

# The Chemistry of Darkness<sup>\*</sup>

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## 1 The nuclear night of the Unthinged

Bringing Deleuze and Idealism into some sort of contact seems anathema, a resignation in the face of too many wrong turns having ended up in confrontation with Hegel. It is an accepted wisdom of the age that Hegelian difference, as a prelude to its resolution, has *nothing to do* with its French avatars over the last thirty years. The horror of it is something special, however: picture waking up to a grey dawn in which desire has been successfully transmuted into its negative, where the body without organs recuperates and gets its parents back, and then shudder at the realisation that this is indeed only picture thinking, and must be raised beyond the abjection of mere externality (relation) to total recovery, in and of the Notion.

But this is not horrific enough; it remains insufficiently visceral, since we do not yet shudder involuntarily at the prospect of a New World, revealed in its first and last sunbeam, ruled from the Tübingen Stift.

Spirit in its formation matures slowly and quietly into its new shape, dissolving bit by bit the structure of the previous world, whose tottering state is only hinted at by isolated symptoms [...]. The gradual crumbling that left unaltered the face of the whole is cut short by a sunburst which, in one flash, illuminates the features of the new world. (Hegel 1977: 7)

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‘Year Zero: Faciality’; uncanny. These passages from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* sound equally at home amidst absolute deterritorialisation, ‘calling forth’ a new earth into which Spirit’s face imperceptibly matures behind the “outwardly-actual” movements of capital:

Philosophy takes the relative deterritorialisation of capital to the absolute, carrying it over onto the plane of immanence like a movement of the infinite, and suppressing [*supprimer*] it as an interior limit, *turning it against itself, in order to call forth a new earth, a new people.* (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 95)

‘*Supprimer*’...: is geophilosophy an adjunct to the progress of the Notion, a mere sur-face to Spirit’s face? What is the “thought-Nature” to which Deleuze and Guattari refer? Hegel hated *Naturphilosophie*, hated evolution,<sup>1</sup> biology, physics and chemistry as false in their self-limitation to the understanding; but he hated *Naturphilosophie* more for its empty equivalences (electricity : magnetism :: South : North Pole) and its monotonous formalism which “submerges [everything] in the void of the Absolute, from which pure identity, formless whiteness, is produced” (Hegel 1977: 30-31). But, as noted, this dissolution of mere nature is also the maturation of Spirit, so that “the gradual crumbling that left unaltered the face of the whole is cut short by a sunburst which, in one flash, illuminates the features of the new world” (Hegel 1977: 11).

Fundamentally, Hegel wanted to reduce all movement to that of the concept: hence his objection to Schelling’s “evolutionary” naturephilosophy (nature as a *Stufenfolge* of its *Potenzen*: a graduation of intensive stages; it is indeed the latter that Hegel has in his sights). With real movement goes real forces, and with real forces, bodies evaporate into

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<sup>1</sup>The philosophy of Minerva’s owlkeeper expresses what, according to John L. Stanley, constitutes an “anti-diachronic diachrony, a timeless view of time itself” (‘Marx’s critique of Hegel’s philosophy of nature’, *Science & Society* 61:4 (1997-8): 467), in two ways. Firstly, section 249 of the *Philosophy of Nature* limits all metamorphosis, all actual change, to “the Notion as such, since only its alteration is development. But in Nature, the Notion is partly only something inward, partly existent only as a living individual: *existent* metamorphosis, therefore, is limited to this individual alone” (*Encyclopaedia* §249); secondly, and as a corollary of the foregoing, that section continues as a critique of “evolutionism” in Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie*, which he abuses as an “inept conception... of the progression and transition of one natural form and sphere into a higher as an outwardly-actual production which ... is relegated to the *obscurity* of the past” (ibid., *Zusatz*).

the grey on grey not of philosophy's dawn, or of "the self-originating, self-differentiating", as Hegel says is needed, "full body of articulated cognition", but of Europa's last sigh, the frozen breath of the Jovian satellite. The "vacuity" to which the Absolute as "the night in which ... all cows are black" reduces (Hegel 1977: 9), is the source of Hegel's fear: if nature abhors a vacuum, the New World illuminated by a sunburst (Hegel 1977: 7), the World of the Notion, abhors the vacuity to which it might be reduced, being already annexed from the conceptual inertia of the "outwardly actual".

A "new face" = a "new people"; A=A: the black night resurgent? Do we conquer grey with blackness, or illumine it from within, glaring white? Is it light ("formless whiteness") or darkness ("the night...")? What lies beneath the sur-face and the face? Although it may seem 'premature' to ask this, given that Deleuze's naturephilosophy remains undeveloped beyond a series of hints (cf. *Difference and Repetition*: 256; *Negotiations*: 140), how "like a movement of the infinite" - how like then, the single flash of Spirit's maturation - is the presaging of the new earth by absolute deterritorialisation?

"What a presentiment of the differences swarming behind us", comments Deleuze, "when in the weariness and despair of our thought without image [the 'night in which all cows are black'] we murmur 'the cows', 'they exaggerate', etc.; how differentiated and differentiating is this blackness... The one external illusion of representation is this illusion that results from all its internal illusions - namely, that groundlessness should lack differences, when in fact it swarms with them...". To save the earth's sur-face from the face behind it, what is required is a chemical sensibility, since chemistry has always been the science and art of the imperceptible, of what escapes the imprisonment of sensibility behind a face (the superficial redundancies of recognition and their maturation into features) to go directly to the earth, or to earths, to be dispersed and molecularised in the black. Even etymology serves to remind us of this: "*chemistry* derives from the Egyptian word for 'black', which is itself named for the black earth of Egypt" (Bensaude-Vincent and Stengers, 1996: 13).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Pursuing the same routes, we may note that chemistry also gives us a geophilosophy based on manufacture or metallurgy, as Bensaude-Vincent and Stengers continue their etymological inventory with not an Egyptian, but a Greek root for 'chemistry': "*cheo*... means to pour a liquid or cast a metal. Greek or Egyptian etymology? The question cannot be settled, because it sends us back to the great Hellenistic city of Alexandria, where it was already the subject not only of legends but also of speculations and

Hegel's great task, to crown the illusion of the Notion's extradition of exteriority within itself, turns into the expulsion of its *absence of characteristics*, as *Unbedingt* - the absolute as 'thingless' or 'unthinged' - as soon as the outside *makes itself felt* (we will come back to this), when in fact what is always felt is the *ungrounding* of the Ideal (the subject) by the real, the *indifference-point* at the rumbling chiasmus at which they intersect. All that remains is that the hollow Ideal swarm with the real in its motility, not overcome, cancelled or raised by it: "What after all, are Ideas, if not these ants which enter and leave through the fracture of the I?" asks Deleuze (1994: 277).

Given this, and following from the presentation of the Hegelian and Deleuzo-Guattarian tellurics of new worlds, their near-substitutability, we must pursue the visceral horror of asking what sort of idealist is Deleuze? Ant-differences seem to save the day from the sunburst of the New World, crawling through the sockets of Spirit's face as it matures, perhaps, too much. Yet what sort of ants are ideas? Actual ones (do thoughts *ant?*), virtual ones, or merely the dark, stochastic glinting of swarming multiplicity? Or, and again we will come back to this, are ants *like* ideas? Let's return to the differentiation of 'ungrounding', as recounted in Deleuze's negotiation of Schelling in *Difference and Repetition*. Ungrounding consists in the production of depth that becomes genitive only as it gives rise to a relative extensity; the 'depth of' is assumed at the point where its verticality is marked in relation to the horizon of the ungrounded, something that is beautifully illustrated by a comment in Kant's Third *Critique* regarding the actions of critique itself, whose task it is to explore "the terrain... to the depth at which lies the first foundation of our power of principles independent of experience" (Kant 1987, Ak.V: 168).<sup>3</sup> Here depth is a determination of extensity, rather than the "pure

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discussions" (*ibid.*: 13). Note, however, that the metallurgical-manufactorial aspect of chemistry is overlooked in the authors' rapid and disappointing conclusion. The lesson Schelling took from chemistry was not one of domiciliation, but of invention, of the irreducibility of alloys in the body of the earth, as we shall see below. For the moment, suffice it to quote again from Bensaude-Vincent in another context, discussing Lavoisier's 'chemical revolution', "Chemistry *creates* its own object, manufactures its Universal" (1994: 671).

<sup>3</sup> References to Kant's works will follow the author-date system, but use the volume and page numbers of *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, edited by the Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1900-), excepting references to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, where pagination will be given in standard A/B form, and to *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*, which translation is taken from the 1755 Riga edition.

implex” (Deleuze 1994: 220) of depth *tout court*. All these determinations of extensity remain relative to the ascription of the genitive, so that

the relativity of [the] determinations [of extensity - high, low; right, left, etc.] is further testimony to the absolute from which they come. Extensity as a whole comes from the depths. Depth as the (ultimate and original) heterogeneous dimension is the matrix of all extensity... The ground [*fond*] as it appears in a homogeneous extensity is notably a projection of something ‘deeper’ [*profond*]: only the latter may be called *Ungrund* or groundless ... (Deleuze 1994: 229)

Now the concept of the *Ungrund* derives, of course, from the “highest point” of Schelling’s *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom* (1809). The *Ungrund* is “without personality” (SW VII: 412)<sup>4</sup> and “precedes all distinction”. Nor is it a “product of antitheses”. We do not arrive at indifference by cancelling difference (or differences), in other words, “nor are [antitheses] contained within it”; rather, the *Ungrund* is a “unique being, apart from all antitheses” (SW VII: 406) and “can only be precedent to all basis, that is, the absolute [*das Unbedingt*] viewed directly” (SW VII: 407-8). It also becomes, however, the basis on which the principles can be predicated not *on* the *Ungrund*, which would turn it into a ground, but “in disjunction and each *for itself*” (SW VII: 407). The unground remains as absolute, and does not contain, but merely potentiates differentiation.

When Deleuze writes, therefore that the ground or *fond* is a projection of the unground or *profond*, making depth as such into the groundless or *sans-fond*, out of which extensity, ie., relative depths, heights, breadths and lengths, develops, this seems fully consonant with the Schellingian version; however, when he writes of depth as “pure implex” from which

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<sup>4</sup> Taking account of the current unavailability of the majority of Schelling’s works in English translation, references to Schelling’s works, where either (a) no English translation exists or (b) where a translation contains the pagination of the following edition, will be to K.F.A. Schelling, ed., *Sämmtliche Werke* (Stuttgart and Augsburg: J.G. Cotta, 1856-61), hereafter SW followed by volume and page numbers. The only exception tho this practise in the current context will be references to Schelling’s *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, which, while translated by Errol E. Harris and Peter Heath, does not contain the SW pagination. References to this text will therefore be to the English translation only.

extensity is explicated, he suggests extensity as a *Potenz* or power of the *Ungrund*. Thus

the explication of extensity rests upon the first synthesis, that of habit and the present; but the implication of depth rests upon the second synthesis, that of Memory and the past. Furthermore, in depth the proximity and the simmering of the third synthesis *make themselves felt*, announcing the universal ‘ungrounding’. (Deleuze 1994: 229-230; emphasis added)

The *Ungrund* turns into a product, a synthesis that pre- and succeeds other syntheses, and into a process, a “universal ungrounding”. Nothing but syntheses, a “product-process identity”, as the *Antioedipus* has it, or a product-process indifference, synthesizing and synthesized through the unground. Here of course, we are far indeed from Hegel, who cannot think the absolute without its having been a product of the eradication of things - perhaps the basis for the philosopher’s admiration of Napoleon was the scorched earth he had not yet witnessed - will it have been the sunburst heralding the New World. But we have not yet distinguished between the New World and the new earth, the world-historical and the geophilosophical; nor yet have we answered the question as to the relation between ants and ideas.

When Deleuze and Guattari discuss the relation between thought and the earth, it is in the context of Kant’s “copernican revolution”. It is this, they argue, that puts thought into a “direct relation with the earth” (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 82). By virtue of being a revolution, it eradicates the philosophical territories enumerated in the preface to the First *Critique*, reducing them to the “battlefield of metaphysics” (Kant 1958: Avii). Indifference is however feigned here, as Kant readily admits, rather than itself indifferent; the deterritorialisation was preparatory to the restoration of metaphysics and the institution of a tribunal. Once again, depth is genitive (‘the depth of our first principles’, as the Third *Critique* has it) and not absolute. What sort of relation to the earth is this? Deleuze writes that

depth *is like* the famous geological line from NE to SW, the line which comes diagonally from the heart of things and distributes volcanoes: it unites a bubbling sensibility and a thought which ‘rumbles in its crater’. (Deleuze 1994: 229-230; emphasis added)

What sort of earth does depth give us? a *quasi* earth, an “*als ob*”, regulative rather than constitutive earth, a *merely subjective*, or Kantian earth. Ants are like Ideas (note the capital), and depth is *like* the heated profiles of tectonic plates. The purpose of the earth, for Kant and for Deleuze and Guattari, is the coming of a new people, a kingdom of ends animated solely by the holy will, or to support revolutions of gifted peoples, signalled and determined through their enthusiasm (cf. the third part of Kant’s *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1799, Ak.VII: 79ff) and Deleuze and Guattari’s commentary, 1991: 96f). The call to the new earth finds an audience awaiting the kingdom of ends. But the self-regulating Kantian subject, responding to revolutionary enthusiasm, is also, by way of the artifacts and artifactors of purposes that ‘ethicoteleology’ entails determined as an instance for the redesign of nature and the production of an unproblematically industrial second nature, from which standpoint the “archaeologist of nature” will find no evidence of man, only the traces of the “most ancient revolutions of the earth”. The circumscribed, retrodetermined limit of absolute deterritorialisation, revealing the earth, “like a movement of the infinite” as the *sans-fond*, the limit on the basis of which alone territory becomes possible *for a people* is not like the Notion, expelling exteriority, since its element is the limit-exteriority of the earth; rather, it is artificially ethicoteleological, exactly like Kant.

## 2 Making it felt

... in depth the proximity and the simmering of the third synthesis *make themselves felt*, announcing the universal ‘ungrounding’. (Deleuze 1994: 229; emphasis added)

In ... freedom, the final intensifying act was to be found through which the whole of nature found its transfiguration in feeling, in intelligence, and ultimately, in will. (SW VII: 350)

Chemistry is nothing else but sensory dynamics. (Schelling 1988: 257)

What are these syntheses that “make themselves felt”? What are these appeals to an industrial empiricism? It is Schelling’s contention that

*Naturphilosophie* must go by way of an “absolute empiricism” (SW III: 27; 24).

A true chemical revolution, Lavoisier’s *Traité élémentaire de chimie* appeared in 1789. Chemistry is artificial, but not arbitrary; “chemistry creates its own object [...] it manufactures its Universal” (Bensaude-Vincent 1994: 671). Accordingly, if Kant drew the affective energies of enthusiasm from the French Revolution *in the direction of the Idea* - which “reduction of the real to the ideal... is the origin of transcendental philosophy” (SW III: 271) - Schelling, in accordance with the “absolute empiricism” that is the method of *Naturphilosophie*, follows the chemical revolution in the direction of the real. Since the ideal “develops from the real, [it] must therefore be explained through it” (SW III: 272). This is why virtually the entire second book of the *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* is devoted to “sensory dynamics” (Schelling 1988: 257), to chemistry.

At stake is not only the contention that the ideal is chemically reducible, but also therefore, if it is so reducible, it can be and is otherwise instantiated: in other words, the ideal - the highest *Potenz* on the *Stufenfolge* of nature - is *substrate independent*. Moreover, if the chemistry of the concept is thus substrate independent, then the scope of absolute - *unthinged* - empiricism is extended beyond the bounds of the anthropocognitive. This is a constant not only in Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* and that of his successors, but throughout a range of neuroanatomists of the C18th and C19th. In *Von der Lebenskraft* (1793), Johann Christian Reil, for example, attempted to “use *Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason* as a foundation for physiology and psychology” (Hansen 1998: 393). While this might seem simply reductive, providing, in the finer fibres, the material pathways through which ideation was created, the broader agenda was to locate the drives - Blumenbach’s *Bildungstrieb* - from which all the Kantian powers (*Vermögen*) derived. Similarly, Marcus Herz’ 1791 *Versuch über den Schwindel*, preceded Freud in “reifying the Kantian categories of space and time into physiological realities” and argued - schizophrenically, his successor would add, like most philosophers - that ideas were material objects (Hansen: 397-8). Just as *Naturphilosoph* S.C. Wagener had argued in his 1828 *Das Leben des Erdballs* [The Life of the Globe], that all phenomena of nature could be attributed to a single *Urkraft*: electricity in the inorganic world; oxygen in the organic, while “in the human brain it thinks” (Clarke and Jacyna 1987: 79); so, in 1850, physiologist Jan Evangelista Purkyne insisted that “the working of the nervous system, the organ of mind, must be understood



with reference to the other forces of nature” and conversely that “even purely physical phenomena were in a sense psych[ological]... one aspect of the *Intelligenz* that... was immanent in all natural processes” (Clarke & Jacyna: 80). It is, however, in an essay on the *Einbildungskraft* (1834) that Purkyne pushes the envelope surrounding the unthinkability of a universal neuroanatomy. Thus,

in mere lines or series of specific sensations, there resides an immanent imaginative power through which all perception is mediated, and without which the mind would act in the world of the senses in sightless vacancy without spatial and temporal conception, merely in a chaos of immediate sensations ... (Clarke & Jacyna: 68)

By way of Schelling’s assertion in the *Ideas* that “chemistry is nothing else but sensory dynamics”, and following Purkyne’s lead, we may imagine the chemical constituents of “experience” beyond even these “higher forms of imbecility” (*ibid.*), and that there are therefore forms in which immanent sensation might be registered by other physiologies. Indeed, Schelling’s assertion means that where there is chemistry, there is sensation, and since there is nowhere in nature an absence of chemical activity, then sensation too must be universally immanent.

Indeed, the entire body of Schelling’s *Naturphilosophisch* works aim at nothing other than that the immanence of chemical activity be construed as the *construction of matter* through its qualities: “All quality of matter rests wholly and solely on the intensity of its basic forces [*Grundkräfte*]” (Schelling 1988: 216). These basic forces are the principal constituents also of Kant’s dynamics in the *Opus Postumum*, as well as in *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* (1755): attraction and repulsion. In Schelling, however, there is also a third force, *Schwerkraft*, which although it might be swiftly translated as ‘gravity’, is less Newtonian than Kantian: *Schwerkraft* has to do with the degree to which matter fills space, which the ‘Anticipations of perception’ in the First *Critique* calls “intensive magnitude” (Kant 1958 A 166/B207ff). Kant writes:

In all appearances, sensation, and the *real* which corresponds to it in the object (*realitas phaenomenon*), has an *intensive magnitude*, that is, a degree. (A166)

From the empirical consciousness to pure consciousness a graduated transition [*Stufenfolge*] is possible, the real in the former completely vanishing and a merely formal *a priori* consciousness ... remaining. (B208)

Schelling, again, takes the opposite direction from Kant. We do not wish to reduce, as Kant does, the real to the ideal, but to explain the ideal by way of the real. Thus, Schelling argues, a “merely formal” consciousness without the real in sensation is impossible:

Force is simply that which affects us. What affects us we call *real*, and what is real exists only in sensation; force is therefore that which alone corresponds to our concept of quality. But every quality, insofar as it is to affect us, must have a degree, and that a *specific* degree [...]. But so long as we think of these dynamical forces quite generally - in a wholly indeterminate relationship - neither one of them has a particular degree [...]. *All quality of matter rests wholly and solely on the intensity of its basic forces*, and since chemistry is properly concerned only with the qualities of matter, we have thereby at once elucidated and confirmed the concept of chemistry ... (as a science which teaches us how a freeplay of dynamical forces may be possible). (Schelling 1988: 216-7)

In short, in order that we can be affected by anything, it is necessary that there be a force that affects us, determined as a particular object by being determined at a particular degree. Physiology and other objects are, therefore, insofar as they affect us, specific determinations of the intensity of the basic forces - qualities of matter, and nothing else besides. We can take this negatively or positively, in a cybernetic sense: negatively, the affectivity to which we are subject is bound to, and bounds, possible experience *for us*; positively, there is the “freeplay of dynamical forces”, which carries the prospect of absolute empiricism beyond the intensities at which a subject is possible, into the the field of “unconscious, blind productivity” that is nature. On both sides, however, we are dealing with determinations, qualities of matter; hence Schelling’s characterisation of *Naturphilosophie* as “Spinozist physics” (SW III: 273).

Unconditioned empiricism therefore not only opens nature to direct experience, but extends experience beyond the phenomenologically accessible, opening the prospect of experiences other than ours. Hence late

C18th journals such as Karl-Phillip Moritz's *Magazin für Erfahrungsseelenkunde* (Magazine for the Study of Soul-Experiences) (1783-1793). "The magazine was [Moritz's] attempt to gather empirical information from a variety of sources, concerning the mostly pathological formations of the personality" (Hansen 1998 391). Nothing to do with Enlightenment humanism; everything to do with artificial intelligence research. "What is it like to be a bat" is perhaps vaguely interesting, but not so much as how silicon-based organisations "experience": how do mountains think, once they have attained sufficient complexity? How can such a philosophy be termed "idealist"? Schelling's is a chemical metaphysics, an electromagnetic ontology, a "geology of morals".

### 3 Chemical powers

Chemistry ... is itself nothing else but *applied* dynamics, or *dynamics considered in its contingency* [... It] considers matter in its *becoming*, and has as its object a free play. (Schelling 1988: 222)

For the concept of matter is itself, by origin, *synthetic*; a purely logical concept of matter is meaningless. (Schelling 1988: 188)

If Lavoisier's "chemical revolution" had chemistry "creating its own object [...] manufacturing its Universal", the field was clearly becoming one of unlimited possibilities, as Freud's attempt to journey, in a late reprise of Schelling's *Erfahrungsseelenkunde*, 'beyond the pleasure principle' brought him to say of biology. But we are mistaken if we apply this autoproduction solely to chemistry as a field, and not to the field of the chemical in general.

Much has, of course, recently been made by chemists such as Prigogine, concerning the self-organisation of chemical bodies, shifting the paradigm governing inorganic and organic chemistry 'from being to becoming'. Thus we continually discover chemists and philosophers retrospectively finding exemplars: Marie-Luise Heuser-Kessler (1986) finds it in Schelling, and Alicia Juarrero-Roqué (1985) finds one in Kant, for example, as a modification of his and Blumenbach's theories of the *Bildungstrieb* that drives organic life. Autopoiesis has metastasized, so that there's nowhere to turn to avoid it. It is no accident, however, that we discover such a paradigm in Kant; it is a necessary consequence of the

idea of artificial teleology governing the actions of sensate, cognitive and finite beings. And it is no argument against a Kantian autopoietics that the language of final causes saturates the chemistry of self-organisation. Indeed, transcendentalism is entirely necessary to autopoiesis: without it, it would never be possible to trace the conditions of possibility back from an existent phenomenon to its causal processes: the 'self' that encloses and recapitulates its 'organisation' would be unlocatable. Wherever we look, self-organisation can only be located retrospectively, like all determinisms other than that of the antifinal, contrapurposive, determinism of the contingent that we find in Schellingian chemical metaphysics, in which the necessary contingency of material determination we find a permanent chemical revolution. There is no retrospection in chemistry, only becoming as expressed as *Potenzen* of possible and impossible experience. As Judith Schlanger puts it, "nature is neither pure product nor pure productivity, but rather an infinitely productive product, or a global product engaged in infinite metamorphosis" (1966: 95).

How, in other words, would it be possible to arrest the global product engaged in infinite metamorphosis in a *single* product, a 'self'? It is only nature as a whole that can be viewed as self-organizing, insofar as it is conceived as product + productivity = the process. Nature's productivity, meanwhile - *natura naturans* - "an autonomous current of infinite transformations" (Schlanger 1966: 86), cannot be deduced from anything; it cannot be formalized for the ideal insofar as it is only given in experience as *natura naturata*, as product. The empirical, undeduced aspect of nature naturing is synthesis, since, for example, magnetism "in itself" not only is not an object of possible experience, but only acts synthetically, binding and repelling in concert with electricity and light, in the form of *Schwerkraft*, which is precisely the degree to which matter fills and particularises an extensity.

Schlanger offers three criteria for what constitutes an absolute empiricism. Firstly, *Schwerkraft*, the "third force" that comes to complicate the Kantian dynamics of attraction and repulsion, is empirical in that it cannot be deduced, and since, as light, magnetism and electricity, it only betrays itself in experience. Secondly, although it cannot be deduced or demonstrated, but only posited, the primary fact of nature's productivity can be experienced. Thirdly, it is empirical in the absolute sense insofar as its final cause is the "actuality of the totality of experience", this causality being in nature as a tendency towards organisation. As such, nature cannot merely be regulated by the idea of

purposiveness, but must be *itself* self-organizing. In this latter, however, we cannot fail to note a sleight of hand: the passage from the actuality of the totality of experience is mediated by and instantiated in the organisational tendency that is the actuality of experience insofar as we do experience; *but it is not therefore the actuality of the totality of experience*, merely of experience determined, particularized as organized. If we cannot, in other words, deduce the process (although Schelling will, in 1800, attempt an *Allgemeine Deduktion des dynamischen Prozess*, SW IV: 1-78), then neither can we infer its totality from the process's products and productivity in their necessary contingency without a transcendental frame within which to contain it. To attempt this qualification of experience as the experience of the organized is to reduce the real to the ideal once again, to formalise it even in the absence of sensation. What is missing is the unthinged empiricism that resituates experience on the other side of the possible-for-us.

But experience has its own, immanent determinations, which are also determinations of matter: these are the powers or *Potenzen*:

A1 is the lowest, and "acts as a kind of involution, [whose] principle... is *Schwerkraft*."

A2 is "activity, thus far only posited as implicit or as potential [but] is now being posited as explicit or actual, namely, as the actual life of matter, that is, as the dynamic process"

A3 in nature expresses nothing other than the supreme Being that has been elevated from nonbeing, that is, the innermost [core] of nature (Schelling in Pfau 1994: 218-220)

These are the qualities of matter, determined in experience as the forces that affect us, producing consciousness as A3 - with which we are all familiar - as conditions of the process. However, following through on the *Einleitung's* commitment to explain the Ideal by way of the real, this emergence cannot be thought as ideal alone; rather, "every opposition [and every transition on the *Stufenfolge* of the process] must, for Schelling, have a synthetic substrate" (Schlanger 1966: 97). It is here that the ideal bites back on the real, redetermining it as its own process, appropriating it *ideally* as its *self*.

At what point, however, can it be determined that absolute empiricism has gone to its fullest extent? At what point, in other words, can the process simply be recapitulated by and for negative consciousness (rather

than positive experience)? Where can a particularization particularize the universal, a product stand in for the process? Schelling's answer is given in the *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), where he notes the disymmetry between the production of mind and its productivity. Insofar as mind is productive, it maintains contact with the blind forces of unconscious production that is nature; insofar, on the other hand, as it seeks to apprehend itself as product, it isolates its productivity in its self-reflection, which, while still a blind productivity, breaks off its connections and establishes a broken but recursive circuit of productivity. If therefore, absolute empiricism, following the utter contingency of the "specific dynamics" of chemistry, terminates in the blind alley of reflection and feeds back on itself as its own, internal limit, then the real and ideal flip without abruptness in a möbius looped endofinality turned now outward, and now inward. Where the loop breaks cannot therefore be a real break, but only a break for consciousness. And since there is an experience of the break, there are forces that articulate and particularize it continuously, which returns us to chemistry as "the science that deals with the quality of matter" and which "in its principles, is utterly *contingent*" (Schelling 1988: 201).

Consciousness - a new earth, a new people, even a new world - then, is not an end of becoming, not a finality around which a self organizes, but rather the blind synthesis of a chemical recursion with an affective abruptness. "For the concept of matter", Schelling writes, "is itself ... synthetic; a purely logical concept of matter is meaningless" (Schelling 1988: 188).

#### 4 The Newest System-Program of Absolute Empiricism

From man it returns to the *productivity of nature*. First, the *matter* of nature. It shows that there is a matter of consciousness just as there is a matter of the machine, because consciousness is something material. Anything that is an object of experience is also material. *We must therefore go beyond experience!*<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Apologies to whoever actually authored the contentious text entitled 'Oldest System-Programme of German Idealism', which runs: "From nature I come to the *works of man*. First of all the *idea* of humanity. I want to show that there is no more an idea of the *state* than there is an idea of the machine, because the state is something mechanical. Only that which is an object of freedom can be called an *idea*. We must therefore go beyond the state!" (Beiser 1998: 3).

With the break, we return to the *Ungrund*, to the groundless that by its indifference, impels the eruption of disjunctions. The further we go in following the absolute, the more the disjunctions multiply, and because all synthesis has a material base (because therefore, the idea of a dialectical process is nonsensical to Schelling, as Schlanger says), the more the *Potenzen* set up a recursion from the highest to the lowest, a recursion that impels experience to the involution of the first *Potenz*, an engagement with the groundless productivity of its own intensive basis, prompting the question: if thought is put into a direct relation with the earth, what is a philosophy of geology where the genitive is not inverted, but is the product of geological formations themselves?

Perhaps this is the trajectory of the philosophy of evil, of the “will of the depths”, whose function it is, as the *Philosophical Inquiries* tell us, to *particularize*. In particularization is contingency, and in contingency, no project. When the antithesis of the Light and the Dark is finally established on the indifferent glare of the Unground, the unthinged, it hurtles towards the absolution of its synthesis by particularizing, through recursive evil, the will of the depths and is “sealed in darkness to remain as the eternally dark depths of selfhood [i.e., particularity], as the *caput mortuum* of his life-process, as potentiality that can never advance to actuality. Then all is subordinated to spirit...” (SW VII: 408). On the basis of the unground, and through the medium of the word that introduces the break between the forces that affect us, the quality and intensity of the matter thus affected, and the affecting of us, such that there is a continuity coursing through the sealed particularity of mind; on this basis, evil is sealed off and becomes - suddenly necessarily - material *as opposed to geistlich*. But the opposition is articulated by synthesis, and the synthesis by the qualities of matter - to explore absolute empiricism, therefore, we need to descend into the recursive involute of the *chemistry of darkness*.

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