

IDENTITY-MONISM OR THE DARK NIGHT OF THE ABSOLUTE? SCHELLING'S SYSTEM OF IDENTITY IN THE 1801 *PRESENTATION*.

CHRISTOPHER SATOOR

York University
cpsatoor@gmail.com

Abstract: *The year 1801 marked an important year for Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling's (1775-1854) philosophical thought. It saw the publication of Schelling's Presentation of My System of Philosophy which would stand as the marker of a new era of idealism, that Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) would coin as objective idealism. The 1801 Presentation represents a clear shift away from Schelling's seminal System of Transcendental Idealism; and the official beginning of Schelling's own Identity Philosophy which occurred through several major works from 1801 to 1806. The Presentation also characterizes a decisive genesis in Schelling's mature metaphysics of identity. The metaphysics of identity's central aim was to capture the concept of absolute identity realized as the totality of the cosmos. Using Spinoza's (1632-1677) Ethics as his guide and model, Schelling revealed a meticulous systematic philosophy that offered distinct propositions and definitions, each following one another to develop an elaborate organic whole.*

However, the works that makeup Schelling's identity philosophy would receive a series of philosophical backlashes from several of his interlocutors, which included: Karl August von Eschenmayer (1768-1852), Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. This criticism would reach forward into the contemporary scholarship. The accusations made against Schelling were directed at his monistic system and surrounded his conception of the absolute. According to Schelling's critics, his systematic concept of the absolute swallowed reality into a homogenous whole leaving no room for philosophical difference. These erroneous accusations would have several implications which would cast a long shadow on Schelling's identity philosophy with the infamous remarks describing Schelling's project eclipsed in the dark night of the absolute.

The following paper is divided in two main parts. The first, will evaluate the historical context and philosophical importance behind the structure of Schelling's 1801 Presentation. The second, will addresses Schelling's numerous critics and attempt to explicate the essence behind Schelling's

metaphysics of identity. This paper will thus conclude by showing how difference plays an integral part for Schelling, as the realm of finitude, and the ground of all phenomena. These important parts of the whole system are connected in a subterranean like fashion in primordial identity.

Thus, grounding Schelling's own novel, philosophical creation, an identity-monism.

Keywords: *Continental Philosophy, F. W. J. Schelling, Identity Philosophy, The Absolute, Indifference, Reason, Objective Idealism, Metaphysics of Identity, Identity-Monism.*

Resumen: *El año 1801 marcó un punto crucial en el pensamiento filosófico de Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling. En ese año se publicó Exposición de mi sistema de filosofía, obra que señalaba el inicio de una nueva etapa del idealismo, posteriormente denominada por Hegel como idealismo objetivo. Esta obra representa un claro distanciamiento respecto al Sistema del idealismo trascendental y marca oficialmente el comienzo de la filosofía de la identidad de Schelling, desarrollada entre 1801 y 1806. La Exposición inaugura la metafísica de la identidad madura de Schelling, cuyo objetivo central era formular el concepto de identidad absoluta como totalidad del cosmos. Inspirándose en la Ética de Spinoza, Schelling desarrolló una filosofía sistemática con proposiciones y definiciones que se integran en un todo orgánico.*

No obstante, su filosofía de la identidad fue blanco de críticas por parte de pensadores contemporáneos como Eschenmayer, Fichte y el propio Hegel. Estas críticas, que continúan en el ámbito académico actual, apuntaban al carácter monista de su sistema y a la noción de un absoluto que absorbería toda diferencia, eliminando la pluralidad filosófica. Este tipo de objeciones dio lugar a la famosa acusación de que el pensamiento de Schelling quedaba “eclipsado en la noche oscura del absoluto”.

El artículo se divide en dos partes: la primera analiza el contexto histórico y la relevancia filosófica de la Exposición de 1801; la segunda examina las críticas recibidas y aclara la esencia de la metafísica de la identidad de Schelling. La conclusión muestra que la diferencia desempeña un papel fundamental en su sistema, como ámbito de la finitud y base de todos los fenómenos, todos ellos enlazados subterráneamente en la identidad primordial. Así se consolida el proyecto filosófico de Schelling: un monismo de la identidad original.

Palabras clave: *Filosofía continental, F. W. J. Schelling, Filosofía de la identidad, El Absoluto, Indiferencia, Razón, Idealismo objetivo, Metafísica de la identidad, Monismo de la identidad.*

Introduction

For too long Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling's philosophical thought has been undervalued for its role in the development of German Idealism. Following this trend of neglect many scholars in the Anglo-Saxon world have cast Schelling as a merely intermediate figure between Kant and Hegel (Beiser 2002: 465). Of course, this image of Schelling, as the proverbial stepping stone in German Idealism, is far from the truth. Times have changed and many scholars are beginning to rethink Schelling's philosophical role in the history of philosophy. As Frederick Beiser notes, it was Schelling who created the basic principles of Absolute Idealism that Hegel carried on and systematized from 1801-1804 (Beiser 2002: 465). Although, Hegel's philosophy would in fact surpass his old Tübingen schoolmate in popularity it was from these early principles that Schelling had laid down that helped make Hegel the philosopher he would become (Beiser 2002: 465). The German philosopher Werner Marx would take this aforementioned point by Beiser, even further by declaring that Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* progressed by the same grounds laid out in Schelling's 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism* (Marx 1984: 35). These words of both Beiser and Marx would seem to sound oddly among Hegelian scholars of today. Indeed, Schelling's philosophy is garnering much more attention with several new monographs being written on his work. It could even be stated that there is a new renaissance in Schelling scholarship. Thus, it is time for a, re-evaluation of Schelling's role and place in the history of German Idealism.

However, there is one major problem facing all Schelling scholarship, and it comes down to the following questions. Firstly, does Schelling have a completed system? And, secondly, if there is no single system, does Schelling's philosophy have a central theme or, perhaps a main focal point related to the whole? These questions have been long debated among Schelling scholars and yet the issue still haunts the modern scholarship. The many faces of Schelling's numerous works and how they relate to one another is something that I will examine. However, surveying all of Schelling's philosophy goes way beyond the confines and space of this paper.

Thus, I will investigate Schelling's conception of identity and how it relates to the absolute in the 1801 *Presentation of My System of Philosophy*. The challenging aspect of Schelling's *Presentation* is that the text is divided into two separate parts. The first part of the text consists of fifty-three distinct definitions, and aimed at disclosing a stable, and succinct metaphysics of Identity (Vater and Wood 2012: 138). The metaphysics of identity is informed by the concept of indifference and this relationship will be my focal point (Vater and Wood 2012: 137). The second part of the text, from definition 54 to 159, deals more forcefully with the philosophy of nature (Vater and Wood 2012: 137). In essence, a large majority of the text deals with a direct presentation of Schelling's philosophy of nature. It must surely come as a surprise to the reader why I would devote the entirety of this paper to only the first part of Schelling's *Presentation*. My reasoning behind this choice stems

from the fact that the first part of Schelling's *Presentation*, to quote Michael Vater and David Wood, sees the metaphysics of identity as demonstrating "how absolute identity is realized as the totality of the universe" (Vater and Wood 2012: 138). Schelling has been accused of many things but one of the most toxic complaints about his work comes from the generalization that his identity philosophy, and its understanding of the absolute swallow's reality as a whole leaving no room for philosophical difference. This claim is simply erroneous and does not adequately interpret Schelling's identity philosophy. It is quite unfortunate that this generalization still lingers in academic circles today.

Schelling's fragmentary and unfinished writings led to Hegel giving him a rather unkind nickname. Hegel called his friend a *philosophical Proteus* (Matthews 2014: 437). This unfortunate stigma has followed Schelling in many philosophical and historical circles. I, on the other hand, think this is an unfair judgement by Hegel. When speaking about Schelling's philosophy it would be better to use the metaphor introduced by the American philosopher Bruce Matthews who describes Schelling, not as a *Protean* philosopher, but as a Greek hero like *Odysseus*. Why this latter metaphor? What does it mean? Matthews's metaphor portrays Schelling as the *Odysseus* of German Idealist philosophy, who like Odysseus, on the open seas, would never want to be limited "to beginnings or endings" (Matthews 2014: 437). Schelling's philosophical journey consists of a lifetime spent on the turbulent seas of thought and experimentation. This vast open sea of thought created a thinker that could never dream of being confined to any one system (Matthews 2014: 437). It made Schelling a thinker intoxicated with freedom and free thinking. It also allowed Schelling the space to become a thinker who boldly investigated the entirety of the cosmos and its inner workings. His own unique inquisitive nature led him to pronounce in the *Stuttgart Seminars* of 1810,

"To what extent is a system ever possible? I would answer that long before [humanity] decided to create a system, there already existed one, that of the cosmos. Hence our proper task consists in discovering that system. The true system can never be created but only uncovered as one that is already inherent in itself; in the divine understanding." (Schelling 1994: 197)

This paper will be broken down into two parts. The first part will evaluate the historical context and philosophical importance behind the structure and innovation of the 1801 *Presentation*. The second part addresses Schelling's critics and attempts to disclose the essence behind Schelling's metaphysics of identity. I will show how difference plays an integral part for Schelling, as the realm of finitude, and the ground of all phenomena. These important parts of the whole system are connected in a subterranean like fashion in primordial identity (Vater and Wood 2012: 139). Thus, grounding Schelling's own novel, philosophical creation, an identity-monism.

The Historical Importance of the 1801 *Presentation*.

Another problem arises when thinking of Schelling's collective works. Individual works have often been read as transitional phases within his entire oeuvre. However, Schelling always saw these so-called transitional works as first sketches (Schelling 2012: 137). Even if we admit that there are many different phases of Schelling's philosophy there is still one central theme that is played throughout his entire philosophy. This theme is the concept of identity. There has never been a clearer presentation of Schelling's system of identity than his *1801 Presentation of My System of Philosophy*. The text expresses Schelling's own novel commitment to creating an identity-metaphysics (Berger and Whistler 2020: 119). The text also has two main critical interlocutors: Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762), and Carl August von Eschenmayer (1768-1852).

Daniel Whistler argues that when we historically think of Schelling's idealism we are often led to think of his 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism*. The Schelling scholar, Michael Vater labeled the text as "Schelling's most polished work" (Vater 1978: xi). However, the *System of Transcendental Idealism* does not represent a mature Schelling coming to his own philosophical voice (Beiser 2002: 565). This new philosophical voice (separate from the success of his philosophy of nature) would only come to fruition in Schelling's *1801 Presentation of My System of Philosophy*. The *Presentation* embodies the first work of Schelling's *Identity Philosophy* and the first time that Schelling would present this system to the learned community (Whistler 2013: 58). This of course was no easy task for it meant dealing with Eschenmayer's critical responses, and parting ways with Fichte's philosophy. At this point in Schelling's philosophical development, he had finally overcome the influence of Fichte and was seeking a solid ground to solidify his new work.

This new found philosophical independence meant that Schelling would be critically responding to both Fichte's and Eschenmayer's objections, which potentially could sever ties with his old friends. Both Fichte and Eschenmayer were deeply skeptical of Schelling's new philosophical direction and Fichte and Schelling's friendship and philosophical collaboration was at the point of no return.

Schelling's goal in the *Presentation* was to move away from Fichte's subjective idealism and, surpass Eschenmayer's own philosophical dualism (Berger and Whistler 2020: 119). At the time Schelling had asked Eschenmayer to submit new articles he was working on to be published in his philosophical *Journal for Speculative Physics* (Vater and Wood 2012: 135). Schelling would be responding to these very philosophical submissions by Eschenmayer. It took Schelling only 6 months to write the *Presentation*. The text contains the influences of Plato (c. 427-348 BC), Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) (Vater and Wood 2012: 136).

Hegel explains in the 1801 *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's Systems of Philosophy*, that the main focal point of Schelling's philosophy is the principle of identity (Hegel 1977: 155). According to Hegel, this principle was the absolute ground of Schelling's

system. What attracted Hegel to Schelling's system of identity was how Schelling stressed the importance between the connection of philosophy and system (Hegel 1977: 155). Schelling would reaffirm this important connection between philosophy and system eight years later in the beginning of the 1809 *Freedom Essay*.

One of Hegel's most important qualifications in the *Difference Essay* is that the concept of identity is not lost in the entirety of Schelling's system. Hegel states, "Identity does not loose itself in the parts [...] for Absolute Identity to be the principle of an entire system it is necessary that *both* subject and object be posited" (Hegel 1977: 155). The importance behind Hegel's words stem from his unwavering approval of Schelling's new found system of objective idealism. This is another main reason why Schelling's *Presentation* plays such a pivotal role in the history of German idealism. This importance is heightened due to the emergence of Schelling's novel invention of objective idealism. Schelling proudly announces to all in the *Presentation* that transcendental idealism has been miraculously transformed into an Objective Idealism (Vater and Wood 2012: 137).

Beiser echoes this same point but adds an extra caveat that not only did the 1801 *Presentation* mark the first appearance of objective idealism, it also solidified both Hegel and Schelling's own commitment to a philosophy of Absolute Idealism. Beneath the surface of this text lies a hidden but prophetic phrase from Schelling's youth. Schelling reanimates an ancient credo which simultaneously breathed life into the entirety of the Identity System. This motto was the ancient Greek, "*Hen Kai Pan*," or "the one and the all" (Beiser 2002: 553). It was not a simple set of words or a mundane phrase spoken among friends. It was a mantra for the young philosophers of Tübingen. Hegel, Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843) and Schelling, saw these words symbolize a truly *free* philosophy, one free from the fetters of religious clerics and dogmatic philosophers.

Stretching out on the vast open sea of thought, our *Odysseus of German Idealism* (Schelling) knew that this new system of identity would in fact need to be a rigorous science. It would have to be grounded firmly on reality. Schelling asked his friend Goethe to borrow his copy of Spinoza's *Ethics*, and while preparing to write the draft of the *Presentation*, he took absolute inspiration from Spinoza's *Ethics*. He kept the text by his side as he wrote the work. It seems odd that Schelling would use Spinoza (of all philosophers) as his model for this new project since Spinoza's philosophy after all, embodied a pre-critical philosophy. Michael Vater explains that Schelling mirrored Spinoza's project because he thought that the *Ethics* perfectly matched the trajectory of the identity philosophy in both form and content (Vater 2012: 157). Schelling set out to create his system of identity in the *Presentation*, in a geometrical fashion just like in Spinoza's *Ethics* (1677) (Norris 2022: 92). It would have to begin with self-evident propositions, followed by air tight definitions with each definition following from the other. The text would also need in-depth corollaries, equipped with thoroughly defined explanations and remarks. There was something attractive about having such clarity behind each definition with a precise axiomatic style. The question I would like

to ask is how far Schelling followed Spinoza? How would Schelling deal with the finite? Would the finite be left to the way side only to be smuggled in to the absolute? This question will be answered in the final section of the paper.

Identity, Indifference and the Absolute: Part I.

There are further reasons why the *Presentation* of all texts in Schelling's corpus is of grave importance to the history of German Idealism. According to Schelling, philosophy as (Wissenschaft) is the only discipline that understands the importance of approaching the whole of reality from the standpoint of reason. This standpoint of reason is also, an identical standpoint of the absolute (Breazeale 2014: 93). Now the question arises why any of this is at all important? This philosophical process is important for Schelling because philosophy *must* express the highest and most universal grasp of reality (Breazeale 2014: 93). This point is extremely important for Schelling because he states in proposition 32 that, "Absolute identity is not the cause of the universe, but is the universe itself" (Schelling 2012: 154).

For Schelling, philosophy can not have an objective or subjective standpoint on the whole (Breazeale 2014: 93). A true philosophy can only ever be constructed from the absolute. Thus, it can never privilege any one starting point, such as idealism or realism (Breazeale 2014: 93). Starting from either the former or the later sets up a fundamental, philosophical opposition. Schelling's main point here is that real philosophy can only ever be expressed as absolute reason (Breazeale 2014: 93). Philosophers must firmly reject, "all fundamental oppositions between: subject, object, real, ideal, mind, nature and, knowing and being" (Breazeale 2014: 93).

Schelling's fundamental disdain for all oppositions in philosophy stems from the fact that philosophies in the past have been stuck in constant oppositions that can only ever produce a philosophy of understanding, and speculation (Breazeale 2014: 94). What a philosophy of reason can produce is *real reflection*. As the late Daniel Breazeale put it, we have to understand that Schelling's thinking is "producing a method of reflection" (Breazeale 2014: 94). This method of reflection approaches philosophy from a position of primordially. Schelling's identity philosophy is really grounded in a "knowing of knowing" (Breazeale 2014: 94). A knowing of knowing, that likewise contains all forms of cognition, and particulars, in a universal way, thereby creating an absolute cognition (Breazeale 2014: 94). Schelling stresses that this absolute cognition must be identical with the absolute itself. Schelling makes this point clearer in definition 7, "The sole unconditioned cognition is that of absolute identity since it alone expresses the essence of reason." (Schelling 2012: 147).

The merging together of being and thinking is the central starting point of Schelling's identity philosophy (Breazeale 2014: 95). Schelling states that he situates himself at the *indifference point* between the philosophy of nature and transcendental philosophy (Schelling 2012: 142). Two "opposite poles of one philosophical activity" (Schelling 2012: 142). The task of this indifference point is to construct a presentation of the integral unity between the *partic-*

ular and the *universal* in their absolute mode of indifference. However, the construction itself must come whole heartedly from reason. Thus, Schelling's system of identity cannot collapse into traditional philosophical accounts of idealism or realism. For only the highest standpoint of reason can achieve insight into the development of a system of identity (Nassar 2014: 229). In definition 1 of the *Presentation*, Schelling states "I call reason, absolute reason, or reason insofar as it is conceived as the total indifference of the subjective and the objective" (Schelling 2012: 145). According to the first definition, reason's role in the *Presentation*, is to help guide the philosopher to an absolute non-subjective thought (Nassar 2014: 229). Now the question arises, as to what an absolute non-subjective thought would look like?

For Schelling, the absolute cannot be located in the self. Neither can it be located in the process of being made into an object for the self's knowing (Nassar 2014: 230). Reason can only ever be found within reason. Schelling makes this point quite clear when he states in definition 3 of the *Presentation* that, "Reason is simply one and simply self-identical [...] reason is therefore one in an absolute sense" (Schelling 2012: 46). Schelling alludes that this self-identical nature of reason occurs within an *in-itself* because reason can never be the subjective nor the objective. As an *in-itself* reason can only be the *indifference* of the two (Nassar 2014: 230). This is where Schelling differs from both Fichte and Hegel. The absolute is not meant to be thought of as a synthesis or *sublation* of subject and object the philosopher must think of the absolute as an *in-itself* (Nassar 2014: 231).

According to George Di Giovanni, Schelling's absolute can be grasped as one identity through two identical terms (Di Giovanni 2021: 45). These terms can be represented by both *essence* and *form*. Essence and form are essentially unified, meaning they are completely equal to one another (Di Giovanni 2021: 45). Di Giovanni states "If we thus define essence as "identity," its *Form* would conceptually be expressed by the formula " $A=A$ " where the " $=$ " sign signifies the indifference of the two" (Di Giovanni 2021: 45).

Christopher Lauer brings up an important observation in regards to Schelling's role in writing the Identity philosophy. The true importance behind Schelling's identity philosophy lies not in explaining its processes or elaborating on what each part entails, but simply to formalize the system as whole (Lauer 2010: 86). In other words, we can not get tangled up in our own understanding, for this relates back to impoverished oppositions between the finite and the infinite (Lauer 2010: 86). What exactly does Schelling mean by formalizing the System of identity? Schelling is talking about the inner dynamic of what makes his identity philosophy.

"The $A=A$ is not the positing of an identity between a previously existing subject and object, but instead divides itself into subjective and objective sides. Thus, there is an $A=A$ conceived subjectively and an $A=A$ objectively, neither one assumes the subject=object role. Rather, this and all other expressions of identity are only intelligible on the fundamental basis of identity that always-already unites the subject and object." (Lauer 2010: 87).

This passage brings to light the fundamental aspect of Schelling's metaphysics of identity. Essentially, there is a doubling of the absolute that is expressed in both the *Subjective-subject-object* pole, and the *Objective-subject-object* pole. This doubling effect creates, a unilateral identity of identity, which is fleshed out as two equal poles. Each pole in this fundamental relationship expresses the absolute conditions of absolute identity, while at the same time being equal amongst each other. Hegel weighted in on this debate about identity in the *Difference Essay* when he defined identity "as the Identity of Identity and non-identity" (Hegel 1977: 155). Schelling reworked this logical formula into both his 1802 *Bruno* dialogue, and his 1804 *System of Philosophy in General*.

Identity-Monism or Dark Night of the Absolute: Part II.

According to Beiser, Schelling's 1801 *Presentation* developed out of the so-called *dark night of the absolute* (Beiser 2002: 568). A phrase that would be echoed by Hegel six years later in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Beiser 2002: 565). Hegel notoriously spawned "the critique of all critiques," that would explode in Schelling's face from time and time again, those lethal words echoed throughout history that, "[T]o pass of its absolute as the night in which, as one says, all cows are black—is utterly vacuous naiveté in cognition" (Hegel 2018: 12).

Both Hegel and Beiser's critical comments stem from Schelling's so-called *dark vision* of the Absolute. For both Beiser and Hegel, Schelling's system of Identity is centered around an absolute, that is unfortunately tethered to a *Parmenidean Monism* (Beiser 2002: 568). What exactly would a Parmenidean Monism look like? According to Beiser, Schelling's Parmenidean monism relates to how the absolute excludes *all* finite things (Beiser 2002: 568). The reason why this is problematic for Beiser is that this type of monism represents an infinite totality of reality that could only be grasped as a pure oneness. A oneness that is bound to its own unity and self-sameness (Beiser 2002: 565). Of course, the ontological problem with this account of monism, unity and self-sameness, is that it allows no space for difference or the finite realm. It also unsatisfactorily raises *absolute reason* on a pedestal. According to this reading, the end goal of the system is the complete *indifference* of the Subject and Object. If Beiser is right, and Schelling's Identity philosophy does collapse into this type of Parmenidean monism, the question must be asked how identity, the absolute, and reason relate to one another? Has Schelling created the ultimate smoke and mirrors system? Beiser states that the central problem surrounding Schelling's identity philosophy; begins with the absolute law of identity, which can be found in the infamous self-evident proposition of $A=A$ in Fichte's *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* (Beiser 2002: 569). Fichte saw this self-evident proposition of $A=A$ bound to the law of identity, as a profound expression of the logical copula (Fichte 2021: 201). Thus, making the insight of the proposition, an absolutely unconditioned first principle (Fichte 2021: 200). Schelling and Fichte both agreed that philosophy as a rigorous science must proceed from propositions that are grounded on a single foundational principle. Each principle would unify the next in order to form the system of the whole.

Beiser continues his attack on Schelling that the dark absolute,

“therefore, excludes all opposition between things and/or any differences between subject and object ...from this absolute standpoint, the finite simply does not exist because nothing considered finite in of itself can exist” (Beiser 2002: 565).

Beiser asks the question why should the absolute remain so bleak? Or why is the absolute drowned in an infinite darkness? He, of course, is not content with Schelling’s answer to such a question. He states that Schelling doesn’t give us an adequate response. For according to Schelling, if the absolute were not purely one, there would have to be another reason for its existence other than its own self. This claim for Schelling is problematic because it would make the infinite a contingent entity dependent on another. We should keep in mind that Schelling’s conception of the absolute is largely inspired by Spinoza’s concept of substance. We also have to ask the question whether this is an accurate account of Schelling’s *Presentation* and the system of identity. Beiser presents Schelling’s system through a problematic and pantheistic presentation. He also states that Schelling’s identity philosophy is essentially “a defense of a monistic rationalism or a rationalistic monism” (Beiser 2002: 553).

If we take Beiser at his words then Schelling’s objective idealism is basically a demonstration of three fundamental propositions. The first proposition involves the absolute. The absolute can only be one, indivisible substance which is essentially equal to the universe (Beiser 2002: 553). The second proposition involves both substance and reason. However, according to Schelling, substance cannot transcend the bounds of reason. There is nothing outside of reason. To quote Schelling’s second definition: “Outside reason is nothing, and in it is everything” (Schelling 2012: 146). Both substance and reason are essentially equal to the fundamental law of reason, which is also the same as the law of identity (Beiser 2002: 553). The third and final proposition expresses the complete totality and unity of the law of identity (Beiser 2002: 553). This involves, both the subject and object, real and ideal, falling prey into a complete *monistic rationalism* in every respect. This monistic rationalism exemplifies two equal sides of one individual substance which according to Beiser, Schelling dubs “an identity of identity” (Schelling 2012: 150).

Univocity, Immanence and Monism.

Beiser is of course one of the great historians of German Idealism but both Daniel Whistler and Dalia Nassar, have philosophical issues with Beiser’s reading of Schelling. According to Whistler, Beiser tends to read Schelling through the lens of a historical caricature, by which he means that Beiser makes several fundamental errors in his interpretation of Schelling’s system of identity. Where does Whistler differ from Beiser? For this final section of the paper, I plan on using Whistler’s defense of Schelling’s Identity philosophy as an identity-Monism to counter Beiser’s claims.

Whistler begins by stating that in order to understand Schelling's identity philosophy one must begin to grasp the importance behind its metaphysical ambition (Whistler 2013: 70). Schelling's identity philosophy as a project, is a philosophy centered on the absolute. To understand this great metaphysical ambition, we, as readers of Schelling, need to first grasp what Schelling means when he speaks of *reality* (Whistler 2013: 70). He brings up four main terms that can be read interchangeably. They are the following: *the absolute*, *identity*, *indifference*, and *God*. The first term, "the absolute" is of course synonymous with reality (Whistler 2013: 71). This is of course, a very important distinction and Schelling states in definition 26

"That absolute identity is absolute totality –Because it is everything that is, or it cannot be conceived as separated from everything that is [...] It is, therefore only as everything, i.e., it is absolute totality" (Schelling 2012: 152).

We can also say the same thing with *identity*, that it too is equal to reality. However, the term identity is an important concept in Schelling's philosophy, and it is used throughout his entire corpus. The same applies to the term *indifference*, it as well carries a large amount of weight in terms of Schelling's whole philosophy, and likewise it is also equal to reality. The one term that has an unusual relationship with the rest of the aforementioned is the term *God*. Whistler notes that God, is not a name for reality, but instead is found as a determinate entity within reality. Only later does the term *God* become synonymous with reality (Whistler 2013: 71).

According to Whistler, all four terms form an irreplaceable relationship to the whole. Schelling wants to express the fundamental *equivocal* relationship between the Absolute and its many terms of reality (Whistler 2013: 72). What makes the *Presentation* an important text in the history of German idealism, and in Schelling scholarship, is that this Schelling of the identity-philosophy abandons his earlier ideas. Moving forward there can be no place for a *two-world metaphysics*. What philosophy needs is a new ground of reality, but this ground can never proceed reality because it *is* reality (Whistler 2013: 73).

Essentially, everything is the absolute. However, Whistler states that both reality and the absolute are actually two uniquely different views of one and the same thing. What we need to understand is that this identity metaphysics is not trying to posit any transcendent entity, for we know Schelling's response. "Therefore, nothing can be outside of reason" (Schelling 2012: 146). What Schelling is alluding to is a ground of reality that is immanent to reason, where *all* things are comprehended (Whistler 2013: 76). Instead of presenting Schelling's identity philosophy as a dark Parmenidean monism, whistler gives us another alternative. This alternative presents Schelling's *Presentation*, as a theory where being is univocal (Whistler 2013: 77). Thus, the univocity of being, describes how all properties, substances, being and reality, in Schelling's system of identity are identical to absolute

identity. We have now come to a crucial point in understanding the underlying machine of Schelling's identity philosophy.

For Schelling, Spinoza was not the only influence on the *Presentation*. Schelling also took a lot from the thought of the Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno. Through Spinoza and Bruno's influence, Schelling would create a new identity philosophy born out of a philosophy of immanence. Or to be more precise, an identity-monism. What exactly is an identity-monism? According to Whistler, it consists of "a process of an immanent self-constitution [of the absolute]. Or to unpack this comment we could say that *univocity* expresses Schelling's fundamental theory of *immanence*. To spell this out in Schelling's own terms, we need only to quote definition 33 of the *Presentation*: "The Universe is equally eternal with absolute identity itself" (Schelling 2012: 146).

Conclusion: "All Determinations are Quantifications."

One of the last issues we must discuss and conclude on is how this theory of identity-monism can spare any room for individual things. I agree with Whistler that Schelling is a monist, and that his monism cannot be reduced to a form of *monistic rationalism*. Schelling's project isn't totally reduced to Spinozism or pre-critical philosophy. I also adhere to the claim that Schelling accepts a philosophy of both absolute *immanence* and *univocity*, therefore explaining how all things are one. The emergence of both an absolute immanence and univocity are the underlying *foundation* for Schelling's identity monism. Identity is always already identical with identity. However, in all of this unity, how can difference emerge? Schelling's answer according to Whistler relates entirely to intensity. He states,

"It is this difference in intensity which gives rise to distinctions between subject and object [...] for a rigorous monism, quantity is the only way to distinguish individuals. Hence, rather than the Spinozist "all determination is negation," Schelling proposes a new dictum that "all determinations are quantifications," there is no negation here" (Whistler 2013: 105).

This proves an essential point of my argument that the Schelling of the *Presentation* saw difference as a creative product of both energy and abundance. There can never be negation nor unbalance but only *different* quantities of a continuous production (Whistler 2013: 105). The absolute does not negate its recombinants, but holds onto the negative identity of everything as a potential reserve. Schelling makes this point even clearer in definition thirty-seven when he states that "the quantitative difference of the subjective and objective is the ground of all finitude (Schelling 2012: 155). Therefore, Schelling's *Presentation* does have an adequate concept of difference, since Schelling sees quantitative difference forming the ground of all individual being.

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