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From Idealism to Romanticism and Leibniz' Logic

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Those familiar with Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794 are familiar with the problem he encounters at the end of the Second Fundamental Principle. Fichte has two absolutes, an absolute self ($I = I$) and an absolute non-self (non- I is not I), each absolutely opposed to the other. In the case of two absolutely (opposed) absolutes, one, or both, must go. It would, of course, be possible to sacrifice the absolutely posited non-self. However, solipsism has never been an attractive option for philosophers. The view that there is only mind and states of mind cannot really be successfully argued, since there would be no »other« with whom to argue it. As we know, Fichte resolves the issue by what he terms an Experiment. *Experimentum* is a late Latin word meaning, simply, experience. The self's experience of itself and of the non-self is that both are finite. Thus Fichte's Third Fundamental Principle: the self posits itself as finite, and op-poses to itself a finite non-self. Fichte's solution is to finitize the absolute self and non-self, thereby solving the problem of two absolutely opposed absolutes. Later on, he will resurrect the First Fundamental Principle in the form of an absolute or ideal self as the goal of all striving. This is, after all, idealism.

In the period of his *Naturphilosophie* (1795–1799), Friedrich Schelling also wrestles with the problem of the two absolutes. However, he does not propose the Fichtean solution of finitizing the two opposed absolutes of self and non-self. Rather, with an able assist from Spinoza, Schelling insists that two absolutes absolutely identical with the same (absolute) identity must be identical with each other. In his *Ethics* (Pt. I, prop. 5), Spinoza had argued that there cannot exist two or more substances (for example, God and/or Nature) having the same nature or attribute, above all if that attribute is absoluteness or infinity. This means that there can be only one sub-

stance (*Deus sive Natura*). Thus, in his 1801 *Presentation of My System of Philosophy*, Schelling maintains that there is only one Absolute.

It should not be imagined that this move on Schelling's part is an easy one. It takes him nearly six years (1795–1801) to work through it and work it out. During this period he is also in the process of distancing himself from Fichte's thought. For example, he is convinced that Fichte's view of nature as merely the material for moral duty is insufficient. On the other hand, he is equally unwilling to go the full Spinozistic route and identify God and Nature. He does not wish his philosophy accounted »Spinozist,« which in the jargon of the period was tantamount to being classified an atheist.

At issue, philosophically, is the meaning of the principle of identity. Spinoza takes a strict understanding of the principle. Behind Schelling, as well as Fichte, there lies an essentially weakened version of identity, namely Leibniz' Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles. The principle passes, largely unscathed, through Kant, who insists that while Leibniz' principle is valid for objects of the pure understanding (for example, the concept of a cubic foot of space) or concepts in general, in virtue of the external sense of space there is difference, not identity. As far as Kant is concerned, Leibniz confuses phenomena with things-in-themselves. Schelling agrees. In his *Concerning the Ego as the Principle of Philosophy* (1795), he says that Leibniz saw the principle of identity as a principle of objective reality, not, as with the »critical philosophy,« deriving from the positing of the ego's reality. Hence, Schelling terms Leibniz a dogmatist.¹ Leibniz' principle is, for Kant, not a law of nature, but only an analytic rule for the comparison of things through mere concepts. Still, although he would accept Leibniz' principle when it comes to concepts, Kant would undoubtedly have had difficulty applying it to a »totality« such as the absolute (KrV A 263, B 319; A 271, B 327 ff.; A 281, B 337).

Historians of German Idealism often fail to appreciate the importance of Leibniz for the development of German philosophy, above all for German idealism. Richard Kroner's *From Kant to Hegel* devotes only a couple

of pages to Leibniz.² Wilhelm Dilthey devotes more space to Frederick the Great than to Leibniz.³ And in his *Philosophy of German Idealism*, Nicolai Hartmann scarcely mentions Leibniz.⁴ The earlier standard view is that true German thought begins with Kant. It is often forgotten that when Kant criticizes the philosophy of the schools he is not referring to medieval scholastics, or to their followers, but to the Leibnizians, such as Christian Wolff and A. G. Baumgarten. It is, in large measure, against these that the *Critique of Pure Reason* is directed. But as with any critique, Hegel will insist, what is criticized also includes what has been accepted by the critic, since only thus does he or she know what to critique and how to go about doing it. So, while Kant may reject metaphysical monads and the empirical application of the principle of the identity of indiscernibles, he accepts Leibniz' weakened version of the principle of identity. Indeed, I would argue that it is this weakened version of identity that renders German Idealism possible.

Obviously, the principle of identity remains strong in Descartes and Spinoza, although the seeds for its weakening are present already in Descartes' *Cogito*.

This is obviously implicit in Leibniz' term »in-discernible,« since a subject, a discernor, would be required to note the lack of a discernible difference between two substances, even if it should be the case that the difference might be discerned only by God. For Descartes the $A = A$ of identity, along with the eternal verities of mathematics, would have a truth independent of the human mind, likely also the divine mind. For Fichte, on the other hand, although he begins the 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre* with the principle of identity ($A = A$) in a strict form, he discovers that its basis is in an absolutely posited $I = I$. However, since this absolute self is later discovered to have been posited through the activity of the synthesizing finite self, it becomes clear that the principle of identity has its basis, in its thereby implicitly weakened form, within the finite self. It may be noted that this point becomes important for the development of the axiomatic method in mathematics later on in the nineteenth century. Schelling, on the other

² *Vom Kant bis Hegel*, 2 ed., Tübingen: Mohr, 1961, pp. 37–40.

³ *Studien zur Geschichte des deutschen Geistes, Gesammelte Schriften*, 3 ed., vol. III, Stuttgart: Teubner, 1962.

⁴ *Die Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus*, 2 ed., Berlin: de Gruyter, 1960.

¹ *Vom Ich als Prinzip der Philosophie oder über das Unbedingte im menschlichen Wissen*, Schellings Werke, Schröter, ed., München: Beck, 1958, I, 154. Special thanks are due to J. and K. Byron for kindly reading over the typescript and making corrections and helpful suggestions for its improvement.

hand, has the $A = A$ principle grounded in the absolute self.⁵ In keeping with this there will also be mathematicians later in the century who will view numbers as Platonically real.

When it comes to the possible joining of the absolute self with the absolute non-self of nature, on the one hand, Schelling recognizes that it is not possible to put two absolutes next to each other; they cannot be synthesized. Also, if the self is posited prior to the non-self, then it can be posited in no synthesis as absolute. Schelling is thoroughly aware of the problem of putting the self and the non-self together from the Kantian perspective. Already in the *Concerning the Ego as Principle of Philosophy* (1795), Schelling notes that it is not possible to join a free ego with a necessitated nature.⁶ Thus, many of Schelling's works between 1795 and 1800 are devoted to a reworking of the philosophy of nature. (I must confess that I have never closely studied Schelling's philosophy of nature. Indeed, I am not fully convinced that it is something worth doing. Life is too short.) What Schelling must do is bring about the switch from a mechanistic (Newtonian) understanding of nature – which is essentially also Spinoza's – to an organismic one. It is understandable why it takes him so long – this is no easy task. Kant makes the same attempt in his *Critique of Judgment*, with, according to some critics, only modest success. In his effort to bring about the switch, Schelling plays Fichte and Spinoza off against each other, while incorporating elements from each into his own thought. He cannot accomplish this with Fichte alone, since for Fichte the non-self of nature is but the material for one's moral duty. Neither can he do it with Spinoza alone, since Spinoza remains essentially a mechanist. So transcendental subjectivity gets transferred to the absolute objectivity of nature, and nature as object gets united with the subject. As he says in his 1797 *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, the absolute ideal is also the absolute real (*das absolut-Ideale auch das absolut-Reale sey*).⁷ The subjective and the objective are conjoined in a pure identity (*reine Identität*) through the absolute.⁸ There is a sort of pre-established harmony, he says, between the two. Indeed, early in this work Schelling indicates his appreciation of Leib-

5 Schellings Werke, I, 102.

6 Schellings Werke, I, 163.

7 Schellings Werke, I, 708.

8 Schellings Werke, I, 712.

niz, while, at the same time, insisting that Leibniz' identification of nature with the world of ideas does not quite do the trick.⁹

According to Leibniz' formulation of the principle of the identity of indiscernibles (*Discourse on Metaphysics IX*), there cannot be two substances that are entirely alike, differing only numerically (*solo numero*);¹⁰ for one can be substituted for the other without changing the truth of the proposition (*salva veritate*).¹¹ In other words, if no significant difference between two beings can be found, or if both have precisely the same set of properties, they must be the same thing. Or as Leibniz notes in the *Moriadology* #9, any two beings in nature will never be precisely one like the other; always an internal difference, or some intrinsically basic character, will be found.¹²

Now one would certainly be inclined to say, with Fichte, that there is a decided difference between the two absolutes of self and non-self. They are, after all, opposites. There would clearly seem to be an »internal difference,« an intrinsically different character, between the two. Indeed, as Leibniz put the matter in the heat of the controversy with Samuel Clarke, »I infer from the principle [of the identity of indiscernibles], among other

9 Schellings Werke, I, 719.

10 »[...] qu'il n'est pas vray que deux substances se ressemblent entierement, et soyent differentes solo numero [...]« G. W. Leibniz, *Die philosophischen Schriften*, C. J. Gerhardt, ed., Hildesheim: Olms, 1965, IV, 433. On the principle that Nothing is Without Reason or Cause, »Sequitur etiam hinc non dari posse <in natura> duas res singulares solo numero differentes.« *Opuscules et fragments inédits de Leibniz*, L. Couturat, ed., Hildesheim: Olms, 1966, p. 519. Never are there to be experienced (*reperientur*) two eggs or two leaves or blades of grass in a garden that are perfectly similar to each other.

11 »Eadem seu coincidentia sunt quorum alterutrum ubilibet potest substitui alteri salva veritate.« *Die philosophischen Schriften*, VII, 236. In G. H. R. Parkinson's view the identity of indiscernibles principle obtains in virtue of his *Praedicatum inest subjecto* principle, namely that no two substances can have the same complete concept; a reason why they are diverse would have to be given, otherwise it would violate the »grand principle« of sufficient reason (*Nihil est sine ratione*). *Logic and Reality in Leibniz's Metaphysics*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1965, pp. 129 ff.

12 »Car il n'y a jamais dans la nature deux Etres, qui soyent parfaitement l'un comme l'autre, et où il ne soit possible de trouver une difference interne, ou fondée sur une denomination intrinseque.« *Die philosophischen Schriften*, VI, 608.

consequences, that there are not in nature two real absolute beings, indiscernible from each other. « (Fifth Paper #21).¹³

In his *System of Transcendental Idealism* of 1800, on the other hand, Schelling speaks of the $A = A$ of identity as being not, as in Kant, analytic or the basis for analytic statements, but as also having a synthetic meaning, that is, if one A would be op-posed to the other A . Thus must one substitute (*substituieren* – the same word Leibniz uses) a concept in the place of A , which expresses an original doubleness in the identity, and vice versa; as there is also doubleness in the original identity.¹⁴ If this be the case, then the infinite self in its possible infinite becoming (*unendliches Werden*) and the infinite non-self must be united.¹⁵ For if the objective ego is absolute and its op-posed negation is absolute as well, and if it is not possible to unite the two as divisible – since they are infinite [contra Fichte] – as through a third something (for both opposites are the result of the positive activity of one and the same self), then [the absolute] object and subject must be identical.¹⁶

By 1801, with his *Presentation of My System of Philosophy*, Schelling has arrived where he wishes to get. He agrees with Kant that the $A = A$ principle of identity has no relation to the empirical, its truth only in an absolute sphere. Still, knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) is necessarily implicated therein.¹⁷ In other words, we are dealing with identity in its post-Cartesian, and modified Kantian, sense. Thus can Schelling conclude: the absolutely posited self and the absolutely posited non-self identical with the same identity must be identical with each other in that absolute identity.¹⁸ There is, then, no quantitative difference between subject and object but, rather, an indifference between the two.¹⁹

What is the meaning of this »indifference« in Schelling? It is not the strict identification of the *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, the af-

13 *Die philosophischen Schriften*, VII, 393–394. He goes on to add that this supposition of two indiscernibles, such as two pieces of matter entirely alike, might be possible in abstract terms but is hardly consistent with the order of things.

14 *Schellings Werke*, II, 372–373.

15 *Schellings Werke*, II 383.

16 *Schellings Werke*, II, 394.

17 *Schellings Werke*, III, 13, 18.

18 *Schellings Werke*, III, 17.

19 *Schellings Werke*, III, 20.

firming and the affirmed, of Spinoza; much less is it the self and non-self joined in a finitized op-position to each other, as in Fichte. The »in« in Schelling's in-difference, is, I think, the Greek privative alpha. There is not a strict identity between the ideal and the real, the subject and the object, the self and the non-self – Schelling is not Spinoza – on the other hand, neither is there the difference of op-position between the two, even a relativized difference – as in Fichte – rather, in accordance with the Leibnizian version of identity, there is a *lack* of difference between the two. This in-difference preserves both sameness and difference. It is in this way that Schelling is able to open the door to the romantic view of nature, indeed to a sacral view of nature. It also renders possible Schelling's romantic aesthetics. There is both sameness and difference in the imaging of the infinite in the finite by the Creator, and as it occurs in the creativity of the artist.²⁰

Human activity, for Fichte, preserves the same elements of sameness and difference. There is the sameness of the identity that is the finite self, albeit a developing and changing identity. There is also the difference between the finite self and the finite non-self. But there is sameness and difference relative to the finite self and its infinite or ideal self as well. The self that I am and the self that I am to be, the self I should be – Fichte's *Sollen* – are not opposed each to the other, because my ideal self is genuinely mine, since I posit it. Still, they are different, since the finite self has not yet achieved its ideal. Indeed, it never will. Hence the infinite striving.

Schelling draws a different »logical« conclusion. According to Leibniz, in the case of any two substances some internal difference, or »intrinsic denomination,« other than purely numerical, will always be found. Fichte obviously thinks that there is such an »internal difference« between self and non-self; and thus he chooses to finitize both, in keeping with human »experience.« Schelling, on the other hand, argues that if both self and non-self are *absolutes*, then there is really no internal difference between the two. Indeed, one of Leibniz' formulations of the principle, namely that in nature there cannot be two real absolute beings indiscernible from each other, would seem to favor Schelling's identification of the absolute of self and the absolute of nature, the ideal and the real, the subjective and the

20 Cf. G. J. Seidel, »Creativity in the Aesthetics of Schelling,« *Idealistic Studies*, 4 (1974) 170–180.

objective, into one. Two absolutes, having the same attribute, namely that of absoluteness, must be identical with each other.

In terms of Leibniz' principle one can go either way. One can, of course, say that in Leibniz' *Discourse on Metaphysics* IX and in the *Monadology* #9 there is, in one case, a logical understanding of the principle while, in the other, an ontological or metaphysical one. However, in a rationalist philosophy, such as that of Leibniz, it is difficult to determine how a distinction between the logical and the ontological can successfully be drawn. Indeed, one could argue that the so-called logical and/or ontological meaning of the principle of the identity of indiscernibles in Leibniz is subject to the very same identity of indiscernibles principle.

Nevertheless, it may be the case that the principle functions differently with »relatives« than it does with »absolutes,« as is evidenced in the very different conclusions drawn by Fichte and Schelling. One can understand how Schelling could term the *Wissenschaftslehre* a relative, rather than an absolute, idealism.²¹ The basis for the very different conclusions drawn by Fichte and Schelling can also be found in Leibniz. In the *New Essays on Human Understanding* Bk. II, Ch. 17, Leibniz insists that there is a difference between an absolute in relation to space (the immensity of God) and the notion of absolute space (an infinite whole) composed of parts.²² For Leibniz, after all, God would be a being infinitely simple, that is, not composed of parts; whereas space, for him, is a relation, a *rapport* between substances, in which space there would obviously be parts.²³

In order for German idealism to work, the principle of identity must indeed be weakened from the strict form it still retains in Spinoza. One can see this early on in the 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre* when Fichte says, »Every opposite is like its opponent in one respect, = X; and every like is opposed to its like in one respect, = X. Such a respect, = X, is called the

21 Schellings *Werke*, I, 718.

22 *Die philosophischen Schriften*, V, 145.

23 Also, it should be noted that, with Huygens, Leibniz is a »wavist,« not an atomist (like Newton). This means that for him two »things,« for example, two waves, can occupy the same place at the same time. As he says in the *Nouveaux essais*, »For instance, we find that two shadows or two rays of light interpenetrate [...] Yet we can still distinguish one ray from the other just by the direction of their paths, even when they intersect,« *New Essays on Human Understanding*, P. Remnant and J. Bennett, trs., Cambridge: University Press, 1981, p. 230. Cf. *Die philosophischen Schriften*, V, 213.

ground, in the first case of *conjunction*, and in the second *distinction*: for to liken or compare opposites is to *conjoin* them; and to set like things in opposition is to *distinguish* them.«²⁴ In other words, there is no distinction without a prior unity; no unity without a prior difference. In short, sameness necessarily implies difference; difference necessarily implies sameness.

Such difference, as well as sameness, are also contained in Schelling's notion of in-difference, as noted above.

In Hegel, the principle of identity has been so thoroughly weakened that it is scarcely recognizable as a principle. Thus, in the *Science of Logic*, Hegel refers to $A = A$ as an empty tautology. The identity that is identical with itself is an identity that implies difference, since anyone who would assert that identity is difference is saying that identity is different from difference. The truth of identity necessarily implies difference.²⁵ In his dialectical moves from identity to difference to diversity (which is the indifference of difference), diversity contains both like and unlike. Things are the same only if they are different (like), different only if they are the same (unlike).²⁶ And although Hegel may poke fun at the application of Leibniz' principle with the example of ladies at court spending their time searching the leaves of trees in the forest to see if any two could be found alike,²⁷ Hegel is clearly not averse to employing Leibniz' principle of the identity of indiscernibles for his own purposes. Indeed, the *Science of Logic* opens with the dialectic of pure being and pure nothing, which are said to be the same (*dasselbe* – notice, he does not say *das Gleiche*, identical), since it is not possible to distinguish a pure being that is indeterminate immediacy, contentless, qualityless, indistinguishable from anything else, from a pure nothing, which is complete emptiness, undifferentiatedness, and lacking in all determination (nothing). Still, this sameness is not without difference, otherwise the dialectical resolution into becoming would not be possible.²⁸

Hegel both does and does not accept Schelling's identification of the two absolutes. He does, after all, accept something of Schelling's sacral

24 *Fichte: Science of Knowledge*, P. Heath and J. Lachs, trs., New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970, p. 110.

25 *Hegel's Science of Logic*, A. V. Miller, tr., London: Allen & Unwin, 1969, p. 417.

26 *Hegel's Science of Logic*, pp. 417 ff.

27 *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 422.

28 *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 82.

view of nature; nature is estranged spirit; as he also accepts portions of Schelling's aesthetics. However, he does not accept the undifferentiated dissolving of all individuality in the absolute, everything dissolved in the ocean of the Absolute, a night in which all cows are black. On the other hand, neither will he accept Fichte's positing of the absolute or ideal self at an infinite and unattainable distance from the finite self; this is a bad or negative infinity. So is Hegel, or is Hegel not, a romantic? Is Hegel, or is Hegel not, an idealist? And the answer to both questions, in accordance with the principle of the identity of indiscernibles, is, in both cases, yes.

Fichte's Transcendental Logic of 1812 – Between Kant and Hegel*

Angelica Nuzzo

Traditional formal logic plays an instrumental role in carrying forth the revolutionary task of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Indeed, Kant's first critical work does not discard this ancient discipline but uses it for a new purpose. Transcendental philosophy is a critical investigation not only of traditional metaphysics but of traditional logic as well. Formal logic does not simply yield to transcendental logic – just as the mere form of thinking (*Denken*) does not simply yield to content-determined knowledge (*Erkennen*). But what is precisely the *distinction* and what the *relation* between formal and transcendental logic in the first *Critique*, and what is exactly *transcendental* logic for Kant? These questions occupy a central position in the development of logic in the first two decades of the 19th

* Research on this essay was supported by the CUNY Research Foundation. Abbreviations and editions used: I. Kant, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Hrsg. v. Der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, 1910 ff. (=AA); I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (=KrV), followed by the pagination of A and B editions; J.G. Fichte, *Fichtes Werke*, ed. by I.H. Fichte, Bde. 1–8, Nachdruck Berlin, DeGruyter, 1971 (=SW); J.G. Fichte, *Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, ed. by R. Lauth, Stuttgart, Frommann, 1962 ff. (=GA); Hegel, G.W.F., *Werke in zwanzig Bände*, (=TW), ed. by E. Moldenhauer, H.M. Michel, Frankfurt a.M., Suhrkamp, 1986.

1 See the studies by T. Pinder, »Kants Begriff der Logik,« in: *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 61, 1979, 308–336; B. Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge. Sensibility and Discursivity in the Critique of Pure Reason*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998; G. Tonelli, »Kant's Critique of Pure Reason within the Tradition of Modern Logic,« in: *Akten des 4. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses*, 1974, Teil III, Berlin/NY, 189; H. Wagner, »Zu Kants Auffassung bezüglich des Verhältnisses zwischen Formal- und Transzendentallogik,« in: *Kant Studien*, 68, 1977, 74ff.