea: the absolute. Both ideas troubled both men for many years. Both ideas seem to lie on the very edge of what is expressible, philosophically or otherwise. And yet, both the unconditioned and the absolute, in differing ways, represent two of the central pillars in Kant’s and Schelling’s thinking between 1781 and 1804.

This thesis is about the unconditioned and the absolute, and how Kant and Schelling articulate them in their philosophy. It is about the extent to which these ideas can be articulated by philosophy at all. This thesis is about how Kant's and Schelling's respective conceptions of nature can help to illuminate their attitudes toward the unconditioned on the one hand, and the absolute on the other.

There are two philosophical constructions of nature with which I deal across the following four chapters. One is metaphysical, and the other is aesthetic. In both cases, I argue that the problem of articulating the unconditioned or absolute is of central importance. For both Kant and Schelling, an unconditioned ground is necessary to secure philosophy's place as a science. Kant seeks an unconditioned ground for knowledge, one that is constructed out of a critical analysis of the faculty of reason. For Schelling, an unconditioned ground for all things is the necessary starting point for philosophy. For Kant, philosophy seeks the unconditioned; for Schelling, it begins there. For Kant, the unconditioned is a rational principle; for Schelling, it is a mode of being.

There are now two distinct ideas in play: the unconditioned or absolute on the one hand, and nature on the other. In order to establish how these ideas will function in this thesis, a couple of issues should be mentioned at this point. The first is the idea of God, which does not feature prominently in my discussion of Kant, but does appear in my discussion of Schelling, especially chapter four on Schelling's philosophy of art. The second is the precise use of nature with which I operate. Both of these issues are interrelated, and so I will dwell for a moment on each in turn. At various points in Kant's work, he calls both God and nature the highest points of transcendental philosophy.¹ God is of course bound up with nature for Kant, to the extent that teleological judgments predicated of nature lead one to what Kant calls the super-sensible. Without wishing to simplify, at this point it suffices to say that the distinction between nature and God for Kant rests upon the distinction between the sensible and the super-sensible. This distinction is supported in, for example, Kant's

¹ The first declaration can be found, among other places, in the 1793 essay *What Real Progress has Metaphysics Made in Germany Since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff?* (c. 20:292-3). The second can be found in Kant's 1783 *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (4:318).

1793 essay *What Real Progress has Metaphysics Made in Germany Since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff*, wherein Kant assigns the sensible to the metaphysics of nature, and the super-sensible to the metaphysics of morals (20:293). By itself, this distinction between the sensible and the super-sensible is not hugely significant in terms of the God/nature issue, since both God and nature have their super-sensible objects (i.e. objects that cannot be experienced).

Indeed, Kant makes it clear in the *Progress* essay that the metaphysics of nature and of freedom should not be considered as wholly separate sciences (ibid.). The more important distinction for Kant is that between theoretical and practical reason, and it is according to this distinction that the realms of nature and God are separable. Kant sharply distinguishes between metaphysics of nature and metaphysics of morals, the latter dealing with questions purporting to freedom, the moral law and ultimately, theology. While a trajectory can be laid out which leads from one domain to the other, and while this trajectory may indeed be necessary for Kant's philosophy, nature and God are by no means the same domain for him.

In the case of Schelling, the boundaries are not quite so clearly defined. As the reader will see in chapter four especially, it is often unclear exactly how God is at all distinguished from nature, the absolute, or the universe. Whereas Kant conducts his philosophy in a way that makes it fairly easy to limit one's discussion to a specific issue, Schelling's writing by comparison allows for no such easy compartmentalisation, and this is why God necessarily appears in the latter half of this thesis. Having stated the above, it should be clear that I do not wish to enter a discussion on the extent to which Kant and Schelling mean the same thing when they refer to God; my point of comparison is rather between their conceptions of nature and the unconditioned or absolute.

One of the most fundamental divisions Schelling sought to disassemble, mentioned above, was that between theoretical and practical philosophy. For Schelling, there is no experience of nature on the one hand, and nature in itself on the other. This is why nature cannot be spoken of in the same terms when talking about Kant as opposed to Schelling. When I talk about metaphysical and aesthetic

constructions of nature, I am talking about nature at its most fundamental level. I am talking about the possibility of nature itself, and with it, the possibility of thinking about nature. My specific focus is on Kant's idea of nature in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which I take to be synonymous with Kant's deductions of the laws of experience. The question of nature in this respect is the question of *knowledge* of nature. When I consider nature aesthetically, I am referring to Kant's theories of judgments of taste and teleological judgments. Once again, these have to do with the way Kant conceives of the faculties of human cognition. I do not, for example, conduct an analysis of Kant's *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, though this book is surely still worthy of study. I am more focussed on how the metaphysical basis for knowledge on the one hand, and matters of taste on the other, inform and are challenged by Schelling's philosophy. When I talk about metaphysics of nature, I do not mean metaphysics of natural science. I am referring to that which makes metaphysics of nature possible in the first place, I am referring to the most basic construction of nature by philosophy, and where that nature is situated in the system of human thinking. For Kant, nature appears in a metaphysics of experience, for Schelling, it appears in a metaphysics of identity. These two metaphysical positions, in crude form, are the two halves of this thesis.

So, the reader is now faced with two distinct ideas, the unconditioned or absolute on one hand, and nature on the other. Faced with the same two ideas, I came to realise that it was precisely the relationship between them which would form the common thread of comparison between Kant and Schelling. How is nature related to the unconditioned in Kant, and how is it related to the absolute in Schelling? In Schelling's case, the matter is not so straightforward, as, during the years of Schelling's career covered in this thesis, he modulates from unconditioned to absolute, and does not make clear what difference, if any he sees between them. From this initial common ground, and its subsequent differentiation in Kant's and Schelling's metaphysical method, one general question and two specific ones emerge. The general question, which applies to Kant and Schelling both, can be posed as follows:

How can philosophy articulate the unconditioned or absolute, and what role does nature play in this?

The specific questions apply to Kant and Schelling respectively.

1. How can the unconditioned be articulated by critical metaphysics?
2. How can the absolute be articulated through identity-philosophy?

These questions, in order to be addressed, require an explanation of each term. What does nature mean for Kant, and for Schelling? What is the meaning of the unconditioned, or the absolute? What are contemporary readers to understand by these terms? These questions in turn lead to a further division in my thesis. Neither Kant nor Schelling are exclusively metaphysicians, their philosophical systems both contain works in aesthetics. Furthermore, both Kant and Schelling give poetry a privileged position in the arts. So, as well as this thesis comparing Kant's and Schelling's philosophy, it is also a comparison between their metaphysics and aesthetics. Several questions guide this comparison. What may it be that art can tell us which philosophy cannot? What distinguishes the insights of the philosopher from those of the artist? Which point of view can best provide an articulation of the unconditioned, or of the absolute? These are all questions with which this thesis is concerned.

In this thesis, I read Kant and Schelling in a particular way. Due to my concern with how they each articulate the unconditioned or absolute in their philosophy, I largely read Kant through the lens of Schelling's *response* to Kant. By this I mean that I have carefully chosen themes and specific arguments in Kant's critical philosophy which resonate with those I discuss in Schelling. I do this for three reasons. Firstly, to extract particular problems from the wealth of Kant's and Schelling's texts which I believe are of enduring importance. Secondly, to read Kant in a way that he is rarely read. And thirdly, to bring Schelling more into the arena of post-Kantian scholarship. I must make clear that in reading Kant and Schelling in this way, I do not wish to make Kant merely a precursor

to Schelling, nor Schelling merely a commentator on Kant. Both philosophers wrote on a huge array of topics during their respective careers. Nor do I wish to claim that nature's relation to the unconditioned or absolute is what Kant or Schelling were "really" talking about, even when they appeared to be discussing something else. Instead, I wish to employ the idea of nature and Schelling's response to Kant as methodological tools, which help to concentrate the focus of my thesis.²

In addition to these theoretical and methodological considerations, there are also three pragmatic issues which I need to mention here. The first concerns the historical period that this thesis covers (1781-1804). This period is comprised out of two smaller periods, one from 1781 to 1790, and the other from 1795 to 1804. The first covers the primary texts by Kant that I discuss in chapters one and two, these being the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781/7), and the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790) respectively. Kant wrote three *Critiques* in this period, the second one being the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1988), but my discussion of Kant focuses on the connections between the first and the third. Though I also discuss other earlier texts by Kant, this is largely for purposes of context, and they are not analysed in the same depth as the first and third *Critiques*. The period 1795-1804 covers the texts by Schelling that I discuss, which are greater in number. The significant ones are *Of the I as a Principle of Philosophy* (1795) *Treatise Explicatory of the Idealism in the Science of Knowledge* (1797), *First outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature* (1799), the *Presentation of my System of Philosophy* (1801) and *Further Presentations from the System of Philosophy* (1802), and the *Philosophy of Art*, which Schelling gave as a series of lectures in 1802 and again in 1804.

² There is a growing area of scholarship examining these and similar issues, in particular the Kant-Schelling connection. Though I do not deal with them at length here, there are two good examples of this in Paul Franks' *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism* (2005) and Michelle Kosch's *Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling and Kierkegaard* (2010)

The second pragmatic issue concerns my labelling of the two philosophical topics that I examine in Kant's and Schelling's work, namely, 'metaphysics' and 'aesthetics'. The title of this thesis refers to Kant's 'critical' philosophy, and Schelling's 'identity-philosophy'. The first term is perhaps more self-explanatory than the second. It is generally agreed that the first publication of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781, marks the official beginning of his critical period. Therefore, I read the first *Critique* according to the ways in which it proposes Kant's critical metaphysics, and the third *Critique* according to the ways in which it proposes Kant's critical aesthetics. Schelling's identity-philosophy, however, does not have such a clear start date. While Schelling's *Presentation of my System of Philosophy* of 1801 can be viewed as the first official declaration and definition of identity-philosophy, there are antecedents to it evident in earlier work. Also, Schelling remarks in the *Presentation* that he had always held the identity-philosophy to be his fundamental method, of which earlier works were merely components. I use the label of 'identity-philosophy' with this in mind. I take Schelling's identity-philosophy, at least in the period which I cover, to be his metaphysical method. Schelling does not refer to his writings on art as aesthetics, but rather as a philosophy of art. The *Philosophy of Art* lectures themselves are composed according to the same method of identity-philosophy. I therefore choose this term to refer to the period I cover as a whole.

The third and final pragmatic issue concerns the structure of my thesis. The thesis has two parts. The first part is dedicated to Kant, the second part to Schelling. Chapters one and two discuss Kant's metaphysics and aesthetics respectively, and chapters three and four discuss Schelling's metaphysics and philosophy of art respectively. While the thesis as a whole is intended to be read in order, I should note that some points which are raised in chapter one are answered in chapter three, specifically on the issue of the relation between the unconditioned and nature. The same is true of chapters two and four. I will make clear which points these are in the text itself, but it will be useful to keep this general structural point in mind.

Kant and Schelling are both challenging but fascinating philosophers. While they differ in many ways, one thing can be said equally of both; that one receives from their philosophy as much as one puts into it. In this thesis I have expended a great deal of myself not only to construct an argument worth making, but also to navigate the labyrinths contained in the texts themselves. My ideas emerged from a research process that was not defined before it began, but rather came to be defined only in looking back to ground that had already been crossed.

PART ONE

KANT

THE CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Chapter One: Making Boundaries in Metaphysics

1.1. The Conflicts of Metaphysics

Abstract

This exposition introduces Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* via the demand of reason for the unconditioned. In order to elucidate this concept of the unconditioned, I first provide some historical context behind Kant's composition of the first *Critique*. I then outline the nature of the demand of reason as it articulated in the two Prefaces to the *Critique* in the A and B editions of the text. This leads me to a summary of transcendental idealism as Kant's metaphysical method. Vitally, this involves the insoluble distinction between appearances and things in themselves. I make sense of this via Kant's "Copernican hypothesis" and its significance for the critical philosophy more generally. It is at this point that I define my own reading of Kant, through a brief review of dominant traditions in Kant scholarship and assumptions associated with them. I make clear that my reading of Kant prominently involves the "idealist" preoccupation with self-world relations in the *Critique*. I too adopt this concern and use it to introduce Kant's idea of the unconditioned proper. I conclude by relating this idea of the unconditioned to the question of nature. This sets up the problem, which the rest of chapter one examines the possibility of solving.

1.1.1. Contextualising the *Critique*

The publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781 marks a radical shift in the history of Western metaphysics.³ Composed over ten years — a period referred to as Kant’s “silent decade” — the *CPR* is Kant’s first official articulation of transcendental idealism.⁴ It is with this new method of philosophy that Kant attempts to put metaphysics on the path of a science.⁵ Kant characterises metaphysics as a ‘battle-ground’, in which its procedure has so far remained ‘a merely random groping’ (Bxv). Transcendental idealism, then, is Kant’s attempt to resolve the conflict of metaphysics. So audacious was Kant’s task, that he published a second edition of the *CPR* in 1787, which contained substantial revisions and clarifications. This dual status of Kant’s text, while not discrediting Kant’s thought itself, does reveal a philosopher embroiled in struggles to achieve the clarity and completeness he believes metaphysics should possess. The story of how Kant came to realise this need to resolve the conflict of metaphysics is not a simple one. Opinion varies on the consistency of Kant’s views in his work prior to the *CPR*.⁶ While it is true that Kant’s pre-critical

3 Hereafter *CPR*.

4 Between his *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770, and the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781, Kant published only three texts, a review of the work of Moscati, an Italian surgeon and professor of anatomy (1771), *Of the Different Races of Human Beings* (1775), which was attached to an announcement for Kant’s lectures on physical geography, and two articles pertaining to Kant’s involvement with the Philanthropinum, a reformist school established in Dessau in 1774. These were published anonymously between 1776-7. In 1777 Kant composed the essay *Concerning Poetic Fiction and Sensor Illusion*, as a response to J.G. Kreutzfeld’s disputation at the latter’s inaugural dissertation as professor of poetry at the University of Königsberg. However, Kant never published this response during his lifetime, and the essay was not published in German until 1910. *Sensory Illusion* has been translated into English by Ralf Meerbote in Lewis Beck’s book *Kant’s Latin Writings* (1992, 2nd ed.). Meerbote includes with his translation an introductory essay containing some interesting comments on Kant’s view of sensibility, which anticipate Kant’s analysis of sensible intuition in the *CPR*.

5 *CPR* Bvii.

6 For example, Gardner claims that Kant’s pre-critical writings ‘do not express a unified philosophical outlook...[or a] cumulative progress towards one’. These writings rather give the impression of

writings cover a diverse range of subjects, one thing that does seem to persist through Kant's early work is a desire to reconcile metaphysics with natural science. In particular, Kant sought to provide a viable metaphysical foundation for the principles of Newtonian mechanics. With this exposition I therefore aim to summarise some of the reasons, meanings, and consequences of Kant conducting his metaphysics in a Newtonian universe. To do this, I briefly examine some of Kant's pre-critical writings, which help contextualise Kant's possible motivations in composing the *CPR*.

Kant's attempt to reconcile metaphysics with Newtonian mechanics is most explicitly articulated in the *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* (1755), in which Kant sought to provide a purely mechanical explanation for the origin of the physical universe. In so doing, Kant confirmed his belief in the validity of Newton's principles for describing the natural world. However, Kant went further than Newton in defending a mechanical account of the universe. While Newton claimed that the system of mechanics was the direct result of a divine hand, Kant advanced the "nebular hypothesis" in which God's existence is not directly necessary for explaining the formation and evolution of the universe.⁷ In place of divine creation, Kant developed a dynamic theory of matter in which matter possesses an inherent drive to form itself into harmonious arrangements. In the *Universal History* Kant believed that he could account for the entire universe according to Newton's principles of attractive and repulsive force.⁸ This does not mean, however, that Newtonian science provides a complete description of reality for Kant. In addition, natural science requires some form of metaphysical support. Kant's dynamic theory of matter is not a physical theory; it is a metaphysical one.

'continual dissatisfaction and experimentation' (1999, p. 13). Beiser opposes these claims and instead argues that 'there is a single aim to all of Kant's major early writings', which was to 'provide a foundation for the metaphysics of nature' (in Guyer, ed. 1992, p. 30).

⁷ *Universal History* (trans. Hastie, 1969, p. 35).

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 23.

While Kant's metaphysical position in the *Universal History* differs from that of the *CPR*, what remains in the latter is Kant's contention that to merely observe empirical evidence is not sufficient for explaining one's relation to the natural world. It matters also how one *conducts* such observations, the foundational principles that inform one's investigations. If one observes the physical world according to the assumption that matter is inherently dynamic, one will reach different conclusions than if one conceives of matter as dead or inert.

Kant's view of how one should conduct metaphysics changed several times before he composed the *CPR*.⁹ Kant moved away from the belief that metaphysics should follow the methods of Newtonian science, leading to what Beiser has referred to as Kant's 'turbulent decade' between 1760 and 1769 (1992, p. 36). Beiser's account of this period tends to over-simplify matters, and 'turbulent' is a somewhat hyperbolic description. However, it can be argued, as Beiser does, that Kant became sceptical about the possibility of a proper method for conducting metaphysics. Kant's 1766 work *Dreams of a Spirit-seer Elucidated by the Dreams of Metaphysics* is a good example of this.¹⁰ *Dreams* is a curious work, in large part because of its uncharacteristically ironic tone. In it, Kant engages with theologian and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), comparing Swedenborg's stories of contact with the spirit world to the sophistries of dogmatic metaphysics.

However, unlike Beiser's reading, which takes this work to represent Kant's 'growing disaffection with metaphysics' (1992, p. 45), I take the less drastic view that *Dreams* is one example of Kant's continued pursuit of a secure methodological ground for conducting metaphysics.¹¹ In a letter to

9 Cf. Beiser, 1992, pp. 30-46.

10 *Dreams of a spirit-seer elucidated by the dreams of metaphysics*

11 Kant's letter to J.H Lambert in 1765 supports this claim: 'For a number of years I have carried on my philosophical reflections on every earthly subject, and after many capsizeings, on which occasion I always looked for the source of my error or tried to get some insight into the nature of my blunder, I have finally reached the point where I feel secure of the method that has to be followed if one wants to escape the delusion of knowledge that has us constantly expecting to reach a conclusion, yet just as

Moses Mendelsohn from April 1766, Kant offers some explanation for the scepticism expressed in *Dreams*, a text which Mendelsohn did not look upon favourably. Kant explains that the tone of *Dreams*, to which Mendelsohn had taken some offence, was partly the result of Kant's reluctance to write it (ibid., p. 54).¹²

Kant's correspondence during this time, particularly with philosopher and mathematician J.H. Lambert, reveals that Kant was embroiled in the task of working out proper demonstrations for what was to become the critical method of transcendental idealism. Kant and Lambert's mutual admiration for each other is clear in these letters. Kant refers to Lambert in a letter from December 1765 as the 'greatest genius in Germany' (Zweig, 1967, p. 47). Kant sympathised with Lambert's assertion that 'we do not get to any material knowledge from the form alone' (ibid., p. 45), as well as the notion that 'whenever a science needs methodical reconstruction and cleansing, it is always metaphysics' (ibid., p. 50). While Kant's "proper method" of metaphysics would not materialise for another sixteen years, with the publication of the first edition of the *Critique*, Kant already held in 1765 what he maintained in the *CPR*, that it would only be the 'great, long-awaited revolution in the sciences' that allowed 'true philosophy' to 'come to life' (ibid., p. 49).

Despite Kant's pre-critical ruminations, highlighted in the correspondence above, Kant's metaphysics prior to his discovery of the transcendental idealist method was largely rationalist in

constantly makes us retrace our steps, a delusion from which the devastating disunity among supposed philosophers also arises. For we lack a common standard with which to procure agreement from them' (Zweig, 1967, p. 48). While Kant proclaimed to have settled on a secure metaphysical method, the two works promised in his letter to Lambert were not as imminent as Kant indicated. Kant's "Metaphysical foundations of natural philosophy" did not appear until twenty years later, as the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (1786), and the "Metaphysical Foundations of Practical Philosophy", the contents of which Kant claims in the letter to have 'already worked out' (ibid., p. 48), never appeared. It is clear that Kant struggled with matters of method, but the presence of such struggles show that his interest in resolving the problems of metaphysics never waned.

¹² Mendelsohn had characterised the tone of *Dreams* as 'between jest and earnest' in a previous letter to Kant, and it is this ambiguous attitude toward the subject matter which Kant sought to clarify.

nature, and led Kant to distinguish, not just the fields of application of metaphysics and natural science, but also the worlds which emerge from them. Hence, in the *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770, Kant defends a sharp distinction between the sensibility and intellect. Not only does this distinction pertain to our powers of cognition, but also to two distinct worlds, one which is accessed by the senses, and the other which is accessed by the intellect. This “two-world” hypothesis allowed Kant to claim that, while sensibility has access only to a certain kind of representation or ‘appearance’, the intellect can in some sense grasp things as they really are, as well as things which cannot be experienced in a sensible manner. While Kant believed himself to have reconciled the systems – broadly construed – of Leibnizian rationalism and Newtonian science, what he had in effect done was separate out intellectual concepts from empirical experience, unable to account for how the two relate to each other. Kant still had not managed to unify physical and metaphysical explanations of the world, and it is this problem which leads to Kant’s characterisation of metaphysics, and indeed, human reason itself, in the *CPR*. It is to this characterisation that I now turn.

1.1.2. Metaphysics as a Demand of Reason

For Kant, the problem of reconciling physics and metaphysics — to put it bluntly — is not simply one of method. It arises out of a dilemma inherent in reason itself. In the Preface to the A edition of the *CPR*, Kant begins by outlining the dilemma of reason in the following way:

Human reason has this peculiar fate that in one species of its knowledge it is burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which, as transcending all its powers, it is also not able to answer. (Avii)

The ‘battle-ground’ of metaphysics results from this dilemma, and so, in the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (1783), one finds the following questions:

If [metaphysics] is a science, how does it come about that it cannot establish itself, like other sciences, in universal and lasting esteem? If it

is not, how does it happen that under the semblance of a science it ceaselessly gives itself airs and keeps the human understanding in suspense with hopes that never fade and are never fulfilled? (4: 256)

If metaphysics is to be considered as a ‘completely isolated speculative science of reason’ (Bxiv), then one cannot expect to alter or improve upon the methods of metaphysics without first subjecting reason to its own internal examination. The two demands are therefore coextensive; reason must conduct a critique of its own powers, and in so doing construct a new and secure method for metaphysics.

The demand which in turn issues from this new, critical metaphysics, is twofold. Its twofold nature informs the structure of this current chapter, and I remain preoccupied with it throughout the other chapters. Kant’s presupposition for making these various demands is that ‘[W]e have no knowledge antecedent to experience, and with experience all our knowledge begins’ (B1). On the one hand, then, Kant defines his metaphysics as one which is occupied with enumerating ‘those concepts *a priori* to which the corresponding objects, commensurate with them, can be given in experience’ (Bxviii-xix). Here, reason is tasked with securing *a priori* the conditions of possibility for experience. On the other hand, Kant points out that such a task results in a ‘startling’ consequence, namely, that reason must ‘transcend the limits of possible experience’ in order to account for them. To properly ground the conditions of experience, Kant’s metaphysics simultaneously posits ‘the *unconditioned*’ which reason demands ‘as required to complete the series of conditions’ (Bxx). How is reason to negotiate the boundary between conditioned experience and the unconditioned, which ‘completes’, but does not enter into experience? The answer to this lies in Kant’s transcendental idealist method.

1.1.3. Transcendental Idealism and the Copernican Hypothesis

Kant's method of transcendental idealism is predicated upon what is known as the Copernican revolution in philosophy.¹³ The term 'Copernican revolution' in fact contains two distinct but related thoughts, both of which Kant introduces in the B Preface. Let's take 'revolution' first. While the majority of the *CPR* is written in a fairly dry, ahistorical style, the B Preface is a good example of Kant's references to historical factors which inform his transcendental idealism.¹⁴ Kant discusses mathematics and natural science in terms of a 'single and sudden revolution [by which they] have become what they are, and indicates that metaphysics ought to 'imitate their procedure', if only by analogy (Bxvi). In terms of natural science, Kant refers to a procedure for metaphysics based on 'the student of nature', which consists in 'looking for the elements of pure reason in *what admits of confirmation or refutation by experiment*' (Bxix). For the purposes of the *CPR* specifically, such a modelling of metaphysics upon the new, "revolutionised" sciences comes down to the necessary realisation that 'reason has insight only into that which is produces after a plan of its own' (Bxiii). This brings us to the other term in the phrase above: 'Copernican'. Kant's Copernican hypothesis responds to the assumption that 'all our knowledge must conform to objects'. Instead, Kant claims that metaphysics fares better if it proceeds by supposing that 'objects must conform to our knowledge' (Bxvi). Kant's Copernican hypothesis is essentially this: 'we can know *a priori* of things only what we ourselves put into them' (Bvxiii).¹⁵

Kant's Copernican hypothesis has established the starting point for transcendental idealism, but has not yet defined it. If knowledge of objects is possible *a priori*, it remains to be shown what *kind* of

13 I have used the term 'hypothesis' in the subtitle to reflect Kant's indication that his metaphysics 'make[s] trial' with this method rather than plainly assert it. Cf. Bxvi.

14 Ameriks has referred to this as the 'Historical-systematic connection'. He identifies this connection as part of a larger "historical turn" in philosophy, which recognises that philosophy must be rigorously constructed, but must also not be naive as to its historical context or influence. Cf. Ameriks, 2006, p. 292.

15 Cf. Deligiorgi, 2005, p. 101.

knowledge this is. The fundamental proposition of transcendental idealism in this regard is that ‘such [*a priori*] knowledge has to do only with appearances, and must leave the thing in itself as indeed real *per se*, but as not known by us’ (Bxx). With this proposition, Kant has answered, in a preliminary way, the demand of reason, namely to supply an unconditioned corresponding to and completing the conditions of knowledge. The latter pertains to objects as they appear, namely, how objects ‘conform to our mode of representation’. The former pertains to things as they are in themselves. Resulting from this distinction is the equally fundamental one between thought and knowledge, which I touched on briefly above. It now becomes clear how this distinction takes effect in the *CPR*; that to know an object *a priori* means to ‘prove its possibility’, i.e. the possibility of it being experienced. Knowledge is produced out of the elements of experience, which I discuss in detail in part two of this chapter. *Thought*, on the other hand, does not rely upon experience in the same way. A thought is possible only on the grounds that it does not contradict itself. Thinking a concept designates only a logical possibility of that concept, but to form knowledge out of that concept requires proof of its ‘objective validity’, meaning, that the concept can be applied to appearances and thereby form an object of experience.

Attitudes toward the Copernican hypothesis vary, both in terms of its correctness and its importance. These attitudes stem from larger, and often contesting, traditions in Kant scholarship. In order to understand some of these traditions, and to begin formulating my own position, I move now to a discussion of the most established traditions in approaching Kant.

1.1.4. Analytic and Idealist Readings of Kant

In his commentary on the *CPR*, Gardner distinguishes between what he calls ‘analytic’ and ‘idealist’ interpretations of Kant’s philosophy (1999, pp. 30-33). The former, exemplified by the work of P.F. Strawson, concerns itself exclusively with the ways in which Kant defends the ‘traditional epistemological goal of justifying our knowledge claims’ (ibid., p. 32). The method of transcendental idealism, according to the analytic interpretation, has its main utility in refuting the

arguments of scepticism. Consequently, the Copernican hypothesis in commentaries such as Strawson's is little more than a methodological idiosyncrasy, rather than a substantial proposition.¹⁶ The idealist interpretation, exemplified in the work of Dieter Henrich, attempts to go beyond this initial goal, in order to investigate the more fundamental question over how it is the subject 'constitutes the world'. In the analytic case, what are at issue are the structures of what we experience. In the idealist case, 'experience itself, the activity of experiencing, has an inherent structure' (ibid.), and furthermore, this structure is what gives rise to, shapes, constitutes, human knowledge. While Gardner's division may be oversimplifying matters somewhat, it nonetheless speaks to the diversity of opinion on the meaning and utility of Kant's critical philosophy.

The analytic position as it is expressed in Strawson's *The Bounds of Sense* (1966), is certainly not without benefits. However, its view of the *CPR* is a fairly narrow one. As Strawson writes, 'the doctrines of transcendental idealism, and the associated picture of the receiving and ordering apparatus of the mind producing Nature as we know it out of the unknowable reality of things as they are in themselves, are undoubtedly the chief obstacles to a sympathetic understanding of the *Critique*' (p. 22). In Strawson's view, the vital condition of Kant's transcendental idealism is something Strawson calls the 'principle of significance'. This principle states that 'there can be no legitimate, or even meaningful, employment of ideas or concepts which does not relate them to empirical experience' (ibid. p. 16).

Henry Allison, whose work sits in something of an intermediary position between analytic and idealist readings, goes further than Strawson by arguing that the principle of significance is but one of multiple 'epistemic conditions', which stem from the larger context of Kant's anthropocentric model of knowledge. (Allison, 1983, p. 29). This anthropocentric model is a consequence of Kant's Copernican hypothesis, of which the principle of significance is only a part. Kant himself says something similar to Strawson's principle in the B Preface: 'all possible speculative knowledge of

16 Cf. Strawson, 1966, p. 23.

reason is limited to mere objects of experience' (Bxxvi). However, Kant goes on to add that, in spite of this limitation of reason, we must still be able to think things beyond what we can experience, namely, things as they are in themselves. If Kant's investigation were to cease at the level of conditions of experience, without investigating the character of what it is that appears to experience, then one is landed in 'the absurd conclusion that there can be an appearance without anything that appears' (ibid.). On Allison's gloss, it does indeed seem as though the principle of significance is not all that significant. He writes, 'to say that objects "conform to our knowledge" is just to say that they conform to the conditions under which we can alone represent them as objects' (1983, p. 28). Allison continues, 'given this presupposition, there is no difficulty in accounting for either a priori or a posteriori knowledge of such objects, for it is an analytic truth that any object represented must conform to the conditions under which it can alone be represented as an object' (ibid.). So, in brief, Kant's transcendental idealism demands not just the principle of significance — that metaphysics limits its knowledge claims to possible experience — but further, that a real existing world be affirmed, out of which experience is partially constituted. It is with this further claim about what kind of world is affirmed by transcendental idealism that Gardner considers the idealist readings of Kant to be additionally concerned. It is because of this additional concern that I, at least provisionally, align myself closer to the idealist reading of Kant. This requires some qualification beyond that which Gardner's commentary offers.

In addition to this deeper concern with — put frankly — "the world", that Gardner identifies with the idealist reading of Kant, there is another element that Henrich draws attention to. In *The Unity of Reason*, Henrich mentions the very diversity of opinion on Kant that Gardner summarises. In spite of the vast and continual labour expended upon understanding it, interpretations of Kant's philosophy are hugely diverse, and appeal to various scholastic traditions (Henrich, 1994, p. 123-4). Any interpretation of Kant sensitive to this fact must recognise itself as such, as an interpretative exercise, which necessarily involves the forging of a relation between Kant's texts, his purported

intentions in producing them, and our own contemporary concerns.¹⁷ With this in mind, Henrich outlines three procedures of philosophical commentary: paraphrastic-expository, genetic, and argumentative reconstruction (p. 124). Expository commentary presents the ‘textual inventory of an entire work’ for scrutiny. Genetic commentary adds to this the philosopher’s perspective upon their own opus, attempting to expose ‘the difficulties from which this work emerged’. Both of these forms of commentary are insufficient in Henrich’s view, in that they are unable to ‘penetrate the conceptual and argumentative fabric of the text itself’ (ibid.). The reconstructive procedure attempts to lay open the text, firstly by elucidating definitions and concepts internal to the text, and from these definitions it ‘isolates premises and arguments in texts of unarticulated complexity’. Henrich considers these reconstructions in philosophical commentary as ‘preliminary work for interpretation’. In Henrich’s estimation, the reconstructive procedure seeks to arrive at concrete assertions about the text in question, yet is also partakes in a hermeneutic exercise, such that it can find ‘some textual basis even when it employs premises that are nowhere in the text under consideration’ (ibid.). This is not to say that the interpretation imposes arguments on a text that does not support them, but rather that interpretation through reconstruction takes into account three vital factors. First, the text itself, removed from any potential context, theme or pre-existing agenda. Second, this text provides the basis for the formation of prevalent themes for the purposes of the interpretation being conducted. Thirdly, both of these elements are involved in a self-reflexive process of negotiation between the text, its historical position, and the position of the commentator.

While Henrich’s method is not without difficulties, there is good reason to at least be aware of the reconstructive method when discussing Kant’s philosophy. This is also not to say that my reconstruction of Kant’s aims and the arguments with which he attempts to prove them are what Kant himself intended in writing the *CPR*. Rather, the parts of the *CPR* with which I am concerned

¹⁷ As Guyer points out in the introduction to his translation the *CPR*, paragraphs and even sentences of Kant’s text can be broken down into distinct argumentative units, and as such reconstructed in various ways to fit with various intentions (1998, p. vii).

form a constellation of philosophical problems which circulate around the main problem of this thesis: the way in which Kant and Schelling articulate the unconditioned in their philosophy. In tackling Kant's *CPR*, I intend to forge a critical foundation upon which my thesis rests, such that each chapter reflects upon certain aspects of my central problem. Simply put that problem is as follows: How, if at all, can the unconditioned be articulated?

1.1.5. The Unconditioned and the Question of Nature in the *CPR*

It would appear at first glance that nature and the unconditioned are, quite literally, worlds apart. However, the task of forging a new metaphysics that Kant sets for himself in the *CPR* in fact requires that a delicate balance be struck between them. As I have mentioned above, Kant made no secret of the fact that his philosophy was inspired by the methods of the natural sciences. In the *CPR* and the *Prolegomena* Kant remarks on the admirable qualities of the scientific methods and how these need to be emulated by philosophy in order for the latter to find the right path for its advances.¹⁸ There is therefore a danger that the possibility *a priori* of nature is in fact merely the possibility *a priori* of natural science. Strawson picks up on this worry, stating that in the *CPR*, Kant assumes that 'Newtonian physics embodie[s] conditions of the possibility of empirical knowledge in general' (1966, p. 23). There is a possibility here that Kant has limited what it is possible to know exclusively to that which is described by Newtonian mechanics. This chapter, while primarily expository, will also address this possibility. I begin by elucidating some of the fundamental elements in Kant's structure of experience. From there I move on to examine how Kant articulates the unity of consciousness, particularly in relation to his denial of intellectual intuition. Finally I examine Kant's theory of transcendental ideas, which, I claim, get us as close as is possible, within the *CPR*, to the unconditioned.

18 Cf.. *CPR*, Bxvi; *Prolegomena*, 4:366.

1.2. The Elements of Experience

Abstract

Having introduced the themes in Kant with which this chapter deals, I now elucidate the core elements of experience in the *CPR* in relation to the central question of Kant's transcendental idealism: how are synthetic *a priori* judgments possible? To understand the meaning of this question, I progress through Kant's theory of intuition, concepts of the understanding, and the power of judgment, to establish how Kant views synthetic judgments in general. From here, I move to a discussion of the Analogies in order to illuminate what synthetic *a priori* judgments are and what knowledge can be yielded from them. This forms the first half of this chapter, and covers the main elements Kant deems necessary for knowledge. The second half conducts a discussion of three further elements in the *CPR* which are not items of knowledge; the unity of apperception, noumena, and intellectual intuition. While Kant articulates these concepts in various ways, they all share the common link of dealing with things beyond the realm of experience, and hence, beyond the realm of knowledge. I conclude by revisiting the question of nature in light of these discussions, and show how Kant views nature as in some sense synonymous with the structure of experience.

1.2.1. Introduction

Kant sums up the project of the *CPR* with the following question: ‘how are *a priori* synthetic judgments possible?’ (B19). To understand this question requires understanding Kant’s distinction between two modes of knowledge.¹⁹ Kant calls these pure and empirical. Empirical knowledge is knowledge *a posteriori*; knowledge formed out of experience. Kant defines empirical knowledge as being ‘made up of what we receive through impressions and of what our own faculty of knowledge (sensible impressions merely serving as the occasions) supplies from itself’ (B1). This gives rise to the question over what it is that our faculty of knowledge supplies to these sense impressions. Put simply, pure, or, *a priori* knowledge is that knowledge which is necessarily and universally independent of all experience. Pure knowledge is therefore not knowledge about properties or inherent qualities of objects, but rather knowledge about how objects that appear to one’s senses are to be organised.²⁰

With this claim regarding pure *a priori* knowledge, Kant refutes both empiricism and rationalism. Regarding empiricism, Kant counters the claim that because knowledge begins from experience, knowledge therefore relies entirely upon experience. Regarding rationalism, Kant is claiming that the possibility of knowledge *a priori* does not mean that knowledge of objects is a merely mental phenomenon, or that this knowledge applies to a separate, non-empirical class of objects. The balance between these two extremes is found in the claim that all *a priori* knowledge pertains only to appearances (*Erscheinungen*) and not to things as they are in themselves.

¹⁹ *Erkenntnisse*.

²⁰ This assertion can be shown through Kant’s line of reasoning in determining the concept of substance. He writes, ‘if we remove from our empirical concept of any object, corporeal or incorporeal, all properties which experience has taught us, we yet cannot take away that property through which the object is thought as substance or as inhering in a substance (although this concept of substance is more determinate than that of an object in general). Owing, therefore, to the necessity with which this concept of substance forces itself upon us, we have no option save to admit that it has its seat in our faculty of *a priori* knowledge’ (B6).

Before arriving to Kant's conception of the synthetic *a priori*, I first elucidate Kant's distinction between the two faculties responsible for knowledge in experience, the faculty of intuition and the faculty of the understanding.

1.2.2. The *a priori* Forms of Intuition

According to the above distinction between pure and empirical knowledge, it follows for Kant that to say merely that our senses receive data from the external world does not go far enough in explaining the nature, and vitally, the possibility of such receptive capacity. Sensible data must be formed before it can give rise to knowledge of an empirical item. Kant writes, 'objects are *given* to us by means of sensibility, and it alone yields us *intuitions*' (A19). The first form of *a priori* knowledge offered in the *CPR* is therefore the *a priori* forms of intuition, space and time.

Space and Time

Kant classifies intuition (*Anschauung*) as the 'immediate relation' between a mode of knowledge and an object. Following the distinction between empirical and pure knowledge, there are also empirical and pure intuitions.²¹ With regard to appearances, there is both the matter and the form of an appearance. Again, following the same method of abstracting from a representation everything added to it from outside — here this means, from concepts — Kant deduces that the bare remainders are 'extension and figure'. These components of an appearance are those without which one cannot make sense of an appearance at all. They belong to the form of appearances, and so, to the form of intuition. Of course, Kant cannot posit these forms of intuition arbitrarily; they must be established *transcendentally*. For Kant this means that space and time must be shown to be

²¹ Kant makes this distinction in terms of pure and empirical representations (*Vorstellungen*). Representation is Kant's most general term for the various components and activities involved in the formation of knowledge of objects. Kant himself assumes the term without qualification. An investigation into the use and suitability of 'representation' in Kant is a thesis in itself. I merely point out the term here in reference to the original German. Dickerson provides an informative overview of the issue of representation in Kant (2004, pp. 4-31).

necessary for every empirical experience, rather than simply happening to be present in experience. In order to show their necessity, Kant aims to prove that space and time are not material existences, but *a priori* forms of intuition.

It is with this transcendental mode of proof that Kant seeks to guard against the nonsensical idea that one sees a different object each time they encounter it, or that one sees the same object, but according to different kinds of intuition. If there is no form of intuition *a priori*, it means that one cannot distinguish between oneself and the thing being intuited. It also eradicates any reason to believe that the object I am currently experiencing remains the same object when I next experience it, for if it has been constituted out of totally new intuitions, it thereby ceases to remain identical with itself. Each of these potential problems requires a particular form to secure intuitions as real relations to objects.

In the *Transcendental Aesthetic*, Kant names the two *a priori* forms of intuition as space and time. Space is an '*a priori* representation, which necessarily underlies all outer appearances' (B39). Time is the *a priori* form of 'the relation of representations in our inner state', (B50). Kant employs four main arguments to defend his conception of space, which he then applies analogously to time. For the sake of clarity, I will follow Kant's arguments in reference to space.

Firstly, space is not derived from empirical experience. It must be *a priori*, as 'outer experience is itself only possible at all through [the] representation of space' (B38). One can know an object as in space, only insofar as space is presupposed as the mode of representation through which the object is experienced. As such, Kant's second argument is that space is a *necessary a priori* representation, as it underlies all of our outer intuitions. As space underlies all outer intuitions, it is therefore not reducible to any particular instance of said intuition, and as such, Kant argues thirdly that space itself is a pure intuition (B39). As I have mentioned above, by 'pure' Kant means both that it is a non-empirical intuition, and also that space itself is a singular indivisible representation, out of which particular realms and measures of space emerge. Diverse spaces can only occur within one

unified space, and this unified space must be presupposed as such before any particular spatial representation is possible. This leads to Kant's fourth argument, that space is an 'infinite given magnitude' (ibid.). Hence, all experience of external objects is a limitation of our pure *a priori* spatial intuition. A fifth and very important argument for space as an *a priori* intuition is Kant's argument from geometry. According to this argument, geometrical representations can only be exhibited in intuition, i.e. immediately and as proof of their concept, if space and its dimensions are presupposed for intuition (B41). The conclusion from these arguments is that experience firstly requires that we represent to ourselves a form of externalisation, and that such externalisation happens at the level of intuition. Without the *a priori* intuition of space, no knowledge of objects in space is possible.

As I mentioned, Kant defends his conception of time according to these same four arguments, with the key difference that where spatial intuition refers to external objects, time is 'nothing but...the intuition of ourselves and of our inner state' (B50). As a result of this, time does not pertain to any empirical content, in the way that space does, but merely involves the relating of such content to the representations of our inner state.

To sum up, space and time are *a priori* intuitions and not empirical concepts because the very possibility of the employment of empirical concepts relies upon space and time being already given. They are therefore neither objective (a property of objects) nor real (real existences), but are subjective and ideal.²² As forms of intuition they pertain only to appearances and not to things in

22 This issue of the subjective and ideal status of space and time in Kant has been interrogated at length, exemplified in the years long debate between Adolf Trendelenburg and Kuno Fischer during the 1860s. This debate centered around Trendelenburg's claim that there exists a neglected alternative in Kant's doctrine of space and time. Trendelenburg saw that Kant had managed to prove the subjectivity and ideality of space and time, but not the related inference that they could not be otherwise. Trendelenburg therefore put forward the suggestion that space and time are both subjective and objective. In Kant's defence, Fischer staunchly disagreed. Neither space nor time permit me to tackle this debate at length here. Graham Bird has recently

themselves. Finally, space and time are the only forms of *a priori* intuition and hence the only forms that sensible data can take for human knowledge. To reiterate, this does not mean that knowledge itself is necessarily spatial and temporal. The kind of knowledge with which Kant is concerned is judgments of experience, and these can only occur within the forms of space and time. Or, to put it more clearly, Kant is concerned with what is necessary for explaining the possibility of judgments of experience. Intuition deals with that which is received through the senses, and so, by itself, intuition cannot form objects of knowledge. For this, a second element is required, and by extension a second faculty in which to house this element. The element is the concept and its faculty is the understanding.

1.2.3. Concepts of the Understanding

Knowledge is not possible through intuition alone. Rather, Kant insists, all items of knowledge are a combination of intuitions and concepts. Because of their distinct roles, ‘the understanding can intuit nothing, the senses can think nothing. Only through their union can knowledge arise’ (*CPR*, B75). Moreover, the framework governing the employment of concepts must not depend on particular experience. It must, like the forms of intuition, be *a priori*. So, as there are empirical and pure intuitions, there are empirical and pure concepts. To explain this separation, Kant contrasts formal, or general logic, with his own transcendental logic. I summarise Kant’s characterisation of formal logic in order to show why he asserts the need for transcendental logic. Formal logic contains ‘the absolutely necessary rules of thought without which there can be no employment whatsoever of the understanding’ (B76). It treats of ‘the form of thought in general’ (B 79), hence Kant also refers to it as ‘general logic’. These rules are posited ‘without any regard to difference in the objects to which the understanding may be directed’ (B76). This point is important and informs many of Kant’s qualifications over knowledge of appearance in contrast to knowledge of this in

covered the debate, defending Fischer’s position (2006). Edward Kanterian has responded to Bird, in defence of Trendelenburg (2013).

themselves. These include Kant's distinction between phenomena and noumena, and his denial of intellectual intuition as a form of knowledge.

Both of these topics are dealt with shortly. The important point here is that because formal logic 'abstracts from all content of knowledge', meaning, the 'relation of knowledge to the object', it cannot furnish judgments about objects, but only about the forms of thought out of which objects are (presumably) constituted. As Kant puts it, 'although our knowledge may be in complete accordance with logical demands, that is, may not contradict itself, it is still possible that it may be in contradiction with its object' (B84). To put it simply, formal logic deals only with the relations between thoughts, and the only rule governing these relations is that they not result in a contradiction. However, the non-contradiction of the forms of thought does not guarantee that those thoughts will not contradict the objects to which they are related. Formal logic has 'no touchstone for the discovery of such error as concerns not the form but the content'. When formal logic is applied, not just to the rules of the understanding, but to objects themselves, it mistakenly asserts that the rules of the understanding can directly map onto objects. This use of logic Kant calls dialectic, and he takes this to mean the 'logic of illusion' (B86)

The point of this summary of Kant's view of formal logic is to contrast it with his transcendental logic, which he claims, can indeed grant knowledge of objects *a priori*, by demonstrating that the forms of thought in the understanding do not apply immediately to objects, but rather *mediately*, through intuition, to appearances. Therefore, the employment of the pure concepts of the understanding 'depends upon the condition that objects to which it can be applied be given to us in intuition' (B87).

The three paragraphs above pertain to the pure concepts of the understanding, and hence by extension to the Transcendental Deduction, by which Kant seeks to justify the categories as explaining synthetic *a priori* knowledge of objects of experience, and the Metaphysical Deduction, by which Kant seeks to enumerate an exhaustive list of these pure concepts. As with almost every

significant argument in the *CPR*, the Transcendental Deduction has been vigorously debated in scholarship. For example, Strawson, who is hostile to the whole project of *a priori* synthesis in Kant, is equally suspicious of transcendental logic as the vehicle for discovering the fundamental concepts of the understanding.²³ Allison, by contrast, appears more invested in working out the intricacies of Kant's argument on this issue.²⁴ Similarly to the *a priori* forms of intuition, my task here is not to debate the relative merits or problems with Kant employing such a logic, but rather to attempt a description of it which accurately represents what Kant means. Having elucidated Kant's distinction between formal and transcendental logic, I now summarise a few of the pertinent characteristics of the understanding generally, regarding its relation to, and synthesis of, the faculty of intuition.

The Understanding as Faculty of Judgment

Where the faculty of intuition is primarily receptive, the faculty of the understanding is spontaneous and active. Via the spontaneous act of the understanding, sensible intuitions are contextualised within a 'higher representation', which comprises 'the immediate [sensible] representation and various others...and thereby much possible knowledge is collected into one' (B94). On this basis, Kant calls the understanding the 'faculty of judgment'. Here we see Kant's most basic division necessary for the synthesis into judgments of knowledge. Knowledge by means of concepts Kant calls 'thought', but this knowledge concerns only relations between non-empirical forms i.e. rules of thought in general. However, concepts are also 'predicates of possible judgments', and as such, the rules they dictate work only in reference to some external content, namely, intuitions (ibid.). The understanding is therefore the faculty of judgment because it is that part of cognition that prescribes rules for conceptualising sensible data into knowledge. No knowledge is possible from concepts alone. On this reading, concepts themselves can be viewed as rules for combining thoughts

23 Cf. Strawson, 1966, pp. 74-85.

24 Cf. Allison, 1983, pp. 116-129.

with intuitions. Kant writes, ‘if understanding in general is to be viewed as the faculty of rules, judgment will be the faculty of subsuming under rules; that is, of distinguishing whether something does or does not stand under a given rule’ (A133/B1720). Judgment is the process by which the combination of concepts and intuitions is monitored.

However, Kant is not just concerned with concepts and intuitions that happen to combine in experience; he is concerned to show how they necessarily combine, in other words, how to have knowledge of objects *a priori*. Given the hypothesis of transcendental idealism, that knowledge begins with experience, it is clear that for Kant, *a priori* knowledge is not knowledge of objects independent of experience, i.e. things in themselves, but rather a form of knowledge which ‘determines something in regard to [objects] prior to their being given’ (Bxvi). This is the synthetic *a priori*. In the following section, I draw on what has been discussed so far to elucidate what kind of knowledge Kant has in mind when he refers to synthetic *a priori* judgments. For this task I look to the Analogies of Experience, which offer some examples of synthetic *a priori* knowledge.

1.2.4. The Synthetic *a priori* and Analogies of Experience

With the above elements summarised, I return to Kant’s question with which I started: ‘how are *a priori* synthetic judgments possible?’ (B19). In order to find Kant’s answer, I look both to the analogies in the *CPR*, and Kant’s discussion of the possibility of pure natural science in the *Prolegomena*. In combination, these discussions offer some insight into what it is that Kant takes *a priori* synthesis to be, and what knowledge is to be obtained out of it.

It is easy to understand why Kant’s notion of synthesis might be cast off as superfluous to the arguments of transcendental idealism. After all, Kant calls synthesis in general the ‘mere result of the power of imagination, a blind but indispensable function of the soul without which we should have no knowledge whatsoever, but of which we are scarcely ever conscious’ (B103). However, it is Kant’s task in the Clue to the Discovery of all Pure concepts of the Understanding, to rescue the notion of synthesis from this obscurity and demonstrate its role in the formation of knowledge. If

one assumes the importance of this part of Kant's transcendental idealism, it is helpful to first get a grasp on what Kant means by synthesis, specifically, the difference between knowledge *a priori* and synthetic knowledge *a priori*. At a basic level, synthesis for Kant simply means the act of 'putting different representations together, and of grasping what is manifold in them in one [act of] knowledge' (B103). In terms of the transition from intuition to concepts, Kant defines synthesis in the following way:

Space and time contain a manifold of pure *a priori* intuition, but at the same time are conditions of the receptivity of our mind — conditions under which alone it can receive representations of objects, and which therefore must also always affect the concept of these objects. But if this manifold is to be known, the spontaneity of our thought requires that it be gone through in a certain way, taken up, and connected. This act I name *synthesis*. (B102)

Concepts are not merely applied to representations — which in Kant's terms could be anything; empirical, non-empirical, thought, intuition etc. Concepts must be applied to the '*pure synthesis* of representations'. The pure *a priori* synthesis which yields pure concepts of the understanding, does so on the basis of an already present manifold of *a priori* intuition, i.e. the forms of space and time. The pure concepts of the understanding which are yielded out of this synthesis are supposed by Kant to provide the '*complete plan of a whole science*' which is divided according to 'determinate principles' (B109). To give one example pertinent for my discussion, the pure concepts of the understanding provide the method by which totality (I will explore the implications of this term below) can be approached as 'plurality considered as unity' (B111). To summarise, the pure concepts of the understanding provide the method by which the plurality of the sensible manifold can be held as a unity, i.e. a conceptual unity. This will become clear in my discussion of the analogies below.

For the moment, I compare this with Kant's discussion of the possibility of pure natural science in the *Prolegomena*. In §17, Kant asks how it is possible 'to know *a priori* the necessary conformity to

law of *experience* itself in respect of all its objects' (4:296). Two distinctions have already been mentioned which inform Kant's answer: the distinction between appearances and things in themselves, and the distinction between intuition and understanding. The output of these distinctions for Kant's conception of knowledge *a priori* is that we have conceptual access only to appearances, and this conceptual access is mediated by intuition. Hence, Kant answers his question by stating that 'we shall not be able to study the nature of things a priori in any other way than by investigating the conditions and universal (although subjective) laws under which alone such a cognition is possible as experience (merely according to form), and by determining the possibility of things as objects of experience' (ibid.). I take Kant here to be referring to the same process of pure *a priori* synthesis that he discusses in the above quoted passages of the *CPR*. I therefore turn to the Analogies with the following notion in mind: that *a priori* synthesis establishes the possibility of experience means the same as to say that *a priori* synthesis establishes the possibility of nature. I claim, in short, that nature in Kant means experience of nature.

I have now moved a little way beyond Kant's central question; 'how are *a priori* synthetic judgments possible?' (B19), and moved to a further question: what is synthetic *a priori* knowledge? One place in which an answer to this can be found is in the Analogies of Experience. Kant introduces the analogies with a principle: 'Experience is possible only through the representation of a necessary connection of perceptions' (B218). This necessary connection is time. This presents a challenge for Kant, because now time must somehow be extended beyond its role as the condition of inner sense, and applied to objects. Gardner formulates the problem in the following way: 'we need to be able to form the idea of an *objective time-order*, in which objects exist with determinate temporal locations, as distinct from the merely subjective time-order in which our representations succeed one another' (1999, p. 172). However, Gardner misses the additional point of the Analogies, that they are regulative rather than constitutive. In other words, what is important is not the positing of an objective time-order, but a mode of thinking that proceeds *as if* such a time-order

existed. Because time is only the ‘formal condition inner sense (*CPR*, A99), such an objective time-order cannot be proven.²⁵

Kant does not so much wish to posit an objective time, as demonstrate how perceptions are connected, i.e. *synthesised*, according to a necessary order. This synthetic unity is ‘the essential in any knowledge of *objects* of the senses’ (B219), insofar as this knowledge is itself grounded in its own unity, the unity of apperception. That latter unity is the subject of its own discussion in the following section. The analogies themselves relate to the three ways in which time-relations are understood, duration, succession, and co-existence. Without further preamble, I list the analogies individually below.

1. ‘In all change of appearances substance is permanent; its quantum in nature is neither increased nor diminished’ (B224).
2. ‘All alterations take places in conformity with the law of the connection of cause and effect’ (B232).
3. ‘All substances, in so far as they can be perceived to coexist in space, are in thoroughgoing reciprocity’ (B256).

Now, while these analogies may not seem overly impactful in terms of what they reveal about the nature of experience, they do, when read through the *Prolegomena*, reveal Kant’s basic attitude toward the way in which nature itself is to be conceived.²⁶ I therefore juxtapose a passage from the

25 The full passage, taken from the Transcendental Deduction in A, is revealing here: ‘Whatever is the origin of our representations, whether they are due to the influence of outer things, or are produced through inner causes, whether they arise *a priori*, or being appearances have an empirical origin, they must all, as modifications of the mind, belong to inner sense. All our knowledge is thus finally subject to time, the formal condition of inner sense’ (A99)

26 As with the issues of space and time, and the Transcendental Deduction, I do not here enter into a debate about the true meaning or relative validity of Kant’s Analogies. I present them in juxtaposition

CPR with another from the *Prolegomena*, which should, with minimal explication, display my interpretation of Kant's idea of nature. In a passage directly after the three analogies, Kant writes the following:

There are certain laws which make a nature possible, and these laws are *a priori*. Empirical laws can exist and be discovered only through experience, and indeed in consequence of those original laws through which experience itself first becomes possible. Our analogies therefore really portray the unity of nature in the connection of all appearances under certain exponents which express nothing save the relation of time...to the unity of apperception...Taken together, the analogies thus declare that all appearances lie, and must lie, in *one* nature, because without this *a priori* unity no unity of experience, and therefore no determination of objects in it, would be possible. (A216/B263)

In the *Prolegomena* Kant writes:

How is nature in the formal sense possible, as the sum total of rules under which all appearances must stand if they are to be thought as connected in an experience? The answer cannot be other than this: it is possible only by means of the constitution of our understanding, according to which all those representations of sensibility are necessarily referred to consciousness, and through which the peculiar kind of our thinking, namely through rule, is first possible...There are many laws of nature which we can only know by means of experience, but the conformity to law in the connection of the appearance, i.e. nature in general, we can get to know through no experience, because experience itself needs such laws, which lie *a priori* at the ground of its possibility. (4:318)

with remarks in the *Prolegomena*, which I interpret as forming an impression that nature at this stage of Kant's thought is to be considered a universal law, which is the same as the possibility of experience. Allison provides a balanced and insightful analysis of first two analogies (1983, pp. 199-234). Morrison has more recently written on the third (1998).

It is with the Analogies of Experience, in my view, that Kant has offered examples — for him, the only possible examples — of synthetic *a priori* knowledge. The change of appearances in time is grounded in a more fundamental substance that does not change. Such changes in appearances are governed by the necessary relation of cause and effect. As formed within a determining temporal order, distinct appearances exist simultaneously. Taken together, these analogies, more than pertaining to a single nature, *prescribe* nature as singular, i.e. as a unity, for the sake of the unity of experience. So, to return briefly to a statement with which I opened, that Kant’s metaphysics operates in a Newtonian universe, I now offer some support in the form of Newton’s three rules of reasoning contained in book three of the second volume of his *Principia mathematica*, named ‘The System of the World’:

1. We are to admit no more causes of natural things than such as are both true and sufficient to explain their appearances
2. Therefore to the same natural effects we must, as far as possible, assign the same causes
3. The qualities of bodies, which admit neither intensification nor remission of degrees, and which are found to belong to all bodies within reach of our experiments, are to be esteemed the universal qualities of all bodies whatsoever. (1973, p. 398)

As Newton claims, ‘since the qualities of bodies are only known to us by experiments, we are to hold for universal all such as universally agree with experiments’ (ibid.). As Kant continues, ‘the highest legislation of nature just lies in ourselves (*Prolegomena*, 4:319). For as much as the Analogies correspond to Newton’s laws, Kant still requires the *Metaphysical Foundations* for a complete description of that to which experience relates. Kant splits the *Foundations* into four chapters, which correspond to the fourfold division Kant makes in the table of categories (quantity, quality, relation and modality. In the third chapter ‘Metaphysics foundations of dynamics’, Kant derives the three laws of mechanics, which correspond to the three categories subsumed under relation, namely substance, causality and community. These three laws of mechanics are the

permanence of the total quantity of matter (4: 542), the law of inertia (4: 543), and the equality of action and reaction (4: 544). All of these laws are synthetic *a priori* propositions, i.e. they are claims about the nature of our experience, prior to our having any experience. A synthetic *a priori* proposition, in essence, is a metaphysical law. These mechanical laws map fairly directly onto Newton's laws of mechanics. However, for Kant, the laws of Newtonian science are of two different kinds. The Axioms or Laws of Motion which Newton derives in the *Principia*, Kant regards as synthetic *a priori* propositions, as summarised above. But other deductions of Newton's, such as the inverse-square law of gravitation, Kant does not regard as *a priori* but *a posteriori*. In short, not all of Newton's laws are synthetic *a priori* truths. Those of Newton's laws which are not *a priori*, are validated by those that are, but not all propositions of natural science can be guaranteed independently of experience.²⁷

I have, perhaps provocatively, attempted to show that in Kant's Analogies, that which can in principle be known of nature is, firstly, to a significant degree, that which Newtonian science describes, and secondly, located in *a priori* principles of experience. The question of the possibility of nature, which Kant defines in the *Prolegomena* as the 'highest point that transcendental philosophy can ever touch' (4:318), is a question of legislation by consciousness, not a question over how nature comes to be susceptible to such legislation. I turn now, therefore, to Kant's view of consciousness, more specifically, the unity of apperception.

27 Much more can of course be said on this topic, which in itself is a worthwhile area of study. I have touched briefly upon some salient points here that support my more general point that experience is of that which is described by the laws of Newtonian natural science. Michael Friedman has written a highly informative book on the subject. Cf. Friedman, 1992, pp. 136-164.

1.2.5. Apperception and the Indeterminate ‘I think’

In a footnote to the Paralogisms, Kant offers a complex account of the status of self-consciousness — which he refers to as the ‘I think’ — in relation to the synthesis of sensibility and understanding.

Kant writes,

The ‘I think’ expresses an indeterminate empirical intuition, i.e. perception (and thus shows that sensation, which as such belongs to sensibility, lies at the basis of this existential proposition). But the ‘I think’ precedes the experience which is required to determine the object of perception through the category in respect of time; and the existence here [referred to] is not a category. (B423)

To put it another way, while the ‘I think’ must necessarily accompany, and be known to accompany, all empirical representations, it is not itself such a representation.²⁸ Nor is it a category of the understanding, for if it were, it would not be able to accompany all applications of the categories. If the ‘I think’ is neither an empirical representation nor a category, it cannot appear to our self-consciousness in its simple existence. Kant calls this self-conscious ‘I’, which is not accessible to thought or intuition, apperception. In his essay on the history of the theory of self-consciousness, Manfred Frank writes ‘the existence of the pure *cogito* is neither intuition nor category. It is epistemically classified as an “inner perception”, which must be strictly distinguished from the perception of psychic objectivities, as these appear to “inner sense”’ (2004, p. 59). However, it is very unclear exactly what this distinct ‘inner perception’ is supposed to be.

Kant clarifies matters somewhat later in the footnote:

[I]t must be observed, that when I have called the proposition, ‘I think’, an empirical proposition, I do not mean to say thereby, that the ‘I’ in this proposition is an empirical representation. On the contrary, it is purely intellectual because belonging to thought in general. Without some

²⁸ Kant calls it a ‘perception’, and it is unclear how this could be anything other than a representation. Kant remains ambiguous on the issue.

empirical representation to supply the material for thought, the *actus*, ‘I think’, would not, indeed, take place; but the empirical is only the condition of the application, or of the employment, of the pure intellectual faculty. (B423)²⁹

Given the fact that the ‘I think’ is an element of thought only, the same conditions apply to it as do the categories. Just as Kant says elsewhere in the *CPR* that the categories cannot be defined in themselves, but merely the rules for their employment established, so too the ‘I think’ cannot be defined, or indeed accessed cognitively at all, because it is the pre-cognitive *actus* that is necessary for cognition to take place at all. Kant does not make clear how it is possible to know anything at all about the ‘I think’ if his description is correct. He merely states that the ‘I think’, can only *appear* to us, in the same way objects may only appear to us, via our faculty of inner sense. Kant seems to be oscillating between two incompatible views here, one that posits the empirical nature of the I, the other which posits its purely intellectual nature. It was requisite for Kant’s system that the term knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) be applicable only to objects. Since the ‘I’ is not an object but rather the subject that synthesises objects, knowledge of the ‘I’ is essentially a non-starter. As Frank puts it, ‘pure self-consciousness cannot become an object of knowledge because it is not sensible’ (2004, p. 57).

Here Kant must endure a burden of proof. If self-consciousness, or the ‘I’, cannot be known, it must be secured in some other fashion. This is where Kant calls upon the notion of an ‘intellectual representation’ to make sense of the unity of self-consciousness. But precisely because Kant has denied us intellectual intuition, the matter of an intellectual representation of the I becomes complicated and possibly incoherent.

It must be possible for the ‘I think’ to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought at all, and that is equivalent to saying that

²⁹ Once again there is a problem here. Kant says that the ‘I think’ is ‘purely intellectual’, yet it must necessarily rely on sensation.

the representation would be impossible, or at least would be nothing to me. The proposition ‘I think’ expresses the determination of my existence, however it does not tell me anything about the content of my existence. It is therefore the ground of empirical propositions, while itself containing nothing empirical. This would seem to suggest that the ‘I think’ is purely intellectual. But Kant has said at the beginning of the footnote that the ‘I think’ is not purely intellectual, for then Kant would have to allow for a form of intellectual intuition which grounds the ‘I think’. The sensible manifold — that which is synthesised into objects via the cognitive activity of the I — is not given in the proposition ‘I think’. It is in this sense, then, that the unity of apperception is transcendental. It applies only to the possibility of objects in general, as unified by a thinking subject, without prescribing any of their content either to external nature or internal nature. It cannot itself become an object of knowledge, nor can its activity, the primary *actus*, be applied to anything beyond possible experience. I can only access this manifold via reflection upon my inner sense, which itself is governed by the form of *a priori* inner intuition, namely time. As with external appearances, I cannot directly perceive what is referred to by the ‘I think’, because the presupposition of the I think is part of what makes perception possible. This is a charitable reading of Kant, given the inconsistencies pointed out above. Kant does hint at a justification for this charitable reading in another footnote:

[S]ince I do not have another self-intuition which gives the *determining* in me (I am conscious only of the spontaneity of it) prior to the act of *determination*, as time does in the case of the determinable, I cannot determine my existence as that of a self-active being; all that I can do is to represent to myself the spontaneity of my thought, that is, of the determination; and my existence is still only determinable sensibly, that is, as the existence of an appearance. But it is owing to this spontaneity that I entitle myself an intelligence. (B158)

In this note, Kant succinctly summarises some important distinctions. The most important is that the self is not transparent to its own activity. It is only conscious of the spontaneity that precedes and

makes possible its activity. Just as I perceive objects outside of myself only as they appear to me rather than how they are in themselves, I must also perceive myself as I appear to myself. Kant explains that, just as for knowledge of an object distinct from me I require, besides the thought of an object in general (in the concept), an intuition by which I determine that general concept, so too for knowledge of myself I require, 'besides the consciousness, that is, besides the thought of myself, an intuition of the manifold in me, by which I determine this thought' (ibid.). In short, to know myself requires the same formal boundaries as to know other objects. But to be aware that it is me that is knowing these things requires a third thing, which cannot be intuited in the same manner. Frank provides some useful comments on this:

In Kant's view it is clear that pure apperception includes the immediate consciousness of its own existence, and that this consciousness, although pre-intuitional, nonetheless includes the perception of an existent. This is because existence cannot be attained by thought alone; it must be *given* if there is to be consciousness of it. (2004, p. 59)

If we grant that there can be perception without intuition, then such perception would be purely conceptual, in the way Frank seems to suggest above. Even so, no knowledge would be possible from this conceptual perception, and no knowledge is granted by concepts alone for Kant. Still, it must be the case that this spontaneous activity of the 'I think' is really present, even if it is not directly perceivable, for otherwise the thinking subject would be dependent on the givenness of contingent phenomena for its thought, and we would be back in the empiricist camp that Kant aims to escape. This of course presents a dilemma, for the very thing Kant had termed the 'highest-point in philosophy' (B134), that is, unity of self-consciousness, can itself never be conclusively proved. As Frank notes, 'the naked being of the self, as a condition of possibility of its self-appearance, remains a mere presupposition' (2004, p. 57). Without the aid of intellectual intuition, the self can never be entirely revealed to itself. As Kant asserts in the Paralogisms;

[The unity of consciousness] is only in *thought*, by which alone no object is given, and to which, therefore, the category of substance, which always presupposes a given *intuition*, cannot be applied. Consequently, this subject cannot be known. The subject of the categories cannot by thinking the categories acquire a concept of itself as an object of the categories' (B422)

Here, Kant takes a risk, one that Frank also picks up on. If self-consciousness, taken as the unity of apperception, is to be guaranteed as the principle that grounds all our cognitive activity, and if, consequently, it is to be the qualification for all claims to the objectivity of knowledge, then there must be an element within intuition itself, which posits the 'I' as already active in the process of cognition. If this element of intuition is to be pure — as Kant requires — then there is a danger that Kant implicitly brings into play that which he explicitly rejects: intellectual intuition. Kant's early objectors, including Schelling, zoned in on this problem. It was proclaimed as the central task of post-Kantian philosophy to prove the existence of that which Kant merely presupposed. These post-Kantian objectors, as Frank summarises, 'strove to demonstrate that Kant's philosophy failed to provide an adequate description of [the I].' (2004, p. 56). According to them, Kant had absorbed himself so much in the deduction of the categories that the self-evidence of its highest principle — the unity of self-consciousness — had not been properly shown. I mention these post-Kantian objectors here because, as I will show in chapter three, Schelling believed one of Kant's basic errors to be confusing intellectual intuition with the unknowable realm of noumena. We are immediately confronted with two further elements in the *CPR*, which advance us further on our approach to the unconditioned. Reflective of Kant's own text, I am preparing to leave the realm of the known. I first discuss noumena and their — yet to be determined — difference from things in themselves. I will then move on to the issue of intellectual intuition.

1.2.6. Noumena as the Positive Thought of Things in Themselves

So far, in both this current chapter and the *CPR*, the notion of a thing in itself has largely been employed polemically in order to illuminate the errors of Kant's predecessors.³⁰ Kant has yet to give the thing in itself any positive treatment. Things in themselves have so far been merely those things, or, that aspect of things, which are not known to us. Kant concludes the *Transcendental Analytic* with a chapter entitled 'The ground of the distinction of all objects in general into phenomena and noumena', and it is here that the thing in itself receives this positive treatment. Kant writes about objects 'considered in their own nature', things that 'are not objects of our senses but are thought as objects merely through the understanding' (B306). The crucial question then becomes 'whether our pure concepts of understanding have meaning in respect of these [noumena], and so can be a way of knowing them' (*ibid.*). Here, an important distinction arises, which draws attention to Kant's occasionally problematic use of the word *thought*. He claims that to even conceptualise a possible object as noumenon is already to grant that object potential status as object of our cognition. The understanding employs concepts in order to combine them with intuitions, and as I have detailed above, the concepts produced therein have the sole use of constituting possible experiences, since intuition for Kant, whether *a priori* or empirical, is sensible. If we were to have a concept of the noumenon, we would in effect be schematising a possible object of experience, which by definition is not and cannot be experienced.³¹ Therefore our understanding does not have a concept of the noumenon, but merely a *thought* of it. The word thought here simply means logical possibility, a thought that is not self-contradictory. In Kant's view, I cannot think of an object that it simultaneously existent and inexistent. But I can think of an object that exists

30 Cf. Allison, 1983, p. 237.

31 One could here say understand the noumenon in a similar way to a concept of reason (discussed in 1.3. In this case the concept acts not as the ground of possible experience but as a regulative principle toward which experience strives. However, it is unclear how the concept of the noumenon as that which is unknown in the object, can regulate our experience of the object.

independently of my cognising it. By extension, I can think of that object as it is in itself, namely, as noumenon.

So far, there doesn't seem to be a problem. It is of course possible that there be objects existing in a manner independently of the activities of our mind. We need to think of objects as having independent existence, or else we are 'landed in the absurd conclusion that there can be an appearance without anything that appears (Bxxvii). Objects can therefore be taken 'in a *twofold* sense, namely as appearance and as thing in itself'. The second half of this two-fold sense, Kant also splits in two. The noumenon can be thought both negatively and positively. In a negative sense, the noumenon is simply that object that is not an object of our sensible intuition. In this case it lies entirely outside of the boundaries of empirical knowledge. As such, nothing determinate can be said about it. In addition, the noumenon can be thought positively as an object of *non-empirical intuition*, i.e. a form of intuition other than our own. It becomes clear why Kant never entirely conflates the terms noumenon and thing-in-itself. The negative sense of noumenon refers only to our lack of cognitive access to something — which then may as well be the thing in itself, for how could we know it to be anything else? The positive sense of noumenon implies another form of intuition, which could just as easily be conditioned by *a priori* forms in a similar way to our own. For Kant, we cannot claim that sensibility is the sole possible kind of intuition. We can only say that it is the sole form of intuition in which humans partake. To say that some other potential form of intuition — about which we know nothing — has access to things-in-themselves would be presumptuous. It would merely have access to things in another way than our sensible intuition does, and hence would yield different kinds of knowledge.

There is another reason why Kant posits these two senses of noumena, and it has to do with the status of intellectual intuition. Kant opens the 'Phenomena and Noumena' chapter by characterising the territory of the understanding as 'an island, enclosed by nature itself within unalterable limits' (B294). But to assume that this island constitutes all that there is falls back into dogmatic modes of

thinking. It is not enough to merely claim ignorance of the possible existence of a realm beyond our understanding. It is in fact a requirement of reason that we posit such a realm, despite not being able to say anything determinate about it. The positive and negative senses of noumena equate roughly with two the senses in which Kant talks about intellectual intuition. In a negative sense, intellectual intuition is the conceivable but inaccessible mode of intuition that would allow for unmediated access to objects, as they exist in themselves. In a positive sense, it is the undeniable and necessary mode of intuition such as would inhere in a deity — or indeed, in nature itself — which, as Kant writes in the introduction, completes the series of conditions upon which our empirical experience depends. This dual and seemingly irresolvable status of intellectual intuition and our relation to it, is largely what keeps Kant's theory of consciousness in balance, as it must if Kant wants to pave a third way toward addressing knowledge between rationalism and empiricism. Having introduced it from a distance, I now deal with Kant's denial of intellectual intuition

1.2.7. Kant's Denial of Intellectual Intuition

To get a handle on what Kant means by intellectual intuition, one can look for a preliminary answer in his *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770:

Sensibility is the receptivity of a subject by which it is possible for its representative state to be affected in a certain way by the presence of some object. Intelligence, rationality, is the faculty of a subject by which it is able to represent to itself what by its quality cannot enter the senses. The object of sensibility is sensuous; what contains nothing but what is knowable by the intellect is intelligible. In the older schools the former was called phenomenon, the latter noumenon. To the extent to which knowledge is subject to the laws of sensuousness it is sensuous; to the extent to which it is subject to the laws of intelligence it is intellectual or rational. (2: 393)

Here, the two realms of phenomena (the sensible realm) and noumena (the intelligible realm) are clearly distinguished and separated. As a result, at least the possibility for intellectual intuition in

human cognition is allowed for, and hence Kant leaves open the possibility of a mode of knowledge that is achieved purely through intellectual activity. Shortly after the *Dissertation*, however, Kant began to doubt his own view. In a letter to Marcus Herz in 1772, Kant wrote:

In my dissertation I was content to explain the nature of intellectual representations in a merely negative way, namely, to state that they were not modifications of the soul brought about by the object. However, I silently passed over the further question of how a representation that refers to an object without being in any way affected by it can be possible.... [B]y what means are these [intellectual representations] given to us, if not by the way in which they affect us? And if such intellectual representations depend on our inner activity, whence comes the agreement that they are supposed to have with objects — objects that are nevertheless not possibly produced thereby?...[A]s to how my understanding may form for itself concepts of things completely a priori, with which concepts the things must necessarily agree, and as to how my understanding may formulate real principles concerning the possibility of such concepts, with which principles experience must be in exact agreement and which nevertheless are independent of experience — this question, of how the faculty of understanding achieves this conformity with the things themselves, is still left in a state of obscurity. (in Zweig, 1967, p. 72)

This passage not only gives insight into the problem Kant found with allowing for intellectual intuition in human knowledge, but it also provides key motivations for Kant's critique of the faculties of cognition in the *CPR*. In the letter, Kant asks, by what means are these intellectual representations given, if not by the way in which they affect us? The solution to this problem for Kant will require a specific and clearly demarcated system of intuitions and their forms, in order to reconcile the two seemingly separate worlds of sensibility and intelligibility within one, transcendently established, cognising subject. Hence, by the time of the *CPR*, intellectual intuition is stalwartly denied, and the possibility of knowledge is limited only to that which can be employed in empirical experience. In what follows, I examine Kant's remarks on intellectual intuition in the

CPR, and why it is that he thinks it should be denied us. With these things in mind, I consider the ambiguous status of the unity of consciousness, which Kant also refers to as transcendental apperception. I will conclude by revisiting intellectual intuition in light of these examinations.

To put it in simple terms, ‘intellectual intuition’ for Kant refers to the perfect unity between thought and being. As Gram puts it, intellectual intuition is ‘a kind of knowing in which cognitive acts and their objects are identical’ (1981, p. 288). This means that an act of intellectual intuition, rather than partaking in the synthetic process of combining sensible data with concepts, is instead a singular act whereby the thing grasped intuitively and the thing conceived conceptually are one and the same.³² If I were to intuit intellectually, I would in effect produce the object I come to know in the mere thinking of it, no sensible information being necessary. To be capable of such an intuition would necessitate being outside of time and space, and outside of the a priori forms of intuition I discussed in the previous section. I would no longer need to relate the objects I conceive to any kind of external data, nor would I need to contextualise them within the frame of my inner sense. Knowledge would thereby be instantaneous with my thinking. Not bound by the conditions of empirical knowledge, intellectual intuition would grant a kind of knowledge altogether disastrous for Kant’s epistemology.

The precise place of intellectual intuition within Kant’s philosophical landscape is bound up with several other central elements. The first of these is *sensible intuition* — the sole form of intuition which can supply us with knowledge of objects. The second is what we can call *inner intuition*, namely the form of intuition which allows us to relate external sensory impressions to ourselves as

³² This concept on intellectual intuition has a long historical ancestry, dating back to the Medievals and beyond. Augustine, Aquinas, Galelei, Spinoza, and Leibniz, to name a few, all formed some notion of intellectual intuition, even if under different auspices. The significant factor in exploring Kant’s concept of intellectual intuition is his denial of it, especially when it comes to critics of Kant such as Schelling, who frequently advocates for the centrality of intellectual intuition as the starting point for philosophy.

a subject of those impressions. In the following note from the B Preface, Kant explains how intellectual intuition relates to the consciousness of one's own self:

If, with the *intellectual consciousness* of my existence, in the representation 'I am', which accompanies all my judgments and acts of understanding, I could at the same time connect a determination of my existence through *intellectual intuition*, the consciousness of a relation to something outside me would not be required. But though that intellectual consciousness does indeed come first, the inner intuition, in which my existence can alone be determined, is sensible and is bound up with the condition of time. (Bx1)

The understanding is an intellectual faculty, but it is effective only to the extent that it can be applied to possible sensible intuitions. As such, 'the understanding in us men is not itself a faculty of intuitions, and cannot, even if intuitions be given in sensibility, take them up *into itself* in such a manner as to combine them as the manifold of its *own* intuition' (ibid.). Kant paints a nuanced picture of the relationship between activity and passivity here. The understanding is active to the extent that it determines objects of sensibility. It is passive to the extent that it can only do this once it has been supplied with sensible intuitions, which it does not itself prescribe. Sensible intuition is active to the extent that it actively intuits sense data according with the a priori forms of intuition (space and time). It is passive to the extent that the intuitions themselves are supplied by an immediate relation between object and intuiting subject, a relation that is not initiated by any activity of the subject. In other words, I cannot intuit empirical objects out of the pure desire to do so, without them first being given to me. Without the aid of sensible intuitions, the understanding would have no possible objects to determine. Without the determining functions of the understanding, sensible intuitions would remain static in their *a priori* forms, which in themselves determine no particular object. Intellectual intuition, if it were possible for human cognition, would tip this balance entirely on to the side of activity; it would not require any sense data from the outside in order to complete its cognitions. Nor would it inhere within any particular forms, as the *a*

priori forms of space and time are present only to the extent that they bridge the gap between sensibility and understanding. For Kant, we cannot even make sense of what such an intellectual intuition would be like, because we necessarily conceive of objects as occurring always already within the confines of the forms of space and time. We think of intellectual intuition in a merely negative sense therefore, in much the same way that we think of the thing in itself, and its corresponding symbolic representative, the noumenon.

It is important to note that Kant's denial of intellectual intuition is not a flat out denial. Kant does not deny the *possibility* of intellectual intuition, precisely because the make up of our cognitive faculties does not allow us to legislate on such a matter. As Kant says, 'we cannot judge in regard to the intuitions of other thinking beings' (B43). Kant can deny intellectual intuition only to the extent that his conception of intuition in general is workable within his transcendental idealist conception of knowledge, which, in addition to the various conditions enumerated above, now also includes the fact that this knowledge is always only *human* knowledge. This involves not just a theory of our experience of external objects, but also our experience of ourselves, which, it turns out, must be subjected to the same restrictions. According to Kant, a proper examination of the possibility of human knowledge will reveal that a form of intuition which is intellectual, and not sensible, is impossible for us. Only gods may partake in intellectual intuition.

Conclusion: Nature as the Sum Total of Appearances

In the preceding I have sought to elucidate Kant's various methods for dividing what can in principle be known from what in principle cannot be known. I have shown through my discussion of the Analogies of Experience that the synthetic *a priori* demonstrates what is in principle knowable results from three laws. I have proposed that these laws are themselves confirmations of the principles of Newtonian mechanics. Following this discussion I have discussed three concepts which in some way move beyond the realm of what is knowable, and in each case, I have shown how Kant reconciles these with the hypothesis of transcendental idealism. What remains, however,

is the status of nature taken, not as which is explained by the possibility of experience, but as the sum total of all objects of experience. In other words, how is Kant to account for nature as a whole? In addition, how is the demand for the unconditioned to met with in such an account? To answer these questions, I move from The Transcendental Analytic to The Transcendental Dialectic, and discuss Kant's theory of ideas, in particular the cosmological ideas.

1.3. Meeting Reason's Demand: the Regulative Role of Ideas

Abstract

In this final part of chapter one, I examine Kant's doctrine of ideas in order to assess the way in which he conceives the relation between nature and the unconditioned. To what extent can they be considered synonymous? This question over the relative sameness or difference of the unconditioned and nature anticipates my discussion of Schelling's nature-philosophy in chapter three, in which he argues for a certain conception of the unconditioned *in* nature. My task at this point is therefore to provide an elucidation of what Kant means by 'idea', and how these ideas relate to the other cognitive faculties. I claim that the picture of nature one receives in the *CPR* is precisely nature as an idea, regulated in turn by the unconditioned. While nature is regulated by the idea of the unconditioned, they are not synonymous in Kant's view. From what has been said above, particular with regarding to *a priori* synthetic knowledge, I conclude that, in the context of the *CPR*, nature is merely those laws which prescribe the possibility of experience (the synthesis of concepts and intuitions). This leaves open the question over whether there is any other kind of possible experience of nature, with which the *Critique of Judgment*, and indeed, my second chapter, is concerned.

1.3.1. Introduction

Tackling Kant's doctrine of the ideas of reason requires some preparation. Kant's discussion of the ideas in the *CPR* is extremely dense, containing various interwoven defences of different principles.³³ Kant also employs a large variety of terms which are often used interchangeably.³⁴ I employ two methods for approaching Kant on the ideas. The first method is to state that I am concerned primarily with one form of ideas that Kant proposes, namely, the cosmological. I take this form of idea to be primarily concerned with providing a unity of thinking regarding subject object relations (self-world, human-nature, etc.). In focussing primarily on the cosmological ideas, I arrive at the question to which I have been advancing during this chapter; what is the relationship between nature and the unconditioned? The second method is to appeal, as I have done several times throughout this chapter, to some useful clarifications provided by the *Prolegomena*, which help to illuminate the connection between nature and the unconditioned, as well as the relation between reason and the other cognitive faculties.

In the third part of the *Prolegomena*, which asks 'how is metaphysics in general possible?', Kant mentions the 'peculiar destination of reason' (4:350) that is posited through the ideas. This destination is peculiar because, in order to satisfy its own demand for the unconditioned, reason posits the ideas merely as 'a principle of the systematic unity of the use of the understanding'. It is by positing such a principle that reason can give 'complete justification for its own procedure' (ibid.). In what follows, I offer some elucidation of the ideas with this peculiar destination in mind, and how this account in the *Prolegomena* accords with Kant's description of the ideas in the *CPR*. I assess what picture of nature Kant leaves us with in the ideas, and the relation of this nature to the unconditioned. Before I arrive to this discussion, I elucidate Kant's definition of the idea in general.

33 Cf. Ameriks (1992), pp. 253-4.

34 In particular, for my purposes, the lack of explicit distinction between what is meant by 'nature', 'the world' and 'the universe' is a pertinent example of this.

1.3.2. Ideas as Concepts of Reason

Kant's most basic term for ideas is concepts of reason.³⁵ These concepts allow us to conceive of things, as opposed to concepts of the understanding, which allow us to connect thoughts to perceptions in experience. Concepts of reason can never enter into experience themselves, and occur nowhere in empirical knowledge. It is already clear that a distinction needs to be made. Concepts up until this point have been understood as things deployed by the understanding in order to formulate a possible experience into an actual one. Kant explains that, unlike concepts of the understanding, concepts of reason are those to which 'no actual experience has even been completely adequate', yet to which 'every actual experience belongs' (*CPR*, B367). In short, concepts of reason enable us to 'conceive'; concepts of the understanding to 'understand', by which Kant means, connect to perceptions. Concepts of reason are those that allow us to think entities, which may very well exist, but are not empirically accessible. Kant calls these concepts transcendental ideas. In what follows, I will focus on the dual function of Kantian ideas, namely that they cannot enter into experience, but that they nonetheless ground all possible experiences. An analogous relation obtains between reason and understanding — both taken in the pure sense — as the relation that obtains between the understanding and intuition in *a priori* synthetic knowledge. In the latter, intuition is taken as a whole; an 'image of sensibility' (B377). In the former, understanding is taken as a whole, in regard to the 'totality of conditions' which are possible through the *a priori* synthesis.

It may appear from the above that concepts of reason are merely an extension of concepts of the understanding, and as such — given that concepts of reason are further removed from experience than concepts of the understanding — one could read the former as little more than forms of thought,

³⁵ *CPR* B367.

which are devoid of content.³⁶ This is certainly not what Kant intends concepts of reason to be, given the hypothesis of transcendental idealism that ‘all possible speculative knowledge of reason is limited to mere objects of experience’ (Bxxvi). However, one must also remember Kant’s corresponding assertion that ‘though we cannot *know* these objects as things in themselves, we must yet be in a position to *think* them as things in themselves’ (ibid.). In order to grasp how Kant reconciles these two claims with the ideas, it is useful to follow Kant in his distinction between ideas in general and transcendental ideas in particular.

1.3.3. Ideas in General: Kant’s Platonism?

Kant begins ‘The ideas in general’ with a cautionary note, about the words that are used to express concepts. ‘To coin new words’, he writes, ‘is to advance a claim to legislation in language that rarely succeeds’ (B369). Kant’s preference is to search in ‘dead and learned’ languages that may provide an already existing expression which encompasses his concept (ibid.). It is through this search that Kant comes to Plato’s use of the term ‘idea’, and takes from Plato the definition of ‘idea’ as ‘something which not only can never be borrowed from the senses but far surpasses even the concepts of understanding...inasmuch as in experience nothing is ever to be met with that is coincident with it’ (B370). From here onwards, Kant becomes increasingly ambiguous about what he sees as correct in Plato, and what he wishes to do away with. Some clues can be found in Kant’s earlier treatment of Plato in the Introduction of the *CPR*. Kant rhapsodises over Plato’s journey to the realm of ideas:

The light dove, cleaving the air in her free flight, and feeling its
resistance, might imagine that its flight would be still easier in empty

36 Cf. A568/B596; ‘If [concepts of the understanding] are applied to appearances, they can be exhibited *in concreto*, because in the appearances they obtain the appropriate material for concepts of experience — a concept of experience being nothing but a concept of understanding *in concreto*. But ideas are even further removed from objective reality that are categories, for no appearance can be found in which they can be represented *in concreto*’.

space. It was thus that Plato left the world of the senses, as setting too narrow limits to the understanding, and ventured out beyond it on the wings of the ideas, in the empty space of the pure understanding. He did not observe that with all his efforts he made no advance — meeting no resistance that might, as it were, serve as a support upon which he could take a stand. (B9).

This gives a distinct impression of Kant's problem with Plato; that if Plato only had in his possession the transcendental idealist principle of all knowledge being limited to experience, he would have fared much better. However, the matter is not so simple upon arriving to Kant's theory of ideas, because, as concepts of *reason* as opposed to the understanding, ideas do not connect at all to intuition, and so cannot be manifested in any experience. There is, nonetheless, a specific relationship between the understanding and reason regarding the ideas, which can help illuminate just what it is that Kant sees in Platonic ideas worth imitating, and where Plato may have been mistaken. Before introducing his transcendental ideas, Kant concludes the Ideas in General with the following description of a 'serial arrangement' (*Stufenleiter*) leading to the idea:

The genus is *representation* in general (*repraesentatio*). Subordinate to it stands representation with consciousness (*perceptio*). A *perception* which relates solely to the subject as the modification of its state is *sensation* (*sensatio*), an objective perception is *knowledge* (*cognitio*). This is either *intuition* or *concept* (*intuitus vel conceptus*). The former relates immediately to the object and is single, the latter refers to it mediately by means of a feature which several things may have in common. The concept is either an *empirical* or a *pure concept*. The pure concept, in so far as it has its origin in the understanding alone (not in the pure image of sensibility), is called a *notion*. A concept formed from notions and transcending the possibility of experience is an *idea* or concept of reason. (B376f.)

Here one can point out the difference between pure concepts of the understanding and concepts of reason by saying that the former are those from which empirical concepts are derived. So, while

pure concepts up to now have been those which deal only with providing the basis for the act of synthesising empirical concepts with intuitions, Kant now shows that pure concepts have a further use, which mediates between the understanding *as employed with respect to intuition*, and reason, which takes the understanding purely as a totality.³⁷ This ‘serial arrangement’ can provide some clarity over how Kant adopts Plato’s conception of idea. As Kant says, Plato took ideas to be ‘archetypes of the things themselves’ (B370). However, according to Kant’s transcendental idealism, things themselves cannot be brought into experience, nor can any concept be applied to them. Kant is left with archetypes that cannot be instantiated. However, if one takes ideas to be, not archetypes of things themselves, but archetypes of those things *of which we have concepts*, then a possible solution appears. This requires some elucidation. Kant points out that Plato also realised that ‘our faculty of knowledge feels a much higher need than merely to spell out appearances according to a synthetic unity’. Beyond this, ‘our reason naturally exalts itself to modes of knowledge which so far transcend the bounds of experience that no given empirical object can ever coincide’ (B371). On this issue Kant and Plato are in agreement. However, in a footnote shortly after, Kant distinguishes himself from Plato due to the ‘extravagances’ by which the latter ‘hypostatized’ the ideas (B372). What Plato took to be archetypes of things, and attempted to present as such, Kant takes as principles of reason, and so not in things, but ‘only in our minds’ (ibid.).

As I have already said, I am concerned specifically with the idea of nature, and its relation to the unconditioned. There are two sentences towards the end of Ideas in General, which are relevant in this regard. I quote them here in preparation for the following section, in which I elucidate Kant’s transcendental ideas with respect to the question of nature. Though the two sentences sit close together in the text of the *CPR*, I separate them out here in the hopes of making their individual sentiments clear:

37 Cf. B378, B383.

a plant, an animal, the orderly arrangement of the cosmos — presumably therefore the entire natural world — clearly show that they are possible only according to ideas.

But only the totality of things, in their interconnection as constituting the universe, is completely adequate to the idea. (B375)

It is interesting to note that in the first sentence, Kant seems to intimate that the ‘entire natural world’ is something larger, or perhaps, more general, than ‘the cosmos’. Might it be that nature, the very thing with which we are supposed to be firmly and immediately acquainted, is in fact an idea of something even more vast than the universe itself? Despite this provocation, I do not wish to attempt a proof of such a claim here. I leave the question open.³⁸ As Kant himself warns, ‘how great a gulf may...have to be left between the idea and its realisation, are questions which no one can, or ought to, answer’ (B374). With these things in mind, I move now to a discussion of transcendental ideas generally, and then to the cosmological in particular.

1.3.4. The Form of Transcendental Ideas

As I have already made clear, one of Kant’s problems with Platonic ideas is that they presume to describe actual entities, which for Kant is problematic because for him, objects of our knowledge must be possible objects of experience. Due to the fact that reason often attempts to ‘transcend the bounds of experience’, into a realm with which ‘no empirical object can ever coincide’ (B371), the doctrine of transcendental ideas can generally be considered as Kant’s attempt to limit the employment of ideas such that reason avoids positing entities inaccessible to experience. Kant achieves this by claiming that ideas only ever have a regulative, and never a constitutive

³⁸ Kant does momentarily address the difference between ‘nature’ and ‘world’ in the CPR (A420/B448). However, the resulting ‘cosmical concepts’ (*Weltbegriffe*) and ‘transcendent concepts of nature’ (*Naturbegriffe*) do not make clear what distinction there might be between “nature” and “the world”. This is because these concepts are merely the concepts by which we conceive a totality of appearances, for the purposes of reason; they are not meant to determine to what these appearances belong, since Kant would then be applying concepts to things in themselves.

employment.³⁹ However, despite the ideas being limited in this way, Kant also claims that they ‘must none the less be recognised as having [their] own reality’ (ibid.). What exactly is the nature of this reality? As I have discussed above, Kant has already made clear that ideas cannot appear in experience; they can neither be objects, nor be applied to objects. The transcendental idea is instead directed towards ‘absolute totality in the synthesis of conditions, and never terminates save in what is absolutely, that is, in all relations, unconditioned’ (B383).⁴⁰ Since the understanding is applied to intuitions, it cannot lend this totality to itself, for then it would be possible for the understanding to actually achieve a complete synthesis, i.e. it would be possible to experience *all that is*. It is incumbent upon reason, then, to lend the understanding this totality as a regulative principle, which guides the understanding in its employment with intuitions. In a rather dense passage, Kant explains how ideas meet the demand of reason for the unconditioned:

The transcendental concept [idea] of reason is...none other than the concept of the *totality* of the *conditions* for any given conditioned. Now since it is the *unconditioned* alone which makes possible the totality of conditions, and, conversely, the totality of conditions is always itself unconditioned, a pure concept of reason can in general be explained by the concept of the unconditioned, conceived as containing a ground of the synthesis of the conditioned. (B379)

This is still to speak about transcendental ideas in general. The way in which Kant demonstrates how this demand for a totality of conditions (an unconditioned) is met with in the ideas depends on the form of idea. Kant separates the transcendental ideas into three groups, which reflect the three

39 A644/B672

40 Kant says something similar in the *Reflexionen*, for example in reflection 4033 from 1769, Kant writes, ‘the necessity of things that we can cognize is always conditional, for in itself we can always negate anything since where we affirm nothing we also do not contradict anything by means of its denial. The concept of the necessary is nevertheless in the first instance a concept given through reason, since through it alone is anything determined. Absolute necessity is a boundary concept, since without it there would be no *completudo* in the series of the contingent. However, this boundary concept is itself problematic and cannot be cognized by reason *a priori*’ (17: 391). Cf. *CPR* B650.

enquires of pure reason that Kant first introduces in the Preface, namely, immortality, freedom, and God (Bxxx). Once again, Kant uses a wealth of terms regarding each form of ideas, their derivation, and their relations to each other. Before dealing with the cosmological ideas proper, I here present a brief summary of the forms of the transcendental ideas in general, in the hope of clarifying what it is that the cosmological ideas specifically are concerned with.

Kant construes the three enquiries of pure reason in terms of relations between representations. I separate these out numerically below, joining each relation to its a) corresponding inquiry of reason, b) transcendental idea, c) transcendental doctrine, and finally d) Kant's method for investigating each idea. All of these elements and the terms by which Kant articulates them are found between B391-B392.

1. The relation of representations to a subject. This relation concerns a) immortality, whose idea is b) the soul, whose doctrine is c) transcendental psychology. Kant's method for this is d) the Paralogisms.
2. The relation of representations to an object. This relation concerns a) freedom, whose idea is b) the world (i.e. nature), whose doctrine is, transcendental cosmology. Kant's method for this is d) the Antinomies.
3. The relation of representations to all things in general. This relation concerns a) God, whose idea is b) the being of all beings, whose doctrine is c) transcendental theology. Kant's method for this is d) the Ideal.

In every case, Kant takes pure reason as seeking 'the absolute totality of the synthesis *on the side of the conditions*' (B393), i.e. an unconditioned. This unconditioned must be sought on the side which conditions appearances, rather than appearances so conditioned, since in the latter case, we are dealing with that which has already been synthesised within space and time. In this case, space and time are themselves the conditions of appearance, but Kant does not wish to grant an unconditioned

intuition. For Kant there can only be unconditioned ideas, because the unconditioned itself cannot enter into experience. It would seem from this that nature has very little to do with either the cosmological ideas or the unconditioned which they seek. But it is important to remember Kant's earlier remark from B385, in which he refers to the 'absolute whole of all appearances' as an idea. Kant has already claimed that nature is precisely this whole of appearances, or rather, the 'sum total of objects of experience' (Bxix). It is hard to take the second characterisation as anything other than a whole of appearances, since appearances only occur in experience. So, at this point, it is safe at least to assume that when Kant talks about the cosmological ideas, he at least has their relation to nature in mind. In order to tackle once again the question of nature through the cosmological ideas, I move from the Transcendental Ideas to the Antinomy of Pure Reason.

1.3.5. The Idea of an Unconditioned Nature

Kant points something out regarding the cosmological ideas which is significant for my present discussion. In The antinomy of Pure Reason, he claims that these ideas are particular in that they alone demand 'a sufficient answer bearing on the constitution of the object' (B506). As the cosmological ideas concern relations of representations to objects, they presuppose an object which 'must be given empirically', and this empirically given object must be tested according to its 'conformity to the idea' (ibid.). This would seem to lend some context — at least regarding Kant's cosmology — as to how it is that ideas must have their own reality. In the Antinomies, Kant explicitly describes the nature of this reality. He writes that both pure and transcendental concepts (i.e. categories and ideas) issue from the understanding. Reason itself 'does not really generate any concept'. Instead, it endeavours to 'free a concept of the understanding from the unavoidable limitations of possible experience' (B436). To summarise these limitations briefly: concepts cannot be applied to objects save through their combination with sensible intuition, and this intuition is necessarily formed in space and time. The idea, on this reading, is a concept freed from space and

time; freed from intuition.⁴¹ However, if a concept is freed from intuition, it cannot be applied to anything, since Kant denies application of concepts to anything *except* sensible intuition. The alternative would be intellectual intuition, which, as explained in 1.2.7, Kant does not allow in cognition.

How is an idea to have reality if the only reality for which Kant allows is that which is formed in space and time? This is a question that has not been extensively explored in the literature on Kant. In the case of the cosmological ideas, this question is answered by something Kant calls *regressive* synthesis (B438). Regressive synthesis is itself a response to the principle upon which Kant bases his deduction of the ideas, namely that ‘if the conditioned is given, the entire sum of conditions, and consequently the absolutely unconditioned...is also given’ (B436). Up to this point in my discussion, the unconditioned has been opposed simply to the conditioned, but there appears here a third term, the *condition*, which is necessary for explaining how it is that regressive synthesis can occur. It is here that Kant’s conception of space and time appear to shift somewhat from how they are discussed in the Transcendental Aesthetic. In the Antinomies, Kant calls space and time the ‘two original *quanta* of all our intuition’. In both cases Kant seeks to show how a regressive synthesis is possible. In the case of time, things are fairly straightforward. As one “quantum” of intuition, Kant calls time ‘the formal condition of all series’ (B439). Its antecedents are either conditions (the past), or consequents (the future). From this it becomes clear that a regressive synthesis can only occur with respect to past time. Space, however, is not a series but ‘an aggregate’. A regressive synthesis of space cannot proceed in the same manner as time, but must instead regress from matter, which Kant takes as conditioned, to one of two possible conditions, either ‘nothing’, or ‘what is no longer matter — namely, the simple’ (B440). These forms of regressive synthesis, in Kant’s view, are employed by reason in order to establish the ‘beginning of

41 This “freeing” of an idea from space and time involves a process, which seems to lead to a kind of Kantian abyss, i.e. the *derivation* of ideas from concepts/categories. Cf. *CPR*, B379, B436ff., B442f.

the world', and the 'limit of the world', namely, whether the world begins in time or not, and whether the world is infinitely extensive or not (B446). Of course, it will be the task of the antinomies themselves to expose the impossibility of determining either of these things conclusively. I will return to this point in 1.3.6.

The two forms of regressive synthesis, first through time, and second through space, comprise a mathematical synthesis (B446). Corresponding to this mathematical synthesis is a second form Kant calls dynamic synthesis. Both of these are forms of regressive synthesis, i.e. that which seeks to ascend from the understanding to reason, and so from the conditions to the unconditioned. Where the mathematical synthesis deals with, firstly, the order of appearances in time, and secondly, the division of appearances into the simple in space, the dynamic synthesis deals with something extra. The two cosmological ideas corresponding to the dynamic synthesis are those of the 'origination' of appearances and the 'dependence of existence' upon the 'alterable in the field of appearance' (B443). When Kant talks about origination and dependence, he is referring to the seeming opposition between freedom and necessity. With these two ideas, Kant is referring to two overlapping concepts, 'the world', and 'nature'. The freedom, or 'self-activity' of nature sits in an ambiguous position between individual natural causes and the necessity of the whole of nature, i.e. the dependence of the existence of the alterable with respect to appearance, which Kant calls 'natural necessity' (B446).

To clarify, the first two forms of cosmological ideas, which refer to time and space respectively, concern the 'mathematical sum total of all appearances and the totality of their synthesis' (ibid.). These two forms of idea manifest in the Antinomies as follows: with respect to time, the first cosmological idea can claim both that the world begins in time and that it does not. This is the first antinomy. With respect to space, the second cosmological idea can claim both that space is infinitely divisible and that it is not divisible. This is contrasted with the dynamic synthesis, wherein the same world (the mathematical world) is entitled 'nature', and viewed as 'a dynamical whole'.

These two cosmological ideas, namely that nature is both free, but also necessary, i.e. productive of appearances and not things in themselves, these ideas manifest in the Antinomies as follows: with respect to causality, the third cosmological idea can claim both that there exists a cause of appearance aside from the laws of nature, and that there is no such additional cause. In other words, while a cause outside of nature is conceivable (the idea of God), it is not necessary, indeed, not even possible to incorporate into Kant's account of nature's appearance, because the idea of God cannot be brought into experience. With respect to necessity, the fourth cosmological idea can claim both that there is a necessary being on which the sum total of appearances depends, and that there is no such necessary being.

In all four cases summarised above, the conflict between the thesis and antithesis of each antimony cannot be solved, because no corresponding object can be supplied which confirms either side. In other words, taking the first antinomy as an example, the natural world cannot be *experienced* as having had a beginning in time or not. Experience is experience of appearances, and as such can only advance from condition to conditioned, i.e. from *a priori* synthesis to an object. This progress from pure to empirical knowledge, or in other words, from the knowledge of the conditions of experience to knowledge of what it is that is conditioned by those conditions, can continue without end. I will say a brief word about the mathematical regressive synthesis before dwelling for a moment on the dynamic and what it means for the possibility of an unconditioned idea of nature.

As mentioned above, the mathematical regressive synthesis which leads to the first two antinomies can be resolved by rejecting both thesis and antithesis. So, in the realm of appearances, one experiences objects firstly as being extended in space and ordered in time. However, neither extension in space nor ordering in time need be enclosed by a limit, nor do they need to be allowed to continue into infinity. This is because space and time are forms of intuition, and as such, apply only to that which is present to the senses. As Kant explains, 'all beginning is in time and all limits of the extended are in space. But space and time belong only to the world of sense. Accordingly,

while appearances *in the world* are conditionally limited, *the world itself* is neither conditional nor unconditionally limited' (B550). In essence, a limit cannot be placed in the world because it is a condition of knowing the world that it is limited by intuition. The condition (sensible intuition) is contained within the series of appearances. In the case of the dynamic regressive synthesis, it is not a sensible condition that Kant appeals to but an intelligible one. This is because the concept of cause (which pertains to the third antinomy) and the concept of appearances being dependent something external to them for their reality (the fourth antinomy), are not part of intuition but of the understanding. As pertaining to the intelligible rather than the sensible, the latter two ideas can in principle be taken as true with respect to both their thesis and antithesis. I will explore this with reference to the third antinomy only, because it is this one that concerns the question of nature most directly.

Kant posits two ways of conceiving causality, either according to nature, or arising from freedom. In the first case, causality is that which Kant describes in the second analogy. Here, a state of appearances is considered as such on the condition that it must have been caused by a prior state. Natural causality in this sense is simply the ordering of appearances in time; nothing comes into being without first being caused. Causality by freedom on the other hand, Kant construes as 'the power of beginning a state spontaneously', which as such is not dependent on the causal chain that is posited in natural causality. To bring my discussion to its point, I quote here a passage in which Kant explains how natural and free causation are reconciled via the idea of reason:

That everything which happens has a cause is a universal law of the very possibility of all experience. Hence the causality of the cause, which itself happens or comes to be, must itself in turn have a cause; and thus the entire field of experience, however far it may extend, is transformed into the sum-total of the merely natural. But since in this way no absolute totality of conditions determine causal relation can be obtained, reason creates for itself the idea of a spontaneity which can begin to act of itself,

without requiring to be determined to action by an antecedent cause in accordance with the law of causality. (B561)

Only that which appears can be considered an object of nature. That which appears can do so only by intuitions being synthesised with concepts. Knowledge of nature, via this synthesis, can be in principle gained according to three *a priori* synthetic propositions: the quantum of substance in nature remains constant; effects can only be consequents of causes; and all objects of experience are co-existent. These are, in essence, the universal laws of nature in the *CPR*. Beyond them, and in order that nature be conceived as something other than a mechanism which carries out these laws in experience, freedom is posited as an idea, which, because it has no corresponding object, must be merely regulative, rather than constitutive, of any experience of nature. In Kant's view, conducting a survey of nature, one must act 'as if the series of appearances were in itself endless, without any first or supreme number' (B700), even though, by virtue of the laws of nature — the laws of the *experience* of nature — such an endless series can be neither confirmed nor denied. It is with this characterisation that I claim Kant's idea of the unity of nature is necessarily a unity of *thinking* about nature. Indeed, Kant expresses this explicitly in the *Prolegomena*, when he writes, 'the possibility of experience in general is thus at the same time the universal law of nature, and the principles of the former are themselves the laws of the latter' (4:319). This may not pose a problem for Kant in the context of his project in the *CPR*, since he introduces this project in the B Preface by claiming that nature must be constrained to 'give answer to questions of reasons own determining' B xiii). In the concluding section (1.3.6), however, I lay out some of the drawbacks of this position, which both establish a point of contrast with Schelling (to be addressed in chapter three), and a mode of transition from the *Critique of pure reason* to the *Critique of judgment*, which I discuss in chapter two.

1.3.6. The Unity of Nature is the Unity of Thinking

Kant often approaches the question of nature with the analogy of legal proceedings. Kant regularly employs legal metaphors, in which nature is required to be “brought to stand” to the trials of reason.⁴² In these trials, Kant is concerned with locating objects that can meet reason’s demands for unity, totality, and ultimately, the unconditioned. Given that no such object can exist, these demands are assigned to the ideas, which regulate the employment of the understanding in experience *as if* such unconditioned unity and totality were a part of nature, rather than merely ‘in our brain’ (B512). The fact that ‘an unconditioned and first existence’ is ‘nowhere discernible’ (B502) in experience, leads Kant to the conclusion that such an existence must remain a regulative idea. I claim that this is because Kant relies upon a separation between subject and object. In terms of an item of knowledge, this is the distinction between the knower and what is known. It is true, according to Kant’s definition of what constitutes an object, that there can be no unconditioned object, and hence no unconditioned in nature — that is, nature considered as synonymous with experience of nature.

Natural science, if grounded by the principles of transcendental idealism, must abide by the same laws as those governing everyday experience of nature. As Kant says in the *Prolegomena*, ‘natural science will never discover to us the inside of the things, i.e. that which is not appearance but can serve as the highest ground of explanation of the appearances’ (4:353). This is because nature itself, in Kant’s terms, is a series of objects, held in a necessary connection. If the unconditioned cannot be an object, it cannot be in nature. This is so, I claim, because Kant relies upon everything being either subject or object. This dualism is presented as an impasse. The ideas get around this impasse in one way, by claiming that experience can be guided by an unconditioned regulative principle which is, as such, neither subject (as condition of experience) nor object (as that which is conditioned). In this case, while a unity in reason may be achieved by keeping the ideas from being

42 Cf. section three of The Antinomy of Pure Reason, particularly A463/B491, and B502-4.

mistakenly applied to objects, a very narrow conception of nature results. It is a nature which is defined by the laws which construct experiences of it. Nature is the medium by which we deduce the modes of our own thinking. Nature is, in one sense, only in our minds, and that which we experience is a series of appearances that may or may not be a totality. What is more, human beings are bound to this uncertain state of affairs, somewhat paradoxically, because, as Kant writes in the *Prolegomena*, ‘metaphysics, perhaps more than any other science, is laid in us in its fundamental lines by nature itself’ (4:353). In the third chapter another option will become available, through Schelling’s nature-philosophy, which attempts to move beyond the opposition of subject and object. With this option, the unconditioned *is* in nature, precisely because it is neither subject, nor object, but a productive process. I leave this here, simply as a signpost for what is to come, and offer now some conclusions to chapter one.

Conclusion to Chapter One

This chapter has sought to clearly elucidate some of the core concepts of Kant's critical metaphysics. I have attempted to view this metaphysics through the question of nature, and defend the view that the *CPR* contains a substantial and specific idea of nature, wherein the possibility of nature itself is considered to be in some sense the same as the possibility of experience. I have maintained the view that Kant's idea of nature, and the unity of nature, is in fact the unity of *thinking about nature*. My focus on the unconditioned has sought to show that while Kant's idea of nature is heavily influenced by the natural sciences, the problem of its metaphysical grounding, and by extension of nature taken as an *idea*, persists. This problem is exemplified by Kant's descriptions of nature as the sum total of appearances, and the impossibility of apprehending such a totality *in concreto*. This reveals the more general problem over the objective reality of ideas, given that ideas cannot be exhibited in experience. In chapter two, I explore a different solution that Kant proposes in the third *Critique*, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. There, nature is considered in an altogether different sense than as a whole of appearances. It is considered as the source of aesthetic judgments. I consider the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and the concepts explained therein as a necessary counterpart to those explored in this chapter. Where the metaphysical construction of nature in Kant meets its limit, the aesthetic construction of nature enters, and so I move now to chapter two, which is occupied precisely with this aesthetic construction of nature.

Chapter Two: Kant's Critical Aesthetics in the *Critique of The Power of Judgment*

Chapter Outline

In this chapter, I explore Kant's expansion upon his idea of nature as articulated in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Section 2.1 explores this idea in terms of Kant's theory of reflective judgment, specifically the two main forms of aesthetic judgment, judgments of beauty and judgments of the sublime. Regarding the latter, I draw out one of Kant's claims pertinent to my discussion, that nature is not receptive to ideas. Ideas merely regulate one's experience of nature, but do not constitute that experience, or the matter of that experience. In the *Critique of Judgment*, this regulative function of reason via the ideas is replaced with the reflective function of judgment that forms aesthetic experience. Despite similar limitations imposed upon experience of nature by reflective aesthetic judgments, there are moments in the *Critique of Judgment* where Kant's attitude toward the idea of nature is expanded, particularly regarding the supersensible. One place this is particularly evident is in Kant's theory of genius. In 2.2, I examine this theory and its connection to aesthetic ideas, which Kant defines as the counterpart to ideas of reason (covered in 1.3). I then move on to discuss the fine arts and poetry in particular, with which I attempt to test the limits of Kant's more expansive idea of nature, namely, a nature that seems predisposed to our aesthetic appreciation of it. Despite the fine arts, and poetry especially, acting as powerful symbolic representations of this "hidden" power of nature, I conclude that Kant's need to restrict this power to a reflective function of judgment, points toward something from which the critical philosophy must cut itself off, namely the unconditioned in nature.

2.1. The Aesthetic Judgment

Abstract

In this section, I examine Kant's description of pure judgments of taste, firstly of the beautiful, and secondly of the sublime. I elucidate the difference between objective determining judgments and subjective reflective judgments. Both judgments of beauty and the sublime are purely reflective, and as such have important connections to Kant's idea of nature, which, as I have shown in chapter one, is conditioned by certain *a priori* modes of thinking. Despite this conditioned nature drawing critical ire from some of Kant's successors, Schelling being one of them, I will point to moments in the third *Critique* that present interesting challenges to those intending to surpass Kant's critical boundaries, particularly regarding the supersensible ground of nature. The lack of receptivity that nature has to ideas is something that radically separates Kant's theory of nature from Schelling's. This will become an important point of comparison in chapters three and four. I will conclude by defending the view that Kant does have a coherent theory of the sublime, which still has its uses, even if the theory as a whole is problematic.

2.1.1. Introduction

In the *Critique of pure reason*, Kant's theory of judgment is limited to acts of the understanding. In the *Analytic of Concepts*, he even goes so far as to call the understanding itself the 'faculty of judgment' (B94). Kant's central task in the *CPR*, in this respect, is to establish firm grounds upon which our capacity for judgment can be shown to be objective, and hence productive of objective knowledge.

In order to show how objective knowledge is possible, Kant proposes a way in which to conceive of our cognitive activity in relation to the external world, such that the world itself — while subsisting independently of us — comes to be objective partly as a result of our cognitive engagement with it.⁴³ The product of this process of cognitive engagement with the material world Kant calls the phenomenal, or the realm of appearances. Its counterpart, the noumenal, is everything that cannot not be subsumed within or under the human cognitive apparatus, which includes, but is not necessarily limited to, things as they are in themselves.⁴⁴ In the *Transcendental Aesthetic* of the *CPR*, Kant deduced the *a priori* forms of space and time as the sole forms of intuition in which sensible experiences take place. In this sense, the term "aesthetic" was used simply to denote the science of the senses, rather than Baumgarten's usage as a rationalist science of taste.⁴⁵ In the *CPR*, the faculty of judgment is reserved for assessing and implementing standards of correctness when combining sensible intuitions with the concepts of the understanding. In this manner, objective or

43 Cf. Gardner, 1999, pp. 37-50. Kant's view of cognition as activity, rather than the mere passivity of the senses, or affectation of the intellect, also informs the way in which Kant's critique of reflective judgment is understood. I demonstrate this below according to Kant's distinction between subjective and objective judgment.

44 Cf. *CPR* B298.

45 Cf. *ibid.*, B35a.

determinative judgments took their role in cognition as monitoring the effective production of objective knowledge.⁴⁶ In the *CPR* judgments are always judgments of cognition.

In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*,⁴⁷ Kant concerns himself not with cognitive judgments, but with aesthetic judgments. As already mentioned, in the *CPR*, ‘aesthetic’ simply designated the science of sensibility. An element of experience is aesthetic to the extent that it concerns the affections of our senses, prior to these affections being conceptualised. Kant retains this definition of aesthetic in the *CJ*, but with some important additions. One such addition is the meaning of subjective judgments. In typical parlance, one tends to think of subjective and objective as strict oppositions, such that the subjective relates merely to the realm of personal feeling or preference, rather than the realm of objective factual truths. Accordingly, to say, for example, that taste is subjective is to say that it is reducible only to a particular person’s likes and dislikes. Nothing “true” or epistemically significant can be said of a subjective judgment. This is not how Kant uses the term subjective however. While it is true that an aesthetic judgment is subjective, because it concerns itself only with cognition of the subject and not the objective world as such, this does not mean that all judgments of taste reduce to personal preference for Kant. While there *are* these kinds of judgment which relate to our feelings of sensory gratification, there are also, in addition, pure judgments of taste, and it is this form of pure judgment with which Kant is primarily concerned. Before examining the intricacies of Kant’s argument, it is worth describing his general account of the subjective judgment in more detail.

2.1.2. The Subjective Form of Judgment

Several of the core features of Kant’s description of judgment in the *CJ* are carried over, at least analogously, from the *CPR*. For example, the difference between determining and reflective judgments in the *CJ* is analogous to the apodeictic and hypothetical uses of reason in the *CPR*,

⁴⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, B600.

⁴⁷ Hereafter *CJ*.

(B674-5). In both cases a unity with regard to knowledge of nature is at issue, and in both cases, this unity concerns the relationships between the universal and the particular. The regulative use of reason in the *CPR* with regard to ideas – which Kant here views as problematic concepts (B675) – has a similar function to the reflective form of judgment in the *CJ*. So, one can draw an – albeit simplified – bridge from the *CPR* to the *CJ*, in which regulative reason gives over to reflective judgment.⁴⁸

Kant defines the power of judgment as ‘the faculty for thinking of the particular as contained under the universal’ (*CJ*, 5:179). By ‘universal’ Kant means a principle or law, such as a concept; by particular he means an individual phenomenal item. The power of judgment can work in one of two ways. When the law is already given, such as in the case of the categories of the understanding, the faculty of judgment merely ‘subsumes the particular under it’ (*ibid.*). Kant calls this the ‘determining’ power of judgment, insofar as it constitutes particular phenomenal items as objects of experience. For example, when I apply the concept of a tree to a phenomenal item, I have subsumed this particular, phenomenal tree under the universal concept of “tree”. I thereby constitute an object of experience. On the other hand, there are cases where ‘only the particular is given, for which the universal is to be found’, and in this case the power judgment is ‘merely reflecting’ (*ibid.*). One begins with a particular, for which a universal is sought. In this case I could start with the phenomenal tree, and from this extract some other universal notion such as that of a living thing

48 One key factor here is the issue of autonomy. In the case of reflective judgment, Kant writes in the *CJ* that, unlike determining judgments, which have no autonomy because of their merely subsumptive function, reflective judgments are more autonomous because they subsume a particular under a principle which the faculty of reflective judgment provides for itself (5:386). It is by this self-prescribed principle or law that the power of reflecting judgment can approximate to concepts of reason (*ibid.*). For more on the issue of autonomy, specifically regarding teleological judgments of nature, cf. Deligiorgi, 2005, pp. 112-8.

reaching toward the sun for nourishment. This is subjective or reflective judgment.⁴⁹ There are important reasons why reflective judgments are precisely *reflective*, and as such subjective rather than objective. In the case of objective judgments, I determine the tree as such by applying a concept to it. In the case of reflective judgments, I do not determine any aspect of the objective tree so much as I use said object as an item for reflection upon my own cognitive faculties. There is an important reason for this which has to do with Kant's expanded idea of nature in the *CJ*. Kant claims that, in the case of determining judgments, nature is experienced according to laws prescribed by the understanding. In the most general sense, nature is determined by the understanding according to 'the universal concept' of nature (5: 180), by which I take Kant to mean simply that nature *is as it is* to the extent that it accords to laws.⁵⁰ There are now two levels of law-governed nature, the universal level of nature as a singular concept, and the 'particular empirical laws' (*ibid.*) that result from the legislation of the understanding. It is with these particular empirical laws that reflective judgment deals.⁵¹

49 One can find a useful technical definition of reflection in the Amphiboly of the Concepts of Reflection in the *CPR*. He writes, 'reflection (*reflexio*) does not concern itself with objects themselves with a view to deriving concepts from them directly, but is that state of mind in which we first set ourselves to discover the subjective conditions under which [alone] we are able to arrive at concepts. It is the consciousness of the relation of given representations to our different sources of knowledge' (B316).

50 Kant uses 'universal concept' here, and not 'idea' as in the *CPR*. I take him to mean essentially the same by both these terms.

51 In addition to elucidating the structure and function of reflective judgment, Kant must also show it to be a necessary *a priori* faculty of cognition. However, the strength of the ground upon which he claims this can be debated, though space does not permit me to go into detail here. See, for example, the following passage from the *CJ*: 'The understanding is[...]in possession of *a priori* universal laws of nature, without which nature could not be an object of experience at all; but still it requires in addition a certain order of nature in its particular rules, which can only be known to it empirically and which from its point of view are contingent' (5:184). Shortly after, Kant relates this to the supersensible: 'Through the possibility of its *a priori* laws for nature the understanding gives a proof that nature is cognized by

The reflecting power of judgment does not legislate in the way determining judgments do, and so the principle by which reflective judgment operates cannot be supplied from without. Instead, ‘the reflecting power of judgment...can only give itself such a transcendental principle as a law, and cannot...prescribe it to nature’ (5: 180). Kant follows this with a line that is of particular importance for my purposes, as it has to do with his conception of nature. He writes, ‘reflection on the laws of nature is directed by nature, and nature is not directed by the conditions in terms of which we attempt to develop a concepts of it that is in this regard entirely contingent’ (ibid.). This is one of the first hints of Kant’s attitude toward nature in the *CJ*, and it is followed by probably the most well known of Kant’s assertions with regard to cognition of nature *a priori*. The understanding prescribes *a priori* laws to nature, but these laws do not govern everything in nature, for there are also ‘particular empirical laws’, which Kant claims ‘must be considered in terms of the sort of unity they would have if an understanding (even if not ours) had likewise given them for the sake of our faculty of cognition’ (ibid.). It is this consideration of the merely empirical in nature that Kant defines as purposiveness.

Purposiveness in an objective sense has to do with the correspondence between a concept, construed as the ‘ground of reality of an object’, which Kant also calls an ‘end’, and that to which the concept is applied. In other words, the form of an object is purposive to the extent that it accords with the concept that grounds its real possibility. In addition to this determinate purposiveness, Kant describes the purposiveness of nature in general according to its empirical laws. This breed of purposiveness belongs exclusively to the reflective power of judgment, as it does not actually prescribe anything to objects in nature, but rather considers there empirical reality as if it were designed for the purposes of our judgment. It is Kant’s conception of the purposiveness of nature

us only as appearances, and hence at the same time an indication of its supersensible substratum; but it leaves this entirely undetermined’ (5:196).

which grounds his analysis of judgments of beauty and the sublime, and by way of analogy, his discussion of fine art and genius, which I will show as this chapter progresses.

2.1.3. The Judgment of Taste

A judgment of taste (*Geschmackurteil*) is a form of reflective judgment. In these judgments, it is the imagination, and not the understanding, which supplies the rule by which the judgment is made. As opposed to determining judgments of knowledge, which are related to the faculty of cognition, reflective aesthetic judgments are related to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. In the *First Introduction* to the *CJ*, Kant provides some supporting arguments for this subjective form of judgment by appealing to the threefold division of the human mind developed by Moses Mendelssohn in his *Morgenstunden* of 1785.⁵² Kant labels these three divisions the faculty of cognition, the feeling of pleasure and displeasure and the faculty of desire (20:206). In the case of the second, Kant argues that ‘the representations belonging to cognition’ are used ‘merely as grounds for preserving [the subject’s] existence in [them]’ (ibid.). This final use of representation as ground does not provide or determine any cognition, even though, as Kant admits, it may presuppose one. Such a remark is sufficient for dismissing with the idea that aesthetic judgments have absolutely nothing to do with cognition. We can see from Kant’s phraseology that it is merely the *result* of aesthetic judgment that is not cognitive, which is not to say the basis or ground might

⁵² Kant composed two introductions to the *CJ*, a first draft (the here cited *First Introduction*), and a second, much shorter version. The first draft was not published until 1793, three years after the publication of the *CJ*. During the nineteenth century, this separately published introduction was taken to be a piece of work independent from the *CJ*. In the Cambridge edition of the *CJ* to which I refer, this *First Introduction* is presented before the introduction to the *CJ* included in the original 1790 edition. I refer to the page tabulation as it appears in this edition. Cf. ‘Editor’s introduction’ to the *CJ* (2000, pp. xli-xliii).

not be cognitive.⁵³ Of course, such an appeal to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure in the subject is not sufficient for fully constituting a system of judgment.⁵⁴ For such a system to be formulated, the feeling of pleasure and displeasure must be connected with *a priori* principles, in the same way that cognition is connected to the principles of the understanding, and desire connected to pure reason (20:207). By supplying its own principle, reflective judgment is able to hold the empirical manifold as a unity, even if it cannot *determine* it as such. It is on the basis of this reflective unity that Kant hopes to secure a systematic connection between the human mind and the natural world.

2.1.4. Judgments of Reflection and the Technique of Nature

Why should systematicity, not just of the human mind, but also of nature itself, be so important for Kant? Systematicity, even if it is taken only as a regulative principle, is what solidifies the place of judgment within the faculties, and helps to secure a viable idea of nature — at least for Kant’s purposes. Via his particular construal of purposiveness, Kant can hold that even reflective judgments are not the result of mere accident but are secured according to a self-prescribed, *a priori* rule. The rule of reflective judgment *presupposes* a concordance between the activity of judgment and the arrangement of material nature. By the time Kant reaches his analysis of judgments of the beautiful, he has already established what he believes to be firm foundations upon which the subjective form of judgment is based. Judgment in the subjective case is *reflective*, for two important reasons. The first, already explored above, has to do merely with the limitation of subjective judgment to reflection upon the interaction of the faculties of the human mind. The

53 Such an assertion becomes increasingly important as the *CJ* progresses, for it justifies the place of the faculty of judgment which would otherwise be in an unsecured position as an indeterminate mediator between imagination and understanding.

54 Kant instead refers to this relation of cognition of an object to pleasure and displeasure as an ‘aggregate’ because, while empirically knowable, such a representation is not grounded on any *a priori* principle, such as those governing the relation of intuitions and concepts. (20:207).

second and perhaps more interesting reason can be found in the *First Introduction*. Kant writes the following:

The reflecting power of judgment...proceeds with given appearances, in order to bring them under empirical concepts of determinate natural things, not schematically, but technically, not as it were merely mechanically, like an instrument, but artistically, in accordance with the general but at the same time indeterminate principle of a purposive arrange of nature in a system, as it were for the benefit of our power of judgment, in the suitability of its particular laws (about which understanding has nothing to say) for the possibility of experience as a system, without which presupposition we could not hope to find our way in a labyrinth of the multiplicity of possible particular empirical laws. Thus the power of judgment itself makes the technique of nature into the principle of its reflection *a priori*. (20:214)

It is this reflective power of judgment which allows us to conceive of nature not merely as a mechanism, but also ‘at the same time an art’ (20:218). The suggestion is that, while it is tempting to reduce the subsuming power of determining judgment to a merely mechanical operation, the reflective power of judgment, given that it need not constitute the object in the same way, can contain the idea of nature *as art*, or as following a rule akin to art. What does this mean? One simple reading is that, as art, nature is a system which, *according to the prescription of its own rule*, can account for all possible myriad representations and experiences contained within and directed towards it. Via reflective judgment, we see nature as an artefact; we see it as if it were *made*. Furthermore, we see nature as if it were made *for the purposes of our judgment*. Such a characterisation of reflective judgment as technical and artistic in form provides ground for Kant’s theory of judgments of the beautiful and the sublime.⁵⁵ These judgments of taste in relation to

55 The technique of nature with regard to reflective judgments is merely formal, in that it provides ‘purposive shapes’ (Gestalten) for the power of judgment to reflect upon the agreement of the imagination with the understanding (*CJ*, 20:232) This is opposed to the real technique of nature that

nature provide the ground for beautiful works of art, both of which, I will claim, are mutually dependent, but in a way that makes nature, and not art-works, the primordial ground for judgments of beauty.

2.1.5. The Pure Judgment of Taste: Beauty

In the preceding, I outlined reflective judgments, and judgments of taste in general. In order to analyse judgments of beauty specifically, Kant splits the form of the judgment into four “moments”. Each of these moments mirrors the logical preconditions of experience Kant deduces in the *CPR*.⁵⁶ This makes the moments of an aesthetic judgment also purely logical.⁵⁷ This does not mean that the judgment of taste itself is a logical judgment, and indeed it cannot be. But for the purposes of Kant’s transcendental deduction of judgment, its component parts are divided logically.⁵⁸ As already mentioned, judgments of taste are reflective, and so concern themselves only with the relation between the faculties while determining nothing about the object. As a result of the ‘determining ground’ of a judgment of taste being wholly subjective, the first logical moment, pertaining to the quality of the judgment, is *disinterestedness*. This simply means that when I judge an object to be beautiful, I do not determine this beauty as an objective property of the thing being

signifies objects of nature as ends, and therefore requires teleological judgment. I do not deal with teleological judgment in any depth here. For more on this see Ginsborg (2008).

56 These are Quantity, Quality, Relation and Modality. Kant uses this same fourfold structure in the *Critique of Practical Reason* to analyse moral judgments (*CPrR*, 66).

57 What is immediately important, is that aesthetic judgments are purposive, or ‘purpose-related’ as Wicks calls them (2006, p. 16). I mention this now to highlight the way in which judgments of beauty are peculiarly subjective. The peculiar nature of this subjectivity will crystallise as I move through the four moments of a judgment of beauty. It will be useful to remember the remarks above about nature following a rule of technique akin to art when considering these four moments.

58 In the following I cover only the first three moments of disinterestedness, universality and purposiveness. I leave out an extended discussion of necessity because by my reading it is implied by the second moment of universality. For more on the necessity of judgments of taste see Wicks (2006, pp. 76-81).

judged, up to and including its actual empirical existence.⁵⁹ Kant writes, ‘to say that an object is beautiful and to prove I have taste what matters is what I make of this representation in myself, not how I depend on the existence of the object’ (*CJ*, 5:205). It is important for Kant that one not depend on the existence of the object, because to do so would presumably mean dependence upon some lower faculty like sensibility. Only complete disinterestedness in the sensible instantiation of an object can make the judgment of beauty a pure one, meaning that it is not bound up with anything empirical. Kant calls a judgment of taste bound up with the empirical a judgment of the agreeable, ‘which pleases the senses in sensation’ (*ibid.*).

As Wicks points out in his commentary on the *CJ*, the first moment of a judgment of beauty already brings about an important condition, namely that they are *ideal*. As ideal, ‘judgments of taste attend to the object's beauty exclusively’, rather than another feature of the object such as its sensory charm or attractive meaning (2006, p.17). They are ideal because there is not one particular property of an object that we can demarcate as its beauty. Rather, the object, approached in a certain way, strikes us as beautiful, not in terms of its properties but in terms of its whole. A judgment of beauty, then, is a pure, ideal judgment of taste.⁶⁰ Pure judgments of taste are disinterested because they do not rely upon sensibility, as opposed to judgments of the agreeable or the good, which always contain some aspect of ‘sensory charm’. For Kant, the agreeable, the beautiful and the good ‘designate three different relations to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, in relation to which we

59 I.e. as an instantiation of X concept. This would be a strong reading of Kant’s claim. A softer reading would simply assert that, while the existence of objective empirical properties must in some way be present in order that I am able to judge anything at all, these properties do not factor into the product of my judgment itself. For a discussion of the first view, cf. Guyer (1997, pp. 169-183). For a discussion of the second, cf. Ameriks, (2003, pp. 323-343).

60 The ideality of a judgment of beauty becomes increasingly important when Kant moves on to talk about beautiful judgments of art-works, because even more than in a judgment about an item of nature, whose teleological purposiveness we can only reflect upon subjectively, a beautiful art-work is able to bring about a pure judgment on the basis of an intentionally crafted and determined item.

distinguish objects or kinds of representations from each other' (*CJ*, 5:210). Pure judgments of beauty contain nothing empirical, or rather, are not determined by anything empirical, and as such, any gratification or approval obtains from these judgments has to do exclusively with the interplay of our cognitive faculties.

The eradication of anything empirical from the judgment of beauty leads Kant to the second moment, pertaining to its quantity. A judgment of beauty is *universal*. At first glance, this would seem to imply that a judgment of taste requires universal *assent*, but Kant does not mean this. Rather, he writes, 'one cannot judge that about which he is aware that the satisfaction in it is without any interest in his own case in any way except that it must contain a ground of satisfaction for everyone' (5:211). This sentence requires some elucidation. When I judge that I am satisfied by a given representation, and this judgment is a pure one, I simultaneously assert that every one can make the same judgment. This does not entail that everyone must *agree* with my judgment, only that they must *be able* to make the same kind of judgment in the same manner. Universality is subjective here, and relies on the fact that, if pure judgments of taste follow the same logical movements as cognitive ones, it must be true that everyone's capacity for aesthetic judgment operates in the same way. Kant calls this 'common validity' (5:215). Kant really does not need to say anything more complex than this. The principles of reflective judgment, are inter-subjectively — and therefore *universally* — valid simply because the human faculty of judgment does and must work in the same manner in each particular subject. This common validity, in order for judgments of taste to rest on *a priori* rather than empirical principles, must ground and therefore logically precede the feeling of pleasure aroused in the subject. This lends credence to the notion that judgments of beauty have nothing to do with features of the object. It is the harmony between the faculties of cognition, combined with the ability 'to communicate one's state of mind', if only with regard to this harmony, upon which feelings of pleasure are grounded. As such, Kant closes the second moment by summarising, 'That is beautiful which pleases universally without a concept' (5:219). There is extensive debate over the extent to which concepts play a role in judgments of

beauty.⁶¹ I am not focussed on this debate, rather I here lay the ground for Kant's theory of artistic beauty, in which it is clear that the conceptual element of the judgment has a larger and, I claim, ambiguous role.

The third — and perhaps most complex — moment of a judgment of beauty concerns its *purposiveness*.⁶² As I mentioned above, purposiveness simply refers to the causal relation between a concept and its object, namely the object being an end of the concept that caused it. An end is the concept taken as the ground of reality for an object. As shown above, this form of purposiveness works in only one direction, grounding the reality of empirical items, which are subsumed under universal concepts. Empirical items cannot ground concepts, and it is for this reason, at least according to the introduction of the *CJ*, that Kant introduces reflective judgment proper. While it is often reported that Kant came to the notion of reflective judgments relatively late, in contrast with his other critical principles, the possibility of reflective judgment is offered in the *CPR*.⁶³ In the *Analytic of Concepts*, Kant says the following:

By 'analytic of concepts', I do not understand their analysis, or the procedure usual in philosophical investigations, that of dissecting the content of such concepts as may present themselves, and so of rendering them more distinct; but the hitherto rarely attempted dissection of the faculty of the understanding itself, in order to investigate the possibility of concepts a priori by looking for them in the understanding alone, as their birthplace, and by analysing the pure use of this faculty. (B91)

It is worth quoting Kant in full here, because his aim in the deduction of the table of categories in the *CPR* is quite specific. Kant is concerned with the make-up of the faculty of the understanding

61 The debate between conceptualist and non-conceptualist readings of Kant is still going on. For non-conceptualist readings cf. Guyer's *Kant and the Claims of Taste* (1997) and Ginsborg's *The Role of Taste in Kant's Theory of Cognition* (1990), for a conceptualist response cf. part three of Ameriks' *Interpreting Kant's Critiques* (2003, pp. 283-343).

62 For a concise overview of purposiveness in judgment cf. Deligiorgi, (2014, p. 28-9).

63 Cf. Pillow, 2003, p. 17.

that governs, a priori, the process of cognition. Concepts are deduced, not from objects that make up their particular ends, but from the faculty of the understanding itself, and in this way, they are purposive. In the *CJ*, Kant takes this notion one step further, by pointing out that if the preceding argument is true, (that concepts are purposive for the sake of their employment by the understanding), it must be possible for there to be purposiveness without an end, for it is enough that a representation, be it of an object, a state of mind or an action, can be explained as such only 'insofar as we assume as its ground a causality in accordance with ends' (5:220). If this is true, then we can 'observe a purposiveness concerning form, even without basing it on an end' (ibid.), i.e. regardless of what purpose may or may not objectively obtain in the object itself. We do this, of course, not by way of a determinative judgment of cognition, but via reflection. This is what leads Kant to claim that a judgment of taste pertains to nothing but the *form of the purposiveness* of an object as its ground. What does this mean? Wenzel provides a useful summary. As we have already seen, a judgment of beauty does not merely concern the relationship between a subject and an object, as would a judgment of cognition. Rather, beauty has its roots in 'an act of contemplation that takes into account that relationship' (2003, p. 2). Wenzel describes two main features of this act of contemplation:

1. The feeling of the beautiful which leads to aesthetic judgment can be applied only to oneself.
2. It is however of objective logical necessity, as this capacity also belongs to every subject. (2003, p. 3)

These points reiterate what I have said above, but here applied to the third moment, they indicate that a judgment of beauty only concerns the *form* of purposiveness. The fact that the purposiveness thus represented can be only subjective, is a result of the combination of the above two facts. If the judgment relied upon something empirical, it would no longer be purely *a priori*, and hence not universal. As Kant writes in the *CJ*,

To establish *a priori* the connection of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure as an effect with some representation (sensation or concept) as its cause is absolutely impossible, for that would be a causal relation which (among objects of experience) can only ever be cognized *a posteriori* and by means of experience itself. (5:222)

The form of purposiveness can hence be understood as ‘the merely formal purposiveness in the play of the cognitive powers of the subject’ (ibid.). The play between these powers does have a kind of causality – it must for a feeling of pleasure to be aroused by it – but one that is not limited to any particular cognition. An aesthetic judgment that appealed to a particular cognition, and so only to its agreeableness or disagreeableness, is an empirical judgment, and hence not related to beauty.⁶⁴ Only a pure disinterested aesthetic judgment can be called a judgment of the beautiful. Such a judgment is not easy to come by however. We are often mistaken about just what kind of judgments we are employing. This is not hard to imagine. It is difficult to conceive how exactly we might eradicate all interest in the object upon which we exercise our judgment. The division of logical judgments into empirical and pure appears relatively unproblematic. But when it comes to reflective aesthetic judgments, which pertain merely to the feelings of pleasure or displeasure in the subject, it becomes less clear how to ensure that the judgment of beauty remains pure. Indeed, Kant points this out when he writes:

Charms are not only often included with beauty (which should properly concern merely form) as a contribution to the aesthetic universal satisfaction, but are even passed off as beauties in themselves, hence the matter of satisfaction is passed off for the form: a misunderstanding which, like many others that yet always have something true as their ground, can be eliminated by careful determination of these concepts. (5:223)

⁶⁴ Such a judgment would rely upon empirical data, not just incidentally but necessarily, and so cannot be a pure judgment.

We might want to question how a determination of concepts is supposed to clarify anything here, given that the judgment of beauty is precisely that which arouses feelings in the subject without strict reliance upon any concept. The exact method by which these ‘charms and emotions’ are eradicated, or how they are stopped from tainting the judgment of beauty in the first place, is not fully explained by Kant. He makes pains to emphasise that while the mere sensation of something, for example, a colour or the tone of an instrument, can only ever be agreeable, i.e. empirical, it is the form of the experience yielded by this sensation which is pure, and hence appropriate for a judgment of beauty. This is because the form ‘is the only thing that can be universally communicated about these representations with certainty: because the quality of sensations themselves cannot be assumed to be in accord in all subjects’ (5:224).⁶⁵ It might at first seem impossible to separate the merely sensuous ‘stuff’ of a colour or a tone from its pure form. Indeed, it is debatable the extent to which mere sensations even have a form, aside from their being ordered in space and time. Kant attempts such a separation of form and content with the following:

If one assumes, with Euler, that the colours are vibrations (*pulsus*) of the air immediately following one another, just as tones are vibrations of the air disturbed by sound, and, what is most important, that the mind does not merely perceive, by sense, their effect on the animation of the organ, but also, through reflection, perceives the regular play of the impressions (hence the form in the combination of different representations) (about which I have very little doubt), then colours and tones would not be mere sensations, but would already be a formal determination of the unity of the manifold in them, and in that case could also be counted as beauties in themselves. (ibid.)

65 This is one of the first instances of what I call a negative conception of beauty. This is a form beauty that exists simply by virtue of eradicating those elements that cannot be ascribed to all subjects with certainty (leaving the merely formal). This negative concept of beauty will become increasingly important, particularly when Kant introduces judgments of the sublime as their “positive” counterpart.

Here Kant makes an important distinction between that which affects our senses (vibrations in the air), and how we come to recognise this succession of sensuous impressions *in the interaction between our faculties*. In so doing however, it appears as though Kant confuses the causal conditions of sensation with the sensations themselves. What is clear from the above passage, is that reflective judgment is the capacity to abstract from immediate sensations in order to identify their ‘regular play of impressions’. It is hard to see how this would amount to anything more than merely reflecting particular sensible impressions upon their more general ordering in space and time, especially because these are the only purely formal kinds of intuition which Kant grants. According to this reading, the form of a sensation is simply the nature of its being spatially and temporally ordered. Remember, what makes this form viable for a judgment of beauty, in terms of the third moment, is its seeming purposiveness for precisely the make up of our faculties and the free play that occurs between them. This is problematic however. If we look at the above quotation closely, it seems that the only way we can reflect upon the ‘play of the impressions’ is to first be confronted with a sensation, which must already be formed in space and time, and then — through some process of abstraction — reflect upon how the form of that sensation accords play of the faculties. If this is the case, then Kant relies upon the Lockean distinction between primary and secondary qualities, which would be untenable with Kant’s more general theory of sensation. Beauty would in turn be dependent upon something merely empirical, i.e. whatever primary qualities are necessary to bring about the sensation, if only for the purposes of abstraction to the *form* of this sensation.

In fact, pure and empirical aesthetic judgments — the first pertaining to beauty, the second to agreeableness or charm — come so close together that Kant admits they are not only confused, but that charm can in fact act as a supplement to beauty for the purposes of ‘recommend[ing] taste and its cultivation’ (ibid.), as long as this charm is not mistaken as ‘the grounds for the judging of beauty’ (5:225). Taste needs to be cultivated. That a *pure* judgment of taste is ideal does not just mean it is devoid of all empirical content, but also, that it is ideal in the sense of ends; an ideal situation. This leads to further problems. If it were possible to be mistaken whether a judgment of

beauty is or is not a pure one — as Kant seems to imply — then it would seem that there are correct and incorrect methods for conducting such a judgment. If this is true, then the supposedly free harmonious play of the faculties is in fact not free, or at least not to the extent Kant implies.⁶⁶ It is conditioned by certain rules of validity and invalidity. To see if Kant can survive this potential objection, it is worth citing at length a particularly complex passage from §16 of the *CJ*. Here, Kant discusses the distinction between free and adherent beauty. The first ‘presupposes no concept of what the object ought to be; the second does presuppose such a concept and the perfection of the object in accordance with it’ (5:229). Our ignorance of any objective end to that which we judge as beautiful liberates the imagination to take the place of determination according to a concept. Kant writes:

No concept of any end for which the manifold should serve the given object and this which the latter would represent is presupposed, by which the imagination, which is as it were at play in the observation of the shape, would merely be restricted. (ibid.)

As Kant’s discussion of purposiveness progresses, his characterisation of beauty becomes increasingly negative. A free beauty represents ‘no object under a determinate concept’ (ibid.). This leads to some strange distinctions. Flowers, borders on wallpaper, and ‘music without a text’ are free beauties. Human beings, horses and buildings are not, for when confronted with them, we ‘presuppose a concept of the end that determines what the thing should be, hence a concept of its perfection’ (ibid.). How exactly we are to judge the level of perfection attained by a human or a building in fulfilling its concept is unclear. In the case of human beings, it is difficult to conceive of how one individual might be considered perfect, as opposed to another. Does Kant mean by

⁶⁶ It is worth asking here to what extent a faculty of human cognition can be entirely free, given that it is always at least partially dependent on both the other faculties, and the limitations said faculties place on the nature of our empirical experience. It could also be asked, however, to what extent partial or limited freedom of a faculty is possible either, given that each faculty operates according to its own internal laws.

perfection simply the attainment of all requisite conditions for exercising the mental faculties? Or does he mean perfection in a moral sense? Either would be hard to reconcile with his larger critical philosophy, the former because a person we consider highly imperfect or even hateful could be still be considered perfectly *rational*, the latter because moral actions are defined by Kant as ones of striving, and hence of being always limited and imperfect.⁶⁷ What *is* clear from the above passage is that a judgment of beauty is pure when we are lacking any *determinate* concept of what the object being judged is or ought to be. This lack of determinate or determining concept may be appropriate for Kant's purposes, but as I will show later in my discussion of Kant on works of art, the case of artistic beauty raises some problems regarding the precise extent to which we can disassociate from any accompanying concept when aesthetically judging art-works. For the sake of natural beauty however, any hypothetical issue of perfection need never enter the picture, since the concept of the thing being judged concerns another element of cognition entirely, namely the objective judgment that yields knowledge. Kant summarises with the following:

The satisfaction in the manifold in a thing in relation to the internal purpose that determines its possibility is a satisfaction grounded on a concept; the satisfaction in beauty, however, is one that presupposes no concept, but is immediately combined with the representation through which the object is given (not through which it is thought). Now if the judgment of taste in regard to the latter is made dependent on the purpose in the former, as a judgment of reason, and is thereby restricted, then it is no longer a free and pure judgment of taste. (5:230)

He continues:

To be sure, taste gains by this combination of aesthetic satisfaction with the intellectual in that it becomes fixed and, though not universal, can have rules prescribed to it in regard to certain purposively determined objects. But in this case these are not rules of taste, but merely rules for the unification of taste with reason i.e. of the beautiful with the good,

⁶⁷ I will discuss this in more detail later regarding Kant's remarks on beauty as a symbol of morality.

through which the former becomes usable as an instrument of intention with regard to the latter, so that the determination of the mind that sustains itself and is of subjective universal validity can underlie that which can only be sustained through strenuous resolve but is objectively universally valid. (5:231)

I have shown the way in which Kant demarcates pure judgments of beauty through the eradication of empirical grounds of determination. But Kant is also aware that such a negative conception of pure judgments does not suffice for a theory of taste. There is danger that beauty itself becomes either that which is judged only by force or absence of other determinations, or is intersubjectively valid only to the extent that every object can potentially be judged as beautiful.⁶⁸ My motivation for pointing out these dangers here is to show the ways in which Kant attempts to “fill out” the gaps created by free judgments of beauty.⁶⁹ I claim that one way in which Kant does this is through a critique of judgments of the sublime, to which I now turn.

2.1.6. The Sublime as Counterpart to Beauty

Many commentators, both inside and outside of the Kantian tradition, have noted the difficulty that comes with the construction a coherent theory of the sublime.⁷⁰ Even from those sympathetic to the Kantian tradition, the majority of emphasis has been expended on the importance of the sublime for Kant’s ethical theory. In a recent article on Kant’s theory of the sublime, Deligiorgi contends with both of these views, arguing, as I will, that there are other important factors about the sublime in Kant apart from its moral significance (2014, pp. 26-7). One does, however, require a certain

68 One could apply a similar characterisation to conceptual art, only, instead of aesthetic judgments being concerned with whether or not something is beautiful, they are concerned with whether or not something is art. The possible applications of Kant’s aesthetics regarding conceptual art is a topic too large to cover here, but has been explored at length in de Duve’s *Kant after Duchamp* (1996). See also Crowther’s discussion of the avant-garde in relation to Kant’s conception of fine art (2010, pp. 165-9).

69 Namely, the gaps between the three faculties of cognition, desire, and taste.

70 Cf. Forsey, 2007, pp. 381-9.

interpretive labour to isolate Kant's theory of the sublime from its moral uses. The results of this labour, while doing service to Kant's overall aesthetic philosophy, do reveal some concerns relating to the place of nature of his critical system more generally. Before addressing the question of nature in light of these concerns, I provide a brief overview of judgments of the sublime in the *CJ*.

In terms of their logical form, judgments of the beautiful and the sublime share mostly common ground. Both judgments are disinterested in that they 'please for themselves' (5:244). Both judgments are therefore reflective, and so concern the make up of our cognitive faculties more than they do the natural world itself. Judgments of the sublime are also of universal validity for the same reasons as judgments of beauty. The difference comes in the forms associated with the judgment, namely, 'limitation' of form in the case of beauty, and 'formless...limitlessness' (ibid.) in the case of the sublime. This formal difference also results in different associated cognitive affects. I elaborate below.

Where judgments of beauty represent a harmony in the faculties of understanding and imagination, the sublime represents a kind of disharmony, such that the faculties are frustrated in some way. Whereas judgments of the beautiful concern limitation, and hence cohesion, the sublime is to be found 'in a formless object, insofar as limitlessness is represented in it' (ibid.). For Kant, each breed of judgment, in essence, correlates to each of the higher faculties. Beauty is connected with the understanding, insofar as it presents an indeterminate concept thereof. The sublime presents the same kind of indeterminate concept, but this time it is a concept of reason that is presented. To put it bluntly, judgments of the sublime are aesthetic presentations of the attempt to present the idea of totality to sensible intuition.

From what has been summarised so far, it is clear that Deligiorgi is right to dispute the claims of those who deny that a theory of the sublime is possible because of its presentation of 'ontologically transcendent' objects (2014, p. 26). Even a superficial acquaintance with Kant's theory of ideas of reason in the *CPR* is enough to show that the theory of the sublime — despite its epistemological

complexity — has a specific and important use in the *CJ*. Judgments of the sublime are the attempt to present ideas to the imagination. For Deligiorgi's purposes, the importance of the sublime connects to Kant's emphasis on the autonomy of rational agents (*ibid.*, p. 32). For my purposes, it is the relation between ideas and nature that is of importance about the sublime, as will be shown in my account of the dynamically sublime.⁷¹ The imaginative presentation of ideas is no small task, and one that Kant admits may even feel 'contrapurposive for our power of judgment' (5:245). Ideas are 'unsuitable for our faculty of presentation', namely the imagination, and as such, risk 'doing violence' to the imagination itself (*ibid.*). This is the essence of the judgment of the sublime.

To deal with the sublime properly, Kant splits it into two types, the mathematical and the dynamic. The first type pertains to magnitude, the second to power, or force.⁷² The common factor in both cases of the sublime is a 'movement of the mind' mediated by the imagination (5:247). In the case of the mathematical, this 'movement of the mind' is related with the faculty of cognition — i.e. the understanding. In the case of the dynamic, the imagination directs this 'movement' to reason, which

71 Consider the following from Kant's general remark attached to §29 of the *CJ*: 'taken literally, and considered literally, ideas cannot be presented. But if we extend our empirical faculty of representation (mathematically or dynamically) for the intuition of nature, then reason inevitably comes in as a faculty of the independence of the absolute totality, and produces the effort of the mind, though it is vain, to make the representation of the senses adequate to that. This effort, and the feeling of the unattainability of the idea by means of the imagination, is itself a presentation of the subjective purposiveness of our mind in the use of the imagination for its supersensible vocation, and compels us to think nature itself in its totality, as the presentation of something supersensible, subjectively, without being able to produce this presentation objectively (5:268).

72 Significantly, it is only the second that is explicitly linked with nature. The reasons for this will become clear. Kant entitles section A 'On the mathematically sublime, and section B 'On the dynamically sublime in nature'. This echoes Kant's distinction between the mathematical and dynamic forms of regressive synthesis in the *CPR*; the first of which Kant says deals with generative concepts of the world, or cosmical concepts (*Weltbegriffe*), the second of which generates concepts of nature (*Naturbegriffe*). I have discussed this in chapter one, cf. 1.3.3-1.3.4)

in the *CJ* Kant refers to as the ‘faculty of desire’ — reason (*ibid.*).⁷³ The mathematical sublime deals with magnitudes that are ‘absolutely great’; those magnitudes that are ‘great beyond all comparison’ (5:248). To clarify this, Kant discusses the concept of magnitude as a comparative concept. In a determinative judgment, the magnitude of one thing must be compared with another, such that their magnitudes are established relative to one another, or else a single item must be compared with a magnitude of measure, i.e. X is a certain number of feet/inches/metres. In both cases the object in question possesses magnitude relative to some other measure. Judgments pertaining to these kinds of magnitude are of course not sublime. Magnitudes, however, which the faculty of judgment cannot compare with any measurable scale, are reflective aesthetic judgments rather than quantitatively determining ones. They are relative only to the limits of that which we are able to sensibly apprehend. That which we judge to be absolutely great therefore pertains to a ‘magnitude that is equal only to itself’. It is that ‘in comparison with which everything else is small’ (5:250).

From the above it is clear that judgments of the sublime determine nothing about the object in question — although they surely rely upon it in a specific way. Any object to which the judgment pertains serves only as ‘the presentation of a sublimity that can be found in the mind’. Hence, ‘what is properly sublime cannot be contained in any sensible form, but concerns only ideas of reason’ (5:245). Because an idea of reason cannot be sensibly presented, what is presented in its place is an ‘inadequacy’ of the mind. One can see why this is the case. Magnitudes are relative to the context under which they are viewed. For example, in the relation between a tree and a bird that is sitting on one of its branches, the tree is taken as very large. In another relation, say, the tree to the forest in which it stands, the tree is exceedingly small. The measure with which Kant is concerned in relation

73 This is not to say that the dynamical sublime has nothing to do with cognition, or that the mathematical has nothing to do with reason. If this were so, it would result in a distinction between mathematical and dynamical *objects*. Instead, Kant wishes to posit these two forms of the sublime as a ‘twofold manner’ in which to represent the same object (5:247).

to the sublime is ‘the measure of the senses’ (5:250).⁷⁴ It is here that one sees the transition from one form of the sublime to the other. Since I cannot apprehend the entire forest in which a tree stands, I judge the forest to be mathematically sublime, i.e. in excess of that which I can sensibly access. In so doing, Kant claims, I demonstrate the presence of a faculty in my mind, which makes possible an ability to think in a way that ‘surpasses every measure of the senses’ (ibid.). The faculty Kant is referring to here is reason.

As with beauty, judgments of the sublime vary in degree; not all are pure judgments. For a judgment of the sublime to be pure, it cannot involve anything teleological, i.e. anything pertaining to a particular end in the object. Because of this criterion, Kant insists that the sublime cannot be shown in products of art — where both the form and magnitude are determined by a human intention — nor in natural ‘things’ — things of which we already have a determined concept — but rather in ‘raw nature’, which Kant construes as nature ‘merely insofar as it contains magnitude’ (5:253).⁷⁵ Pure judgments of the sublime therefore concern the appearances of nature, the intuition of which ‘brings with them the idea of its infinity’, and this infinity is an aesthetic one because it concerns the ‘inadequacy of even the greatest effort of our imagination in the estimation of the magnitude of an object’ (5:255). Kant summarises what he means by this inadequacy of the imagination in terms of the cognitive construction of nature. He writes,

[T]he proper unalterable basic measure of nature is its absolute whole, which, in the case of nature as appearance, is infinity comprehended. But since this basic measure is a self-contradictory concept (on account of the impossibility of the absolute totality of an endless progression), that magnitude of a natural object on which the imagination fruitlessly expends its entire capacity for comprehension must lead the concept of nature to a supersensible substratum (which grounds both it and at the same time our faculty for thinking), which is great beyond any standard

74 Cf. Crowther, 2010, p. 175

75 The validity of the claim that no art can be sublime will be addressed in the final section this chapter.

of sense and hence allows not so much the object as rather the disposition of the mind in estimating it to be judged sublime. (5:256)

The key to the sublime is what I take to be the affective relation between the imagination and sensibility. The fact that we can always imagine a greater measure — from man, to tree, to mountain, to planet, to milky way and so on — shows what Kant describes as a ‘paling into insignificance’ of nature, in as much as it cannot supply a presentation to the senses which is adequate to the ideas reason possesses of these ever progressing measures or magnitudes (5:257). We cannot always apprehend, in other words, everything we can imagine.

Why should this failure in our apprehension be pleasurable, as Kant insists it is? The pleasure obtained from judgments of the sublime has to do with the relationship between imagination and reason. Whereas judgments of beauty allowed for a free harmonious play between imagination and understanding, judgments of the sublime interrupt the freedom of the imagination due to the fact that it cannot phenomenally present the totality conceived by reason to the senses. As Crowther puts it, when we are presented with a vast phenomenon, ‘reason demands that we comprehend its phenomenal totality’ (2010, p. 175). This totality, however, ‘exceeds the power of imaginative representation, and in so doing, suggests the idea of infinite continuation’ (ibid.). The satisfaction comes when we realise that, despite the failure of our imagination to present this phenomenal totality, we can still hold it as a rational idea. Consequently, the imagination ‘reaches its maximum and, in the effort to extend it, sinks back into itself, but is thereby transported into an emotionally moving satisfaction’ (CJ, 5:252). Kant asserts that such a sinking of the imagination triggers satisfaction, because where imagination fails, reason can still succeed. In other words, where an idea cannot be (imaginatively) apprehended, it can still be (rationally) thought. The failure to attain an idea in intuition causes in us a feeling of respect, both for that which exceeds our faculty of sensibility, and for the rational vocation, which takes the reins of sensibility and guides us in actions according to laws. However, Kant does not justify why it is that this failure of the imagination should cause satisfaction and respect, rather than, say, depression and melancholia. Kant’s own

motivation for linking the insufficiency of the imagination with reason has to do with his need to connect mathematical and dynamical accounts of the sublime together, i.e. to show how they are two ways of judging objects, not judgments about distinct kind of objects. It is my contention that the same holds of the Kantian picture of nature generally speaking, namely that mathematical explanations of natural phenomena are insufficient without accompanying dynamic explanations, and vice versa.⁷⁶ This can be shown further my looking at this second form of the sublime, the dynamical.

In judgments of the dynamical sublime, nature is considered not essentially as magnitude, but as power. Kant calls power ‘a capacity that is superior to great obstacles’ (5:260). While magnitude may not play the essential role in judgments of the dynamical sublime, it is nonetheless involved, given Kant’s reference to ‘great obstacle’. The difference here is that, while in the mathematical sublime these obstacles are judged according to an apparent or aesthetic infinity, in the dynamical they are judged according to an apparent vital power. This power Kant calls dominion, when it is superior to the resistance of something else that possesses power. As such, the dynamical sublime is nature judged as having power, but not dominion, over us. This power, within the judgment, causes us to consider nature as an object of fear. Kant gives examples such as ‘bold, overhanging, as it were threatening cliffs’, thunder clouds, and volcanoes (5:261). These kinds of things reduce our capacity for resistance to ‘an insignificant trifle’, and hence make us fearful over our frailty in the face of the forces of nature. Not being in any physical danger, however, we are elevated by our awareness that while we cannot physically resist, we possess a resistance of ‘quite another kind’, which gives us ‘the courage to measure ourselves against the apparent all-powerfulness of nature’ (5:262). This resistance for Kant is our capacity for judging ourselves as separate from nature, and as such superior to it in a certain sense. The judgment of the dynamical sublime then, holds nature

⁷⁶ This will be a major point for Schelling’s nature-philosophy as I show in 3.2.3.

as an object of fear that arouses the specifically human power to call up its own vocation — and here Kant surely means our moral vocation — upon which nature has no dominion.

Immediately after describing the dynamically sublime in nature, Kant clearly lays out what he sees as the difference between natural and rational powers. He writes in §29 that ‘the disposition of the mind to the feeling of the sublime requires its receptivity to ideas’, which is precisely the ‘inadequacy of nature’ (5:265). This may seem strange, given that it is through ideas that nature is first conceivable at all. Therefore, it may appear as though Kant considers ideas of nature to be — if not substantively, at least transcendently — coexistent with *experience* of nature. However, as chapter one sought to show, and as I reiterate here, ideas of nature are only coextensive with the structure of experience. One approaches nature according to ideas, by acting *as if* those ideas were true of nature itself, but without being able to confirm this in any possible experience. In short, ideas of nature regulate one's experience of nature, but not nature itself. So, in the context of the sublime, nature is not receptive to ideas, because ideas do not make contact with nature itself. To reiterate my earlier claim from chapter one, an Kantian idea of nature is not about nature, it is about our thinking, and the unity of nature is in fact the unity of thought. Though this unity of thought makes experience of nature possible, it does not describe what nature is.

I believe that there are grounds for claiming that Kant has an impoverished account of nature in his critical philosophy, to the extent that nature is not viewed as itself productive; rather the rules of experience are productive of appearances, and to that extent productive of nature. As I concluded in chapter one, Kant's conception of nature results from his insistence on the opposition of subject and object, an opposition which Schelling will seek to disassemble in his nature-philosophy, which I cover in chapter three. But this is to jump ahead. There are several problems with Kant's theory of the sublime — that the failure of the imagination to apprehend totality necessarily results in satisfaction, and that nature appears to not be receptive to ideas despite these ideas guiding experience of nature itself. I interpret these problems as resulting the fact that Kant does not fully

consider the ways in which nature is self-productive. In the following section (2.2), I argue that Kant attempts to answer these problems with his theory of genius, and I assess to what extent he succeeds.

2.2. Genius and the Problem of Nature

Abstract

In this section I advance two main claims. The first is that Kant's theory of genius posits a relation between genius and nature for which Kant cannot fully account. Secondly, and as a consequence, Kant makes both genius and the art-work subservient to natural beauty and the judgment of taste. Even though Kant's concern is more with the judgments art-works can stimulate, rather than the works themselves, Kant believes he is in a position to place the particular arts in a hierarchy. He does this according to the extent to which each art form manages to express of aesthetic ideas. In response to the first problem, the unresolved relation between genius and nature, I examine a defence of the divine inspiration argument, and claim that, despite its merits, it still falls short in several respects. In response to the second problem, I follow Gadamer's critique of Kant's theory of genius, in combination with Kant's remarks on poetry. I conclude that, even though Kant's remarks on poetry are helpful in explaining the nature of art in general, Kant's conception of nature itself remains problematic, in that it relies too heavily on the functions of our cognitive faculties. This conclusion prepares the way for part two of this thesis, on Schelling's identity-philosophy, which I will argue is largely concerned with adapting Kant's metaphysical position.

2.2.1. Genius as a ‘Gift of Nature’

Many scholars have commented on the brevity and ambiguity of Kant’s remarks on genius in the third *Critique*.⁷⁷ Compared with his analysis of judgments of taste, Kant’s discussion of fine art and genius seems rather spare, and at times little more than an afterthought.⁷⁸ Within the context of the *CJ* as a whole, the sections on fine art and genius take up the least space. The most obvious reason for this is that Kant’s main focus in the *CJ* is securing reflective judgments according to *a priori* principles, firstly in matters of taste and secondly in matters of purpose (the critique of teleological judgment). While genius is certainly accorded its role in Kant’s aesthetics, it is a role that is arguably subservient to the more general issue of judgments of beauty, and further, judgments of *natural* beauty. To explain the creative power of genius for Kant is therefore to explain how one can intentionally bring about pure judgments of taste. In order for art-works to come about, the potentially unbounded imaginative activity of the creative artist must be properly confined, to avoid artistic products becoming mere nonsense. In Kant’s view, it is the faculty of taste that is responsible for this. The balance between genius and taste is what gives works of art their character as original exemplars, a term which I will explain in what follows.

While the faculty of aesthetic judgment is bestowed upon every rational human subject, genius is granted only to a lucky few. From where does it derive? Genius for Kant is a talent, which he also calls a ‘natural gift’. The faculty of genius is ‘the inborn predisposition of the mind through which nature gives the rule to art’ (5:307). The genius is, in short, a ‘favourite of nature’ (5:318). From these descriptions, it would appear that genius and nature are connected in a way that “ordinary” human beings and nature are not. So how exactly does nature ‘give the rule’ to art through genius? Analogous to natural beauties, beautiful art must be produced in such a way that it can be judged independently from any associated concept. This does not mean that fine art is produced in the

77 Cf. Crowther (2010, p. 152), Proulx (2011 p. 29), Schaper (1992, p. 385).

78 For the purposes of this section I refer to fine art and beautiful art interchangeably, as reflected in Kant’s original term *schöne kunst*.

absence of any concept whatsoever. The key to understanding genius is the way in which it combines two distinct elements into its productions. On the one hand, artistic creations are intentional creations, for ‘every art presupposes rules which first lay the foundation by means of which a product that is to be called artistic is first representation as possible’ (5:307). On the other hand, the concept of beautiful art does not allow the judgment concerning its beauty to be derived from it. In other words, the concept of beautiful art does not determine beautiful art-works. As Kant asserts, ‘there is no science of the beautiful, only a critique’, nor is there ‘beautiful science, only beautiful art’ (5:305).

So far, beautiful art follows a fairly close analogy with beautiful nature, at least in terms of aesthetic judgment. In both nature and art, one must be aware that the object being judged is beautiful — that it stimulates a harmony in the cognitive faculties — while at the same time lacking prescriptive rules by which the object can be judged in such a way. In art’s case, this balance comes down to the extent to which the conceptual element of the work in question plays a role. This in turn concerns the role of intention in the creations of genius, an intention which, in Kant’s view, is directed primarily toward the expression of aesthetic ideas. I discuss these issues in detail below.

Several points are worth dwelling upon before talking about the process of artistic creation. Firstly, Kant is concerned primarily with fine art, which in his view, is beautiful art; there is no place for the sublime in works of art.⁷⁹ So little does Kant consider the sublime as part of the arts that he does not devote a single line to the issue. For him, the task of art is to represent the beauties of nature through original creations. As such, just like natural beauty, artistic beauty also admits of degrees. Where Kant distinguished between objects that could be judged as purely beautiful from those that were merely charming, i.e. appealed to the senses, he also makes a similar distinction in the case of art. In §43, Kant separates beautiful art — which he calls liberal art here — from mechanical or

79 Cf. *CJ*, (5:253).

remunerative art.⁸⁰ The former is characterised primarily by play, which Kant describes as ‘an occupation that is agreeable in itself’, the latter by labour, i.e. an activity which is attractive only in its result (5:304). Significantly, even beautiful or liberal art cannot be completely playful, but must also include ‘something compulsory’, which Kant calls ‘mechanism’. Without this mechanical element, ‘the spirit, which must be free in the art and which alone animates the work, would have no body at all and would entirely evaporate’ (ibid.). Kant uses the example of poetry, which, although requiring ‘correctness and richness of diction, also requires ‘prosody and meter’. In other words, merely speaking *as if* one were reciting a poem does not mean that it is a poem one is reciting. The language itself, which in this case also means the rules and discipline in which such language occurs, are also needed for that which one recites to be a work of poetry. I will return to the significance of poetry later in this section.

Pleasing arrangements of material do not amount to beautiful art. Though they may charm an audience, or pleasurably affect the senses, the remunerative arts are not sufficient for stimulating pure judgments of taste. Neither material, nor spirit, can produce beautiful art on its own. A work of beautiful art is beautiful to the extent that it expresses aesthetic ideas, which I will discuss further in the following section. To be sure, mechanical or remunerative art can have pleasure as its aim, just as beautiful art does, but in the case of the former, this pleasure takes the form of ‘mere sensations’; in the latter this pleasure occurs as ‘kinds of cognition’ (5:305). These cognitions are ones specific to the purpose of the work of art, in contrast to something merely agreeable, such as background music that helps facilitate conversation (5:306). In the latter case, the associated cognitions concern the conversation being had, and not the music being played, at least not exclusively (ibid.). Beautiful art is, therefore, ‘a kind of representation that is purposive in itself, and though without an end, nevertheless promotes the cultivation of the mental powers for sociable communication’ (ibid.). That which is communicated is the capacity for reflective judgment, shared universally

⁸⁰ The contrast here can be expressed in Kant’s terms *Schönkunst* and *Brodkunst*, the former meaning beautiful art, the latter literally translating as “art for bread”.

amongst human beings. Clearly for Kant, it is one thing for people to present aesthetic ideas to themselves in response to nature. It is quite another for a person to devise their own aesthetic ideas, and make these communicable to an audience.

All of this seems straightforward enough, and in isolation from the question of nature, nothing particularly problematic emerges from Kant's discussion of fine art. Two things seem immediately important for Kant's theory of genius: originality and communicability. Indeed, there is good cause to argue that each of these corresponds to the combination of spirit and mechanism discussed in the last paragraph. The spirit is wholly original, in that it animates the mind in ways not previously given. It is also wholly ideal, in that it cannot appear directly, but only through the material it animates. Communicability therefore becomes possible via this material, remembering of course that material does not just indicate the empirical items used to construct a work, but also the accompanying rules and traditions of artistic discipline. It is the balance between these two factors that makes the products of genius exemplary, as models of emulation for other people gifted with genius (5:318). In order to understand how the genius communicates through the art-work, I now turn to Kant's remarks on aesthetic ideas.

2.2.2. Genius as Expressive of Aesthetic Ideas

As mentioned above, spirit is an essential element of genius. Works of art cannot be considered beautiful unless they are in some way animated by spirit. As spirit animates the mind of the perceiver into presenting aesthetic ideas via the imagination, so it animates the artistic genius specifically to create something that *expresses* aesthetic ideas. However, the spirit alone cannot achieve what is required to make an artistic product beautiful. The spirit of genius must be accompanied by a mechanism (a rule or concept). The necessity of some mechanism by which art-works are produced will become important later. It is simply the case that, while concepts are surely involved in both the creation and appreciation of art-works, no concept can provide the *determining* ground for a work of art. That is why, in §45, Kant remarks that art must simultaneously look like

art, and appear to be a product of nature, even while the viewer is aware that the work is not a work of nature. Only art that appears to be ‘free from all constraint by arbitrary rules’ can be called beautiful, and in this way, it shares in the beauty displayed in products of nature. Hence, Kant writes, ‘nature was beautiful, if at the same time it looked like art; and art can only be called beautiful if we are aware that it is art and yet it looks to us like nature’ (5:306). Kant holds two requirements for a work of fine art. Such a work can only come about by nature acting through the genius in some way, and further, this natural force must be the source of creativity.⁸¹ Only then can genius express aesthetic ideas. To fully understand Kant on aesthetic ideas, it is useful to briefly reiterate how Kant defines ideas in general in the *CPR*.

Ideas order the cosmos.⁸² They do so according to rules that prohibit their appearing directly in empirical experience. Ideas of reason strive toward certainty and totality. By virtue of being ideas, and not appearances, they also go some way to capturing totality (insofar as it is thinkable).⁸³ Kant insists in the *CPR* that no knowledge can be gained from thought alone. Within this context, Kant’s answer to the problem of presenting ideas to cognition is found in practical reason, at precisely the point that speculative or theoretical reason reaches its limit. Practical reason is able to concretely present ideas by constructing them in the form of moral actions.⁸⁴ Being necessarily finite, however, such actions must necessarily fail to capture the object of their striving. To illuminate the problem, Kant introduces the antinomies of reason.⁸⁵ The antinomies are designed to show the ways in which seemingly opposed propositions can be proven compatible if one views them each from different perspectives. In the fourth antinomy, Kant sets up equally convincing cases for both the existence

81 Cf. Proulx, 2011, p. 9.

82 Cf. *CPR*, B375.

83 I have discussed this in detail in chapter one (1.3).

84 One could also, with Kant, call this practical reason.

85 *CPR*, B448-B488.

and the non-existence of a necessary being.⁸⁶ By viewing the former from the perspective of absolute totality, and the latter from the perspective of perpetual experience, Kant believes he has shown the thesis and antithesis are not truly oppositional. The thesis (that there is an existent necessary being) is the perspective of pure reason. The antithesis (that there is no such existent being) is the perspective of the understanding. Despite the unavoidably dual perspective such antinomies establish, this does not mean there are two separate realities. In the introduction to the *CJ* Kant makes this clear:

Understanding and reason...have two different legislations on one and the same territory of experience, without either being detrimental to the other. For just as little as the concept of nature influences legislation through the concept of freedom does the latter disturb the legislation of nature. (5:175)

This ‘territory of experience’ is nature, insofar as it grounds all possible appearances according to *a priori* laws, while also exceeding any possible appearance. Understanding and reason do not act upon this territory in the same way. They each have their own domain, and each domain is legislative of experience in a particular manner (*ibid.*). This does not mean there are two natures however. Instead of ‘domain’, one might use the term ‘mode of operation’ to describe the difference between understanding and reason. The understanding legislates through concepts of nature and is purely theoretical (since the rules of the understanding cannot themselves appear in experience). This is its mode of operation. Reason legislates through the concept of freedom and is purely practical, since freedom itself cannot be defined according to a determinative rule *a priori*. Kant attempts to balance these two domains in typically complex fashion. I quote him in full here to understand the context:

There is thus an unlimited but also inaccessible field for our faculty of cognition as a whole, namely the field of the supersensible, in which we

⁸⁶ *CPR*, B480-88.

find no territory for ourselves, and thus cannot have on it a domain for theoretical cognition either for the concepts of the understanding or for those of reason, a field that we must certainly occupy with ideas for the sake of the theoretical as well as the practical use of reason, but for which, in relation to the laws from the concept of freedom we can provide nothing but a practical reality, through which, accordingly, our theoretical cognition is not in the least extended to the supersensible. (ibid.)

At this point, of course, we are still strictly within the realm of ideas of reason, but the important point in the above passage is Kant's mention of the supersensible. It is precisely this realm of the supersensible that the genius accesses or "channels" in artistic creation. There is another form of idea put forward in the third *Critique*: the aesthetic idea.

In what follows I will elucidate the form and various features of the aesthetic idea, aesthetic attributes, and their corresponding aesthetic object. While ideas of reason present (albeit indirect) grounds for moral action, I argue aesthetic ideas are a form of presentation, which supplements the imagination with free associations beyond what is originally presented. In the case of artistic products, this means that the aesthetic idea expressed by a work pertains to a domain larger than that which it directly expresses. In other words, the idea expressed by a work is larger than the work's content. This could be interpreted as meaning that the work is a symbol. There is evidence for this in the *CJ*, which I discuss in the following section. First, it is important to grasp exactly how aesthetic ideas function for Kant before considering them in this wider artistic context.

In section §49 On the Faculties of the Mind which Constitute Genius, Kant first mentions aesthetic ideas. This occurs between his remarks on art in general, and on the faculty of genius. Aesthetic ideas themselves are introduced via Kant's remarks on spirit (*Geist*). Kant defines the spirit as an 'animating principle of the mind [*Gemüt*]' (5:314). His qualification of this is revealing. Kant continues:

That...by which this principle [of spirit] animates the soul, the material which it uses for this purpose, is that which purposively sets the mental powers into motion, i.e., into a play that is self-maintaining and even strengthens the powers to that end. (ibid.)⁸⁷

While ideas of reason are concepts to which no intuitions are adequate, aesthetic ideas are, conversely, intuitions to which no concept is adequate (ibid.). Kant offers some strange sounding elaborations on this, for example that the artist attempts to make ideas ‘sensible beyond the limits of experience’ (ibid.). One may ask, how can something be sensibly presented in such a way as to go beyond the bounds of experience, which for Kant is always sensible? This is precisely the problem that Kant wishes to solve at this point in the *CJ*. Aesthetic ideas act as the ‘pendant’ or counterpart of reason, because they attempt to present rational concepts to sensibility. However, because such a task is for all intents and purposes impossible, the aesthetic idea must operate according to a specific procedure, one which relies upon the functions of the imagination. Shortly after the remarks above, Kant defines aesthetic ideas in this way:

[T]he aesthetic idea is a representation of the imagination associated with a given concept, which is combined with such a manifold of partial representations in the free use of the imagination that no expression designating a determinate concept can be found for it, which therefore allows the addition to a concept of much that is unnameable, the feeling of which animates the cognitive faculties and combines spirit with the mere letter of language. (ibid.)

An aesthetic idea is a form presentation, which ‘occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e., concept, to be adequate to it’ (ibid.). Hence, Kant concludes ‘*no language fully attains or can make [it] intelligible*’ (ibid., my emphasis). We have the capacity to apprehend aesthetic ideas in imagination, but not to know them, in the sense we can

⁸⁷ I use the Guyer & Matthews translation of the *CJ*, where ‘mind’ is used for the original ‘*Gemüt*’. In §49 Guyer renders ‘*Gemüt*’ at times as ‘mind’, others as ‘soul’. ‘*Gemüt*’ can also mean disposition, nature or feeling. It is worth keeping in mind this larger meaning.

know empirical objects. In these respects, aesthetic ideas do not seem to be distinct from ideas of reason. Formally speaking they both have the same structure. The difference would appear to be that in the case of aesthetic ideas, the idea itself is communicated through the art-work, which is a material object. It is through this material that aesthetic ideas ‘set the faculty of intellectual ideas (reason) into motion’ (5:315), a process by which the initial concept (for example, the concept of a painting), is ‘aesthetically enlarged’ in the imagination. Kant argues that it is by the ‘instigation of a representation’ that the imagination becomes creative, and supplements that initial representation with many additional ones, which then cannot be reduced to what was initially represented. For example, I could view a portrait, whose concept merely tells me that it is a painting of someone’s face. However, the aesthetic idea communicated to me through this portrait allows me to imaginatively supplement this with other representations that are not automatically involved in the concept “portrait”, for example, that the eyes are mourning an unarticulated loss, or contemplating a great love, that the person “portrayed” is virtuous, evil, troubled, etc.

Kant’s notion of aesthetically enlarging a concept is key to understanding how he conceives of genius. Despite this supplementary action of the imagination, Kant also remarks that aesthetic ideas represent ‘a completeness beyond anything of which there is an example in nature’ (5:314). How can a boundless activity also be complete? The only way is if one characterises the representations of the imagination referred to here as ideas, which Kant does. This requires some explanation. At first it appears that aesthetic ideas instigate a supplementary activity of the imagination, perhaps in a way analogous to how ideas of reason instigate or necessitate moral striving. However, Kant labels the imaginative activity itself as an idea, on the one hand because it ‘seek[s] to approximate a presentation of concepts of reason’, and on the other, because this presentation yields something to which no concept is adequate’ (ibid.).

So how can this imaginative ideation, as one could call it, be both unbounded and complete? Precisely because on the one hand, imaginative creativity in the generation of aesthetic ideas is not

determined by the concept to which it approximates, because the concept itself is indeterminate — for example the concept of eternity. On the other hand, the imagination ‘emulates the precedent of reason in attaining to a maximum’ (ibid.). By thinking ‘more than one can in express in a concept determined by words’, we are struck by the fact that we can, at least by way of analogy, present to ourselves totalising concepts. More than this, it is *only* by way of the aesthetic imagination that our cognitions can approximate to concepts of reason (5:317).

From these descriptions, Kant defines genius as the union of imagination and understanding. As opposed to imagination used for cognition, where it is subservient to the concept supplied by the understanding, imagination in the aesthetic context is free to provide ‘unsought extensive material of the understanding’ beyond that which concords directly with the concept (ibid.). As such, Kant defines genius as a ‘happy relation’ of finding ideas for a given concept and hitting upon the expression for these, through which the ‘subjective disposition of the mind that is thereby produced, as an accompaniment of the concept, can be communicated to others’. It is precisely this ability of genius to navigate between idea and expression that Kant reiterates as spirit (5:318). What is yielded, it turns out, by the spirited activity of genius, is the ability to express what is ‘unnameable in the mental state’ and make it ‘universally communicable’ (5:317). The artistic genius, in a certain sense, expresses what is otherwise inexpressible. However, the reasons the genius does this, turn out to be fairly conservative ones, as I show in the concluding section of this chapter. Furthermore, the question of how it is that genius manages to channel the otherwise unknowable freedom of nature into its productions remains unanswered. Much like the failure of the imagination in judgments of the sublime, which Kant takes as instigating an appeal to reason, so the productions of genius, which seem to present more than can be directly articulated, Kant takes as symbols, not of the force of nature, or our kinship with nature, but of human moral duty. In what follows, I tackle the question over how it is genius manages to produce works which express aesthetic ideas, to which Kant offers no real answer. Instead, he takes the inspiration of genius as given, and claims that judgments of taste must be deployed in order to form that inspiration into something communicable.

Subsequently, I discuss the argument that the creative power of genius symbolises divine creation, which has recently been defended.⁸⁸ I claim that the divine creation argument does not manage to account the relationship between genius and nature, the latter of which, at least from Kant's remarks, appears to be the source of the former.

2.2.3. Genius, Taste, and the Symbolic

Works of beautiful art are those which can bring about pure judgments of taste. Clearly such works are a rarefied thing, and in Kant's view, are solely the products of genius. The power of genius for Kant is in devising original creations and making them communicable in such a way that they can be judged as if they were natural products. Unlike his successors, Kant did not want genius to stake to heavy a claim on the system of his aesthetics. Kant makes it clear through his remarks on art and genius that the judgment of taste always takes priority. In §50, Kant explicitly addresses the combination of genius and taste, and asks if it is more important 'whether genius or taste is displayed' (5:319). Kant equates this with asking whether the imagination or the power of judgment counts for more in works of art. In the former case, Kant labels this form of art 'inspired', but only in the second case can art be called beautiful. Taste is the discipline of genius, which helps to make the products of genius communicable.

Still, it is not entirely clear how nature works through genius to give the rule to art. In his commentary on the *CJ*, Wicks is sensitive to this problem. On the one hand, Wicks points out that artistic products possess 'the same basic structure as beautiful natural objects' (2006, p. 125). Wicks draws out an analogy in Kant between the laws of nature, according to which we first form judgments of beauty, and the 'academic rules and plans' which guide the creation of art-works. Without natural laws, Wicks states, 'there would indeed be not much more than sensory chaos' and similarly, for Kant, 'genius without academic form would also lead to incoherence' (ibid.).

⁸⁸ I refer to an article by Wicks, entitled "The Divine Inspiration for Kant's Formalist Theory of Beauty" (2015).

On the other hand, precisely because these academic rules are created by human intention, we must recognise the work of art precisely as art, and not a merely natural product. How can this contradictory position be reconciled? For Wicks, this contradiction appears on the part of the viewer of the art-work. Works of art appear in some sense natural and in another sense not, but this is because the inner workings of the genius are obscured from the observer. Wicks characterises the artistic genius as someone able to produce something that conceals its own method of producing. I agree with this, but would like to add that for Kant, this concealing of method is not a part of the artist's intentions. Hence, 'the author of a product that he owes to his genius does not know himself how the ideas for it come to him' (5:308). If the methods of producing beautiful art are concealed to the audience, they must be concealed to the artist who produces them, otherwise there would in principle be potential rules for the creation of beautiful things, which would violate Kant's theory of reflective judgment.

Wicks offers a viable answer to how genius negotiates its intentional and natural creative powers, and this answer can get us some way to understanding how it is that judgments of beauty can be applied to art-works. But the dilemma of the connection between genius and nature still remains. Wicks himself realises this, claiming that when one judges a work of art, they must 'first must apprehend [it] as a merely natural object, or 'constellation of forms' (i.e. without regard for its origin). Nevertheless one must also comprehend the work's purposive form, contemplating it as 'a work with a design, and hence fail to appreciate its pure beauty'. Kant's solution, according to Wicks, is that 'art represents natural objects which become of moral interest' (2006, p. 119). Moreover, the stronger the artistic genius's moral awareness happens to be – the more the products of artistic genius have a moral content that has been given a beautiful appearance – the stronger the confirmation of nature's compatibility with morality will be, quite beyond the confirmation that snowflakes and tulips offer' (ibid., p. 124).

Is Wicks right to place so much emphasis on the relation between artistic beauty and morality? Fortunately, Kant dedicates a section of the *CJ* specifically to this. Kant entitles §59 On Beauty as a Symbol of Morality, wherein he details a brief theory of the symbol. Kant contrasts the symbolic with the schematic, as two methods of hypotyposis – presentation that grants reality to concepts. The schematic relates to the combination of concepts of the understanding with intuitions *a priori*. The symbolic deals with concepts of reason, to which, of course, ‘no sensible intuition can be adequate’ (p. 225). In this case, Kant says, ‘an intuition is attributed with which the power of judgment proceeds in a way merely analogous to that which is observed in schematisation’. Kant clarifies this by explaining that it is merely ‘the rule of the procedure, not the intuition itself’, which is used. In the symbolic form of presentation, it is the ‘form of reflection, not the content, which corresponds to the concept (ibid.).

It is in this way, namely, the symbolic, that beauty connects to the morally good. The place of aesthetic ideas in Kant’s theory of judgment becomes clearer in §59, and Kant mirrors much of the language he employs in his discussion of aesthetic ideas here. Kant describes symbolic presentations as ‘designation of the concepts by means of accompanying sensible signs’, which contain ‘nothing at all belonging to the intuition of the object’. Instead, these symbols act ‘in accordance with the laws of association of the imagination, and hence in a subjective regard, as a means of reproduction’ (5:352). Kant uses examples such as a hand mill symbolically representing a despotic state, or a monarchical state being represented by a body with a soul. These analogies help to illuminate concepts that do not have direct instantiations in sensible intuition. This is how beauty represents morality. The ‘ennoblement and elevation above the mere receptivity for pleasure from sensible impressions’ leads us to an intelligible space, which helps to unify the faculties of cognition and taste. In an extended passage, which I quote in full, Kant explains how it is that reflective judgments aid cognition in forming a common unity:

In th[e] faculty [of the intelligible] the power of judgment does not see itself, as is otherwise the case in empirical judging, as subjected to a

heteronomy of the laws of experience; in regard to the objects of such a pure satisfaction it gives the law to itself, both on account of this inner possibility in the subject as well as on the account of the outer possibility of a nature that corresponds to it, as related to something in the subject itself and outside of it, which is neither nature nor freedom, but which is connected with the ground of the latter, namely the supersensible, in which the theoretical faculty is combined with the practical, in a mutual and unknown way, to form a unity. (5:353)

By conceiving of beauty as analogous with morality, Kant achieves two things. First, he grounds the supersensible as something common to the subject and the natural world that the subject inhabits. Secondly, couching moral claims in terms of their aesthetic (pleasurable) correlates allows Kant to solidify one of the only connections that he deems philosophically relevant between the subject and nature. The faculty of taste is shown to make possible ‘the transition from sensible charm to the habitual moral interest’ by representing the imagination ‘even in its freedom as purposively determinable form the understanding’ (5:354). By representing natural objects as beautiful, and by emulating this representation in works of art, Kant aims to show a deep affinity between our cognitive faculties, our moral concerns, and the fundamental ground of nature; the supersensible. It can be argued, however, that this affinity is one which Kant must presume rather than conclusively prove, much like the common root of intuition and understanding that he mentions in the *CPR*. None of this, however, tells us anything either about how nature manifests itself to us, aesthetically or otherwise. Nor does it give us any insight into how the artistic genius channels the creative power of nature into its works. For Kant, the creative power of genius is expressed primarily in the form of aesthetic ideas, which Kant sees as counterpart to idea of reason as elucidated in the *CPR*. In the following, I construe aesthetic ideas as attempts by the imagination to perceptually present ideas of reason.

2.2.4. The Mysteries of Creation: A Response to the Divination Argument

It is clear from what I have said so far that for Kant, works of art can be deemed as such only to the extent that they can bring about pure judgments of beauty. What remains to be shown is exactly how the capacity for genius is able to create products that can do this. In his commentary on the *CJ*, Wicks advances the claim that ‘The beauty of the work of art can...only reside in the mystery of what the artist intended’ (2006, p. 121). I have dealt somewhat with this mysterious element of genius above. However, there still some important gaps in Kant’s theory of genius which, in a recent article, Wicks hopes to solve. Here, I focus on two related problems Wicks highlights. The first is that ‘Kant’s characterisation of pure beauty presumes to remain unaffected by historical, linguistic, political, religious, psychological, philosophical and cultural differences in its endeavour to establish universally recognisable conditions for judgments of beauty’ (Wicks, 2015, p. 2). The second problem relates to the kind of creative power granted to genius, which Wicks sees as analogous to the creative power of God (*ibid.*, p. 16). I will respond to both of these claims by arguing that Kant’s notion of genius is entwined with specifically human ends, which prevents him from ascending even to an analogous relation between God and genius. This is precisely why the creative power of genius remains on the side of nature, as a mysterious and unknown force. It is also why particular artistic products can at most serve as exemplars, rather than archetypes (*CJ* 5:319). The worry about contextual conditions of artistic practise can also be answered by separating the activity of genius from the products it creates, as well as the schools and traditions that follow therefrom. The problem comes, I claim, when attempting to pair back together the creative power of genius with the product that is produced from it. I claim that the only solution is to grant the art-work itself an ideal status similar to that of the aesthetic ideal elucidated above.

Wicks’ main motivation in his article is to reconcile Kant’s moral concerns with regard to natural beauty, and his aesthetic concerns regarding the genius. Wicks attempts to do this by construing genius as analogous to God’s divine creation. In this way, the troubling aspect of historical context

with regard to actual art-works can be avoided. The divination argument runs as follows. For the human being, aesthetic and moral judgments occupy distinct domains, which, while deeply connected, are nonetheless separate types of judgment. As Wicks claims, ‘it is human finitude that separates the beautiful and the moral into distinct mental categories’ (2015, p. 9). For God there is no such separation; as a primordial being, God requires no distinction between thought and intuition. As a consequence of this, neither beauty nor morality *occur* as such, but are presumably contained within the same singular and absolute truth of God’s affirmation. It is therefore a specifically human problem – and presumably one at which the genius excels – ‘to *reintegrate* these feelings for the sake of emulating the divine condition more closely’ (pp. 9-10). It is this characterisation of the human problem, and of genius more specifically, with which I want to contend.

The notion of beauty being tied up with specifically human ends can be observed in §17 of the *CJ*, a section called The Ideal of Beauty. Here we see that Kant is already concerned with the difference between natural and artificial beauty that becomes so important in his theory of genius. Natural beauty claims priority over artificial beauty for a few key reasons. The first thing to note is that taste gives rise to archetypes. These archetypes are the ideals of beauty, and the utmost ideal is the human body. The human form is held up as an ideal, something to be striven for. At the same time the ideal is realised as imperfect (for it is an intellectualised ideal, i.e. one which involves an interest in the objective purposiveness). So ‘an ideal of beautiful flowers, of beautiful furnishings, of a beautiful view, cannot be conceived’ (5:233). But neither can an ideal of beauty adhering to determinate ends be conceived, because ‘the ends are not adequately determined and fixed by their concept’. They are subservient to some other purpose or purposes. So the only ideal of beauty can be the human being. The ideal of beauty then gives rise to the aesthetic normal idea. This has parallels with the ideas of reason, in so far as they are particular representations with ends that cannot become objects of intuition proper. Kant writes, ‘the idea of reason...makes the ends of humanity insofar as they cannot be sensibly represented into the principle for judging of its figure,

through which, as their effect in appearance, the former are revealed' (ibid.).⁸⁹ Both these forms iterate the paradoxical sounding notion of 'something that we strive to produce even if we are not in possession of it'. But a passage from Kant helps to reveal the nature of this idea: 'The highest aesthetic model to which we are granted access, the archetype of taste, is a mere idea, which everyone must produce in himself, and in accordance with which he must judge everything that is an object of taste.' (5:232). Here we can see an iteration of my claim that genius is tied up with exclusively human ends. Just as with ideas of reason, we cannot prescribe to ourselves objects of striving from any position external to our thought, we must set both the goal towards which we are working, and the nature of our work to get there, from within.

It cannot simply be that the genius is endowed with the ability to generate beautiful forms, if the purpose of such forms is to bring about judgments of taste in the audience. If this were so, then the distinction between beautiful and mechanical art would dissolve. In addition to this purpose, genius must also possess a creative power independent of any specified end, and importantly, independently of mere sensation.⁹⁰ Art's beautiful representation of a thing would be reduced to an immaculate reproduction of a flower. Art must always be tied up with specifically human, i.e. "non-natural" ends. Wicks asks an understandable question on the basis of this conflation: 'what is the aesthetic idea of which such a beautiful natural object [as a rose] is regarded as the expression?' (2015, p. 19). To call a natural object judged as beautiful an expression of an aesthetic idea is mistaken. In fact the process works in reverse. It is the human *Geist* that makes possible the presentation of aesthetic ideas, which are produced by the imagination for intuition. A natural beauty does not express an aesthetic idea; rather it is the ground upon which an aesthetic idea is

89 The model of exemplary originality is a thoroughly human construct therefore. It does not make sense to speak of objects of nature as being exemplary or original. Creations of nature presumably are always original and always exemplary, in that they are perfectly what they are, even if the ultimate end of this perfection is unknown to us. The human being is the only candidate for the ideal of beauty, being both the determiner of their own ends and the subject of finite conditions.

90 Cf. *CJ*, 5:306.

produced. Aesthetic ideas are employed for the purposes of judgments of taste and, ultimately, creations of genius. The pure judgment of taste brought about by a beauty of nature does not in fact generate any ideas whatsoever. Rather, the spirit animates the faculties to generate ideas. A natural beauty can be the subject of a pure judgment of taste precisely because it is disinterested. As such, the judgment of beauty is not attached to any idea, either of reason or an aesthetic idea. A judgment of beauty is neither guided by, nor in the business of expressing, any idea at all. If natural beauty expresses aesthetic ideas at all, then it is only because of the judgments instilled in us by the forms of nature, not a power inherent in nature itself.

It is because of this that I disagree with Wicks' characterisation of genius. He writes, 'if the artistic genius is said to create another nature, then the genius emerges as an analogue to, or finite condensation of, the intelligence that our power of judgment postulates as the source of natural kinds as well as of the beauty they exhibit within those natural forms.' (ibid., p. 16). One can see the appeal of such a view. The notion that genius taps into the same creative powers employed by God in the creation of the natural world makes sense on the surface, and it also helps to explain the way in which genius – via its “gift of nature” – can formulate aesthetic ideas which exhaust all possible explanation. However, the parallel between artistic and natural beauty upon which Wicks bases this analogy does not hold if one examines the difference between divine creation and natural creation. For Kant, God does not create nature per se; he rather creates, that is, makes possible, the laws of nature, by which nature creates itself. A belief in the supersensible substrate of nature and a belief in God are related, but they are not the same. This can be proven quite simply by following Kant's notion that while we can know nature (in a certain form) directly, i.e. through its sensible manifestation to us as appearance, we cannot know of God in the same fashion.⁹¹ There is another

91 In §90 of the *CJ* Kant recapitulates his arguments concerning the existence of God in the *CPR*. He claims that, 'since the concept of a being that is to be sought beyond nature corresponds to no intuition that is possible for it...there is absolutely no cognition of it'. Kant does admit that we can conceive of

reason why artistic creation is not analogous to divine creation. In the first *Critique*, Kant goes to great lengths to deny human beings the possibility of a divine intelligence, or intellectual intuition. In Kant's view, such an intuition would grant us the ability to think things into existence. There would be no separation between our thought of an object and its empirical reality. The analogy between this kind of intelligence and the creative force of genius breaks down on several points. Firstly, that which the genius thinks (namely, the aesthetic idea) is not the same thing that is produced in the final art-work. The art-work, paradoxically, contains aesthetic ideas within a limited form, but this form is not identical with the idea itself. The form is precisely a work (*opus*) because it has to be *produced*, that is, brought *into* empirical reality, *through* empirical reality – its spatial and temporal dimensions included. One might be able to say that the insight of genius, whatever that might be, offers something analogous to divine creation, but again, the products of genius are not analogous to this creation. As Kant says, 'nature is a beautiful thing, art is a beautiful representation of a thing' (§48, 5:311).

This leads to the first of Wicks' worries mentioned above. If the work of genius and the beauty instilled within it are said to be universal, then what are we to make of the fact that the products of genius are themselves historical and culturally conditioned? For example, 'someone who speaks only English is in no position to judge the beauty of poetry written in another language either with respect to the poetry's formal structure or its degree of semantic resonance, despite how it may contain a universal content' (Wicks, p. 25). This may seem like a trivial worry, But Wicks has good reasons for expressing it. Because Wick's conceives of genius as analogous to the creative power of God, he conceives of the former 'speaking in a universal language to everyone'. Wick's problem with Kant is that he appears to assume that 'adhering to universal content alone will preserve the universal validity of judgments of beauty' (ibid.). This worry can be answered with Kant's remarks on succession in §32. Kant was of course of the passage of historical and cultural time, and its role things according to analogy, but it is not possible to draw an inference for said analogy such that a proof could be constructed from it. (Cf. *CJ*, 5:564-5).

role in the manifestation of art-works. But including such considerations in his analysis of aesthetic judgments would be counter-purposive. The most he can do is adapt what he sees as the creative powers of genius for his own purposes, i.e. for bringing about judgments of taste, and advocating for morally engaged subjects with an appropriate amount of respect for both nature and reason. But Kant is also aware that the creative power of genius must be bestowed into actual concrete works, conditioned and finite objects which make up and partake in historical time. This is precisely why art-works can only ever be exemplary. It is not the content of said works that is universal, therefore, but the formal judgments of taste they bring about. Standards of beauty may indeed change, but for Kant, formal principles governing the operation of aesthetic judgment do not.

A judgment of taste is singular judgment about the object, but the way in which I arrive at this judgment must be valid for all. This saves us from constantly falling into error about our own judgments (if we had no standard with which to compare them, how would we evaluate them?). It also saves taste from being a merely arbitrary case of personal preferences. However, this only concerns judgments made in the face of an already existing object. The object itself occurs in time and space, in a historical and cultural context. The process of genius itself is universal precisely because it follows the same *a priori* rules in all cases. The process of genius does not so much inhabit an individual as it does move through them. This happens by succession, which as Kant writes, is ‘the correct expression for any influence that the products of an exemplary author can have on others’ (5:283). This influence has to do with nothing more than one creating ‘from the same sources...as one’s predecessor’ and to learn from one’s predecessor ‘only the manner of conducting oneself in so doing’ (ibid.). It is clear from this passage that, while the actual contents of art-works are culturally informed, the inspiration that lies beneath them is always of the same kind, or at least, functions in the same manner. In addition, this inspiration does not prescribe anything like a universal content, only a manner in which artistic genius is supposed to present itself, namely, the manner of producing aesthetic ideas.

The point of this is that, even if Wick's analogy between artistic genius and the creative power of God does hold, nothing substantive can be inferred from this. On Kant's terms, there is nothing to determine the way God creates the world; nor is there a way to determine how genius creates i.e. how the artist creates precisely the works they do. All Kant believes we can prove is the *a priori* principles which govern judgments of taste, by which the creative powers of genius are monitored. The divination argument does not ultimately reveal anything substantive about the creative process of genius.

I began this section with a quote from Wicks, that 'the beauty of the work of art can[...]only reside in the mystery of what the artist intended'. In a sense, this still holds. Whether the creative power of genius is held as analogous to God's creation or not, neither of these creative processes can be objectively known by us. In the former case, art-works are brought about via the intention of the artist, but also via an unknown gift of nature, an origin that shares ground with the supersensible. Again, in both cases, we have little else to which we can appeal other than our moral interest. If the ideal of beauty is the human as such, as Kant states, then the ideal of art is the art-work as such, not any particular art-work, though each particular work surely refers to this impossible ideal. The art-work as such, minimally defined, is merely the intentional creation and expression of aesthetic ideas, and construed in this sense, amounts to little more than an emulation of nature according to moral interest. This may be what Kant intended; for works of art to symbolise the creative power of nature to accord with our moral concerns. However, the fact that in his remarks on the sublime, Kant claims that nature is unreceptive to human ideation, at least in a constitutive sense, it seems difficult for this vital relation between nature and genius to hold. The art-work seems to be a symbol of the striving toward the supersensible, just as ethical actions represent the striving toward moral ideas of reason. To better understand the relation between this infinite striving and its finite manifestation, in 2.2.5 I offer my interpretation of artistic production in the *CJ*.

2.2.5. Nature In the Work of Art

As I have shown above, Kant draws attention to a mysterious element in the productive capacity of genius, namely that its source of creative power lies in its relation to nature. Moreover, the exact process of this natural inspiration for genius remains a mystery in Kant's account. The argument of divine inspiration is not sufficient for answering this mystery for reasons I have laid out above. The question over how it is that the artist, and *not* the philosopher, can access or channel this supersensible substrate of nature into their creations remains to be answered.⁹² It is on this question that I will focus for the remainder of this chapter. Answering this question in turn will address the larger issue of the place of artistic beauty in relation to natural beauty.

I focus on Gadamer's account of Kant's aesthetics in his seminal work *Truth and Method*, to examine how it is that genius can create works of art, and what exactly these works are in Kant's estimation. I follow Gadamer's claim that 'the ideal of beauty prepares a place for the essence of art' (1989, p. 48). I examine how this ideal is transposed into artistic representation, particularly in the case of poetry, which Kant designates as the highest art form (*CJ*, 5:326). I conclude by readdressing the question of nature in light of Kant's theory of genius and corresponding theory of fine art. While valuable, Kant's theory of genius leaves the question of nature still partly unanswered, which prepares for my move to Schelling in the second part of this thesis.

In discussing the arts, Kant is concerned only with beautiful art, i.e. art-works that can bring about pure judgments of taste. This requires originality, as discussed above, and the capacity to communicate this originality in an understandable way. The problem that immediately arises, and with which I will be concerned throughout the rest of the chapter, is that there seems to be an element of creative genius that remains beyond the grasp of philosophical principles, which I claim is the precisely the original element which makes a work of art beautiful. What makes the products

⁹² This advantage that the artist seems to have over the philosopher is echoed by Schelling in his *Philosophy of Art*, which will be the focus of chapter four.

of genius works of art is that they are created according to an originally conceived principle, which is in part unknown to the artists themselves. More than how genius gives rise to its creations, Kant's concern is with how said creations are communicated to an audience. How is it, then, that art-works come to be judged as beautiful by the perceiver?⁹³

Kant is not concerned with the ontology of the art-work itself, nor with what rules the genius gives to themselves in the moment of creation, but only the way in which the form of the work brings about a judgment of taste *as if* it were a form of nature. The artistic genius possesses the exact same faculties as every other human subject. It is only by chance, it would seem, that in the genius these faculties work in such a way as to be able to present aesthetic ideas *as if* they originated in nature, to purposively bring about purposeless, disinterested aesthetic judgments. Fine art is beautiful art to the extent that it can provoke pure judgments of taste. But contained within Kant's description is a potentially paradoxical situation. He claims that art must be intentionally produced, and further, produced with a concept in mind of what the art-work ought to be (i.e. its purpose). Yet in this producing something is brought into the work (via genius) that makes it appear as if it were a natural product, i.e. created without any intention at all, and without the associated concept.

As I explained in part one of this chapter, beauty in nature is that which pleases without a concept. By contrast, beautiful works of art are those that bring about an aesthetic expansion on their concept. It is useful to remember that in the case of natural beauty, a judgment of taste is based on the form of the object, and so by the specific ways in which that form is limited. This is opposed to

⁹³ Schaeffer picks up on this potential problem, asking, 'if the work remains essentially opaque to the genius who produced it, and even to the genius-disciples who are inspired by it...by what miracle can it become transparent for ordinary receivers who can only be imitators?' (2000, p. 43). Schaeffer construes this as a problem of the grounding of rules, continuing that, 'on the one hand, the genius is incapable of rationally grounding his rules himself, since they are grounded in his nature...On the other hand, the genius *gives* the rules...which ground the exemplarity of the work of genius, [and] can in a certain way be discovered by its receivers' (ibid., p. 40). However, as I will show, it is not so much the rules created by genius that creates art's exemplary status, but rather, the communication of aesthetic ideas.

the sublime, which represents a certain limitlessness for judgment. The issue of limitation/limitlessness is important in the case of works of art as well.

So far, nothing particularly troubling has emerged. For art to be beautiful it must be capable of inducing the same kinds of pure aesthetic judgment as natural beauties, and this is only possible through genius, which is the gift of animating materials with spirit. So animated, these materials are capable of expressing aesthetic ideas. When one delves deeper into the relation between artistic and natural beauty, things become more complicated. In §45 Kant claims that when one encounters a work of art, they must ‘be aware that it is art, and not nature’, yet the ‘purposiveness in its form must still seem to be as free from all constraint by arbitrary rules as if it were a mere product of nature’ (5:306). What is it that makes us aware something is art, and not nature? For Kant, it is the fact that the artist ‘always has a determinate intention of producing something’. This intention is apparent to a viewer as a concept associated with the end of the work itself i.e. the concept of something being a painting, a poem, a sculpture, etc. One is aware of a human intention in a work of art. Despite this intention, a work of art must be regarded as nature. The talent of the artist, therefore, is the talent of intentionally and conceptually producing something that can be judged independently of its intention and its concept.

Earlier I discussed Kant’s view of genius as being a natural gift, and an ‘inborn predisposition of the mind (5:307). Now it becomes clear how it is that nature ‘gives the rule to art’. The genius in effect emulates — although in an original fashion — the form of natural beauty: being an end without a purpose. In §48 of the *CJ*, Kant illuminates this through his description of the relation of genius to taste. In the case of natural beauty, only taste is required, but in the case of beautiful art, both taste and genius are required; taste as the capacity to judge works as beautiful, genius to account for their possibility. In the case of nature, one need not be concerned with the possibility of natural forms; such possibility does not factor into reflective judgments at all. However, a concept of art’s possibility is necessary for judging it as beautiful, and this is explained by genius. Whereas the

beauty of nature is a beautiful thing, the beauty of art is a ‘beautiful representation of a thing’ (5:311).

At first glance, the characterisation of art as a beautiful representation, rather than a beautiful thing would seem to put natural beauty at an advantage. Artistic beauty appears to be derivative of natural beauty. Natural beauties exercise a greater degree of freedom from determinate concepts; this is how they can be judged according to their form alone. On the other hand, since art always ‘presupposes an end in the cause (and its causality), a concept must first be the ground of what the thing is supposed to be’ (5:312).

Kant states that ‘the beautiful representation of an object...is really only the form of the presentation of a concept by means of which the latter is universally communicated’ (ibid.). It remains to be seen exactly what this form is, as it cannot be a mere emulation of nature. Something about the human intention that brings about the work of art must factor into products of genius. However, the originality that Kant bestows to genius is precisely that element which stems from the mysterious connection between genius and nature; the element which even the artistic genius cannot account for. With these things in mind I turn now to Gadamer’s account of genius in relation to artistic versus natural beauty. While I find Gadamer’s interpretation illuminating, I contend that he remains within the same problematic boundaries as Kant, in terms of what it is that art can tell us about nature.

2.2.6. Gadamer on Natural and Artistic Beauty

In his book *Truth and Method*, Gadamer asserts that Kant’s concept of the pure judgment of taste ‘is a methodological abstraction only obliquely related to the difference between nature and art’ (1989, p. 51). This is true; Kant is concerned more with establishing the universal validity of reflective aesthetic judgment than he is with what these judgments specifically are about. Gadamer points out that, as a result, Kant’s critique of aesthetic judgment ‘does not seek to be a philosophy of art’ (ibid.), and this is reflected by the brevity of Kant’s remarks on art itself. Of particular

importance, in Gadamer's view, is Kant's ideal of beauty, which Gadamer claims rests on the distinction between the 'normative idea' and the 'rational idea' of beauty (ibid., p. 47). In the first case, an idea is held which acts as the 'genus' out of which individual examples of beauty emerge. Gadamer gives the example of a beautiful animal. The normative idea of a beautiful cow is one in which the minimum conditions are provided by which an individual cow is to be judged. Gadamer does not elaborate on what kind of conditions these might be, or indeed how they are possible given that the judgment of beauty does not rest on any property of the object being judged. He seems to be referring to Kant's question in *The Ideal of Beauty* over the possibility of an 'archetype of taste', which, as a 'mere idea', can nonetheless act as guide for individual judgments of taste (*CJ*, 5:232). Gadamer's point here is that the normative idea of beauty is 'not a prototype of beauty but merely of correctness'. A rational idea of beauty, on the other hand, seems to demand something corresponding to it, which gives it a valid employment. In other words, the rational idea of beauty requires an ideal, in which its concept is instantiated. For Gadamer, as for Kant, this ideal is the expression of the moral by the human being. In this case, Gadamer claims, the object represented (the human form) 'coincides with the artistic meaning that speaks to us in the representation' (1989, p. 48). This may be a little hard to grasp at first, but I take Gadamer to mean that, for Kant, only the human form can express an ideal of beauty because only the human being can actually *be* what it represents. For example, Gadamer writes, 'a tree that is stunted because of unfavourable conditions of growth may seem wretched to us, but the tree does not feel wretched or express this wretchedness' (ibid.). A human being on the other hand, expresses wretchedness by *being* wretched, i.e. by being measured 'by the human moral ideal itself' (ibid., 49). This notion of the ideal of beauty opens up for Gadamer an ambiguity over the relation between natural and artistic beauty, which, it would seem, Gadamer is preoccupied with arranging hierarchically.

Gadamer claims, on the basis of his discussion mentioned above, that the 'fundamental problem that motivates Kant's aesthetics is that the beautiful engages our interests' (ibid., p. 50). The way in which our interests are engaged by either natural or artistic beauty leads Gadamer to the thought

that each form of beauty seems to have an advantage over the other. Gadamer claims that Kant's doctrine of the ideal of beauty results in 'an advantage of art over natural beauty: the advantage of being a more direct expression of the moral' (ibid.). However, Kant, in Gadamer's view, proposes the opposite. Natural beauty can arouse moral interest without having to address it directly. This is because, when judging natural forms to be beautiful, we are led to the thought that nature has itself produced that beauty, and where this thought arouses interest, Gadamer says, 'we have a cultivation of the moral sensibility'. Gadamer explains this situation in the following way: it is precisely because 'in nature we find no ends in themselves and yet find beauty', i.e. a 'suitedness to the end of our pleasure' that nature seems to 'give us a "hint" that we are in fact the ultimate end, the final goal of creation' (ibid., p. 51).

What emerges from Gadamer's discussion is an explanatory gap between art-works as some expression of nature, and nature itself. As I have discussed already, the works of genius are specifically tied up with human ends. As a result of this, Gadamer writes that the task of art 'is no longer to represent the ideal of nature, but to enable man to encounter himself in nature and in the human, historical world' (1989 p. 49). At first glance this makes sense. Just as judgments of taste are concerned with the faculties of the subject rather than properties of natural objects, art is concerned with how mankind relates to nature rather than with nature itself. As such, Gadamer continues, 'it is perfectly appropriate that Kant does not inquire into the mode of existence of the object being aesthetically judged (and thus into the whole question of the relation between beauty of nature and that of art)' (ibid.). However, I claim that this is not a wholly satisfactory answer. The only thing left to do, in this case, is to examine how art brings about judgments of taste, and to what extent these judgments of artistic beauty are the same as those of natural beauty.

Again, Gadamer highlights the problem of beauty engaging our interest. Nature appears akin to our interest in forming judgments of beauty without any specific purpose. This is why one's interest in the beautiful concerns only the faculty of judgment, rather than whatever the judgment may be

about. Returning to the example of the stunted tree, while its stuntedness does not straightforwardly *mean* its wretchedness, (its purpose is not to *be* wretched), still the tree is nonetheless purposive in an indirect way, namely, in its being used for the purpose of an aesthetic judgment, one which ultimately concerns man's own wretchedness, man being the only thing which can in itself be wretched (ibid., p. 49).

Because of this, Gadamer claims that natural beauty has an advantage over artistic beauty because the former 'possesses no significance of content', and as such 'manifests the judgment of taste in its unintellectualized purity' (ibid., p. 50). It seems that for Gadamer, the lack of direct conceptual content in the case of natural beauty makes judgments of natural beauty easier, because one does not have to negotiate with what an item of nature may be "trying to say". In other words, Gadamer rests on the assumption that natural objects do not specify a meaningful content in their appearances, whereas art-works do. Art-works are always made "for a reason", in Gadamer's view. A judgment of beauty regarding an art-work must therefore navigate the additional task of negotiating the meaning of the work as well as its potential beauty. At first glance, this would seem to reflect what Kant himself says. In §51 of the *CJ* Kant writes that beauty, either in nature or in art, is the expression of aesthetic ideas, the difference being that 'in beautiful art this idea must be occasioned by a concept of the object, but in beautiful nature the mere reflection on a given intuition, without a concept of what the object ought to be, is sufficient' (5:320). However, Gadamer shifts this conception of the difference between natural and artistic beauty in a way that is slightly troubling. It has to do with the connection between nature and morality.

Gadamer points out that one of the fundamental problems of Kant's aesthetics is that 'the beautiful engages our interests' (1989, p. 50). Gadamer claims that 'as beautiful, nature finds a *language* that brings to *us* an intelligible idea of what mankind is to be' (ibid., p. 51). For Gadamer, art is a direct expression of that which in aesthetic judgments of nature is expressed analogously. Nature, in Gadamer's view 'communicates to us th[e] self-discovery [of the moral nature] of man in a reality

that does not intend to do so' (ibid.). In other words, nothing inherent in the appearances of nature affirms the existence of a moral universe, since this idea of morality must be legislated by reason. For art to affirm the moral status of mankind, it must, in some way, set out to achieve this goal. It cannot be mere happenstance that works of art speak to our moral concerns. However, the power of genius, which in Gadamer's view is precisely the power to communicate humankind's moral interests, remains nonetheless a gift of nature in Kant's argument, not a gift of morality.

Genius is in a paradoxical position, in which it must produce morally pertinent representations, with an intention to do so, but via a creative gift that it cannot rationally ground. Gadamer also draws attention to this seeming paradox at the heart of genius. He claims that 'the irrationality of genius brings out an element of productive creation, shown both in creator and recipient, namely that there is no other way of laying hold of the meaning of a work of art than in the unique form of the work and in the mystery of its impression which can never be fully expressed by any language' (1989, p. 49).

Gadamer's point is that there seems to be something about the artistic mode of expression that is unlike any other form of expression, which is that art expresses a meaning directly, but in such a way that one cannot, upon receipt of that meaning, describe what it is. This is because that meaning is inseparable from the form in which it is expressed, the artistic form itself. This is how the artwork seems to be able to express the universal in the particular, by being limited to the final, concrete form of the work itself. Exactly *what* it expresses via this form takes us beyond the mere work however, into the realm of ideas, which, as Kant says, 'aesthetically enlarges the concept itself in an unbounded way'. There is, in some sense, more expressed in the work than its mere content. This can be summed up with the following passage from Kant:

One can call such representations of the imagination ideas: on the one hand because they at least strive toward something lying beyond the bounds of experience, and thus seek to approximate a presentation of concepts of reason (of intellectual ideas), which gives them the

appearances of an objective reality; on the other hand, and indeed principally, because no concept can be fully adequate to them, as inner intuition. (CJ, 5:314)

When expressed via the art-work, these aesthetic ideas open up an ‘immeasurable field of related representations’ (5:315) which the imagination is free to contemplate without the need to tie them down to any determinate concepts. This is what Gadamer means by an aesthetic expansion of the artistic concept. To get a better understanding of this ‘immeasurable field’, I now turn to the way in which Kant approaches the individual forms of art, which reveal something about how he conceives of natural beauty with regard to them.

2.2.7. Poetry as the Highest Art: Kant’s Aesthetic Hierarchy

Kant rarely shows any interest in the actual materials of the art-work, which one must assume contribute at least in part to the conceptual determination of what the work is supposed to be. This is largely because Kant is concerned with the cognitive functions necessary for judgments, rather than what the judgments are about. A brief look at Kant’s ranking of the arts makes this clear. In §51 and §53 of the *CJ*, Kant discusses the place of different art forms in relation to each other. These are designated according to Kant’s main criteria for beauty, whether of nature or of art, which is the expression of aesthetic ideas (5:320). Kant splits art into three main types, the art of speech, pictorial art, and art of the play of sensations. Kant performs this division to show how each separate form interacts with ideas on the one hand, and sensations on the other. He places music in the lowest position among the hierarchy of the arts. This is because, he claims, music ‘speaks through mere sensations without concepts, and hence does not, like poetry, leave something behind for reflection’ (5:328). Kant does admit, however, that music, or the art of tone, as he calls it, can move the mind in deeper ways than other forms, albeit temporarily. It is this temporariness that Kant identifies as the feature which disqualifies music from being as pure an art form as poetry. Presumably this is because, outside of the duration of the performance, during which time the audience is caught up in ‘charm and movement of the mind’ (ibid.), there is nothing to observe

upon which reflective judgment can be based. The form of music exists exclusively in its actual occurrence, and this will not suffice for the contemplative judgments Kant is after.

On the other end of the scale, Kant claims that ‘the art of poetry (which owns its origin almost entirely to genius, and will be guided least by precept or example) claims the highest rank of all’ (5:326). Poetry takes up what I characterise as a highly paradoxical position in the ranking of the arts, one that is akin to the paradox of genius I mentioned in relation to Gadamer. Poetry is, on the one hand, pure communicative power, i.e. language itself. Language is the form most associated with the communication of thoughts. In the case of poetry, language is not used to communicate, at least, not directly. Instead, poetry is direct expression used as play. This might sound like a superficial characterisation of poetry, but it bears strong relations to the aesthetic idea. Poetry ‘expands the mind by setting the imagination free’ (5:326). It presents ‘within the limits of a given concept... a fullness of thought to which no linguistic expression is fully adequate’. Via this fullness of thought, poetry ‘elevates itself aesthetically to the level of ideas’ (ibid.). In these descriptions of Kant’s poetry there is a fairly direct instantiation of aesthetic ideas. Poetry achieves its effect by presenting itself as a ‘merely entertaining play with the imagination’. Through this play, poetry allows the mind to ‘feel its capacity to judge of nature, as appearance, freely, self-actively, and independently of determination by nature’ (ibid.). These descriptions of Kant accord with his earlier remarks in §49, where he described the process of the imagination, in which the material lent to us by nature is turned into something which ‘steps beyond nature’ (5:314). The poet, through this process, ‘ventures to make sensible rational ideas’, in a way which philosophy cannot. It is by presenting itself as a mere play that poetry seems able to do this.

I challenge Gadamer’s conception of genius in Kant’s aesthetics, by claiming that poetry seems able to detach itself from all purposes, to use language in a way that removes all need to specify intention, or even a purpose internal to the poem itself. Poetry seems to be capable of removing the need to speak about anything in particular, to engage in a free play of imagination and

understanding. However, it should be remembered that this formal aspect of poetry through which its playful quality is achieved, is specific to the judgment of beauty made about the poem. It is not so much a factor of its creation but of its reception. It seems that Kant is still one step removed from talking about the artistic product itself. In the final section, I address the distance at which Kant situates himself from the art-work, and some potential problems that arise from this.

2.2.8. Art at a Distance

The fact that Kant was relatively unconcerned with actual art-works leads to the following question. If it is the merely formal properties of a poem that are judged to be beautiful — mirroring judgments of natural beauty most directly — then what does a poem need to be *about* in order for these formal properties to achieve the status of beauty? Indeed, does the content even matter for a poem to be beautiful? Of course, the content must have some role to play, but it is difficult to see what role this is for Kant. In §49, Kant states that the thing that makes art beautiful is its spirit, that which is able to animate content in such a way as to create aesthetic ideas. These ideas themselves are such because they cannot be directly instantiated in experience, and even in the case of poetry, in a single linguistic expression. So, in the cases of both spirit and aesthetic ideas, the actual content still remains a mystery.

Poetry can express ideas of reason in an aesthetic fashion, namely reflectively, in something sensible — which in this case must be language itself. The aesthetic presentation of the idea then achieves ‘a completeness that goes beyond anything of which there is an example in nature’. The imagination ‘emulates the precedent of reason in attaining to a maximum’ (5:315). Where one cannot represent ideas of reason directly through concepts, one supplements this for an aesthetic expansion of the given concept of reason for which no expression is found (5:316).

Curiously, at this point, after spending so much time asserting that the art of genius concerns the beautiful exclusively, Kant mentions the sublime again. He remarks that in the consciousness of virtue – construed as an idea of reason – the mind receives ‘a multitude of sublime and calming

feelings...which no expression that is adequate to a determine concepts fully captures'. Kant follows this with a footnote in which he writes 'perhaps nothing more sublime has ever been said, or any thought more sublimely expressed, than in the inscription over the temple of Isis (Mother Nature): "I am all that is, that was, and that will be, and my veil no mortal has removed"' (ibid.).⁹⁴ The fact that Kant returns to the sublime at this point, and particular in reference to the concept of Mother Nature, is revealing.⁹⁵ It perhaps says something about what it is that the genius accesses in order to produce beautiful works of art. If nature is that which no mortal can truly access — at least not completely — and nature is also that which gives the rule to art through genius, it stands to reason that genius is the capacity that delves deeper into nature than do any of the cognitive faculties. Kant's mention of the sublime here shows that while the end product of genius has nothing to do with the sublime, perhaps the process by which genius creates does. Indeed, Kant states that the power of genius can even present ugly things as beautiful. It would not be such a stretch to claim that genius is able to present sublime things as beautiful. In fact, this is precisely what Schelling's philosophy of art will attempt to do. Genius can do this, of course, by forming the potentially infinite manifold of imaginative presentations into a particular completeness, the same

94 In his earlier work *The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God* (1763) Kant expresses similar sentiments about the sublime, though in this case as support for the 'wisdom, providence and even power of a Being who is worthy of our worship' (2:117). The following note attached to this passage is revealing in this regard: 'When, among other things, I consider the microscopic observations of Dr. Hill . . . ; when I see numerous animal species in a single drop of water, predatory kinds equipped with instruments of destruction, intent upon the pursuit of their prey, but in their turn annihilated by the still more powerful tyrants of this aquatic world; when I contemplate the intrigues, the violence, the scenes of commotion in a single particle of matter, and when from thence I direct my gaze upwards to the immeasurable spaces of the heavens teeming with worlds as with specks of dust—when I contemplate all this, no human language can express the feelings aroused by such a thought; and all subtle metaphysical analysis falls far short of the sublimity and dignity characteristic of such an intuition.'

95 This citation of Kant's is obviously a gloss on the Bible, and it is significant that in his earlier work, he says similar things about God. Cf. *The Only Possible Argument*, 2:151.

completeness that goes beyond nature, precisely because nature, in its completeness, can never be instantiated in experience.

Works of art, and poetry to the highest degree, limit the immeasurable field of related representations that accompany an aesthetic presentation of the imagination. Poetry in particular, can communicate these representations in a way that is guided enough by taste as to be appreciable by an audience, but is original enough to surpass direct linguistic expressions. This applies not only to poetic renderings of pre-established natural beauties, but even renderings of those things that in nature are not represented as beautiful. Art is therefore both grounded in nature and operates in a way akin to the supersensible substrate of nature, but also steps *beyond* nature by inventing original ways to represent as beautiful even that which does not seem most suited to such a representation. There is nothing to stop these beautiful representations being of things which naturally would be judged as sublime, but the cost of Kant's assertion that all works of fine art are beautiful is that the side of genius connected to the potentially sublime in nature is obscured from critique, or definition, even by those gifted with the genius to create such works.

Poetry most effectively represents the operations of nature (in accord with the laws of the understanding) such that the content of poetry – being secondary to form by which it is judged – does not become embroiled with sensible presentation. As mere play, that which poems speak about does not need to enter into the problem of possible experience, just as the idea, its aesthetic counterpart, and the supersensible itself never enter into this problem either. They are represented by a play which draws attention to the harmonious relation between the faculties, and a nature that appears as if it were a work of art. Works of art appear as if they were nature. There is evidence to suggest that Kant wanted the relation between art and nature to be mutual, such as his discussion of the technique of nature that I discussed in the first part of this chapter. But given the fact that art for Kant can only stimulate judgments of beauty, and not of the sublime, and given that the formal judging of works of art mirrors that which is first found in nature, it would seem that the work of art

is secondary to the effect of nature on our reflective judgment. Nature takes priority due to the fact that the freedom represented in the work of art is derivative of that freedom which we hold as being inherent in nature. Through art mankind strives toward the supersensible. If nature is to take priority – and indeed, Kant quickly leaves the question of art altogether to deal with the teleological judgment of nature in the second half of the *CJ* – then the concluding question remains, what picture of nature are we left with in Kant's aesthetics?

Conclusion to Chapter Two: the Inaccessible Ground of Kantian Nature

From the perspective Kant's aesthetics, nature seems to speak to us. It is as if nature were attempting to make intelligible the status of mankind. Works of art seem to carry out this process directly for Kant, through the intention of the artist. The spirit is responsible for making this process original, which means two things; first, that the created work stands as an exemplar for further works by appearing to apply rules that it creates for itself; second, that the work thereby created communicates something (via the imagination) that cannot be summed up by any simple conceptual expression. Nevertheless, none of these elements of genius explain precisely its relation to nature, because this relation lies in the supersensible toward which aesthetic ideas strive, and which they depict through the supplementary representations of the imagination. Furthermore, in Kant's view the organisation perceived in nature, which reaches its pinnacle in the human organism, 'infinitely surpasses all capacity for a similar presentation by art'. Art can symbolise nature, but it cannot *be* nature; it cannot be alive, nor can it self-organise.

Gadamer highlights an important and potentially problematic ambiguity in the difference between artistic and natural beauty. However, his attempt to clarify this ambiguity relies solely on the specificity of artistic beauty, resulting from its intentional creation. I have moved beyond Gadamer's account in order to consider how, if at all, the sublime factors into artistic creation. Yet, it appears as though this ambiguity remains so, given the fact that, after all, Kant himself relegates the creative power of artistic genius to a 'gift of nature'.

In this chapter, I have related the question of nature which informs my thesis to Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment. It has emerged from this that Kant conceives of nature itself as lacking in receptivity to ideas. The most important thing that this reveals is something Kant articulates in his analysis of the sublime. There, he identifies an aspect of the human mental life that is altogether separate from nature. In §28 Kant claims that we possess a power to 'regard those things about

which we are concerned as trivial, and hence to regard [nature's] power...as not the sort of dominion over ourselves and our authority to which we would have to bow if it came to our highest principles and their affirmation or abandonment' (5:262). It seems fairly clear that Kant here is referring to something like the first stages of being a moral agent, which, in terms of what has been discussed above, implies establishing a separation between human reason and nature, one which allows the latter to be regulated by the former. In dismissing worldly, sensory or empirical concerns, we can, in Kant's view, ascend toward a more 'pure' version of humanity, in which moral duty is tantamount.⁹⁶ In terms of the sublime, Kant reduces its function here to raising the imagination to presenting those cases in which the mind can 'make palpable to itself the sublimity of its own vocation even over nature' (ibid.). In spite of great (physical) odds, the power of human reason can still always triumph, and it is hard to see an alternative to the view that, while Kant offers diverse analyses of the aspects of aesthetic and artistic life, they all essentially amount to the re-affirmation of his moral position.

I have argued that genius is important for Kant's definition of beautiful works of art, to the extent that the creative power of genius mirrors a creative power in nature. More significantly, the effective combination of genius and taste can make this creative power apparent in a way that could not otherwise be articulated. In short, genius can reveal to the faculty of taste a creative force in nature that cannot be accessed by any other human faculty. The price of this access for Kant, however, is precisely that it can only be mirrored, by an artistic process which is neither philosophically measurable or repeatable, but merely exemplary. Where reflective judgments treat nature *as if* it were created for the purposes of our aesthetic satisfaction, genius seems able to intentionally produce beautiful forms, but in such a way that art-works which exemplify those beautiful forms are judged *as if* they were not produced by any intention i.e. as if they were products of nature. However, the exact means by which genius achieves this, and the larger role

⁹⁶ As in 1.3.3., Kant's subtle Platonism is again evident here.

such capacity for genius might play both in philosophical and social life, remain unclear in Kant. Shortly after advancing his theory of genius, Kant moves on the second part of the *CJ*, in which he constructs his critique of teleological judgment. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Kant's nuanced view of purposiveness underlies most if not all of his subsequent arguments, but it is easy at this point to claim that such purposiveness is much more directed toward Kant's moral concerns than artistic or aesthetic ones.

What does this mean for subsequent philosophies of art? Gadamer points out that, 'unlike Kant, [Fichte and Schelling] considered the *standpoint of art* (as the unconscious production of genius) all inclusive – embracing even nature, which is understood as a product of spirit'. (1989, p. 59). As I move from Kant to Schelling, I have in mind this concern for the standpoint of art. This is the subject of chapter four. In chapter three, I will discuss how Schelling also sought to talk about nature from the standpoint of nature.

PART TWO
SCHELLING
THE IDENTITY-PHILOSOPHY

Chapter Three: Disassembling the Boundaries of Metaphysics

3.1. Schelling's Critique of Kantian Metaphysics in the *Treatise Explicatory of the Idealism in the Science of Knowledge*

Abstract

Along with his contemporary J.G. Fichte, Schelling formed a distinctive response to Kant's critical metaphysics. Schelling soon dismissed Fichte's effort, the *Science of Knowledge* (1794), as excessively ideal. Kant, however, was never quite so easy for Schelling to dismiss. On the surface, the *Treatise Explicatory of the Idealism in the Science of Knowledge* (1797) is an essay about Fichte, but it soon becomes clear that Schelling is actually interested in Kant *Critique of Pure Reason*. Schelling performs two tasks in the *Treatise*. First, he defends Kant's critical system from its various misinterpretations. Second, he attempts to bring Kant's philosophy to its proper conclusions by pointing out which elements were given too much weight, and importantly, which were not given enough. In doing so, Schelling's *Treatise* re-examines several key features of Kant's critical philosophy; intuition, imagination, and their grounding force, the spirit. Schelling's support of intellectual intuition, as the unity of thought and being, directly opposes Kant's, who denied humans the capacity for intellectual intuition. I will defend Schelling's criticisms of Kant, while also questioning the extent to which Schelling overcomes Kant's critical limitations. I will conclude by summarising Schelling's position and pointing out where his criticisms of Kant are most relevant for studies of Kant.

3.1.1. The Origin of Knowledge

In the rarely discussed *Treatise Explicatory of the Idealism in the Science of Knowledge*, Schelling aims to answer a particularly Kantian question. Schelling asks, ‘what...is...the reality that inheres in our representations?’ (1994, p. 69).⁹⁷ In so doing, Schelling hopes to show, like Kant, that our representations of objects and the objects in themselves two renderings of the same thing, thus avoiding the problem of a “two-worlds” metaphysics.⁹⁸ However, Schelling has one important qualification, for which Kant’s critical philosophy does not allow. While Kant wanted to secure the principles by which intuition and understanding were synthesised for knowledge, Schelling wants to go one step further. The latter writes, ‘when asking “What is the origin of our knowledge?” we do not want to know how already existing representations and concepts might be dissolved into their components; rather the question was how we had originally formed these concepts and representations’ (ibid., p. 70). This is a subtle but important development of Kant’s critical project. For Schelling, it is not enough merely show the *a priori* conditions for knowledge; we must also inquire into how we came to obtain such conditions. One must meet the demand of reason, and complete the chain of conditions that Kant spoke of in the first *Critique*, not just theoretically but practically.⁹⁹ Fichte had already attempted this in his *Science of Knowledge (Wissenschaftslehre)*, but Schelling was dissatisfied with the former’s grounding of this principle in self-consciousness, or the absolute I. For Schelling, such a principle lies neither in consciousness itself, nor in an external ground; it lies rather in their identity, which Schelling names spirit. In what follows, I will look in detail at Schelling’s early modifications of Kant in the *Treatise*, his reinterpretation of intuition and imagination, and their importance for intellectual intuition, the vehicle through which the Schelling believes spirit is brought to consciousness. Schelling’s early essays were subsequently eclipsed by

⁹⁷ Hereafter *Treatise*. I say ‘rarely discussed’ in reference to the English speaking philosophical world. The *Treatise* was translated into English in 1994.

⁹⁸ For more on the two worlds problem in Schelling, cf. Whistler, 2013, pp. 70-93.

⁹⁹ Cf. A481/B509.

his philosophy of nature and by his *System of Transcendental Idealism* in 1800. It is my contention, however, that the *Treatise* contains many important insights into the young philosopher's adaptations of Kant, adaptations which inform Schelling's subsequent work.

3.1.2. Kant's Incomplete Criticism

Kant faced significant objections in the wake of his critical philosophy. It is arguable that these criticisms have as much to do with the competition that existed to surpass Kant's grand philosophical system, as it did with actual problems in Kant's philosophy.¹⁰⁰ As I have already made clear, Schelling was not an outright critic of Kant. Such critics, in Schelling's view, sought only to erect intellectual edifices, which were lacking in true philosophical spirit.¹⁰¹ At the beginning of the *Treatise*, Schelling stresses the importance of saving Kant from the misunderstandings of his heirs. Schelling accuses Kant's successors of reading the latter too superficially, and thereby not understanding his true intentions, arguing that, '[i]n addition to the *literal language* [of Kant's philosophy] there also exists a *language of spirit*...[T]he former is merely the vehicle for the latter' (1994, p. 69).¹⁰²

Schelling believes that he has uncovered the true intentions of Kant's critical philosophy. By pointing these intentions out, Schelling can bring critical philosophy to its proper conclusions. Schelling therefore has two main goals in the *Treatise*. First, he aims to provide the authoritative account of Kant's critical philosophy, whereby it is shown to be incomplete. Second, Schelling aims to use this account to defend his position on the necessity of intellectual intuition as the starting

100 Cf. *Treatise*, (1994 pp. 8-14); Frank, 2004; pp. 23-38.

101 Cf. *Treatise*, (1994 p. 24).

102 Schelling perpetually struggled with the continuum between revelation and analytical reasoning. Schelling's discussion of spirit in the *Treatise* is indicative of this struggle. Cf. "Metaphysical Empiricism" in Schelling and B. Matthews (trans.) *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*, 2007, pp. 171-191.

point for philosophy.¹⁰³ However, Schelling's understanding of intellectual intuition has already changed here from its first appearance in his 1795 essay *Of the I as a Principle for Philosophy*. Intellectual intuition in the *Treatise* is not the quasi-mystical, inarticulable insight it was in *Of the I*.¹⁰⁴ It takes on a more subdued role wherein the initial unconditioned activity of the spirit is brought to consciousness. As such it remains purely subjective.¹⁰⁵ I will discuss this in more detail later. For now, I examine the reinterpretations and corrections to Kant's philosophy that Schelling presents.

3.1.3. The Formation of Knowledge in the *Treatise*

Schelling begins proceedings in the *Treatise* on a fairly Kantian footing, pointing out the necessary dualism involved, not just in knowledge but in the foundations of self-consciousness;

[T]he very essence of the spirit involves an original conflict in self-consciousness resulting in the creation of a real world outside the spirit through intuition (a creation *ex nihilo*). Consequently, no world exists unless there is a spirit to form knowledge of it and, conversely, no spirit exists without a world outside of it. (1994, p. 69)

It is important for Schelling that the same spirit which initially separates the world and intuition is responsible for joining it back together.¹⁰⁶ This is done via the imagination, for intuition. In Kant this synthesis is responsible for knowledge, but it has an additional function for Schelling. In the first pages of the *Treatise*, Schelling sets up an important difference for the sake of his method. While Kant is correct in asserting that our conditioned finite understanding is discursive and

103 Kant is well known for denying intellectual intuition any inherent reality for human cognition. Cf. *CPR*, Bxl, n.; B69-72; B158-9.

104 Cf. Vater & Wood, 2012, p. 19.

105 Hence distinguishing it from both spirit and the absolute itself.

106 It eventually becomes clear that for Schelling, spirit must not merely reunite with the world, but both must issue from identity. This is elaborated both in Schelling's philosophy of nature and identity-philosophy, with which I deal in sections 3.2 and 3.3.

dualistic, the higher principles by which this knowledge is governed are necessarily not so. Therefore, it is not so much that Kant is wrong, merely incomplete. The vital element of a potentially complete philosophy — intellectual intuition — is missing from Kant. Schelling points out the insufficiency of merely ‘empirical inquiries’, because of the frequency with which ‘their most interesting problems refer us back to higher principles’ (ibid.). These higher principles are precisely what lead Schelling to the question with which we began: ‘What, then, is ultimately the reality that inheres in our representations?’ It is worth quoting Schelling’s response in full here, as it outlines his complex attitude to the problem of grounding empirical experience. To begin answering the above question, two complementary but opposing conditions are necessary:

a primordial tendency toward the real [*zum Realen*], on the one hand, and a capacity to elevate oneself above reality [*das Wirkliche*], because without the former such a question will entangle us all too easily in idealistic speculations, and because without the latter the senses, rendered full by the individual object, retain no receptivity whatsoever for the real. (ibid.)

Schelling has here articulated the middle ground of Kantian critical philosophy. In doing so, the former lays out the essential presuppositions of his perspective. Human knowledge must be grounded upon a unity that precedes the synthesis of intuition and understanding, but this unity must also inhere in consciousness itself. In other words, human reality must be in one sense unified and identical, in another sense disparate and multifarious. How can these opposing views be reconciled? For Schelling, it cannot be on the basis of Kant’s solution, wherein things are divided into phenomena and noumena. This is because, as Schelling writes, ‘an indeterminate logical something after thought has discriminated between the object and its qualities, it is assumed that in reality, too, this object could indeed exist in and of itself [and] independent of its qualities’ (ibid., p. 70). The problem with this indeterminate logical something is that it escapes all contact with our thinking; it is conceived merely as an object lacking in any determinate qualities, which is equivalent to saying it is not anything at all. For Schelling, there is no logical remainder after

consciousness produces knowledge, because the product of that knowledge, and that from which it is produced are the same. This will be the argument with which I most contend.

So far I have scratched the surface of Schelling's reading of Kant. From here, things become much more complex. Schelling writes in a way that makes it unclear at what point he is following Kant's thinking, and at what point he begins to diverge from it. It is often uncertain when Schelling is using Kant's reasoning to make an assertion, and when he is merely following it for the sake of argument, in order to implicate Kant in some error. To help clarify Schelling's position, I will examine several key elements of the critical system in turn, as Schelling explains them, with the aim of elucidating Schelling's position in as simple a manner as possible.

3.1.4. Intuition and Imagination in the Treatise

Two potential paths emerge from what Schelling has said so far. One of them is deductive, the other constructive.¹⁰⁷ Schelling thinks that Kant has stopped at deduction, using empirical experience to deduce the categories of the understanding. In Schelling's view this is insufficient. Even if the categories are deduced from experience, which is a damaging accusation in itself, the categories themselves are not the most important thing. When we ask the question "what is the origin of my representations?", to answer, "the concepts of the understanding" does not address the larger issue, namely how these concepts came to be formed. Schelling is looking to articulate the actual and progressive history of self-consciousness from a higher principle, one which is itself known to philosophy. This requires some explanation. It is clear that the faculty of the understanding is not enough to furnish representations, as indeed Kant would agree. In addition, intuition and imagination are required. In a lengthy passage, Schelling explains the process of cognition from intuition to the understanding. I quote the passage in full with a subsequent elucidation:

¹⁰⁷ I use the term 'construction' here only to point out a difference in philosophical enterprises and methodologies. I deal with Schelling's theory of construction in 3.3.

To know an object outside of myself, Kant notes, intuition alone does not suffice. Indeed it does not, for by creating this [object] through a synthesis of the imagination, it cannot simultaneously be intuited by the subject as an object, that is, as something that possesses reality and an autonomous existence independent of the subject. Only after the creative faculty has completed [its activity], does the faculty of understanding enter into the picture, according to Kant — an ancillary that merely apprehends, *comprehends* [and] arrests what has been furnished by another faculty. Yet what can such a faculty accomplish? — Once both intuition and reality have vanished, [it can] only *imitate*, only *repeat*, that original act of intuition wherein the object first existed: for that the imagination is needed. The real, however, subsists only in intuition. Hence the imagination, in its current employment, cannot repeat that mode of action according to its material aspect either. For otherwise intuition would originate anew and we would once again be where we were before. Hence the imagination only repeats the *formal* aspect of that mode of action. This, we know, consists of time and space. Thus the imagination delineates merely the contour of an object hovering in time and space. This contour Kant calls the *schema*, claiming that it alone mediates the concept with the intuition. However, here as so often, he exhibited too generous a treatment of something that possesses no intrinsic reality. In *speculation* one may distinguish between scheme and concept, yet in the *nature* (of our cognition) they are never separate. A concept without sensibilization by the imagination is a word without sense, a sound without meaning. Only now that subject is able to oppose, relate, compare, and bind together the object and the contour, the real and the formal aspects, does there originate an intuition with consciousness and the firm, incontrovertible conviction in the latter that there exists something outside and independent of it. Thus, as Kant observes, the lucid point of an objective cognition is to be found only at the convergence of the intuition with the concept. (p. 73)¹⁰⁸

108 It is noted here, and again in section two of this chapter, that Schelling augments his use of the term speculation between 1797 and 1803. This is particularly evident in the second edition of the *Ideas for a*

Critics contemporary with him claimed that that Kant had totally separated the faculties of sensibility and understanding. In the above quotation, Schelling challenges this claim and reinforces what he believes Kant's view to be; that for any objective cognition, these two faculties, sensibility and understanding, are absolutely united. This lends subtle credence to Schelling's (Kantian) view that while philosophy can, for the sake of analysis, separate out elements of cognition, in *reality* — which is to say, in *knowledge* — there is no such separation. The main difference between Kant and Schelling's methods of philosophy, then, is that the former merely posits the *possibility* of sensibility and understanding deriving from a common root, and the latter seeks to prove the *reality* of this common root. To flesh out this assertion, I will examine each point of the above quoted passage in turn. Schelling begins in line with Kant, agreeing that intuition by itself cannot furnish knowledge of an object. He goes further in saying that, within intuition, there is not yet any distinction between the intuition itself, and that *of which it is an intuition*. In short, there is no separation between inner and outer in intuition. Instead, there is an opposition between positive and negative. Schelling utilises the terms *apeiron* and *peras* in order to characterise space and time in a particular way.¹⁰⁹ For Schelling space represents the originally limitless and undetermined; time represents determination and limitation. According to this analogy, space is originally positive, time originally negative.¹¹⁰ The two are complementary: space obtains in an unlimited manner, and is thereby limited by time. Kant has already shown in the *CPR* that space and time are necessary

Philosophy of Nature released in 1803, which revises the original 1797 use of 'speculation' for 'reflection'. In light of this revision that Schelling makes, it may be more instructive to render the sentence from the above quotation thus: 'In reflection one may distinguish between scheme and concept, yet in the nature (of our cognition) they are never separate'.

109 From the Greek, translating as 'the unlimited' and 'the limit', respectively.

110 I say more about Schelling's attitudes to space and time in 3.2, which explores Schelling's more cohesive account offered in the *Introduction to the Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature* (1799). It is mentioned here merely that Schelling's conception of spirit in the context of the *Treatise* is meant to elaborate a corresponding process between consciousness positing itself and nature positing itself (see below).

conditions for intuition. It therefore follows that intuition is generally possible only through a minimum of two activities, which I here call spatial and temporal determination. The same holds true for the imagination, which also holds these opposites together. Hence the understanding only repeats the original oppositions carried out by intuition and imagination. The understanding's legislative authority, what Kant calls the *schema*, in fact does not have as much authority in Schelling's view. This is because, by the time of the *schema*, namely, that which synthesises the object with its representation, the object has already been synthesised. This might not seem so different from Kant himself. But once Schelling leaves Kant's terminology and begins to introduce his own, we can see where Schelling distinguishes himself from Kant.

3.1.5. The Matter of Geist

In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* Kant calls the spirit 'the animating principle of the mind' (5:313). Schelling would certainly agree with this, but as with many matters in the *Treatise*, he wants to take this one step further. We start to get a sense of this when Schelling writes 'I am firmly convinced that no one who is not entirely deprived of his good senses [*Vernunft*] has ever claimed anything about speculative matters for which we could not point to some foundation in human nature itself' (1994, p 76). Here is the crux of the matter of spirit, and what first distinguishes Schelling from Fichte. Where Fichte reduced the ground of knowledge to the activity of the I opposed to the not-I, Schelling saw no such absolute distinction. For Schelling, the grounding principle of consciousness must have a corresponding principle in nature.¹¹¹ In the absolute itself, the two principles are identical.¹¹²

111 This is Schelling's speculative principle that nature cannot be conceived merely according to its products, but must also be construed as an original productivity. Again I explore this in 3.2.

112 This is a pre-emptive statement on my part. It still remains at this point for Schelling to articulate the way in which principles are united in the absolute, which is done in the *Presentations* and *Further Presentations* essays covered in 3.3.

Once again we are exposed to Schelling's own dualistic view, which could be characterised as perspectively dualistic. According to one perspective, which Kant would call transcendental idealism, the form of our knowledge obtains from within, and becomes knowledge only when it is supplied with some content, or matter, which is supplied from without. This is a familiar scenario. Kant secured the *a priori* forms of intuition as space and time. Coupled with the concepts of the understanding, all that remained was for these to be filled out with some material content. In Schelling's view – one could argue in Kant's as well – this separation between form and matter is merely 'hypothetical', and in fact the two are 'most intimately united in our knowledge (ibid., p. 76). Schelling goes so far as to say that 'the faith in an external world lies grounded in the inability of the common understanding to discriminate between object and representation during the [act of] representation' (ibid.). This is what distinguishes the second perspective, which sees the external world, or nature, and internal consciousness held in opposition merely for the sake of philosophical reflection, while in actual fact, the two are united.¹¹³ This is the point at which Schelling sees Kant's philosophy falling short. Kant explained the form of our conceptual faculty, without accounting for its origins. This will not do, because, as Schelling says, 'even if we understand the origin of a world *external to ourselves*, we still do not understand how the representations of this world could have entered *into* our consciousness'. Kant and Fichte both opted to turn inward, to the interior workings of consciousness itself to locate an answer. But this is only half the story for Schelling. Hence the problem of the philosopher is 'to explain the absolute correspondence of the object and the representation, of being and cognition' (ibid., p 77).

So far, like Kant, Schelling has merely presupposed the identity of object and representation. But they have not been substantively united. Here is where the spirit (*Geist*) enters the picture. Schelling

113 It is this real union between consciousness and nature that becomes stronger as Schelling's philosophy progresses. In his *System of Philosophy in General* from 1804 Schelling goes so far as to make the following his central proposition: 'the knower and that which is known are the same', (1994, p. 141).

introduces the concept of spirit in the following way: ‘The identity of representation and object, then, exists, only in the intuition-of-self [*Selbstanschauung*] of the spirit. Hence...it ought to be possible to *prove* that the spirit, by having an intuition of *whatever* object, merely intuits itself’ (ibid., p. 78). It is immediately clear that when Schelling refers to spirit, he does not just mean an animating principle of the mind. Spirit for Schelling animates all things, both within consciousness and in nature. With this all-encompassing view of spirit, Schelling believes he has secured the identity of several vital oppositions, including finitude and infinity, form and essence, mind and nature. However, the case of spirit is not yet proved, and in order to demonstrate its validity Schelling returns to some fairly Kantian sentiments. In what follows, I analyse Schelling’s account of spirit, via his conception of the primordial representation. Schelling attempts to ground self-consciousness identity within a broader, more general identity which he names the absolute. I argue that Schelling encounters the problem over how to *prove* his assertions and thereby overcome Kant’s dualisms. Schelling’s solution, construction, will be the subject of 3.3.

3.1.6. *Geist* as Primordial Representation

Central to Schelling’s argument in the *Treatise* is that the same productive capacities which reside in our cognitive faculties, also reside in nature. Once again, Schelling begins in a fairly Kantian manner, warning against hasty speculation on the matter of the identity of object and representation;

The question...arises how it should be possible for something external and strictly heterogeneous from the soul to cohere with our interiority in so immediate a manner, and how it could have merged so inextricably with our ‘I’ that neither one could be separated from the other without simultaneously uprooting what is common to both: the consciousness of ourselves. Nothing is more crucial than to think this question through in a rigorous manner and to ensure that this rigor not be compromised by our desire to arrive at some answer (1994, p. 85).

Key to the question of consciousness is the recognition that what the philosopher attempts to articulate in the cohesion of soul and world is something which ‘effectively precedes all concepts’

(ibid.). Kant's mistake, in Schelling's view, is that he attempted to explain conceptually what is in fact not conceptual at all. This is why it was left with the 'logical remainder' of the noumenal that I mentioned earlier. Schelling once again attempts to bring Kant's argument to its conclusions. He accepts Kant's version of space and time as the ground of possibility for intuitions. However, Schelling makes an additional remark. Due to the reality of knowledge relying on its being determinate, 'the entire belief in a reality outside ourselves ultimately adheres to the [notion of] an *original sensation* as its principle and most fundamental cause' (ibid., p. 87). This is worth unpacking. Space and time determine the forms in which our knowledge occurs. The intuition contained therein is subsequently conceptualised, bringing about a determined object for cognition. However, the object, or rather, the *matter* of the object, exists prior to our cognition of it, and it would not make sense to say that it existed indeterminately; it is merely indeterminate for us. Kant calls this element of cognition the sensible manifold. It takes *our* cognitive activity to form this manifold into a determinate object. It follows that such an activity – the original sensation – is responsible for bringing about the object in the first place. Such an activity must be infinite and unconditioned, for otherwise it would be conditioned by a further activity, and so on *ad infinitum*.¹¹⁴

Such an assertion relies on Schelling's insistence that spirit is at the ground of all reality, and that consequently, consciousness is not something specific to human beings, but arises out of the same ground as does nature and all its products. This spirit is originally unbounded, infinite, and unformed. The spirit is originally *immaterial*. This same spirit *materialises* as it gives rise to when giving rise to a reality that is finite, bounded, and formed. As such, spirit, or the immaterial, becomes opposed to the material. It follows that 'only in the act of production does the spirit become aware of its *finitude*' (ibid., p. 88). This is a key point for Schelling's wider philosophy. All matter is the result of the equilibrium between two forces, one unlimited, the other limited. Both

114 Given this position, Schelling asserts that 'all acts of the spirit thus aim at presenting the infinite within the finite. The goal of all these acts is self-consciousness, and their history is none other than the history of self-consciousness' (1994, p. 87).

forces are united in the absolute, and both are united in intellectual intuition. However, nothing can happen, nothing produced until these forces are reconciled into a determinate form. Upon this, our entire existence depends; we are forever trying to replicate, and thereby seek out the eternal ground of this producing. As such, ‘there exists within us a *necessary* striving to sustain the continuity of the representations, that is, an *eternal producing*’ (ibid. p. 90).

We as finite human beings never achieve our goal of finding the ground of our representations. As a consequence, our striving is eternal. Philosophy for Schelling is strictly within the domain of the eternal. But it must nonetheless account for how the eternal gives over into thing. In other words, production must have its origin, whereby it moves from formless eternity into determinate formations. Schelling names this the primordial representation. It is with this term that Schelling hopes to escape Kant’s problem of explaining the non-conceptual by way of the conceptual. It is also this primordial act which first separates the world of sensibility from the world of ideas. Schelling credits Kant with the thought that ideas obtain a status wherein they are neither concept, nor intuition, yet ground the possibility of both. Whereas for Kant these ideas, limited to the domain of reason, remained merely regulative, for Schelling, ideas are actual manifestations of the contradictory appearance of the absolute for cognition. Indeed, as will be shown in this chapter, the absolute in Schelling’s view is an idea which *realises itself* — makes itself real. The vehicle with which Schelling aims to account for this self-realising absolute is intellectual intuition. Intellectual intuition grounds self-consciousness, for in it consciousness has no object other than itself. Self-consciousness must issue from intellectual intuition, in which consciousness and that of which is consciousness are held in a pre-existing unity.¹¹⁵ At this point in Schelling’s thought, intellectual intuition is construed as that by which the absolute is brought to consciousness. It is the subjective side of the absolute itself.

¹¹⁵ Similar to Kant’s self-affection, except that for Kant self-affection is limited to phenomena, and cannot give us insight into the things in themselves. Cf. CPR, B67.

To move from the subjective to the objective, Schelling moves from the primordial representation to the primordial construction. Schelling borrows the term construction from mathematics, as does Kant.¹¹⁶ Once again, however, Kant has missed something, according to Schelling. By using construction as a way to distinguish philosophy from mathematics, Kant has left the synthesis of cognition resting on a *primordial dualism* (ibid. p 107). Schelling argues that the ‘construction from opposites’ that Kant conducts via the categories of the understanding presupposes this dualism in the human spirit which has been ‘elaborated in [Kant’s] practical philosophy although merely presuppos[ed]...in his theoretical philosophy’ (ibid.). In positing this primordial dualism in Kant’s metaphysics, Schelling believes that he has brought Kant to an ultimate ‘duplicity of principles’ which cannot be moved beyond without extending construction to philosophy as well. Where intellectual intuition obtains the reality of self-consciousness, the primordial construction is what *brings about* this self-consciousness. The primordial construction, in effect, constructs the self. So far, we have reached the level of the self constructing itself. But Schelling has still not accounted for how it is that the absolute itself splits from itself so that human consciousness can emerge from it. This chapter is headed toward Schelling’s theory of construction. Before it can arrive there, however, the other side of Schelling’s philosophy – the nature-philosophy – must be elaborated. I therefore draw some conclusions from the preceding in preparation for part two.

Conclusion

According to Schelling’s *Treatise*, Kant’s critical philosophy is incomplete. However, the *Treatise* does not fully address how it might be possible to complete it. In Kant’s *CPR*, principles such as the unconditioned are not denied, but neither are they affirmed. Kant’s basic reason for this is that he believes in the finitude of human beings relative to their ground of possibility in general. To put it bluntly, human beings are not capable of knowing what they are in themselves, but only what they are as they *appear* to consciousness.

116 Cf. CPR Bxi, B268, B300, A708/B736, A717/ B745, A722/B750, A734/B762.

Schelling asserts in the *Treatise* that the principle of the unconditioned must not only be affirmed, but *proven*. For this proof, intellectual intuition is necessary, the very thing which Kant continually denies for human cognition. One can debate the relative status of intellectual intuition in Kant and Schelling, and say, for example, that Schelling's conception of intellectual intuition simply does not refer to the same thing as does Kant's.¹¹⁷ However, at this point such a statement would be premature. It remains to be fully seen how Schelling's method can account for intellectual intuition with the larger context of his identity-philosophy. This is a method in germination, though never explicit in the *Treatise*. It will take Schelling's philosophy of nature, and finally, his direct explication of identity-philosophy in the *Presentations Further Presentations* essays to complete this larger picture. Firstly, then, I move to the philosophy of nature, which will attempt to show how the unconditioned is not merely a thought demanded by reason, but is in fact the principle of productivity in nature itself.

117 Gram has written an article on precisely this issue, (1981, pp. 287-304).

3.2. From Unconditioned Nature to Absolute Identity: Schelling's Speculative Physics

Abstract

That Kant could call his metaphysical critique of reason complete, as he does both the prefaces to the *CPR*, is due to the limits he places upon philosophy.¹¹⁸ This results in a limitation of Kant's idea of nature. Nature in Kant is that which appears under certain *a priori* laws, and the human subject, who prescribes these laws to sensible data, determines knowledge of nature. As such, nature is limited in Kant's philosophy to that which can be represented as appearances. Even Kant's positive metaphysics of nature in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (1786), is conditioned by this limitation. The unconditioned, and the question over whether the unconditioned is in any sense a part of nature, remain in need of answer. Schelling's nature-philosophy attempts such an answer, by insisting that the unconditioned is not just a *part* of nature, but the *ground* of nature. Such an answer requires that nature be understood, not as a product, but as an essential *productivity*. The difference between nature's products and nature's productivity, as well as their associated positions of reflection and speculation, will be elaborated here. Schelling's conception of speculative physics, which he introduces in 1799, provides the ground for his identity-philosophy, with which 3.2 concludes, and 3.3 begins. Despite Schelling's evident attacks on Kant's account of nature, I will show how both still share some common aims, and assumptions, albeit in different iterations.

118 *CPR* Axiii/Bxxiv.

3.2.1. From a Reflective to a Speculative Form of Philosophy

Schelling persistently expresses dissatisfaction with the dualistic nature of Kant's philosophy. In large part, this has to do with Schelling's shift in understanding regarding the concepts of reflection and speculation. This shift occurs in quite a subtle way in the Schelling's nature-philosophy, which I discuss below. In terms of nature-philosophy itself, Schelling's aim, through what he views as the proper speculative method, is to move beyond the idea of nature as product to the idea of nature as productivity. In Schelling's view, Kant's speculative metaphysics is in fact only reflective, by which Schelling means, it relies upon an opposition between subject and object. To make this move, Schelling revises the meanings of 'reflection' and 'speculation', adapting them for his own purposes. As it is clear that Schelling adapts these terms from Kant's use of them, I will begin by briefly summarising what Kant means by them in order to illuminate the comparison.

In the *CPR*, Kant defines reflection as 'that state of mind in which we first set ourselves to discover the subjective conditions under which we are able to arrive at concepts' (B316). For Kant, reflection does not concern itself with objects, but rather with 'the relation of given representations to our different sources of knowledge' (ibid.). Kant argues that there are two modes of reflection for the subject: logical and transcendental. Logical reflection is simply an act comparison between representations, without considering whether these representations belong to sensibility or to the understanding. Transcendental reflection, on the other hand, contains 'the ground of the possibility of the objective comparison of representations with each other' (B319). The latter form of reflection is the one with which Kant is most concerned, as it is this transcendental reflection that *determines a priori* the "transcendental location" of concepts, establishing whether a concept belongs either to

sensibility or the understanding.¹¹⁹ In short, transcendental reflection according to Kant is the subjective determination of concepts, according to which cognitive faculty they belong.¹²⁰

By speculation, Kant means the theoretical knowledge that can be obtained through reason about the structure and unity of experience.¹²¹ In the *CPR*, The speculative employment of reason is concerned with securing the distinct functions of each of the faculties of cognition, and thereby placing firm limits upon what is knowable *a priori*. Kantian speculation deals with what is theoretically knowable *a priori*. Kantian reflection assigns what is knowable *a priori* to the appropriate cognitive faculties.

For Schelling, Kant's use of both reflection and speculation contain what can be seen as a hidden subjectivist assumption, namely that they rest upon the distinction between subject and object, or between internal consciousness and external nature.¹²² By striving for a systematic unity in the structure of cognition only, Schelling believes that Kant has introduced an insuperable separation between the human subject and the world. This is unsatisfactory for Schelling, because he believes that philosophy ought to be grounded upon a unified foundational principle, one that shows how consciousness and nature emerge from identity. According to Schelling's nature-philosophy, Kant's transcendental idealist view of nature posits a scenario in which, ultimately, the totality of nature

119 The passages I have quoted in this paragraph follow Kant in referring at some points to 'representations', at others to 'concepts'. Without wanting to simplify Kant, one could say that concepts are a type of representation.

120 For clarity, I stick to Kant's definition of reflection in the *CPR*. Although Kant accords a greater role to reflection in the third *Critique*, extending it to aesthetic and teleological judgments, the basic (formal) character of reflection remains the same.

121 Cf. *CPR* Bxx-xxi; B383; A471/B499.

122 Exactly how hidden this assumption is in Kant can of course be debated, but suffice to say here that Schelling hones in on the fact that Kant presupposes a subject that cannot be properly grounded, either in absolute self-consciousness or absolute nature (here meaning nature as productivity)

collapses into the totality of thought, because the totality of nature is held merely as an idea; an idea not itself produced by nature.

So, how does Schelling understand the terms ‘reflection’ and ‘speculation’? Matters become somewhat complicated here. The reason for this is found in Schelling’s alterations to the *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* between the first edition of 1797 and the second edition of 1803. In the first edition, Schelling conducts a dialectical explanation of the polarity of nature: the dynamic relation between opposed forces. With this explanation, Schelling ultimately construes the dynamism of nature transcendently. In other words, like Kant, the Schelling of the first edition of the *Ideas* construes nature according to the *possibility of experience* of nature.¹²³ One implication of this, is that the concept of nature is now split into two: nature itself on the one hand, and experience of nature on the other. In the first edition of the *Ideas*, Schelling uses the term ‘speculation’ to refer to this separation. In the second edition, this has been moderated to ‘reflection’. The following passage from the introduction to the *Ideas* will demonstrate this difference:

How a world outside us, how a Nature and with it experience, is possible — these are questions for which we have *philosophy* to thank; or rather, *with* these questions philosophy came to be...As soon as man sets himself in opposition to the external world...the first step to philosophy has been taken. With that separation, reflection first begins; he separates the object from the intuition, the concept from the image, finally (in that he becomes his own *object*) himself from himself. (1988, p. 10)

Now, in this passage from the second edition, it is *reflection* that issues from the separation between human subject and nature, but in the first edition this was rendered ‘speculation’. This is an important distinction, because it shows how Schelling came to reassess the status of both reflection and speculation in the second edition from 1803, in light of his identity-philosophy. According to this second edition rendering, Kant’s philosophy, in spite of dealing with a ‘speculative

123 Cf. Stern’s introduction to the *Ideas* (1988, p. xvi).

employment of reason', ultimately remains stuck in the standpoint of reflection, namely, on the assumption of the insuperable division between mind and nature. So, in what does reflection consist for Schelling? According to the second edition of the *Ideas*, it consists in 'dissection', not just of the 'phenomenal world', but also the 'intellectual'. Reflection makes the 'separation between man and the world permanent, because it treats the latter as a thing in itself, which neither intuition nor imagination, neither understanding nor reason, can reach' (ibid., p. 11). Reflection for Schelling is, then, something of a necessary misstep (the dissection of the unity of man and nature), which has to be corrected through speculation (the reunifying of man and nature into identity).¹²⁴ Man must alienate himself from nature in order to become properly acquainted with it.

So far, I have only covered the somewhat ambiguous attitude Schelling displays toward 'reflection' and 'speculation', in the change between the first and second edition of the *Ideas*. I have shown simply that Schelling alters his view between 1797 and 1803 in light of his identity-philosophy. The identity-philosophy itself is of course still to be elucidated. Stern offers a simple explanation of the two editions in his introduction to the *Ideas*; 'whereas in the first edition of the *Ideas* Schelling's deduction of the polarity of nature has been purely dialectical — as the transition of one moment

124 The following passage from the *Ideas* can help to clarify this relation between 'reflection' and 'speculation' in Schelling: '[T]he human mind was early led to the idea of a *self*-organizing matter, and because organization is conceivable only in relation to a mind, to an original union of mind and matter in these things. It saw itself composed to seek the reason for these things, on the one hand, in Nature herself, and on the other, in a principle exalted above Nature; and hence it very soon fell into thinking of mind and Nature as one. Here for the first time there emerged from its sacred obscurity that ideal being in which the mind supposes concept and deed, design and execution, to be one. Here first a premonition came over and of his own nature, in which intuition and concept, form and object, ideal and real, are originally one and the same. Hence the peculiar aura which surrounds this problem, an aura which the philosophy of mere reflection, which sets out only to *separate*, can never develop, whereas the pure intuition, or rather, the creative imagination, long since discovered the symbolic language, which one has only to construe in order to discover that Nature speaks to us the more intelligibly the less with think of her in a merely reflective way' (1988, p. 35).

into its opposite or other — in the second edition this polarity is conceived as the unfolding into difference of an original unity’ (p. xxi). According to this revised view, duality arises from ‘within the absolute itself’ (ibid.). This matter can be clarified by consulting the supplement to the introduction that Schelling wrote for the second edition.¹²⁵ Here, Schelling discusses his nature-philosophy wholly from the standpoint of identity. So, whereas Schelling had previously stated that philosophy begins with the separation of the human subject from the natural world, in the supplement Schelling claims that ‘the first step to philosophy and the condition without which it cannot even be entered, is the insight that the absolute-ideal is also the absolute-real, and that without this there is only sensible and conditioned, but no absolute and unconditioned reality’ (ibid., p. 44).¹²⁶

In this section I have outlined Kant’s use of ‘reflection’ and ‘speculation’, and have begun elucidating how Schelling adopts and modifies these terms. What exactly Schelling means by speculation still remains to be seen however, because, as is clear from the above, Schelling’s thought undergoes some important changes during the years between the first and second editions of the *Ideas*. To grapple with Schelling’s speculative philosophy as he begins to formulate it, I turn now to another of Schelling’s works of nature-philosophy, the *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*, which Schelling published in 1799. By examining this text, I aim to avoid some of the ambiguities presented in the two editions of the *Ideas*, and elucidate a nature-philosophy conducted under a specific set of terms which help to anticipate Schelling’s identity-philosophy, of which nature is only one component.

125 The full title of this supplement is ‘Exposition of the General Idea of Philosophy as such, and of the Philosophy of Nature in Particular, as a Necessary and Integral Part of it’, and can be found in the 1988 translation of the *Ideas*, pp. 43-55. The full title gives some idea of Schelling’s shift in focus between 1797 and 1803.

126 It is important not to conflate ‘ideal’ and ‘real’ with ‘mind’ and ‘nature’, because, as will become increasingly clear in Schelling’s work after 1800, both ‘mind’ and ‘nature’ are combinations of the ideal and the real.

3.2.2. Schelling's Speculative Physics

It has become clear that Schelling wishes to approach nature, not merely as a world of experienced phenomena, but as a self-actualising reality. In the *First Outline*, and the separately issued *Introduction to the Outline*, Schelling introduces his method of speculative physics, which sets out to grapple with the productive capacity of nature.¹²⁷ With this method, Schelling aimed to reconcile appearing nature – that which appears to knowledge as distinct and established natural products – from unconditioned nature, that is, nature as productive of the whole of itself, including our knowledge of it. At issue in Schelling's method of speculative physics is the way in which the ideal and the real are related. In the *Introduction*, Schelling claims that human intelligence perceives 'the most complete fusion of the ideal and the real' in products of nature (2004, p. 193). The human intelligence perceives the ideal because nature displays a level of self-actualising regularity that Schelling denies would be possible from mere material mechanism. It perceives the real because this regularity does *really* manifest in natural objects. Schelling calls this 'crystallization' (p. 194). Schelling's point here is that we everywhere observe natural phenomena which display a level of organisation and complexity that seems 'akin to the conscious', for example the migration patterns of animal species. Schelling does not want to claim however, that such regularities are merely prescribed by the human intellect. Nature is not to be taken as a reflection of self-consciousness, nor simply as 'the medium [in which] self-consciousness can take place' (ibid.). To take nature in this way is to account for it with the arguments of transcendental philosophy, wherein nature is explained for the sake of thought; the real is explained via the ideal. Schelling's nature-philosophy,

127 The full title is *Introduction to the Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature, or, On the Concept of Speculative Physics and the Internal Organization of a System of this Science*. This introduction was originally released separately from the *First Outline*, although both in 1799. The translation of the *Introduction* is found in Peterson's translation of the *First Outline* (2004, pp. 193-232).

as a speculative physics, argues that nature should be thought as ‘independent and real’ and as such that ‘the ideal must arise out of the real and admit of explanation from it’ (ibid.).

From the above one begins to get a sense of the place nature-philosophy takes up in Schelling’s more general identity-philosophy – though he is yet to name the latter in these terms. Here, in the *Introduction*, Schelling simply says that if transcendental philosophy explains the real by the ideal, and nature-philosophy the ideal by the real, then ‘then the two sciences are therefore but one science, differentiated only in the opposite orientation of their tasks. Moreover, as the two directions are not only equally possible, but equally necessary, the same necessity attaches to both in the system of knowledge’ (ibid.).

It is true that Kant’s transcendental idealism can succeed in articulating the unity of the mind via speculative reason, but as Kant himself says, ‘all possible speculative knowledge of reason is limited to mere objects of experience’ (*CPR*, Bxxvi). For Schelling this accounts only for the formal structure of knowledge, or the ideal, but its necessary counterpart, the real, is left in a peculiar position. On the one hand, the real is that which can be structured into objects of knowledge by the cognitive faculties. The real is *appearance*. But the real is also that which cannot be so structured, namely things-in-themselves or the *unconditioned*. Schelling’s next task is therefore to show in what way the unconditioned can be predicated of nature.

3.2.3. The Unconditioned in Nature

As early as 1795, Schelling recognises the need to solve the demand of reason for the unconditioned. In his essay *Of the I as a Principle of Philosophy*, Schelling claims that ‘theoretical reason *necessarily* seeks what is not conditioned; having formed the *idea* of the unconditioned, and, as *theoretical* reason, being unable to realize the unconditioned, it therefore demands the *act*

through which it ought to be realized' (1980, p. 167, original emphasis).¹²⁸ In *Of the I*, this act is taken to be the unconditioned activity of the ego, or absolute I. While Schelling later revises his view of this unconditioned activity, what is retained in the nature-philosophy is the collapse of theoretical into practical reason.¹²⁹

As I showed in chapter one, the unconditioned for Kant issues from a demand of reason. Reason demands totality, and the unconditioned emerges as an *idea* of reason which fulfils this demand. As an idea, however, the unconditioned has no real substantive role to play in experience, and hence no role in knowledge. Kant insists that it is to be construed as 'real per se', but 'not known by us' (*CPR* B xx). The unconditioned can, nevertheless, be an object of striving, but only for practical, never for theoretical reason. For Kant, then, positing the reality of the unconditioned transcends the limits of our cognitive powers; since the unconditioned cannot be an object of experience, it can at most be a regulative idea. For Schelling too, the unconditioned does not appear in experience. However, this does not mean that nothing can be known about it.

Schelling begins the *First Outline* with a section entitled 'The Unconditioned in Nature'. Here Schelling defines the unconditioned in the following way:

128 Marti's translation of this passage renders it a little unclear, but it can be clarified with reference to a passage shortly before, in which Schelling directly addresses the 'critique of the cognitive faculty' – a thinly veiled reference to Kant. Here Schelling remarks that such a critique must necessarily seek both the formal and material principles of synthesis. Rather than deducing both from a common principle, Schelling claims that Kant has merely 'explain[ed] the progress of one synthesis by that of the other' (1980, p. 166). Kant's critique of cognition, according to Schelling, 'must admit that theoretical reason necessarily seeks what is not conditioned, and that the very striving which produces a synthesis demands an absolute synthesis as goal of all philosophy. And, for this very reason, the critique must destroy what it only just erected' (ibid.). It can be debated how fair Schelling's characterization of Kant is here, especially considering Kant's recognition of the problematic nature of the unconditioned in the *CPR*. Cf. above 1.1.5.

129 Cf. Peterson, 2004, pp. xiii-xviii.

The unconditioned cannot be sought in any individual “thing” nor in anything of which one can say that it “is”. For what “is” only partakes of being, and is only an individual form or kind of being. Conversely, one can never say of the unconditioned that it “is”. For it is being itself, and as such, it does not exhibit itself entirely in any finite product, and every individual is, as it were, a particular expression of it. (2004, p. 13)

Schelling’s aim here to show how the principle of the unconditioned as it pertains to transcendental philosophy, must also pertain to natural science. In the case of nature-philosophy, the unconditioned becomes the ground of productive activity in nature analogously to how it grounds human knowledge. However, in both cases, Schelling distinguishes his idea of the unconditioned from Kant’s by claiming that it is not merely a regulative idea guiding experience, but rather an activity. The unconditioned in nature ‘cannot be sought in any individual object; rather a *principle* of being, that itself “is” not, manifests in each natural object’ (ibid.). This requires some elucidation. In line with the distinction between reflection and speculation discussed above, Schelling is here making the distinction between that which appears, and the principle which *makes possible* that which appears. This is, in other words, the distinction between product and productivity. Schelling does not mask the fact that he carries over this distinction from transcendental philosophy. In both cases – the transcendental and the natural – everything that exists is ‘a construction of spirit’.¹³⁰ So, if being itself is construed, not as a particular and therefore conditioned being, but rather as ‘the constructing itself’, then nature produces itself in the same way as the self produces itself, namely, through an unconditioned activity.

This is where a shift of perspective becomes necessary. If nature were both an unconditioned productivity, and the sum of all that it produces, then it would be tempting to view the former as being exhausted by the latter. In this case, nature is simply everything that is, or the ‘sum total of existence’ (ibid., p. 14). However, this view of nature treats it as an object; something already determined. Whether nature is so determined by itself or by the human subject is irrelevant. The

¹³⁰ I discuss Schelling’s concept of spirit in 3.1.5 and 3.1.6.

point is that approaching nature in this way neglects the productive power inherent in nature, which is inexhaustible; it is never used up in any of its products. Nature considered as object is nature considered as conditioned. If being itself is construed as absolute activity, then an individual being (of nature) must be understood as a determinate form or 'limitation' of that originary activity. There is therefore no 'originary substratum' of being that might be described by the notion of substance, because this substance itself arises out of an activity which is never wholly exhausted in any product or sum of products (ibid.).

According to the view prescribed by speculative physics, nature must be considered as the identity of productivity and product. To elaborate on this relationship, Schelling re-introduces the relation of subject and object, not as an opposition, but as two ways of conceiving the same thing. Nature considered as product, is nature as object. Nature considered as productivity, is nature as subject. It is the latter of these with which Schelling is concerned. Again, this is not to say that nature is not objective, or made in some sense of objects. It is simply to say that understand nature *merely* as objective is to miss the vital idea that nature constitutes *itself* as object. The question of speculative physics is not how we know natural phenomena, but how we know nature as *productive* of these phenomena. There is no division in Schelling's nature-philosophy between appearances and things-in-themselves; there is only a division between productivity and product. This is because Schelling is not concerned with experience of nature, which would then require a distinction between what one can and cannot experience. Rather Schelling's nature-philosophy, considered as speculative physics, attempts to construct an understanding of nature as pure productivity, and appearances of nature as products which simultaneously always give over into that original productivity. If the unconditioned must remain a regulative idea in Kant's philosophy, then only its formal side may be determinable. The unconditioned is an idea which allows the subject to hold their knowledge as a unity. However, the reality of this unconditioned remains undetermined, and indeed indeterminable for Kant, hence his doctrine of things-in-themselves. It is not so much that Schelling seeks to

overturn Kant's way of thinking completely in this regard. Rather Schelling wishes to extend it. In his introduction to the *First Outline*, Peterson explains this:

If theoretical reason necessarily seeks the unconditioned (as Kant also held), then it must also admit that the endeavour which produces a synthesis in each act of knowing, a reunion of subject and object, ultimately demands the affirmation of such a unity as principle. That is, this endeavour is the symptom of a desire to achieve a state in which synthesis is no longer necessary. (2004, p. xvi)

In Kant's view, such a unity could only be held as a regulative idea of reason, a unity toward which the understanding strives. For Schelling, Kant's error in this regard was to attempt to ascend from intuition, to understanding, to reason, and hence from conditioned experience to the unconditioned idea. Schelling instead asks how the opposite is possible, namely how a finite empirical exhibition of nature is possible *from out of* its unconditioned activity. In other words, how is the infinite exhibited in the finite? Now, since the truly infinite cannot be empirically exhibited, it can only manifest through 'a finitude which is never complete', which Schelling calls the 'empirically infinite' (ibid., p. 15). However, such an empirical infinity can only be exhibited successively, i.e. in a continuous series. For a continuous empirical series to be capable of presentation, it must already be occurring in time and space. But the originally infinite, i.e. the unconditioned activity of nature, is, in Schelling's view, the activity out of which time and space are themselves originally constituted. The empirically infinite cannot reach the truly infinite since the former relies upon a structure that is established by the latter. So, Schelling concludes that 'the genuine concept of an empirical infinite is the concept of an activity that is infinitely inhibited' (ibid., p.16).

If an activity is infinitely inhibited, how can it still be thought of as active? Schelling's answer to this relies on his claims that 'nature is its own legislator', and consequently that what happens in nature must be explained 'from the active and motive principles which lie in it'; in other words, nature is sufficient for its own explanation. So, how can an infinite activity be infinitely inhibited,

and yet still active? Schelling here calls on Kant's conception of repulsive and attractive forces. Schelling characterises the repulsive as that which is 'originally infinite' and streaming out in all directions from one central point' (p. 17). Such a force would, on its own, not occupy space, since, for something to occupy space requires that it be limited in some way, i.e. limited to a position in space. Hence Schelling calls the attractive force 'an energetic activity opposing (retarding)' the expansive force of repulsion, and giving it a 'finite velocity' (ibid.). The problem that then emerges is that if these forces coincide in the same point, then 'their effects toward one another will reciprocally be cancelled' (ibid.) and the product of this coinciding will be = to 0. Schelling's solution to this is the claim that 'no product in nature can be the product in which those opposed activities absolutely coincide' (ibid.). In other words, nature is never at rest. There is never any permanence in nature, only an apparent permanence in nature viewed as objects. The activity of nature as subject 'continues irresistibly, and...continually labours in opposition to all permanence' (ibid.).

Nature for Schelling acts in the dynamic flux between productivity and product, the latter of which is only a temporary instantiations of the former. Kant's description of repulsive and attractive force explains the mechanism by which this flux is possible, but not why it is that it is precisely a *flux*, i.e. why these forces never resolve themselves. One can summarise by saying that Kant seeks to explain the permanent by way of alteration, in such a way that the former grounds the latter. Schelling seeks to explain the alterable by way of the permanent, insofar as the former is the unconditioned productive force of the latter, which is conditioned i.e. objective.

According to Schelling, to treat nature reflectively means to oppose nature as object to oneself as subject. Instead, Schelling treats nature as a subject which is its own object — the self-legislation of nature mentioned above. Hence, Schelling writes in the *Ideas* that 'what we want is not that Nature should coincide with the laws of our mind *by chance* (as if through some *third* intermediary), but that *she herself*, necessarily and originally, should not only *express*, but *even realize*, the laws of our

mind, and that she is, and is called, Nature only insofar as she does so' (ibid. pp. 41-2). Compare this passage with the following from Kant's *CPR*:

The highest formal unity, which rests solely on concepts of reason, is the *purposive* unity of things. The *speculative* interest of reason makes it necessary to regard all order in the world as if it had originated in the purpose of a supreme reason. (A687/B715)

The discovered absence of any such 'teleological connection' in a product of nature for Kant, does not affect 'the teleological law itself', because all that has been discovered is that a particular natural phenomenon can be accounted for by mechanical explanation. If, therefore the anatomist is 'convicted of error when he assigns to some member of an animal body an end which it can be clearly shown not to subserve' it still remains 'quite impossible to *prove* in any given case that an arrangement of nature, be it what it may, subserves no end whatsoever' (A688/B716). Quite simply, the fact that ideas such as purposiveness have only this regulative use in Kantian reason, is insufficient for Schelling. This is to relegate purposiveness to the ideal, and Schelling wishes to show how it is also real.

3.2.4. From Unconditioned Nature to Absolute Identity

As I have mentioned, Schelling comes to see his nature-philosophy as only one aspect of his broader identity-philosophy. However, he does so retrospectively. In the above, I have shown how Schelling seeks to demonstrate the unconditioned activity of nature, and so extend nature itself beyond Kant's conception, which Schelling took to be overly mechanical. This comes with the caveat that Kant and Schelling approach nature from two different perspectives. Kant is concerned with nature considered as experience of nature. For Kant, explaining the possibility of synthetic *a priori* knowledge is to explain the possibility of the laws of nature. It is via these laws that we come to know nature objectively. In Schelling's nature-philosophy, the need to account for knowledge of nature evaporates, as he is concerned more with how nature itself is productive of our knowledge of it. Schelling treats nature as subjective.

One difficulty in approaching Schelling's treatment of nature as subjective is his modulation of the terms 'reflection' and 'speculation'. I have attempted to clarify this matter by discussing how both Kant and Schelling understand the terms 'reflection' and 'speculation'. I have elucidated this distinction by showing how Schelling differentiates his position from Kant. I have appealed to the idea that Schelling wishes for philosophy, nature-philosophy included, to issue *from* the unconditioned, rather than ascend *towards* it. In essence, I have shown how Schelling constructs his idea of nature as a self-constitutive unity. However, as I have also mentioned, one consequence of Schelling's development towards the identity-philosophy is that the nature-philosophy comes to be viewed only as one aspect of something larger. Nature is a unity that is in turn encompassed by a more general unity, namely, the absolute. To complete my account of Schelling's metaphysics, therefore, I move on to an account of the identity-philosophy proper, as well as the method that arises from it, philosophical construction.

3.3. Schelling's Construction of Absolute Identity

Abstract

This section once again addresses the question of how the absolute can be articulated. As Schelling's thought progressed, his once reverent endorsement of intellectual intuition was toned down, and construction began to play an increasingly important role. Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to say that construction *replaces* intellectual intuition. Instead, Schelling's theory of construction attempts to account not just for how the absolute can be intuited (i.e. how it can be thought) but how it can be *posited*. This distinction can be thought of via two statements that Schelling endorses. First, everything is absolute. Second, the absolute comes already formed. In this section I will explore the meaning of these two statements, and the way in which they combine in Schelling's theory of construction. Construction first appears in Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), and is described there as an imitation of what he calls the 'first cognition'. However, significant advances on this initial concept are made as Schelling develops the concept of construction in two subsequent texts, the *Further Presentations from the System of Philosophy* (1802), and *On Construction in Philosophy* (1803). These texts are therefore my main focus. In order to show the significance of the identity-philosophy on Schelling's thought, I begin by comparing Schelling's early conception of intellectual intuition with its articulation in identity-philosophy. I conclude by arguing that Schelling's theory of construction prepares the way for his philosophy of art, wherein the truth of the constructive method is taken as given.

3.3.1. The Method of Identity-philosophy

In his *Further Presentations of the System of Philosophy* from 1802, Schelling attempts to defend his identity-philosophy by elucidating its methodology. He writes,

The essence of the absolute in and for itself says nothing to us; it fills us with images of an infinite enclosure, of an impenetrable stillness, and concealment, the way the oldest forms of philosophy pictured the state of the universe before He who is life stepped forth *in his own shape* in the act of his self-intuitive cognition. This eternal form, equal to the absolute itself, is the day in which we comprehend that night and the wonders hidden in it, the light in which we clearly discern the absolute, the eternal mediator, the all-seeing and all-disclosing eye of the world, the source of all wisdom and cognition. (2001b, p. 392)

The problem that emerges from this is how to account for the fact that this enclosed and impenetrable absolute comes to manifest itself. It is this problem with which Schelling appears to struggle the most. In her book on early German Romantic and Schellingian theories of the absolute, Nassar points this out. She writes that towards the end of 1800, ‘Schelling came to realise that the absolute — as absolute — cannot be presented or mediated through any thing’ (2013, p. 227). Nassar is here referring to the shift that occurs between Schelling’s *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800)¹³¹ and the identity-philosophy as articulated in the *Presentation* and *Further Presentations* of 1801 and 1802. In the *STI*, Schelling claims that it is the work of art that can best present the identity of subject and object, or of ideal and real. In short, the work of art is the utmost expression of the absolute. I dwell on this conclusion to the *STI* momentarily, in order to show the move to identity-philosophy that is necessitated by it.

In the *STI*, intellectual intuition is the vehicle with which consciousness can present the ‘identity of the conscious and the unconscious in the self’ (*STI*, 1978, p. 219). Consciousness, because it emerges from the absolute, undergoes the same polarising dynamic as nature, that is, consciousness

131 Hereafter *STI*

splits into subject and object. However, the ultimate recognition of the identity from which subject and object are originally posited, comes with the consequence that puts this dynamic polarisation to rest, the end result being that ‘the feeling accompanying this [intellectual] intuition will be that of an infinite tranquillity’ (ibid., p. 221). In other words, intellectual intuition in the *STI* results in a reuniting of subject and object, conscious and unconscious into an ‘unexpected harmony’, which the self comes to realise is nothing but the absolute which originally contains this harmony. In short, the self has come back to the place whence it began. This presents a threat to the dynamism Schelling requires, lest his absolute be a mere static monism. Something must additionally be produced out of this harmony. This additional something, which holds the identity of subject and object *in an object*, is the work of art. The output of intellectual intuition is therefore aesthetic intuition. Schelling’s philosophy of art is the subject of the next chapter. For now, I will only draw on a problem that Nassar identifies with Schelling’s claim that the identity of the absolute is resolved in aesthetic intuition.

The problem with the work of art presenting absolute identity is that, in so doing, absolute identity has been transported into an object. So, while the work of art is the product of a self-conscious being, and therefore of aesthetic intuition, it is not itself such a being. Nassar claims that, because of this, the work of art remains ‘distinct from the self, such that aesthetic intuition is not intuition of the original identity “in the self”, but rather, “in the work of art”’ (2014, pp. 226-7). If the intuition of the ultimate identity of the absolute has been transported into an objective product – a work of art – then to what extent can one be said to have knowledge of the absolute at all? Schelling’s solution in the *Presentation* and *Further Presentations* is to reconstruct his view of intellectual intuition posited in the early *Of the I* essay, but with an additional requirement. As Schelling puts it in the *Presentation*, to arrive at the thought of the absolute, ‘one must abstract from what does the thinking’ (2001a, p. 349). This is a curious statement, but when considering the impasse at which Schelling arrived at the conclusion of the *STI* – that the presentation of the absolute could be attained in the work of art, which, as object, still retained the opposition between subject and object

– it becomes somewhat clearer what Schelling intends in the identity-philosophy. Schelling intends to show how the absolute can be presented in a way that frees it entirely from either subject or object. In other words, Schelling attempts to present the absolute in itself.

While intellectual intuition certainly does not disappear from Schelling's identity-philosophy, it does, as already mentioned, undergo some changes. To grasp these changes I turn now to a brief overview of Schelling's conception of intellectual intuition from when it first appeared in the *Of the I* essay.

3.3.2. The Plant in the Plant: Schelling's Conception of Intellectual Intuition

In his 1795 essay, *Of the I as the Principle of Philosophy*, Schelling first mentions intellectual intuition.¹³² Still heavily under the influence of Fichte's philosophy, Schelling's defence of intellectual intuition in *Of the I* is formulated exclusively in order to articulate the unconditioned ground of the I, or absolute-I.¹³³ In a similar manner to Kant's in the preface of the *CPR*, Schelling develops his position out of the need for an unconditioned principle for philosophy:

132 Both *Of the I* and Schelling's first publication *On the Possibility of a Form of All Philosophy*, which I mention in the footnote below, are translated in Fritz Marti's volume *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge: Four Early Essays (1794-1796)* (1980). I take all references to both essays from that volume.

133 Schelling's first publication, *On the possibility of a form of all philosophy*, appeared in 1794. While this essay also tackles the issue of an unconditioned ground for philosophy, adopted from both Kant and Fichte, it does not yet land on the claim that this ground can be determined through intellectual intuition. Instead *On the possibility* construes the unconditioned as an 'ultimate axiom', which determines both the form and content of philosophy. Schelling claims that this ultimate axiom can only be 'the originally self-positing I' (1980, p. 45).

As soon as philosophy begins to be a science, it must at least *assume* an ultimate principle, and, with it, something uncondition[ed]. (1980, p. 73)¹³⁴

Schelling's goal in *Of the I* is to prove the reality of this assumption about an ultimate principle, and to demonstrate what that principle is. I will outline Schelling's argument for intellectual intuition in *Of the I*, and then present some objections to it, which show why it is untenable. Indeed, Schelling came to this same conclusion, and adapts his conception of intellectual intuition during the period of his identity-philosophy.

In the preface to *Of the I*, Schelling remarks that 'the unity of consciousness' requires a grounding in higher principles, principles which Schelling believes that Kant presupposed in the *CPR*. For example, Kant deduces the categories according to the table of logical functions of judgment, but he does not establish the latter according to any principle (*ibid.*, p. 65). In Schelling's view, Kant *presupposes* this higher principle but does not address it. The reasons for this will become clear. Schelling goes on to claim that this higher principle can be nothing other than the unity of consciousness, understood as 'the synthesis of multiplicity into unity as such', and furthermore, this unity of consciousness can only be understood according to a 'superior absolute unity'. In other words, the unity of consciousness cannot simply accompany one's judgments, it must *determine* them from an absolute principle.¹³⁵ This principle is the absolute I.

Schelling opens the *Of the I* essay proper by reiterating the need for this principle:

Either our knowledge has no reality at all and must be an eternal round of propositions, each dissolving into its opposite, a chaos in which no element can crystallize - or else there must be an ultimate point of reality

134 Cf. Kant, *CPR*, Bxx. The difference of course is that Kant admitted the necessity of an unconditioned, but not knowledge of the unconditioned. For Schelling, as will become clear, such an unconditioned is not merely an element of knowledge but is that from which all knowledge emerges.

135 Kant's remark that the 'I think' must accompany all representations of a subject appears in §16 of the Transcendental Deduction (B131).

on which everything depends, from which all firmness and all forms of our knowledge spring, a point which sunders the elements, and which circumscribes for each of them the circle of its continuous effect in the universe of knowledge. (1980, p. 71)

This problem of an epistemological regress is not just present in Schelling's critique of Kant, but can also be found in the contemporary debate between coherentists and foundationalists. Foundationalist theories of non-doxastic sources of belief are justifiably open to skepticism as to the grounds upon which such sources can be justified. Coherentists face the objections that the internal coherence of a system does not guarantee the validity of its principles.¹³⁶ Schelling certainly sounds like a foundationalist when he calls on the need for 'knowledge which I do not reach by way of some other knowledge, but through which alone all other knowledge is knowledge' (ibid.). However, matters are not so simple. The principle that Schelling seeks does not merely ground knowledge; it must be the 'original ground (*Urgrund*) of all reality'. Here one already begins to see anticipations of Schelling's theory of construction, as he follows this by claiming that the 'assertion [of the ground of human knowledge] must be contained in its thought; it must create itself through its being thought' (ibid., p. 72). According to this definition, the *Urgrund* of reality does not just justify our knowledge claims about reality, but *creates* that reality. Furthermore, the determination of reality as such, or, the fact that we can refer to reality as *really being*, is coextensive with its creation. It is due to this characterisation that Schelling claims the only candidate for the *Urgrund*, for the unconditioned in human knowledge, is the absolute I.

Now, The absolute I cannot be a concept because it would then be only a possible object, and Schelling is firm in denying the I is an object at all, since it is the very thing responsible for positing objects as opposed to itself. If the I were a concept then it would require 'something higher in which

136 Utilising Schelling's philosophy to contribute to the foundationalism/coherentism debate is surely a valuable exercise, though unfortunately one beyond the remit of this thesis. I mention it here only to advocate for Schelling's continued relevance in contemporary philosophy. For an overview of the foundationalism/coherentism debate, see Audi, 1988, pp. 407-442

it could find its unity’, and also, ‘something lower which would furnish its multiplicity’ (ibid., p. 85). The I must be self-positing. In other words, it must rely neither on a more fundamental unity for its possibility, nor on an empirical content to furnish its reality. Instead, both its fundamental unity and its reality must be contained with itself. Since the I cannot be a concept, because, if it were, this would make it a subject reliant upon an object against which to posit itself, Schelling concludes that the I can only be determined in an intuition. Since the I cannot be an object, because it is the source of the division of subject and object, this intuition cannot be a sensible intuition. The I can only be determined ‘in an intuition which grasps on object at all and is in no way a sensation, in short, and *intellectual* intuition’ (1980, p. 85)

Schelling retains Kant’s distinction between sensible and intellectual in intuition from the *CPR*. So, Schelling writes the following, ‘Where there is an object there is sensuous intuition, and vice versa. Where there is no object, that is, in the absolute I, there is no sense intuition, therefore either no intuition at all or else intellectual intuition. Therefore *the I is determined for itself as mere I in intellectual intuition*’ (p. 85, translator’s emphasis). What is curious about this argument is that we arrive at the claim that we have intellectual intuition via an *inference*. If we really had intellectual intuition, we should be able to tell so directly. There should not be anything to debate here, as it would be the most evident thing. But it does not seem to be so.¹³⁷ Indeed, this is one of the weaknesses of Schelling’s early conception of intellectual intuition. Schelling does acknowledge ‘that Kant denied all intellectual intuition’, but for the former this is only a result of the context in which Kant’s philosophy operates. Schelling claims that Kant’s critical philosophy ‘only *presupposes* the *absolute* I at every step and which, on the basis of presupposed higher principles, determines only the empirically conditioned I and the not-I in its synthesis with that I’ (ibid.). What is important in this conception of intellectual intuition, is that it determines the I as such, and not any individual or empirical I. This requires some clarification. Schelling writes, ‘since the subject is

137 A contemporary parallel here would be the alleged existence of qualia.

thinkable only in regard to an object, and the object only in regard to a subject, neither of them can contain the uncondition[ed] because both are conditioned reciprocally' (ibid., p. 74). Now we are confronted with the problem of how to think this absolute that intellectual intuition is supposed to access. How can we think something that is not a thing, i.e. the absolute? This is the problem Schelling faces in *Of the I*, and he fails to definitely connect the absolute I to the individual I. Schelling claims that intellectual intuition is of a completely different kind to sensible intuition, but does not elucidate this difference. As a result, the absolute, taken as an absolute I, remains closed off from consciousness. The intellectual intuition which determines the absolute I *as absolute*, does not take place in consciousness at all, 'since consciousness presupposes an object'. Intellectual intuition is possible 'only insofar as it has no object' (ibid., p. 85)

Before raising some objections to Schelling's argument, it is worth summarising what has been said so far. Schelling claims that intellectual intuition determines the I as the absolute ground of all reality. Intellectual intuition is therefore only possible if it is neither subjective nor objective.

In his book on Schelling's nature-philosophy, Esposito rightly points out that there is a problem of connection between the absolute I and the actual or empirical I. He writes, 'if...unity is an essential component of a self, then the finite and absolute selves are really one self; and if so, how are these selves to be related?' (1977, p. 40). This is a question to which Schelling, at least within *Of the I*, does not have an answer. Indeed, Schelling claims that 'the absolute I never steps outside of itself' (1980, p. 110). If this is the case, Esposito asks, then 'of what use is the finite self to the absolute?' (1977, p. 40). And again, the answer would seem to be that the finite self is not really of any use to Schelling at this point. The "ascent" that intellectual intuition seems to provide in *Of the I*, from the merely finite, through the infinite, into the sphere of 'absolute being', takes the human subject to a realm in which it no longer recognises itself as a subject at all.

Reducing the absolute to the I, and intellectual intuition to the determination of the I *as absolute*, was ultimately overly restrictive on Schelling's part. As such, Schelling adjusts his conception of

intellectual intuition in his *Presentation* and *Further Presentations*.¹³⁸ In these texts, identity is expressed via the opposition between universal and particular. Much the same as reflective judgment in Kant's third *Critique*, in the *Further Presentations* Schelling argues that intellectual intuition is the ability to see the universal in the particular. This does not involve a process of abstraction or transcendental deduction; rather it is a direct and immediate experience of the identity between universal and particular. Schelling gives the example of a plant. When the anatomist dissects a plant to study it, he sees both the plant itself, as a particular of a certain species, as the concept "plant" etc. But he sees this via and within the individual plant body he happens to be dissecting. So, 'to see the plant in the plant, the organ in the organism, in a word to see the concept or indifference within the difference is possible only through intellectual intuition' (2001b, p. 377).

Once again, a familiar problem emerges. Let us suppose that intellectual intuition can see the ultimate indifference that grounds difference. What is to be done with this insight, which, as already mentioned, has no object toward which it can direct itself? Indeed, to where is philosophy supposed to progress from this intellectual intuition? As Schelling's identity-philosophy is concerned not just with thinking but with *postulating* the unity of the absolute, it becomes clear that intellectual intuition does not suffice. Even in its revised form in the identity-philosophy, intellectual intuition suffers from the same problem as it does in the *STI*, wherein it must be converted into aesthetic intuition in order to be productive. Intellectual intuition must be *productive* of something. However, unlike the work of art, which is produced by the particular capacities of the artistic genius, intellectual intuition in the identity-philosophy must admit of a universality that moves beyond the opposition of the artistic subject (the genius) and the artistic object. It is Schelling's intention to show the way in which consciousness can and must be united with nature in the absolute, and how

138 These essays appeared in the second and third issues of the *Journal of Speculative Physics*, which Schelling started 1800, arguably as a way of presenting his newly constructed system of identity-philosophy, though Schelling insists in the *Presentation* that he was forced to release this system prematurely (2001a, p. 33).

philosophy can present this unity. The key word here is ‘present’. The identity-philosophy must present the absolute, not prove it or argue for its validity. To formulate proofs is to rest upon the separation between the proof itself and that which it proves. As Schelling repeatedly asserts, philosophy must as little suffer from burdens of explanation as mathematics.¹³⁹ For example, in presenting a triangle, the mathematician does not need to provide extra explanation as to why the sum of the angles in a triangle is equal to two right angles. This truth is contained in the triangle itself. To present the identity of the absolute, Schelling requires something more than intellectual intuition. This is the method of construction, proposed first in the *Further Presentations*, and defended in the 1803 essay *On Construction in Philosophy*. It is to these texts that I now turn.

3.3.3. Constructing the Absolute

In his *Further Presentations*, Schelling takes as his starting point the actuality and necessity of intellectual intuition. Intellectual intuition must be ‘simply and without restriction presupposed’ (2001b, p. 376). Intellectual intuition is the capacity to ‘see the universal in the particular, the infinite in the finite, the two combined into a living unity’ (ibid.). In the *Construction* essay, Schelling’s task is to show not just how this living unity is “seen”, or recognised as such, but how it is *enacted*. For Schelling, only this step is missing Kant, because the latter did not allow for philosophical, but only mathematical construction. Kant can only conceive, but not construct, the absolute, and Schelling sees as a shortcoming of the critical philosophy. This can be taken as Schelling’s ultimate aim, to move beyond the limits of criticism, and demonstrate the possibility of cognition of the absolute. His method for doing so begins with the way in which Schelling characterises the absolute itself, namely, as absolute cognition. What does it mean to cognise the absolute? It means precisely the absolute itself; the cognition of the absolute and the absolute itself

139 Schelling defends this idea in the *Construction essay* (2008, pp. 274-6) and in the *Supplement* (1988, p. 53)

are the same, because, as Schelling claims, the nature of the absolute is in itself is absolute cognition.

To call the absolute a form of cognition is one thing. To ground a philosophy in this absolute cognition is quite another, and is fraught with its own difficulties. Schelling tackles these difficulties head on in a section of the *Further Presentations* entitled ‘On Philosophical Construction, or the Way to Exhibit all Things in the Absolute’. This full title is important, because it points out the difference between intellectual intuition, and construction. The former merely recognises the absolute as absolute, the latter *postulates* this absolute. How is such a postulation of the absolute possible? As Schelling points out, it is hard to see ‘how we can see so clearly into the absolute that we can ground a science in it’, as well as how such a science can be drawn from ‘the simply identical and thoroughly simple essence of the absolute’ (ibid., p. 385). There are two obstacles to be overcome here. Firstly, if the absolute is essentially simple and identical, how is one supposed to distinguish between the absolute itself and what is demonstrated or produced out of it? Secondly, how can one even demonstrate the absolute at all, given that it is a single unconditioned unity, and that *through* which it is demonstrated is a conditioned multiplicity? Schelling accepts this distinction between unity and multiplicity, but once again, this is only one perspective. If everyday cognition is bound by the condition of dualism, then the aim is not to dissolve the distinction, but to present its indifference. In order to do this Schelling adjusts the distinction with the following mission statement:

What is proved, which we assume is ever the same, is the absolute unity of the finite and the infinite; for the present purpose I call it the universal. That in which it is proved is determinate unity, and is accordingly called the particular. To demonstrate the indifference between the universal and particular is to enact a philosophical construction; when this indifference

is shown to be itself an absolute indifference, the construction is an absolute one. (*Further Presentations*, 2001b, pp. 385-6)¹⁴⁰

This characterisation of construction contains within it some important caveats. Firstly, constructions are productive (Whistler, 2013, p. 118). More than this, constructions are *performative*. What does this mean exactly? Schelling adopts the geometrical conception of construction. The geometer ‘exhibits the reality of the figures he is using in his work’ (ibid.). He does not produce something and then attempt to prove its validity afterwards. Rather, the production *is* the proof; the two are identical. Constructions are productive to the extent that they ‘enact the construction they describe’ (ibid., p. 119). Whistler lays out the essential components of construction, and it is already obvious from his reading that construction is a difficult matter to tackle, first and foremost because it claims that its only burden of proof is its existence. How are we then to go about deciding on the validity of construction as a method at all? In what follows I will assess what answers Schelling offers to this question, first in relation to his move beyond Kant in the *Construction* essay, and later in the matter of universal and particular already mentioned.

3.3.4. Beyond Kantian Construction

In the *Construction* essay, Schelling acknowledges that Kant is ‘perhaps the first to grasp the universal concept of construction deeply and truly philosophically.’ (p. 273) Schelling follows Kant’s description of construction as the identification of concept and intuition, for which a non-empirical intuition must be provided.¹⁴¹ The key feature of construction for Schelling is that it enables a concept to be expressed ‘without compromising its universality’ (ibid.). This is exactly

140 The German word ‘*Gleichgültigkeit*’, rendered here as ‘indifference’, can also mean in older German ‘of the same value/validity’, or ‘equivalent’. Schelling’s own use of the term develops out of his nature-philosophy, in particular the study of magnetism. In this case, ‘indifference’ refers to the neutral point of a magnet that is dominated by neither pole. I interpret Schelling as employing this meaning of indifference, and read it as such throughout this chapter and chapter four.

141 Kant phrases it in the following way in the *CPR*: ‘to construct a concept means to exhibit *a priori* the intuition which corresponds to the concept’ (A713/B741).

what the above passage from the *Further Presentations* aims to achieve, namely, a presentation which balances universal and particular. Schelling's problem with Kant's discussion of construction is that he denies the possibility of construction for philosophy, because, according to Kantian transcendental idealism, to exhibit *a priori* an intuition corresponding to a concept is to achieve an intellectual intuition. For Schelling, philosophy is in and of the absolute itself, from which it emerges and to which it returns.¹⁴² Because of this, philosophy 'does not have a point above itself...from which it can reflect'. It must unify 'all points of reflection in itself, its own essence must always accompany it' (ibid., p. 273). So, where Kant denies construction because it would result in intellectual intuition that violates his transcendental idealism, Schelling advocates for the constructive method in philosophy because it allows for a continuity between concept and intuition which Schelling believes will allow him to present the absolute without compromising its identity.

To formulate his method of construction, Schelling adopts the geometrical model that Kant describes.¹⁴³ To reiterate, Kant argues in the *CPR* that, in order to construct a concept, one requires a non-empirical intuition, which is simultaneously singular and universal; singular because it is a representation of a particular, or, a particular representation; universal because that same representation is what constructs the concept. The concept is immediately produced in the intuition, rather than applied to it after the fact. Kant believed that such constructions could only exist in mathematics, geometry being the upmost example. Schelling's central motivation is to extend Kantian construction beyond mathematics and secure its place in philosophy. The reasons for Kant to deny construction to philosophy are the direct result of his critical system. To grant construction by means of the categories would be to grant intellectual intuition, in other words, an identity of

142 Philosophy has been said to "return" twice in what I have said so far. Philosophy in the *STI* was to return to the 'universal ocean of poetry'. In the *Construction* essay, it returns to the absolute. Though Schelling himself does not make the claim outright, it is intriguing to consider, particularly in light of Schelling's philosophy of art which I examine in the next chapter, the extent to which the absolute itself can be given the character of 'poetic', not just in a productive, but in an artistic sense.

143 Whistler offers a succinct overview of the history of geometrical construction. (2013 pp. 117-128).

concept and intuition. For Kant, both intellectual intuition and construction are problematic for philosophy because they eliminate the connection to empirical experience. Schelling argues, however, that by granting this kind of construction in mathematics, Kant had unwittingly shown the necessity of such intuition for philosophy. If Kant grants a non-empirical intuition to geometry by which to exhibit its concepts, Schelling claims, ‘he cannot then establish an absolute difference between mathematics and philosophy through this non-empirical intuition’ (ibid., p. 274). In other words, Schelling believes that Kant has failed to show why construction should be prohibited in philosophy. This is because Kant conflated two types of mathematical intuition into one, in order to prohibit what would become an intellectual intuition in philosophy.

So, what Kant took as one form of intuition — intellectual — Schelling here divides in two. The first, which presents the universal in the particular, belongs to geometry. The second, which presents the particular in the universal, belongs to arithmetic. Philosophy is neither of these, but rather the presentation of their *indifference* [*Gleichgültigkeit*] (ibid., p. 275).

Kant could not grant this indifference of universal and particular to philosophy because he was limited by the methods of transcendental idealism. Schelling argues that philosophy must attain absolute form in order to forge the right path for itself. What does it mean to attain absolute form? Indeed, what does it even mean for philosophy to have a form? To this Schelling offers few answers. His closest analogy is Spinoza, who, Schelling claims, employed the geometrical method as a way of constructing philosophical proofs. In Schelling’s estimation, Spinoza’s error was to focus exclusively on this form and neglect the ‘pure ideal of philosophy’ (ibid.). Kant responded to the same problem with his infamous declaration that ‘Thoughts without intuitions are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind’ (*CPR*, B75). However, the indivisibility of essence and form indicates more than the mere synthesis that Kant required. Additionally, this indivisibility must also ground philosophy itself. It must be both the discovery of, and the catalyst for, philosophical inquiry. So, to attain absolute form is to realise and “make real” the indivisibility of form and

essence. As such, ‘philosophy must be not only a knowing, but always and necessarily at the same time a knowing of this knowing, not in endless procession, but an always present infinity’ (p. 273). This last distinction is an important one. As we, and presumably Schelling, learned from Kant, we cannot experience our own experience, we cannot know our own knowing. Instead, we can only appear to ourselves in the same way that objects of external experience appear, as intuitions in space and time. Whatever it is that does the appearing is not itself contained within the appearance.¹⁴⁴ Now, Schelling would likely agree with the first part of this statement: we cannot experience ourselves experiencing, because this would itself be another experience different from the first. However, Schelling’s insistence on the indivisibility of form and essence is what allows him to avoid the ‘endless procession’ of knowledge knowing knowledge, and augment it into a ‘present infinity’.

Construction, in Kant’s terms, is the identity of concept and intuition. This identity brings about, in Schelling’s view, a ‘non-empirical intuition’ that must express itself, on the one hand, ‘as an intuition that is singular and concrete’, and on the other, ‘as a construction of a concept that is universally valid for all possible intuitions belonging under the same concept’ (ibid.). The archetypal construction is therefore a particular intuition which conveys something universal. As such, all constructions are archetypes, because they demonstrate the reality of their concept in one and the same conceptual (intellectual) intuition. Geometrical figures are a prime example of this. A triangle will not compromise its universality whether it appears in empirical or pure intuition. Importantly, it does not need to appear in empirical intuition in order for its properties to hold true. These very properties, to be instantiated in an empirical item, depend upon the construction of the concept ‘triangle’. The triangle, in itself, is an archetype. The absolute archetypal construction is the one whereby the absolute posits itself as absolute, and where the absolute and the positing are

¹⁴⁴ This much is echoed in Schelling’s nature-philosophy, wherein the unconditioned productivity of nature never actually appears in a natural product, as to do so would turn the unconditioned into a conditioned.

identical.¹⁴⁵ This Schelling calls the absolute cognition, asserting in the *Further Presentations*, ‘there is not absolute knowledge and outside of this an absolute, but the two are one. The essence of philosophy lies in this identity’ (2001b, p. 391). One can already see the parallels that persist between philosophical construction and aesthetic construction. In the conclusion I will draw these out explicitly.

Philosophical constructions do not make what they exhibit in a simple sense, nor do they deduce some separate fact from their exhibition. They rather see a certain mode of being in the exhibition itself, namely, of being universal and particular simultaneously. As Schelling puts it, ‘the whole universe *is* in the absolute as plant, as animal, as human being, but since the whole is in every part it *is* therein not as plant, not as animal, not as human being or as the particular unity, but as absolute unity’ (ibid.,). In short, philosophical construction ascends to and brings into it, the absolute itself. There are not distinct forms with distinct essences, there are merely presentations of the one absolute essence in the form of the plant, animal, human, etc. We now start to see the meaning, and the intimate relation between the two statements with which I began. Everything is absolute, i.e. a manifestation of the one absolute essence. The absolute comes already formed because it is being itself, namely, the absolute productivity which gives rise to forms out of itself. The essence of the absolute is that it forms itself.

145 Nassar discusses the issue of archetypes in detail (2014, pp. 244-256). It will become increasingly important for my arguments once I turn to Schelling’s philosophy of art.

Conclusion to Chapter Three

Before concluding, it is worth briefly summarising the character of construction for Schelling.

- Constructions are the identity of concept and intuition.
- Proof of concept and proof of existence are therefore also identical.
- Philosophical constructions express the universal through the particular.
- They thereby produce ideas.
- The ideas produced and the absolute from which they are produced are identical.

I have deliberately excluded a further remark that Schelling makes in the *Construction* essay. Schelling argues that no philosophical construction can be merely particular, in the way that a construction of a triangle is particular to geometry, for example. Philosophy is supposed to be the science by which all other sciences are measured, by which their particular manifestations are reconciled with the absolute. Philosophy cannot therefore be bound by the same limitations as other sciences. What then does philosophy construct? Schelling argues that philosophy must ‘construct construction itself, as well as define definition’ (2008, p. 279). Now, if philosophy is to ground the very premises upon which it bases its arguments, there is a risk that it sinks back into the trenches of dogmatism from which Kant was so eager to rescue it. For where is the measure of correctness to lie? By what standards can the correctness of philosophy’s assertions be assessed?

Whistler expresses a similar worry when he asks, ‘what evidence does Schelling have that...construction [is] the most productive form of knowing? (2013, p. 129). Whistler’s answer refers to many of the things I have already elucidated, namely the various indifferences between universal and particular, concept and intuition, the constructing activity and its product, and its possibility and actuality. In Schelling’s view, philosophical construction unites all of these oppositions, not by synthesising them, but by uncovering, or more accurately, postulating their

absolute identity. For Schelling, the method of construction is also proof of existence of that which it constructs. However, we are still left with the question as to how that proof of existence is to be guaranteed by a philosophy which now seems consumed solely by the task of constructing such proofs. How is a philosophy with no ground external to itself supposed to be regulated? One could say, the absolute regulates it, and philosophy's task is primarily to demonstrate the existence of such a ground. However, I repeat here what was shown in the previous part of this chapter on Schelling's nature-philosophy. That everything is originally absolute still does not explain how it is that the absolute comes to exhibit itself in particular things. Schelling is yet to provide conclusive justification for the identity of the *absolute* and the *thought of the absolute*, because this identity is itself an assumption upon which Schellingian speculation is based. A question arises to which Schelling is compelled to give an answer. Can the absolute be both a cognition and that which makes this cognition possible? In a manner of conclusion, I present a possible answer to this problem, from the *STI*.

In the *STI*, Schelling talks about construction as a form of imitation. Construction basically recreates or reproduces the original series of acts whereby the unified absolute was split from itself by being posited *as* absolute. Construction reproduces the original unity of subject and object in the absolute. One could say, according to this view of construction, that it is the vehicle by which consciousness comes to consciousness. All mention of imitation disappears from the *Further Presentations* and *Construction* essay. This is perhaps because Schelling is eager in these two texts to assert his theory of construction in order to distinguish himself from Kant and Fichte. But the idea of imitation is useful, because it hints at a problem with which Schelling was to struggle intensely for the rest of his career. If the absolute is always absolute, as is everything that emerges from it, then there can never be a difference between the absolute itself and its articulation via a particular emergence. Or rather, the difference is merely one of perspective, between reflection or speculation. Yet, in the *STI*, precisely this difference is articulated by the concept of imitation. The imitation is qualitatively identical to that which it imitates, but it is not quantitatively identical. It is

a further, as in, additional, particular manifestation. There is the productive force of the absolute itself and then there is the *imitative* productive force of the imagination. As I began by saying, the utmost manifestation of this productive force is the art-work. I conclude my work on Schelling's metaphysics by reopening the abyss that it sought to close. And as I move from his metaphysics to his philosophy of art, I do so with the assertion that it is only via the work of art that the post-1800 Schelling can hope to resolve the persistent divisions between the absolute and that which the absolute manifests. Schelling's philosophy of art will posit that the work of art is the ultimate symbol of the absolute. I will be ask, therefore, to what extent the symbol closes this gap in the absolute between identity and difference, or merely represents it.

Chapter Four: Art of the Absolute: Schelling's *Philosophy of Art* Lectures

Chapter Outline

In this chapter I examine Schelling's *Philosophy of Art* lectures, delivered between 1802 and 1804.¹⁴⁶ From these lectures I analyse three interrelated elements. Firstly, the articulation of Schelling's philosophy of identity via the work of art. Secondly, Schelling's theory of the absolute, and the struggles contained therein relating to expression of the absolute via the particular i.e. an artwork. Thirdly, Schelling's philosophy of language. I take these three issues as inseparable, to the extent that they all contribute to Schelling's lifelong struggle to fully account for the absolute and the how discrete things emerge from it. It is within these three elements that Schelling's struggle to overcome limitations imposed by Kant's critical and aesthetic philosophy is most evident. I closely examine Whistler's reading of the *PoA*, as he presents one of the most thorough analyses of Schelling's theory of the symbol. Contrary to Whistler, I claim that Schelling's theory of language does not so much demonstrate the indifference [*Indifferenz*] of ideal and real, as it does display the ultimate and endless insufficiency of linguistic utterances to capture that which grounds them. I am particularly concerned in this chapter with Schelling's thought that language is the original natural work of art, and I relate this to the conclusion to the *System of Transcendental Idealism* that I discussed in chapter three. If language is an objectification of the absolute, then its emergence *as* art cuts language off from this origin. In short, the absolute cannot be articulated.

146 Hereafter *PoA*.

4.1. Construction of the Art-Work

Abstract

In the *Philosophy of Art* lectures, delivered between 1802 and 1804, Schelling expands upon his theory of the absolute via an analysis of the metaphysical and ontological status of art. For Schelling, art, like all things, derives from the absolute and is an articulation of the absolute. Unlike other things, however, the work of art is what Whistler has called the “maximal expression” of the absolute, because it fully identifies the relation of indifference between ideal and real, infinite and finite, universal and particular, that obtains in the absolute itself. The *PoA* lectures contain Schelling’s most rigorously formulated thoughts on art and its relation to philosophy. They also contain intense struggles to properly account for how the art-work – or indeed anything at all – can derive from a thoroughly indifferent, self-identical unity such as the absolute. Schelling maintains in the *PoA* that the universe creates itself in a similar manner to how the art-work is created, and that consequently, works of art derive directly and immediately from the absolute itself. His problem comes, I claim, when he has to account for the ways in which these works of art can “contain” absoluteness while still remaining concrete phenomenal items. Schelling’s purported solution is to designate language the utmost work of art – a natural work of art – in order to display the balance between ideal essence or content (language itself) and concrete form (linguistic utterance). In this chapter, I will contend with Schelling’s theory of symbolic language, and Whistler’s analysis thereof. I will argue that despite making significant advances beyond Kant’s aesthetics,¹⁴⁷ Schelling still does not manage to account for how the absolute can be articulated, brought into, or expressed through, the art-work.

147 Most importantly from the “merely subjective” or “intersubjective” realm of judgment, to a firm ontology of the art-work itself.

4.1.1. Introduction

Schelling does not deal with Kant at length anywhere in the *PoA*. Kant's third *Critique* is mentioned only once in the whole text.¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Kant's presence is tacit throughout. The *CJ* imposed severe limitations, not only upon the capacities of aesthetics, but also upon the things which aesthetics describes. Consequently, art-works could be described only to the extent of their being vehicles for aesthetic judgments, to say nothing of their origin, content or ontological status. Schelling belonged a group of philosophers – among them Schiller, and members of the early German Romantic movement August and Friedrich Schlegel – who sought to disassemble these limitations. In Schelling's case, such disassembling could be achieved only via an entirely different conception of philosophy and its role. By the time of the *PoA*, this conception of philosophy was identity-philosophy, and its role was nothing less than the revelation and articulation of the absolute and all its possible manifestations.

In the specific case of the *PoA*, Schelling aims to focus on the material formulation of art itself, and how this is fundamentally grounded in the absolute. For example, Kant argues in the *CJ* that beauty can only be understood as a kind of judgment, rather than a property of external objects. It is not that an object *is* beautiful in itself, but that I judge it to be beautiful in accordance with the harmony of my cognitive faculties. Schelling performs a stark reversal of this position, going so far as to claim in §21 of the *PoA* that beauty is a property of the absolute itself (1989, p. 31). Given the force with which Kant opposed this conception of beauty, that it inheres in things independently of our perceptions, it might appear surprising that Schelling makes such a drastic claim. To understand the nature of this claim, however, it is vital to address the philosophical backdrop upon which the claim is made. Schelling's claim is not the rationalist or empiricist one Kant sought to oppose. The claim that beauty is an element of the absolute derives from Schelling's identity philosophy, and has to do

148 Cf. *PoA* 1989, p. 12. This could be a result of the *PoA* being lectures rather than something written solely for publication.

with the fact that human perceptions, as much as external nature, as much as beauty itself, derive from the same identical absolute. So, if beauty is the outcome of a judgment, this must be because the harmony felt between the cognitive faculties in the judgment is also manifested by the absolute itself. Schelling claims that, when viewed ‘from the perspective of totality or as they are in themselves’, ‘all things...are formed in absolute beauty’ (ibid.). Absolute beauty means eternal beauty, the beauty of divine creation. In response to those who would want to claim that ugliness is also a feature of the absolute, Schelling claims that ‘perverted or ugly things...just as error or falsity, consist of mere privation and belong only to the temporal view of things’. The ugly is one’s lack of ability to see beauty as a reflection of God’s divine and eternal creation. More will be said about this in 4.2.

If all things derive from absolute identity, one might question to what use identity-philosophy can be put.¹⁴⁹ To avoid dismissing such a philosophy outright, it is important to get a grasp on exactly what Schelling means by the absolute, and how he seeks to account for the way in which distinct phenomena arise from it. It is only with this knowledge that we can, according to Schelling, explain the possibility and origins of the work of art.

4.1.2. God, the Absolute, and the Universe

Schelling begins the *Philosophy of Art* with the claim that, to ‘construe art means to determine its place in the universe’ (1989, p. 24). Such a determination requires nothing less than the first principles of philosophy. The first principles for Schelling are those articulated in his identity-philosophy, most explicitly in the *Presentation* and *Further Presentations* that I have discussed in the previous chapter. To recapitulate briefly, these principles are that intellectual intuition is a

¹⁴⁹ Whistler claims, for example, that the role of philosophy in Schelling’s view is to observe the absolute construct itself, and chart its progress (2013, p. 247). This raises the question over what it is that is being observed in or through this identity (if identity is only ever itself, what observable things does it produce?) I will be defending the idea that a philosophy of art grounded in Schellingian identity-philosophy does, or at least strives to do, more than Whistler seems to believe.

necessary instrument of philosophy, that philosophy is an absolute science (the science of the absolute) and that finally; philosophy constructs, rather than deduces or infers, its principles. What are the consequences of a philosophy of art conducted according to this philosophical system? The answer is twofold. Firstly, like all things, art must be shown to emerge from and express the absolute. Secondly, the philosophy of art must not treat art as a series of objects; rather it must construct ‘the universe in the form of art’ (ibid. p. 35). It is the second task with which Schelling is most concerned, and in order to complete it, he must first account for the possibility of art in the absolute.¹⁵⁰ Schelling titles the sections of the *PoA* accordingly, as Construction of the Universal, and Construction of the Particular, to discuss the content and the form of art respectively. During this chapter, the validity of construction as method will therefore also be scrutinised.

The *PoA* offers perhaps the most thorough description of the absolute of all Schelling’s texts up to that point. Its exact specifications provide what Schelling believes to be the only possible foundations, both for art and for philosophy. So what are these specifications? They are constructed from Schelling’s conception of God. This conception is muddled in the *PoA* by the fact that Schelling frequently appears to refer to God and the absolute interchangeably.¹⁵¹ It is not clear

150 Terminological differences abound in Schelling, and he rarely is explicit about the exact differences between them. Schelling often uses the terms “God”, “universe” and “absolute” interchangeably. I follow Schelling’s usage, with some qualifications. I will address these qualifications directly in the text as they appear, but it is worth noting here that the absolute is the term which Schelling distinguishes the most from the others. The absolute is a more complex term, as it can designate either God, the independence of God from all that is, or the eternal identity which precedes God’s positing of himself. Whistler summarises four terms that he claims Schelling uses interchangeably between 1801 and 1805. These are ‘the absolute’, ‘identity’, ‘indifference’, and ‘God’. Cf. Whistler, 2013, pp. 70-1.

151 Cf. *PoA* §24: ‘The true construction of art is a presentation of its forms as forms of things as those things are in themselves, or as they are within the absolute, for according to §21 the universe is formed within God as eternal beauty and as an absolute work of art. Similarly, all things as they are in themselves or within God are just as absolutely beautiful as they are absolutely true. Accordingly, the forms of art, since they are the forms of beautiful things, are also formed of things as they are within

whether God is identical with the absolute, a local feature *of* the absolute, or the active force by which the absolute which brings about the existing universe. Schelling's descriptions of these three elements both pave the way for his art philosophy, and create the abyss from which he struggles to emerge by the time of his unfinished *Weltalter* project.¹⁵² God is identical with the universe taken 'in and for itself' (1989, p. 26). This means that God himself, and his positing of the universe (via intellectual intuition) are one and the same.¹⁵³ It also means, presumably, that there is a God prior to this positing, who is not identical with anything except himself. *This* God, which escapes any description, is the closest Schelling gets to a simple identification of God and the absolute. But by virtue of being the absolute, he is not God. Why? The absolute is 'utterly eternal', it is 'neither conscious nor unconscious, neither free nor unfree, nor necessary' (ibid.). If God were to take on this negative status, what would he be at all? A mere nothing, or rather, the absence of any property. But God is not the absence of all properties for Schelling. Rather, God is infinite affirmation (ibid.

God or in themselves. And since all construction is a presentation of things within the absolute, the construction of art in particular is the presentation of its forms as forms of things as they are within the absolute, and accordingly also a presentation of the universe itself as an absolute work of art as it is formed within God in eternal beauty.'

152 *Weltalter* or *Ages of the World* refers to a collection of unfinished texts composed in between 1811-1814/15. It also refers to a larger period in Schelling's thought generally, approximately covering the years 1809-1827 (cf. Vassányi, 2011 p. 387). With the *Weltalter*, Schelling attempts to present a history of the absolute in three books: past, present and future. In all three drafts however, Schelling only manages to write the first book, the past. The original manuscripts of all three drafts have been lost. However, fragments of the second and third draft have been published and translated into English. The third draft was first translated by Frederick de Wolfe Bolman Jr. in 1942, and again by Jason Wirth in 2000. The second draft appears with an essay by Slavoj Žižek entitled *The Abyss of Freedom*, from 1997. The story of Schelling's attempt to complete and publish the *Weltalter* bears some striking similarities with Kant's struggle to complete the *Critique of Pure Reason*, with the obvious difference that Kant did manage to publish his grand work. For more on this, see Wirth's introduction to his translation of the *Weltalter* (2000, pp. vii-xxxii).

153 Schelling mentions intellectual intuition only four times in the *PoA*, taking its validity as self-evident on the basis of his earlier identity-philosophy.

p. 26-7). God's creation is archetypal; by creating the forms of the universe, God simultaneously imparts into these forms their eternal essences.

We now have, from Schelling's descriptions, at least four elements; the absolute, the universe, God, and eternity. The work of art, and the artist by whom the work is created, have complex relations with all these elements. In addition, they all united by a further element: mythology. Schelling defines mythology in §37:

The entirety of the poetic renderings of the gods, by acquiring complete objectivity or independent poetic existence, *is mythology*... Mythology is nothing other than the universe in its higher manifestation, in its absolute form, the true universe in itself, image and symbol of life and of wondrous chaos in the divine imagination, itself already poesy and yet in and for itself the content and element of poesy. (ibid., p. 45)

According to Schelling, mythology is more fundamental than both poetry and philosophy. Mythology in fact unites poetry and philosophy together. Schelling characterises the mythological as the absolute continuity between concept and intuition, between language and utterance. It is this continuity that Schelling argues art manages to capture, or recapture, via an immediacy not present for philosophical reasoning. Philosophy is guided by rational argumentation, a linear and (arguably) temporal process. Art, or the art of art, as Schelling puts it,¹⁵⁴ is guided by intuition, by an immediate revelation of its place in the absolute.¹⁵⁵ One may wish to object to this characterisation of art, and ask why it is necessary, or how it is even possible, that all art reveal the absolute. As with Schelling's general philosophical method post-1800, this becomes a matter of perspective. One may elect to view art as a collection of objects, or practices. To approach art in this way is to approach art empirically, as phenomenal appearance. Schelling does not deny this "real" side of art, he says only that he is 'speaking of a more sacred art... a proclaimer of divine mysteries, the unveiler of

154 Cf. *PoA*, §62 (1989. p. 84).

155 For an early description of this difference between philosophy and poetry, see Schelling's *Bruno, or, on the Natural and the Divine Principle of Things*, (1984, pp. 132-3).

ideas' (ibid., p. 4) In what follows I will examine the ways in which Schelling accounts for the way in which this notion of art, which Schelling has claimed is immediately present in mythology, "enters" into the particular art-work.¹⁵⁶ Elements central to Kant's aesthetics are all present here, such elements as genius, intuition, beauty and sublimity, and a reverence for nature. The way in which these things interact, however, changes significantly in Schelling's hands.

4.1.3. Constructing the 'Universe in the Form of Art'

Philosophy of art for Schelling constructs the universe in the form of art. What does this mean? To begin unpacking this claim requires a grasp of Schelling's concepts of universal and particular, as they occur in the *PoA*. In reference to mythology, Schelling defines the relation between universal and particular in the following way:

Representation of the absolute with absolute indifference of the universal and particular *within the universal* = philosophy – idea. Representation of the absolute with absolute indifference of the universal and the particular *in the particular* = art. The universal content of this representation = mythology. In mythology we thus find the second synthesis already accomplished, that of the indifference of the universal and the particular with the *particular*. This proposition is thus the principle of construction of mythology as such. (1989, p. §37, p. 45)

Two things should be noted here. First, mythology is the 'universal content' of art, but this does not mean that all art is mythological. Rather, mythology supplies the essential condition of art considered as an objectification of the absolute, namely, the presentation of the indifference of universal and particular *in a particular*. Consequently, the second thing to note is that the

¹⁵⁶ It is important to note that no art-work contemporary to Schelling is considered mythological by him, hence the distinction between mythology in general and the work of art in particular. The mythological for Schelling is not merely a separate – therefore inaccessible – historical epoch, but an entirely different manifestation of the absolute from either philosophy or poetry. I discuss this further in 4.4.

mythological synthesis of universal and particular is enacted in the same way as a philosophical construction. Where philosophy enacts this construction pertaining only to the universal, i.e. independent of a concrete form, mythology constructs pertaining to a particular, i.e. a concrete item or series of items. On the surface this seems strange, as it implies that philosophy does not have a form. However, we must remember that within this distinction between philosophy and mythology is implied a further distinction between that which pertains (philosophy/mythology) and that *to which* it pertains (the absolute). Philosophy pertains to the absolute via the universal (via reason, articulated conceptually). Mythology pertains to the absolute via the particular (via artistic forms).

What ramifications do these distinctions have for philosophy, given that Schelling appears to have granted an immediate representation of the absolute via mythology, but not via philosophy? Some comparison with Kant is useful here. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant claims that concepts of the understanding do not appear in the phenomenal world. They are, in a sense, one step removed from phenomenal experience. Concepts of reason (ideas) are further removed, given that they derive from wholly from reason, which can never directly determine experience. According to Kant, ideas of reason cannot directly determine experience because they pertain to ‘the totality of things, in their interconnection as constituting the universe’ (*CPR*, B375).

Schelling has a different metaphysical position, though it shares some common ground with Kant. Importantly for my argument, part of this common ground is the necessity for the absolute *to be expressed* via some representation or other. For Kant, it is expressed only in a regulative way, as a prescription by reason to the understanding, to grant the latter ‘direction towards a certain unity of which it has itself no concept’, in such a way as to ‘unite all the acts of the understanding, in respect of every object, into an *absolute* whole’ (*CPR*, B383) For Schelling, the absolute is expressed directly and immediately in the art-work, whose universal content is mythology. Common to both these views is that the absolute relies upon representation, whether in an idea or in an art-work. The notion of the necessity of representation for accessing the absolute will feature heavily later in this

chapter. Presently, I wish to focus on where Schelling's metaphysics differs from and challenges Kant's, and how this informs what Schelling means by constructing the universe in the form of art.

In the *PoA*, Schelling claims that reason is within the absolute, not just notionally, but fully: 'complete revelation of God only occurs where in the reflected world itself the individual forms resolve into absolute identity, and this occurs only within *reason*. Reason is thus *within* the All itself and the full reflected image of God' (1989, p. 27, original emphasis). Again, this remark is worth examining closely. Schelling's first assumption is that the world is the 'reflected image of God'. One might assume, therefore, that this precludes any element of human cognition, reason included, from accessing 'God himself'. Indeed, this is the case, and this is where art begins to show its necessity as counterpart to philosophy. Philosophy is the 'immediate or direct representation of the divine', but art is immediately or directly only the representation of indifference as such', i.e. the indifference between ideal and real (ibid.). As a consequence, philosophy deals exclusively with esoteric matters: ideas. It proceeds via rational argumentation, and this argumentation is said to represent the divine — or in other words, the identity of the 'affirming and the affirmed', i.e. God (ibid., p. 24). Art represents this identity *as indifference of ideal and real*, but does not represent this identity *in itself*.

So far, philosophy seems to have the upper hand. However, advancing a few pages in the *PoA*, this dynamic between philosophy and art is revealed to be less than straightforward. It concerns the relation between universal and particular. In §27 Schelling writes, 'particular things, to the extent they are absolute in that particularity and thus to the extent they as particulars are simultaneously universes, are called *ideas*' (ibid. p. 34 original emphasis). As such 'every idea is = universe in the form of the particular'. Philosophy deals in ideas, i.e. particulars taken in the sense of the universal. Because an idea is = universe in the form of particular, however, the idea is 'not real as this particular.' The ideas, as real, or, 'viewed on the plane of the real' as Schelling puts it, are 'the *gods*, for their essence, their essential nature, = god. There are ideas only to the extent that they are

god in a particular form. Every idea, therefore, = god, but a particular god' (ibid., original emphasis). Both philosophy and art express the same God, the same absolute; philosophy in an ideal way, art in a real way. Schelling has presented the particular difference between philosophy and art, namely that, 'what ideas are for philosophy, the gods are for art, and vice versa' (ibid. p. 35). To construct the universe in the form of art, therefore, is to inform the particular art-work as such, into the universal idea, which is the absolute. In other words, philosophy of art articulates the absolute via the idea of art. Art itself, however, articulates the absolute via itself, i.e. via its real form. The real particular of the art-work therefore appears to express the absolute *more* directly, without need for the mediation of ideas into forms such as the linguistic arguments employed in philosophy. This is a central element of my criticism of Schelling's art-philosophy, which I will develop in 4.2. For now I turn to Schelling's description of the construction of artistic form.

4.1.4. Construction of Artistic Form

So far, I have shown how Schelling seeks to prove the absolute status of artistic content — its essence. He must now account for the absolute status of artistic form. This account is directed toward one central question:

How does...universal content make the transition into the particularity of form and actually become the true material of a particular work of art? (ibid. p. 83).

Once again, this question results directly from the assertions of Schelling's identity-philosophy. The relations of universal and particular, and their correlates, form and essence, are of course not exclusive to art, and it is the job of identity-philosophy to show how these elements relate in a general sense, namely, in the sense of the absolute. This is achieved via the construction of ideas. Philosophical construction enacts a synthesis that both identifies universal and particular, and reveals their ultimate identity in the absolute. A construction of philosophy of art enacts this same synthesis in the form of art, in other words, with reference to an objective representation of this

synthesis — with reference to a *work*. Philosophical construction must ‘construct construction itself, as well as define definition’ (*Construction*, 2008, p. 279). It follows then that art-philosophical construction, constructs the construction of works of art.¹⁵⁷ This sounds rather confusing, but each use of the word construction plays a specific role. To simplify, identity-philosophy constructs ideas, which articulate the grounding of things in the absolute. The philosophy of art constructs ideas which articulate they way in which the absolute can be *viewed as art*. In so doing, art-philosophy attempts to show not only how art is grounded in the absolute, but how it posits the absolute *within* itself.

So much for art-philosophy in general. As for the form of art in particular, Schelling explains how form, like essence, derives from God. Here, the story becomes more complex. The direct and immediate content of all art is mythology - the ‘poetic rendering of the Gods’ (1989, §37 p.45). When it comes to artistic form, another factor must be taken into consideration. God, ‘directly and from within himself’ produces only ‘the ideas of things’ (ibid. pp., 83-4). God produces real things ‘only indirectly or mediately in the reflected world’. This much is fairly obvious. If God were to produce particular things directly, he would be conditioned by this producing. Instead, God produces the ‘essence of a particular and in relationship to a particular thing’ (p. 84). So how exactly does God relate to particular things? Schelling’s answer is that a particular relates to God, only to the extent that that particular is ‘one with its own universal, that is, through its idea or its eternal concept’ (ibid., p. 84). In this case, that idea is the idea of the absolute itself.

At this point, one may object by asking how it is that a particular can be at one with its own universal. For example, the universal property of “applehood” can apply both to particular apple 1 and particular apple 2, so that “applehood” = apple 1 and apple 2. It does not follow from this that

¹⁵⁷ This is certainly a dubious claim, as Schelling could be taken as meaning that philosophers in effect construct art itself. As Whistler rightly notes, however, ‘construction is not a method which the philosopher imposes on reality; it is a process that reality itself is already undergoing. Something constructs itself and the philosopher charts this process’ (2013, p 124).

apple 1 = apple 2. However, the indifference of universal and particular in terms of art does not concern the predication of a universal to a particular in the way that “applehood” is predicated of particular apples. The relation is not predicative. It is symbolic. The nature of the symbolic is a significant theme in Schelling’s *PoA*, and I will consider it at length in the following parts of this chapter. For the moment I conclude with a summary of what has been covered so far, and some outcomes thereof.

4.1.5. Art In and For Itself

The utility of describing philosophy of art as the construction of the universe in the form of art, is precisely its applicability to myriad other phenomena. The universe in and for itself = God. But the universe constructed in such and such a way = the thing therein constructed. The art-work expresses the indifference between these two poles. Philosophy expresses their identity.

It is important for Schelling to stress that construction of art-works is not merely a synthesis – of subject and object, of essence and form, of universal and particular. Rather, the art-work expresses the *pre-existing* and *eternal* unity between these things from the absolute perspective. Art-works express the unity that precedes their creation *via something created*. Art represents, recalls, *symbolises* the unity that precedes all creation and into which all creation gives over. The absolute, one might therefore surmise, is nothing other than simple creative potentiation. The actual things that arise from it are particular potencies (*Potenzen*),¹⁵⁸ which themselves are governed by their own laws of poesis. To put it another way, works of art are created according to laws *that they also create*. This is, from the point of view of identity philosophy, the organism as such. This “organic” principle of creation directly opposes mechanical theories of nature that preceded Schelling, and, importantly, Kant’s conception of natural teleology.¹⁵⁹ For Schelling, nature is an eternal dynamic

158 For more on Schelling’s doctrine of potences (*Potenzlehre*), cf. Tritten, (2012)

159 cf. *CJ*, pp. 45; 72-3; 294-5; 297-301; 310

of forces, which interrelate in such a way as to bring about distinct natural phenomena. At the same time, said phenomena *all* arise from the one unconditioned principle of the absolute.

At this point, I pose again my guiding question. How can the absolute be articulated? According to Schelling, philosophy articulates the absolute via ideas; art articulates the absolute via real particulars. To put it another way, the absolute articulates itself in ideas for philosophy, and articulates itself in particulars for art. For identity-philosophy this articulation is one of identity, for art-philosophy it is one of indifference.¹⁶⁰

God = the universe in and for itself. The forces which govern creation are self-regulating because they derive from God; they *are* God himself. God, taken in this way, is equal to the ultimate free act of creation, ultimate because it is the one free act from which necessity arises. Art, replicates, draws into itself, and in turn expresses through itself, this same principle that equates freedom and necessity. The ground of possibility for all of this is the absolute. What still remains for Schelling, is to account for how the constructions of artistic form make their way into actual concrete forms — art-works themselves. Once again, for the purposes of Schelling's identity-philosophy, essence and form are required in equal measure, so that a relation of indifference can obtain between them. For the purposes of art, further elements are required; beauty, the sublime, and genius. In what follows, I will discuss these each in turn, both in terms of how they relate to the absolute as such, and the absolute viewed in the form of art. First, I examine Schelling's descriptions of beauty as a feature of the absolute, and the sublime as a response *to* the absolute. I then move on to discuss genius as a

160 Perhaps then, the thing art-works purportedly express is not so much the absolute itself, in so far as such a thing necessarily encompasses all that is, has been, and will be, but rather the principle by which all things are so encompassed. The principle, insofar as it is viewed according to the universe in the form of art, is poesis. Its concrete manifestation is poetry. Poetry, therefore, is the highest art not because it maximally expresses the absolute, but because it is the absolute, to the extent that the absolute is conceivable only as such a poetic principle, (cf. Nassar, 2014, pp. 226-7). The matter of poetry is covered in the concluding part of this chapter (4.4).

form of intellectual intuition, and the problems this presents Schelling when defending art as an articulation of the absolute.

4.2. Universal harmony: on Beauty as a Feature of the Absolute

Abstract

In the *PoA* Schelling argues that beauty is a feature of the absolute. He adopts Kant's definition of beauty as harmonious free relation, and attempts to vastly extend its scope. Where Kant limited beauty to a form of judgment, Schelling seeks to extend beauty not only to nature in itself, but to the universe, and to the absolute. Schelling argues that the same notion of beauty governs both the creation of art-works and the most basic character of the universe. I approach Schelling's conceptions of beauty through his discussion of sonority, as an example of Schelling's construction of the universe in the form of art. The ramifications of Schelling's theory of beauty include a need for a more extensive conception of genius than Kant is able to provide. Schelling's conceptions of the sublime and genius will therefore form the next section (4.3).

4.2.1. Introduction

Schelling makes a bold claim in the first part of the *PoA*: ‘the universe is formed in God as an absolute work of art and in eternal beauty’ (1989, p. 31). In this section of my chapter I will make sense of this claim, and investigate whether it is defensible. In this brief introduction, I present two passages from the *PoA*, which are helpful in recapitulating Schelling’s position with respect to the absolute and beauty. The first passage deals with the manifestation of the absolute as the universe. The second deals specifically with the formation of the philosophy of art. My discussion of beauty in Schelling will use these passages as a foundation, from which I will develop subsequent discussions. I quote both passages in turn below:

[T]he universe is structured in two directions corresponding to the two unities within the absolute. Within the first, considered *in and for itself*, the absolute appears merely as the *ground* of existence, since on this side it forms its own eternal unity into difference. Within the second, the absolute appears as *essence*, as an absolute; for just as in the first unity essence is worked into form, so here in contrast form is worked into essence. In the first instance, form is thus dominant; in the second, essence. (1989, p. 201)

In the philosophy of art, no principle other than that of the infinite can serve as our point of departure; hence, we must present the infinite as the unconditioned principle of art. Just as for philosophy in general, the absolute is the archetype of truth, so also for art is it the archetype of *beauty*. We must therefore show that truth and beauty are merely two different ways of viewing the one absolute. (*ibid.*, p. 16)¹⁶¹

I will return to these passages repeatedly throughout this section. For the moment it is important to note that in the second passage, Schelling designates beauty as the ‘archetype for the philosophy of art’. Beauty is, for Schelling, *one* way of ‘viewing the *one* absolute’ (*ibid.*, my emphasis). This conception of beauty is fundamental to Schelling’s arguments concerning products of nature, and

161 Cf. *PoA* p. 292, nn. 16-17

products of art created by genius. It also has ramifications for Schelling's understanding of sublimity as the counterpart to beauty. All of these elements have important resonances with Kant, and part of my analysis in the section that follows this one will be to unpack exactly what these resonances are and assess their implications. For now I focus on the first quoted passage, and how it relates to Schelling's larger project of identity-philosophy.

4.2.2. Forming the Absolute from Identity

The relation between form and essence is fundamental to Schelling's philosophy, not just in terms of art, but also for his larger project of identity-philosophy. The absolute grounds two dimensions, form and essence. Essence is necessarily one, or what Schelling calls 'absolute identity within substance'. Form, taken in the universal rather than particular sense, possesses only 'relative identity' (ibid., p. 118). An immediate question arises pertaining to these identities or 'unities' as Schelling also calls them. How does the absolute first become spilt into essence and form, into absolute and relative unity?

To begin with, the absolute is not differentiated into essence and form, as both are posited within the absolute as identical. Hence 'form is also the essence, and the essence the form' (ibid.). For the 'relative identity' of form to truly emerge, the absolute must undergo a process of 'subject-objectivation', whereby the 'subjectivity and eternal unity' of the absolute pass into 'objectivity or multiplicity'. Considered as 'one side of the absolute act of production', the result of this passing over from subjective unity (essence) to objective multiplicity (form) Schelling calls 'matter or substance or eternal nature itself' (ibid., pp. 118-19). In short, the absolute forms itself into nature by passing its essence over into varied concrete forms.

This formation of the absolute into nature is not accidental. As, Schelling explains, 'only through subject-objectivation does [the absolute] manifest itself within objectivity and then as a recognised object guide itself back from this objectivity into its own self-recognition' (ibid.). All the time, or rather, eternally, the absolutely subjective (ideal, or essence) and absolutely objective (real, or form)

are ‘essentially one and the same’. To put it another way, the absolute appears to itself, and thereby recognises itself, by manifesting as nature.¹⁶² The absolute enacts a process of eternal self-reconciliation, cycling from subjectivity, to objectivity, and back again. One may ask, why is it necessary for the absolute to reconcile itself if it is eternally and absolutely unified? This is similar to asking why multiple things exist rather than just one single thing. From one perspective, things are multifarious. For Schelling, this is the perspective of reflection, wherein there are multifarious things in so far as being itself is considered as a collection of products (here I am recalling Schelling’s nature-philosophy). However, as I have maintained throughout my reading of Schelling, and as the phrase ‘subject-objectivation’ makes clear, Schelling does not wish to rest upon the opposition of subject and object that yields the latter merely as products. The speculative standpoint, which, I claim, remains tacit in the *PoA*, does not view determined products in opposition to a determining subject, or rather, it does not rest upon this opposition. Speculation views the absolute as the fundamental identity of productivity and product, as both subject and object. In consequence, all apparently distinct phenomena — natural phenomena, organisms, including humans — are differentiations of one fundamental unity. As Schelling puts it, ‘the absolute is precisely that with regards to which no antithesis obtains between the idea and the concrete. In it, that which is the concrete or particular in things is itself the essence or universal’ (ibid., p. 25). To understand this better, and to see how beauty can be attributed to the absolute, it is necessary to trace Schelling’s path from the absolute, through its first cognition, to the organism.

4.2.3. The Path to the Organism

Schelling describes the organism as the indifference of form and essence (*PoA*, p. 27). This is related to the more general process by which Schelling supposes the absolute manifests itself. In the identity-philosophy this process is called the absolute cognition. In the *PoA* Schelling calls it God’s

¹⁶² It must be remembered that Schelling frequently refers to the absolute as the primordial first cognition. Cf. above, 3.1.6.

‘infinite affirmation’. Through this affirmation, God ‘comprehends himself as infinitely affirming, as infinitely affirmed, and as the indifference of both’ (p. 24). Schelling adds that God himself is ‘none of these in particular’, i.e. God is not reducible to any one state or stage of the process of his affirmation, but is the identity of all three. As such, God is both absolute unity and absolute totality, ‘not everything, but rather absolute allness itself’ (ibid.). Though Schelling’s explicit reference to God to account for this absolute totality may seem problematic — what if we were to remove God from the picture; can there be an atheist’s account of the absolute? — it is worth noting that this tripartite structure of affirming, affirmed and indifference of the two, mirrors that of both Schelling’s transcendental philosophy and nature-philosophy. In transcendental philosophy, the self forms an intellectual intuition of itself, first as active subject, then as object of its own knowledge, then finally as self; as ‘a knowing that simultaneously produces itself’ (*STI*, 1978, p. 27). In nature-philosophy, nature is firstly productive, secondly productive *of* products, and thirdly the identity of productivity and product. This is worth noting in order to avoid accusing Schelling of supplanting some previous element of his philosophy with theology.¹⁶³

The path from the absolute to the organism also travels through three stages or differentiation, or potences (*Potenzen*) as Schelling calls them.¹⁶⁴ Schelling’s use of the term potences arises from the fact that he conducts his philosophy of art according to the general principles of his identity-philosophy. The important principle in this case is, as Schelling claims, that ‘there is actually and

163 As Whistler points out, ‘before mid-1802 and after 1806, God does not name reality; instead, God is a determinate entity within reality...however between later 1802 and 1805 [the period during with the *PoA* lectures were delivered] God does become synonymous with reality’ (2013, p. 71).

164 The word potence does not have a common usage, and indeed Schelling uses the term in a specific way. Potence does not straightforwardly mean potency; it does not mean ‘power’ or ‘potential’. Rather, potence suggests a unity of power and actuality, or rather, power actualised. For Schelling, because there is no absolute separation between thought and being, or in the terms of the *PoA*, between ideal and real, then power is always actualised power; potence is the identity of power and actualisation. As such I stick to the rendering that Stott’s translation gives; potence rather than potency. Cf. Tritten, 2012, p. 115.

essentially only *one* essence, *one* absolute reality' (ibid., p. 14). As such, this essence, as absolute, 'is indivisible such that it cannot change over into other essences by means of division or separation' (ibid.). If the absolute cannot be divided or separated, how does it give way to discrete entities? How does it emerge at all? It can only emerge, in Schelling's view, through potences, which he defines as the 'indivisible whole...posited under various determinations'. For example, the essence of nature, of art, and history, is the same essence. The absoluteness which inheres in each is one absolute in different potences, (the absolute in the potence of nature, the absolute in the potence of art, etc.).

So, to determine the potences that ground the organism in the *PoA*, Schelling borrows from his nature-philosophy.¹⁶⁵ He writes,

The construction of matter is based on three potences, yet these are general categories such that just as matter individually, so also is nature as a whole based on them. By means of the first potence matter is anorganic and subordinated to the schema of the straight line; by means of the second it is organic, and by means of the third it is the expression of reason. The same potences, however, recur yet again in regards to the whole of matter. Matter as a whole is anorganic, organic and only in the third potence — in the human organism — the expression of reason. (*PoA*, p. 161)

The point of this passage is to show how the three potences of matter — anorganic, organic, organism, are all indeed *matter*. They are differentiated iterations of the same fundamental potence of matter itself. Via the first potence, matter is anorganic, or 'cohesive' (ibid.). I will refer again to this potence of cohesion in my subsequent discussion of sonority in Schelling's construction of music. This will act as a particular example of Schelling's more general idea that the character of art is *in* the absolute, namely, the absolute in the potence of art. Before moving to this example of sonority, it remains to describe Schelling's remarks on beauty generally.

165 For a concise overview of differentiation in nature, cf. Esposito, 1977, pp. 88-97.

4.2.4. Universal and Particular Beauty

In the introduction to the *PoA*, Schelling asks how it is possible that ‘individual beautiful things can issue from absolute beauty’ (p. 17). Just as the potences from which the forms of art emerge are modelled on those of the identity-philosophy, so too the question of universal versus individual beauty is answered by the relation of universal to individual generally speaking. Schelling claims that philosophy answers this question of universal and individual with ‘the doctrine of the ideas or archetypes’ (ibid.). Art answers with the doctrine of ideas, intuited not as ideas, but objectively. This reiterates Schelling’s attitude toward the philosophy of art, that ‘art exactly corresponds to philosophy and is merely the latter’s objective reflex’, and so, ‘it must also proceed through all the potences within the real as does philosophy in the ideal (ibid., p. 16). This is one of Schelling’s clearest explications of the respective roles of philosophy and art. Fundamentally, philosophy deals with the ideal; art with the real.

Of course, the relation between philosophy and art is not so simple. Philosophy has its own ideal and real side (transcendental philosophy and nature-philosophy respectively), and so too does art; the formative and verbal arts.¹⁶⁶ Why is this important for considering beauty? Because Schelling describes beauty as the interpenetration or mutual informing of [the ideal and real]’ (p. 29). The merely ideal, in general philosophy, is truth (Schelling also calls this knowledge), and the merely

¹⁶⁶ Schelling refers to an antithesis between ‘plastic or formative art on the one hand, and verbal art on the other’ (p. 18), which have antecedents in Schelling’s nature-philosophy; namely that the interaction of the productive force with that which it produces is never at rest. In the case of the *PoA*, the antitheses between forms of art arises from the distinction between ideal and real as emanations of the absolute. As such, Schelling claims that ‘formative and verbal art = the real and ideal series of philosophy. The former is characterised by that unity in which the infinite is taken up into the finite, and the construction of this series corresponds to the *philosophy of nature*. The latter is characterised by the other unity, the one in which the finite is formed into the infinite, and the construction of this series corresponds to *idealism* in the general system of philosophy. I will call the first unity the real unity, the second the ideal unity; that which encompasses both I will call indifference’ (ibid.).

real is action. Hence beauty is the mutual informing of truth and action into one another, in the form of art. I here review the earlier quoted passage for clarity:

In the philosophy of art, no principle other than that of the infinite can serve as our point of departure; hence, we must present the infinite as the unconditioned principle of art. Just as for philosophy in general, the absolute is the archetype of truth, so also for art is it the archetype of *beauty*. We must therefore show that truth and beauty are merely two different ways of viewing the one absolute. (1989, p. 16)

So, as well as there being beauty in things, there is also absolute beauty, of which the former is a reflected image. All appearing beauty derives from absolute beauty, which, as already mentioned, is God's creation of the universe. Beautiful art is the indifference of absolute and reflected beauty (ideal and real beauty).

To test Schelling's conception of beauty, specifically the notion that the universe itself is constructed as a work of art, I now turn to one example of Schelling's attempt to ground art and beauty in the absolute. This example is sonority. Sonority is the potency with which Schelling constructs music.

4.2.5. The Indwelling Beauty of the Universe: Schelling on Sonority

Schelling seeks to show the multifarious ways in which beauty manifests itself, and the absolute archetype of beauty which grounds all of these manifestations. As mentioned above, Schelling calls the first potency of the absolute the anorganic, and this potency corresponds to the primary formation of matter: matter as cohesive. This cohesion, and the relations that obtain between material forms gives rise to sonority. How can this be? How does the mere forming of matter give rise to sonority, indeed, how does it give rise to anything audible at all? If there is no sound in space, how can the cosmic bodies which occupy space produce sonority? Is this a purely metaphorical sonority that Schelling is talking about? One could certainly interpret it that way, but I

claim that understanding sonority as a metaphor in the *PoA* does not go far enough in getting to grips with Schelling's argument. I will make sense of sonority with two interpretative tools.

Schelling delivered the *PoA* lectures as the height of wave-particle debate. In 1803, between the two occasions in which Schelling delivered the lectures, Thomas Young discovered the double-slit interference, which he believed confirmed his wave theory of light.¹⁶⁷ Young's theory, among others, was critical of Newton's corpuscular theory of light, which held that light was emitted from luminous bodies in minute particles. In his *Experiments and Calculations Relative to Physical Optics* of 1804, Young draws the conclusion from his experiments that 'there must be some strong resemblance between the nature of sound and that of light' (p. 12). The resemblance Young is referring to is that both sound and light can be seen to travel in waves. I use the concept of wave as a figure here, to help interpret Schelling's specific remarks on sonority. I do not wish to say that Schelling claims sonority *is* a wave, merely that the figure of the wave can help us understand some of the more abstract remarks Schelling makes about sonority being detached from corporeality.

Secondly, and more explicit in Schelling's own text, is the Pythagorean notion of *musica universalis*, or the music of the spheres.¹⁶⁸ Simply put, this theory posits that the distances between musical intervals are equivalent to the ratios of whole numbers. This in turn is related to the discovery attributed to Pythagoras, that the length of a musical string will change the frequency and hence the pitch of the note that resounds from it. These are said to be reflections of the harmony

167 The modern double-slit experiment of which Young's was a precursor, is used to show that light can behave as both wave and particle, and describes the probabilistic nature of quantum mechanical phenomena. I should make clear that I use the double slit inference as an interpretative tool. I do not wish to claim that Schelling was directly influenced by Young's experiments, but rather that understanding sonority according to the figure of the wave can be helpful in making sense of Schelling's ideas.

168 Schelling mentions this himself in the *PoA*. pp. 109; 116-17.

between celestial bodies and their movements.¹⁶⁹ The second contextual basis is therefore the movements of the universe considered as music.¹⁷⁰ I therefore approach Schelling's discussion of sonority considered as a wave, and that the splitting apart of the absolute into ideal and real, can be understood analogously to the splitting apart of the wave through the double slit experiment.

Schelling mentions sonority in his construction of music, which he characterises in the introduction to the *PoA* as 'the primal rhythm of nature and of the universe itself, which by means of this art breaks through into the world of representation'. Here Schelling seeks to show that the real side of art, that in which the infinite is informed into the finite — or to put it another way, unity is informed into multiplicity — is encompassed or symbolised by music, the fundamental potency of which is sonority.¹⁷¹

I showed above the process that the absolute undergoes when manifesting an ideal and real side. Schelling's resulting proposition is that works of art pertain to the indifference of the real and the ideal, from either the real or the ideal side. In other words, real, or formative art, expresses an indifference between ideal and real via the real — via the particular. Verbal or ideal arts, which I will discuss in more detail in the following section, express the same indifference between ideal and real via the ideal — the universal.

169 The attribution of the music of the spheres to Pythagoras is a point of debate. Here I do not wish to engage in this debate, or establish the merits of Pythagorean theory generally. I only wish to point out that Schelling was operating with this idea in mind during the *PoA* lectures. The other well-known defence of this idea appears in Kepler's *Harmonice Mundi* in 1619.

170 Such is Schelling's interpretation of the Pythagorean theory: 'Pythagoras does not say that these movements [of the solar system] *cause* music, but rather that they *are* music' (*PoA*, p. 116).

171 Schelling also calls the real side of art the formative arts, in contrast to the idea, or verbal arts. I remind the reader that Schelling divides the arts into real and ideal in the same way that he divides the absolute into a real and ideal side. Formative art therefore means that art in which unity (ideal) is formed into multiplicity (real): quite literally the *forming* of an ideal into something real. As *art*, these formations of ideal into real form their own unity once again (that of the indifference between ideal and real) which Schelling names the symbol. This will be elucidated in what follows.

So, how does the informing of the ideal into the real manifest as sonority? To start, speaking as he is from the real side, Schelling adapts his use of ideal and real into infinite and finite. For Schelling, infinity is construed as unity, since the alternative will be merely an infinite sequence, i.e. empirical infinity.¹⁷² The real is then construed as multiplicity.¹⁷³ So, to clarify, the ideal is a unity, and infinite; the real is multiplicity, and finite. Schelling's proposition is then formed as follows: 'the indifference of the informing of the infinite into the finite, taken purely as indifference, is sonority' (ibid., p. 107). Again, this indifference manifests as sonority only when the absolute is determined in the potency of art. In nature, the same indifference manifests as magnetism.¹⁷⁴ Magnetism is not in itself a form, however; it does not subsist independently of the matter that is animated by it. So, while magnetism is the implanting of the infinite into the finite as bound to a corporeal body, sonority is the same implanting 'detached from corporeality' (ibid., p. 108).

How can sonority be detached from corporeality? If Schelling is to defend this claim then clearly sonority must be distinguished from sound. This is where I appeal to the two contextual bases mentioned above (Schelling's preoccupation with the music of the spheres and sonority considered as wave). These two bases are linked by the fact that both of them require a particular understanding of the universe, namely, one that moves beyond the universe as merely physical occurrences and relations. Instead, I read sonority according to what it is that makes such relations possible. Now, the resonance of bodies is directly related to their coherence; this can be observed in things such as the orbital resonance of planets with smaller bodies. In this case, resonance is attached to the

172 This notion of empirical infinity will become important for my discussion of the sublime (4.3).

173 As should hopefully be evident by this point, Schelling's philosophy generally speaking attempts to account for this relation; unity posited in multiplicity, or, the absolute being articulated.

174 Cf. *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*: 'Magnetism is the general act of animation, the implanting of unity into multiplicity, of the concept into difference. The same embodiment of the subjective into the object, which, viewed in the ideal as potency, is self-consciousness, appears here expressed in being, although even this being, considered in itself, is again a relative unity of thinking and being...Magnetism is therefore the universal form of individual being-in-itself' (1988, p. 128).

material movements of the bodies themselves. However, the relations between bodies in orbit, given that they can be translated into harmonic musical intervals, shows for Schelling that there must be, underlying these harmonic intervals, a formal quality that displays the identities of these relations in each other. This formal quality is sonority, which Schelling considers as ‘continuity...an uninterrupted flow of resonance’ (ibid.). This uninterrupted flow allows for sonority to be viewed as containing unity in multiplicity. To put it bluntly, sonority is the possibility of multiplicity contained in a unity. It is then neither the total absence or total presence of resonance, but the absolute form of resonance. Sonority is the essence of resonance, or “resonance-ness”.

Considering the above in terms of the notion of wave, one can refer to the experiment in which an alarm clock is placed in a bell jar, and a vacuum chamber is created inside. Now, the sound of the clock of course cannot be heard, because it has no medium through which to travel. However, this has only shown that the waves cannot travel, it has not erased the possibility, the potential for emitting sound. If one imagines waves, not as emerging or emitting from a source, but as particular manifestations of a larger unity, then sonority is precisely this larger unity; the formal, and so non-corporeal separation and union of resonance into distinct resonances. Like the double-slit experiment, I understand sonority as a wave that separates itself into two – in Schelling’s terms this would be the separation of coherence of bodies from their resonances. In splitting itself, however, sonority is also the rejoining of the separated waves back together into a singular wave. To put it in terms of the identity-philosophy, sonority is differentiation within unity. Hence, as Schelling says, ‘the multiplicity that is combined in the coherence as such with the unity thus becomes a living multiplicity within sonority, a multiplicity that affirms itself’ (ibid., p. 116) If, in double slit experiment, the wave splits and comes back together, sonority is its point of splitting and rejoining.

This leads to the second contextual basis, the notion of the music of the spheres. Schelling claims that the doctrine of the music of the spheres has been wrongly interpreted as asserting that ‘the movements of...large bodies must *cause resonance*’ (ibid.). According to this causal view,

Schelling claims, ‘these bodies rotate with different yet measured velocity and in increasingly expanded circles, [and consequently] this resonance generates a consonant harmony organised according to the tonal relationships of music’. This view is mistaken, claims Schelling, because it interprets the whole thing empirically. Schelling argues that this notion of the music of the spheres ‘does not say that these movements *cause* music, but rather that they themselves *are* music’ (ibid.). I would add here that the movements are the *form* of music, so that the absence of a medium in which resonance can travel does not effect Schelling’s interpretation. Music is the universe in the potency of sonority. Music is, or rather, symbolises, the universe considered as sonorous. The musician is that person who can perceive the harmonies of the universe without them being transmitted.

Sonority is constant or total resonance. The conclusion to this construction of Schelling’s is expressed §77 of the *PoA*: ‘The art form in which the real unity purely as such becomes potency and symbol is *music*’ (ibid., p. 109, original emphasis). As such, Schelling asserts that music encompasses all other formative arts, which include painting, sculpture and finally, architecture. Put simply, all formative arts are in some sense musical, according to Schelling. Rhythm, the next element in Schelling’s analysis, is that which allows music as a particular form to emerge *as* music, rather than mere sonority. Schelling defines rhythm as ‘the periodic subdivision of homogeneity’, such that the ‘uniformity of the latter is combined with variety’ (ibid., p. 110). In other words, rhythm associates the unity of sonority with multiplicity and division of sounds. Schelling argues from this that rhythm is the ‘music within music’, since that which characterises music at the most basic level is ‘the informing of unity into multiplicity’ (p. 111). It should be noted that music is the art form which encompasses these elements – sonority and rhythm. Sonority and rhythm are of course not exclusive to musical art, however. Remember, sonority is cohesion of bodies and their relations. Those bodies can be anything — planets, geological formations, atoms. All of these, Schelling insists, pertain to a sonorous relation when considered from the real side of the absolute. It should be reiterated here that a notion such as the sonorous relation between cosmic bodies

clearly does not refer to bodies as they are understood by the natural sciences. Schelling's theory of beauty, like his entire philosophy of art, emerges from the construction of the universe in the form of art. In the *PoA*, and through this example, one can see Schelling attempt to push his identity-philosophy to its limit.

So, when constructed in the form of art, or to put it more bluntly, when the universe is considered as a work of art, then the relations between its bodies, via sonority, are harmonious. However, the mere cohesion of bodies is not sufficient for music, and rhythm, as a division of sonorous unity, cannot come from harmonious relation, but from the relation of that harmonious relation to a heterogeneous element; as Schelling puts it 'the informing of unity into multiplicity' Consider sonority as breath. Imagine a breath that is totally and completely unified i.e. does not suffer interruption from loss of lung capacity or any external forces. Rhythm is what divides that breath into multiple elements, like so:

o-o-o-o-o-o-o¹⁷⁵

Here the "o" is homogenous, uninterrupted breath. The dashes represent the division of this breath into multiple parts, such that any part could be separated and considered as its own rhythmic unit, for example:

o-o

Schelling claims that the other features of music, harmony and melody, are made possible from the result of these two forces, sonority and rhythm, being placed in a relation of indifference. To use the breath analogy, a piece of music never entirely closes the breath off, never entirely reduces to "-",

175 This is my rendering of sonority is my own, not Schelling's. I use it for illustrative purposes.

nor does it entirely expand to homogenous breath, to “o”.¹⁷⁶ Even a piece of music that consisted of a single note played continuously could still be written out as follows:

-o-

For Schelling, the simple elements of homogeneity and variety — sonority and rhythm — give rise to all subsequent musical forms, including tone, harmony and melody. These various musical forms do something else as well however. They pertain to the absolute which gave rise to them via the cohesion of matter and the relations between material bodies. Thus Schelling believes that he has shown the way in which, not just music as product of human activity occurs, but also how the universe itself is musical in a certain sense. Schelling explains in the following passage:

The cosmic bodies in nature are the first unities that emerge from eternal matter. They also encompass everything within themselves, even though they must contract into themselves and withdraw into narrower and more particular spheres in order to portray the highest organization within themselves in which the unity of nature attains perfect self-intuition. The type of reason inherent within them thus expresses itself in their general movements only for the first potency. Music, which from the one perspective is the most closed of all the arts, the one that comprehends the forms still within chaos and without differentiation, and that expresses only the pure form of these movements separated from corporeality, similarly takes up the absolute model or figure only as rhythm, harmony, and melody, that is, for the first potency, even though within these spheres it is the most boundless of all arts. (ibid., p. 118)

Here is one interpretation of this passage. Cosmic bodies pertain to the first potency, i.e. anorganic matter. As such they display only certain characteristics corresponding to this potency — cohesion, movement and relations to other bodies. However, those same cosmic bodies, as manifestations of the absolute, develop through the second and third potencies — organic matter and organisms

¹⁷⁶ One could object with, for example, John Cage’s “4:33”, which consists of a group of musicians not playing their instruments for the entire performance. See my counter-argument to this below.

respectively. These cosmic bodies, viewed from the perspective of the second and third potences, obtain the same relations of rhythm, harmony and melody, as do music. In fact, music *becomes* music via these elements. Music is an expression of the absolute pertaining to the first potence that expresses a universe in itself. That universe is the absolute taken in the form of music. From the first potence, then, the archetype of beauty is not just deployed in service of cosmic bodies but is claimed to inhere in those cosmic bodies by virtue of a simple line of reasoning. If music derives from the same absolute as does every other real form, and we can deem music beautiful due to its rhythmical, melodic and harmonic features, we must then also be able to deem the harmony of cosmic bodies as beautiful. If music, organisms, human beings and the judgments of beauty in which we partake all arise from the same potences as do cosmic bodies, then how can we say on the one hand that beauty is a feature of our judgment, but then deny that it is a feature of the cosmic bodies which, via the potences, make judgment itself possible? If beauty pertains to a free cognitive harmony, Schelling's claim is that it must also pertain to a free *real* harmony, namely the harmony between the potences of anorganic, organic and organism.

Even John Cage's '4:33', a piece that consists only of four minutes and thirty three seconds of "silence", can be called music according to Schelling's definition. How is this so? Cage's piece substitutes sounds made by instruments for the ambient sounds of the space in which it is performed — shuffling of seats, coughs, a door opening, etc. Treating these sounds homogeneously, they are merely noise. Outside of the context of the piece one would not think to pay them any attention. Indeed, Schelling would not wish to call noise music. However, he refers to a specific form of rhythm that he calls the 'tact of rhythm' (p. 111), wherein rhythm is not merely a regularity of intervals (as could be achieved in counting), but rather is that which is sought 'wherever something identical is to become different or varied' (ibid.). The homogenous sound of a gathered crowd, in the context of a musical piece, attains a kind regularity — 'rhythm is viewed as the transformation of an essentially meaningless succession into a meaningful one' (ibid.). I have explored here

Schelling's construction of music out of its absolute form — sonority — and the primary manifestation of that form, rhythm. I will now draw some conclusions from this

Conclusion

Both the absolute and art have ideal and real sides. The task of identity-philosophy, which Schelling simply calls “general philosophy” in the *PoA*, is to prove the identity of real and ideal in the absolute. The task of philosophy of art is to prove the same identity of real and ideal *in the form of art*. Schelling therefore regards all art forms as not only various relations of indifference between real and ideal but also as symbols of the same features in the universe, both at the anorganic stage of cosmic bodies, and the organic stage of nature. For Schelling, all philosophy, philosophy of art included, begins, proceeds and amounts to the absolute. Schelling's claims about beauty are designed to justify his initial claim in the first section of the *PoA* that ‘the universe is formed in God as an absolute work of art and in eternal beauty’ (ibid., p. 31). I have aimed to show this via the example of sonority as the indwelling of harmonious relations which are symbolised through artworks. Artistic beauty is the representation of the original indifference posited in the informing of ideal into real. In the case of music, this is the informing of unity into multiplicity. What remains to be discussed are Schelling's conception of the sublime and the negotiation of these two elements via genius into the work of art. These will be the topics of 4.3.

4.3. Absolute Formlessness: The Sublime and Genius

Abstract

Corresponding to Schelling's view of beauty as absolute harmony is his view of the sublime as formless chaos. The sublime could therefore be construed as an element of the absolute, just like beauty. However, Schelling argues differently. According to his view, the sublime emerges out of what Schelling calls 'affecting infinity', similar to Kant's notion of the absolutely great. Therefore the sublime is merely the *perception* of chaos, rather than an indication of actual chaos in the universe. This results from Schelling's reliance on Schiller's conception of the sublime, which is highly influenced by Kant. By contrasting Schelling's ideas of the sublime and genius, I show that Schelling's view of art as the organ and document of philosophy reveals a problematic tension between philosophy as ideal and art as real articulations of the absolute. I conclude therefore with a critique of Schelling's notion of genius, claiming that it does not manage to overturn Kant's own view.

4.3.1. The Law of Beauty and the ‘Art of Art’

In the *PoA*, Schelling seeks to prove that beauty is not only a form of human judgment, but also a feature of the absolute. This means that beauty can be conceived in two senses, which I have elucidated above, namely absolute beauty and reflected beauty. The art-work, by virtue of being the indifference of ideal and real, is therefore the symbol or indifference of absolute and reflected beauty for Schelling. With respect to beauty, then, Schelling differentiates himself quite strongly from Kant. For the latter, beauty is expressed as a form of reflective judgment which draws attention to the harmony between one’s cognitive faculties. For Schelling, this subjective harmony corresponds to a harmony inherent in the absolute, Schelling derives this from the very formation of the matter of the universe. Matter is worked into harmony by the act of God, of which the art-work is a symbol. In the case of the sublime, Schelling’s connection to Kant appears stronger than in the case of beauty, in large part due to Schelling’s repeated references to Schiller, who in his essay *On the Sublime* from 1801, defends a largely Kantian notion of the sublime and its relation to reason.¹⁷⁷ In the *PoA*, the sublime is not emergent from the absolute, so much as it is the symbol employed by the subject in attempting to apprehend the absolute. In this way, the sublime in Schelling has a familiar structure to the one with which I characterised the Kantian sublime in chapter two, namely as reason’s attempt to present ideas to sensibility. To elucidate the position of the sublime in Schelling’s philosophy of art, I begin first by briefly reiterating his description of beauty.

Schelling claims that ‘Beauty is posited where the particular (real) is so commensurate with its concept that the latter itself, as infinite, enters into the finite and is intuited *in concreto*. The *real* in which it (the concept) appears thereby *becomes* truly similar and equal to its own idea, the idea in which precisely this universal and particular are in absolute identity’ (*PoA*, 1989, p. 29). Schelling’s

¹⁷⁷ In his introduction to a translation of two essays by Schiller, *Naive and Sentimental Poetry* and *On the Sublime*, Elias points out that the exact date of the publication of *On the Sublime* remains uncertain, with estimates ranging from 1793 to 1801. Elias argues for the later date in consideration of the development of Schiller’s thought (cf. Elias, 1966, pp. 78-9).

conception of beauty in these terms is directly linked to his notion of the absolute as expressed in the gods of Greek mythology. In §33 of the *PoA* Schelling defines the law of portrayal of the gods as the ‘law of beauty’. This law of beauty is that ‘the absolute cannot be beautiful at all except as intuited within limitation, that is, within the particular’. All these gods are ‘the absolute itself...intuited actually’ (ibid.). Schelling here gives the examples of Jupiter and Juno.¹⁷⁸

It is not so much that Greek mythology forms the basis of all art. Such a reduction would be quite absurd. Rather, this mythology exemplifies the formal framework of Schelling’s identity-philosophy, constructed as philosophy of art. So, when Schelling characterises mythology as the ‘universal and absolute material of art’ (*PoA*, p. 17), I interpret this as an already materialised process of the absolute manifesting in mythology. Mythology, then, is taken as the presentation of the indifference of the ideal and real, or, to put it in terms of construction, mythology is the unity of concept and being. This is the law of beauty briefly described, in so far as it pertains to harmonious limitations of the absolute. I now discuss how this relates to the notion of the ‘art of art’.

Schelling refers to the art of art in his discussion of genius.¹⁷⁹ Just like the absolute, the universe, and all manifestations of phenomena contained therein, the genius has both an ideal and a real side.

Schelling explains the real and ideal sides of genius like this:

The real side of genius, or that unity that constitutes the informing of the infinite into the finite, can be called *poesy*, in the narrower sense; the ideal side, or that unity that constitutes the informing of the finite into the infinite, can be called the *art* within art. (ibid., p. 85, original emphasis)

By *poesy*, or the real side, Schelling simply means ‘the creation of something real, or *invention* in and for itself’. *Poesy* here means *poiesis*. The ‘art’ of art is that whereby this creation becomes

178 These are the Roman names for the Greek gods Zeus and Hera.

179 I refer to Schelling’s concept of genius here merely in order to illuminate the relation between *poesy* and art, which will inform my discussion of the sublime. It is only after these discussions that I focus on genius in the *PoA* directly.

‘something that exists and endures on its own power’ (ibid.). What does it mean for a creation to endure? Schelling does not here mean the status of an art-work as mere product. Just as in his nature-philosophy Schelling was concerned with the unconditioned productivity of nature, so here he is concerned with the absolute *poiesis* of the absolute. This can be extrapolated from Schelling’s more general assertion in §5 of the *PoA* that the absolute is utterly eternal (ibid., p. 24). I clarify this by way of a brief comparison with natural productivity. In his nature-philosophy, Schelling claims that natural phenomena emerge from an opposition of forces that are constantly striving for rest i.e. indifference, but never reach it. Schelling uses the analogy of a whirlpool to explain this. A whirlpool is formed when the flow of a stream encounters resistance. The whirlpool is therefore maintained by the continual tension between forces. Natural products, in Schelling’s view, are the things which form in this tension. As such, the opposing forces are never entirely commensurate with each other; if they were then they would each cancel the other out, and no whirlpool, nor product would emerge.¹⁸⁰ This unequal opposition of forces is what makes nature dynamic. Schelling references a similar idea in §5 of the *PoA*, wherein he says that a particular thing’s endurance is ‘a perpetual positing of its universal into *its* concrete manifestation’ (ibid.). However, in the presentation of the absolute in the form of art, Schelling claims that there can be no such perpetual positing, as this implies a continuous succession of positing, and ‘by virtue of the limitation of the latter, [this concrete manifestation] *is* not everything here and now and at once what it could be according to its essence or its universal’ (ibid.). In the absolute, since that particular concrete manifestation is ‘absolutely equal to the universal’ this means that ‘it is everything it *can* be, and is so in *reality* and, simultaneously, without any temporal mediation. It is thus void of time and is eternal in itself’ (ibid.).

According to the above, one could interpret Schelling to be saying that art-works themselves are eternal, and have no relationship to time, which again would be an indefensible claim. Instead, I

180 This example is taken from the *First Outline for a System of the Philosophy of Nature* (2004, p. 18).

take Schelling to be saying that the art-works are *presentations* of eternity. They are not eternal themselves but rather *depict* the eternal. In the context of Schelling's wish to place art as well as philosophy in the absolute, this depiction of eternity can be taken as raising the art-work to the eternal itself, in the same way that a philosophical construction is the identity of its exhibition, and the proof of what it exhibits. Expressed simply, I take Schelling's claim to be the following: artistic creations are productions from out of eternity, and as such, are themselves eternal. To understand this claim, it is necessary to repeat Schelling's more general view of the relation between universal and particular within the absolute. §26 of the *PoA* begins, 'Within the absolute all particular things are genuinely separated and genuinely one only to the extent that each is the universe unto itself, and each is the absolute whole' (ibid., p. 34). These particulars within the absolute, or absolute particularities, Schelling calls ideas. This is of course dependent on Schelling's desire to show the 'truth of the ideas'; that they are not merely regulative as in Kant but constitutive and real.¹⁸¹

How do beauty and the sublime relate to this? The sublime corresponds to the real side, that of informing the infinite into the finite. This is poesy; the act of communicating or manifesting an artistic concept into a physical form. Beauty corresponds to the ideal side, that of informing the finite into the infinite. This is art; whereby this concrete form arrives once again at its own concept, by being the absolute manifestation of that concept. According to this reading, it appears that art can be both beautiful and sublime simultaneously, and Schelling does indeed claim something like this in the *PoA*.¹⁸² Relating this to my earlier discussion, I claim that the unity of concept and being exhibited in the philosophical construction has as its artistic analogue the unity of (ideal, universal) creative power and (real, particular) concrete presentation. If one carries this over to beauty and the

181 Cf. Simpson, 'Foreword' to the *PoA* (1989, p. xi).

182 I qualify this by pointing out that Schelling's references to the simultaneity of beauty and the sublime are made largely in reference to mythological figures. Again, I read this as a mode for the generation of beauty and the sublime rather than a claim that beauty and the sublime themselves emerge from the gods of Greek mythology. Cf. §33, p. 40.

sublime, then it follows that each art-work is the identity of beauty and the sublime. To make sense of this, and assess how viable Schelling's assertions are, I now turn to his account of the sublime. This is an account that I claim is largely influenced by Schiller, and so, indirectly, by Kant. In the following I connect Schelling's description of the sublime with his description of genius, keeping in mind both the explicit influence of Schiller and the implicit influence of Kant.

4.3.2. Sublime Chaos: Schelling versus Schiller

Here I examine Schelling's general claim in the *PoA* that the universe itself is conceivable in two distinct ways or directions. The more specific claim in the context of the universe in the form of art is that each direction corresponds to the sublime and to beauty respectively. Schelling articulates this double view of the universe with the following: On the one hand, there is 'the view of the universe as *chaos*, which, briefly stated, is the basic view of the sublime to the extent that within it everything is comprehended as unity in absolute identity'. On the other is the 'view of the universe as the highest beauty and form, since the universe is chaos precisely by means of the absoluteness of *form*, or because all forms and accordingly also the absolute form are structured into every particular and into *every form*'. (ibid., p. 34).

The fact that forms arise at all from this chaotic universe is the result of the unlimited being in some way limited. This much Schelling believes to have explained via the construction of matter in his nature-philosophy.¹⁸³ However, what is at issue here is not the process by which the unlimited becomes limited. Rather, the issue is the way in which the absolute is considered. When considered as sublime, the absolute is viewed through one's 'encounter [with] the infinite being taken up into the finite as such'; the encounter in which 'we distinguish the infinite within the finite' (ibid., p. 87). Immediately, one detects in Schelling's construction of the sublime that it is more directly connected to the powers of human cognition than it is to the nature of the absolute itself. Though not explicitly, Schelling echoes Kant's distinction between the mathematical and dynamic sublime.

183 Cf. *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, (1988, pp. 179-181).

Schelling's distinction is that between the physical and the ethical sublime. The physical sublime refers to the human subject's 'power of apprehension' being defeated in the face of vast concrete items such as 'colossal...mountains or cliffs', 'the wide ocean that is surrounded only by the vault of heaven' or the 'immensity of the earth' (ibid., p. 86). The ethical sublime refers to the human subject's 'vital power' which 'dwindles to nothing' in the face of the power of nature. Both 'power of apprehension' and 'vital power' are taken from Schiller, who clearly borrows from Kant. Common to all three authors is the notion that the human subject can, through their reason, rise above the merely sensible in nature which imposes upon them in the sublime, to the realm of the infinite; the realm of ideas.¹⁸⁴ Schelling attempts to distinguish himself from Kant and Schiller by claiming that the boundlessness of nature one perceives in colossal or immense masses is 'only the reflection of the *true* infinity' (ibid.). He writes that 'the intuition of the sublime enters only when the sensual, concrete intuition is found to be inadequate for the greatness of the concrete object, and then the truly infinity appears for which the merely concretely infinite is the symbol'. Hence the sublime is 'a subjugation by the truly infinite of the finite that is merely *affecting* infinity' (ibid.).

184 In Kant this view appears in §29 of the *CJ*; 'the disposition of the mind to the feeling of the sublime requires its receptivity to ideas...a dominion that reason exercises over sensibility only in order to enlarge it in a way suitable for its own proper domain (the practical) and to allow it to look out upon the infinite, which for sensibility is an abyss' (5:265).

Schiller expresses a similar view in *On the Sublime*; "We gladly permit the imagination to meet its master in the realm of appearances because ultimately it is only a sensuous faculty that triumphs over other sensuous faculties; but nature in her entire boundlessness cannot impinge upon the absolute greatness within ourselves' (1966, p. 196).

Schelling himself borrows another passage from *On the sublime*, which in Schiller's text reads, 'fearlessly and with a terrible delight [the subject] now approaches these ghastly visions of his imagination and deliberately deploys the whole force of this faculty, [reason,] in order to represent the sensuously infinite, so that even if it should fail in this attempt he will experience all the more vividly the superiority of his ideas over the highest of which sensuousness is capable' (ibid., pp. 203-4).

In referring sublime experiences to the truly infinite for which they are the symbol, Schelling attempts to move beyond the separation in Kant between theoretical and practical reason — namely, that it is only via the latter that one can strive toward the infinite — and Schiller’s preoccupation with the moral significance of the sublime. While the moral significance of the sublime is present in Schelling, it is not his main concern. As he writes, ‘The intuition of the sublime, in spite of its kinship with the element of the ideal and the ethical, is an aesthetic intuition, to use this world here finally’ (p. 86). As with beauty, Schelling’s aim is to ground the sublime in the absolute.

It is with this attempt to describe the sublime within the absolute that Schelling’s account begins to run into problems, which spill over into his account of genius. He claims that nature itself, however colossal or powerful it may appear to the human subject, is not in itself sublime, since ‘the disposition or the principle by which the finite is reduced to a symbol of the infinite is actually found in the subject’ (ibid., p. 90). Once again borrowing from Schiller, Schelling attempts to describe the sublime itself, detached from any disposition of the subject. Here Schelling takes Schiller’s notion of the ‘confusion of [nature’s] own appearances’, which is of course a confusion relative to one’s lack of ability to sensibly apprehend the whole of nature. Schelling applies this to the absolute as ‘primal chaos’, that in which ‘all resides as one and one as all’. Here, Schelling characterises the essence of the sublime in the same way that he characterises the essence of material objects. He writes, ‘the being or substance of the sublime is always one and the same...only the form changes’ (ibid., p. 86). It has already been asserted that this form of the sublime can take two different routes, depending on the perspective from which it is viewed. Borrowing again from Schiller, Schelling writes, ‘*Chaos*, is the fundamental intuition of the sublime, for our vision perceives as chaos even the great mass that transcends our sensuous vision, as well as the sum of all the blind forces too powerful for our mere physical strength. Only to that extent do these things become symbols of the infinite for us.’ (ibid., original emphasis).

The sublime emerges as the attempt by sensibility to apprehend the formlessness of the absolute itself. Absolute formlessness is simultaneously absolute form because, while not being reducible to any particular form, i.e. not being formed itself, it is also the totality of all possible forms. If beauty emerges from the forming of the absolute into harmonious relations, of which the art-work is the objective presentation, then it would follow that the artistic genius needs at least some insight into the primal formlessness of the absolute out of which beauty is formed. This primal formlessness, which is also the ground of all possible forms, is the sublime. And yet, it is still not clear that Schelling has distinguished here between the sublime as subjective disposition and the sublime within the absolute. Once the subjective disposition that encounters the sublime is removed, the sublime itself is also removed, because within the absolute itself, beauty and the sublime are identified. The determination of something as beautiful or sublime is only relative (ibid., p. 91). Hence, Schelling claims that the difference between beauty and the sublime – in terms of the absolute from which they emerge as different – is a quantitative rather than qualitative difference, pertaining to the degree of limitation of the infinite by the finite, or the ideal by the real. Schelling claims that ‘the more the element of limitation reconciles itself with the infinite...the more purely beautiful it is’ (ibid.). For example, one could look at the night sky and see just an array of stars, disordered and chaotic. However, the sublime feeling that I experience out of this encounter – as Schelling himself says – is not because the night sky really *is* this way, but is rather a reflection on the partial nature of my sensibility, and the dwindling of my physical powers in the face of such a vast expanse. However I can also hold the same sky as the symbol of an overriding order, which, though definitely beyond my powers of sensible apprehension, is not impossible for me to conceive through my reason. The absence of limitation or formlessness of the night sky is in fact just what I perceive, not the night sky itself. Schelling confirms this by saying that ‘in general there is no sphere in which something can be called beautiful that in a different situation might not also be sublime’ (ibid.). On this reading the sublime does not seem to be within the absolute at all, but merely a situation in which the absolute is viewed as if it were absolutely formless. However,

Schelling also claims that in art, the object itself is sublime (ibid., p. 90). This is revealing of what I see as a larger problem with Schelling's account of genius, to which I now turn.

4.3.3 The “Sublime” Intuitions of Genius

Both Kant and Schelling claim that everyone can access the sublime, and that this is indication of a good moral disposition.¹⁸⁵ This concerns judgments of the sublime, or in Schelling's terms, practices of the sublime. To be able to create things which can induce these judgments or practices is rarer. For Kant, beauty and the sublime can be demonstrated only in the realm of judgment, of inner cognitive activity. Genius is that capacity in particular humans — a gift of nature — to instigate judgments of beauty through a work. For Kant, however, the artist endowed with genius is not in the business of creating works that are sublime.¹⁸⁶ Schelling thinks differently. This is due to Schelling's claim that the universe can be viewed as either beautiful or sublime, and the related claim that all representations of the absolute are in themselves universes. As such, an art-work for Schelling can be either beautiful or sublime; indeed it can be both simultaneously. While this certainly follows from Schelling's conception of the identity of the absolute, itself inherited from his earlier notion of the unconditioned in nature, some problems start to emerge once the sublime is viewed in the context of genius. By extension, this specific problem connects to a more general one in the *PoA*, which has to do with the status of the artist relative to the status of the philosopher. Schelling writes of this relation between the artist and the philosopher:

Since in the artist the same principle is objective that in the philosopher reflects itself subjectively, he [the artist] thus does not relate to that principle subjectively or consciously—though he, too, could become conscious of it through a higher reflex. He is not, however, conscious of it in the quality of being an artist. As such he is driven by that principle

185 Cf. Kant, *CJ* §29 (5:265); Schelling, *PoA*, §65, (1989, p. 87).

186 Kant writes in §48 of the *CJ* that genius is the ‘talent for beautiful art’, and that the beauty of art ‘is a beautiful representation of a thing’ (5:311).

and for just that reason does not himself possess it. When he does achieve the standpoint of the ideal reflex with regards to that principle, he thereby elevates himself as an artist to a higher potency, yet as an artist still always relates to it *objectively*. The subjective element within him passes over again to the objective element, just as in the philosopher the objective element is constantly taken up into the subjective one. For this reason philosophy, notwithstanding its inner identity with art, is nonetheless always and necessarily science, that is, ideal, whereas art is always and necessarily art, that is, real. (ibid., p. 6)

This characterisation of the artist bears some resemblance to Kant's in the §46 *CJ*, where he writes that 'the author of a product that he owes to his genius does not know himself how the ideas for it come to him', since for Kant the rule of genius is 'nature' (5:308). Schelling in fact makes several remarks on genius that resonate with Kant's. In the introduction to the *PoA* Schelling claims that 'genius is autonomous, yet it escapes only external determination by laws, not determination by its own laws, since it is only genius insofar as it actually constitutes the highest law-governed qualities' (1989 p. 6). This is comparable with Kant's description of genius in the *CJ* as exemplary originality: 'genius is a talent for producing that for which no determinate rule can be given, not a predisposition of skill for that which can be learned in accordance with some rule, consequently originality must be its primary characteristic. [However,] since there can also be original nonsense, its products must at the same time be models, i.e., exemplary, hence, while not themselves the result of imitation, they must yet serve others in that way, i.e. as a standard or a rule of judging' (5:308).

Despite these similarities, Schelling wishes to move beyond Kant's quasi-mystical view of genius as a gift of nature, and place it firmly within the absolute.¹⁸⁷ For Schelling, genius is secured in the absolute as 'the eternal concept of the human being in God' (*PoA*, 1989, p. 84). What distinguishes genius is not its mysterious origin, but its capacity to articulate – which here means present as real – the absolute in its pure form, i.e. identity. However, since it remains true in both Kant and Schelling

187 Cf. *CJ*, §46 (5:308).

that not everybody can be a genius, it is unclear what Schelling manages to add here by claiming that the genius is the eternal concept of the human being in God. In addition, the above passage on the relation between artist and philosopher appears to claim that *philosophy* is responsible for articulating the idea of which art-works are merely the unconscious depiction. I now move to the conclusion, which dwells on this question.

Conclusion

Schelling attempts to disassemble the mystery of genius in the following passage:

With few exceptions, one can learn very little about the essence of art from those who practice art in such an age, since as a rule they have no guide concerning the actual idea of art and of beauty. Precisely this dominant disagreement even among those who practice art is a compelling reason for seeking the true idea and principles of art itself by means of science. (1989, p. 11)

Schelling seems to be contradicting himself somewhat, on the one hand presenting art as that which, like nature, seems to operate according to its own self-determining laws, but also as the thing which will always have a flawed concept of itself without the help of rigorous philosophy to decode the practices that the artists themselves cannot explain. It is unclear if Schelling means to say that art-works themselves express flawed concepts, or whether he is making the softer claim that to engage in constructions of the nature of art is to necessarily do philosophy of art.

This leaves open further questions. Can philosophy even talk about art in the way Schelling desires? Can philosophy construct a system of art, given that artistic creation (poesy) draws into its products an unconscious element of nature? Must philosophy become unconscious in order to reveal these grounds? In other words, must philosophy become art if it is to objectively present the absolute in which it is grounded? Such is Schelling's claim in the *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1978, p. 232), but I do not believe this is his claim in the *PoA*. While Schelling offers an intriguing notion of the relation of beauty and the sublime, which I have read as variations on a continuum between

form and formlessness, it is not clear how he has distinguished his notion of genius from Kant's. Both the sublime and genius in Schelling appear to be partial or unconscious reflexes of that which philosophy articulates completely and consciously. Schelling's wish to construct the universe in the form of art therefore seems to rest on limitations inherited from Kant's aesthetics. The real and direct depiction of the absolute in art doesn't appear to actually be so without the aid of philosophical construction, which acts on behalf of the genius, blind to the origin and essence of their own creations. Perhaps the absolute cannot be articulated unless this articulation is subsequently constructed *in* and *of* the absolute, by philosophy. There is one topic I have mentioned but not fully elucidated in Schelling, that can potentially reconcile this discrepancy between the artistic unconscious and the philosophical conscious. This is Schelling's notion of the symbol. In the concluding part of this chapter, I examine Schelling on the symbol in the context of poetry. The resulting concept of symbolic language presents an opportunity to assess whether reconciliation between philosophy and the ocean of poetry from which it emerges is possible.

4.4. Poetry and the Absolute Symbol of Language

Abstract

In the final part of chapter four, I examine Schelling's notion of the symbol. I claim that it is with this notion that Schelling attempts to construct not just the identity of art and the absolute, but of art and philosophy. I begin with a reiteration of Kant's view of poetry, which I claim provides a useful point from which to examine Schelling's dissatisfaction with Kant's philosophy more generally. While cautious not to reduce Schelling's philosophy to merely a comment on Kant, I point out some important common ground between them on the issue of poetic versus philosophical language. I look to Whistler's account of the symbol in Schelling as one way to interpret the relation of art and philosophy in the *PoA*. While I agree with much of Whistler's reading, I identify some problems in its characterisation of indifference (*Indifferenz*). The overriding question will be this: once the absolute has moved from absolute identity to presentation of that identity, to what extent is it still absolute? Schelling's answer: to the extent that the absolute forms a symbol of itself. It is with this answer that I move to my own interpretation of Schelling's symbol, wherein I claim that the *PoA* reveals different goals to the one's that Whistler identifies.

4.4.1 Introduction

As I have maintained throughout this chapter, a fundamental concern in Schelling's *PoA* is to properly account for the relation between art and philosophy. With his theory of the symbol, this concern comes most clearly to the fore. As such, the symbol in Schelling is never an exclusively artistic phenomenon.¹⁸⁸ For Schelling, the symbolic is a mode of presentation (*Darstellung*), which he claims can unite philosophy and poetry. As I have already discussed, Schelling identifies art and philosophy in the sense that they are both manifestations of the absolute — philosophy is primarily an ideal manifestation, art primarily a real one. Already, however, Schelling has separated the absolute into two sides, which, despite his insistence that they do indeed issue from the same absolute identity, are separate nonetheless. To become absolute once again, philosophy must find what is real to it; art must find what is ideal. In what follows I elucidate Schelling's attempt to show, through his theory of the symbol, that such a reunion is possible, as well as some consequences of this.

Why is the (re)union of real and ideal important? To answer this question requires some comparison with Kant. In making this comparison, I should make clear that I neither view Schelling merely as a respondent to Kant, nor Kant as a problem that Schelling has to solve. I therefore agree with Whistler that one should not view Schelling's philosophy merely as 'Kantianism drawn to its most extreme conclusions' (2013, p. 67) However, when it comes to the symbol, particularly considered as the mode of poetic presentation, it is clear that Schelling does indeed seek to move beyond Kant's views in some sense. Schelling refers to Kant's aesthetics as a 'formalism', which, while bearing a 'new and higher view' of art that its predecessors, still ends up presenting 'artistically empty doctrines of art' (*PoA*, 1989, p. 8). This is one of the strongest condemnations of Kant's aesthetics in the *PoA*, and it is, I claim, largely to do with Kant's aesthetic ideas being dependent on ideas of reason, such that art itself is reduced to a dependency on 'the moral and the useful' (*ibid.*).

188 Cf. Whistler, 2013, pp. 142-3.

In order to establish how fair Schelling's assessment of Kant actually is, I revisit a passage from Kant's *CJ* which I take as representative of the position Schelling attacks. In the passage, Kant defends the notion that poetry is the highest art. He writes,

The art of poetry (which owes its origin almost entirely to genius, and will be guided least by precept or example) claims the highest rank of all [in the arts]. It expands the mind by setting the imagination free and presenting, within the limits of the given concept and among the unbounded manifold of forms possibly agreeing with it, the one that connects its presentation with a fullness of thought to which no linguistic expression is fully adequate, and thus elevates itself aesthetically to the level of ideas. (5:326)

At first, this passage doesn't seem to warrant the kind of attack that Schelling wages on Kant. However, in the same paragraph, Kant continues that we can supply ourselves, through poetry, with a 'schema of the supersensible' (*ibid.*).

There are two consequences of this passage, which I believe contribute to Schelling's ire at what he views as the emptiness of Kant's aesthetics. Firstly, poetry in Kant's view is a linguistic presentation of ideas which are themselves inexpressible. What is expressed poetically cannot be captured in a straightforward linguistic expression. In addition to this explicit statement of Kant's there is an implicit one; that this irreducibility of poetic expression also applies to linguistic expressions in philosophy. This will prove important for my assessment of Schelling's theory of the symbol, as the *PoA* seems determined to explain what poetry *is*, not just how it is to be aesthetically judged. Secondly, the presentation of poetry acts as a schema of the supersensible, in the sense that through poetry one is able to judge of nature 'freely and self-actively', in accordance with 'points of view that nature does not present by itself in experience either for sense or for the understanding' (*ibid.*). Now, it should be stated that Kant does offer a solution to the apparent contradiction of a linguistic expression (poetry) presenting an idea that no linguistic expression can capture. He too

calls this the symbolic, and also defines it as a mode of presentation. In §59 of the *CJ* Kant defines the symbolic mode of presentation in contrast to the schematic:

All hypotyposis (presentation)...as making something sensible, is of one of two kinds: either schematic where to a concept grasped by the understanding the corresponding intuition is given *a priori*; or symbolic, where to a concept which only reason can think, and to which no sensible intuition can be adequate, an intuition is attributed with which the power of judgment proceeds in a way merely analogous to that which is observed in schematization. (5:351).

For Kant the symbolic relies upon analogy in order to connect sensible intuitions to ideas. However, for Schelling, this process of analogous schematisation, whereby something is taken as meaning something else, is not the symbolic but the allegorical. Schelling defines allegory as that mode of presentation in which ‘the particular...means or signifies the universal or is intuited as the universal’ (*PoA*, 1989, p. 47). Kant’s example in the *CJ* of a handmill symbolising a despotic state can help to show what Schelling means by this. In Kant’s example, the sensible representation of a handmill – its various features and actions – are judged *as if*, i.e. analogously, to the features and actions of a despotic state. One thing is taken to *mean* another, although literally it does not. As Whistler puts it, in the Kantian symbol, ‘meaning and being remain separated, and in consequence the former is only won from the latter by means of an artificial process of analogous reasoning’ (2013, p. 66). For Schelling, the symbolic must present itself as the identity of meaning and being. I will discuss this in detail in the following section.

One could here contend that when Kant defines poetry as a schema of the supersensible, he does not mean that poetry is symbolic, and so the distinction between symbol and allegory is not necessary. However, given the above quoted passage from Kant on the nature of the symbolic, it is hard to read poetry as the schema of the supersensible in any other way. What results from Kant’s description of poetry is a division between poetic and non-poetic language. The former can act as a vehicle for

communicating aesthetic ideas, but the content of these ideas does not appear to be translatable into non-poetic language. In what follows, I will show why Schelling believes this to be problematic.

4.4.2. Schelling's Construction of the Symbol

Shortly before Schelling introduces his notion of symbolic language, he affirms the common goal of art and the philosophy of art. He writes, 'our present task, which is to understand the transition of the aesthetic idea into the concrete work of art, is the same as the general task of philosophy as such, namely, to understand the manifestation of the ideas through particular things' (p. 98). This reiterates the idea I mentioned earlier that the symbol is not an exclusively artistic mode of presentation. It also highlights a quite particular problem with which I will conclude; namely, how philosophy and art can each emerge from the absolute while remaining absolute themselves.

In §39 of the *PoA*, Schelling defines the symbol in the following way: 'Representation of the absolute with absolute indifference of the universal and the particular within the particular is possible only symbolically' (p. 45). To reach the symbolic, Schelling moves through three levels. The important thing about these levels is that they are not qualitatively differentiated, but are rather a 'succession of potences' (ibid., p. 48). I will return to this point in a moment. The first and most basic of the three levels of representation is schematism. Schelling defines schematism as a representation in which 'the universal means the means the particular, or in which the particular is intuited through the universal' (ibid., p. 46). A simple example of this would be applying a concept to an object, where the concept is what makes the object *mean* what it is.

The second level is the allegorical, where the 'particular means the universal, or in which the universal is intuited through the particular'. An example of allegory would be intuiting the acts of a virtuous man as meaning the concept virtue. The third level is the symbolic, where neither universal means particular nor vice versa, but rather the two are 'absolutely one' (ibid.). In this case, the virtuous man's actions do not merely *mean* virtue, rather they *are* virtue itself, and virtue *is* the virtuous man. The symbolic is the 'absolute form', because it is the only form in which the

universal and the particular unify into one. These three levels correspond to the level of indifference between ideal and real in the various iterations of the absolute. The allegorical represents finitude, the schematic infinity, and the symbol eternity. What differentiates infinity from eternity? Eternity is not simply endless magnitude or an endless amount of time, it is rather endless producing i.e. an endless process of finitude emerging from infinity, and returning to it. Concepts like magnitude and time are produced out of eternity; eternity is their condition. If eternity is the condition of all subsequent things, and in fact endures *through* all things, one starts to understand better how language symbolizes eternity.

The status of the symbol is therefore no small matter for Schelling. Whistler points out that it is incumbent upon Schelling to show that ‘there is symbolic language and that philosophy employs it to exhibit the absolute absolutely’ (Whistler, 2013, p. 168). The reason for this in the *PoA*, is that Schelling believes in the ‘absolute status of philosophy and the absolute status of poetry’ (ibid., p. 166). So either the language of philosophy and poetry is an absolute language, or it symbolises an absolute expression which itself cannot be absolutely expressed. As Whistler writes, philosophy is a linguistic enterprise, a ‘discursive yet maximal *Darstellung* [presentation] of the absolute’ (ibid.). What does this mean? Can philosophy be discursive about the absolute and identical with it at the same time? Whistler’s account of the symbol in the *PoA* addresses these potential problems. Before moving on to Schelling’s construction of symbolic language, and poetic language in particular, I take a moment here to dwell on Whistler’s summary of the problems and his response to them.

Firstly, I return to the point above, that schematism, allegory and symbol are a succession of potences. In simple terms, this means that schematism, allegory and symbol are differences of degree rather than of kind. How is one to interpret this? Schelling himself takes it as given and does not offer an explicit defence. Whistler provides some clarity on the issue. Whistler claims that schematism, allegory and the symbolic are ‘different intensities of absolute form’ (2013, p. 145). As such, they each correspond to ‘the three different types of self formation of reality’ (ibid.). In the

case of schematism, the infinite is emphasised over the finite, or in other words, the ideal is emphasised over the real. In the case of allegory, the finite is emphasised over the infinite, or the real over the ideal. In the case of the symbol, neither real nor ideal take precedence. The symbol is therefore the indifference between ideal and real, and also therefore between schematism and allegory.

A second potential problem emerges from the first, which is that Schelling also refers to the indifference of the symbol between schematism and allegory, as a synthesis of latter two. In other words, the symbol is the result of schematism and allegory being synthesised. However, synthesis, in Schelling's view, applies to a reflective mode of philosophy, namely one that rests on the dualism between subject and object. This is where my view differs from Whistler's. Whistler claims that 'reflection is a mode of thinking or being in which the indifference of the absolute is not produced to a very high degree', and further, that 'reflection designates the less intense ways in which reality manifests itself' (ibid., p. 148). I do not follow this line of thinking, precisely for the reason that Schelling takes indifference to be itself subject to differentiation, and further, that speculation is merely reflection to a more intense degree. Whistler claims that the presence of 'synthesis' in the *PoA* is most likely a result of Schelling preparing the material for lectures, rather than a rigorously construed text (ibid., pp. 144-5). This may be so, and the fact that Schelling withheld the *PoA* from publication during his lifetime supports such an idea. However, given that the *PoA* itself sits on the edge of Schelling's period of relative silence before the publication of his *Freiheitsschrift* in 1809,¹⁸⁹ I claim that it is just as reasonable to interpret the presence of synthesis here as a realisation on Schelling's part that the absolute grounding of philosophy and art in the identity of the absolute came with its own specific difficulty, namely, how to first leave the absolute

189 The full English title is *Philosophical Inquiries into the Essence of Human Freedom*, but is commonly known as the *Freedom Essay*.

so that one can return to it.¹⁹⁰ With this in mind, I now turn to Schelling's claims about symbolic language in the *PoA* to see what solutions it offers.

4.4.3. The Poetry of Symbolic Language

In order to understand Schelling's thoughts on the symbolic in language, I will briefly reiterate his general position regarding the absolute. Schelling claims that the universe itself, as the most basic manifestation of the absolute, is 'structured in two directions corresponding to the two unities within the absolute' (*PoA*, 1989, p. 201). The first of these presents the absolute as the ground of existence, and corresponds to the real side. The second presents the absolute as essence, and hence as inhering in every particular. The first of these is 'essence worked into form', the second 'form [...] worked into essence' (*ibid.*). However, just because the absolute is spilt into real and ideal sides, this does not mean that it is split *apart*. Both the absolutely real – symbolised by the plastic arts – and the absolute ideal – symbolised by the verbal arts – contain their opposite by virtue of being absolute.

In §73 Schelling states this most explicitly: 'the ideal unity, as the resolution of the particular into the universal, of the concrete into the concept, becomes objective in speech or language'. He goes on to argue for why this is the case. On the one hand, language is 'the direct expression of something *ideal* — knowledge, thought, feeling, will, and so on — through something real' and for that reason Schelling considers language itself as a work of art. On the other hand, 'language is also a work of nature, because it is the only material used for art that cannot be considered as being created by art'. Schelling concludes from this that language is a 'natural work of art' (p. 99).

The key to understanding Schelling's philosophy of language has to do with his conception of the absolute. In the section of the *PoA* where he talks about language, Schelling reiterates this conception by stating, 'the absolute is by nature an eternal act of producing' (*ibid.*). The absolute *is* to the extent that it *produces*.

190 Cf. McGrath, 2015, p. 8.

In a very dense passage of the *PoA* Schelling describes the absolute's eternal producing as an absolute cognitive act. This act, like everything, moves in an ideal and a real direction. The absolute is to be taken, therefore, as the identity of ideal and real. When the absolute moves over into form, i.e. when the infinite is informed into the finite, this real side of the act manifests as matter. Matter becomes a symbol for the absolute, as it takes the eternity of the absolute's producing into itself. However, matter is not itself eternal. Unlike older theories of substance, Schelling thinks that the only eternal thing is the *producing* of matter, not matter itself. In other words, matter is matter to the extent that it is being produced. In the previous chapter (3.2.3) I pointed out how Schelling views nature (the real side of the absolute), as the identity of productivity and product. To shift terminology for a moment, this means that the ground of all matter is not an eternal substance, but the eternal production of substance. That which the act of production produces, as I mentioned before, moves in two directions simultaneously. In other words, matter is not the cause of ideas, and ideas are not the cause of matter. When the absolute moves to the real side, its product is matter. When it moves to the ideal side, its product is ideas, which do not *have* to transfer themselves into any form, but can remain ideal. However, given that this ideal is contained with the act, it is not the absolutely ideal, but rather appears as something 'relatively ideal that possesses the real outside of itself – standing over against it' (1989, p. 100) However, as relatively ideal, it strives for the real to give it form, and so cannot cross over into objectivity. The ideal side of the absolute affirmation remains subjective, and strives 'yet again toward a covering, a body, through which it may become objective without detriment to its ideality' (ibid., p. 100).

For Schelling, language represents the indifference point between the ideal striving for a body and that which embodies the ideal. Language is the densest symbol because it represents the maximal indifference of ideal and real, the informing of the idea (infinite) into the real (finite) concrete linguistic utterance. Language *itself*, just as the absolute *itself*, is neither wholly real nor wholly ideal. Rather, language is the ground of possibility for *particular* languages, i.e. languages that transmit the indifference – though synthesised – of ideal and real. It is not just that language is the

densest symbol. *All* symbols are ultimately linguistic. The differences between art forms are not qualitative, but quantitative. Because language achieves the indifference of ideal and real, it becomes a 'more paradigmatic symbol than matter, and this forms the basis for Schelling's conjecture that poetry and linguistic symbols are generally superior to material symbols' (Whistler, 2013, p. 183). Language is the objectification of the absolute ideal, not merely into matter, which cannot itself speak, but into an objective form that does not thereby lose its ideality. To put it another way, the self-affirmation of God becomes the '*speaking word* of God, the *logos*, which is simultaneously God himself' (*PoA*, 1989 p. 100). It is this divine speaking in which one partakes with language.

Schelling's connection here of human language with the word of God would appear to provide a natural conclusion to his theory of the symbol. God's creation is itself symbolised, reaffirmed, by human language. As Schelling himself reaffirms, 'one views the word or speaking of God as the outflow of the divine science, as the creating, multifarious, and yet congruous harmony of the divine act of creation' (*ibid.*). However, this is where the symbol in Schelling begins to show signs of a deeper realisation. Schelling continues, 'just as knowledge still grasps or renders itself symbolically in language, so also does divine knowledge apprehend itself symbolically in the world such that also the *whole* of that real world (whole inasmuch as it is itself the unity of the real and the ideal) is itself a primal act of speaking. Yet the *real* world is no longer the living word, the speech of God himself, but rather only the spoken—or expended—word' (*ibid.*, pp. 100-1). At this point, one arrives in Schelling to the moment that I have anticipated throughout, namely, the relation between art and philosophy. I propose an interpretation of Schelling that acknowledges the difficulty he has with reconciling this relation.

4.4.4. Looking into the Speculative Mirror

To end, it is sometimes necessary to return to the beginning. In this case it is Schelling's own beginning in the *PoA*, where he states very clearly that art is the 'repetition of [identity-philosophy]

in its highest potence' (ibid., p. 13). It is clear from what has been said so far that this highest potence is the symbolic. However, if art is identity-philosophy conducted symbolically, then it would seem that philosophy is not itself symbolic, and that art has the advantage over philosophy. This would seem to contradict Schelling's remarks on genius and the sublime, wherein he states that philosophy can reveal the true nature of things only partly understood by their creators. The claim that art is identity-philosophy in its highest potence appears to make art superior to philosophy. Even when Schelling directly asserts the superiority of philosophy, art can in some sense be seen to have something philosophy does not. For instance, Schelling writes,

Philosophy is the basis of everything, encompasses everything, and extends its constructions to all potences and objects of knowledge. Only through it does one have access to the highest. By means of the doctrine of art an even smaller circle is formed within philosophy itself, one in which we view more immediately the eternal in a visible form, as it were. Hence, the doctrine of art, properly understood, is in complete agreement with philosophy. (ibid.)

This passage quite assertively places the circle of art within the all-encompassing circle of philosophy. However, while the circle of art is smaller, it is also more potent, both in Schelling's sense of potence, and also in terms of its capabilities. Philosophy may encompass the absolute, it may extend to all potences, but art, and here, I would claim, poetry particularly, confronts philosophy with a visible eternity, with a fully formed absolute. Poetry realises and makes real what philosophy only identifies in the ideal. A little further back in Schelling's introduction one finds this: 'The philosophy of art is a necessary goal of the philosopher, who in art views the inner essence of his own discipline as if in a magic and symbolic mirror' (ibid., p. 8). The union of philosophy and art, of the scientific spirit and the poetic, is always a *reunion*; a joining together of that which first has to be split, i.e. differentiated. In terms of the identity that is supposed to be captured or articulated by identity-philosophy, it remains unclear in the *PoA* to what extent art *is* identity-philosophy (at its highest potence) or merely a *branch* of identity philosophy.

Another problem still lingers. From one perspective language is the utmost symbol of the absolute, and so can present it objectively. This is poetry. From the other side, language is constantly trying to return to itself as this symbol. This is philosophy. Philosophy is forever trying to become poetry, namely to become objective. In the *PoA*, Schelling constructs indifference out of the absolute coming into form. However, indifference is not the same as that out of which it is constructed. Indifference allows for the symbol, the symbol in turn cycles back into the absolute as its highest potency. It is a circling back. But what has been brought with it? Content and form are one within the absolute. But as I have shown, content and form are also one, in the sense that they are indifferent, i.e. through the symbolic. However maximally the symbol presents the fundamental oneness of the absolute, it remains the case that the absolute must be objectified – expressed, externalised. The absolute cannot be one straightforwardly.

Conclusion to Chapter Four: Philosophy, Poetry

Towards the end of the *PoA* Schelling offers some insight into his wish for a union of philosophy and poetry, in the form of the didactic poem, ‘in which not merely the forms and aids of presentation, but rather that which is to be portrayed is itself poetic’ (1989, p. 226). Envisioning this poem Schelling writes the following:

The didactic poem can only be a poem about the universe or the nature of things. It must portray the reflex of the universe in knowledge. The most perfect image of the universe must thus be achieved in science itself, which is called to be just such an image. It is certain that a science that achieves this identity with the universe will agree with the universe, not only from the perspective of content, but also from that of form; to the extent that the universe itself is the archetype of all poesy, and indeed is the poesy of the absolute itself, science in that identity with the universe, regarding both form and content, will in and for itself already be poesy and will resolve itself into poesy. The origin of the absolute didactic poem or of the speculative epic thus coincides with the perfection of science; just as science originally emerged from poesy, so also is its final and most beautiful destiny to flow back into this ocean. (p. 226)

The end of this passage is reminiscent of the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, where Schelling makes the following statement: ‘philosophy was born and nourished by poetry in the infancy of knowledge, and with it all those sciences it has guided to perfection; we may thus expect them, on completion, to flow back like so many individual streams into the universal ocean of poetry from which they took their source’ (1978, p. 232). The parallels between the *STI* and the *PoA* continue. In the final part of the *STI*, Schelling points out the mutual dependency of philosophy and art:

Take away objectivity from art, one might say, and it ceases to be what it is, and becomes philosophy; grant objectivity to philosophy, and it ceases to be philosophy and becomes art. Philosophy attains, indeed, to the highest, but it brings to this summit only, so to say, the fraction of a man. Art brings *the whole man*, as he is, to that point, namely to the knowledge

of the highest, and this is what underlies the eternal difference and the marvel of art. (1978 p. 233)

I would argue that the same contention exists in the *PoA*, except with a new spirit of synthesis, here meaning not just the joining together of different elements, but also of showing their underlying affinity, and fundamental identity. So, Schelling ends the *PoA* with the following;

The complete manifestation of philosophy emerges only within the totality of all potences. The principle of philosophy, as the identity of all these potences, thus necessarily has no potence itself...The construction of philosophy does not direct itself to a construction of potences as such and thus as different potences, but rather within each potence only to the presentation of the absolute such that each in and for itself is the whole.

However, he adds,

The relationship between the individual parts in the closed and organic whole of philosophy resembles that between the various figures in a perfectly constructed poetic work, where every figure, by being a part of the whole, as a perfect reflex of that whole as actually absolute and independent in its own turn. (1989, p. 282)

Philosophy and art cannot do without each other. So, a persistent dualism continues. The path to absolute identity is a double path, separating out and reuniting occasionally, to illuminate the common ground beneath, the absolute more evasive than ever when it is most near, in the sublime presence of poetic reality. If philosophy can take part of the human to the highest peak, then inevitably and perhaps instructively, art confronts us with something wholly real, to which – despite flights of speculation – we must ultimately always return.

Conclusion to the Thesis

I began this thesis by asking Kant and Schelling deal with the unconditioned/absolute in their philosophy. To answer this question, I have offered both metaphysical and aesthetic readings of the meaning the unconditioned read through Schelling's response to Kant's critical philosophy. A significant part of both Kant's and Schelling's articulation of the unconditioned has to do with the role of nature. Part of the effort involved in addressing the role of nature have been directed toward building a method by which to move between and compare Kant's and Schelling's distinct philosophical systems. I have read Kant largely through the lens of Schelling's response to Kant, in order to establish a dialogue on a specific set of issues common to both philosophers. As I began this thesis by saying, metaphysical, aesthetic, and artistic expressions of the unconditioned/absolute are all only partial representations of something which cannot be exhausted by any particular representation. Putting the results of the individual chapters together, I offer two fragments that describe transitions between Kant and Schelling, one concerning nature, and other concerning art. The top line describes Kant, the bottom line Schelling:

Kant: nature as the idea of the sum total of appearances

Schelling: nature as unconditioned productivity.

Kant: art as the expression of aesthetic ideas

Schelling: art as expression of the absolute.

It has been my task during this thesis to explain and defend these transitions. In so doing, I have examined Kant's critical philosophy and Schelling's identity-philosophy, both as self-sufficient

systems and relations between two historical periods. The common element of these systems, I have argued, is the prized place of poetry as the form of art that seems particularly suited to articulating something to which philosophy only approximates. I will spend a moment on this relation between philosophy and poetry, firstly for Kant, and secondly for Schelling. I reiterate here that the difference between Kant's and Schelling's philosophies can be viewed as a difference in standpoints. The difference between critical philosophy and identity-philosophy comes down to where one chooses to begin in one's investigations.

Kant shows us how to prepare for striving toward the unconditioned, the actual carrying out of which is done by practical reason. Aesthetic judgment is a pleasurable way in which to reflect upon our rational and moral natures, on the duties to which we are bound, and on our capacities to live up to them. The organisation of nature, which we judge as if it were purposively arranged as such, becomes the ultimate symbol for our own moral nature, and gives us cause to see the world to which we are related, not just as an aggregate of mechanisms, but as sustained by the divine intelligence of God. Through the journey of Kant's critical philosophy, one can indeed see how knowledge makes room for faith. Art, and poetry in particular can provide us with pleasurable ways in which to contemplate the same rational ideas by which we unify our experience of nature, and again, it does so for the sake of the same principled moral striving. In his aesthetic philosophy, Kant need not occupy himself with how it is that the artistic productions of genius come to express to us that which we see in nature. What is most important for Kant is how we can judge the products of genius as such. In Kant's critical philosophy, the line is drawn by experience, and it is up to the methods of transcendental idealism to explain how it is that we arrived there. For this we require not just the power of deduction, but *transcendental* deduction; we do not simply seek to know how we came by this or that experience, but how we come to have any experience at all, and *a priori* knowledge of its objects. But here there is a subtle distinction on which I claim Schelling hinges. By inquiring into the possibility of experience, Kant intends to show the grounds on which experience rests at any given moment, and by extension, in all possible moments. The grounds of

experience are not temporally, but logically prior to experience itself. The unconditioned is yielded by the demand for a unity of *Erkenntnisse*; meaning not just modes of knowledge, but a *system* of knowledge.

In this thesis, I have examined Kant's critical philosophy as a preparation for a complete speculative science. The systematic completion of philosophy results from its scope being limited. Reason attains its unity by subjecting itself to the formation of boundaries, beyond which, it slips into baseless claims, into territory which cannot be held up to the trial of critical metaphysics itself. Reason beyond its bounds leads, mostly, to error. However, the regulative ideas of reason which give rise to the various forms of dialectic on the *CPR*, help to secure the boundaries reason must not surpass. According to the ideas, nature is held as a unity to the extent that there is a unity of *a priori* laws governing experience of nature. Beyond these laws of experience, one cannot venture, except to find their necessary validity for the powers of cognition. In the *CJ*, Kant adds to these powers a further one, the power of reflective judgment. This allows for Kant to articulate a formal process by which we are able to hold nature not just as a unity, but also as purposive for the sake of our cognition. The power of genius, in addition, seems able, by some unknown gift of nature, to retrieve something from the hidden territory of nature, that which lies beyond the grasp of judgments and ideas. What is more, the power of genius is able translate this unknowable something into a communicable form. A poem may transport us into pleasurable and inspiring realms, but, with critical capacities intact, the poem will not take us beyond the bounds of our reason.

For Schelling, the unconditioned is a productive activity, both in the self and in nature. The unconditioned and the absolute are not exactly the same thing in Schelling's thought, though they are related. The unconditioned is the mode in which the absolute produces itself. Navigating this relationship between the unconditioned and the absolute reveals a dynamic in Schelling's philosophy which is difficult to deal with, and with which Schelling himself struggled. This struggle is precisely the one over how to articulate the absolute. In my analysis of Schelling's

metaphysics and his philosophy of art, a difficulty emerges. In order for philosophy to articulate the absolute it must separate itself *from* the absolute. Intellectual intuition, which can provide insight into the original unity from which philosophy and all other things spring, cannot reunite these things *actually*, but only *ideally*. Has Schelling come so far from Kant after all? Schelling can conceive of nature as the identity of productivity and product, but this identity is not simple sameness, it is not numerical identity but polar identity, one which relies upon the extremes of its poles being in continual tension. In my discussion of Schelling's philosophy of art I used the figure of the wave to explain the splitting and re-joining of sonority. This figure can also help to conceptualise how Schelling saw the dynamic formation of the absolute itself. The absolute is eternally differentiating and re-identifying itself, and the multiple oppositions which arise from philosophising – ideal-real, subject-object, mind-nature, infinite-finite – are merely various intersections of that wave. Relating to the above question over how far Schelling moves beyond Kant, we may ask of these various oppositions and the unity to which they belong, can this unity be *shown*, or must it remain, as Kant would have it, a regulative concept of human reason?

While identity-philosophy can posit the absolute, it is always entangled in intersections and oppositions. I see Schelling's defence of the constructive method as an attempt to philosophise in a non-dualistic way. While the success of this defence is debatable, its implicit consequences are evident in Schelling's *Philosophy of Art*, where the constructive method is taken as given. Philosophy can construct the universe in the form of art because such a construction is both universal and particular, i.e. it is both a construction of the universe, and the universe viewed as a work of art. But philosophy itself, by Schelling's own admission, deals only with the universal. In other words, philosophy must always be philosophy *of* something. If Schelling's philosophy is a philosophy of the absolute, it is because philosophy is eternally *seeking* the absolute. It is worth emphasising that, in this respect, Schelling's view is not dissimilar from Kant's.

I have made efforts in this thesis to draw comparisons between both ideas and specific texts that are rarely talked about in relation to one another. This is particularly the case with Schelling, who enjoys significantly less discussion in English speaking philosophy. However, there has been and continues to be work exploring the relationship between Kant and Schelling, as well as the German Idealist period more generally. Michelle Kosch's book *Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling and Kierkegaard* offers useful insights into the development of Schelling's early philosophy, as well as some of the themes in Kant that I have covered. In addition, Lara Ostaric's edited collection *Interpreting Schelling: Critical Essays* (2014) covers a wide spectrum of Schelling's philosophy, including several entries on Schelling's identity-philosophy. Although I have not been able to delve into these texts in my thesis, they provide evidence of burgeoning interest in Schelling's work and his connection to the history of German philosophy.

In the introduction to this thesis, I said that Kant seeks the unconditioned, and Schelling begins there. However, by beginning, Schelling's philosophy pushes itself apart from the absolute of which it desires to speak. What of poetry? Was this not the universal ocean from which Schelling claimed philosophy has first arisen? Philosophy may indeed have arisen out of a poetic ocean, and in so doing, adapted to the land on which it found itself. But, in finding its legs, in peering out into the starry heavens from the highest peak, philosophy forgets how to swim. Kant's noumenal fog threatens to keep philosophy off the sea. And yet, the poet still ventures there, returning on occasion with glorious treasures from the deep. They are no mere illusions either, nor puzzles which philosophy is tasked with solving. Poetry, and the arts more broadly, have their own modes of transportation through the eternity of all things. Philosophy may be forever seeking its own ground, finding respite in no place except the one that it builds for itself. But as that building crumbles and is built anew, old foundations emerge again, and previously forgotten conversations remind us that the borders we erect can just as easily be used to let things in as to keep them out.

Epilogue

It is no coincidence that I chose poetry, and for short while in chapter four, music, to approach my readings of Kant's aesthetics and Schelling's philosophy of art. During the research, composition, and writing of this thesis, I have reflected on my own practice, not just as a philosopher but as a poet and musician. I often appealed to these disciplines, in moments where my philosophical skills eluded me. When I was unsure if I had understood Kant, Schelling, or a secondary author; when I was unsure whether to call something a concept or an idea; when I didn't know if I agreed or disagreed with something in a text; when I became disoriented in the struggle to take possession over my own voice. This last struggle is one that a poet or a musician knows well, and it is one that is almost impossible to describe. It can only be evidenced in the work itself, in the doing and continuing to do. In the pursuit of my philosophical voice I was also exercising my artistic one. The relation was unidirectional. Music is not just a therapy, a temporary break from intellectual work. It is its own intellectual work. I saw philosophical ideas in harmonic triads, melodies, rhythms, and at the same time, lines of verse, half-remembered etymologies, images and diagrams. It would not have been possible to compose this thesis without those things, nor would those things have emerged as they did without the works of philosophy I have studied.

Contained in this thesis are all the notes, pictures, strange dreams, and poetic fragments by which I was visited in writing it. This combination, both an act of chance and yet altogether necessary, has led me in many moments to consider the possibility of exchange – disciplinary, institutional, pedagogical. It is an exchange that neither takes philosophy as a pool of assorted problems, nor artistic forms as merely eccentric subject matter for academic study. It is an exchange which sees both of these things as practices, mutually informative and, at times, coextensive. "Freedom within form" is an expression usually applied to jazz music, but it applies to philosophy as well, and to a spirit which can benefit the support of institutions of intellectual life.

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