

POST-KANTIAN IDEALISM AND SELF-TRANSFORMATION

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What makes Immanuel Kant's Copernican revolution Copernican and what makes it a revolution?

The B-Preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781, 1787) proposes an "experiment" that "promises to metaphysics the secure course of a science", viz., to assume, not that "all our cognition must conform to the objects", which is an assumption that "[u]p to now" has "come to nothing", but rather that "objects must conform to our cognition". Kant compares this assumption to "the first thoughts of Copernicus". Just as Copernicus discovers a shift in the nature of celestial bodies on the basis of a "hypothesis" about the orbital activity of the earth, so too Kant discovers a shift in the nature of natural bodies on the basis of an "analogous" hypothesis about the cognitive activity of the subject. Insofar as the subject contributes to cognition both the "representations of space and time" and "the elementary concepts of the understanding", the object must "agree" with these representational elements and so must be cognizable, not as "a thing in itself", but rather as "an appearance".¹ Kant's Copernican revolution is Copernican, then, because it turns from prioritizing the status of the object toward prioritizing the activity of the subject.

The B-Preface also cites Copernicus' theory as a "remarkable" example of sciences that "have become what they are now through a revolution brought about all at once". Kant clarifies that the analogous revolution that he proposes for "the accepted procedure of metaphysics" is first-personal, since it amounts to a "transformation in our way of thinking" whereby the idea that "cognition reaches only appearances" serves as a "crosscheck" for our explanation of the possibility of cognition.² This change of mind is not unlike what, in *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1793), Kant calls a "change of heart", viz., the "transformation" of our moral disposition whereby, through a "revolution" as opposed to a "gradual reform", the "representation of duty" alone becomes our incentive to act.³ Such a change of heart results from judging, exclusively on the basis of consciousness of the moral law, that "[one] can do something because [one] is aware that [one] ought to do it and cognizes freedom within [oneself]", as Kant explains in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788).⁴ Moreover, a change of mind and a change of heart must be two aspects of one and the same revolution, given that, as Kant says in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), a "complete critique of reason" must transform our reason in both its theoretical and its practical uses.⁵ Kant's Copernican revolution is a revolution, then, because it demands a transformation of oneself.

While the idea that philosophy requires self-transformation is historically pervasive, it exerts considerable influence on the post-Kantians who first aim to systematize Kant's idealism by grounding it on a first principle. In the 1790s, J.G. Fichte and F.W.J. Schelling offer competing accounts of the self-transformation that they regard as essential to positing a first principle. Their accounts raise two central questions. First, what makes this kind of self-transformation possible? Second, are there different possible expressions of philosophical self-transformation?

In what follows, I will articulate the Fichtean and Schellingian answers to these central questions. For Fichte, at least during his Jena period, the one who summons me to posit a first principle makes possible my philosophical self-transformation, although the latter has an exclusively idealist expression in that I can only genuinely posit the I as first principle, which is to say that philosophical self-transformation depends on mutual recognition and vindicates precisely one philosophical system (Section 13.1). For Schelling, at least in his "Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism" (1795/96), a brute act of will makes possible my philosophical self-transformation, although the latter has either an idealist or a realist expression in that I can genuinely posit either the I or the not-I as first principle, which is to say that philosophical self-transformation does not depend on mutual recognition and vindicates one of two possible philosophical systems (Section 13.2). Thus, whereas Fichtean self-transformation is recognitive and non-pluralistic, Schellingian self-transformation is pluralistic and non-recognitive. I conclude with a discussion of how F.H. Jacobi's "Open Letter to Fichte" (1799) poses a challenge to Fichte's and Schelling's answers to the two central questions (Section 13.3).

13.1 The Kind of Philosophy One Chooses

Fichte presents the *Wissenschaftslehre* as the "spirit" of transcendental idealism,⁶ which systematizes transcendental idealism by grounding it on a first principle, viz., the absolute freedom of reason or, equivalently, the I. In order to understand the self-transformation that he regards as essential to positing the I as a first principle, it is worth noting that, in coming to endorse idealism, Fichte undergoes his own philosophical self-transformation.

In his 1807 Königsberg lectures, Fichte reports: "as a young man I was much more deeply rooted in the same Spinozism to which young people today, on far weaker grounds than those that I then repudiated, wish me to return".⁷ Before formulating and defending a philosophy of freedom, Fichte was in fact a Spinozist or what he typically calls a "dogmatist". This sheds light on his letter to F.A. Weissshuhn, August/September 1790, shortly after his conversion: "I have been living in a new world ever since reading the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Propositions that I thought could never be overturned have been overturned for me. Things have been proven to me which I thought could never be proven—for example, the concept of absolute freedom, the concept of duty, etc.—and I feel all the happier for it".⁸ The seemingly irrefutable "[p]ropositions" are presumably to be found in Baruch Spinoza's *Ethics*, according to which human freedom and hence moral duty are mere figments of the imagination. In a draft of a letter to H.N. Achelis, November 1790, Fichte all but characterizes his conversion as a Copernican revolution:

The influence that [Kant's] philosophy, especially its moral part (though this is unintelligible apart from a study of the *Critique of Practical Reason*), exercises upon one's entire way of thinking is unbelievable—as is the revolution that it has occasioned in my own way of thinking in particular. I particularly owe it to you to confess that I now believe wholeheartedly in human freedom and realize full well that duty, virtue, and morality are all possible only if freedom is presupposed. I realized this truth very well before—perhaps I

said as much to you—but I felt that the entire sequence of my inferences forced me to reject morality. It has, in addition, become quite obvious to me that very harmful consequences for society follow from the assumption that all human actions occur necessarily.⁹

What follows from “inferences” according to Spinoza’s definitions, axioms, and geometric method is the rejection of human freedom. Fichte comes to view this as a social nightmare in which one’s action is the effect of antecedent causes over which one has no control and for which one thus has no responsibility. He subsequently describes this “revolution” in thinking in “On Stimulating and Increasing the Pure Interest in Truth” (1795) as “the elevating consciousness that is expressed in the following words: ‘I was a machine, and I could have remained one. Motivated by myself and by means of my own strength, I have made myself into an autonomous being[.]’”.¹⁰ Inspired by the practical aspect of Kant’s Copernican revolution, Fichte transforms his conception of himself from a Spinozistic “machine” into a morally dutiful and thus free subject. But what does this self-transformation involve? The answer lies in the nature of the dispute between idealism and dogmatism.

In *Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre* (1797/98), Fichte asserts that philosophy’s first “task” is to posit the “explanatory ground” or first principle of experience.¹¹ To this end, a philosopher must posit either the free activity of the “intellect”, i.e., the absolute freedom of reason or the I, or the substantial existence of the “thing in itself”, i.e., the absolute existence of nature or the not-I. In positing the former, a philosopher endorses “idealism” and, in positing the latter, they endorse “dogmatism”.¹² Fichte then argues that the dispute between idealism and dogmatism cannot be settled theoretically, i.e., on the basis of conceptual analysis:

Neither of these two systems can directly refute the opposing one; for the dispute between them is a dispute concerning the first principle, i.e., concerning a principle that cannot be derived from any higher principle. If the first principle of either system is conceded, then it is able to refute the first principle of the other. Each denies everything included within the opposite system. They do not have a single point in common on the basis of which they might be able to achieve mutual understanding and be united with one another. Even when they appear to be in agreement concerning the words of some proposition, they understand these same words to mean two different things.¹³

This passage gives three reasons for why the idealism–dogmatism dispute is theoretically insoluble. First, each competing first principle is a derivational ground and so “cannot be derived” from any ground that might justify it. In other words, both the I and the not-I function as unmediated presuppositions.¹⁴ Second, each principle, if it is “conceded”, grounds a rigorous, comprehensive explanation of experience that rules out its opposing principle. Thus, the thing in itself is unthinkable on the presupposition of the freedom of the intellect and vice versa.¹⁵ Third, each principle renders an opposing system unintelligible, since words in one system that are repeated in the opposing system differ in “mean[ing]”. For example, an idealist recognizes nothing that a dogmatist means by the words “nature exists”, a dogmatist recognizes nothing that an idealist means by the words “humans act”, etc.¹⁶ Conceptual analysis thus cannot resolve the dispute between idealists and dogmatists. It shows only that they beg the question against each other, share no common ground with each other, and talk past each other.¹⁷

The dispute must therefore be resolved, not theoretically, but rather practically. For an idealist, this involves attaining consciousness of their freedom, which is a self-transformation whereby they turn from cognizing themselves as a given object, i.e., as a modification of nature or the

not-I, to cognizing themselves as an active subject, i.e., as an expression of reason or the I. Fichte calls this consciousness “intellectual intuition”.¹⁸ On the one hand, consciousness of one’s freedom is intellectual. Otherwise it is sensible, in which case it passively receives something that is externally given and therefore fails to be a cognition of oneself as internally active. As Fichte says, consciousness of freedom “does not impose itself upon anyone”, but rather “depends upon [one’s] own self-activity”, i.e., upon “performing the act” through which freedom originates.¹⁹ On the other hand, consciousness of one’s freedom is intuitional. Otherwise it conceptually mediates its access to freedom, in which case freedom is not an unmediated presupposition and therefore fails to be a first principle. As Fichte says, consciousness of freedom is “the immediate consciousness that I act and of what I do when I act”.²⁰ Resolving the dispute in idealism’s favour accordingly involves a revolution in thinking, viz., the self-transformation whereby one elevates the self of which one is conscious from an object to a subject, i.e., from a being to an acting.

Fichte acknowledges that intellectual intuition constitutes a refutation of dogmatism “for [idealists]”, not “for [dogmatists]”.²¹ This is because idealism depends on “performing the act” through which the freedom of which it is conscious originates and therefore depends on the very “self-activity” whose existence a dogmatist denies in thought. If there is to be a genuinely universal refutation of dogmatism, then, a dogmatist must somehow conceal an incipient power of freedom through which they refute their own position in action.

In order to demonstrate a dogmatist’s self-refutation, Fichte reminds us that positing a first principle is not a given feature of one’s being, but is rather a task for one’s doing, i.e., a way of living or performance in which one regards oneself as correct and for which one therefore regards oneself as responsible. In other words, positing is a normative activity, which depends on one’s freedom to conduct it and to do so properly. However, this presupposes that positing is “a free act of thinking”.²² Now, a dogmatist posits the not-I as a first principle. But since their first principle rules out the “free act” in which positing consists, their act of positing is a performative contradiction. Hence Fichte says in *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* (1794/95) that a dogmatist who abstracts from the I in order to posit the not-I must “think unawares” of the I and so must “unwittingly subjoin in thought the very thing from which they have allegedly abstracted, and contradict themselves”.²³ It is because a dogmatist unwittingly smuggles freedom into their act of positing that, as Fichte puts it in the *Wissenschaftslehre Nova Methodo* (1796/99), their philosophical position contains its own “cure” and “antidote”.²⁴ Positing the not-I as a first principle betrays one’s I-hood.

If dogmatism is self-refuting, then idealism is the only possible expression of the self-transformation that constitutes positing a first principle. As Fichte concludes, “[t]he only type of philosophy that remains possible is idealism”.²⁵ This answers the second central question above. Let us turn now to the first central question concerning what makes this exclusively idealist self-transformation possible.

In “Concerning the Difference Between the Spirit and the Letter Within Philosophy” (1794), Fichte says:

just as we were ushered by birth into this material world, so philosophy seeks—by means of a total rebirth—to usher us into a new and higher world. (I am speaking here of transcendental philosophy, not of the ordinary sort of “popular philosophy”—which is not philosophy at all.) Our first birth inserted us into the series constituted by the specific characteristics of that which is *represented*; this second birth seeks to lift us into the series constituted by the specific characteristics of that which *represents*. The same difficulty that kept us from entering the first world also prevents us from entering this second one.²⁶

This passage contrasts our “first birth”, which affords us consciousness of objects, i.e., consciousness of empirical beings that are “represented”, with a “second birth” that “lift[s]” us into consciousness of freedom, i.e., consciousness of the active standpoint that “represents”.²⁷ Fichte assigns this “total rebirth” to “transcendental philosophy”, i.e., to systematic transcendental idealism. This is because, as we have seen, it is idealism alone that properly tasks us with the self-transformative act of positing a first principle, our positing which involves consciousness of our freedom via intellectual intuition. Fichte describes this self-transformation in terms of one’s elevation from the “material world” to a “higher world”, i.e., from consciousness of our mere being to consciousness of our free acting.

Crucially, the passage implies that both our initial emergence into the world of objects and our subsequent elevation into the world of freedom are conditioned by our relation to others. As Fichte says, “[t]he same difficulty that kept us from entering the first world also prevents us from entering this second one”. The “difficulty” that is involved in each birth is our need for another to occasion that birth. Hence Fichte explains that, for the possibility of our first birth, “parents” must summon us by creating our material existence, whereas, for the possibility of our second birth, a “teacher” must summon us by inviting our free response.²⁸ The difficulty in each birth, viz., the difficulty of entering a new world, is overcome only when another summons us in the appropriate sense.

There is, however, an important difference between these births. In one’s first birth, one’s dependence on another is not reciprocal. By contrast, in one’s second birth, one’s dependence on another is indeed reciprocal. Fichte can invite us, as he does in the *Nova Methodo*, to think of the wall, to think of ourselves thinking of the wall, and to become “immediately conscious” of the identity of “the thinker and the thought” in this second thought. By attaining this consciousness, we determine our thought and thereby exhibit the freedom of reason or the I. However, Fichte cannot perform this “instance of free acting” for us, on pain of contradiction.²⁹ In other words, he cannot successfully serve as midwife for our second birth without our spontaneous response. Hence he says that “if one wants to communicate [idealism] to someone else, one has to ask the other person to perform the action in question”.³⁰ Hence too, in the *New Presentation*, he says: “insofar as [one] is summoned to think of [oneself], [one] is summoned to engage in a type of *inner acting* that depends upon [one’s] own self-activity”.³¹ Thus, insofar as consciousness of one’s freedom is a kind of philosophical self-transformation, it is made possible by a summons.³² This answers the first central question above.

Addressing his students as a teacher, Fichte articulates the second-personal condition of converting to idealism: “We are fortunate if we possess philosophy ourselves, but we cannot give it away. All of our philosophical assertions are ‘bodies’ and nothing more. And we hand these bodies over to you in order to help you to develop philosophy out of and through your own self—not that you could not also do so without the help of these ‘bodies’”.³³ A teacher gives a student no less, but no more, than the letter of philosophy, i.e., the audible “bodies” of its assertions or, “without the help of these”, the visual bodies of its writings. A student can study and memorize the letter of philosophy. But in order to “possess” philosophy themselves, they must exhibit its spirit, viz., by replying to a teacher’s summons to philosophize. Since to philosophize is to satisfy philosophy’s first task of positing the first principle of experience, which we saw is an inescapably “free act of thinking”, the student’s reply to their teacher must be free. Their reply will therefore necessarily exhibit the freedom of reason, i.e., they will necessarily demonstrate their I-hood. The only question is whether they do so with the good faith of an idealist’s intellectual intuition or with the bad faith of a dogmatist’s performative contradiction.³⁴

We might wonder how a summons can condition the self-transformation that constitutes the positing of idealism’s first principle yet count among the derivative conditions of experience,

i.e., the categories, that idealism deduces from this principle. In *Foundations of Natural Right* (1796), Fichte observes that since the object presupposes the subject's freedom (for otherwise the subject's freedom is impossible) and vice versa (for otherwise the subject's freedom is unconstrained), each will presuppose the other "*ad infinitum*". This regress, he argues, "can be cancelled only if it is assumed that *the subject's efficacy* is synthetically unified with the *object* in one and the same moment", viz., in an event that "leave[s] the subject in full possession of its freedom to be self-determining". Fichte locates this event in another's summons, which "call[s] upon [a subject] to resolve to exercise its efficacy".³⁵ Your summons makes room for my freedom in a way that an object cannot, for it both limits me by inviting me to recognize your freedom and limits itself by inviting and thus recognizing my freedom. Moreover, by removing the regress that is produced by the subject-object relation, the concept of the summons counts as a category that makes experience possible and that is derivable from idealism's first principle. But then it seems, paradoxically, that the summons both makes possible and follows from idealist self-transformation.

We can avoid what seems like a paradox by observing three features of the double role of the summons. First, the summons plays a metaphilosophical role when it conditions one's consciousness of freedom as such, whereas it plays a categorial role when it conditions one's exercise of freedom with others. Second, the summons that conditions idealist self-transformation is a particular expression of the general kind of event that idealism subsequently deduces as a condition of exercising one's freedom. Third, by deducing the summons with which it begins, idealism at least arguably derives its own basic condition and thereby at least arguably shows itself to be a self-justifying philosophical system.³⁶

I conclude this section by pausing over Fichte's famous dictum that "the kind of philosophy one chooses [...] depends upon the kind of person one is".³⁷ This dictum might be taken to imply that one can genuinely choose dogmatism, given a dogmatic personality, and hence that Fichte is a pluralist. However, since he regards dogmatism as self-refuting, he cannot be a pluralist. The dictum rather implies that one can either choose idealism or else fail to see that one's own response to philosophy's first task proves that idealism is the only choice. The kind of person one is thus has certain restrictions concerning the possibility of philosophical self-transformation.³⁸

Admittedly, Fichte argues that, in the absence of sufficient reasons that might theoretically resolve the idealism-dogmatism dispute, the "decision between these two systems is one that is determined by free choice", the "basis" for which choice being one's "*inclination and interest*". However, he immediately clarifies that one's "supreme interest and the foundation of all one's other interests is one's *interest in oneself*", where an idealist's self-interest is intended to reflect her "absolute self-sufficiency" and a dogmatist's self-interest is intended to reflect the "self-sufficiency of things".³⁹ However, a dogmatist's self-interest unintentionally reflects her self-sufficiency, for, as we saw, she must regard her response to philosophy's first task as correct and hence as an act for which she is responsible, which presupposes her freedom. Thus, although self-interest ultimately grounds one's choice between idealism and dogmatism, this ground inescapably exhibits one's freedom. As Fichte puts it: "I am only active. I cannot be driven from this position. This is the point where my philosophy becomes entirely independent of all arbitrary choice and becomes a product of iron necessity—to the extent, that is, that free reason can be subject to necessity; i.e., it becomes a product of *practical* necessity. I *cannot* go beyond this standpoint because I am not *permitted* to go beyond it".⁴⁰

I turn now to Schelling's "Philosophical Letters", whose main aim, he says, is "to make the freedom of minds known".⁴¹

13.2 The Kind of Philosophy One Lives

By the time that Schelling publishes the “Philosophical Letters”, he is steeped Fichte’s early Jena work. Schelling sends “On the Possibility of a Form of Philosophy in General” (1794) to Fichte, who in return sends him fascicles of the *Foundations*, which then inspires Schelling’s “Of the I as Principle of Philosophy or On the Unconditioned in Human Knowledge” (1795). However, philosophical differences between the two idealists soon emerge.

Like Fichte, Schelling recognizes the theoretical possibility of precisely two systems, viz., criticism and dogmatism, which he says “are nothing else than idealism and realism systematically conceived”, i.e., nothing else than the *Wissenschaftslehre* and Spinozism.⁴² Schelling explains that the dispute between criticism and dogmatism regarding the first principle of experience “must proceed from the very point from which the controversy of philosophy itself proceeded”, viz., the question of how we “*come to egress from the absolute*”, which he says Kant “expressed differently” in the first *Critique* as the question of how we “*come to judge synthetically*”.⁴³ How are these questions synonymous expressions of the same problem?

According to Schelling, “no controversy is possible about the absolute as such”, since in it “no laws are observed except the law of identity” and hence “none but analytic propositions are valid”. In other words, there is no philosophical “strife” regarding the absolute, for it consists in the identity of subject and predicate.⁴⁴ Such strife accordingly assumes our “*egress from the absolute*”, in which case it assumes the difference between subject and predicate. But then our egress involves the use of synthetic propositions rather than merely analytic propositions. Thus, for the dispute between criticism and dogmatism to proceed from the question of how we egress from the absolute is precisely for it to proceed from the Kantian question of how we judge synthetically. As Schelling says, criticism and dogmatism disagree, “not about the question whether there are any synthetic judgments”, but rather about the “decidedly higher question” about the “principle” of the unity of synthetic judgment, i.e., the principle that makes synthetic judgment possible.⁴⁵ Moreover, since this principle is none other than the first principle of experience, which is the realm in which we make synthetic judgments, we can say that the dispute between critics and dogmatists must proceed from the task of explaining the possibility of experience. Hence Schelling paraphrases the synonymous questions regarding our egress from the absolute and regarding the possibility of synthetic judgment with the question “why is there a realm of experience at all?”⁴⁶

Again like Fichte, Schelling denies the theoretical solubility of the criticism–dogmatism dispute, which he concludes “necessarily becomes *practical*”.⁴⁷ Whereas Fichte concludes this on the basis of the inadequacy of conceptual analysis for resolving the dispute, Schelling concludes this on the basis of Kant’s argument in the first *Critique* that reason is theoretically “unable to realize the unconditioned” that conditions cognition, since the unconditioned cannot be given in any possible experience, and so “*demand*s the *act* through which [the unconditioned] *ought* to be realized” and accordingly proceeds from the “domain of *practical philosophy*”.⁴⁸ Unlike Fichte, however, Schelling holds that both criticism and dogmatism can practically resolve the dispute, i.e., the dispute is practically resolvable both by a system that begins from the free activity of reason or the I and by a system that begins from the substantial existence of nature or the not-I. As I will put the point, although Schelling himself endorses criticism, he diverges from Fichte by regarding both criticism and dogmatism as livable philosophical systems.

In order to defend the possibility of a “consistent dogmatic ethics”, Schelling claims that, “like any other ethics”, the “ethics of dogmatism” aims to solve “the problem of the existence of the world”. He explains that this is none other than “the problem of *all* philosophy”, viz.,

the problem of the “transition from the non-finite to the finite”, which is yet another synonymous expression of the question of how we egress from the “non-finite” absolute toward the experience of the “finite” world.⁴⁹ However, it is not yet clear why dogmatism’s response to this question is not only theoretically consistent, which Fichte concedes, but also practically consistent.

Schelling clarifies that Spinoza’s is a “system of *ethics*” because it is intended, not as “an artifice, a mental play”, which he says Spinoza would find “loathsome”, but rather as something whose “purpose” is to be “lived”.⁵⁰ Spinoza posits the first principle of dogmatism as an unconditioned condition that is “realiz[able]” through his own actions, which, if consistent with the propositions of the *Ethics*, will exhibit the causal necessity that governs every mode of nature. The realizability of a first principle and hence the livability of the system that rests on that principle is what Schelling calls “the practical dictum heeded by all philosophy”. It is to this practical dictum that he contends Spinoza “owed [his] solution” to the “problem of *all* philosophy”.⁵¹ Hence Schelling describes Spinoza as deciding “practically” that he is a mode of nature, asserts that Spinoza “has recourse to practical postulates”, and ascribes to Spinoza, not simply theoretical consistency, but also the practical characteristics of “calmness” and of a “serene spirit”.⁵² Hence too he claims that although criticism and dogmatism “differ in the spirit of the action” of practically realizing the unconditioned, the “action as such [...] cannot in turn distinguish” these systems.⁵³ In other words, critical and dogmatic realizations of the unconditioned are similar in kind *qua* “action[s]”, although they differ in degree of “spirit”, viz., by displaying moral vigour and serene calm, respectively. Both systems are in this respect livable. Both therefore offer practical solutions to their dispute.

However, Schelling’s contention about the livability of dogmatism will not convince Fichte, who will insist, as he does in the *New Presentation*, that Spinoza “could not have been convinced of his own philosophy” because it “directly contradicts those convictions that Spinoza must necessarily have adopted in his everyday life, by virtue of which he had to consider himself to be free and self-sufficient”.⁵⁴ I will now reconstruct a five-step argument from the “Philosophical Letters” that can support Schelling’s contention.

First, Schelling claims that synthetic judgment has “two conditions”. It must be “*preceded* by an *absolute* unity”, viz., the origin in which subject and predicate are analytically identical and from which, as subjects, we must egress in order to judge synthetically about objects in experience. And it must “*terminate* in an *absolute thesis*”, viz., the ideal in which the experiential opposition between the judging subject and the judged object has been removed and thus “cease[s]”.⁵⁵ Fichte arguably adheres to these two conditions in the *New Presentation* when he claims that the *Wissenschaftslehre* “commences” with “the I as an intellectual intuition”, which is the consciousness of the first principle on which experience rests, viz., the free activity that is constituted by the identity of the subject and the object, i.e., of “the thinker and the thought”, and “concludes” with “the I as an idea”, which represents the regulative ideal for which experience strives, viz., the perfect alignment of morality and the world.⁵⁶ However, we will see that Schelling diverges from Fichte regarding the livability of intellectual intuition.

Second, since we must posit a principle according to which synthetic judgment is possible, Schelling claims that we “must have worked our way up” to our starting point, for we “cannot get there by arguing”.⁵⁷ We have seen why this is so. The dispute between criticism and dogmatism cannot be resolved by conceptual analysis, i.e., by “arguing” for either system on the basis of reasons. This is both because each system has equally sufficient reasons in its favour, given that each is rigorous and comprehensive, and because each system rests on an underivable ground,

for which no reason can be given.⁵⁸ Positing a first principle is thus an act of willing, not of reasoning.⁵⁹ Hence Schelling says that “[w]e must *be* what we call ourselves theoretically”.⁶⁰ So far, this agrees with Fichte’s position that the dispute is only practically resolvable.

Third, since it is by an act of sheer will that one posits a first principle, Schelling claims that first principles are “nothing but proleptic assertions”, i.e., “*original insuperable prejudices*”. A first principle is “proleptic” in that no reason can be given for positing it and thus it is posited prior to any right that one could have for positing it. Hence Schelling says that a first principle is not “valid in and by [itself]”, but rather is only valid “by our freedom”, i.e., by our initially and continuously striving to “*be* what we call ourselves”, whether as critics or as dogmatists.⁶¹ Positing a first principle is “*prejudicial*”, moreover, in that it makes possible and thus precedes judgment, viz., the synthetic judgment by which we cognize objects in experience. Hence Schelling says that positing a first principle is not a cognition that is secured through judgment, but is rather a “practical decision”, viz., a wilful endorsement of or commitment to a philosophical system in which cognition is possible.⁶² But if positing a first principle is not cognitive, then it cannot consist in absolute cognition, whether of the I or of the not-I. As Schelling says, it is “*groundless*” to assert “an absolute in human knowledge”, i.e., an absolute cognition of the unconditioned condition or first principle of experience. We gain cognition only within the “realm of the conditioned”, i.e., within experience, whereas the unconditioned exceeds all possible experience.⁶³

Fourth, since we cognize nothing by positing a first principle, Schelling claims that intellectual intuition cannot be the cognitive act it is purported to be. Indeed, he argues, intellectual intuition is not cognitive because it is not even livable:

We awaken from intellectual intuition as from a state of death. We awaken through reflection, that is, through a forced return to ourselves. But no return is thinkable without resistance, no reflection without an object. We designate as alive an activity intent upon objects alone and as dead an activity losing itself in itself. [...] [A]s long as intuition is intent upon objects, that is, as long as it is sensuous intuition, there is no danger of losing oneself. [...] Should I maintain intellectual intuition I would cease to live; I would go “from time to eternity”.⁶⁴

An activity is “dead” if it “los[es] itself”, viz., by being absorbed into its object. Intellectual intuition is comparable to a “state of death” because it would involve one’s identification with reason or the I, in the case of critical intellectual intuition, or with nature or the not-I, in the case of dogmatic intellectual intuition. By contrast, the activity of experience is “alive” because while we “return to ourselves” in cognizing objects of experience, viz., by bringing cognitions under the unity of self-consciousness, this return is not “thinkable” without the “resistance” of objects whose existence is sensibly given to and thus independent of us. Hence Schelling says that whereas, in intellectual intuition, “I would cease to live”, in sensible intuition, there is no such “danger”.⁶⁵ Intellectual intuition is accordingly unlivable. This is why Schelling associates both critical and dogmatic claims to intellectual intuition with “fanaticism”,⁶⁶ a delusion to which Fichte and Spinoza equally fall prey and for which delusion Schelling coins the term “dogmaticism”.⁶⁷

Fifth, since intellectual intuition is unlivable, Schelling concludes that positing a first principle can have “only a subjective value”.⁶⁸ It is by an act of will that I decide to posit the I or the not-I. My decision does not cognize an unconditioned condition, but rather exhibits the value that I wilfully invest in the philosophical system that rests on it. This value is subjective insofar as it

expresses my initial and continuous endorsement of a system as a practical response to the problem of philosophy and thus as worth living. As Schelling puts it, “every *system* bears the stamp of individuality on the face of it” and the more that “*individuality*” partakes of a system, “the less it can claim universal validity”.⁶⁹ My system demonstrates the value that I place in living with moral vigour, as a critic, or with serene calm, as a dogmatist. The longer I commit to living in this way, the more my system demonstrates a validity that is particular to me and perhaps also to us, but that is never “universal”. But if a system’s livability rests on no more than its subjective value, then, as Schelling contends against Fichte, dogmatism is livable just insofar as one values living a dogmatic life.

This five-step argument reveals answers to the two central questions above.

Regarding the question of what makes possible the philosophical self-transformation whereby one becomes a critic or a dogmatist, Schelling’s view is that this is made possible by an unpre-thinkable act of will. My decision to posit the I or the not-I as a first principle is thinkable. But it is not the result of a process of reasoning and so is not conditioned by a prior act of thought. Hence Schelling concludes the “Philosophical Letters” by stating that nature “reserve[s]” for the “worthy” a philosophy that “cannot be learned, recited like a litany, or contained in dead words”, but rather “is a symbol for the union of free spirits”.⁷⁰ A philosophical system is not a fixed doctrine that must first be memorized and repeated, but is rather a way of life that must first be ventured. To live as a critic or a dogmatist is to be a “symbol” of freedom, i.e., to bear the mark of the activity of resolving to be what one calls oneself. While this agrees with Fichte’s view that a system is “not a lifeless household item one can put aside or pick up as one wishes”, but rather “is animated by the very soul of the who adopts it”,⁷¹ it does not ground a system’s adoption on the summons, but rather on one’s will alone.⁷²

Regarding the question of whether there are different possible expressions of philosophical self-transformation, Schelling’s view in the “Philosophical Letters” is that there are two. Criticism and dogmatism are equally valid expressions of this self-transformation, since, as we saw, both are livable. Schelling makes his commitment to pluralism clear when he says that, “for a spirit who has made himself free and who owes his philosophy only to himself, nothing can be more unbearable than the despotism of narrow minds who cannot tolerate another system beside their own”.⁷³ He does so again when he says that criticism and dogmatism each “can hold their own” as they approach “the ultimate goal” of judgment.⁷⁴ He does so yet again when he says that dogmatism is refutable by one who “realizes” criticism “in oneself” yet “irrefutable for him who is able to realize it practically”.⁷⁵ Moreover, in opposition to Fichte’s identification of the *Wissenschaftslehre* with the spirit of Kant’s idealism, Schelling claims that the first *Critique* is “the genuine *Wissenschaftslehre*” precisely because it “cannot possibly put up one absolute principle in order to become a *system* (in the narrower sense of the word)”, but rather contains “the canon for all principles and systems”, from which he infers that it is “deplorable” to assign the “*spirit*” of the first *Critique* to “one system alone”.⁷⁶ One can indeed pursue criticism as a system “in the narrower sense of the word”. But it is one of two narrowly construed systems whose common canon is derived from the first *Critique*, i.e., from the “genuine *Wissenschaftslehre*”, the spirit of which therefore cannot be restricted to either of that canon’s two expressions.⁷⁷

Diverging from Fichte’s recognitive and non-pluralistic view of philosophical self-transformation in the Jena period, then, Schelling’s view of self-transformation in the “Philosophical Letters” is pluralistic and non-recognitive.

Of course, Fichte and Schelling agree that positing the first principle of a philosophical system is not the theoretical result of a process of reasoning, but is rather the practical matter of deciding to live that system. We might worry that such a decision is problematically arbitrary.

However, arbitrariness is only problematic within a system that provides a framework of reasons in which it can be objected that something happens for no reason and so violates what, according to that framework, counts as rational. But then a decision for such a system cannot be problematically arbitrary or irrational, but at most is arational. In other words, whereas the question of problematic arbitrariness is always internal to a system, the question of whether one wills to practically realize or live a system is always external to that system.⁷⁸ This is why when, in the 1815 draft of the *Ages of the World*, Schelling says that “[e]verything must rest on the highest voluntarism”, his concern “is not freedom for a particular deed”, such as might be rational or irrational according to a particular system’s framework of reasons, but is rather the “absolute freedom” with which one wilfully, i.e., arationally, endorses or commits to a particular system.⁷⁹

I conclude this section by noting that Schelling in fact anticipates by one year Fichte’s dictum that one’s chosen philosophy depends on one’s kind of person. We saw that, for Fichte, the dictum does not imply that one can choose dogmatism, but rather implies that one can either choose idealism or fail to see that idealism is one’s only choice. In the “Philosophical Letters”, Schelling prefigures this dictum when he says that the philosophical system that we choose “depends on the freedom of spirit which we have ourselves acquired”.⁸⁰ This formulation of the dictum lacks reference to personality. However, as we saw, for Schelling, the critic and dogmatist do not differ in kind, since “action as such” cannot “distinguish” them. Rather, they differ in degree of “spirit” insofar as their respective systems bear the “stamp” of a distinctive “individuality”, i.e., insofar as their systems express a morally vigorous and a serenely calm personality, respectively. In other words, one’s chosen philosophy depends on one’s kind of person, where this implies, *contra* Fichte, that one can genuinely choose and genuinely live either criticism or dogmatism.

Personality becomes a pivotal concept in Schelling’s *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* (1809):

no matter how high we place reason, we do not believe, for example, that anyone may be virtuous or a hero or generally a great human being on the basis of pure reason, indeed, not even, according to the familiar phrase, that the human race can be propagated by it. Only in personality is there life, and all personality rests on a dark ground that indeed must therefore be the ground of cognition as well.⁸¹

We can see in this passage the implicit suggestion that a philosophical system is a way of “life” that provides a framework in which practical and theoretical reasons, and hence “virtu[e]” and “cognition”, are possible. Schelling’s claim is that a livable system rests, not on reason, but rather on personality, where the expression of personality cannot be defined in exclusively idealist terms because it rests on a “dark ground”, viz., the unprethinkable primacy of the will.⁸² In particular, how one expresses one’s personality cannot be confined to the idealist terms of Fichte’s account of self-transformation, according to which idealist and dogmatic interests ultimately rest on an idealist self-interest that one either authentically expresses and affirms or inauthentically suppresses and evades. Thus, Schelling’s earlier formulation of the dictum diverges from Fichte’s later formulation by pluralistically acknowledging the livability of both criticism and dogmatism.

I will now conclude by considering Jacobi’s interpretation of Fichte’s dictum and how it poses a challenge to Fichte’s and Schelling’s answers to the central questions regarding the possibility and the expressibility of philosophical self-transformation.

13.3 The Kind of Philosophy One Inherits

Jacobi concludes his “Open Letter to Fichte” by citing Fichte’s dictum:

Every philosophy, without exception, is at some point marked by a *miracle*. Each has a particular site, its *holy place*, where its miracle appears and, being alone the true, makes all others superfluous. Taste and character determine to a large extent in which direction we shall look, towards one of these sites or another. You have aptly remarked on this yourself (on p. 25 of your *New Presentation*) where you say: “The kind of philosophy one chooses thus depends on the kind of person one is. For a philosophical system is not a lifeless household item one can put aside or pick up as one wishes; instead, it is animated by the very soul of the person who adopts it”. —You may well be surprised that I should quote this passage, and call it apt, for the surrounding context (pages 23 to 26) proclaims with biting wit your contempt, or at least your *indifference, for my way of thinking*, and a scarcely *restrained* ridicule. But for this reason I have thought of this passage with all the greater fondness, as an occasion to note that by writing this letter I have exhibited a *strength of spirit* at least not *contemptible*.⁸³

Jacobi parses the dictum as stating that one’s chosen philosophy depends “without exception” on a “*miracle*” whose appearance is a “*holy place*” that consists “large[ly]” in one’s “[t]aste and character”, i.e., in the kind of person one is. He expects Fichte to be “surprised” that he approvingly quotes the dictum given its “surrounding context”, whose specified pagination contains Fichte’s argument above that, wittingly or not, idealistic self-interest grounds one’s decision to posit a first principle. Jacobi expects surprise because Fichte’s argument displays “*indifference*”, if not “ridicule” or “contempt”, for non-idealist positions, including Jacobi’s own realist position, from which he frequently attacks idealism.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, he has undiminished “fondness” for the dictum because it indicates that his realism, no less than Fichte’s idealism, “exhibit[s] a *strength of spirit*”. In other words, Jacobi is fond of the dictum because he interprets it pluralistically such that one’s chosen philosophy depends on one’s kind of person, where this implies, *contra* Fichte, that one can genuinely choose against idealism. However, we will see that it also implies, *contra* Schelling, that one can genuinely choose against dogmatism.

Jacobi’s realism is neither the Spinozistic dogmatism that Fichte regards as self-refuting nor the Spinozistic dogmatism that Schelling regards as livable. In *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn* (1785), Jacobi claims:

I love Spinoza, because he, more than any other philosopher, has led me to the perfect conviction that certain things admit of no explication: one must not therefore keep one’s eyes shut to them, but must take them as one finds them. I have no concept more intimate than that of the final cause; no conviction more vital than that *I do what I think*, and not, *that I should think what I do*. Truly therefore, I must assume a source of thought and action that remains completely inexplicable to me.⁸⁵

Jacobi “love[s]” Spinoza’s view that things are explicable only if they have infinite efficient causes and otherwise are “inexplicable”, for it shows him where the spade of explication turns. In particular, it shows him that those things which are not efficiently caused are not objects of explication, but rather are objects of “faith”.⁸⁶ Rather than “shut” his “eyes” to them, Jacobi “take[s]” them as he “finds” them, viz., as things his “conviction” in which is “vital”, i.e.,

life-sustaining. For example, as a “source of thought and action”, his freedom is inexplicable because it grounds explications of what he thinks and does. Without the “*mystery* of freedom”,⁸⁷ such explications would represent a causal regress that rules out the possibility of his freedom. Jacobi’s realism is thus one that begins, not with the dogmatist’s not-I, but rather with the brute fact of freedom.

However, Jacobi’s realism does not begin with the idealist’s I either, for he regards his conviction in the existence of a transcendent deity as equally vital as his conviction in freedom. He argues in his letter to Fichte that human freedom is “unfathomable because God’s being is necessarily unfathomable”, since otherwise human freedom would be a “*supra-divine* power”. As he puts it, “God is, and is *outside me, a living, self-subsisting being*, or I am God. There is no third”.⁸⁸ Jacobi takes the first option and associates the second option with Fichte’s idealism, for which he coins the term “*nihilism*”.⁸⁹

The personality to which Jacobi owes his philosophy is accordingly confined to neither idealist nor dogmatic terms, *contra* Schelling. It is instead defined by Jacobi’s historical situation. While he agrees that one’s philosophy must be livable, he adds that it must “originate” from one’s “history”. Hence he asks rhetorically: “can living philosophy ever be anything but history?”⁹⁰ It is only within some historical situation, e.g., the 1780s pantheism controversy, that criticism and dogmatism offer relevant and seemingly exclusive options for philosophical self-transformation. One’s chosen philosophy thus depends on one’s personality specifically insofar as the latter is historically conditioned, i.e., conditioned by an inherited historical situation. Moreover, since inherited historical situations endlessly vary, the possible expressions of one’s personality will also endlessly vary. The historical pluralism to which Jacobi is committed is thus broader than Schelling’s systematic pluralism in the “Philosophical Letters”.

Jacobi’s historical pluralism poses a challenge to Fichte’s and Schelling’s answers to the two central questions. Regarding the possibility of philosophical self-transformation, Fichte faces the problem of whose summons, depending on historical patterns of exclusionary practices including the anti-Semitism to which Fichte contributed,⁹¹ is deemed worthy of response, while Schelling faces the problem of whose act of will, depending on historical patterns of social conformity including philosophy itself, is truly authentic. Regarding the expressibility of philosophical self-transformation, Fichte and Schelling both face the problem of whether defending idealism or dogmatism, at least given subsequent developments in philosophy, can avoid a despotic restriction of viable philosophical options.

To be sure, Jacobi is equally vulnerable to these problems. Indeed, we perennially face the problems of exclusion, conformism, and despotism. This indicates that the significance both of Fichte and Schelling’s disagreement about philosophical self-transformation and of Jacobi’s challenge to their respective positions is not restricted to the German idealist tradition, but rather extends to the entire course of post-Kantian thought.⁹² By challenging Fichte’s project of articulating an idealism that is absolute and therefore without contrary, Schelling’s early pluralism prefigures existentialism’s reassessment of philosophy’s first principle as the demand that one chooses oneself, where this is a genuine choice between alternative ways of living. And by expanding the alternatives beyond idealism and dogmatism, Jacobi perhaps unwittingly confronts us with the abiding ambiguities of existentially committing to transforming oneself. Stanley Cavell articulates these ambiguities in “An Emerson Mood”: “To say ‘Follow me and you will be saved’, you must be sure you are of God. But to say ‘Follow in yourself what I follow in mine and you will be saved’, you merely have to be sure you are following yourself”.⁹³ Philosophical self-transformation struggles to decipher whom it follows.⁹⁴

Notes

- 1 Kant KrV Bxvi, xviii, xviii–n, xxvi.
- 2 Kant KrV Bxv–xvi, xxii–n, xx.
- 3 Kant AA 6: 47, 51.
- 4 Kant AA 5: 30.
- 5 Kant AA 4: 405.
- 6 Fichte SW I: 479.
- 7 Fichte GA II/10: 114, translated by Breazeale (2018: 105).
- 8 Fichte (1988: 357).
- 9 Fichte (1988: 360–1).
- 10 Fichte SW VIII: 352.
- 11 Fichte SW I: 423.
- 12 Fichte SW I: 425–6.
- 13 Fichte SW I: 429.
- 14 Cf. Fichte: “[e]very philosophy presupposes something that it does not demonstrate on the basis of which it explains and demonstrates everything else” (GA IV/2: 17).
- 15 Cf. Fichte: “By means of a correct inference from his own first principle [...] the dogmatist transforms this fact [viz., the consciousness of freedom] into an illusion and a deception” (SW I: 430).
- 16 Cf. Fichte: “[dogmatists are not] aware that anything is lacking in their system, for the opposed world [of representations] is not present for them at all. [...] Dogmatism starts with a being, which it considers to be something absolute; consequently, this is a system that can never go beyond being. Idealism is not in the least acquainted with any sort of being, considered as something that subsists for itself. In other words, dogmatism begins with necessity, and idealism begins with freedom. Hence they find themselves in two completely different worlds” (SW I: 439, 509n).
- 17 Cf. Balog (2012) on the theoretical insolubility of the dispute between physicalism and anti-physicalism.
- 18 For an account of the interlocking problems that motivate Fichte’s doctrine of intellectual intuition, see Bruno (2022a).
- 19 Fichte SW I: 429, 462–3.
- 20 Fichte SW I: 463. Cf.: “The I is identical with immediate consciousness” (GA IV/2: 33)
- 21 Fichte SW I: 510.
- 22 Fichte SW I: 425.
- 23 Fichte SW I: 97. Cf.: “in presupposing the thoroughgoing validity of the mechanism of cause and effect, [dogmatists] directly contradict themselves. What they say stands in contradiction with what they do; for, to the extent that they *presuppose* mechanism, they at the same time elevate themselves above it. Their own act of thinking of this relationship is an act that lies outside the realm of mechanical determinism. Mechanism cannot grasp itself, precisely because it is mechanism. Only a free consciousness is able to grasp itself” (SW I: 509–10).
- 24 Fichte GA IV/2: 16.
- 25 Fichte SW I: 484.
- 26 Fichte (1988: 203).
- 27 Cf. Fichte (1988): “in transcendental philosophy what is reflected upon is the activity of representing (the representing subject)” (201).
- 28 Fichte (1988: 202–3, 207).
- 29 Fichte GA IV/2: 29, 38.
- 30 Fichte GA IV/2: 28.
- 31 Fichte SW I: 461–2.
- 32 Kemp (2015) defines radical self-transformation as the willful undermining of one’s foundational value and argues that it is heteronomous on the grounds that one’s will is only free if it conforms to one’s foundational value. This argument seems unable to account for Fichte’s early conversion from dogmatism to idealism, which is arguably a philosophical guise of radical self-transformation yet is not heteronomous. Nevertheless, Kemp and Iacovetti (2020) plausibly argue that, for Fichte, overcoming our “natural propensity toward dogmatism” (SW I: 484) by converting to idealism involves spontaneous choice as opposed to rational affirmation and acts of grace. However, given that Fichte regards a summons as a condition of the possibility of philosophical conversion, the latter appears to involve the spontaneity of both one who converts and one who summons conversion.

- 33 Fichte (1988: 207).
- 34 See Fichte: “The *Wissenschaftslehre* will become universally comprehensible [...] as soon as we begin to educate human beings for their own purposes and as instruments of their own will and not as soulless instruments for the use of others. Education of the whole person from earliest youth: this is the only way to propagate philosophy” (SW I: 507).
- 35 Fichte SW III: 32–3.
- 36 That idealism is arguably self-justifying might suggest, *contra* Fichte’s argument in the *New Presentation*, that it is theoretically superior to dogmatism. However, this feature of idealism is dialectically inert, for it rests on intellectual intuition and thus depends on its practical superiority to dogmatism.
- 37 Fichte SW I: 434.
- 38 In his letter to Reinhold, 22 April 1799, Fichte says that Jacobi’s “Open Letter” to him appears to harbour “the fanaticism of *real life*. It is this fanaticism which forbids him to abstract dispassionately and impartially from real life, even for the sake of experiment. [...] I consider such apathy to be absolutely necessary if one is to understand transcendental philosophy completely, without being either angered by it or lured by it into despair. [...] A philosopher’s philosophy is independent of his life, and his life is independent of his philosophy” (1988: 429).
- 39 Fichte SW I: 433.
- 40 Fichte SW I: 466–7. Fichte’s view that representing I-hood is *a priori* (since it both makes experience possible and cannot be imagined away) and intuitional (since it both is singular to the exclusion of dogmatism and grounds the space of reasons that contains all representations within it) is comparable to Kant’s view in the *Transcendental Aesthetic* that representing space and time is *a priori* and intuitional.
- 41 Schelling SW I/1: 292.
- 42 Schelling SW I/1: 302; cf. SW I/1: 211–2.
- 43 Schelling SW I/1: 294. Cf. Schelling’s “Of the I as First Principle of Philosophy or on the Unconditioned in Human Knowledge” (1795): “Even the author of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in his attempt not only to arbitrate the dispute among philosophers but to resolve the antinomy in philosophy itself, did not know what else to do than to state the point at issue in an all-encompassing question, which he expressed as follows: How are synthetic judgements *a priori* possible? As will be shown in the course of this investigation, this question in its highest abstraction is none other than: How is it possible for the absolute I to step out of itself and oppose to itself a not-I?” (SW I/1: 175).
- 44 Schelling SW I/1: 293–4, 308.
- 45 Schelling SW I/1: 295.
- 46 Schelling SW I/1: 310.
- 47 Schelling SW I/1: 311.
- 48 Schelling SW I/1: 299.
- 49 Schelling SW I/1: 299, 313–4.
- 50 Schelling SW I/1: 305.
- 51 Schelling SW I/1: 315.
- 52 Schelling SW I/1: 300, 316.
- 53 Schelling SW I/1: 334.
- 54 Fichte SW I: 513.
- 55 Schelling SW I/1: 296–8.
- 56 Fichte SW I: 515.
- 57 Schelling SW I/1: 308.
- 58 Cf. Schelling: “If I may say it in the words of Jacobi, philosophy seeks to unveil and reveal that which is, so that the nature or spirit of philosophy cannot lie in any formula or letter; its highest topic must be what is immediate in man and present only to itself, and cannot be what is mediated by concepts and laboriously recapitulated in concepts. The aim of philosophy is no mere reform of its discipline but a complete reversal of its principles, that is, a revolution which one can view as the second possible revolution in its field. The first took place when the recognition of objects was set up as the principle of all knowledge” (SW I/1: 156).
- 59 Paul (2014) describes major life choices as transformative experiences in which we learn something radically new, which is epistemically transformative, or become radically different, which is personally transformative. She argues that although decision theory holds that the rationality of a major life choice depends on imaginatively projecting ourselves into a future in which we have taken that choice, imaginative projection cannot show us what it will be like to have taken that choice, given the latter’s

- epistemic and personal consequences, and so cannot help us to assign a subjective value to that choice, from which she infers that major life choices cannot be rational. Insofar as philosophical self-transformation is transformative in Paul's sense, we might conclude that they are not rational, but are rather voluntary. Carel and Kidd (2020) argue that most transformative experiences are not chosen, but rather are involuntary, e.g., sustaining a severe injury, or non-voluntary, e.g., being imprisoned and tortured.
- 60 Schelling SW I/1: 308.
- 61 Schelling SW I/1: 312–3. We can compare philosophical self-transformation with large-scale transformative pursuits, e.g., becoming a parent or a music lover, which Callard (2016) describes as aspirational because they aim at values whose appreciation is initially lacking and so exhibit proleptic rationality. Such pursuits, not unlike what Schelling calls being or, we might say, becoming what we call ourselves, occur over an extended, if not an endless, period of time. It is because the rationality of transformative pursuits is proleptic that Callard denies, *contra* Paul (2014), that we need to ask whether the decision in their favour is rational.
- 62 Schelling SW I/1: 313. Despite some terminological inconsistency, Schelling's conception of decision is comparable to what Chang (2013) describes as willing a reason: "When you will that some consideration is a reason, you 'stipulate' or 'command'—by a sheer act of will—that it be a reason. *Willing something to be a reason is willing*—perhaps unconsciously and non-deliberately: Let this be a reason! It is not believing, wanting, hoping, deciding, or intending that something be a reason. Nor is it pretending that or simply treating something *as if* it is a reason. Willing something to be a reason is the activity of placing your will—your very agency—behind its being a reason" (93). Cf. Chang (2009).
- 63 Schelling SW I/1: 308–9.
- 64 Schelling SW I/1: 325.
- 65 Just prior to this passage, Schelling argues that "actuality" for us must be "restricted", i.e., spatio-temporally limited (SW I/1: 324). This contrasts with the actuality that intellectual intuition represents, viz., the I or the not-I, which is not spatio-temporally limited.
- 66 Schelling SW I/1: 320, 326. Although Schelling ascribes fanaticism to claims to intellectual intuition, which purport to cognize the "absolute unity" with which judgment begins, he also ascribes it to claims that purport to cognize the "absolute thesis" at which judgment aims (327). While the first ascription targets Fichte and Spinoza alike, Fichte would support the second ascription insofar as he regards the ultimate goal of judgment as an unattainable and therefore merely regulative ideal. Cf. di Paolo in this volume on fanaticism in Kant and other modern thinkers.
- 67 Schelling SW I/1: 333. See Nieke (1972: 278–9).
- 68 Schelling SW I/1: 313.
- 69 Schelling SW I/1: 304.
- 70 Schelling SW I/1: 341.
- 71 Fichte SW I: 434.
- 72 See Kierkegaard (2009): "when Jacobi discovers to his *horreur* that Lessing is really a Spinozist, he speaks out of total conviction. He wants to sweep Lessing off his feet. Lessing replies: 'Good, very good! I can use all of that, but I cannot do the same with it. Altogether I quite like your *salto mortale*, and I see how a man with a good head can lower his head in a somersault in this way to get going; take me along, if at all possible'. Here Lessing's irony comes out superbly, aware as he presumably is that when you are to leap you must surely do it alone, and also be alone in properly understanding that it is an impossibility. One has to admire his urbanity and his liking for Jacobi, and the conversational skill that so politely says: 'take me with you, if at all possible'" (86).
- 73 Schelling SW I/1: 306.
- 74 Schelling SW I/1: 331.
- 75 Schelling SW I/1: 339.
- 76 Schelling SW I/1: 301, 304–5.
- 77 Kemp and Iacovetti (2020) object to my pluralist reading of Schelling in Bruno (2014), Bruno (2016), and Bruno (2020a). I rebut their objection in Bruno (2022b).
- 78 Cf. the distinction between internal and external questions in Carnap (1950: 21–3, 35–6).
- 79 Schelling SW I/8: 304. Cf. "most people are frightened precisely by this abyssal freedom in the same way that they are frightened by the necessity to be utterly one thing or another" (304).
- 80 Schelling SW I/1: 308.
- 81 Schelling SW I/7: 413.
- 82 On the primacy of the will in Schelling's *Philosophical Investigations*, see Bruno (2021).

- 83 Jacobi (1994: 526–7); quotation from Fichte modified and cited from SW I: 434.
- 84 On Jacobi's attack on transcendental idealism, see Bruno (2020b).
- 85 Jacobi (1994: 193).
- 86 Jacobi (1994: 230). Cf. Jacobi's love for Spinoza with his love for the idealist, stated at the beginning of *David Hume on Faith, or Idealism and Realism* (1787): "an idealist, basing himself on this distinction [between assertions of identity and assertions of existence], can compel me to concede that my conviction about the existence of real things outside me is only a matter of *faith*. But then, as a realist, I am forced to say that all knowledge derives exclusively from faith, for *things* must be *given* to me before I am in a position to enquire about relations" (1994: 256).
- 87 See Jacobi (1994: 519).
- 88 Jacobi (1994: 523–4).
- 89 Jacobi (1994: 519).
- 90 Jacobi (1994: 239).
- 91 See Franks (2016).
- 92 See Nietzsche (2002): "I have gradually come to realize what every great philosophy so far has been: a confession of faith on the part of its author, and a type of involuntary and unself-conscious memoir[...] [...] [T]here is absolutely nothing impersonal about the philosopher; and in particular his morals bear decided and decisive witness to *who he is*—which means, in what order of rank the innermost drives of his nature stand with respect to each other" (8–9).
- 93 Cavell (2003: 32).
- 94 Thanks to Naomi Fisher, David Suarez, and Justin Vlasits for helpful comments on this chapter.

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