

Schelling's Critique of Hegel: Options and Responses, in the Spirit of Highlighting Shared Insights

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I have heard that, at one university where philosophers compete with others for a fellowship, decided by a committee without representation from philosophy, a newly hired philosopher received this advice: “Do not say, in your application for the fellowship, that your research will solve the mind-body problem; the committee, having funded many such proposals, has grown skeptical.” I think it understandable if proponents of the late Schelling's criticisms of Hegel might have a similar skepticism about Hegelians claiming to refute Schelling's criticisms of Hegel: each Hegelian returning to the topic again can seem to imply that previous attempts were insufficient, so that the very ambition to do it—yet again—can seem to add inductive evidence that it needs doing, but will not be done.

But here I want to take a step back and look for a more productive framing than just a zero-sum Hegel vs. Schelling confrontation. For this I think there is tremendous aid in Peter Dews's clear and powerful book, *Schelling's Late Philosophy in Confrontation with Hegel*. One key is the spirit with which Dews pursues the issues in Schelling's critique, suggested by this neat and wise line: “It is characteristic of the history of philosophy that a new discovery or insight can rapidly lead to polarization—to a conflict of extremes.”⁴⁸ Indeed. I think we do better to prosecute one side or the other in the dispute between Schelling and Hegel specifically with an eye to a more final aim of better understanding the *shared* discoveries or insights that also polarize the two, and so with an eye to the philosophical importance of the issues at stake between both of them.

I am thankful for Dews's attention to my work on Hegel in context of looking for more productive ways to consider those issues, even if this also an occasion for him to press Schelling's criticism against (my version of) Hegel. I take this in the spirit of partnership, to the ends above. I will try to hold up my end of this partnership here,

⁴⁷ I'm indebted especially to conversations with G. Anthony Bruno and Marcela García, and to my research assistants, James Cullers and Abhinav Ganesh.

⁴⁸ Dews, Peter, *Schelling's Late Philosophy in Confrontation with Hegel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 281.

looking to how I think Dews's advances can also help clarify strengths in Hegel with respect to the Schellingian challenges.

I begin by drawing a further lesson from what Dews does *not* do. For those writing today, with worries about Hegel, it can seem irresistible to follow in some form of the spirit of Bertrand Russell, who says:

Hegel's philosophy is so odd that one would not have expected him to be able to get sane men to accept it, but he did. He set it out with so much obscurity that people thought it must be profound.⁴⁹

Perhaps there are senses in which it would be well to worry about whether sane people should accept Hegel, but not, I think, in any sense that would simply assume that *Russell's* philosophical methodology is obviously, without argument, the standard of sanity and philosophical interest. Indeed, what would seem more worrisome to me would be if someone thought such a pretense to a monopoly on sanity could give philosophical reason to set aside the entire tradition of German Idealism, or justify a refusal to engage the philosophical issues highlighted and engaged there.

So, if we are seeking philosophical strength in Schelling's worries, I think we should resist reading them in Russell's spirit, or as allegations that Hegel fails because of a craziness of a sort supposedly revealed by contrast with something more sober from recent analytic philosophy—allegations that would assume this without argument as a standard of success, and assume that Schelling would come out better in those terms. By the same token, if seeking philosophical strengths in Hegel with respect to the late Schelling's challenges, I do not think we should argue that Hegel comes out better insofar as he can be better rehabilitated in terms of more recent analytic philosophy. I am convinced by Dews that Hegelians have tended to be the guiltier party here. So I proceed here trying to avoid criticism of either Schelling or Hegel in the spirit of Russell. I am again thankful that Dews highlights my work on Hegel as helpful in this context of trying to avoid those kinds of unproductive paths.

By way of beginning to seek shared insight here, perhaps Hegel and Schelling would agree in their worries about the kind of methodology Russell would prefer. Perhaps

⁴⁹ Russell, Bertrand, *Unpopular Essays* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2009), 20.

they would see this as a kind of *ad hoc* mixture of appeals to common sense—for example, against monism—along with appeals to highly theoretical philosophical interpretations of results in logic and physics, while allowing these interpretations to drift quite far from common sense, and without as much philosophical defense as they would want given that they are philosophical interpretations. I think here of the early Schelling in “Of the I . . . ,” who—though no Spinozist—praises Spinoza’s systematicity in contrast to *ad hoc* mixtures:

The Spinozistic system, with all its errors, is infinitely more respectable to me, because of its bold consistency, than the popular coalition systems of our educated world, which, patched together from the rags of all possible systems, would be the death of all true philosophy.⁵⁰

Perhaps, then, thinking through the engagements of Hegel and Schelling could contribute to characterizing their shared insight into some central problems in philosophy—prominently, I think, problems about *being*. They would agree on the importance of facing these problems squarely, even if this leads in unusual directions, or away from a path that would dismiss the problems in a merely *ad hoc* or unprincipled manner as above.

But space constrains me to now turn from a shared sense of the importance of the issues addressed by Hegel and Schelling, to Schelling’s criticisms of Hegel. Here I adopt as an aim the defense of Hegel against Schelling. But in the spirit above, it is not my sole or final aim—or, if I seem to treat it as such for now, this is only pretense. For, again, part of the point is to do this in a way that contributes to a partnership with others arguing different sides, collectively aiming to bring out the philosophical importance of both Schelling and Hegel, and German Idealism more broadly.

I think Dews captures many strands of Schelling’s critique, where each is powerfully explained, and the threat to Hegel clear. But I want to consider different options concerning how those strands fit together, or answers to questions like: what is the crux or focus that organizes them together into the overall philosophical challenge? It is no part of my ambition to settle the matter of how the late Schelling is best understood; I am not sure of the answer to that question. But I distinguish options so as to distinguish

⁵⁰ Schelling, F. W. J., *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. Karl Friedrich August Schelling (Stuttgart/Augsburg: J. G. Cotta’scher Verlag, 1856–1861), I, I, 151. Hereafter abbreviated SW.

avenues for Hegelian response to each. Perhaps it is predictable that I see attention to the distinctions as helping the Hegelian response. My worry is that, for any given Hegelian response, Schelling could be defended by arguing that the Hegelian has missed the point of the charge. Fair enough. But then the Schellingian should have to be clear about exactly what the charge is and is not, and should have to face the challenges that come with that charge—rather than evading the Hegelian defense by changing the story about what the charge is. I suspect the state of debate may have made things too easy on Schellingians here. I proceed from what I regard as less likely to more likely interpretations focused on harder problems for Hegelians.

One strand of critique alleges that Hegel fails to provide what Dews calls the “ultimate satisfaction of reason,” which would require explaining everything. One particular locus for this charge is the question: “What is the explanation for the *fact* that nature exists?”⁵¹ Here Schelling targets in particular Hegel’s attempt to transition from his *Logic* to his *Philosophy of Nature*.

Certainly this is a strand of Schelling’s critique. But is it *the crux* or *organizing focus* of the whole critique? Just to have a starting point to consider, even if we then set it aside—to say that this is the very crux, the bedrock, would naturally suggest something like this:

1. Hegel cannot adequately do something—namely, explain everything—that philosophy must do, and so Hegel fails.

Those who press *this* criticism seem to need to provide a case that philosophy must do this. But I doubt that this captures the late Schelling’s critique, or in any case his most compelling proposal. For, if this were the critique, then it would seem to require Schelling to do better what he alleges Hegel cannot do. Otherwise, even if Hegel fails to do it, this might just be something that philosophy cannot do. That would in turn make more difficult the argument that it is something that all philosophy somehow must do. And even if that argument were successful, if no philosophy could succeed that this would be no critique of Hegel, but of philosophy.

⁵¹ Dews, *Schelling’s Late Philosophy*, 170 and 167, respectively.

Here are some reasons to doubt that the late Schelling is best understood in this way. With respect to “what is,” Schelling does think that Hegel’s philosophy can address “the ‘what’ of things,” “the matter or content,” but Schelling thinks Hegel cannot well enough address “*that* it is.” However, the complaint does not seem to be that Schelling can provide a better *rational explanation* of the fact “that it is,” for “it is not reason’s job to show *that* it is, since this is longer the concern of reason but of experience.”⁵²

And I doubt that Dews would see this as the crux of Schelling’s critique. For Dews approves Theunissen’s seeing “Schelling’s late project as the exposure of the powerlessness internal to the very power of reason.”⁵³ Whatever more specifically is meant here, the point does not seem to be for Schelling ultimately to exceed Hegel in manifesting some power of rational explanation.

Since (1) is probably not Schelling’s point, I will not delay further here. The further philosophical response to such a charge is probably obvious, namely, a request to see the full and superior rational explanation of everything, including “the fact that nature exists.”

But I turn now to consider that perhaps Schelling does not promise to better do what he thinks Hegel cannot adequately do. This raises a central question: why would it be supposed to be a problem for Hegel that he cannot adequately do it? Here I would distinguish readings of Schelling as organizing the charge around either internal or external critique. An internal critique would make this the crux of the matter:

2. Internal critique. Something essential to *Hegel’s* project commits him to explain everything, including prominently the fact that nature exists, and the project fails in failing to do this.

One generic worry is that this path, organizing everything around internal critique, seems quite Hegelian. Schelling (read in this way) would be specifically directing our attention to what he takes to be the crux of the matter, and so philosophically crucial—namely, an internal contradiction in Hegel, from which we would be supposed to draw the most important philosophical results. In Hegelian terms, this looks like implying that reason can find in dialectical engagement with immanent contradictions a way of developing philosophical results. To me this does not look like a promising path for someone seeking,

⁵² Schelling SW II/3, 60. See Dews, *Schelling’s Late Philosophy*, 163.

⁵³ Dews, *Schelling’s Late Philosophy*, 147.

specifically against Hegel, an “exposure of the powerlessness internal to the very power of reason.”

But we can also consider more specifically the suggestion that it is essential to Hegel’s project to commit to his philosophy explaining everything. One possibility is to proceed in what seemed the spirit of Russell, above: to try to present Hegel as making an insane promise on this point, so that Hegel would be of little to no philosophical relevance relative to something more sober from analytic philosophy. But it is hard to see how this is to the credit of the late Schelling, who chooses to engage in such philosophical depth with Hegel. Further, if we would accept this kind of uncharitable interpretation of Hegel, then I would again think that the late Schelling could equally be approached in this way. So I have set this aside, above, in favor of interpretations aiming at understanding the philosophical importance of the relation between Schelling and Hegel, and German Idealism more generally. Insofar as *that* is the goal, we would have to be much more careful in giving reasons in favor of seeing Hegel as making a specific commitment—one we could then argue that he fails to satisfy.

Here is a proposal as to how we could try to tie Hegel to a commitment that his philosophy must explain everything: Perhaps the evident enormity of Hegel’s systematic ambitions ties him to this?

But, on my interpretation, Hegel has reason to see this shoe as on the other foot—to see systematicity as pulling philosophy apart from such a commitment.⁵⁴ For it would not be systematic to begin with this commitment in place, or this standard for philosophy. If such a standard were in place already at the start of systematic philosophy, then it would be merely presupposed. But Hegel famously addresses truly or fully systematic philosophy, rooted in what Hegel calls “the resolve to want to think purely.”⁵⁵ And Hegel famously argues that this would have to mean beginning without such presuppositions.⁵⁶ For Hegel, then, systematic philosophy must find reason within itself to come to whatever problem or problems it will take as essential to philosophy.

⁵⁴ Kreines 2018, on which see Dews, *Schelling’s Late Philosophy*, 164ff.

⁵⁵ Hegel, G. W. F., *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline. Part I: Science of Logic*, trans. K. Brinkmann and D. O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), §78An.

⁵⁶ Hegel, G. W. F., *The Science of Logic*, trans. George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 21:56.

I think the *Logic* comes very quickly to such a problem, in arguing that immediate, pure being is nothing. The problem is something like this: How to account for what it is to be, in some way compatible with there being determinacy at all? In finding that being is nothing, Hegel begins the dialectic meant to answer this question, or to provide an account of “the truth of being”—an account of *what* it is to be. The *Logic* is supposed to find reason to conclude that the truth of being is ultimately, in some sense, what Hegel calls “the concept.”⁵⁷ Hegel thinks that beginning without presuppositions sets in place a challenge for those who would resist his dialectic, beginning with the equation of being and nothing: “the challenge to state what, then, is *being*, and *what is nothing*.”⁵⁸

Insofar as Hegel’s path brings him to an account of the truth of being as the concept, his conclusions will include the claim that the concept develops itself into what it is throughout the course of the *Logic*: it answers the question of its own what-is-it, or explains its own whatness. The arguments of the *Logic* are supposed to show that the object of the *Logic* “makes itself—through and out of itself—into what it is.”⁵⁹ Further, I take it that “the concept” answers all explanatory what-questions about everything else, or questions of the form: “what is it?” And so there is some justice in Schelling thinking Hegel takes as philosophically central the *what*. Hegel argues that purely systematic philosophy finds reason in itself to take this whatness as central.

So there is certainly a sense in which Hegel commits to his philosophy explaining all of the whatness, ultimately in terms of the concept. But if we ask why it is the case *that* things are, in any senses that would come apart from this, I think Hegel has given reason as to why the central problem for systematic philosophy lies elsewhere. The fact that my pen exists, for example, might be explained by its causal history; systematic philosophy does not find any reason to think that it must provide a complete causal history for this. True, it will owe an account of what it is to be matter, for example, and what it is to be a cause. But that is different.

If Schellingians think that it *must* be essential to Hegel’s philosophical endeavor to provide, for everything, a reason for the fact that this exists—in a sense over and above

⁵⁷ Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, §159.

⁵⁸ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21:80.

⁵⁹ Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, §83Zu.

the explanation of whatness, above—then it seems to me they need some further arguments on that point.

Dews worries that the line sketched above, in my work on Hegel, exposes a vulnerability of Hegel's relative to Schelling. My work admits that there are facts about it being the case *that* this or that is, where Hegel's philosophy does not explain that fact. Dews says admitting this fact "ineluctably raises a 'why' question"⁶⁰ that Hegel cannot answer.

I said above that this would seem to presuppose that philosophy must aim to answer every why question it recognizes as meaningful, and that Hegel would not make this presupposition.

But I would also cede a version of Dews's "ineluctably." The *Logic* often argues that philosophy does indeed *ineluctably* come to expect or demand certain kinds of explanation . . . but then argues that some of those demands turn out to collapse under pressure. Take, for example, the discussion in the "Doctrine of Essence" in the *Logic* of grounding and the principle of sufficient ground or reason: the *Logic* up to that point would show that this principle is "ineluctable," in the sense that it is derived in the *Logic*. But, by the same token, the principle of sufficient reason would also be sublated or *aufgehoben* along the way. Perhaps Hegel's progress could be blocked at *that* point, disallowing him from disconnecting from the principle of sufficient reason, and committing his philosophy to resolving all why-questions. But if *that* is the strategy, then then the crux of the issue is not after all the transition from the *Logic* to nature, and we need an argument about the failure of the transition out of the Doctrine of Essence. And then I don't see how worries about the transition to nature will really support this concern at all.

But perhaps all this is just reason to think that the crux of Schelling's critique, its organizing focus, is elsewhere. The other overarching kind of option I see is this:

3. Schelling's critique is **external**: there is something, X, outside Hegel's philosophy—something that must be outside it, that it could never reach, but nonetheless requires philosophical account.

⁶⁰ Dews, *Schelling's Late Philosophy*, 167

To me it seems clear that the Hegelian has every right to demand an answer, from such a critic, to a what-question: *what is it*, this X, to which Hegel is supposedly so essentially blind?

If we in this way set aside the other two approaches above (1-2), then we come to a dialectical context that gives added weight to the what-question. First: *if* Hegel were supposed to fail relative to *his own standard*, in an immanent critique, *then* he would be in no position to ask for clarification of what the standard is. The critic could just refer Hegel back to something he himself wrote and cannot very well claim to not understand. But if the point is external, then such a critic seems very much on the hook: if they cannot give a satisfying account of what it is that so eludes Hegel, then this seems trouble for their critique.

Second, I think we should be convinced that something like this is a problem for Hegel only if convinced that this something, this X, is really of essential philosophical importance, or is not something that philosophy may legitimately ignore or dismiss. Then we might think that a philosopher, in failing to account for this—even if not committing to do so—is in this respect still failing, or subject to critique. And I do not see how we could be convinced of the essential philosophical importance of this X without receiving an explanation of *what it is*.

So I grant that, had the earlier approaches (1-2) worked out, this what-question would not be troublesome. But this should be no consolation at all to the Schellingian who has abandoned (1-2).

Would Schelling answer this what-question, in this spirit—or would he resist it or argue that it misses the point? I take these two options in turn:

3a. Schelling answers the *what* question: Hegel’s philosophy is blind to something, where Schelling can explain what it is, along the lines of “the pure that,” or “sheer being,” or “unprethinkable being,” or similar.⁶¹

I think the Hegelian answer on this point is no surprise: Hegel would say in a spirit of agreement that systematic philosophy *must* begin, as Hegel’s *Logic* does, with “Being,

⁶¹ On those three terms, respectively, Dews, *Schelling’s Late Philosophy*, xvii, 149, 169, 172, 208; and 129, 128, 175; and 148-155 and Chapter 6.

pure being,”⁶² but the *Logic* puts arguments on the table that alternative accounts of “the truth of being” have internal problems, and ultimately Hegel’s “the concept” is required to account for the what-it-is of being. So, Hegel has arguments that the present critique would require an account of what it is to be, and that it cannot do this without first ceding Hegel’s philosophy. The way is open for Schelling to respond, certainly, but now it seems that he would have to play Hegel’s game—the game of whatness, as it were. This might put pressure back in the direction of the internal critique option and its difficulties in really detaching or getting any distance from Hegel, above.

Here are two attempted Schellingian replies:

3a.i. Hegel’s game of whatness fails right here at the start, after “pure being” but before Hegel reaches the conclusion that being is “nothing,” and the demand to account for what it is to be in terms of the resulting dialectic.

Dews has a powerful explanation of a strand of Schelling’s criticism right here. Namely, Hegel can get from being to the lack of determinateness, but not to the nothing, and so presumably not to the rest of the *Logic*. Dews’s version of the challenge here is that Hegel just ignores the possibility of pure being’s lacking determinacy, but not because it is nothing; rather, because it is “pure non-being, understood as the *potentiality* of any determinate way of being,” which “is equally as devoid of determinations.”⁶³

It is testament to the strength and the spirit of Dews’s book that he immediately tells us precisely what Hegel’s response should be: it should be to argue that appeal to a distinction between potentiality and actuality is not available at this stage of the *Logic*. Let me add two points about this. First, I think Hegel has good reason for this. To take an example to which I would imagine Schelling agreeing: We cannot just assume—that is, have in place in the beginning—the view that reality comes parceled out in terms of a distinction between the subject and predicate of judgment. Why not then say the same of the distinction between actuality and potentiality?

Second, such a Schellingian argument would seem to me like good news for Hegel and the project of his *Logic*. Part of the point of arguing that pure being is nothing is to support a broader case in the “Doctrine of Being” that thought remains unstable and

⁶² Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21:68.

⁶³ Dews, *Schelling’s Late Philosophy*, 129.

contradictory so long as it assumes an immediacy of being, so that thought *must* rather eventually retool to rest everything on pairs of relata in dependence or mediation relations—like the relation between potentiality and actuality. I would think that would be the argument *for* the transition to the topics of the “Doctrine of Essence,” the second of three parts of the *Logic*. So *this* version of Schelling’s critique seems to endorse and empower the argument of the *Logic* up to that point. Of course, Hegel will *then* argue that such distinctions between relata collapse under the weight placed on them by the demand to account for the what of things, and this is the gateway to the “Doctrine of the Concept.” Then it seems to me Schelling would need some other way to halt the proceedings *there*, with an actuality-potentiality distinction; again there is a threat of getting dragged into battle on Hegel’s terms: the game of whatness is afoot.

But here is a different way of trying to answer Hegel’s what question, advancing this form of Schellingian external critique:

3a.ii: Hegel is blind to “un-pre-thinkable being” (*das unvordenkliche Seyn*), and this is utterly other than anything Hegel can grasp as “pure being”.

Here I think Dews captures a strong line for this version of Schelling: The Schellingian need not fail to answer the challenge of explaining what it is to which Hegel is blind. For Schelling does not hold that this is simply not thinkable. It is not *pre*-thinkable, “but this does not preclude it from being post-thinkable.”⁶⁴ In post-thinking it, the Hegelian what-question would be answered, and the critique would be shown to bite.

I would think that the Hegelian reply would be this: Did we really go on to *entirely* capture in thought *what* un-pre-thinkable being is? If so, then what distinguishes this from Hegel’s account in thought of pure being? Again, as above, this threatens to pull us back into the dialectic and its game of whatness. Or the Schellingian could rather say that un-pre-thinkable being is not entirely grasped in post-thinking it, so that this would leave something out, *the initial and always unthinkable aspect of unprethinkable being*, as it were. But then the critique would be that Hegel is blind to something—this always unthinkable side of being—where Schelling seems unable to give an account of what it is

⁶⁴ Dews, *Schelling’s Late Philosophy*, 172.

to which Hegel is blind. And for reasons above, once we clearly set aside approaches (1-2), this seems an uncomfortable position to be in.

Again, maybe we have not yet found the most promising interpretation and powerful critique; maybe it is a mistake to think that Schelling would or does squarely answer the Hegelian's what-question. So perhaps the critique is rather something like this:

3b. *Schelling resists the Hegelian what-question or argues that it misses the point.* That question, and the way Hegel follows it up with the game of whatness—*precisely this* best reveals what Hegel must always miss, or what those who fail to distinguish negative from positive philosophy must always miss. So we can't directly explain *what* it is. We see it, or *experience* it and its importance indirectly, as it were, looking to its *absence* in attempted philosophical systems, like Hegel's. And maybe Schelling draws attention to Hegel's transition from the *Logic* to nature not because this is the crux of an argument, but because this is one of the cases in which the absence is clearest to see.

I think this kind of approach is potentially powerful, interesting and important. Here let me begin with an historical question: Isn't this Jacobi's strategy, executed with respect to Spinoza rather than Hegel? That is, Jacobi asks us to grasp the superiority of Spinoza to all other demonstrative philosophy. And he also asks us to attend to what must be absent in Spinoza's system. This includes one's agency and freedom, as an individual, acting over finite periods, not from the perspective of eternity or pure rationality; the existence of the finite objects that resist my finite agency; and so on. Jacobi also suggests—about someone who has clarified for themselves what it is that Spinoza is blind to, and obscures—they would aim “to unveil *existence*, and to reveal it. . . . His final goal is what cannot be explained.”⁶⁵

Further, would this strategy actually be stronger, executed with respect to Spinoza rather than to Hegel? After all, Spinoza (unlike Hegel, I think) clearly commits to a

⁶⁵ Jacobi, Friedrich Heinrich, *Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel “Allwill,”* trans. George di Giovanni (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 194; Jacobi, *Werke*, ed. Klaus Hammacher and Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Meiner, 1998ff), 1:29.

principle of sufficient reason: “For every thing a cause or reason must be assigned either for its existence or for its nonexistence.”⁶⁶ So we might expect tight spots to emerge where Spinoza would have difficulty explaining the fact that this or that exists—as philosophers (including Hegel) have worried from the beginning will be the case, for Spinoza, with respect to the fact that there is any finitude. And perhaps a kind of blindness is revealed at those spots. But then, would Jacobi be right in *his* characterizations of what this is a blindness *to*? Certainly Jacobi and Schelling do not seem, in their engagements with one another, to think that they are working along similar lines.

Quite apart from my too-quick suggestion that Jacobi might have a stronger version of this strategy, we can fall back to a different question: How could we adjudicate between different versions of this strategy? How do we adjudicate exactly what we would see in the blind spot of a philosophical system (whether we are thinking of Spinoza’s or Hegel’s)? I would worry, of course, about attempts to adjudicate on the grounds of rational argument or demonstration about what the important X is. After all, the point for Jacobi is that demonstration is blind to this, and for the late Schelling the point is about a powerlessness of reason in this respect. But then how to adjudicate?

I would also worry whether Schelling would not end up stuck on unstable middle ground between Hegel and Jacobi. That is to say, perhaps Hegel and Jacobi would agree that the late Schelling is left with a bit of an *ad hoc* mixture, something again disparaged by the early Schelling at least as a kind of “popular coalition” philosophy. Why would not the “bold consistency”⁶⁷ that seems to be the spirit of their time, counsel instead either going to Jacobi’s extreme of his “unphilosophy,”⁶⁸ on the one hand, or else to Hegel’s systematic philosophy, on the other?

But I want to make clear that I am not responding to the charge that proponents of Hegel are blind by shutting my eyes tighter. I think it important for philosophers to respond to this kind of critique by at least trying to open their eyes, trying to encourage and engage the worry that they pursue philosophy in a way that leaves them blind to something important. So, I try to open my eyes. Still, I am not sure if what I almost maybe

⁶⁶ Spinoza, Benedict de, *Ethics*, in *The Collected Works of Spinoza Vol 1*, trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), E1P11D2.

⁶⁷ These quotations are again from Schelling’s “Of the I . . .” I, I, 151, cited above.

⁶⁸ Jacobi, *Werke* 2: 194.

start to see is rather what *Jacobi* sees, rather than Schelling? I would ask Schellingians: How can I improve my vision?

Those are the major fault lines between options, as I see it, for Schelling's attack. I should say again that the point of offering options is to cede that Schellingians can dodge any particular Hegelian response. They can do so by alleging that that response misses the point of the criticism. But then it seems fair to ask that the defender of Schelling make some choices about what exactly organizes the criticism, so that the engagement can proceed on those terms. For example, I have argued that the Schellingian faces serious difficulties if they commit to internal critique (option 2). Granted, they can evade those difficulties by squarely forswearing the path of internal critique (option 3); but then, I have argued, they must squarely face difficulties about *what* exactly it is to which Hegel is supposed to be so blind.

Finally, I want to leave off prosecuting the defense of Hegel. I now drop the pretense I adopted at a certain point above. For the bulk of my remarks, it may have seemed as if my *sole* and *final* aim were to defend Hegel over Schelling. But I hope I have just taken up a pretense here. I hope my comments live up to the high standard set by Dews, specifically when it comes to pursuing the arguments in the spirit of supporting the philosophical importance of the Hegel/Schelling engagement all around. And the spirit of exploring the shared insights that polarize Hegel and Schelling, first of all concerning problems about *being*, that also send them in different directions.

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