

## Schelling's Philosophical Letters on Doctrine and Critique

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My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language. This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely hopeless. Ethics so far as it springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute valuable, can be no science. What it says does not add to our knowledge in any sense. But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it.

—Wittgenstein, “A Lecture on Ethics”<sup>1</sup>

I can only say: I don't belittle this human tendency; I take my hat off to it. And here it is essential that this is not a sociological description but that I speak *for myself*.

—Wittgenstein, in Waismann, “Notes on Talks with Wittgenstein”<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Introduction

In 1795 and 1796, Schelling published an essay in two parts in *Philosophical Journal of a Society of German Scholars*, co-edited by Fichte and

Niethammer. While they appeared under the familiar title *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* (*Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kritikismus*), the first part was originally entitled *Philosophical Letters on Dogmaticism and Criticism* (*Philosophische Briefe über Dogmaticismus und Kritikismus*). Without informing Schelling, Niethammer replaced “Dogmaticism” with “Dogmatism,” assuming the author had intended a term more common among philosophers and germane to readers of Kant.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the text’s English translation mistranslates “Dogmaticismus” as “dogmatism” at two key junctures.<sup>4</sup> These historical matters obscure what is, in fact, an important philosophical matter, namely, Schelling’s appropriation of Kant’s distinction between critique and doctrine in the former’s attack on dogmaticism.

The *Letters* repurpose Kant’s distinction in response to the surging interest in philosophical systematicity in Germany in the 1780s and 1790s. They argue that a system is constituted by “perpetual striving,” an activity whose goal is “the object of an endless task.”<sup>5</sup> According to Schelling, critique furnishes the method of striving for any system, including dogmatism—by which he means Spinozism. Critique secures this method by investigating the subject’s essence, namely, the freedom by which she lives the system of her choice. Critique accordingly favors no system, not even criticism—by which Schelling means Fichteanism. By contrast, dogmaticism flouts critique by asserting the actual attainment of doctrinal or systematic knowledge. Dogmaticism mistakes a system for “an object of *knowledge*” rather than “an object of *freedom*,” indulging a delusion to which Schelling thinks critics and dogmatists—Fichteans and Spinozists—are equally susceptible.<sup>6</sup>

Removing publication and translation errors surrounding the *Letters* reveals that whereas “dogmatism” and “criticism” refer to the systems of Spinoza and Fichte involved in the pantheism controversy of the late eighteenth century, “dogmaticism” invokes one of Kant’s chief methodological distinctions. As we will see, Schelling relies on the distinction between critique and doctrine in asserting that the *Critique of Pure Reason* provides the “universal methodology” by which alone Spinozism and Fichteanism may be authentic systems for living.<sup>7</sup>

In section 2, I articulate Kant’s distinction between critique and doctrine. In section 3, I explicate Fichte’s claim for the identity of critique and doctrine, which rests on his idea of intellectual intuition. In sections 4 and 5, I account for Schelling’s rejection of Fichte’s identity claim by reconstructing the *Letters*’ two-step argument that critique concerns the spirit in which one pursues a system and that this pursuit is inconsistent

with intellectual intuition. According to this argument, a system is nothing beyond our activity of striving to realize it practically—nothing beyond its livability—and insofar as intellectual intuition feigns this activity's completion—its achievement of a doctrine—it is dogmaticist and thus unlivable. We will see that this argument expresses the *Letters'* metaphilosophical pluralism, a commitment to the valid multiplicity of systems, which Schelling defends often throughout his career.

## 2. Kant's Distinction

In the Preface to the first *Critique*, Kant provides a definition of a critique of reason that is meant to orient the reader through the text as a whole. He says that our power of judgment demands of reason “the most difficult of all its tasks, namely, that of self-knowledge, and to institute a court of justice, by which reason may secure its rightful claims while dismissing all its groundless pretensions, and this not by mere decrees but according to its own eternal and unchangeable laws; and this court is none other than the critique of pure reason itself.”<sup>8</sup> Self-knowledge is described in this definition as the absence of delusion regarding the claims to which reason is entitled. Self-knowledge is furthermore portrayed as emerging from a trial in which reason's claims are pressed for their entitlement. So defined, a critique of reason may appear to consist strictly in providing a transcendental deduction in response to the question *quid juris* regarding reason's right to the categories, a right which grounds the possibility of judgments that are universal and necessary yet ampliative. This appearance would agree with the idea that the first *Critique* must solve what, in the Introduction, Kant calls the “real problem of pure reason,” namely, the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgments.<sup>9</sup>

However, Kant clarifies his definition in the next sentence: “by this I do not understand a critique of books and systems, but a critique of the faculty of reason in general, in respect of all the cognitions after which reason might strive independently of all experience, and hence the decision about the possibility or impossibility of a metaphysics in general, and the determination of its sources, as well as its extent and boundaries, all, however, from principles.”<sup>10</sup> According to this clarification, critique includes, yet exceeds, the “real problem of pure reason,” for while it must solve this problem by determining the “sources” of reason's *a priori* cognitions, it must also determine the “boundaries” of such cognitions. As Kant says in

the Discipline of Pure Reason, “philosophy consists precisely in knowing its bounds.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, the sort of self-knowledge attained through critique is knowledge of oneself within one’s proper cognitive limitations.

Kant’s full definition of a critique of reason helps to clarify his later assertion that “without critique” nothing can “bring [us] to self-knowledge.”<sup>12</sup> It also serves to contextualize his distinction between critique and doctrine.

In the Preface and Introduction, Kant assigns critique a methodological function. He says that critique aims “to transform the accepted procedure of metaphysics,” calling it a “method” that “catalogues the entire outline of the science of metaphysics, both in respect of its boundaries and in respect of its entire internal structure.”<sup>13</sup> This method assesses “the worth or worthlessness of all cognitions *a priori*,” which has the “negative” utility of correcting the use of pure reason. Critique thus differs from doctrine, which, beyond a mere corrective, purports to amplify cognitions of pure reason through an organon. Whereas cataloging the *a priori* principles of reason’s correct use yields a “canon,” an “organon of pure reason would be a sum total of those principles in accordance with which all pure *a priori* cognitions can be acquired and actually brought about. The exhaustive application of such an organon would create a system of pure reason.” By asserting the “exhaustive application” of *a priori* principles in an organon, a doctrine lays claim to metaphysics as a science. Critique, by contrast, is simply “the propaedeutic to the system of pure reason.”<sup>14</sup>

Doctrine expresses what Kant calls the “prejudice” that speculative reason can make progress in metaphysics without critique, a prejudice he labels “dogmatism.”<sup>15</sup> Dogmatism is a state of self-delusion in which reason’s habit of “groundless pretensions” “leads to groundless assertions” and “thus to skepticism.”<sup>16</sup> Hence, it impairs philosophy’s “aim of revealing the deceptions of a reason that misjudges its own boundaries and of bringing the self-conceit of speculation back to modest but thorough self-knowledge by means of a sufficient illumination of our concepts.”<sup>17</sup> Without self-knowledge secured through critique, reason’s maturation stalls at the “childhood” of dogmatism.<sup>18</sup>

Kant connects the foregoing concepts in the Analytic of Principles: “although, for the expansion of the role of the understanding in the field of pure cognitions *a priori*, hence as a doctrine, philosophy seems entirely unnecessary or rather ill-suited, since after all its previous attempts little or no territory has been won, yet as critique . . . philosophy with all of its perspicacity and art of scrutiny is called up (even though its utility is then only negative).”<sup>19</sup> The endless controversies and inevitable skepticism to

which dogmatism leads show that philosophy, which consists in “knowing its bounds,” is best suited for self-knowledge rather than self-delusion—for critique instead of doctrine.

### 3. Fichte's Identity Claim

Although Fichte claims to inherit the spirit of Kant's philosophy, he predicated his *Wissenschaftslehre* on *identifying* critique and doctrine, not differentiating them. It is crucial to grasp Fichte's argument for this identity claim if we are to comprehend Schelling's defense of Kant's distinction in the *Letters*. First, in 1794 Schelling publishes and sends Fichte *On the Possibility of a Form of Philosophy in General*, which is indebted to Fichte's *On the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre* published that year. Fichte then sends Schelling fascicles of *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*, inspiring Schelling in 1795 to write *Of the I as Principle of Philosophy*. Thus, by the time Schelling writes the *Letters*, he is steeped in Fichte's work. Second, the *Letters* attack the idea of intellectual intuition and the idea that critique secures more than the method for philosophy. Since both of these ideas support Fichte's argument for the identity of critique and doctrine, their development in his early Jena texts bears considerably on our understanding of Schelling's rejection of the identity claim.

We can see in a prefatory way that the *Wissenschaftslehre* is critical, insofar as it defines our “first demand” as the turn toward the first-person standpoint, yet doctrinal, insofar as it sets as our first “task” the grounding of a systematic account of experience on a first principle.<sup>20</sup> On the one hand, it is by a critical turn inward that we determine the conditions of experience. Our first demand is thus, not only the Kantian requirement of securing reason's right to its claims, but the equally Kantian requirement of regarding reason as self-determining in the deduction of this right, as subject and object of critique. As Fichte says in *On the Concept*, his science “is not something that exists independently of us and without our help. On the contrary, it is something which can only be produced by the freedom of our mind.”<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, critique is not merely the propaedeutic to a system. Fichte transforms critique into a system grounded on a first principle, namely, the absolute freedom of reason or “the I.”<sup>22</sup> Enshrining freedom as a first principle is necessary to refute dogmatism, the system that nihilistically rules out human freedom. Fichte describes dogmatism in the *Foundations* as “appealing to the supposedly higher concept of the

*thing*” or “the not-I.” Positing such a principle is “*transcendent*, since it goes on beyond the I. So far as dogmatism can be consistent, Spinozism is its most logical outcome.”<sup>23</sup> Dogmatism is refutable only if philosophy’s first principle can be known to be the I and the *Wissenschaftslehre* thereby proven to be the one true doctrine.

Positing a first principle depends, as Fichte says in the 1797/98 *Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre*, on the kind of person one is.<sup>24</sup> This may tempt us to ascribe to him the view that one may legitimately endorse dogmatism and genuinely live as a Spinozist. Yet we find that, for Fichte, one is either a willful or a failed idealist. In the *Foundations*, he says that there is “no explaining how any thinker should ever have been able to go beyond the I . . . if we did not encounter a practical datum which completely accounts for this phenomenon. It was a practical datum . . . which drove the dogmatist on beyond the I . . . namely, the feeling of a necessary subordination and unity of the entire not-I under the practical laws of the I.”<sup>25</sup> A dogmatist cannot explain how to transcend the first-person standpoint of the I, for her philosophy expresses a “practical datum” that conflicts with her nihilistic view, namely, her feeling of freedom, of “a necessary subordination” of the world to her “practical laws.” Her very act of positing the not-I as first principle betrays this datum insofar as she seeks to reconcile the world with her practical perspective. As Fichte says in the *New Presentation*, something in a dogmatist’s “inner self” agrees with her idealist opponent.<sup>26</sup> Thus, although one cannot be forced to accept idealism, as this acceptance “depends on freedom,”<sup>27</sup> and while one can at most be “summoned”<sup>28</sup> to embrace one’s freedom, the dogmatist undermines her system through the performative contradiction of positing a principle that rules out this practical datum. Fichte concludes that the “only type of philosophy that remains possible is idealism,” from which it follows that a person must either rise to “the level of idealism” and act in good faith or else fail to do so and live in bad faith.<sup>29</sup>

Embracing freedom is a cognitive act that Fichte calls “intellectual intuition.” This term does not appear in the *Foundations*. Fichte introduces it in his 1794 review of Schulze’s 1792 *Aenesidemus* and develops it, after Schelling’s *Letters*, in the 1796–99 *Wissenschaftslehre Nova Methodo* lectures and in the *New Presentation*. However, we can see that the concept behind the term is at work in the *Foundations* if we consider Fichte’s description of philosophy’s first principle in the *Aenesidemus* review.

As Paul Franks has shown, Schulze’s attack on Reinhold in *Aenesidemus* elicits Fichte’s qualified concession.<sup>30</sup> Fichte agrees that Reinhold’s

principle—that every act of consciousness is mediated by representation—cannot be a first principle. But he denies that this is because, as Schulze holds, the mind must be immediately conscious of objects as transcendently real. Rather, Fichte argues that acts of consciousness mediated by representation form a regress unless the mind has immediate awareness of a single unconditioned ground. Reinhold's principle cannot express this ground, for it asserts that consciousness is always mediated by representation, which means that grasping this principle is itself mediated by representation. But representation, Fichte says, is “*empirically given*” and so conditioned: Reinhold's principle is thereby homogeneous with what it conditions, which forms a regress.<sup>31</sup> Thus, it cannot express an unconditioned ground.

Fichte's review locates philosophy's first principle in “an *Act*” of the I, which the *Foundations* will describe as “that *Act* which does not and cannot appear among the empirical states of our consciousness, but rather lies at the basis of all consciousness and alone makes it possible.”<sup>32</sup> In the review, he says that the I is “posited” and “realized through intellectual intuition, through the *I am*, and indeed, through the *I simply am, because I am*.”<sup>33</sup> This prefigures his formulation in the *Foundations* that “the I *exists* because it *posits itself*, and *posits itself* because *it exists*.”<sup>34</sup> Finally, Fichte's claim against Schulze that “[o]ur knowledge can extend no further” than intellectual intuition of the I is echoed in the *Foundations*' claim that the I's self-positing is the principle of “all human knowledge.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, while the term recedes briefly in the early Jena period, the concept of intellectual intuition plays a crucial role in the *Foundations*.

For a detailed account of intellectual intuition, however, we must look to the *Nova Methodo*. As we saw, proving that idealism is the one true doctrine depends on positing a principle that expresses an unconditioned ground. To this end, Fichte summons us to think the I and to observe that, whatever we represent, the I is active in this. Grasping the concept of the I as essentially active allows us then to observe that, in thinking this very concept, “the thinking subject and the object one is thinking of, the thinker and the thought, are here one and the same.”<sup>36</sup> We overcome both subjective and objective conditions in thinking the I, for, in doing so, subject and object are inseparable. As Fichte says in the *Foundations*, the I is both “the active, and what the activity brings about.”<sup>37</sup> Cognizing the I as “a subject-object” thus secures an unconditioned ground. Fichte calls this cognition “intellectual intuition.” It apprehends the I's “self-positing,” the freedom whereby it pervades all representation.<sup>38</sup> This apprehension is

intellectual, since it does not depend on passive sensation, yet intuitive, since it is not mediated by either subjective or objective conditions.<sup>39</sup>

In an 1801 reply to Kant's 1799 public repudiation of the *Wissenschaftslehre*,<sup>40</sup> Fichte clarifies that his use of "intellectual intuition" is meant to signify apprehension, not of an object, but of reason's own activity. It is, he says, "*cognition of reason itself by means of reason itself.*" Although this recalls Kant's view of critique as a kind of self-knowledge, and while Fichte attributes this idea's "discovery" to Kant, he adds that Kant "failed to carry it through to completion," namely, by converting critique into a "system" or doctrine.<sup>41</sup> How does intellectual intuition facilitate this conversion?

In his review, Fichte chides Schulze for demanding a thing-in-itself outside the I's activity: "[the I] is the circle within which every finite understanding, that is, every understanding that we can conceive, is necessarily confined. Anyone who wants to escape from this circle does not understand himself and does not know what he wants. . . . Within this circle, on the other hand, [critique] furnishes us with the greatest coherence in all of our knowledge."<sup>42</sup> The idea of the thing-in-itself is "a piece of whimsy, a pipe dream, [and] a non-thought" insofar as it feigns a faculty "different from ours."<sup>43</sup> This agrees with Kant's view that critique corrects the self-delusion by which one craves an alien perspective: "complaints . . . that we do not understand through pure reason what the things that appear to us might be in themselves . . . are entirely improper and irrational; for they would have us be able to cognize things, thus intuit them, even without senses, consequently they would have it that we have a faculty of cognition entirely distinct from the human not merely in degree but even in intuition and kind, and thus that we ought to be not humans but beings that we cannot even say are possible, let alone how they are constituted."<sup>44</sup> Despite their idealist accord, however, Fichte rejects Kant's insistence on thinking the thing-in-itself. In such thinking, "*one always thinks of oneself, as an intellect striving to know the thing.*"<sup>45</sup> The idea of the thing-in-itself is "nothing but another way of looking at the I"<sup>46</sup> and is otherwise "a pure invention which possesses no reality whatsoever."<sup>47</sup> Critique rightly confines us to the circle of the I's activity, but it errs in retaining the idea of the thing-in-itself. But what exactly is Kant's error, given that he denies this idea any actuality and regulatively rehabilitates it for theoretical reason's systematic ends?

According to Fichte, the idea of the thing-in-itself is the remnant of a needless deception. In the *Transcendental Dialectic*, Kant describes transcendental illusion as the "natural and unavoidable" confusion of the "sub-



jective necessity of a connection of our concepts” with “objective necessity in the determination of things in themselves.”<sup>48</sup> It is the illusion that we know, not appearances, but “things in general in a systematic doctrine.”<sup>49</sup> Fichte denies that we can diagnose an illusion without thereby removing it: “[Kant refers to] *a deception that continually recurs, despite the fact that one knows that it is a deception*. . . . To know that one is deceived and yet to remain deceived: this is not a state of conviction and harmony with oneself; instead it is a state of serious inner conflict.”<sup>50</sup> Transcendental illusion is a deception that can be “completely extirpated,” for we ourselves have “invented” the thing-in-itself,<sup>51</sup> and must be extirpated, on pain of a divided standpoint in which, as Kant himself admits, we “irremediably” chase “false hopes,” “even after we have exposed the mirage.”<sup>52</sup> Once we see that appearances compose “our commonly shared truth,” the “false philosophy” of the thing-in-itself “will fall away—like scales from our eyes—never to recur again.”<sup>53</sup> The *Wissenschaftslehre* presents critique freed from this idea, having refuted the system grounded on the thing-in-itself, that is, on the dogmatist’s not-I. As we saw, it does so by means of intellectual intuition. This, then, is how intellectual intuition converts critique into a doctrine: in cognizing the I as the absolute ground of experience, it decisively vindicates a system that is no longer threatened either by Spinozistic dogmatism or by transcendental illusion.

#### 4. Schelling’s First Premise

Freedom is the practical datum expressed by positing any first principle, a datum that apparently refutes Spinozism. This insight inspires Fichte to defend our intellectual intuition of the I as the ground of the sole possible system, from which he infers the identity of critique and doctrine. In the *Letters*, Schelling argues that critique strictly concerns our endless striving for doctrine and that intellectual intuition is only the pretense of achieving this goal. We will see that this two-step argument supports his rejection of Fichte’s identity claim.

In the Fifth Letter, Schelling declares,

Nothing, it seems to me, proves more strikingly how little of the *spirit* of the *Critique of Pure Reason* the majority have grasped than the almost universal belief that the *Critique of Pure Reason* belongs to one system alone, since it precisely must be the

peculiarity of a critique of reason *that* it can favour *no* system exclusively, but rather must either truly establish, or at least prepare, a canon for *all*. Of course, the universal methodology belongs to a canon for *all* systems as a necessary part; but nothing worse can befall such a work than if one takes the method that it sets up for *all* systems as the system itself. . . . [T]he *Critique of Pure Reason* is not destined to establish any one *system* exclusively. . . . Rather, as far as I understand it, it is destined precisely to deduce from the essence of reason the possibility of two directly opposed systems and to establish a system of criticism (conceived in its completion) or, better said, of idealism as well as, directly opposing it, a system of dogmatism or of realism. . . . The *Critique of Pure Reason* alone is or contains the actual doctrine of science [*Wissenschaftslehre*] because it is valid for all *science*.<sup>54</sup>

This passage wrests from Fichte both the claim to critique and the title of *Wissenschaftslehre*, ascribing them to the “canon” and “method” whereby criticism and dogmatism can with equal validity be pursued. I will examine in turn the premises that lead to this conclusion.

To advance the premise that critique concerns our striving for doctrine, Schelling reassesses the practical datum that Fichte discerns in the dogmatist. Rather than dismiss her feeling of freedom as self-refuting, Schelling situates it within a “consistent dogmatic ethics.”<sup>55</sup> In the Fifth Letter, he asks, “why did Spinoza present his philosophy in a system of ethics? Certainly he did not do so in vain. Of him, one can really say: ‘he lived in his system.’ But surely he also thought of it as more than a theoretical castle in the sky, in which a spirit like his could hardly have found the calm and the ‘*heaven in understanding*’ in which he so visibly lived and moved.”<sup>56</sup> Spinoza’s is an ethics in that it offers a way of living in accord with nature by rendering nature fully intelligible. Systematic knowledge of nature is the “highest good” for Spinoza because the mind is active to the extent that it understands: the more it knows, the more it acts from virtue.<sup>57</sup> Instead of the nihilism that appalls Fichte, Schelling sees in dogmatism the desire common to all systems: to live in systematic knowledge of the world.<sup>58</sup> As he says in the Seventh Letter, dogmatism, “like any other ethics,” aims to solve “the problem of the existence of the world.”<sup>59</sup> Schelling thus reserves for Spinoza a capacity that Fichte unqualifiedly denies to him, namely, action. This is why he ascribes “*vol-*

*untary* annihilation” to dogmatism, for although Spinoza concludes that we are not free, he is moved by an active “*love* of the infinite” to live out his doctrine.<sup>60</sup> By drawing attention to the “practical intention” that drives Spinoza’s ethics, Schelling underscores what the practical datum of dogmatism shares with that of criticism.<sup>61</sup>

Stressing Spinoza’s practical starting point may appear to ignore his necessitarian conclusions. However, dogmatism can no more definitively prove its conclusions than can criticism, for this requires intellectual intuition, which, as Schelling’s second premise will show, is unlivable.

Returning to the first premise, if we grant that dogmatism and criticism both start from a desire for systematic knowledge, why should we regard critique as investigating this practical datum, rather than the bounds of our cognitive faculty? Schelling claims that adducing the “weakness” of this faculty affords merely a privative conception of our essence, on the basis of which we cannot fully lay claim to the laws of experience. By contrast, adducing what he calls “the freedom of minds” affords a positive conception of our essence.<sup>62</sup> Schelling develops this conception by considering what makes the dispute between criticism and dogmatism possible in the first place.

In the Third Letter, Schelling argues that no real dispute occurs between systems “except in a field they had in common.” Their shared field of dispute is not the absolute, in which “the strife of different systems would never have arisen.”<sup>63</sup> It rather originates in an “*original* opposition in the human mind.”<sup>64</sup> Schelling describes this opposition in terms of “the last great question (to be or not to be?).”<sup>65</sup> What is the precise meaning of this question and how does it account for systems’ shared field of dispute?

Experience raises the question of how we amplify our cognition or how we “*come to judge synthetically*.” Schelling claims that systems disagree, “not about the question whether there are any synthetic judgments, but about a decidedly higher question concerning the principle of that unity which is expressed in the synthetic judgment.”<sup>66</sup> Experience raises the question of the unconditioned “principle” that unifies synthetic judgment. It thereby draws criticism and dogmatism into the “domain of *practical* philosophy,” which “*demand*s the *act* through which [the unconditioned] *ought* to be realized.”<sup>67</sup> We have seen why experience ultimately raises a “*practical*” problem. Recall that systems confront “the problem of the existence of the world,” which, at root, is the problem of how one should decide to live. We can therefore see why systems’ shared field of dispute arises from an opposition “in the human mind,” in the subject who faces a

momentous decision. Experience confronts us with the question of whether to live by one system rather than another—of whether “to be or not to be” in accord with that system.<sup>68</sup>

This, then, is why Schelling construes critique as investigating “the freedom of minds” rather than the bounds of our cognitive faculty.<sup>69</sup> Striving for systematic knowledge in response to the world’s existence is a positive feature of our essence. As Schelling says in the Sixth Letter, “Which of the two [systems] we choose depends on the freedom of spirit which we have ourselves acquired. We must *be* what we call ourselves theoretically. And nothing can convince us of being that, except our very *striving* to be just that. This striving realizes our knowledge of ourselves, and thus this knowledge becomes the pure product of our freedom. We ourselves must have worked our way up to the point from which we want to start: one cannot *reason oneself up to that point*, nor can others.”<sup>70</sup> Critically construed, freedom is the decision to “*be*,” to practically strive to realize the unconditioned according to one or another system.

Notice that deciding to be an idealist or a realist is not the conclusion to an argument. Endorsing a system “depends on the freedom of spirit” by which one responds to the problem of how to live.<sup>71</sup> For this very reason, Schelling infers that either of dogmatism and criticism “is just as possible as the other, and both will coexist as long as finite beings do not all stand on the same level of freedom.”<sup>72</sup> As a matter of freedom, these systems are equally possible: however much Schelling prefers idealism, dogmatism remains a practical possibility. Crucially, these systems would remain equally possible even if all subjects came to occupy either a realist or an idealist level of freedom, for their opposition is “*original*” to the human mind. Thus, whereas Fichte restricts systematicity to the “level of idealism,” Schelling recognizes distinct—and valid—modes of freedom.

Schelling thus arrives at his first premise. Since the mode of striving is what differentiates an idealist from a realist, critique must delve into the “*peculiar spirit*”<sup>73</sup> in which one strives to live out the realization of the unconditioned. Criticism differs from dogmatism, “not in the ultimate *goal* which both of them set up, but in the *approach* to it, in the *realization* of it. . . . And philosophy inquires into the ultimate *goal* of our human vocation only in order to be able to answer the much more urgent question as to our vocation itself.”<sup>74</sup> This explains Schelling’s declaration above that the first *Critique* must “deduce from the essence of reason the very possibility of two exactly opposed systems.” Reason’s essence consists, not in cognition, but in the decisive spirit by which one strives to “*be*.” As

he says in the Sixth Letter, “if we want to establish a system and, therefore, principles, we cannot do it except by an *anticipation* of the practical decision. We should not establish those principles unless our freedom had already decided about them; at the beginning of our knowledge they are nothing but proleptic assertions or . . . *original insuperable prejudices*.”<sup>75</sup> We will now see that, insofar as knowledge begins with the prejudice of deciding to realize a system, it is incompatible with intellectual intuition.

### 5. Schelling's Second Premise

A philosophical system is a response to the ethical problem of the existence of the world, the practical problem of how to be in the world. A system is accordingly nothing beyond our living it. By investigating our essence as agents in search of systematic knowledge, critique shows that “every *system* bears the stamp of individuality on its face because none can be completed otherwise than *practically* (i.e., subjectively). The more closely a philosophy approaches a system, the greater share *freedom* and *individuality* have in it and the less claim it has to universal validity.”<sup>76</sup>

Now, if a system is subjectively valid, it would be illusory to regard it as an unrivaled doctrine. Consequently, Fichte's identity claim would be false, inasmuch as it rests on intellectual intuition of the first principle of a universally valid doctrine. This is precisely Schelling's second premise.

As Kant defines it, dogmatism is driven to uncritical metaphysical claims by the “fanaticism” or “delusion” that we are capable of intellectual intuition.<sup>77</sup> In the Fifth Letter, Schelling says that when the first *Critique* renounces dogmatism, it in fact speaks “against dogmatism.”<sup>78</sup> Schelling's earlier defense of the practical datum of dogmatism explains his choice of a different term here to denote what Kant calls “dogmatism.” In doing so, he no more spares Spinoza than attacks Fichte (if not by name), for an essential mark of dogmatism is its claim to intellectual intuition. Why is such a claim fanatical?

Schelling argues in the Eighth Letter that consciousness depends on “resistance.” Without objects resisting my activity and without my ability to resist their force, “there is infinite expansion. But the intensity of our consciousness is in inverse ratio to the extension of our being.”<sup>79</sup> Consciousness would vanish were the subject to annihilate the object's difference from it. As we saw, intellectual intuition aims to extend beyond the division between subject and object in order to secure an unconditioned

ground. If this extension stands inversely to consciousness, however, then we cannot sustain such an intuition: “We awaken from intellectual intuition as from a state of death. We awaken through *reflection*, i.e., through a forced return to ourselves. But no return is thinkable without resistance, no reflection without an *object*. We designate as alive an activity directed at objects *alone* and as dead an activity losing itself in itself. Man ought to be neither lifeless nor merely living. His activity is necessarily intent upon objects, but with equal necessity it returns into itself. The *latter* distinguishes him from the merely living (animal) being, the *former* from the lifeless.”<sup>80</sup> Schelling likens intellectual intuition to death because it effaces the resistance on which mere life depends in order to survive in its environment and on which rational life depends in order to reflect on its possibilities.<sup>81</sup> Insofar as reflectively mediated sensation constitutes rational life, it makes intellectual intuition unlivable: “as long as intuition is intent upon objects, i.e., as long as it is sensible intuition, there is no danger of losing oneself. The I, on finding resistance, is *obliged* to take a stand against it, i.e., to return into self. However, where sensible intuition ceases, where everything objective vanishes, there is nothing but infinite expansion without a return into self. Should I maintain intellectual intuition I would cease to live; I would go ‘from time into eternity.’” I resist what I intuit, grasping it *as* an object. With no such resistance, Schelling says, “I would cease to be *I*.”<sup>82</sup>

Intellectual intuition seeks a point at which the subject is “annihilated.” This, Schelling says, is the “delusion” of a “fanatic,” for one must think of oneself *as* a subject in order to think of oneself as annihilated.<sup>83</sup> The fanatic mistakes intellectual intuition for what Schelling calls “self-intuition.” By this, he means our capacity to withdraw from the “experience of objects” to an “experience produced by ourselves,” which “alone can breathe life” into a system. Self-intuition is our response to experience, which, as we saw, raises the problem of the world’s existence and how to live in it. To solve it, we withdraw from experience to an intuition that is “in the strictest sense our own experience,” namely, our freedom to decide by which system to live.<sup>84</sup> Self-intuition is thus no knowledge of an unconditioned. Indeed, no proposition is “more *groundless*” than one that “asserts an absolute in human knowledge. Just because it affirms that which is absolute, no further ground can be given for the proposition. As soon as we enter the realm of proofs, we enter the realm of that which is conditioned and, vice versa, entering the realm of that which is conditioned, we enter the realm of philosophical problems.”<sup>85</sup> The realm of “problems” or “proofs” is experience,

a realm that leads us to dispute about its ultimate condition. Claiming to resolve this dispute through intellectual intuition is fanatical because any response to the question of experience presupposes experience: “to answer this question we first must have left the realm of experience; but if we had left that realm the very question would cease.”<sup>86</sup> The question instead leads us to “*create* a new realm” where “*knowledge* ceases,” where we are faced with “*giving* reality” to our first principles in such a way that “they themselves merge into life and existence.”<sup>87</sup>

By ruling out intellectual intuition, Schelling refutes Fichte's claim to doctrine. As he says, “criticism would deteriorate into fanaticism if it should represent this ultimate goal as attainable,” a reproach it can be spared “as little as can dogmatism.”<sup>88</sup> We must instead strive under the guidance of critique, which establishes “neither an absolute principle nor a definite and complete system,” but only “the canon for all principles and systems.”<sup>89</sup> It is “vain” and “blind dogmatism” to regard doctrine as achievable through “the mere choice of principles”—vain because principles are “*insuperable prejudices*,” blind because restricting us to one principle “coerce[s] our freedom.”<sup>90</sup> As we saw, positing a principle is an intuition of the freedom of spirit with which I meet the problem of experience and exemplify my life as a response to it.<sup>91</sup> My vocation is not to achieve systematic knowledge in the form of a doctrine. It is to demand of myself the endless realization of my system of choice—to *be what I call myself*. As Schelling says, “even dogmatism, by its *practical* intention, is distinguished from blind dogmatism, which uses the absolute as a constitutive principle for our *knowledge*, while dogmatism uses it merely as a constitutive principle for our vocation.”<sup>92</sup> Criticism and dogmatism differ, not in their “vocation,” but in the spirit of their “approach,” which, according to Schelling's first premise, is critique's proper topic. To assert one's arrival at a doctrine—to assert the cessation of one's approach—is to deny one's essence as free. It is to evade oneself, misunderstanding oneself beyond one's bounds.<sup>93</sup> It is, moreover, to deny others' essence as free: “for a spirit who has made itself free and who owes *its* philosophy only to itself, nothing must be more unbearable than the despotism of narrow minds who cannot tolerate another system beside their own.”<sup>94</sup> I can, like Fichte, summon you to embrace your freedom, but not, on pain of dogmatism, to adhere to my principle as sacrosanct. I can even exemplify my life as a response to the problem of existence, but I cannot decide for all how to live.<sup>95</sup>

Schelling's two-step rejection of Fichte's claim for the identity of critique and doctrine shows that philosophy starts, not with a conclusive

cognition, but with a decision whose form can be neither determined in advance nor vindicated against alternatives. To borrow a concept that Schelling develops in the 1809 *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, such a beginning is *unprethinkable*.<sup>96</sup> My first principle is thinkable, but only as that which thought cannot anticipate, on which thought cannot enforce any prior rule. While my principle opens a way of life, it is, for that life, a foregone commitment lying outside legitimate, internal questions. On Schelling's reading, critique awakens us to the spirit of striving that is expressed by a first principle, and alerts us to the dogmaticist temptation to misconstrue as livable the resolution of this striving in a doctrine. By retrieving the idea of dogmatism, we thus better understand Schelling's *Letters*, while registering the impact of a core Kantian distinction on the development of German idealism.

## Notes

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein, "A Lecture on Ethics," *Philosophical Review* 74, no. 1 (1965), 11–12.
2. Friedrich Waismann, "Notes on Talks with Wittgenstein," *Philosophical Review* 74, no. 1 (1965), 16.
3. See Annemarie Pieper, "Editorischer Bericht zu Schellings Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kritizismus," in Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *Schelling: Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1982).
4. See Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *The Unconditioned in Human Knowledge: Four Early Essays 1794–1796*, trans. F. Marti (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1980), 172, 176. I modify this translation in some citations from this text.
5. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schellings sämtliche Werke* (cited hereafter as *SW*), ed. K.F.A. Schelling (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856–1861), 1/1:315, 331.
6. Schelling, *SW* 1/1:331.
7. Schelling, *SW* 1/1:301.
8. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. and trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Axi–xii. All references to Kant's first *Critique* use the standard A/B pagination of the first (1781, A) and second (1787, B) editions.
9. *Ibid.*, B19.
10. *Ibid.*, Axi.
11. *Ibid.*, A727/B755.
12. *Ibid.*, A763/B791.



13. Ibid., Bxxii–xxiii.

14. Ibid., A11–12/B25–26.

15. Ibid., *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxxx. Dogmatism differs from what Kant calls reason's dogmatic procedure: "Criticism is not opposed to the dogmatic procedure of reason in its pure cognition as science (for science must always be dogmatic, i.e., it must prove its conclusions strictly *a priori* from secure principles); rather, it is opposed only to dogmatism, i.e., to the presumption of getting on solely with pure cognition from (philosophical) concepts according to principles, which reason has been using for a long time without first inquiring in what way and by what right it has obtained them. Dogmatism is therefore the dogmatic procedure of pure reason, without an antecedent critique of its own capacity." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxxxv. A dogmatic procedure is one in which reason proceeds from *a priori* principles. This becomes dogmatism if reason does not deduce its right to such principles as part of a "careful examination of its condition" (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A757/B785). This is to proceed pre-judicially, that is, without a prior judgment of right.

16. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B22–23.

17. Ibid., A735/B763.

18. Ibid., A761/B789.

19. Ibid., A135/B174. As Kant states in the Preface, however, "a critique that limits the speculative use of reason is, to be sure, to that extent negative, but because it simultaneously removes an obstacle that limits or even threatens to wipe out the practical use of reason, this critique is also in fact of positive and very important utility, as soon as we have convinced ourselves that there is an absolutely necessary practical use of pure reason (the moral use), in which reason unavoidably extends itself beyond the boundaries of sensibility, without needing any assistance from speculative reason, but in which it must also be made secure against any counteraction from the latter, in order not to fall into contradiction with itself." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxxiv.

20. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Sämmtliche Werke* (cited hereafter as *SW*), ed. Immanuel Hermann Fichte (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971), 1:422–426.

21. Fichte, *SW* 1:46.

22. See: "What then is the overall gist of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, summarized in a few words? It is this: Reason is absolutely self-sufficient; it exists only for itself." Fichte, *SW* 1:474.

23. Fichte, *SW* 1:120–121.

24. Ibid., 1:434.

25. Ibid., 1:121.

26. Ibid., 1:434.

27. Ibid., 1:499.

28. Ibid., 1:462.

29. Ibid., 1:438, 434.

30. See Paul Franks, *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 219–236.

31. Fichte, *SW* 1:8.

32. *Ibid.*, 1:8, 91.

33. *Ibid.*, 1:10, 16.

34. *Ibid.*, 1:134.

35. *Ibid.*, 1:16, 91.

36. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (cited hereafter as *GA*), ed. Erich Fuchs, Hans Gliwitzky, Reinhard Lauth, and Peter K. Schneider (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1962–2012), 4/2:29.

37. Fichte, *SW* 1:96.

38. Fichte, *GA* 4/2:31, 40.

39. If vindicating idealism is necessary to refute the view that human action is a mode of a dead mechanism, intellectual intuition would be apt. As Fichte says in the *New Presentation*, it is in virtue of my immediate awareness of the I's freedom that, in any action, "I know that *I* do this." It is in this sense that intellectual intuition "contains within itself the source of life, and apart from it there is nothing but death." Fichte, *SW* 1:463.

40. See Immanuel Kant, "Open Letter on Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*," in *Philosophical Correspondence 1759–99*, ed. and trans. Arnulf Zweig (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 253–254.

41. Fichte, *GA* 1/7:159. Cf.: "The intellectual intuition of which the *Wissenschaftslehre* speaks is not directed towards any sort of being whatsoever; instead, it is directed at an acting—and this is something that Kant does not even mention (except, perhaps, under the name 'pure apperception'). . . . I have just as much right to use this term to designate this type of consciousness as Kant has to use it to designate something else, something that is actually nothing at all." Fichte, *SW* 1:472. And cf.: "Less rational than Kant's denial of the possibility of intellectual intuition is the behaviour of those who have continued to reject intellectual intuition even after it has been deduced in their presence (e.g., the author of the review [namely, Erhard], published in 1796 in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, of Schelling's *On the I*). People of this sort will never become conscious of their own freedom of thinking." Fichte, *GA* 4/2:32.

42. Fichte, *SW* 1:11, 15. Cf. Kant: "Our reason is not like an indeterminably extended plane, the limits of which one can cognize only in general, but must rather be compared with a sphere, the radius of which can be found out from the curvature of an arc on its surface (from the nature of synthetic *a priori* propositions), from which its content and its boundary can also be ascertained with certainty. Outside this sphere (field of experience) nothing is an object for it; indeed even questions about such supposed objects concern only subjective principles of a thoroughgoing determination of the relations that can obtain among the concepts of understanding inside of this sphere." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A762/B790.

43. Fichte, *SW* 1:16, 17. Cf. Fichte's claim that the idea of the in itself is "the uttermost perversion of reason, and a concept perfectly absurd." Fichte, *SW* 1:472.

44. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A277–278/B333–334. Cf. Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 96: "philosophy concerns those necessities we cannot, being human, fail to know. Except that nothing is more human than to deny them."

45. Fichte, *SW* 1:19.

46. Fichte, *GA* 4/2:42.

47. Fichte, *SW* 1:428.

48. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A297/B354.

49. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A247/B303.

50. Fichte, *SW* 1:513–514.

51. Fichte, *SW* 1:514.

52. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A298/B354–355.

53. Fichte, *SW* 1:514.

54. Schelling, *SW* 1/1:301–304.

55. *Ibid.*, 1/1:299.

56. *Ibid.*, 1/1:305. Contrast Fichte: "*Spinoza* could not have been convinced by his own philosophy. He could only have *thought* of it; he could not have *believed* it. For this is a philosophy that 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." Fichte, *SW* 1:513.

57. Baruch Spinoza, *The Ethics*, trans. S. Shirley (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1992), 4p28.

58. See also: "The ideas to which our speculation has risen cease to be objects of an idle occupation that tires our spirit all too soon; they become the law of our *life*, and as they themselves merge into life and existence—and become objects of *experience*—they free us forever from the tedious business of ascertaining their reality by way of speculation *a priori*." Schelling, *SW* 1/1:341.

59. *Ibid.*, 1/1:313.

60. *Ibid.*, 1/1:284, 316, first italics added. See also: "A *system* of knowledge is either a stunt or intellectual game (you know that nothing could be more repugnant to the serious spirit of *Spinoza*)—or it must *obtain* reality . . . not by *knowledge*, but by *action*. . . . You say: 'I can understand how *Spinoza* could keep out of sight the contradiction involved in his ethical principle. However, granting that, how was it possible for the serene spirit of *Spinoza* to bear that destructive and annihilating principle itself? For his is a serenity which illumines with its mild light his whole life and all his writings.' I cannot reply except by saying: 'Read his writings in just *this* respect, and you will find the answer to your question yourself.'" Schelling, *SW* 1/1:305, 317.

61. Schelling, *SW* 1/1:333. See also: "[dogmatism] is practically *refutable* if one realizes *in oneself* an absolutely opposing system. But it is irrefutable for him who is able to realize it *practically*, who can bear the thought of working at his

own annihilation, of abolishing every free causality in himself, and of being the modification of an object in whose infinitude he will sooner or later find his own (moral) ruin.” Schelling, *SW* 1/1:339.

62. *Ibid.*, 1/1:290–92.

63. *Ibid.*, 1/1:293. See also: “if we had never left its sphere we should all agree about the absolute, and if we had never stepped out from it, we should have no other field for dispute. . . . [I]n the absolute . . . [idealism and realism] must cease as opposite systems.” Schelling, *SW* 1/1:294, 330.

64. *Ibid.*, 1/1:294.

65. *Ibid.*, 1/1:339.

66. *Ibid.*, 1/1:294–295.

67. *Ibid.*, 1/1:299.

68. Schelling’s pluralism repudiates Fichte’s claim that idealism is the only possible system and the sole measure of personality. They agree that philosophy requires systematicity, not simply through a critical turn to the first-person standpoint, but through an *authentic* turn to the essential freedom of that standpoint. However, Fichte denies any common discourse for idealists and realists: “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.” See Fichte, *SW* 1:429. A defense of idealism, for Fichte, is conclusive yet potentially alienating, whereas for Schelling it is inconclusive yet genuinely discursive.

69. This may suggest that Schelling’s notion of critique surpasses Kant’s, which concerns an analysis of our faculties of cognition. Goldman argues that Kant’s analysis is in fact guided by the regulative idea of the self. This idea can be seen as orienting thought, in the first place, toward a consideration of our faculties. See Avery Goldman, “What is Orientation in Critique?” in *Recht und Frieden in der Philosophie Kants: Akten des X. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses*, ed. Valerio Rohden et al (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 252. Goldman argues, furthermore, that Kant provides a deduction of this idea in order to establish the conditions of the possibility of critical inquiry generally and the division between the empirical and transcendental use of concepts in particular. See Avery Goldman, “Critique and the Mind: Towards a Defense of Kant’s Transcendental Method,” *Kant-Studien* 98, no. 4 (2007), 408–414. Connecting Kant’s idea of the self and what Schelling regards as the freedom of minds may accordingly reveal more common ground concerning their concepts of critique.

70. Schelling, *SW* 1/1:308.

71. “The highest dignity of philosophy is precisely that it expects everything of human *freedom*.” Schelling, *SW* 1/1:306.

72. Ibid., 1/1:307. See also: “Nothing more disgusts the philosophical mind than when it hears that henceforth all philosophy shall lie captive in the fetters of a single system.” Schelling, *SW* 1/1:306.

73. Ibid., 1/1:304.

74. Ibid., 1/1:332. Dogmatism and criticism “can only differ in the spirit of the action.” Schelling, *SW* 1/1:334.

75. Ibid., 1/1:312–313.

76. Ibid., 1/1: 304. Contrast Schelling's claim in the 1804 *System of the Whole of Philosophy and the Philosophy of Nature in Particular* that in “reason all subjectivity ceases” and that “it is not *me* who recognizes this identity, but it recognizes itself, and I am merely its organ.” Not coincidentally, this text describes reason's self-recognition as “an *intellectual intuition*.” Schelling, *SW* 1/6:142–143, 153.

77. See Kant, *Ak.* 5: 275; 8: 398, 405; *Critique of Pure Reason*, Axiii, Bxxxiv.

78. Schelling, *SW* 1/1:302.

79. Ibid., 1/1:324. Cf.: “There is no consciousness without something that is at the same time excluded and contracted. That which is conscious excludes that of which it is conscious as not itself. Yet it must again attract it precisely as that of which it is conscious as itself, only in a different form.” Schelling, *SW* 1/8:262.

80. Ibid., 1/1:325.

81. Cf.: “Without opposition [there is] no life. Indeed, such [opposition] inheres in man and in all existence.” Schelling, *SW* 1/7:435.

82. Ibid., 1/1:325.

83. Ibid., 1/1:319–320. For an account of the relation between intellectual intuition and death in Schelling's *Letters*, see G. Anthony Bruno, “‘As From a State of Death’: Schelling's Idealism as Mortalism,” *Comparative and Continental Philosophy* 8, no. 3 (2016).

84. Schelling, *SW* 1/1:318–319.

85. Ibid., 1/1:308–309. A realm of problems is qualitatively unlike the absolute, in which “all is intelligible” (Schelling, *SW* 1/1:308).

86. Ibid., 1/1:310–311.

87. Ibid., *SW* 1/1:310–311, 341. Cf. Nagel: “What sustains us, in belief as in action, is not reason or justification, but something more basic than these—for we go on in the same way even after we are convinced that the reasons have given out. If we tried to rely entirely on reason, and pressed it hard, our lives and beliefs would collapse—a form of madness that may actually occur if the inertial force of taking the world and life for granted is somehow lost. If we lose our grip on that, reason will not give it back to us.” Thomas Nagel, “The Absurd,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 68, no. 20 (1971), 724.

88. Schelling, *SW* 1/1:327–328, 335.

89. Ibid., 1/1:304–305.

90. Ibid., 1/1:312. See also: “*Philosophy*, an admirable word! If this author has a vote, he casts it for the retention of this old word. For, as far as he sees, our whole knowledge will always remain *philosophy*, i.e., always merely progressing knowledge, whose higher or lower degrees we owe only to our *love* for wisdom, i.e., to our freedom. —Least of all would he wish to displace this word through a philosophy that has for the first time undertaken to save the freedom in philosophizing from the presumptions of dogmaticism, through a philosophy that presupposes the self-achieved freedom of the spirit and that therefore will be eternally incomprehensible for every slave of system.” Schelling, *SW* 1/1:307n.

91. See Schelling: “as soon as we are in the contest, those very principles as set up in the beginning are no longer valid in and by themselves; now only is it to be decided, practically and by our freedom, whether they are valid or not.” Schelling, *SW* 1/1:312.

92. Ibid., 1/1:333. See also Kant: “The mistake that most obviously leads to [creating a field of objects beyond appearances], and can certainly be excused though not justified, lies in this: that the use of the understanding, contrary to its vocation, is made transcendental, and the objects, i.e., possible intuitions, are made to conform themselves to concepts, but concepts are not made to conform themselves to possible intuitions (on which alone rests their objective validity).” Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A289/B345.

93. Cf. Cavell: “Nothing is more human than the wish to deny one’s humanity. . . . A fitting title for the history of philosophy would be: Philosophy and the Rejection of the Human.” Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality and Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 109, 207.

94. Schelling, *SW* 1/1:306. Cf.: “Nothing could more enrage a youthful and fiery sensibility, burning for the truth, than the intention of a teacher to prepare his audience for some one special or particular system, wishing in this way to emasculate them by underhandedly removing the freedom of inquiry” (Schelling, *SW* 2/3:16).

95. See Cavell: “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.” Stanley Cavell, “An Emerson Mood,” in *Emerson’s Transcendental Etudes* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 32. We can hear Fichte in the first instruction and Schelling in the second.

96. For an account of the *Freedom* essay’s development of the *Letters*’ view of the act that grounds philosophy, see G. Anthony Bruno, “Freedom and Pluralism in Schelling’s Critique of Fichte’s *Jena Wissenschaftslehre*,” *Idealistic Studies* 43, no. 1/2 (2014).