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Fichte and Schelling [on God, Nature, and the Vocation of Academics]

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Pre-edited version of “Fichte and Schelling,” in Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Über das Wesen des Gelehrten*, Interpretationen und Quellen 4, Alfred Denker, Jeffrey Kinlaw, and Holger Zaborowski, eds. (Freiberg: Herder, 2020).

Fichte had lectured on the vocation of the scholar—or more precisely, morality for scholars-- in 1794 at the beginning of his career in Jena; he returns to the theme on the occasion of his call to a professorship in Erlangen in 1805 and subsequently publishes them under the title *Über das Wesen des Gelehrten und seine Erscheinungen im Gebiete der Freiheit* (1806). He warns in a brusque preface that these lectures are published for the convenience of *students* who have not had the chance to *hear* them, that they are not presented as literary works, and that he has nothing to say to a reading public with whom he is increasingly disinclined to engage (GA I, 8: 59)¹. Schelling, nonetheless, seizes upon the published text as the breaking of a long, self-imposed silence on technical (*wissenschaftlich*) philosophy in a brief review that he uses as a preface to a longer review of this work and the subsequently published *Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters* and *Die Anweisung zum seigen Lebens oder auch die Religionslehre*. Schelling’s essay, *Darlegung des wahren Verhältnisses der Naturphilosophie zu der verbesserten Fichteschen Lehre: Eine Erläuterungsschrift der ersten* (1806), extends the

¹ J. G. Fichte, Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, hg. Reinhard Lauth & Hans Gilwizky, Werke Band 8 (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann Verlag, 1991—hereafter cited as GA, I, 8.

somewhat subdued presentation of his own identity- and nature-philosophies made in *Vorlesungen über die Methode des akademischen Studiums* (1802) into aggressively polemical territory. That both philosophers appeal to ‘Ideas’ or ‘the Idea of the Absolute’ to ground their ideas of the unity of human knowledge and/or the unity of morality indicates the common ground they shared from 1795 to the turn of the century. That Schelling speaks of the unity of knowledge in the multi-disciplinary array of faculties in the university while Fichte speaks of the morality of scholars in the context of the human enterprise (“to come to freedom with reason”) indicates their fundamental difference in their approach to systematizing human cognition as transcendental idealism. It would be difficult to reconstruct what the educated public made of all these essays, since it lacked the Ur-text : the *Fichte-Schelling Briefwechsel*, especially the exchanges of the years 1800-1802. Intimates such as G. W. F. Hegel and Friedrich Schleiermacher were able to figure out Schelling’s side of ‘the difference’. Fichte had not chosen to publish the texts of the presentations of the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1801/02 or the three Berlin lecture series of 1804, so Schelling’s *invention* of a silence on Fichte’s part about absolute- or first-philosophy had a certain plausibility—while it enabled Schelling to extend the public clarification of the views he advanced in the 1802 dialogue *Bruno* and the academic studies lectures about the unity of knowledge, the reach of absolute or objective idealism, and the methodology of the natural sciences. The core contentions of Fichte’s *Wesen des Gelehrten* lectures and Schelling’s review of them are plain, nonetheless: Fichte’s claim that Schelling prized a dead, mechanical nature over the life of spirit in *his* ‘idealism’ is met by Schelling’s counter-claim that Fichte had ever and always opted for a narrow idealism of human subjectivity. The presence of these clashing claims in the two sets of lectures on scholars, their calling, and their habitat almost obscures a fundamental commonality: following upon Kant’s *Streit der*

Facultaten, each seeks to enshrine philosophy as the university's fundamental discipline, disputing the historical claims of sovereignty advanced by the professional or politically supported domains of law, medicine and theology, and seeking to block the growing ascendancy of historical and empirical-scientific disciplines.

For the sake of simplicity, this essay will pursue a chronological path through four main items of discussion: (1) the difference between Fichte's and Schelling's philosophies as reflected in the *Correspondence* of 1800-1802, (2) Schelling's remarks on the unity of knowledge and the difference between empirical science and *Naturphilosophie* in the academic studies lectures, (3) Fichte's remarks on first-philosophy, nature and morality in the *Wesen des Gelehrten* lectures, especially the first two, (4) Schelling's subsequent polemical response. The overarching problematic is not whether human cognition is a system or can be rendered systematic in a philosophical construction—there is substantial agreement on that issue, the one which post-modern thought finds so problematic—but whether the freedom of the moral point of view or the objectivity of nature indicated by established scientific domains will furnish the paradigm for such a construction.

[1] Much of the *Correspondence* in the early months of 1800 is essentially political, concerned with plans to form a united front for the transcendental idealists and romantic writers living in Jena or Berlin. When Fichte receives Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* after the fall book-fair, he comments to its author that he is wrong to oppose consciousness and nature or to provide separate constructions of them within that work. Both writers had spoken of *real* and *ideal* activities and although they might contrast nature as real-ideal to consciousness itself as

ideal-real, the two activities are united in the I. For transcendental philosophy, argues Fichte, nature can only be something *found*—finished, perfect, and intelligible to be sure, but shaped not according to its own laws but from the lawfulness borrowed from intelligence. Both nature and consciousness can be philosophically constructed only because philosophy performs a subtle abstraction—presumably from the I—and subsequently constructs transcendental or fictional accounts both of nature and individual consciousness (HkA III, 2, 1: 276; *PRFS* 42).²

Schelling cannot accept this account: nature is not just ‘found’ intelligence, but intelligence that is productive and objective. While ordinary consciousness discovers intelligence in nature after the fact as something objective or merely found, transcendental (constructive) idealism finds it to be both productive and objective, a lesser derivative or *potency* of the transparently active productivity of consciousness. He goes on to sketch two ways transcendental idealism might receive systematic shape, each with the 1794/95 *Grundlage des gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* as its foundation: (a) philosophy as such, with *physics* and *ethics*, both in the broadest Greek sense, and both founded on the above-mentioned abstraction and fictional construction of its concrete domains, or (b) a simpler parallel construction of nature and consciousness, both mirroring an essentially active intelligence, but the later starting where the former begins (HkA III, 2, 1: 279-281; *PRFS* 44-46). Neither option is attractive to Fichte, for the former essentially concedes Kant’s charge that *Wissenschaftslehre* is mere logic, empty

²Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, Historisch-kritische Ausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, *Briefe 2, Briefwechsel 1800-1802*, hg. Thomas Kisser (Stuttgart: Fromann-Holzboog, 2010)—edition cited hereafter as HkA. English translation: J. G. Fichte/F. W. J. Schelling, *Correspondence 1800-1802*, in *The Philosophical Rupture between Fichte and Schelling: Selected Texts and Correspondence (1800-1802)*, edited & translated by Michael Vater & David W. Wood (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012)—hereafter cited at *PRFS*.

tautology, while the latter gestures to a domain of reality beyond the reach of activity or the I's self-positing.

Fichte drafts a reply that is slightly paranoid and significantly self-critical: the subjective [or the domain of the individual I] is indeed a construct and it is imported into philosophy's object through an act of the imagination. For all that, the I cannot be explained by that [nature] which it has itself explained or deduced. The real reason for Schelling's apparent lapse into realism and for the muddled Spinozism of the romantic writers is not that objectivity has not received an adequate account in *Wissenschaftslehre*, but that the original check or limitation of activity implicit in its triad of principles has been left unexplained. An account of the intelligible world is missing, and absent that the check is mere factual, or indeed a surd. Hints in that direction are contained in the third book of the *Vocation of Man*, but they are mere hints (HkA III, 2, 1: 289-290; *PRFS* 48-49). Fichte's actual reply is more anodyne: while the principles of Schelling's philosophy of nature do not follow from the published *Wissenschaftslehre*, an extension of its principles that locates some basis for intelligibility *in* nature might be found in an extension of its principles that seems to be demanded by the times. Such an extension would be a 'transcendental system of the intelligible world'; it would explain *individual* consciousness on the basis of a reality or limitation found in a noumenal nature—and so get around Schelling's difficulty of wanting to explain a phenomenal nature by a phenomenal consciousness and vice versa (HkA III, 2, 1: 287-288; *PRFS* 49). Fichte's conciliatory gesture is not fruitful, for Schelling takes the single word "extension" to imply that anything goes, and Fichte's attempts to produce an account of the intelligible world seem to compromise the Kantian distinction of the *transcendent* and the *transcendental*. Indeed, the versions of *Wissenschaftslehre* penned in 1801/02, 1804, and the popular distillation of those works in the 1805 lectures on the scholar all

prominently feature a divided ontology, a first-philosophy or ontology offered on its own merits—seemingly a transcendent metaphysics—and an appended phenomenology.

Fichte in fact offers a short version of this two-layer or two-world theory in a letter penned in mid-summer 1801. It declares the philosophy must start from seeing, not from being, if it is transcendental or a matter of *Evidenz*, as one of Euclid's postulates would be in geometry. It is not a matter of deploying a web of concepts, for concepts are placeholders or frozen intuitions. A complete philosophy would have to explain absolute consciousness as in one sense a sum of individual consciousnesses, or in another sense, as a ground for all individual consciousnesses. So Fichte calls the absolute or God *at once* the ideal ground of the identity of all consciousnesses and the real ground for their separation as individuals. While *Wissenschaftslehre* can explain the universal form of I-hood and its relationship to absolute consciousness (namely as the relation of the determinate to the determinable), its moves are conceptual, while individual consciousness seems to be beyond description or conceptualization—with both its self-presence (or seeing) and the limitation of its individuality that it factually is forever escaping philosophical account. If, as Fichte says, “being is—a *seeing that is impenetrable to itself*”, then this account embraces two impenetrables, that of God or the Absolute and that of individual consciousness in its limitation to individuality. One can say (metaphysically, after Leibniz) that *Wissenschaftslehre* presents the universal form of the spirit world and that every individual is a particular point of view upon this system *from its own point of view*, but the missing point of individuation is available only in and through *life*, not through philosophy or genetic explanation (HkA III, 2, 1: 365-368; *PRFS* 56-58).

While much in the foregoing account is difficult or frankly unintelligible despite its author's use of arithmetic formulae and the analogy the geometer's use of “self-evident”

postulates, it is clear that Fichte objected to Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* because it began and ended with being, not seeing, that the activity imported into its account of the levels of dynamic process was imagined or *fictive activity*, and that life, if ever accessible to philosophy, was forever beyond the reach of this objective and objectifying philosophy. Fichte eschews the labels of subjectivity and objectivity that Schelling comes to prefer after 1801 not because they tilt the game in Schelling's favor, but because they have nothing to do with *transcendental philosophy* as he understands it, which is the genesis of an immediate comprehension of I-hood from the inside out, hence the necessary condition of experience. "No consciousness without self-consciousness" is Fichte's watchword. If a philosophy shifts the ground to *what is experienced*, as happens in the objective or absolute idealism of Schelling and Hegel, the warrant of the 'transcendental' pedigree is lost and philosophy increasingly becomes talk about everything from no particular point of view.

[2] Schelling uses the lectures on academic studies he delivered at Jena in the summer of 1802 to explain and defend the 'real-idealism' of the 1801 *Presentation of My System of Philosophy*, to defend his *Naturphilosophie* and to advance the claim that philosophy is the fundamental and unifying discipline in the contemporary German university. While *My System* was written under the constraints of a promise to not to go public on their disagreements and while the 1802 dialogue *Bruno* made moves both polemical and conciliatory in antique disguise, both the exchange of letters between Fichte and Schelling and the underlying friendship they signified ended early in 1802. Schelling was free to speak his mind, admittedly to a gathering of freshmen assembled in the summer months.

Schelling was in fact rather slow in seizing the ground of his new so-called identity-philosophy, since its initial presentations were heavily dependent upon historical models of earlier systems, the *Presentation* upon a rather literal reading of the first two books of Spinoza's *Ethics*, the *Bruno* upon a Neoplatonically costumed Spinozism in which talk of ineffable substance and its effable modes of mind and matter is replaced by more elegant and spiritual sounding talk of eternal ideas seamlessly embracing both the infinite and the finite. The first lecture of the academic studies series adopts this talk of ideas and the Idea of the Absolute, but it is careful to express this idea in the context of the broader concept of knowledge as such: the immediate identity of the ideal and the real. The geometer illustrates this general identity in the clearest possible manner, directly utilizing insight into the axioms and postulates that integrate the nature of points, line, figures and surfaces with three-dimensional space to organize the study of empirical lines, figures and bodies (SW V, 215-216; US 9-10).³ If knowledge is one, it must be so because it exists as one idea in the Absolute, and because we as human knowers are congruent with this single but all-embracing idea. Lacking a productive relation to this archetypal unity, many of the neuter drones at work in the hive of learning produce but inorganic excretions, by which Schelling means the mass of professional skills and empirical aptitudes taught in the university which lack any orientation to the organic body of knowledge or the ability to reproduce themselves therein (SW V, 216-217; US 10-11). But premature professionalism is not the only impediment to the university's realization of the totality of

³ J. F. W. Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, hg. K. F. A. Schelling, 14 Bd. (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856-61), reproduced in *Schellings Werke*, Dritter Hauptband: *Schriften zur Identitätsphilosophie*, hg. Manfred Schröter (Münch: Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1927)—hereafter cited as SW. English translation: F. W. J. Schelling, *On University Studies*, ed. Norbert Guterman, tr. E. S. Morgan (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1966)—hereafter cited as US.

knowing; the call to action [-- heard everywhere in this revolutionary time, but especially in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*--] is distorting and distracting. Knowing and acting are not hard and fast opposites in the Absolute, nor empirical alternatives in life, for the Absolute exhibits a double movement: to image its being in its form and resolve its form (or display) back into essence; in just such a way cognition and action mirror and reinforce each other in life (SW V, 217-221; *US* 12-15). Schelling is clearly critical of the influence of Fichte's moralism and social activism in the university, but there is no hint of the gloves-off polemic and personal attack that Fichte's *Wesen des Gelehrten* will provoke in 1806.

The eleventh lecture on the natural sciences defends the idea and fruitfulness of *Naturphilosophie* as a discipline that is at once above and alongside the disparate, particular sciences such as physics or chemistry. Any complete account of cognition as such must start with its function in the Absolute, whereby the productivity of God is manifested as particular worlds or 'ideas', each of them organic and individual at the same time, all of them related because they manifest the singular divine reality. Life, productivity and internal relatedness are thus the characters of living cognition. Only because the law of the Absolute is to be self-cognizing or its own object are ideas produced that completely manifest the divine essence, and only by resolving empirically disparate things into their idea does a genuine cognition arise (SW V, 317; *US* 115). This process of manifestation of the universal in the particular and self-recognition in the resolution of particulars back into the universal is further continued in the mirror relationship that hold between ideas and empirical particulars. Ideas ensoul particulars and govern them either by inorganic forces such as gravity or magnetism, or by internal self-regulation such as is seen in homeostatic systems or organisms, or by the self-cognizant self-regulation which manifests as reason in the intelligent being (SW V, 318; *US* 116). If cognition

is arrayed on a scale that runs from a knowing that makes the object extrinsic to the knower to a cognition that is internal, focused on itself and holistic, two distinct approaches to the study of nature open up: the empirical investigation of the particular which is the business of the particular scientific disciplines in their separations from each other and the philosophical approach which strives to reconfigure the particular in its origination from the ideas, and ultimately from the single Idea of the Absolute. The spirit of modern physics is embodied in the philosophical (or anti-philosophical) moves Descartes makes to separate mind and matter, and to study the inorganic world apart from the organic, adopting the hypothesis of mechanism that change or movement can only originate in a communication of energy from outside (SW V, 319-320; *US* 117-118). The final product of the dualism inherent in this approach is the image of matter as intrinsically lacking life—just dead extended stuff: imponderable, weightless, unlimited, the ideal subject in a kingdom of death.

Naturphilosophie offers a distinct approach to the study of nature. It is not opposed to empiricism as theory is opposed to experiment, for theorizing or hypothesis-formation and the testing of hypothesis by experiment are equally features of empiricism. Philosophy offers the path of *construction* or construction in intellectual intuition; it represents the presence of the real in the ideal, or of the particular in the idea. Particular forms replicate the universal movement of the imaging of the universal in the particular in the Absolute and the converse resolution of particulars back into the universal. Mind is reconciled to nature only when it can recognize itself therein, or view nature as a living totality that is self-animated and self-produced. The dead matter of modern physics is reconfigured as ideality or life itself in *Naturphilosophie* (SW V, 320-325; *US* 120-123). –Fichte’s criticisms are not on stage in this discussion, but the contrast between a style of natural science that is grounded in the life of nature and not the dead stuff of

mechanistic materialism will be central to Schelling's 1806 refutation of Fichte's attack upon *Naturphilosophie in Wesen des Gelehrten*.

[3] In the first lecture of his 1805 series on academic life and conduct, Fichte begins his discussion of morality for scholars by contrasting natural human existence in the sensible world with a life oriented toward a higher, hidden ground—a ground of appearances, simply called the *divine idea*. The scholar is defined by this idea—that is what makes him a scholar—and by unreserved dedication to or love of the idea. Of course the distinction between natural existence and its ideal ground is artificial; at any moment, the idea is mediated by the culture of the era, but however much it is present or obscured by that culture, the scholar is defined by his unreserved love for the idea (GA I, 8: 64-65). There is nothing technical nor philosophical in the locution: *göttliche Idee*. It simply designates an intellectual as opposed to a sensible field for human endeavor. But unlike other distinctions such as that of the learner as opposed to the accomplished scholar, love of the idea designates both the *Was* and the *Wie* of the scholarly calling.

The second lecture is devoted to a closer definition of this still obscure idea of a ground of appearances. While Fichte excuses himself from the task of an exact or scientific derivation of the Idea's traits here, he claims that a 'feel for the truth' should be adequate to motivate the acceptance of several propositions:

- Being is simply and thoroughly characterized by *life* and *activity*; there is nothing dead, inactive, or imperfect about it.

- The sole living item is the *life of God* or of the Absolute; it is alive in itself, through itself, by itself.
- The divine life is purely in itself, hidden away as it were, self-enclosed, without any alteration or change.
- But the divine idea manifests itself, appears, *presents itself*—its presentation or concretion is the world. God presents godself as it can, while the divine idea remains pure and self-enclosed.
- As much as the divine idea is simple, unitary and self-enclosed, its presentation (the entire life of humankind) is necessary an infinite unfolding or temporal process. When the all-at-once of the idea is translated to the temporal order, life itself is to some extent negated, limited, put within constraints, or mixed with what is dead and lifeless. Forced within limits, life in time manifests as a striving to transcend limitation (GA I, 8: 71-72).

Fichte's philosophical catechism is quite simple, unadorned by argument. Three contrasts converge: appearance versus reality, life versus death, activity versus constraint or limitation.

Fichte proceeds to identify the *constraints* of the above discussion with the objective, material world or nature. Though nature has its ground in the divine life, its function is to be nothing other than a foil for the existence of another, 'divine' life in human endeavor. Nature's destiny is to be negated, to serve as means for human life. Fichte then turns to sermonizing:

Do not be blinded or misled by a philosophy that appropriates the name *nature-philosophy* and thinks that it has surpassed all previous philosophy by making nature absolute and tries to divinize it. From time immemorial, all theoretical errors and all practical corruptions of human ideals have been grounded in the tendency to steal the

names *being* and *existence* and apply them to that which neither is nor exists, and which sought life and the joy of life in that which intrinsically harbored death (ibid., 73-74).

Several positive notes remain that need to be voiced, and Fichte exhibits them with great economy:

- The human being can generally understand from the assumptions articulated above that there is an origin of and a cause for the temporal flow in which she lives, but there is no way to undo it or overleap all limitation, since reality and appearance, or the divine life and its temporal presentation are forever two, not one.
- If one could gather all the fragments and pieces of the temporal display of life and reassemble them, one might understand how there can be reality *and* appearance, or how the display in ever-lapsing time translates the divine being. But that is counter-intuitive: the human knower and agent is itself part of time.
- Recourse to experience is necessary to understand the current state of being, or where one is. Consciousness is oriented toward experience, and experience is embedded in the flow of time.
- So thoroughly is the human being immersed in time and circumstances that have taken shape in time that the only way the human has of orienting herself in life is through the moral law. The transcendence of limits and the reacquisition, as it were, of the original life is a moral, not a cognitive imperative. Educated reflection suffices to illuminate only what must be done with our freedom of action (74-76).

The academy's calling, then, is essentially moral; its leading disciplines, besides *philosophy* which alone can provide some theoretical illumination of the general truths that can be

understood, will be *jurisprudence* and *religion* or natural hierarchy. When the *arts* and *sciences* are added, with their capacities to deal with details as well as the whole, the fundamental disciplines of the learned world will number five (79).

Other than to note how brief, intuitive, and unargued the above presentation is, we postpone comment until we consider Schelling's reaction. Most reviewers of the printed version of the lectures considered this philosophical section of the lectures alone; Fichte's recommendations of qualities such as application, diligence, and integrity are the standard stuff of academic virtue-ethics.

[4] Schelling's reception of Fichte's lectures on the morality of scholars falls into two parts: a brief review that appeared in the Jena *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung*, and a longer, overtly polemical review of all the popular works of 1806, including the *Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters* and the *Anweisung zum seligen Leben*. Generally, Schelling takes the first two lectures of the *Wesen des Gelehrten* as a clue to his discernment of the other works, finding their contents to be clear, unambiguous—and self-contradictory.

The review takes the lectures to be Fichte's "breaking of the multi-year silences he has maintained on his philosophical views," takes note of the scornful comment addressed to the reading public in its preface, and wonders aloud why Fichte's promised revisions of the *Wissenschaftslehre* have never appeared (SW VII, 4-5). As far as his theoretical philosophy goes, Schelling isolates three of Fichte's assertions:

- All being is living and self-active;
- The Absolute or God is life itself;

- The divine life is hidden in itself, self-enclosed and self-supporting. It is all being and no other sort of being is outside it,

but wonders what this can mean, since *being* is usually taken to mean the opposite of *activity*, or to entail the denial of possibility of activity (SW VII, 6). Then comes the question of how any sort of particularized being can be added to the self-enclosed divine life: either, as Jacobi paraphrased Spinoza, there can be no stepping-outside the Absolute or there will be some sort of emanation of an inferior sort of being, as the Neoplatonists envisioned. Fichte seems to think that it is self-evident or at least non-problematic that there is some sort of stepping-outside or emanation, but Schelling doubts that Fichte was doing more than mouthing words at this point, since on his own assumptions, a *Heraustreten des Absoluten aus sich selbst* is unthinkable. Is it essential that God manifest godself externally, or not essential? If essential, then the Absolute is conditioned, that is, subject to a law that it must produce this external display. The very idea that besides an absolute and unconditioned God there is necessarily a conditioned external display entails uncountable difficulties (ibid., 7). There are difficulties too in Fichte's stipulation that the Absolute's *Darstellung* must take the form of a display that unfolds in endlessly lapsing time: is not the heart of the phenomenology that transcendental idealism teaches the view that time is but a subjective form of presentation, an *ens imaginarium* (ibid., 8)?

Schelling turns from Fichte's account of what is to his account of what is not: *nature*. Since humankind pertains not to nature, but to God in some undefined sense, a negative factor must be introduced to account for it; this is the restriction or limitation that squeezes the fullness of being, as it were, into an elongated or progressive form, time. Since Fichte lacks any idea of a positive connection between being and becoming other than purposiveness and the moral command, the negative idea of restriction (*Hemmung*) is made to do the work. But a negative

account can do no positive work: to say that there must be a restriction so that an endless development can occur is like saying that worms lack eyes so that they can be blind (ibid., 9-10). Fichte pronounces nature dead, ignoring the implication that if nature involves the limitation of divine reality, it must have some element of reality to it. Nature means *objective reality*, but how can a limitation, a subjective entity, produce something objective? Furthermore, if nature is something dead and a product of a purely negative factor, how are Fichte's initial assumptions about God, life and reality anything other than *transcendent* pronouncements, not merely assumptions made in the service of *transcendental* explanation? Whatever else it can or cannot do, a philosophy that it supposed to explain the possibility of experience cannot start out by denying the validity of experience (ibid., 13-15).

Schelling then turns to Fichte's ethical ideas, starting with "Fichte's atheistic view of nature." Since nature is but a restriction on human activity and an obstacle to the manifestation of divine life, the best that can be done with it is to instrumentalize it—turn forests into stools and other furniture, employ reason to transform nature's flora and fauna into human conveniences, and behave as if there is no meaning in green woods rustling in the wind other than to serve as fuel to warm 'rational' beings (ibid., 18-19). The artificiality of this purely economical view of nature is matched by the etiolated nature of the morality of duty that Fichte advocates. What sort of people need to have a list of duties endlessly prescribed to it, especially when no guidance is given about how to resolve apparent conflicts of duty? And what kind of morality is produced by the dry prescriptive mode—anything more than the inept conformity to 'rules of style' that an author with nothing to say, or with no acquaintance with truth or beauty, can produce? Why not trust, instead, the life of a people, their sentiments, their ways of life, their common conscience (20)?

Schelling expands upon most of these criticism at length, oftentimes with intemperate zeal, in the lengthy second part of his review of Fichte's trilogy—an inverted *Divine Comedy* in which the lectures on the present age lead the reader through hell, to the purgatory of the scholarly life, and finally to the ersatz paradise of the 'blessed life' essay (SW VII, 87). We must forego a lengthy treatment and merely state that most of the discussion is an elaboration, or a polemical amplification, of points succinctly made in the *ALZ* review. Two items are new to Schelling's critique, however, and deserve some attention: a short list of Fichte's errors that Schelling uses to begin the longer discussion and Schelling's own metaphysical reply to the divided ontology of Fichte's second *Wesen des Gelehrten* lecture.

First, the 'syllabus of errors', which we translate without comment:

Our present purpose requires only that we discuss . . . items that Herr Fichte has taught and asserted:

- *a cognition of the in-itself or the Absolute is forever impossible for humans;*
- *we can only know about our knowing [Wissen], must start from it and remain within it;*
- *nature is an empty objectivity, merely the sense-world;*
- *it [nature] consists solely in the affections of our I, depends on incomprehensible restrictions within which the I feels enclosed, and is essentially irrational, unholy, and godless;*
- *it is everywhere finite and completely dead;*
- *the basis of all reality, of all cognition is the individual [persönliche] freedom of the human being;*

- *the divine can only be believed, not cognized;*
- *this belief is solely of the moral kind, and if it contains more than what follows from the concept of morality, it is senseless superstition (SW VII: 21).*

For the second item, Schelling challenges the most difficult idea of Fichte's second lecture, the contention that there is being or the divine idea or the divine life, but it is strictly in itself and unto itself, for we in our knowing and acting pertain to a different order where God has *presented* godself and become existence, external existence, the world—and where the divine life manifests itself as consciousness constrained by the flow of ever-lapsing time (GA I, 8: 71-72). Schelling's challenge is not merely negative; for that it would suffice to note that Fichte has cleverly hidden the chasm between being and phenomena or God's *Darstellung* with his claim that we can understand the *Daß* but not the *Wie* of the cleft (ibid., 74). Instead Schelling reaches back to line of thought initiated in 1802 which conceives God or the Absolute as self-realizing, the idea that is not just idea, but self-actualized idea. Schelling had changed his terminology slightly in his 1804 lectures on *the Entire System of Philosophy, and Nature-Philosophy in Particular*, where he views God as essentially self-affirmation, real or existent both as that which affirms and that which is affirmed—and so real and realized both in nature and in human reason (SW VI: 151-155). Refining that view, Schelling now says that the divine reality is not only expressive or self-affirming, it is a band or bond [*Band*] between affirming and affirmed.

If in general what is self-expressive and so self-knowing, as it is in the highest case or God, there can be no divide between being [*Wesen*] and expression [*Form*], or affirmation and affirmed. Similarly there can be no divide between the one and the many, or between being and knowing, or between philosophy that comprehends being and nature-philosophy—for the one is replicated in the many, being is mirrored in knowing, and God is mirrored in and to that extent

present in nature (SW VII: 54-56). One who finds nature but an aggregate of lifeless items fails to see the one in the many, or the living unity of the many in the one item viewed-- one who, for instance, views bodies as inert masses pushed by incomprehensible external forces, not as a living field (gravity) where singular items (bodies) are relatively and temporarily distinguished (ibid., 57).

Ultimately there can be but two types of metaphysical theories—those that connect and those that divide. Those that would view nature as a contingent collection of multiple items operate with relative concepts and are unable to transcend the fixed view that one and many are simply different, or that the infinite (God) and the finite (nature) somehow exist outside each other. It is reflection, not reason, that approaches the primal unity of all and thinks it must solve an imagined problem of a cleft or chasm [*Spaltung*] between orders of things it does not know how to comprehend (ibid., 58). Reason sees things in connected fashion, so it conceives of nature an eternal mirroring of the divine being and form in one another, the eternal birth of things in God and the resolution of all things back into God. Nature is not the absence of God or the opposite of the divine life and to view it as such is to cast it into the abyss of incomprehensibility (ibid., 59).