

IMAGINATION AS A CONNECTING MIDDLE IN SCHELLING'S RECONSTRUCTION OF KANT

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In a footnote to the ninth edition of his *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* composed in 1795 Schelling writes: 'It is to be hoped that time, the mother of all development, will . . . foster and eventually develop, unto the completion of the whole science, those seeds of great disclosures about this wondrous faculty which Kant has sown in his immortal work.¹ The wondrous faculty in question is the imagination, the *Einbildungskraft*. If this hope for the development of this seed is realized it is because the mothering is supplemented by not a little husbandry at the hand of Schelling himself. No one contributes more than he to explain in what way the imagination is, as he puts it, 'the connecting middle' between theory and practice and, by implication, to explain in what way the third *Critique* mediates between the other two.

¹ F.W.J. Schelling, *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge: Four Early Essays (1794-1796)*, trans Fritz Marti (Bucknell University Press: Lewisburg/Associated University Presses: London, 1980), p. 190; K.F.A Schelling (ed.), *Sämtliche Werke* (J.G. Cotta: Stuttgart and Augsburg, 1856-61), hereafter SW.

Imagination . . . is analogous with *theoretical* reason inasmuch as this is *dependent* upon cognition of the *object*, and analogous with *practical* reason insofar as this produces its object, itself. Imagination *actively produces* an object by putting itself in complete dependence on that object, into full *passivity*. What the creature of imagination lacks in objectivity, imagination itself supplies by the passivity which, through an act of spontaneity, it voluntarily assumes toward the idea of that object. Thus imagination could be defined as the faculty of putting oneself into complete passivity by full self-activity.²

If, following the cue of the words Schelling stresses here, we consider the polarity of the theoretical and the practical within the architectonic of the three *Critiques*, we are struck by the thought that imagination is already involved in the first *Critique* qua concerned primarily with theoretical knowledge and that it is arguably involved in the second *Critique* qua concerned primarily with practice. The argument for this latter claim would turn on whether one understands the role of the Type (*Typik*) to be primarily practical or indistinguishable from the imagination's role as a connecting middle between theory and practice. But it can be a connecting middle only if it partakes of both the theoretical and the practical through being their common root. One reason for saying that the Type is a product of the practical imagination is that, according to Kant, the imagination is the faculty which produces an example or model for the application of a law. In so far as the law to be applied is a rule of skill or counsel of prudence it reduces to a falsifiable theoretical statement about the empirical

² *Ibid.*

world. Only the moral law is irreducibly practical. Nevertheless, our understanding of its universal applicability in the intelligible world of ends can be assisted by the thought of a world in which everyone in the world of ends and means behaves according to the principle of prudence or self-love. Here, however, it is only the universal form of the moral law that is modelled by the law of self-love. Since the moral law is a law of pure reason prescribing with regard only to the form of subjective maxims, hence not grounded in sensibility, the law of the system of nature which typifies it does so only in respect of form. 'Consequently the moral law has no faculty but the understanding to aid its application to physical objects (not the imagination).'³ 'Not the imagination'. These words seem to settle once and for all that there is no place in Kant's thinking for pure practical imagination. This may indeed be so, unless in the second *Critique* a place can be found for the ambiguity to be found in the first, for example at B 162 note b, between imagination contrasted with and imagination identified with understanding or regarded as the understanding performing one of its roles. Whether or not a place can be found in the second *Critique* for this ambiguity and thereby for the notion of a properly practical imagination, one of the lessons to be drawn from some of the writings of Schelling seems to be that a place for such a notion must be found, and that the way to find it is along a path which reconstructs each *Critique* in terms of the others with the help of an intellectual *intuitus originarius* which Kant denies to man. In attempting in this essay to follow Schelling's first steps along this path let us set out from the theory of transcendental imagination of the first *Critique*.

³ *Kant's Critique of Practical Reason and Other Works on the Theory of Ethics*, trans T.K. Abbott, 6th edn (Longman: London, 1909), p. 161.

I

On a simple reading of Kant's theory of theory, the transcendental imagination occupies a *Zwischenland* between sensibility and understanding defined as the faculty of pure *a priori* concepts and principles. It is the faculty of judgement where judgement is taken to mean the subsumption of particular cases under concepts and principles. Here the simple reading encounters the complication of the ambiguity announced in the footnote to B 162 which we have already mentioned and will have occasion to mention once more: 'It is one and the same spontaneity, which in the one case, under the title of imagination, and in the other case, under the title of understanding, brings combination into the manifold of intuition'.

Kant's movement between an account which contrasts and an account which assimilates imagination and understanding is sometimes said to be a symptom of his partial realization that the capacity to apply a concept or principle is part of understanding it. Indeed, there is no reason why Kant should be said to reject this inclusive notion of understanding so long as we recognize what it includes. If we fail to recognize this, we shall fail to recognize that there is a sense in which someone can be in possession of a concept theoretically and be able to define it yet still be hopeless at picking out instances of it. He may have an understanding of the kind that can be learned by rote yet lack the so-called mother wit which at B 172 Kant calls 'so-called' perhaps because however innate this intelligence may be it still requires practice if the fluent exercise of it is to be possible. In that case, Kant's distinction between a more and a less abstractly intellectual understanding of concepts is preserved at any rate for empirical concepts through the concession that the

capacity to apply them in practice, which is part of the fuller understanding, is itself acquired through practice. If Kant nevertheless wishes to distinguish also between, on the one hand, the particularity of a dog or of a physical or mental picture of a dog and, on the other hand, the schema intermediate between the abstract universal concept of it and the particular, the empirical schema appears to end up being nothing other than the acquired capacity to pick out dogs and pictures of dogs rather than something that enables us to acquire that capacity. All it will enable is an improvement in that capacity.

Nevertheless, where pure non-empirical concepts are concerned, there is a role for the schema to perform which does not reduce to that of an acquired expertise. Hence, the acquisition of empirical concepts would not be explicable solely in the terms of an empiricist theory of learning. For empirical concepts presuppose pure schemata, namely mathematical ones in the narrower sense, that is to say, geometrical, arithmetical or algebraic ones, and transcendental ones, that is to say, mathematical and dynamic ones in the sense in which Kant employs these terms to separate each of the quadruples of pure categories, pure schemata and pure principles into two pairs. Although in calling these categories, schemata and principles pure, Kant is rejecting genetic empiricism, this does not prevent his sometimes arguing for a variety of logical empiricism along the lines of the logically behaviourist account of understanding we have just been discussing, according to which the understanding of a concept is the ability to cash it by referring to specific instances that do and don't fall under it. Just what variety of logical empiricism Kant subscribes to will depend on what he would count as a specific instance.

Take, for instance, the concepts of mathematics, considering them first of all in their pure intuitions. Space has three dimensions; between two points there can be only one straight line, etc. Although all these principles, and the representation of the object with which this science occupies itself, are generated in the mind completely *a priori*, they would mean nothing, were we not always able to present their meaning in appearances, that is, in empirical objects (B 299).

The mathematical principles and concepts in question would have no meaning or sense without this reference to empirical instantiation. Furthermore, we cannot define any of the categories and principles, meaning by that not just the specially mathematical ones but the transcendental ones as well, 'without at once descending to the conditions of sensibility'. By sensibility here he means not solely pure sensibility but empirical sensibility. Without that there is no *Sinn*. This word is translated by Kemp Smith on at least one occasion as 'sensible meaning'. This translation receives support not only from etymology but also from the adverbial phrase in Kant's remark that without 'relation to the object' we cannot define any of the categories 'in any real sense'. But we have seen that in the passage cited from the previous paragraph, mathematical concepts 'mean nothing' (*gar nichts bedeuten*) unless their meaning can be laid before us (*ihre Bedeutung darlegen*) in empirical objects. That, we are then told, is how it is with all the categories and principles tabled in the Transcendental Analytic.

Without pretending that the paragraphs here in question pose no problems, it must be said that they do not compel us to draw the embarrassing inference that a pure concept can have a purely empirical, so to speak purely 'impure', instance. If there are empirical instances of the

pure concept triangle they are instances in the literal sense of the word *Bei-spielen*: they are instances falling under the concept only in the mode of standing in for, and playing alongside, it. Pure concepts can have real meaning, as Kant says, only if they are able to present their meaning in empirical objects. Their meaning and the empirical presentability of it are two stages. Thus, the pure concept of magnitude 'seeks its support and meaning (*Sinn*) in number, and this in turn in the fingers, in the beads of the abacus, or in the strokes and points which can be placed before the eyes'. The 'in turn' (*diese aber*) here makes it clear that Kant is not saying that the science of arithmetic is a counting of fingers, beads or of mental images of any such things. That cannot be right if mental images of beads are as particular as beads, for that would lead to an infinite regress which he seeks to avoid by stating quite explicitly that counting particulars presupposes schemata which are not particular things because they are not things but procedures or methods for identifying things. The four fingers of a particular empirically perceivable hand exemplify magnitude, a universal intellectual concept of the understanding, thanks to the schema of number, a sensuous concept constructed in the imagination. The purely intellectual concept is introduced to the empirical objects of sense, presented to them, not directly, but through the mediation of a construct, the construct of the number four and of number as such. In calling the schema a construct, we seem to be calling it a thing. But the schema as construct is inseparable from the process of constructing. The numbers four and five are unities at which we arrive. They are totalities built up in time by the combination of a plurality of units: the category of quantity temporalized. Number in general is 'the unity of the synthesis of the manifold of a homogeneous intuition in

general, a unity due to my generating time itself in the apprehension of the intuition' (B 182).

Similarly, the undetermined concept of ground becomes determined as the concept of mechanical cause, and the purely logical sequence (*Folge*) of hypothetical judgement becomes determined as causal sequence through the mediation of the schema of temporal sequence according to a rule. Since sensible intuition is the only intuition available to human beings according to Kant, construction is restricted to time and along with it the real meaning of the categories of the understanding. These pure concepts have only a purely logical meaning. They have no objective reference unless they are given it by the schemata. What difference would it make to the critical idealism of Kant, we may now ask, when it is argued, as it is argued by Schelling, that sensible intuition is not the only intuition available to human beings, and that we have access to non-discursive intellectual constructive intuition as well?

II

A convenient point of departure from which to move toward an answer to this question is the piece 'On Construction in Philosophy' published anonymously in the *Critical Journal of Philosophy* in 1802. Although some commentators have attributed this to Hegel and others have suggested that it is a joint production by the co-editors of the journal, most authorities now agree that it is by Schelling. 'On Construction in Philosophy' is a review of Carl H. Höyer's *Treatise on Philosophical Construction* published in the previous year. These two titles indicate that what is at stake is Kant's assertion in the Transcendental Doctrine of Method of the first *Critique* that philosophical knowledge is discursive or

acromatic, i.e. knowledge gained by reason from the analysis of concepts, whereas mathematical knowledge is knowledge reached by reason through pure temporal or temporo-spatial synthesis, i.e. the construction of concepts in intuition which as such is concrete and individual rather than abstractly or otherwise discursive (B 741, B 758). Schelling maintains against this that there is a place for construction in philosophy. So are we going to find that whereas Kant, because he believes that there is no place for construction in philosophy, rejects Spinoza's and Wolff's assumption that the method of philosophy can begin with definitions, Schelling will allow the possibility of this, even though the construction allowing it will not be one of pure time or space? Schelling makes five main points.

(1) The first critical point Schelling makes against Kant in his article turns, if I read his intention correctly, on the fact that mathematics, on Kant's account, employs schemata and these are each a *unity* of a given pure intuition or form of intuition which is particular and is the product of an act (*Handlung*) of construction. It is this act which brings the concept of unity to the pure sensible datum. It is the conceptual partner in the constitution of the schema. Now, since the schema is a unity of this with a sensible datum, the intellectuality of the schema as a whole dominates the pure sensibility which is offered as, so to speak, the temporal receptacle in which the constructing takes place.

In this interpretation of Schelling's first objection to Kant a distinction is made between the intuitive and the constructive aspects of the schema. Strictly speaking, therefore, we should have to say that it is the constructing which is intellectual. Schelling, however, considers that his objection entitles him to claim to have found an

opening for intellectual intuition. This locution can be justified on the grounds that it is with distinguishable but inseparable aspects of schematism that we are concerned, as the constructing is distinguished from the construct produced. Unless we insist on this, the notion of schematism will be open to the objection that a second order schema is required to bridge the gap between its two parts and a third and fourth to bridge the gap between their sub-parts, and so on. Kant's insistence that the schema is a process or procedure (*Verfahren*) puts his reader on guard against this regress. Further, a reason for protesting against Schelling's talk of intellectual intuition or intellectual intuiting would be a reason for protesting against Kant's reference to the schema as a sensible concept.

(2) Schelling writes: 'Space as according to Kant it grounds geometry and time as according to him it grounds arithmetic, is wholly intellectual intuition, but expressed there in the finite and here in the infinite'. (*Der Raum, wie er der Geometrie, und die Zeit, wie sie der Arithmetik nach Kant zu Grunde liegt, ist die ganze intellectuale Anschauung; aber dort im Endlichen, hier im Unendlichen ausgedrückt.*) Does 'there' mean in the case of space and 'here' in the case of time, as seems likely? Or does 'there' refer to the case of the mathematician and 'here' to the case of the philosopher which are mentioned in that order in the preceding sentence? In the preceding sentence, Schelling says that the absolute difference between mathematics and philosophy cannot lie for Kant in the fact that there is non-empirical intuition in the latter but not in the former, since Kant argues that geometry does call for non-empirical intuition. The difference must therefore lie in the fact that whereas for the mathematician intellectual intuition is reflected in

sensibility, for the philosopher it is reflected in itself, *in sich selbst*. This would be a reason for saying that in philosophy intellectual intuition is infinite, for it is not limited by something other than itself as is the case with intellectual intuition in mathematics, where it is limited by sensibility. This does not exclude the possibility that philosophy's intellectual intuition is temporal. And, indeed, Schelling maintains that it is. His way of maintaining it, furthermore, brings together into one story the two interpretations of the words 'here' and 'there' in the sentence in question. For philosophy's intellectual intuition is an intuition of pure time. Here the purity of time is its independence of spatiality and its closer kinship with arithmetic as against geometry. True, on Kant's account *the representation of the arithmetical continuum depends upon the spatial continuum as a (for humans) contingently necessary auxiliary.*

Even time itself we cannot represent, save in so far as we attend, in the *drawing* of a straight line (which has to serve as the outer figurative representation of time), merely to the act of the synthesis of the manifold whereby we successively determine inner sense, and in so doing attend to the succession of this determination in inner sense (B 155).

So the notion of succession, presupposed in counting, is a notion of pure active motion, *Bewegung*, regarded as an act, *Handlung*, presupposed both by the representation of time which, Kant elsewhere tells us, cannot itself be perceived, and by the representation of space: their connecting middle or common root which explains why Kant says that the schema is not a thing but a *Verfahren*. This movement as act is, in Fichtean terms, a striving (*Streben*) which as striving, presupposes the resistance, the *objection*, of the spatio-temporally real. This opposition is

the origin of the feeling of self-awareness, that is to say, of the self's awareness of its own temporality. Schelling asks: 'how, then, does the self become an object to itself as inner sense?'; that is to say, how does it become an object for itself as sensation combined with consciousness? He answers: 'Simply and solely through the fact that *time* arises (*entsteht*) for it', not of course time as already externally intuited but, he says, in words that relay Kant's reflections on time back to Augustine and forward to Bergson, Husserl and Heidegger, 'time as mere limit, mere point (*blosse Grenze, blosse Punkt*)', that is to say, 'as pure intensity, as activity which can expand itself only in one dimension, but is now concentrated at a single point'.⁴ The *intensio* of time as limit or point is not yet time itself. It is how time arises for the self. It *is* time when the unidimensionally extensible activity becomes an object to itself. This is entailed by the first principle that the self is self-consciousness, activity conscious of itself, from which it follows that the self itself is time conceived of in activity, *in Thätigkeit gedacht*. The *intensio* of time as the tension of a spring or as source is inconceivable in isolation from the idea of, respectively, expansibility or flow (*distensio*). Since this idea of the subject being a temporally extended object to itself implies that of the subject's being conscious of an object in space, we can say that the *intensio* or intensity of the self implies the intentionality of consciousness, and vice versa. So we could formulate Schelling's second objection against Kant by saying that the latter fails to see that a corollary of his own argument is that without intellectual intuition sensible intuition is blind. The origin

⁴ F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), trans Peter Heath (University Press of Virginia: Charlottesville, 1978), hereafter STI, p. 103; SW III, p. 466.

of geometry, and of arithmetic and algebra, the origin of mathematics is the origin of philosophy.

(3) Schelling's third objection, or perhaps a strong reformulation of the one we have just considered, is that Kant contradicts himself. For, as we have indeed confirmed, Kant maintains that philosophy is the analysis of concepts. But concepts will be empty unless there is some object to which they can be referred. Since he denies that in philosophy they are independent of intuition of sensible objects, whether empirical or pure, they must on pain of vacuity be given determinacy of meaning by being referred to intellectual intuition. Hence intellectual intuition is presupposed by transcendental imagination and its schematism, by the pure synthesis of transcendental self-consciousness. Provided this alleged intellectual intuition of the 'I am' is temporal despite not being spatial, a refutation of subjective idealism analogous to Kant's is available to Schelling, as we have just seen.

(4) From our discussion of Schelling's first objection against Kant it is clear that in mathematics intuition has two aspects, a universal and a particular. According to Kant mathematics treats of the universal in the particular, whereas philosophy treats the particular only in the universal (B 742). Schelling doubts the validity of both of these characterizations. He casts doubt on the first by citing Kant against Kant. Kant does indeed say that in geometry the concept of a figure, for example a triangle, is expressed in a particular pure or empirical intuition; he also says however:

the evident propositions of numerical relation are indeed synthetic, but are not general like those of geometry, and cannot, therefore, be called axioms but only numerical formulas. The assertion that $7 + 5$ is

equal to 12 is not an analytic proposition. . . . But although this proposition is synthetic, it is also only singular. So far as we are here attending merely to the synthesis of the homogeneous (of units), that synthesis can take place only in one way, although the *employment* of these numbers is general (B 205).

Schelling does not cite or refer to these sentences explicitly, but it must be on them that he bases his statement that Kant himself concedes that arithmetic treats of particular numerical formulae stating a relation between individual magnitudes which are expressed in the universal. That would make arithmetic a part of philosophy on Kant's definition of this. Schelling does not, however, share this definition of philosophy. Because the opposition between philosophy and mathematics cannot be based on whether the particular is expressed in the universal or vice versa, and because, in either case, a true identification of the universal with the particular is as such an intuition, the difference between mathematics and philosophy is a difference of intuition or construction. In mathematics, construction is distinguished by having two aspects, the universal and the particular, the former expressing or presenting the latter or vice versa. In philosophical construction what in mathematics is distinguished is united in a point of absolute indifference or identity which is an identity of identity and difference.

(5) With this notion of constructive intuition in which the opposition of the two kinds of expression is overcome, a new notion of particularity emerges and with it a new notion of universality, concrete universality, universality condescended from the expression of the metaphysical in the physical and the physical in the metaphysical. This condescension of visible spirit and invisible nature is, in the language of Spinoza, the identity of Thought and Extension,

the point of indifference between the *sive* of *Deus sive Natura* and the *sive* of *Deus sive Spiritus*. In the language of Hegel and of the *Critique of Judgment* (section IV), it is a resultant of the joint expression of a determinate and a reflective judgement. This absolute universality is the universality not of a discursive concept but of a concrete Idea that is the object of intellectual intuition. Whereas Kant cannot maintain both the difference between mathematics and philosophy and secure real sense through reference for the concepts of philosophy, Schelling does both by distinguishing two kinds of intuitional object. If Kant had recognized that he is committed to admitting intellectual intuition in both mathematics and philosophy but that the particularity and generality in each case are of two absolutely different kinds, he would have recognized too that to ask a philosopher to work out the sum of the angles of a triangle from the concept of a triangle is like asking a sculptor to make a statue out of musical notes or a musician to perform a sonata with pigments.

III

In the *System of Transcendental Idealism* Schelling endorses Fichte's partial endorsement of Descartes' *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations*. Up to a point this is also another endorsement of Kant's deduction from the 'I think'. The beginning of the system set out philosophically is the end of the method of discovery, and the structure of the end is reflected in that of the beginning. The identity of intuitive construct and constructing, of thought and thinking, in the Absolute Idea is reflected in the 'I am' which is 'the first, absolutely unconditioned principle' which Schelling takes over from Fichte's *Science of Knowledge*, as illustrated by Fichte's statement that in the act of positing 'I am', the self 'is at

once the agent (*das Handelnde*) and the product of action (*der Handlung*); the active (*das Thätige*), and what the activity (*die Thätigkeit*) brings about'.⁵ For this identity of the producing and product or constructing and construct, acting (*Handlung*) and act performed (*That*) Fichte adopts the word *Thathandlung*. This word is commonly used of violent deeds and is therefore appropriate to describe what Schelling and Fichte say is for human beings a unique coincidence through imagination of product and producing or, as we might alternatively say, of constative and non-constative performance, such as might be supposed to be reserved for a divine *causa sui*. *Einbildungskraft* is a craft, a quiet force, and in writings of Schelling later than those with which we are here immediately concerned it becomes a name for the creativity of God. Schelling observes:

In becoming an object of myself through self-consciousness, there arises for me the concept of the self, and conversely, the concept of the self is merely the concept of becoming-an-object-to-oneself. . . . Thus we have here that original identity of thought and object, appearance and reality, for which we were searching, and which is nowhere else to be found. . . . That this identity between being-thought and coming-to-be, in the case of the self, remains hidden from so many, is due solely to the fact that they neither perform the act of self-consciousness in freedom, nor are able to reflect in so doing upon what arises therein.⁶

⁵ J.G. Fichte, *Science of Knowledge (Wissenschaftslehre)*, with the *First and Second Introductions*, trans and edited by Peter Heath and John Lachs (Appleton/Century/Crofts: New York, 1970), hereafter SK, p. 97; *Gesamtausgabe*, I, 2, Reinhard Lauth and Hans Jacob (eds) (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Frommann Verlag, 1965), p. 259 (I, 96).

⁶ STI, p. 25; cp p. 43, SW III, p. 366, cp p. 389.

So pure consciousness, self-consciousness, usually gets hidden by empirical consciousness. Our consciousness is normally directed to things around us or to the feelings to which they give rise. Because such empirical consciousness is not unchallengeably veridical on any specific occasion it cannot supply the supreme principle of knowledge. This is why Fichte and Schelling begin their search for that principle with a principle of logic, the principle of identity $A=A$ which is usually taken to be presupposed by any synthetic proposition. They agree, however, that an identical proposition conveys no knowledge. They agree with Kant that it is purely formal and that for a proposition to convey real knowledge objective content must be provided in some way. The only proposition that fulfils the requirements of absolute priority is one which like $A=A$ is identical, but which is, at the same time, synthetic. That proposition is 'I=P' or 'I am'.

From this synthetic identical proposition in which form and content are one, Fichte sets out, in the wake of Augustine, Descartes and Kant, to construct a science of the world. Our main interest here is in the method of construction which Schelling employs. Having now acquainted ourselves with some of the workings of this method first at the end and now at the beginning of his version of what Fichte calls the 'pragmatic history of the human mind or spirit'⁷ let us return to the end.

IV

Marking out the ground for Hegel's history of spirit, *Geist's Geschehen*, and Heidegger's history of the concealment and advent of being, *Sein's Ereignis*, Schelling

⁷ SK, pp. 198-9; *Gesamtausgabe*, I, 2, p. 365 (I, 222).

conceives philosophy as 'the free recapitulation (*Wiederholung*) of the series of acts into which the one act of self-consciousness evolves'.⁸ As the science of science, the knowledge of knowledge, philosophy is the one science with a double seriality, that of the reflective and specifically philosophical series and that of the reflected series of ordinary consciousness which in the end coincide. Seven years before the publication of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* a pre-echo can be heard in Schelling's *System* when we read: 'subject and object – which are absolutely united in the absolute act of self-consciousness – must be constantly kept distinct for purposes of philosophizing, that is, in order to allow this unification to take place before our eyes'.⁹ So, as Hegel says in the Introduction of the *Phenomenology* 'all that is left for us to do is simply to look on'.¹⁰

Philosophy is a pragmatic history because it is a repetition of deeds analogous to the procedure in a law-court through which the necessity of those deeds is brought out. As the words *pragma*, *Tatsache* and 'fact' remind us, an act may be the doing and what is brought about, whether the doing be *praxis* or *poiësis*. This two-in-one reflected in the language of ordinary consciousness is matched by the philosophical term of art 'point of indifference' which Schelling introduces for the identity of constructing and the intuited object whose transfigurations evolve from original self-consciousness and whose so-called indifference therefore is far from the indeterminacy of a night in which all cows are black or a 'formless whiteness' like that of the blank page purporting to portray the Absolute in a certain burlesque of the philosophical journal *Mind*

⁸ STI, p. 49; SW III, p. 397.

⁹ STI, p. 42, cp p. 73, SW III, p. 389, cp p. 427.

¹⁰ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans A.V. Miller (Clarendon: Oxford, 1977), p. 54, cp pp. 36, 57.

entitled *Mind!*.¹¹ Schelling complains that when he refers to his 'real idealism' as a system of absolute identity the word identity has been misinterpreted when it has been taken to imply that the system suppresses the distinctions between matter and spirit, good and evil, truth and error.¹² Likewise, indifference is not sheer emptiness, nothing or night.¹³ More like the *polemos* of darkness and light to which Heraclitus and Hölderlin allude, it is a 'conflict of absolutely opposed activities . . . one that originally reaches out into infinity . . . the real, objective, limitable activity; the other, the tendency to intuit oneself in that infinity, . . . the ideal, subjective, illimitable activity'.

In the *System of Transcendental Idealism* the genesis of the figures of consciousness follows approximately the order of the Transcendental Doctrine of Elements of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the order of the three *Critiques*. Apart from a disagreement over the doctrine of the things-in-themselves, the chief difference is that from the deduction of the absolute synthesis of self-consciousness, the movement of the deductions takes the form of graduated resolutions of contradictions by transition to some third thing common to each of the opposites. The main body of the book is divided into the three major transitions which Schelling calls *epochs*: from original sensation to productive intuition, from productive intuition to reflection and from reflection to the absolute act of will, this last being the transition from theory to practice of which, as we noted, Schelling undertakes to trace the common root. Given the already evident similarities in many respects of Schelling's *System of Transcendental*

¹¹ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, p. 31.

¹² SW X, p. 107.

¹³ SW IV, p. 403; cp Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie, Gesamtausgabe*, 65 (Klostermann: Frankfurt am Main, 1989), p. 199.

Idealism to the transcendental idealism of Kant, we are primed to expect agreement between them as to this common root of theory and practice. Given the ubiquity in Schelling's *System* of constructive intuition, how could this common root fail to be the imagination where schematism performs its 'art concealed in the depths of the human soul' and 'whose real modes of operation (*Handgriffe*) nature is hardly likely ever to allow us to discover, and to have open to our gaze' (B 180)? How can this fail to be in one guise or another the imagination which as productive imagination it is not unreasonable to identify with the 'common, but to us unknown, root' of sensibility and understanding' (B 29)?¹⁴

Yet in the discussion of what he calls productive intuition, that is to say in the section dealing with the construction of objects, Schelling is coy about using the word 'imagination'. The word is very rarely used there. The simplest explanation for this is one that sheds some light also on the fact that in classical lists of the powers of the mind sometimes both memory and imagination are mentioned, but sometimes the former is subsumed under the latter. The importance Schelling attributes to construction leads him to think of imagination primarily as constructive and his decision to keep more or less in step with the first *Critique* in his ordering of the treatment of topics means that imagination will not receive the full treatment until his *System* reaches the stage equivalent to that of Kant's pages on schematism. The *System's* section on productive intuition is roughly equivalent to Kant's transcendental deduction of the conditions of objectivity. So any mention it makes of

¹⁴ Cp Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans James S. Churchill (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1962), p. 41; *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (Klostermann: Frankfurt am Main, 1951), p. 41.

imagination will be such as is licensed by the fact that in the *Critique of Pure Reason* imagination has been considered at this stage only in its capacity as the reproductive component of the threefold synthesis where it is in synergy with recognition in concepts and apprehension in intuition. Kant's phrase 'apprehension in intuition' may well have suggested the phrase 'productive intuition' to Schelling. A productive intuition is a productive image, where the reference to image must be read as a reference to Kant's teaching that 'The pure image (*Bild*) of all magnitudes (*quantorum*) for outer sense is space; that of all objects of the senses in general is time' (B 182). This statement is made in the section on Schematism where it is argued, as we have seen, that the application of magnitude (*quantitas*), a general concept of the understanding, to these pure particular objects of intuition is managed by the schema of number. That productive intuition is another name for the imagination is suggested by the fact that we have found Schelling referring to the imagination as 'this wondrous faculty' in 1795 and now find him speaking in 1800 of 'the marvel (*das Wunder*) of productive intuition'.¹⁵ Its marvellous art, notwithstanding its being an art that conceals art, is discovered by Schelling, with Fichte's aid, to be that of effecting a suspension of the oscillation (*Schweben*) between, on the one hand, the restriction imposed upon the self by, for example, sensation – when the self senses itself opposed to itself – and, on the other hand, the self's infinite striving to pass beyond this real opposition to its ideal activity, and to overcome this difference, which can neither persist nor be simply done away with (*aufgehoben*), in the identity of a third activity.

The fact that this 'third thing' is still an activity and

¹⁵ STI, p. 70, SW III, p. 423.

destined to give rise to a higher level oscillation or wavering may explain why the imagination is here described as the resolution of a conflict whereas in the *Science of Knowledge* Fichte says imagination is itself an oscillation. *Phantasia* in the *De Anima* is a *kinèsis* (429a1). This idea of movement is implied in the etymology of *pha* which conveys the idea of emerging or coming to light, *phainesthai*.

It is what Merleau-Ponty would call the 'good ambiguity' of the imagination that moves the mind from each of its epochs to the next. This is why it crops up not only in Schelling's first and second epochs, that is to say, not only in the transition from feeling to productive intuition and from its unconscious operation there to reflection. It emerges also in the transition from reflection on objects to the conscious willing of objects as ends, those produced when the art concealed in the depths of the soul emerges in *objets d'art*.

The methodological way-making (*Bewegung*) from Schelling's second epoch to his third is a shift from reflection to schematism. In other words, it is a transition from what in the third *Critique* Kant calls reflective judgement to what he there calls determinative judgement. If, in ascending from one epoch to another the structure of the less complex is refigured but retained in the next, then the highest flight of imagination will be symbolic in the special sense defined by Schelling in the lectures on the *Philosophy of Art* first delivered in 1802. There schematism is defined as a presentation (*Darstellung*) in which the universal signifies (*bedeutet*) the particular or in which the particular is intuited through (*angeschaut durch*) the universal. The allegorical is defined as presentation in which the particular signifies the universal or in which the universal is intuited through the particular. The symbolic is the logical product of

these, or, as he says, their synthesis, in which neither does the general signify the particular nor does the particular signify the general, but in which these significings are absolutely one.¹⁶ Although in making these distinctions Schelling must have had the third *Critique* open before him at §59 – for his modes of *Darstellung* are what Kant there calls kinds of *hypotyposes* and *exhibitiones* – his definition of the symbolic is slightly but significantly more articulated than Kant's. Although, like Schelling, Kant contrasts the symbolic explicitly with the schematic (the determinative), he does not, unlike Schelling, contrast the symbolic explicitly with the allegorical (the reflective). The symbolic, on Kant's definition, is a variety of what Aristotle calls analogy. It is an analogy with a double function. It functions as a schema, applying a concept to an intuited object; but the rule of procedure it applies to that intuited object is applied also to another object, as when a living body is taken to represent a monarchical state governed by constitutional laws. Here symbolism is simulation by simile made possible by a structural rather than an intuitional resemblance between a constitutional monarchy and a living body. A symbol thus defined is a metaphor and corresponds to what Schelling rates as a lesser form of art. For Schelling, symbolism is imagination at its most developed. And although there are some forms of art which are schematic and others which are allegorical, the highest form of art is symbolic. It may be that in symbolism, as defined by Kant, both schematism and allegorism are at work, but they have not fused as they are in symbolism as defined by Schelling. We have just seen that although Schelling says that symbolism is a synthesis of the other two modes of presentation, he also says that neither of them

¹⁶ SW V, p. 407.

operates as such. Their becoming one is to be understood in the way that in the triads of categories deduced by Kant the third, though a synthesis of the first and the second, is something entirely new. That schematism and allegory achieve an *Indifferenzpunkt* in the symbolic is neatly encompassed in the German word for symbol, *Sinnbild*, which mirrors the unity of meaning and form.¹⁷ Schelling evinces his wish to ensure that this mirroring be not confused with a one-sided dependency relation of copying or causing subsumed under the principle of sufficient reason when the phrase 'mere speculation' in the Introduction to the first edition of the *Philosophy of Nature* (1793) is replaced in the second edition (1803) by the phrase 'mere reflection', thereby enabling 'speculation' to be retained for a nobler role, as it is also by Hegel.¹⁸

Perhaps the conjunction of his belief that the imagination is fully developed in art with his belief that it is in the sphere of art that the imagination is usually thought to be most at home explains Schelling's reservations over using the word 'imagination' for the earlier stages of the history of the mind. Coleridge begins Chapter X of *Biographia Literaria* as follows:

'Esemplastic. The word is not in Johnson, nor have I met with it elsewhere'. Neither have I. I constructed it myself from the Greek words, *eis en plattein*, to shape into one; because having to convey a new sense, I thought that a new term would both aid the recollection of my meaning, and prevent its being

¹⁷ SW V, p. 412.

¹⁸ See K. Düsing, 'Spekulation und Reflexion: Zur Zusammenarbeit Schellings und Hegels in Jena', *Hegel-Studien*, V (1969), pp. 95–127, and Jean-François Courtine, 'Le déploiement schellingien de l'unité: de l'universio à l'universitas', *Les études philosophiques* (1978), p. 351, note 12.

confounded with the usual import of the word, imagination.

To 'shape into one' is also a translation of *In-eins-bildung* which is the power of *Einbildungskraft* on Schelling's account of imagination.¹⁹ Schelling does not want this to be confounded with the merely associative reproductive imagination of the empiricists. Hence, when he is treating the oscillation between the infinite will and the finite reality which opposes it and makes it possible he acknowledges that he has not yet shown his right to employ the word imagination of this oscillation between and ultimate unification of the finite and infinite. A similar caution is expressed by Fichte when of a certain activity he has found it necessary to postulate in the course of the argument of the *Science of Knowledge* he writes in parentheses 'its name is *imagination*, as will appear in due course'.²⁰

If the imagination is most fully developed in art and art is most fully developed in symbolism, symbolism is most fully developed in mythology. Schelling's most favoured cases among extant mythologies are those presented in Homer, where the individual *is* the universal and the universal *is* the individual; the *Sinn* is the *Bild* and the *Bild* the *Sinn* rather than either *signifying* (*bedeuten*) the other, which is what happens once mythology gives way to allegory, as Homer's mythologies do for a later age, or when his myths are succeeded by such allegories as that of Eros and Psyche. That Homer's *Odyssey* should be accorded such a privileged place is in keeping with the pragmatic history of the human spirit being described as spirit's *Odyssey*.²¹ It is the history of a

¹⁹ SW V, p. 306.

²⁰ SK, p. 150; *Gesamtausgabe*, I, 2, p. 314 (I, 160).

²¹ STI, p. 232, SW III, p. 629.

homecoming in that the end of that history is the fulfilment of its beginning. The original judgement, the *Ur-teil*, of that beginning is the simple twofold root of self-consciousness from which grows the highest form of self-consciousness, the aesthetic imagination which is 'the productive intuition reiterated to its highest degree' (*die in der höchsten Potenz sich wiederholende produktive Anschauung*)²² and whose expression in the work of art is the objective organon of philosophy. Let us retrace more closely the path followed by this return.

V

Schelling's statement that productive intuition of objects reiterated to its highest degree is the *poiësis* of aesthetic intuition becomes more comprehensible when it is set alongside certain statements made by Kant. In the section of the *Critique of Pure Reason* dealing with the transition from the table of forms of judgement to the table of categories, Kant writes: 'The same function which gives unity to the various representations *in a judgement* also gives unity to the mere synthesis of various representations *in an intuition*' (B 104). We have already noted more than once that this function which gives unity to the mere synthesis of various representations in an intuition is sometimes called 'imagination' by Kant and sometimes 'understanding'. 'It is one and the same spontaneity, which in the one case, under the title of imagination, and in the other case, under the title of understanding, brings combination into the manifold of intuition' (B 162 note b). Schelling must surely intend his reader to recognize that he is repeating this sentence

²² STI, p. 230, SW V, p. 626.

when he writes, with reference to poetic intuition and to productive intuition, that is, intuition productive of the space in which real objects appear, 'it is one and the same capacity that is active in both, the only one whereby we are able to think and to couple together even what is contradictory (*das Widersprechende*) – and its name is imagination'.²³

If Schelling and Kant are agreed that this capacity, spontaneity or function, may sometimes be entitled imagination and sometimes understanding, how does this agreement stand in relation to the sentence cited from the *Critique of Practical Reason* at the beginning of this essay: 'the moral law has no faculty but the understanding to aid its application to physical objects (not the imagination)'? Kant says this because the moral law is purely formal and the order of a moral realm of free agents can have as an analogy in nature only the formality of a system of natural laws, that is to say, an order of understanding whose laws are not exhibited in concrete spatio-temporal reality by schematism. This does not mean that the moral idea of reason cannot be exhibited in an aesthetic idea, an ideal type or archetype constructed by the poetic imagination. When Schelling writes that an Idea of reason is not a concept of the understanding, he is thinking of the antinomies which Kant has shown to arise if this is forgotten; for example, if it is forgotten that freedom is not a concept of the understanding, but an Idea of reason.

Remembering the distinction between the practical employment of Ideas of reason and the theoretical employment of concepts of the understanding makes it possible to couple together, to construe, to construct,

²³ STI, p. 230, SW III, p. 625.

what would otherwise be contradictory, for example the infinitude of the will and the finitude of resistant reality without which there can be no willing. Remembering this distinction allows not only for this overcoming of contradiction. Since contradiction is overcome by 'the connecting middle' entitled imagination we can now see that the ambiguity between imagination and the schematized understanding to be found in the first *Critique* is matched in Schelling's reading of the threefold Critical synthesis by the further ambiguity on the possibility of which we touched in our opening paragraphs. There is an ambiguity between fully fledged imagination and unschematized understanding in that the fully fledged form of the latter, the Idea of freedom presupposed by the categorical imperative, is practical reason whose application is guided by the former, that is to say, by an aesthetic Idea. The constructions of aesthetic intuition are the fulfilment of the constructions of mathematical and intellectual intuition of which philosophy becomes conscious when it reflects on the self-consciousness of the 'I am'. So philosophy's becoming conscious of this is its becoming conscious of its own limitations. In the final section of this essay we shall examine in a little more detail why this is so and indicate in broad terms where the philosophy of philosophy which emerges from Schelling's reconstruction of Kant stands in relation to philosophy's past and future.

VI

The aesthetic intuition of the poetic faculty (*Dichtungsvermögen*) objectifies in a work of art the intellectual intuition which operates unconsciously in the production of objects and in our movement among them in action. It is the document and organon which

philosophy needs to make manifest the absolutely simple identity of the conscious and the unconscious which, because it is prior to predication, cannot be fully described and must therefore be otherwise presented, exhibited or performed (*dargestellt*). However, if philosophy can make this manifest only through art, the idea of philosophy as the science of sciences will have to be revised. If Schelling wishes to say both that art is the ancilla of philosophy, is paramount for philosophy, and that it is paramount over philosophy, as might seem to be indicated if, as he says, philosophy returns to poetry, *logos* to *mythos*, philosophical constructing and mythopoietic intuition fuse in what we shall have to think of as the heir to what used to be called philosophy. That this is so is suggested by the following sentences from the last pages of the *System* where it seems that both the poetic and the philosophical genius become absorbed into the political community:

What intellectual intuition is for the philosopher, aesthetic intuition is for his object. The former, since it is necessary purely for purposes of that special direction of mind which it takes in philosophizing, makes no appearance at all in ordinary consciousness; the latter, since it is nothing else but intellectual intuition given universal currency, or become objective, *can* at least figure in every consciousness. But from this very fact it may also be understood that, and why, philosophy *as* philosophy can never become generally current. The one field to which absolute objectivity is granted, is 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 (*ein Bruchstück*) of man. Art brings *the whole man*, as he is, to this point, namely to knowledge of the highest, and this is what underlies the eternal difference and the marvel of art.²⁴

Now for Schelling, as we have seen, the most marvellous marvel of art is mythology. Mythology is accorded this pre-eminence because at the end of its history philosophy, the 'whole science' referred to in the quotation from Schelling with which we began, returns to the mythological source from which it sprang.

Philosophy was born and nourished by poetry in the infancy of knowledge, and with it all those sciences it has guided toward 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. Nor is it in general difficult to say what the medium for this return of science to poetry will be; for in mythology such a medium existed, before the occurrence of a breach (*Trennung*) now seemingly beyond repair. But how a new mythology is itself to arise, which shall be the creation, not of some individual author, but of a new race, impersonating, as it were, one single poet – that is a problem whose solution can be looked for only in the future destinies of the world, and in the course of history to come.²⁵

That is a problem we cannot pursue here beyond observing that the future destinies of the world and the course of history will see this idea of philosophy realized

²⁴ STI, p. 233, SW III, p. 629.

²⁵ STI, pp. 232–3, SW III, p. 629.

less in the conceptual thinking of the author of the *Science of Logic* than in the *denkendes Dichten* of the third of the three Tübingen friends, Hölderlin, and in the *dichtendes Denken* to which Hölderlin provoked Heidegger at a time when talk of mythology and race was once more in the air. Heidegger, following Schelling and Kant, is much given to delving for hidden roots, in particular the root shared by theory and practice. We have been examining why, in the paragraph from the *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* which we cited at the outset, Schelling believes this root to be imagination. When in that paragraph Schelling writes with reference to imagination, whose *Schweben* can mean oscillation but also suspense, that it voluntarily assumes a state of passivity toward an object, it is not difficult to hear his words as an expression of the belief that the common root is less likely to be disclosed by grasping (*Begreifen*) than by letting be (*Seinlassen*). In the *Further Expositions of my System of Philosophy* (1802) Schelling distinguishes ratiocinative *Begreifen* which explains by subordination, from the non-hierarchical thinking of identity, where the 'of' signifies a genitive which is both subjective and objective, a 'speculative' genitive we could perhaps say, where the equal right and value of opposites is acknowledged, and where each thing is allowed to be (*seynlassen*) in its power the same as the other is in its.²⁶ In learning how imagination is a connecting middle for Schelling and Kant we learn how Schelling is a connecting middle between Kant and Heidegger.

²⁶ SW IV, p. 344.

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