

**The Significance of Art in Schelling—
Primordial Demand and Final Destination of Reason**

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Philosophy

April 2009

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Abstract

Before Schelling, Kant has already placed aesthetics in a system of philosophy, but he is not genuinely concerned about the question of art. Schelling is the first philosopher who places art within a system of philosophy and endows art a paramount role in the system. For Schelling, at least in his early thinking, art is not only a necessary question in philosophy, but is also its very origin and final destination. This position is quite extraordinary to for philosopher. Why does Schelling, as a philosopher, make such claim? How can art become the origin and destination of philosophy and sciences? What is the true essence and significance of art? These are the major questions of this dissertation. Schelling's discourse on art in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* and *Philosophy of Art* will be explicated. In order to make Schelling's contention more apparent, the discussions on art in Hegel and the early German romantic such as Friedrich Schlegel, Hölderlin and Novalis will be included as well.

Unlike contemporary aesthetic discussions, Schelling's discourse on art is never detached from the context of philosophy or metaphysics. For Schelling, what philosophy or metaphysics ultimately questions about are the unity and the ground of existence and thinking. Following Kant, Schelling, like his romantic and idealistic contemporaries, recognizes that the problem of unity is the fundamental question of philosophy. But diverging from Kant, Schelling thinks that there is no way to attain and explain the unity unless the ground is first investigated.

The ground is for Schelling nothing else but the original One and the primordial demand. In order to explain and attain the unity of everything, the ground is posited

as original identity; in order to explain the origin of existence and thinking, the ground is posited as a primordial demand. This demand is the demand for intuiting or knowing itself. Since the first principle is a demand, the system therefore becomes a dynamic and dialectical one. The whole system of Schelling is thus constructed according to two basic activities originated from the primordial demand: separation and unification.

Art is the final product of the system and the ground can gain a complete intuition of itself through works of art. Art therefore becomes the final destination of the system. Schelling thinks that only the works of art can completely unify thinking and reality, the infinite and the finite, the universal and the particular, the subjective and the objective, give equal respect to each opposing pole, completely reflect the original identity and fulfill the primordial demand. What Schelling in his philosophy of art reveals is that philosophizing or reflection is not sufficient to solve the ultimate questions asked by itself. Thinking or rationality is not the foundation of world and reality. In fact, thinking and reality are equally the products of the ground. Hence, it is unreasonable and one-sided to make any one product the dominant factor and even the first principle of the unification and the whole system.

From the discourse on art, we see that Schelling, who is known as a German idealist, pays much attention to the question of existence and gives much respect to reality as such. Hence, Schelling's intellectual identity is quite ambivalent and should be re-examined. The second major task of this dissertation is to deliberate whether Schelling is an early German romantic or a German idealist, and whether there is a transition from romanticism to idealism in Schelling's philosophy. In order to answer these questions, the general positions of early German romanticism and German

idealism should be first articulated. Then, the consistency of Schelling's thought will be verified. This dissertation argues for consistency of Schelling's system throughout his life and for Schelling's reconciliation of romanticism and idealism. Instead of being a preparation to Hegel's system, this dissertation will show that Schelling's fundamental concern and position are incompatible with that of Hegel. Despite his affinity with the romantic thought, the position of the demand of the ground and the final anticipation of future development are different in Schelling and the romantics.

摘要

在謝林哲學以前，康德已將美學之討論置入哲學系統之中，但康德從未真正關注藝術之課題。真正將藝術之討論置入哲學系統中並賦予藝術一至高無上之地位者，謝林絕對是第一人。對謝林而言(至少在其早期思想中)，藝術不僅是哲學必需處理的課題，更是哲學的起源與終點。這種立場對於哲學家而言是非同尋常的。為何作為哲學家的謝林會提出這種觀點？藝術如何能成為哲學及科學的起源與終點？藝術的真正本質及意義究竟是什麼？這些正正是本文的中心課題。本文將闡釋謝林於其《先驗唯心論體系》及《藝術哲學》中有關藝術之討論。為了突顯謝林之藝術哲學理論，本文亦將討論黑格爾及德國早期浪漫主義者如弗里德里希·施萊格爾、荷爾德林及諾瓦利斯等人的藝術觀點。

有異於近代美學之討論，謝林從未離開哲學或形而上學之脈絡去處理藝術此一課題。謝林認為哲學或形而上學最終要尋覓的乃是存在於思想之間的統一及兩者之終極本源。承繼康德之洞見，謝林(以及其當代之浪漫主義者及觀念論者)承認統一之問題乃哲學之根本課題。但與康德背道而馳的是，謝林認為若要達至及解釋統一，哲學必需首先處理終極本源此一課題。

謝林認為終極本源是原一及原初渴求。為了解釋及達至萬事萬物之統一，終極本源被設定為原一；為了解釋存在及思想之由來，終極本源被設定為原初渴求。此渴求渴望能直覺及認識自身。由於哲學體系之第一原理乃一渴求，哲學體系因而成為一具活動及辯證性質之體系。謝林之整個哲學體系乃根據兩個源自原初渴求的基本活動來建構：分離與統一。

藝術正是哲學體系之最終產物，透過藝術作品，終極本源能完滿地直覺自

身，藝術亦因而成爲哲學之終點。謝林認爲只有藝術作品才能完滿地統一思想與實在、無限與有限、普遍與特殊、主體與客體，並能平等地尊重對立之任何一方，完滿地反映終極本源及滿足原初渴求。謝林之藝術哲學給予我們的啓示是哲學思考或反思根本不足以解答其自身發問的終極問題。思想或理性因而並非世界或實在的存在根據。事實上，思想與實在同樣都只是終極本源之產物。因此，以任一產物作爲統一及體系之主導成素甚至第一原理皆是不合理及片面的。

從謝林之藝術哲學，我們可以看到其作爲德國觀念論之一員，十分關注存在之課題及對實在給予高度之重視。因此，我們需要重新審視謝林之學術立場。本文之第二大課題即在於重新考量謝林究竟是一位德國早期浪漫主義者還是德國觀念論者？究竟謝林哲學中有沒有所謂由浪漫主義至觀念論的轉向？爲了解答以上之問題，本文必需先釐清德國早期浪漫主義及德國觀念論之基本旨趣，隨後即檢驗謝林哲學之一貫性問題。本文最後將肯定及闡述謝林哲學體系之一貫性，及其對德國早期浪漫主義和德國觀念論之調和。本文將指出謝林哲學並非是黑格爾體系之序幕，謝林之根本關懷及基本立場與黑格爾實有不能相容之處。另外，即使謝林哲學與浪漫主義者之觀點多有相合，但其對原初渴求之設定及對體系未來發展之期望則與浪漫主義者迥然不同。

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Introduction—Metaphysics and Aesthetics

If we enquire into the significance of art in Schelling, we first need to question why Schelling, as a philosopher, becomes interested in the issue on art, or in other words, to ask in what context does art rise to become a crucial subject matter in his philosophy. In order to unveil the context and position of philosophy of art in Schelling's thought we must ask an even more generic question: How does aesthetics, the discipline which studies beauty and art, arise to become a philosophical discipline? Only by following this question, the main concern of Schelling's philosophy of art and the essential significance of art in Schelling can be revealed.

As a philosophical field of research, aesthetics has long been put in a marginal position in the history of philosophy before Baumgarten and Kant. Plato thinks that art in no way supports philosophy on the way to truth. What art manifests is only the appearance of reality, thus the work of art is illusory if truth only indwells within the supersensible realm of ideas. Though Aristotle affirms the significance of tragedy for the purification of soul, the question about art had never become the central concern of his philosophy. In the 18th century, Baumgarten first uses "aesthetics", which originally was related to perceptions or sensibility and designated the study of beauty. He first links good perceptions with beauty, and affirms the truth inherent in beauty. The new meaning of "aesthetics" endowed by Baumgarten had much influence on Kant, who is the first to place aesthetics within the system of philosophy with a necessarily assigned role. Kant's discourse on aesthetics inspired his contemporaries and many subsequent thinkers, such as the German Idealists, the early German Romanticists and a number of modern thinkers, on the problem of art, and paved the way for the elevation of the status of art in the world of philosophy. In this way, the

background of and the reason for aesthetics within Kant's philosophical system becomes an indispensable prelude to the research on the significance of art in Schelling's philosophy.

(I) Metaphysics and Aesthetics in Kant

A) Metaphysics in Kant

a) Metaphysics as a Science

Kant's philosophical system, which is almost demonstrated by his three *Critiques*, is completed by his critique of reflective judgment, in which aesthetics plays the essential part. The task of Kant's system can to a great extent be seen as a response to and solution of traditional metaphysical problems. For Kant, since the subject matters of traditional metaphysical doctrines and the principles of which they make use transcend the limits of experience, empirical justification is by no means significant. Metaphysics in this way only leads to dogmatic conclusions and endless controversies without certainty and truth, making itself underserved for the title "Queen of sciences", or even precludes itself from being a science. The first task of *Critique of Pure Reason* is to demonstrate the possibility of experience, or the transcendental constitutive conditions of experience. Does it mean that for Kant experience, or empirical observation, is the innermost principle of science? Or does it imply that natural science is the only kind of science? Though it is apparent that Kant restricts the sphere of knowledge with objective validity to the sphere of experience or natural science, he is never an empiricist who holds materialism and hence discredits metaphysics, nor a skeptic who suspects any truth in metaphysics. In the Introduction of *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant suggests that metaphysics should be treated as a science with true and valid knowledge:

“It must be possible for reason to attain to certainty whether we know or do not know the objects of metaphysics, that is, to come to a decision either in regard to the objects of its enquiries or in regard to the capacity or incapacity of reason to pass any judgment upon them, so that we may either with confidence extend our pure reason or set to it sure and determinate limits. This last question, which arises out of the previous general problem, may, rightly stated, take the form: *How is metaphysics, as science, possible?* Thus the critique of reason, in the end, necessarily leads to scientific knowledge ; while its dogmatic employment, on the other hand, lands us in dogmatic assertions to which other assertions, equally specious, can always be opposed -- that is, in *scepticism*.” (B22- 23)¹

It follows that in response to the previous difficulties in the long history of metaphysics, what Kant intends to embark upon is to preserve metaphysics from skepticism and transform it to become a real science. Frederick Beiser describes that although Kant was one of the harshest critics of the Enlightenment, his aim was to save the principles of the Enlightenment and “to give a lasting foundation to its fundamental article of faith: the authority of reason”² In order to save reason or the Enlightenment from its self-destruction, Beiser thinks that Kant pays much effort to prevent rational criticism from going extremely into skepticism, or naturalism into materialism. The former preserves the validity of reason in representing truth, and the latter the dignity of reason as an autonomous faculty and the lawgiver of nature and morality. Hence, though metaphysics was dogmatic and incapable of being a

¹ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith. Macmillan: London; St. Martin's: New York, 1968, p.57.

² Beiser, Frederick. “The Enlightenment and Idealism”, in Karl Ameriks ed. *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.22.

science long before, and the status and validity of natural sciences were meanwhile growing up rapidly, Kant intends to rescue metaphysics from sheer skepticism and to construct it as a possible science, which challenges the belief that empirical science is the only valid form or the paradigm of science as such.

b) The Domain of Metaphysics

i) Metaphysics as a Special and Limited Domain

To the word “metaphysics” Kant ascribes various meanings in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Certainly one of its meanings designates the traditional dogmatic doctrines on the transcendent objects, which are the problems Kant aims at overcoming. With positive use, “metaphysics” seems to have two meanings. One of it signifies merely the regulative use of pure reason, another one the whole of Kant’s transcendental philosophy. Concerning the former, in the pure use of the *a priori* concepts of understanding (categories), which entirely transcends experience and in which sensibility by no means functions, there arises some ideas which contain no knowledge with objective validity and are the proper subject matters of traditional metaphysics: “Metaphysics has as the proper object of its enquiries three ideas only: *God, freedom, and immortality* -- so related that the second concept, when combined with the first, should lead to the third as a necessary conclusion. Any other matters with which this science may deal serve merely as a means of arriving at these ideas and of establishing their reality.”(B395)³ After the refusal of the validity of the old metaphysical discussions and the expulsion of these ideas from the domain of knowledge with objective validity, what Kant has to tackle is the reconstruction of

³ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith. Macmillan: London; St. Martin's: New York, 1968, p.325.

the conditions and the significance of these old beliefs. Kant maintains that instead of being constitutive principles of experience, they are in fact regulative principles.

The suggestion of regulative principles should be regarded as the most important task of Kant in order to resolve the difficulties in traditional metaphysics. It is suggested under the discovery of the most contradictory nature of reason: on the one hand knowledge cannot be built without experience and sensibility; on the other, the belief of God, freedom and immortality, though cannot be examined within experience, are always haunting to human beings. Thus, knowledge and science are always restricted, whereas reason always tends to extend beyond experience. It is under this tension between the limitation and the extension of reason that Kant's suggestion of regulative principles arises: "Human reason, since it first began to think, or rather to reflect, has never been able to dispense with a metaphysics; but also has never been able to obtain it in a form sufficiently free from all foreign elements."(A842 B870)⁴ The extension of reason is the very demand of reason. Once human being thinks and reflects, it becomes unavoidable to step into the domain which transcends experience and goes beyond the domain of knowledge. The searching for the reality and truth of the ideas therefore seems to become infinite and even unattainable. However, this demand is for Kant the *essential ends* of reason: "we shall always return to metaphysics as to a beloved one with whom we have had a quarrel. For here we are concerned with essential ends—ends with which metaphysics must ceaselessly occupy itself, either in striving for genuine insight into them, or in refuting those who profess already to have attained it."(A850 B878)⁵ Since the demand for thinking beyond experience is essential and necessary for

⁴ Ibid, p.660.

⁵ Ibid, pp. 664-665.

human being, the significance of metaphysics should be examined carefully instead of proclaiming it as useless and illusory in haste.

Accordingly, what Kant designates as “metaphysics” is a special and limited sphere in his investigation. Regarding the question what metaphysics means in Kant, the domain of metaphysics is in distinction from experience, from natural science and from the constitutive *a priori* principles by which the possibility of experience is established and constructed. Only on the land of metaphysics or of the regulative principles can we see the essential ends and dilemma of human reason. On the contrary, within experience and natural science, the dilemma between the demand and the limitation of reason has not yet been exposed. In other words, we can simply conclude that the Analytic and the Dialectic of the *Critique of Pure Reason* deal with different principles, in which the latter tackles the problem of metaphysics, whereas the former the problem of science and experience.

ii) The Proper Nature of the Regulative Principles and Metaphysics as the Whole Domain of Kant’s Critical Philosophy

By means of tracing the origin, limiting the domain and constructing the validity of the transcendent ideas according to the very innermost demand of reason, we know that regulative principles are essentially different from the constitutive ones. However, it is still unclear why the regulative principles are *regulative*. In the last part of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant suggests the very importance of the regulative principles and thus metaphysics:

“[M]etaphysics is also the full and complete development of human reason. Quite apart from its influence, as science, in connection with certain specific ends it is an indispensable discipline. For in dealing with reason it treats of those elements and highest maxims which must form the basis of the very *possibility* of some sciences, and of the *use* of all. That, as mere speculation, it serves rather to prevent errors than to extend knowledge, does not detract from its value. On the contrary this gives it dignity and authority, through that censorship which secures general order and harmony, and indeed the well-being of the scientific commonwealth, preventing those who labour courageously and fruitfully on its behalf from losing sight of the supreme end, the happiness of all mankind.”
(A851 B879)⁶

It shows that the regulative principles are not merely one kind of *a priori* principles which are simply brought forth by the inner demand of reason, rather, they do contribute to the completion of the development of human reason and guide the further development of empirical sciences. Although the regulative principles do not directly apply to the constitution of experience and objects, they are the innermost principles of reason to regulate, guide, control and bring into order the *a priori* principles of sensibility and understanding. Thus, they are the innermost principles of the possibility of the constitution of sciences. More importantly, the regulative principles are the very principles which inspire and guide the activity of philosophizing. They are the *a priori* principles which contribute to the *reflection on experience* and the discovery of the lawfulness and determinate laws in nature and human reason. Only by means of reflection can man prevent error and gain genuine development. Hence, the significance of the regulative principles as regulative lies in

⁶ Ibid, p.665.

their nature to guide and regulate different human faculties. They can guide because they are the foundation of reflection and philosophizing.

It leads to the transition of the meaning of metaphysics from its limited domain to the systematic whole of the transcendental or pure philosophy:

“The philosophy of pure reason is either a *propaedeutic* (preparation), which investigates the faculty of reason in respect of all its pure *a priori* knowledge, and is entitled the science which exhibits in systematic connection the whole body (true as well as illusory) of philosophical knowledge arising out of pure reason, and which is entitled *metaphysics*. The title 'metaphysics' may also, however, be given to the whole of pure philosophy, inclusive of criticism, and so as comprehending the investigation of all that can ever be known *a priori* as well as the exposition of that which constitutes a system of the pure philosophical modes of knowledge of this type -- in distinction, therefore, from all empirical and from all mathematical employment of reason.” (A841 B869)⁷

In this way, the complete and systematic investigation of the faculties of reason in their *a priori* use, which is the whole task of Kant's *Critiques*, becomes a metaphysics, but a scientific and valid one in distinction from the old dogmatic doctrines. After the abandonment of the dogmatic metaphysics, which did not understand its own origin and domain with validity, and the construction of the *a priori* constitutive principles of experience and natural science, Kant in the latter part of his first *Critique* endows again the supreme role of metaphysics in becoming a science and guiding sciences, which is another interpretation of metaphysics as the “Queen of sciences”. Besides,

⁷ Ibid, p.659.

entitling the whole of pure philosophy “metaphysics” exhibits that metaphysics is not simply one branch of philosophy, but should be the essential part of it. This transition of the meaning of metaphysics in Kant is mainly due to the question how the reflection and critique of human reason are possible, a question the natural sciences are incapable of answering, a question asking the root of the constitutive elements of experience.

c) The Demand of Reason

Concerning the above characterizations of the domain of metaphysics, the demand of reason indeed plays an essential role. All of the regulative principles, the ideas and the postulates come from the very demand of reason: “As a matter of fact, multiplicity of rules and unity of principles is a demand of reason, for the purpose of bringing the understanding into thoroughgoing accord with itself, just as the understanding brings the manifold of intuition under concepts and thereby connects the manifold.”⁸ (A 306) The regulative principles are not something which is given by without and something which can be proved by experience. Rather, they are only the inner demands of reason. Thus, reason is no longer something static and mechanistic, but something which can demand and will. It is indeed a great breakthrough of traditional metaphysics and epistemology, which mainly consider the content of rationality or the ground of knowledge, but neglect the desire and demand of it. It is also by this essential demand and willing that freedom can be postulated and morality can be established, since this demand is not stimulated by anything other than pure reason itself. If morality should be based on categorical

⁸ Ibid, p. 305.

imperative, the very demands of reason for unity, freedom and God should be regarded as the first categorical imperative and the first expression of freedom.

Kant's suggestion of the demand of reason should be regarded as one brilliant philosophical invention. In addition to be a breakthrough of traditional metaphysics, the concept of the demand of reason also shows the humanistic perspective of Kantian philosophy. In traditional discourses on knowledge or reason, the sensible feelings are always excluded from the sphere of rationality, especially from epistemology. However, in Kant's system, the demand of reason for unity becomes the innermost principles of Understanding and the regulative principles of knowledge. In this way, demand, desire and hope become what ultimately support the progress and development of scientific knowledge, instead of being something insignificant, useless and even detrimental in cognition and science. Without the eternal demand for unity and for revealing the origin of the world, there cannot be great development in many disciplines.

Every demand looks for fulfillment, but the demand of reason can never find its fulfillment or completion, since the demand can only be fulfilled in experience. The demand of reason arises before any experience and has no direct relation to experience. It is an entirely inner demand of pure reason. Although it is a demand about experience, it does not have the power to order experience and guarantee its own fulfillment, since in Kant's system, there is something external to pure reason within experience. This fatal failure of the demand of reason is expressed in Kant's famous metaphor of adventurous seafarer:

“This domain is an island, enclosed by nature itself within unalterable limits. It is the land of truth -- enchanting name! -- surrounded by a wide and stormy ocean, the native home of illusion, where many a fog bank and many a swiftly melting iceberg give the deceptive appearance of farther shores, deluding the adventurous seafarer ever anew with empty hopes, and engaging him in enterprises which he can never abandon and yet is unable to carry to completion.”⁹(B295 A236)

The island means experience and the wide and stormy ocean the domain of metaphysics. The seafarer is motivated by the inner demand of pure reason which can never be abandoned. Concerning the significance of this demand, it generates the innermost regulative principles of knowledge; but concerning the fulfillment of this demand, it only brings “empty hopes”.

The unique value of Kant’s philosophy is that although he recognizes the failure in fulfilling reason’s innermost demand, he does not expel it out of his system and determine it as a mere illusion or myth. On the contrary, he reveals the real significance of this demand and the real fate of human reason: Since the demand brings out the regulative principles, there can be progress and development of sciences; but since the demand can never be fulfilled, man is ever in hope and search. By means of the doctrine of the demand of reason, what Kant articulates are not only metaphysical and epistemological problems, but also the existential question of human being. This doctrine indeed has great impact on subsequent philosophers, especially the German idealists and the early German romantics. Based on the inner demand of reason, German idealists, including Schelling, transform the Kantian

⁹ Ibid, p. 257.

system into a dialectic one. Besides, Kant's concept of demand of reason also anticipates the romantic themes of yearning and infinite approximation.

B) Aesthetics in Kant

c) The Problem of Unity as the Reason for Kant's Progress from Metaphysics to Aesthetics

The last part of *Critique of Pure Reason* does anticipate the task of *Critique of Judgment*, which deals with the regulative use of reflective judgment. The final part of *Critique of Judgment* discusses the teleological judgment, which contains the contentions of the purposiveness of nature and the idea of God. It is obviously an echo of the later part of the first *Critique*. By the analytic of the beautiful and the sublime, Kant firstly exhibits the pure nature of the regulative and indeterminate use of reflective judgment through aesthetics. The power of reflective judgment is the faculty other than that of theoretical and practical reasons explored by Kant. In the domain of theoretical reason, the spontaneity of understanding and the *a priori* structure of sensibility determine the objects in nature; in the domain of practical reason, the categorical imperative of reason alone determines moral actions. Both of these uses of reason determine objects with objective validity. However, in the theoretical use of reason, sensibility and understanding are heterogeneous principles, in which the former assumes givenness from without and the concept of thing-in-itself. On the contrary, the practical law of reason is only spontaneously commanded by reason itself. Therefore, the domain of theoretical reason and that of practical reason are distinct and heterogeneous. There arises an important question: how to bridge the two domains or bring about their unity? Before discussing the method by which Kant attempts to solve this question, more important is to ask why

there is' such request. One of the reasons is that the moral actions must act in the world. Although the moral will is not determined by external conditions and consequences of the action, it must have causal effects in the world of nature, which shows that the two domains of reason in fact entangle with each other. Hence, we need an explanation of this entanglement despite of the clear distinction between the theoretical and practical uses of reason. Another thing is that the demand for unity is the innermost demand of reason. The idea of God or the first cause exhibits this demand. Kant thinks that human beings by nature extends his question beyond the limit of experience and asks about the first cause of the world. This is the metaphysical request which is necessarily issued by reason and waits for answering.

In order to solve the problem of unity, an analytic of aesthetic judgment of taste seems for Kant indispensable. It is because in this task Kant can examine the *pure* nature of regulative use of reason without involving either the domain of the theoretical or practical reason. It makes the part of aesthetics, rather than that of teleological judgment, the essential sections of *Critique of Judgment*, since the latter is easily confused with the theoretical and practical reasons. An aesthetic judgment of taste is for Kant clearly neither theoretical nor practical. At the beginning of the analytic of the beautiful, Kant distinguishes between liking for the agreeable, liking for the good and a kind of free liking which relates to the object of taste or beautiful.¹⁰ He points out that the problem of taste or beautiful does not lie in the spheres of gratification or morality. This distinction paves the way for the investigation of the first moment of judgment of taste, its quality, and the conclusion that a genuine judgment of taste or the beautiful is devoid of any interest no matter

¹⁰ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*, Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987, p. 209-211.

based on causality or morality. Both of the judgment of the beautiful and that of the sublime are judgments of the objects which we *merely* like and contemplate, or feel pleasurable *purely* and *freely*, without considering their existence, purposes, or effects on us.

b) Purposiveness and Organic Nature

The decisive step in Kant's investigation of the nature of aesthetic judgment is the discovery of purposiveness without purpose. One crucial distinction between the judgment of the agreeable and that of the beautiful is that the latter only contemplates the form of its object whereas the former also concerns the existence of it. In merely contemplating the form of object, we feel pleasure owing to the perfect form of the object and the harmonious relation between its parts, as if it is produced under a will. On the contrary, in cognition the concept of object is wholly determined by the laws of understanding under which only mechanistic or blind causality is determined and valid. Thus, a sense of purpose or will is inconceivable in this kind of cognitive activity. Since aesthetic judgment is not cognition, and its object is not determined by concepts, contemplating the form of object means that the object is indeterminate and its presentation manifests a kind of freedom which is absent in cognition. Kant designates this kind of freedom the "free play of imagination" which harmonizes with understanding simultaneously. There seems to be a harmony between the imagination's free apprehension and the lawfulness of the understanding. In other words, although the imagination apprehends freely, it seems that it still follows some rules which could not be designated and articulated. This harmony can neither be accounted for by the process of cognition nor by a will, i.e., a purpose, since no ground is there to provide a proof for it. Therefore, this specific kind of experience

indicates that we can merely *presume* that the object is caused by a will, instead of regarding this kind of causality to be subsumable under an objective will.

If the purposiveness we feel is not really caused by a will, and hence not an objective quality of the objects, the only way out is that this purposiveness is the very nature of our representational faculties. This purposiveness manifesting in the object of the aesthetic judgment exhibits the harmony between the free play of the imagination and the lawfulness of understanding. Though the purposiveness does have its basis in the object and its form, the beautiful form of object do not guide and prompt us to cognize the nature of the objects in depth. It indicates that this purposiveness we vividly feel in the aesthetic judgment of taste is purposive merely for our subjective cognitive powers, but not for the objects themselves.

The important insight of the discussion about purposiveness is that it demonstrates the entanglement of the mechanistic nature and the organic nature: the object we feel pleasure in its purposive form is at the same time the object in mechanistic nature which is determined by sensibility and understanding. There are two senses of "nature" in the *Critique of Judgment*. One is the mechanistic nature and the other is technic of nature. Mechanistic nature is the world determined by sensibility and understanding, in which the objects appear as mere aggregate and contingent. There is no system and creation in mechanistic nature, but only a blind causality. Technic of nature is the *view of nature*, in which we *assume* that there is a systematic connection of all empirical objects and of all empirical laws. Unlike the mechanistic nature, which is the mere sum total of objects, technic of nature does not refer downright to the objects in nature. It refers no more than to the specific capacity of human reason. Therefore, Kant repeatedly clarifies that it is the power of judgment

that is technical, instead of the nature itself: "So it is actually the power of judgment that is technical; nature is presented as technical only insofar as it harmonizes with, and [so] necessitates, that [technical] procedure of judgment."¹¹ Technic of nature is a very important concept in Kant's philosophy, without it being the case, it is impossible for us to account for the coherence and unity of experience and knowledge. Though technic of nature is neither the knowledge of nature, nor does it enrich our knowledge of nature, it is a necessary assumption and principle for us to have further investigation into the nature.

It is obvious that technic of nature is equivalent to organic nature, which later becomes a central concern for Schelling and the early German Romantics. Kant gives an important discussion on natural purposes or organized beings in *Critique of Judgment*. A thing can impossibly be brought forth by a purpose in mechanistic nature since in mechanistic nature there is only blind and natural causality. But to speak of a purpose one must presuppose a will or a concept of reason. Therefore, "natural purpose" seems to be a contradictory concept. In order to resolve the contradiction inherent in this concept, Kant suggests that "a thing exists as a natural purpose if it is both cause and effect of itself"¹². When we say that a thing is produced with a purpose, we always mean that it is caused by a will external to it, but it is not the case of natural purpose. There are two requirements for a thing to be called a natural purpose or an organized being. Firstly, "the possibility of its parts must depend on their relation to the whole."¹³ The second one is with more importance: in order to combine into the unity of a whole, the parts of an organized being have to become cause and effect of each other reciprocally. In other words,

¹¹ Ibid, p.220.

¹² Ibid, p. 371.

¹³ Ibid, p.373.

each part of an organized being *produces* the other parts. Even if there are deficiencies in some parts, the other parts will compensate the inadequacy and maintain the unity of the whole.

c) The Role and Status of Aesthetics in Kant's System

Accordingly, it is apparent that unity, wholeness and purposiveness are the principles of organization as well as an object of taste. Teleological judgment, while remaining in its purity and regulative use, is the same as the aesthetic judgment of taste. Aesthetic judgment of taste, as well as all the regulative principles of reason, despite their incapability of determining object with objective validity, appeal to a kind of universality which can only be justified from the innermost nature and demand of reason. The unity, wholeness and purposiveness inherent in the judgment of taste, including the judgment of the beautiful and the sublime, exhibits the unity of the faculties of reason. The judgment of the beautiful exhibits the harmony between imagination and understanding, whereas the judgment of the sublime exhibits the unity between imagination and reason. Besides, though the aesthetic judgment belongs neither to the theoretical nor practical reason, it *touches* both of them. On the one hand, the object of taste is simultaneously an object of theoretical reason. Kant confesses that "even a judgment of taste still has reference to the understanding"¹⁴ which leads to a concept but an indeterminate one. On the other hand, the free judgment of taste without itself being subjected to a heteronomy from empirical laws is indeed analogous to the pure self-legislation of reason in morality, which contributes to Kant's famous statement about beauty as the symbol of morality. It is in this way Kant *links* the two separated domains of reason by aesthetics. Aesthetics

¹⁴ Ibid, p.43, in Kant's own footnote.

is thus merely the *intermediate* point of the two major stems of philosophy.

Does it mean that for Kant the final task of philosophy or metaphysics is completed by aesthetics? The answer is certainly negative. Kant's introduction of aesthetics seems to be only a strategy to solve the problem in the system of philosophy: the separation between cognition and morality, which are the two doctrines of philosophy based on incompatible *a priori* principles. The outline of the system, the beginning and the end of philosophy and metaphysics are already determined in the first *Critique*:

“Metaphysics is divided into that of the speculative and that of the practical employment of pure reason, and is therefore either metaphysics of nature or metaphysics of morals. The term 'metaphysics', in its strict sense, is commonly reserved for the metaphysics of speculative reason. But as pure moral philosophy really forms part of this special branch of human and philosophical knowledge derived from pure reason, we shall retain for it the title 'metaphysics'.”¹⁵

Accompanied to the *Critique of Practical Reason*, in which the self-legislation of the pure will of reason and the necessary postulates of reason are fully articulated, the system is almost finished. It is obvious that no seat is reserved for aesthetics at the outset. In First Introduction of his *Critique of Judgment*, Kant maintains that since reflective judgment contains no objective proposition, the inquiry about aesthetics is thus subordinated only to a critique of pure reason, but does not constitute a

¹⁵ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith. Macmillan: London; St. Martin's: New York, 1968, pp. 659-660.

doctrine (like the theoretical and the practical reason) in the system of philosophy. Kant himself believes that a critique of reflective judgment can justify the unity of theoretical and practical reasons: "because the subject has this possibility within him, while outside [him] there is also the possibility that nature will harmonize with it, judgment finds itself referred to something that is both in the subject himself and outside him, something that is neither nature nor freedom and yet is linked with the basis of freedom, the supersensible, in which the theoretical and the practical power are in an unknown manner combined and joined into a unity."¹⁶ Nevertheless, the addition of the critique of aesthetic judgment and that of teleological judgment only further confirms and exhibits the fact of the entanglement of the two domains, instead of bringing forth any transformation to the established system and hence making the supersensible and the unity of the two domains becoming more attainable. Thus the unity and the combination of the two powers still remain unexplained in Kant.

In fact, the aesthetic judgment of taste is only a faculty different from both domains, and at the same time has affinity with each of them. It is far from being the unity or even the symbol of the unity of them. Kant's discourse on aesthetics in the *Critique of Judgment* is in general determined by the already well-established stems of the system of philosophy. Owing to the already well-established stems of philosophy, the discourse on aesthetics in Kant is destined to be restricted and formulated with reference to cognition and morality. Hence, aesthetics has never gained an independent status in Kantian philosophy, but is only a necessary supplement to his whole system.

¹⁶ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*, Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987, p.229.

(II) Metaphysics and Aesthetics in Schelling

A) The Unity of Reason and the Concept of the Absolute

From Kant's legacy, Schelling's enquiry into art has never been isolated from the questions of metaphysics. Dale Snow argues for "a fundamental tension that pervades all of Schelling's writings, that serves as the impetus for bringing into question the possibility of metaphysics."¹⁷ Schelling's project can be regarded as a questioning about the possibility of metaphysics, in which the doubts are always raised in virtue of the tensions between the subjective and the objective, freedom and necessity, soul and matter, and so on. On the basis of Kant's system, Schelling, as well as his contemporaries, is ambitious to solve the major question left by Kant: the unity of the theoretical and practical reason, of nature and freedom, of sensibility and understanding, of experience and ideas. Though Kant recognizes reason's innermost demand for unity and wholeness, and affirms the regulative power of the ideas, his system is full of dualism, in which the ideas are separated from the world and the dawn of the unity of reason readily sinks back into skepticism.

From Schelling's point of view, Kant assumes the unity of reason, but fails to ground the system upon that unity; the conclusion is correct but the premise is missing. Hence, he intends to make apparent the unknown supersensible ground of unity. In his early essay, Schelling has already insightfully suggested the central problem in Kant: "*how did we ever come to judge synthetically?*" This is what Kant asked at the very beginning of his work, and this question lies at the base of his entire philosophy as problem concerning the essential and common point of *all*

¹⁷ Snow, Dale E.. *Schelling and the End of Idealism*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 3.

philosophy.”¹⁸ Instead of asking the question about how synthetic judgment *a priori* is possible, Schelling reformulates the Kantian question: “How do I ever come to egress from the absolute, and to progress toward an opposite?”¹⁹ “How the absolute could come out of itself and oppose to itself a world?”²⁰ This reformulation shows a new conception of the system of philosophy or metaphysics on the basis of Kant. The unity of reason and the ideas, which are postulated and limited cautiously by Kant, are posited intrepidly by Schelling as the primordial ground and the original identity of nature and spirit. The unity of reason is now released from the restricted domain and becomes constitutive to existence and the essence of world and knowledge.

Kant himself indeed acknowledges the dignity of the unity of reason or the concept of the absolute, which is the innermost and highest principle of reason in organizing the act of understanding, and hence in all of reason’s activity:

The pure concepts of reason -- of totality in the synthesis of conditions -- are thus at least necessary as setting us the task of extending the unity of understanding, where possible, up to the unconditioned, and are grounded in the nature of human reason. These transcendental concepts may, however, be without any suitable corresponding employment *in concreto*, and may therefore have no other utility than that of so directing the understanding that, while it is extended to the uttermost, it is also at the same time brought into complete consistency with itself...I shall use the word ‘*absolute*’, opposing it to what is valid only comparatively, that is, in some particular respect. For while the latter is restricted

¹⁸ Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph, Schelling. “Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism”, in Trans. Fritz Marti. *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge : Four Early Essays, 1794-1796*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1980, p.164.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid, p.174.

by conditions, the former is valid without restriction. Now the transcendental concept of reason is directed always solely towards absolute totality in the synthesis of conditions, and never terminates save in what is absolutely, that is, in all relations, unconditioned. For pure reason leaves everything to the understanding -- the understanding [alone] applying immediately to the objects of intuition, or rather to their synthesis in the imagination. Reason concerns itself exclusively with absolute totality in the employment of the concepts of the understanding, and endeavours to carry the synthetic unity which is thought in the category, up to the completely unconditioned. We may call this unity of appearances the *unity of reason*, and that expressed by the category the *unity of understanding*. Reason accordingly occupies itself solely with the employment of understanding, not indeed in so far as the latter contains the ground of possible experience (for the concept of the absolute totality of conditions is not applicable in any experience, since no experience is unconditioned), but solely in order to prescribe to the understanding its direction towards a certain unity of which it has itself no concept, and in such manner as to unite all the acts of the understanding, in respect of every object, into an *absolute* whole. The objective employment of the pure concepts of reason is, therefore, always *transcendent*, while that of the pure concepts of understanding must, in accordance with their nature, and inasmuch as their application is solely to possible experience, be always *immanent*. (A324-326, B380-383)²¹

“The absolute” is the central concept of the German idealists. Kant has already points out the meaning of the concept of the absolute: unconditional, wholeness, totality, the

²¹ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith. Macmillan: London; St. Martin's: New York, 1968, pp. 316-318.

ultimate concept of unity, within which nothing is contradictory and opposing to each other. This is the pure concept which human reason can reach ultimately. What upsets Schelling and his contemporaries is only the transcendent and immanent use of Kant's idea of the absolute. For Kant the pure concept of reason applies merely to understanding, or in a wider sense to the *a priori* structure of the cognitive faculties. It has nothing to do with the world. If that is the case, what does it unite? How can reason eventually know the world, and posit the thing-in-itself which is heterogeneous to itself? It is insufficient to answer this by the power of sensibility, since without recognition of things outside, sensibility is impossible. Kant's concept of pure reason is only significant in explaining the order of the world, but leaves the *existence* of the world to a mystery. The dilemma is that on the one hand, Kant certainly affirms the existence of external world and sometimes even intends to make a proof, which differentiates his system from those of Berkeley; on the other hand, Kant's system leaves the existence of the external world unexplained, which either revives skepticism, or leads to a vital inconsistency with reason's demand for unity. Therefore, to illustrate the existence of the external world and to demonstrate its identity with reason or spirit become the common concern and struggle of the German Idealists and even the early German Romantics, who intend to develop and complete the system laid by Kant instead of falling prey to skepticism.

If the system of philosophy is to be consistent and completed, for Schelling, the unity of reason must be reformulated into the "absolute identity". The original unity does not take place after separation, for otherwise the separation and the heterogeneous elements cannot be explained. The original unity must be *priori* to any separation and existence, and if the existence of all that will be separated can be accounted for, the primordial unity, as the ground of existence of all beings, must be

the primordial or absolute identity of all that will be separated and differentiated. Schelling aims at a reconciliation of the projects of Fichte and Spinoza in attaining the absolute unity: "Fichte's importance for Schelling lies in his suggestion of how, within the subject, there is an 'infinite' aspect which philosophy can show more emphatically than Kant thought possible. Schelling adopts from Spinoza the refusal to consider the ground of thought and the ground of material existence as ultimately separable."²² In his early essay "Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism", Schelling criticizes dogmatism and idealism. The former seeks to dissolve the subject into an absolute object which is perfectly represented in Spinoza, while the latter seeks to dissolve the object into an absolute subject which is represented in Fichte. What the young Schelling attempts to establish is criticism, the reconciliation of dogmatism and idealism. Though the projects of Fichte and Spinoza avail the construction of the system, Schelling soon notices their insufficiencies. In Fichte's system, nature is subordinated under the activity of the absolute I, or under the moral activity, in which necessity and independence of nature and reality cannot be fully explained; in Spinoza's system, everything follows with necessity from the absolute nature, the *causa sui*, in which freedom and moral autonomy seem to become incomprehensible. Either the subject swallows up the object, or the object the subject. In both projects the victorious one leaves the existence and reality of the loser unexplained. The fundamental problem is that in the opposing projects the victory of one end over another still assumes an opposition between subject and object, nature and spirit. Schelling's absolute identity of nature and consciousness denotes that the absolute is neither nature nor consciousness, and because of the common ground nature and consciousness essentially encompass and develop towards each other.

²² Andrew Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: an Introduction*. London, New York: Routledge, 1993, p.16.

B) A Dynamic System and Art as the Final Destination of the System

In order to account for the existence of the external world out of the absolute identity, a dimension of genesis and dynamics becomes unavoidable for Schelling's system. Schelling repeatedly emphasizes throughout his life that philosophy must begin from the absolute and finally return to the absolute, which is what Kant's system fails to finish: "a system is completed when it is led back to its starting point...we have gradually led our object, the self itself, up to the very point where we ourselves were standing when we began to philosophize."²³ In this way, a system of philosophy is no more a task of critique, delimitation and ordering proceeded by an outsider, but is process or development of the activity of the absolute or the primordial ground in making itself apparent to itself, the history of self-realization and self-intuition of the absolute. While Kant recognizes the concept of the absolute and restricts it in the domain of pure reason, Schelling intends to break through the delimitation by positing the absolute as the primordial ground of existence, which instead of being regulative, is also constitutive to the external world and possible experience. Limitation, for Schelling, is no longer a Kantian delimitation of the domain of validity, but is an essential activity and condition of the absolute in order to intuit and reflect itself, that is, the activity by which objects and beings are generated.

Then, in what stage is Schelling's system, or the self-realization of the absolute completed? The answer of Schelling in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* is art. In aesthetic production and the works of art, nature and spirit are completely

²³ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Trans. Peter Heath. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978, p.232.

reconciled, and the highest task of the system, the “objectification of the intellectual intuition”, is attained in the works of art, in which the identity of freedom and necessity becomes an object for the self-intuition of the absolute. I would not digress here into the detail of it, which has to be embarked upon in the following chapters. In this prelude, I merely intend to unveil the context and background of Schelling’s philosophy of art.

Like Kant, aesthetics in Schelling is proposed in relation to the final task of philosophy, namely the complete system of reason’s uses or metaphysics. In the system of philosophy aesthetics is related to the innermost nature of pure reason or the absolute which tends to see purposiveness and unity in natural objects. It at the outset determines the necessary relation between metaphysics and aesthetics. Unlike Kant, Schelling’s system, at least in his early stage, is indeed completed by a philosophy of art. It is for Schelling that reflection, which is the method adopted by Kant, is insufficient to accomplish the absolute’s demand for self-illumination, since reflection still presupposes the opposition between the subjective and the objective, which is manifested in most part of Kant’s system of philosophy. Hence, if the system is to be or can be completed, the completeness must be attained by means of the activity which is simultaneously free and compelled, conscious and unconscious, that is, by art. In this way, Schelling’s philosophy demonstrates the limitation of understanding and reflection concerning the final task of metaphysics. Reflection has long been posited as the equivalence of reason, especially in the age of modernity, from the Enlightenment on. Along with it is the distinction between understanding and sensibility, the overflowing of rationality and the suppression of feeling and sensation, as well as man’s domination over and manipulation of nature. Schelling’s proposal of the philosophy of art tends to be an attempt to give a solution of the

problem generated by the metaphysical need of reason accompanied with the limitation of reflection. Though the status of philosophy of art seems not remain unchanged in Schelling's thought and in later Schelling art is seldom discussed, his contentions on art do still play an important role within his system, and understanding art with reference to his fundamental concern on the metaphysical problem and systematicity of philosophy even paves a way for us to understand his later focus on freedom and religion.

C) On Art Becoming a Major Concern in Aesthetics and Philosophy

a) Aesthetic Judgment as the Main Focus of Kant's Aesthetics

Although Kant is the first who places aesthetics within the system of philosophy, it is obvious that Kant's aesthetics focuses mainly on the aesthetic *judgment*, especially the judgment of the beautiful. The judgment of taste can be divided into the judgment of the beautiful and the judgment of the sublime. By the use of "taste", Kant sometimes denotes the judgment of the beautiful only. For example, in the Section 50 of *Critique of Judgment*, which emphasizes the combination of taste with genius in the products of fine art, Kant states that "in order for a work to be beautiful, it is not strictly necessary that it be rich and original in ideas, but it is necessary that the imagination in its freedom be commensurate with the lawfulness of the understanding."²⁴ Besides, he says that "the concept of the sublime in nature is not nearly as important and rich in implications as that of the beautiful in nature, and that this concept indicates nothing purposive whatever in nature itself but only in what use we can make of our intuitions of nature so that we can feel a purposiveness within ourselves entirely independent of nature...this is a crucial preliminary remark,

²⁴ Immanuel Kant. *Critique of Judgment*, Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987, p.319.

which separates our ideas of the sublime completely from the idea of a purposiveness of nature, and turns the theory of the sublime in to a mere appendix to our aesthetic judging of the purposiveness of nature."²⁵ It is evident that although the *Analytic of the Sublime* is the counterpart of the *Analytic of the Beautiful*, it has only a marginal status in Kant's aesthetics. Even the sublime has a power to elevate the spirit of human beings, yet it is not the main concern of Kant in his aesthetics because the judgment of the sublime is not the pure and essential kind of reflective judgment.

In the judgment of the sublime, the object is too large or too mighty that we cannot grasp its form by either the imagination or the sensibility, the situations make it hardly possible for us to recognize the limit of the object, and hence its form. So the object of sublime is represented as formless. The feeling of pleasure in the judgment of the sublime is due to the consciousness of our own vocation or the supersensible substrate which could not be dominated by external forces and is superior to the nature. However, this pleasure is given rise by means of displeasure due to inability of imagination or sensibility. In having the feeling of absolute or infinity when judging the object as sublime, we know that the imagination and the sensibility are incapable of grasping the infinity and resisting the might of the object. In the judgment of the beautiful, the purposiveness is given rise by the harmony between the free play of imagination and the lawfulness of understanding. In the judgment of the sublime, however, the purposiveness appears purposive for the reason and not purposive for the imagination. It is a conflict, rather than a harmony. Hence, Kant's partiality for the judgment of the beautiful is to a great extent due to his attempt to maintain the purity of reflective judgment in his aesthetics, which is an important intermediate link or harmony between the power of theoretical reason and

²⁵ Ibid, p.246.

practical reason. Regarding this concern, the judgment of the beautiful alone becomes the essential concern of Kant's aesthetics.

Instead of the sublime, art including the aesthetic production and the works of art, which would become a main concern of subsequent philosophers, is indeed the genuine appendix of Kant's aesthetics. His discussion on art is only placed at the later part of the Deduction of the pure aesthetic judgment. Besides, the transition from the Deduction of judgment of taste to the discussion on art lacks an adequate clarification. Regarding the question whether taste or genius is more important in fine art, Kant's answer is definitely in favor of taste. It is evident for Kant that taste is the necessary condition of aesthetic judgment as well as aesthetic production: "now insofar as art shows genius it does indeed deserve to be called inspired, but it deserves to be called fine art only insofar as it shows taste. Hence what we must look to above all, when we judge art as fine art, is taste, at least as an indispensable condition."²⁶ Therefore, although the *Critique of Judgment* does include some discussions on art which are influential to subsequent philosophers, what Kant's aesthetics presents is no more than a philosophy of taste, which has never developed into a philosophy of art.

b) Philosophy of Art as a Main Concern in Schelling's System

Schelling is the first who places a philosophy of art in a truly crucial position within the system of philosophy and gives a systematic investigation of art in general and of its different forms. For Schelling the basic character of a work of art is the

²⁶ Ibid, p.319.

“unconscious infinity [synthesis of nature and freedom].”²⁷ Since the aesthetic production proceeds from the infinite opposition between conscious and unconscious activities, the works of art manifest the reconciliation of the ultimate contradictions between the conscious and the unconscious, freedom and necessity. What a work of art presents is “an infinite finitely displayed”.²⁸ In a single work of art which is made of sensible and limited material, the infinite separation and reconciliation are manifested in a moment. Not only the primordial origin, but also the whole history of consciousness, is embodied in the work of art with infinite tranquility. It is evident that the mission to unify the heterogeneous and opposing poles is designated to art instead of to Kant’s aesthetic judgment. There is no place of aesthetic judgment in Schelling’s philosophy of art, the beautiful and the sublime, instead of being natures of aesthetic judgments, are taken to be more likely as the characteristics of the works of art.

Besides, for Kant, the judgment to the beauty of nature is superior and prior to that of works of art, for the former is based on liking of the mere form of object whereas the latter unavoidably presupposes a purpose as the cause of object and hence the concept of perfection. Therefore, the judgment on artistic beauty or liking of artistic beauty is “no longer purely aesthetic, no longer a mere judgment of taste...and so we make a teleological judgment that serves the aesthetic one as a foundation and condition that it must take into account”²⁹ It is apparent that Kant’s preference of natural beauty to artistic beauty is determined by the degree of purity in which the specific and independent nature of reflective judgment can be purely

²⁷ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Trans. Peter Heath. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978, p.225.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Immanuel Kant. *Critique of Judgment*, Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987, p.312.

represented. In opposing to Kant, Schelling unhesitatingly points out that natural beauty is contingent. We do not necessarily judge nature as beautiful, but it is necessary for us to judge whether an artistic object is beautiful. Thus, the experience in art, whether creation or judgment, precedes the judgment on natural beauty and indeed provides the standard as well as guidance to the latter: “[if beauty is essentially the resolution of an infinite conflict] the organic product of nature will likewise not necessarily be beautiful, and if it is so, its beauty will appear as altogether contingent, since the condition thereof cannot be thought of as existing in nature... Whence it is self-evident what we are to think of the imitation of nature as a principle of art; for so far from the merely contingent beauty of nature providing the rule to art, the fact is, rather, that what art creates in its perfection is the principle and norm for the judgment of natural beauty.”³⁰

The conception of philosophy and that of philosophy of art included in the *System of Transcendental Idealism* and *Philosophy of Art* are related in a very subtle manner. In his *Philosophy of Art*, Schelling investigates art in general and its specific forms systematically and even proposes a system of art forms. In *Philosophy of Art*, Schelling no longer claims that art is the document and organ of philosophy; instead, regarding the status and significance, art stands parallel to philosophy. It seems that art no longer plays the completing role in the system of philosophy as what is described in *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Hence, many scholars argue that in Schelling’s philosophy there exists a transition from romanticism, for which art is superior to philosophy, to idealism, for which only philosophy can unfold the ultimate truth and the primordial ground of the world. Whether there is a transition

³⁰ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Trans. Peter Heath. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978, pp.226-227.

from romanticism to idealism in Schelling's thought is another main focus of this dissertation. It is not only a matter of tracing or positing Schelling's thought, rather, following this line of thought the relationship between art and philosophy, and the significance of art in Schelling's thought can be articulated in a more refined fashion.

D) Schelling—A Romanticist or an Idealist?

The intellectual identity of Schelling is not without controversy. Some scholars think that he is a representative of German Idealism preceding and contributing to Hegel's system, yet some think that he was a prince of early German Romanticism. The even subtler view is that Schelling's philosophy includes a transition from romanticism to idealism, in which the transition point is controversial. There arises the problem of periodization of Schelling's thought, which is not only a technical or historical problem, but essentially affiliates with the interpretation of Schelling's philosophy. It is remarkable that the discussion of Schelling's transition between romanticism and idealism is to a large extent related to his intricate view on the philosophy of art. Manfred Frank thinks that Schelling in *System of Transcendental Idealism* is a romantic, whereas his contentions in *Philosophy of Art* incline towards idealism. According to Frank, early German romanticism is founded upon the philosophical position which maintains the incapability of grasping the Absolute by reflection and abstract thinking and speaks in favor of art as the only medium to realize the absolute ground. On the contrary, German idealism believes that both artistic language and abstract conception are adequate to comprehend the Absolute. Frank thinks that *Philosophy of Art* belongs to the period of identity philosophy of

Schelling, which mainly presents view of German idealism.³¹

In line with Frank, Andrew Bowie in his earlier writing divides Schelling's thought into three stages: the early stage extends from mid 1790s to 1800, the stage of identity philosophy from 1801 to 1809, and the later stage from 1809 to the end of Schelling within which freedom and positive philosophy become the main concern.³² Although Bowie has not discussed in this work the ideas in *Philosophy of Art* and hence Schelling's transition between romanticism and idealism under this periodization, the sharp distinction between the *System of Transcendental Idealism* and the *Philosophy art* is implied in his clear-cut distinction between the first and second stages.

Nevertheless, in Schelling's later discussion³³, it is quite difficult to clarify whether his views are idealistic or romantic. Concerning the division between idealism and romanticism, Bowie suggests two kinds of views. The first view is that the idealists seek new philosophical foundations on the basis of the founding role of self-consciousness, whereas the romantics realize that the activity of consciousness (including self-consciousness) ever contains opposition and separation and thus cannot become the genuine foundation of philosophy. The second view on the division between idealism and romanticism focuses on their difference in the conception of art. The idealistic one aims at synthesizing art and all other sciences, that is, to synthesize the sensuous and the ideal, in a collective manner, which is first represented in the "Oldest System Programme of German Idealism"; whereas the

³¹ see 曼弗雷德·弗蘭克：《德國早期浪漫主義美學導論》，聶軍等譯，吉林：吉林人民出版社，2006，ch. 13.

³² See Andrew Bowie. *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: an Introduction*. London, New York: Routledge, 1993.

³³ See Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003, ch.4.

romantics pursue contingency and individuality in art.

In discerning Schelling's tension between idealism and romanticism in *System of Transcendental Idealism* and *Philosophy of Art*, Bowie is in fact based on the second view of the division between idealism and romanticism. He thinks that the position of art in *System of Transcendental Idealism* is almost the same as that in *Philosophy of Art*. In the former, Schelling thinks that art can *unify* what philosophy infinitely demands for and strives toward. Concerning the latter, Bowie states that the text is much more linked to idealism than to romanticism since art thus becomes a kind of language in which idea, word and things are inseparably and necessarily bound up with each other, rather than arbitrarily related. Hence, the significance of the particular intuition of art is sustained not for its own particularity, but for its potentiality to show the absolute totality in itself. Bowie's two definitions on romanticism and idealism are not without perplexity, in which the second view on idealism may be inconsistent with the first one, that is, the idealistic conception of art in its unifying or synthesizing power may in some cases contradict the idealistic view that philosophy must be grounded on the basis of self-consciousness. Nevertheless, Bowie's work does reveal the complex entanglement of the romantic and the idealistic inclination in Schelling's philosophy.

In order to investigate the significance of art in Schelling, a discerning of his romantic and idealistic inclination, at least within his philosophy of art, is an unavoidable task. And in order to accomplish this, the opposition or distinction between romanticism and idealism must be thoroughly discussed first. Instead of making a clear-cut distinction between the two intellectual movements, one situation is to a large extent possible: the opposition between romanticism and idealism may

not be an absolute one, and hence Schelling's thought belongs to neither, but is the hovering or even the unity of both.

(III)The Tasks of this Dissertation

This dissertation aims at unfolding the significance of art by investigating Schelling's aesthetics. Since Schelling's contentions in his philosophy of art is closely affiliate with the metaphysical context of aesthetics, the significance of art in Schelling should be unveiled mainly in relation to his conception of philosophy. The significance of art in relation to philosophy is indeed not a particular and arbitrary question cast by Schelling according to his mere individual preference. If the final task of philosophy is to unfold the ultimate foundation of truth and the primordial ground of existence, discussing art in relation to philosophy implies that art is a possible way to the ultimate truth or the primordial ground of existence, which are the first and ultimate questions in the investigation of the significance of art. In his *System of Transcendental Idealism*, Schelling lays claim on art's supreme role in accomplishing the vocation of philosophy; in *Philosophy of Art*, he shows concretely and in details how art in its different forms fulfills its role.

In this dissertation, two major tasks will be embarked upon in order to articulate the significance of art in Schelling. The first one is to expose art's relation to philosophy and its role within the system of philosophy under Schelling's conception. Schelling's conception of the significance of art is indeed revealed and determined in his approach to the discourse on art: truly placing art within the system of philosophy. Then, what does a system of philosophy, and hence a system of art mean? What are the specific characteristics of Schelling's system of philosophy and that of art? Is it

necessary to expose the nature and significance of art within a system? Does Schelling unfold his discourse on art within a system similar to that of Hegel? In order to accentuate Schelling's view, the relevant ideas of Kant, Hegel and the early German romantics are to be discussed as well.

The second task to be tackled asks whether there is a transition from romanticism to idealism in Schelling's discourse in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* and *Philosophy of Art*. Is the significance of art in revealing the ultimate truth or primordial ground of existence recanted by Schelling himself? In *System of Transcendental Idealism*, Schelling attempts to show that the ultimate vocation of philosophy is completed by art alone, instead of by philosophy itself. Even though Schelling seems not to sustain this view in his later work on art, the *Philosophy of Art*, art still has a higher status than sciences in revealing the ultimate truth. In this dissertation, I would like to argue that in Schelling's *Philosophy of Art*, philosophy still needs to be completed and realized by a philosophy of art. There is thus no essential transition of the views on art from *System of Transcendental Idealism* to *Philosophy of Art*, and hence no transition from romanticism to idealism, which is a prevalent interpretation of Schelling's philosophy. Instead, Schelling's aesthetics attempts to hover between the two conceptual camps in order to reconcile them. In order to embark upon this complicated question, an investigation on the opposition and relation of romanticism and idealism is prerequisite. The more general question concerning the romantic and idealistic inclination in Schelling's philosophy is limited to the sphere of his aesthetics in this dissertation.

In the concluding chapter, Schelling's philosophical insights which anticipate the contemporary discourses on art and truth is revealed with reference to Gadamer's

and Heidegger's discourses on art. Hence, the investigation of Schelling's thought, besides being of interest for the history of Western philosophy, also has contemporary relevance.

Part One: Approaching Art—System and Art

When we ask about the nature, meaning, or significance of an object, we are necessarily involved in an activity of reflection, in which we split ourselves from the immediate preoccupation with the object enquired and raise ourselves to the intellectual and conceptual world above direct experience. It is evident that philosophy is inseparable from the power of reflection, and philosophizing is even commonly taken as an activity equal to reflection. However, we can reflect upon anything and in many ways. All sciences and scholarship are activities and products of reflection, even in our common language there are elements of reflection. If the splitting from direct and immediate experience is the basic condition of reflection, language itself should be regarded as the first product, not only a condition, of reflection. In this way, concerning our subject matter, art has already been reflected and investigated by many disciplines and in many ways. Then, there arises a question about how art becomes an object of philosophy specifically.

This question has supreme importance since the approach or the way of reflection to the object manifests the genuine concern of a philosophical reflection on art and determines the essence and significance of the object within the investigation. The question and the approach of it indeed anticipate the answer. The question concerning the way of art to become the object of philosophy, in fact, can be subtly divided into two: the first is concerned about art as an object *of* philosophy, while the other enquires art as an object *within* philosophy. Not only the meaning of art, but also the conception of philosophy is different within these two approaches. Let me explain the difference. In contrast to the latter, enquiring art as an object *of* philosophy shows that art may not necessarily be an object of philosophy. For this

attitude assumes that philosophy stands outside of art, art is arbitrarily or contingently taken as its object, and the investigation on art is merely a contingent division of philosophy. On the contrary, if art is taken as an object *within* philosophy, it implies that art is necessarily investigated by philosophy, and more importantly, the investigation on art is itself a part or a constitutive content of philosophy.

According to this distinction, we can further infer that without taking the object as its inner part, all investigations of philosophy, and hence, the content of philosophy, are merely contingent, and what is essential to it is only some forms or directions of reflection. Under such a conception, philosophy is only some methods or forms without having its own content: everything can be investigated, but none is *necessarily* its object. Such kind of philosophy is not aware of, or thinks it has no need to, justify its object, hence, the distinction between philosophy and other kinds of reflection becomes blurred. I do not intend to eliminate all of the values of this conception of philosophy, but this is certainly not the case in Kant and the German idealists.

Enquiring an object within philosophy does not mean that there simply are determinate contents in philosophy. If that is the case, we can further question about the origin or the source of these contents, and they may be treated as posited dogmatically or arbitrarily if without satisfactory justification. Therefore, enquiring art as an object within philosophy indicates that philosophy is a system, because only as a system can philosophy endow necessity to its part and then justify its content. Thus, in the investigation of art within a system of philosophy, not only are the nature and significance of art revealed, but the systematicity of philosophy itself is also reflected upon in the investigation. In this way, the relation between philosophy

itself and its objects becomes inseparable.

If philosophy is a system, what kind of system does it belong to? And what does a system mean? Concerning the subject matter of this dissertation, these questions are better examined firstly with the help of Kant. An investigation on the significance of art in Schelling is no more than an investigation of art within Schelling's system of philosophy. The system of philosophy determines the approach, the content and the conclusion of the investigation. Schelling, as well as his idealistic and romantic contemporaries, inherits much from Kant especially in regard to the idea of systematicity of philosophy. Kant's division of reason or philosophy into theoretical and practical, his distinction between sensibility and understanding, and other important insight and distinctions, become the common ground and starting point of the philosophical thinking of Schelling and his contemporaries. Hence, in order to expose the nature of the system of philosophy, the specific approach to art, and the relationship between the discourse on art and the system of philosophy in Schelling, an examination of the system of Kant is still unavoidable.

Chapter One: System and Art in Kant

(I) Transcendental Philosophy as a System—Unity, Totality and Position

Although Kant embarks upon different subject matters, namely knowledge, morality and aesthetics, in his three *Critiques*, he has never described himself as tackling various kinds of theories or philosophies, as many contemporary philosophers do. On the contrary, he repeatedly emphasizes the connection and unity of these investigations, and entitles his own philosophy “transcendental philosophy” or “critical philosophy”. For Kant, there are no various kinds of philosophies, such as philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, philosophy of religion, and so on. Instead, his philosophical investigations into different subject matters belong to one philosophy. Kant believes there should be necessary connection between real problems of philosophy. Hence, the different doctrines or different subject matters of philosophy do not constitute different philosophies. Rather, if there is necessary connection between them, what they constitute are only different domains of one philosophy. “Transcendental philosophy is only the idea of a science, for which the critique of pure reason has to lay down the complete architectonic plan. That is to say, it has to guarantee, as following from principles, the completeness and certainty of the structure in all its parts. It is the system of all principles of pure reason.”³⁴ Though Kant sometimes modestly claims that his critique has not exhausted the completeness of transcendental philosophy, it is apparent that this idea of transcendental philosophy is the idea which guides his investigations on different

³⁴ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith. Macmillan: London; St. Martin's: New York, 1968, p. 60.

subject matters, under which his philosophical doctrines are endeavors to attain the completeness of transcendental philosophy.

In Kant's conception, transcendental philosophy, as an architectonic plan, is not a sum total of investigations on different subject matters, but is rather a system. For Kant, a system is the "unity of the manifold modes of knowledge under one idea"³⁵. This one idea behind different modes of knowledge is exactly the idea of unity, which has already presupposed a unity under *one* idea. Without this unity under one ultimate idea all of our knowledge and experience are only aggregate and contingent. It shows that a system of philosophy arises from an intolerance of the contingent mode of knowledge and from a demand for bringing forth necessity to them. One source of this necessity of the manifold modes of knowledge is that these modes of knowledge are determined by principles *a priori*, which are principles beyond experience. This is the first criterion for the reflection or the critique of these modes of knowledge in becoming a content of transcendental philosophy, which is philosophy proper for Kant. However, the relation between the necessity and the unity of the manifold modes of knowledge is indicated in another sense of necessity: the necessity of the positions of the modes of knowledge.

The target of transcendental philosophy is not only to unveil the *a priori* principles which participate in the determination of different kinds of object, but also to determine the positions of different kinds of object, and hence the positions of the *a priori* principles in different powers of human reason. Position of a thing presupposes the existence of the others and the relation and connection between them. Accordingly, we can imagine that everything has connection with the others and

³⁵ Ibid, p.653.

subsequently the whole world becomes a great web or a totality of the connections, in which everything has its peculiar position relative to the others. Nevertheless, it should be noted that for Kant the connections of different modes of knowledge is not an objective fact, nor is the totality a consequent or a result of mutual determination of the objects. The former cannot be proved by experience, or does not have any givenness from sensibility, since it is impossible to investigate all empirical objects in order to justify this idea. Even though we can investigate all of the empirical objects and conclude that there is a totality of mutual connection between all empirical objects and modes of knowledge, it is still an empirical conclusion, that is, a conclusion drawn *a posteriori*, and hence the totality of the mutual connections or determinations between all objects becomes again a sum total and a blind mechanism, which are counter to Kant's idea of unity and system.

For Kant, totality or unity is the innermost idea of pure reason. Although the discourse of it is brought forth from analysis of the forms of judgments and in this sense can be taken as a discovery *from* experience, the nature of the idea of totality or unity is indeed independent from and precedes experience. Unity or totality is not the objective and present state of experience, but only the subjective but necessary view and demand of human reason. It is the innermost nature of reason and according to that the possibility of experience and sciences are established *primordially*, though not directly. It is not the case that we derive the concept of totality or unity from experience, but rather that the concept of totality or unity guides and motivates us to discover the linkages and connections within experience and knowledge. Our investigations into nature and experience are conducted by the idea of totality or unity, and we will consider our knowledge as defective and insufficient as long as it is not adequate to the idea of unity. Hence, Kant maintains that his transcendental

philosophy is formed “in architectonic fashion, in view of the affinity of its parts and of their derivation from a single supreme and inner end, through which the whole is first made possible”³⁶ The idea of the whole or totality is for Kant realized architectonically or systematically in accordance with the end of reason:

“If we consider in its whole range the knowledge obtained for us by the understanding, we find that what is peculiarly distinctive of reason in its attitude to this body of knowledge, is that it prescribes and seeks to achieve its *systematisation*, that is, to exhibit the connection of its parts in conformity with a single principle. This unity of reason always presupposes an idea, namely, that of the form of a whole of knowledge -- a whole which is prior to the determinate knowledge of the parts and which contains the conditions that determine *a priori* for every part its position and relation to the other parts. This idea accordingly postulates a complete unity in the knowledge obtained by the understanding, by which this knowledge is not a mere contingent aggregate, but a system connected according to necessary laws. We may not say that this idea is a concept of the object, but only of the thoroughgoing unity of such concepts, in so far as that unity serves as a rule for the understanding.”³⁷

Accordingly, under the systematization of reason, which presupposes idea of totality or wholeness, reason gives laws and unity to the pure concepts of understanding, and the *positions* of different applications and principles of reason are thus determined *a priori* and necessarily. Accordingly, the objects are no longer single and independent,

³⁶ *ibid*, p.654.

³⁷ *ibid*, p.534.

but are organically related to the others and to totality. By the same token, nature is no longer blind but becomes an organic nature.

(II) Dualism in Kant's System

It is obvious that unity or totality is the central idea and the ultimate demand of Kant's system, yet his system unavoidably falls into dualism. Kant's system is divided into the doctrine of theoretical reason and that of practical reason according to different subject matters and principles. The former is concerned about the possibility of knowledge or science whereas the latter the possibility of morality. Knowledge must be possible by means of the cooperation of sensibility and understanding, while morality is possible by reason and freedom alone. There arises the distinction between sensibility and understanding, and hence, between appearance and thing-in-itself. These two are heterogeneous principles which cannot be unified. Hence, theoretical reason and practical reason are separated in principle. However, since it is the inner end of reason to seek to achieve a system according to the postulate or the idea of unity, there arises a contradiction between the demand and the result in Kant's system. He himself is certainly aware of this contradiction, and his discourses on aesthetics and teleological judgment are the major responses to this problem.

Nevertheless, it seems that Kant is not very eager to resolve this contradiction. As I have shown in the Introduction, the domain of reflective judgment and aesthetics is only an intermediate realm between the domains of theoretical reason and that of practical reason. The reflective judgment of taste has affinities to both of the employments of reason: on the one hand, the object of taste is simultaneously the

object of theoretical reason, besides, though the concept in reflective judgment of taste is indeterminate, it still contains the cognitive power in general, that is, the cooperation of imagination and understanding. On the other hand, the judgment of taste is made freely which is devoid of all interest. It resembles the autonomy in morality and manifests the freedom or the supersensible substrate in human reason. It is apparent that Kant only adds an intermediate domain between the separated domains of theoretical and practical reason, *bridging* them with a transition, but in no way uniting them in principle. The dualism between the sensibility and the understanding, and hence appearance and thing-in-itself, still remains after the exposition of the structure of reflective judgment.

Accordingly, if systematization is to realize and articulate the genuine unity of knowledge and freedom, there should be in the system only one ultimate principle which unifies the apparently heterogeneous principles, since only by means of this can the demand of the system be satisfied. This monistic systematic approach is indeed generated out of the very demand. Unless we ignore the demand, a dualistic system ever remains unsatisfactory. A monistic system is indeed the basic belief of the successors of Kant such as Reinhold, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. Reinhold's elementary philosophy, as a methodology different from that of Kant, emphasizes that the system should start from a simple principle or proposition from which other different principles are derived. This insight made a great impact on Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. However, the successors of Kant were refused by their predecessor. Although Kant himself has said that systematization was the endeavor to exhibit the connection of the parts in conformity with a single principle, he opposes to any belief and methodology conforming to what is exposed in Reinhold's elementary philosophy. It seems to be a strange controversy: the one who first introduces the

unity of reason was the one who vigorously opposes the system starting from one simple principle in order to solve the problem of dualism. In order to make this situation more comprehensible, the meaning of unity and totality in Kant's system should be further examined.

(III) Kant's Crucial Position concerning Systematicity

A) Transcendental Philosophy as an Ascending Process

Within Kant's text, the ideas of unity and totality (or whole) are almost equivalent and interchangeable. Although Kant repeatedly emphasizes that these ideas are not derived and acquired from experience, and are the *a priori* principles preceding experience, he does equally emphasize the *ascending process* to the ideas of unity and totality, which greatly contributes to his opposition to any monism or one-dimensional system such as that of Reinhold:

“[T]ranscendental ideas thus serve only for *ascending*, in the series of conditions, to the unconditioned, that is, to principles. As regards the *descending* to the conditioned, reason does, indeed, make a very extensive logical employment of the laws of understanding, but no kind of transcendental employment; and if we form an idea of the absolute totality of such a synthesis (of the *progressus*), as, for instance, of the whole series of all *future* alterations in the world, this is a creation of the mind (*ens rationis*) which is only arbitrarily thought, and not a necessary presupposition of reason. For the possibility of the conditioned presupposes the totality of its conditions, but not of its consequences.”³⁸

³⁸ *ibid.*, p.325.

Although Kant maintains that the ideas, the unconditioned, are *a priori* principles of pure reason which lie beyond experience, he does not approve to construct the system according to an ultimate or fundamental principle from which all other principles and knowledge are derived. Dieter Henrich has pointed out the difference of Kant's system from a deductive one: "Instead philosophy must remain an investigation. Because it cannot begin with the principle of the system, the system – but not the method – of philosophy is the *result*...This implies that critical philosophy can never use Euclidean methods. It can never develop a deductive form that believes it needs one single principle of some highest proposition (axiom), antecedent to commencing philosophical argumentation. Thus philosophy remains what Plato had claimed it to be – an ascent (*epanodos*), a climbing."³⁹ Any system which starts from the highest principle is only a descending one, and hence is mysticism for Kant, since it ventures into the principles and domains beyond any application of reason and are unstable and incapable of supporting anything else. It is for this reason that in the letters to Fichte and Reinhold, Kant has warned them to "stay away from further investigations into the origins of knowledge beyond the scope of the condition of its possible application to science or to metaphysics."⁴⁰

Up to now, it is apparent that though what Kant establishes is a system of transcendental philosophy, experience still plays an important role. On the one hand, the possibility of conditions of experience is guided by the innermost regulative principles of reason, such as ideas of unity and totality; on the other, the nature and the extension of the system are still restricted by the application of reason in experience. In the world of concept or pure thought, idea precedes experience, yet

³⁹ Henrich, Dieter. *Between Kant and Hegel : lectures on German idealism*. Ed. David S. Pacini. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003, p.60.

⁴⁰ *ibid*, p.34.

regarding the activity of reflection, experience is the starting point. Besides, the idea of systematic unity is only an ideal or postulate for us "in seeking for such unity in the connection of things, according to universal laws of nature; and we ought, therefore, to believe that we have approximated to completeness in the employment of the principle only in proportion as we are in a position to verify such unity in empirical fashion -- a completeness which is never, of course, attainable."⁴¹ Hence, the completeness of the system is only an idea and the unity has to be ever realized in experience or empirical research. Richard Kroner in his *The Worldview of Kant* has rightly pointed out that a monistic system is for Kant only an ideal or an object of faith. Regarding this ideal, the system is never completed but is ever in struggle⁴². For Kroner, the separation or dualism between necessity and freedom is the necessary condition for the possibility of man to practice his moral action and to discover the meaning of the world and himself, and it is the inner reason for Kant's disapproval of a completed monistic philosophical system. Although Kroner's view is based on his opinion about the primacy of morality or practical reason in Kant, which is still a debatable question, his judgment on Kant's systematicity is indeed significant and notable.

B) Kant's Concept of Unity as Harmony

If the word "unity" denotes a synthesis resolving or eliminating contradictions or heterogeneous things, which is so for the German idealists including Schelling, the concept of "totality" seems to be more tolerant of heterogeneous things and even contradiction. Following the explication above, the

⁴¹ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith. Macmillan: London; St. Martin's: New York, 1968, p.563.

⁴² Kroner, Richard. 《論康德與黑格爾》, 關子尹編譯, 台北: 聯經出版事業公司, 1985, ch. 2.

meaning of unity or totality in Kant should be grasped according to the concept of *harmony*. This is a crucial concept in his critique of aesthetic judgments. In exposing the nature of aesthetic judgment, Kant repeatedly emphasizes the harmony between the free play of imagination and the lawfulness of understanding. Similarly, in teleological judgment, nature is viewed as purposive or organic in which the parts are reciprocally means and ends, cause and effect, to each other. Thus, reciprocity and harmony are manifested in an organic product and even in the whole organic nature. Contrary to the strict sense of unity, the concept of harmony only demands the *reciprocity* and *cooperation* of different things and principles without dissolving them. In fact, reciprocity and cooperation indeed presuppose the existence of heterogeneous things. Under such view, each can be preserved and stands opposite to the others but nonetheless works simultaneously, interdependently and without conflict, that is, harmoniously. The whole picture of this peaceful connection and cooperation can be understood as a totality. Hence, Dieter Henrich describes Kant's system as a "multidimensional system."⁴³ Paul Franks also accurately states that "Kant's insistence on systematicity did not undermine his dualism. Systematicity was intended to demonstrate the *necessary harmony* within each of Kant's dualities, not to show that phenomena and noumena, receptivity and spontaneity, form and matter, were really *one*." ⁴⁴

Only by means of the concept of harmony can we comprehend the core meaning of Kant's conception of unity and totality, and hence the requirement, the division and the limit of his system. Up to now we know that Kant does not intend to

⁴³ Henrich, Dieter. *Between Kant and Hegel : lectures on German idealism*. Ed. David S. Pacini. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003, p.38.

⁴⁴ Franks, Paul. "Jacobi, Reinhold, and Maimon" in Karl Ameriks-ed. *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 101.

posit or justify any ultimate, one simple principle from which all the others are derived. He only bases on experience and reflects upon the *a priori* conditions of different objects in order to construct the validity and limitation of the objects, and the ultimate task of his system is to construct the *harmonious order and positions* between objects conditioned by different *a priori* principles. Hence, the division between theoretical and practical reasons, or between science and morality, is not only a result of the applications of the *a priori* principles and the architectonic nature of pure reason, but is firstly recognized and taken for granted from experience. The *existence* of nature and action is a mere fact for Kant. Within his system, aesthetics, as I have described in the Introduction, is only a strategy for the system which aims at constructing the harmonious relationship between the principles of knowledge and that of morality, instead of a complete resolution of the heterogeneity and contradiction between them.

(IV) On Art's being Overlooked in Kant's System

Regarding the genuine aim to construct the harmonious order of nature and human faculties, it becomes comprehensible why art or the aesthetic production has not become a major concern in Kant's discourse on aesthetics. It is because the aim of his aesthetics is only to exhibit the harmony between freedom and necessity, morality and cognition, by means of a kind of activity which is neither cognition nor morality, but is at the same time conditioned by the powers or principles concerning the two employments. In order to manifest this kind of activity in its pureness, the judgment of the beautiful then becomes the main concern in Kant's discourse on aesthetics, since it at once reveals the harmony between free play of imagination and the lawfulness of understanding, that is, the harmonies between imagination

(sensibility) and understanding, necessity and freedom, cognition and morality. Other topics in aesthetics such as the judgment of the sublime and the aesthetic production are necessarily confused with some unfavorable factors regarding the aim of the system. In the judgment of the sublime, instead of a harmony, there is rather a conflict between imagination and reason. It is due to the fact that the imagination is incapable of representing the form of the object which is either too vast or too mighty, yet at the same time we feel a pleasure in confronting the object, manifesting therefore the infinity and extension of reason. On the part of aesthetic production, art, which is at the outset unavoidably mixed with a purpose which desires the existence of the object, contradicts the first requirement of aesthetic judgment: devoid of all interest.

Kant has tried to resolve the contradiction of the concept of purpose inherent in aesthetic production by means of the concept of genius, which is the “innate productive ability of the artist and as such belongs itself to nature... innate mental predisposition through which nature gives the rule to art.”⁴⁵ In order to solve the contradiction, Kant denies the motivation of aesthetic production as a kind of purpose or desire like that in cognition and morality. By distinguishing fine art from science, mechanic nature, craft and mechanic art, Kant points out that fine art is the work of man through freedom. It is created with purpose but “without the cause’s having thought of effect”. Works of art do not actualize the possible object adequately according to our cognition or willing with determinate concepts. Hence, although the works of art are the free products of the artists, they must look like the products of nature instead of something initiated from human will. Therefore, Kant

⁴⁵ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*, Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987, p.307.

thinks that the true author of the works of art, i.e. genius, is the embodiment of nature. This sense of nature must be the technic of nature or the organic nature instead of mechanistic nature. Mechanistic nature is the world determined by sensibility and understanding. The objects appear as mere aggregate and contingent. There is no system and creation in mechanistic nature. Technic of nature is the view of nature, in which we according to the very demand and end of reason assume that there is systematic connection, and hence harmony, of the empirical objects and the empirical laws. The concept of technic of nature or organic nature is based on the very ideas of unity and harmony.

Concerning the nature of genius, Kant's contention may imply that genius is the ability between nature and freedom, or a harmony of the two. This becomes a main concern and development in the discourses on art in Schelling and his many contemporaries. However, Kant himself has not articulated that since art has never been the kernel of his discourse on aesthetics. More importantly, since his aesthetics is only a strategy in serving the final aim of his system, his consideration to the approach to and the subject matters of aesthetics are greatly limited. Unlike cognition and morality, aesthetic judgment, let alone art, has not been considered independently and thoroughly in Kant's system.

Chapter Two: System and Art in Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism*

(I) From a Static System to a Dynamic System

In Kant's system, once the principles and the domains of the employment of reason are established and delimited, there is no further development and alteration in these principles and domains regarding their own nature and the relationship between them. What remains is to unify the different and separated employments of reason in order to fulfill the innermost demand of reason for unity. This target is attained by Kant through *adding* an intermediate transition between and *outside of* the two well established stems, instead of through a modification and development of the established principles and order. Kant's system is thus a static one: The limitation of theoretical and practical reasons and the division between them are clear, but the linkage is not. It seems that the division is established at the very outset when there is reason, and reason is something simultaneously contains two kinds of employment. Schelling's system in *System of Transcendental Idealism (STI)*, despite its Kantian heritage, opposes critically to the static nature of the latter. Before the discussion of Schelling's system, one question should be clarified first: Why is there such a need to change the system from a static to a dynamic and dialectic one?

A) The beginning of the System

As I have described in previous chapter, although Kant recognizes that the concept of the ultimate ground or the first cause of the world is an unavoidable idea

demanded by pure reason, he nevertheless disapproves any system searching for and starting from an ultimate principle from which all the others are derived. For Kant, the ideas can only be speculated through an ascending process which undergoes from experience instead of being applied to experience *a priori*. Hence, the starting point of Kant's transcendental philosophy is experience instead of ideas. The sequence of his discussion can be taken as an evidence: He starts his system from the critique of theoretical reason, in which sensibility is the first object of investigation. The discussions about the ideas are made in the last part of his first and second *Critique* and the whole of third *Critique*.

Freedom is for Kant an ultimate idea of human beings and the very hallmark of pure reason. In the "Introduction" of *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant states that "the concept of freedom, insofar as its reality is proved by an apodictic law of practical reason, constitutes the keystone of the whole structure of a system of pure reason, even of speculative reason, and all other concept (those of God and immortality)"⁴⁶ Keystone is the last stone placed onto an arch which completes the architecture and makes it a self-supporting structure. Taking the concept of freedom as the keystone of the system indicates that freedom is the final result of the system, instead of the starting point. However, concerning the role of freedom in Kant's system, there are still some questions: If freedom is not the starting point of the system, but only a final result of the system which is constructed by an ascending reflective process starting from experience, how are we capable of saying that freedom, and hence the ideas of unity and totality, are the inner ends and demands of reason which ultimately guide the construction of the system and give lawfulness to

⁴⁶ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*. Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002, p.139.

the rules of understanding? This question can be divided into two: Why can we recognize the ideas as transcendent ideas but not mere products of empirical thinking? Even if we accept that the ideas are transcendent and not products of experience, how can we recognize that they are inner ends and demands of reason but not merely insignificant illusions?

For Kant philosophy should be undertaken with entire autonomy and spontaneity of philosophers:

“Philosophy is the science of the relation of all knowledge to the essential ends of human reason (*teleologia rationis humanae*), and the philosopher is not an artificer in the field of reason, but himself the lawgiver of human reason. In this sense of the term it would be very vainglorious to entitle oneself a philosopher, and to pretend to have equalled the pattern which exists in the idea alone. The mathematician, the natural philosopher, and the logician, however successful the two former may have been in their advances in the field of rational knowledge, and the two latter more especially in philosophical knowledge, are yet only artificers in the field of reason. There is a teacher, [conceived] in the ideal, who sets them their tasks, and employs them as instruments, to further the essential ends of human reason. Him alone we must call philosopher”.⁴⁷

Genuine philosopher is someone who not only can discern the nature of different employments of reason, but also has insight into the essential ends and demands of reason. Besides, since philosopher is the lawgiver of human reason, he should not be guided and limited by experience. This conception of philosopher shows that

⁴⁷ *ibid*, pp.657-658.

philosophy (including Kant's own transcendental philosophy) should be a product of freedom. It is also for this reason that for Kant moral philosophy is the highest discipline in philosophy, since morality is entirely based on the freedom and autonomy of pure reason. Therefore, if the concept of freedom is not postulated and believed at the outset, if freedom has not already acted even implicitly, the beginning of a transcendental system is inconceivable. Even the question of why there arises philosophy, accordingly, seems to become incomprehensible as well. Thus, even though the concept of freedom and the idea of unity can only be demonstrated in the final step of our reflection starting from experience, the primordial status of freedom, at least implicitly, should be recognized at the beginning of the system. This characterizes Schelling's system. Kant's conception of systematicity made a great impact on Schelling and his contemporaries. Schelling repeatedly emphasizes that the beginning and the ending of philosophy is freedom⁴⁸, which is obviously an inheritance from Kant, but at the same time, also a departure from Kant.

B) The Concern for Existence

Kant's system does not aim at explaining the existence and becoming of the objects, but only aims at determining and delimiting the nature, position and the mutual relations between them. In this way, the existence of the external world is still accepted and presupposed as a mere fact by Kant, like the empiricists, without further examination. It is also for this reason that the dualism between the sensibility and the understanding, or that between appearance and thing-in-itself, is established and tolerated. It seems that the question about the existence of the world is not a

⁴⁸ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Trans. Peter Heath. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978, p.33.

problematic in Kant's system. On the contrary, the existence of the world and knowledge is for Schelling the most fundamental problem. Dale Snow has rightly pointed out that "Is philosophy then only concerned with the essences of things? And has it nothing to do with their existence? Hegel, according to Schelling, ignores existence. Hegel fails to offer, as Schelling promises to do (a promise never finally realized), a philosophy that answers to life."⁴⁹ From Schelling's viewpoint, not only does Hegel ignore the problem of existence, but Kant as well. The most unproblematic belief in ordinary consciousness is the existence of the external world, which is the greatest prejudice and dogma in the view of Schelling.

The question about the existence of the world is not a question which is indifferent to epistemological question. For Schelling, the latter cannot be completely resolved if the former is not explained. Once the external world is simply presupposed, knowledge must be taken as a synthesis of the subjective and the objective conditions, but at the same time the *passage* of the subjective into the objective, or vice versa, is still left incomprehensible. For Schelling, the synthesis in knowledge, which is a major problematic in Kant, is still a mystery at the end of his system, and this will consequently revive skepticism about the existence of the external world and the possibility of knowledge. Hence, instead of relying on a dualism between internal conditions and external world, Schelling's system of philosophy must be grounded on an absolutely first principle which alone can give explanation and certainty to the incomprehensible structure of knowledge or ordinary consciousness.

⁴⁹ Snow, Dale E.. *Schelling and the End of Idealism*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 3.

C) A Living System with Activity and Demand

Where can we find this first principle? It cannot be one added or assumed *from without* of the system itself. Otherwise, the system is only an artifact and hence cannot be a self-supporting or self-consisting one. Besides, the problems of dualism and the existence of external beings cannot be solved if the first principle comes from without:

“Now every true system...must contain the ground of its subsistence within *itself*; and hence, if there be a system of knowledge, its principle must *lie within knowledge itself*”.⁵⁰

In our ordinary belief and even in Kant's conception, system is an artifact constructed by theorists or philosophers, but in the case of Schelling and his idealistic contemporaries, the philosophical system is itself a *living being* activated by the innermost nature and demand of reason, and the activities and the nature of man are determined and initiated within the development of the system. The system is not created by man, rather, man is included within the system. Since life cannot be founded on external principle, as in the case of mechanism, the first principle of the system must not be invented by anything other than itself, but must lie within itself, and the whole system must be at once the origin and the product of itself. Thus, for Schelling the first principle of the system should be the act of realization of itself, of the primordial ground. Once this act of realizing itself by itself starts, the system also starts. Thus, at the very outset, Schelling's system contains an absolute and

⁵⁰ *ibid*, p.15.

immanent *action* as its origin, and the whole system is a process and development according to this *primordial action* of realizing itself by itself.

Besides, life is not sustained by a mechanistic principle. From Kant on, many philosophers, including Schelling and his idealistic and romantic contemporaries, believe that what distinguishes life from a machine is that the former should contain purpose or demand, despite this purpose or demand is difficult to prove or articulate well. Accordingly, if the system is a living whole, there should be a demand which originates the whole activity and development of the system. I have clarified in the Introduction that the demand of reason is a crucial concept in Kant's system which made a great impact on German idealism and early German romanticism. Although Kant's system is as a whole a static one, this concept of demand paves the way to the transformation of the system from a static to a dialectic and dynamic one. In Kant, the role of the demand of reason is quite obscure. It is not the constitutive element of experience, but Kant does not declare this demand as a regulative principle. He merely claims that human reason contains this demand. Although this demand is the origin of the ideas, it by nature differs from the ideas. In Schelling, this demand becomes the very nature of the first principle or the primordial ground. The demand of reason in Kant is mainly a demand for unity, but in Schelling, what it demands for is no longer mere unity, but *knowing itself*. Although the object of the demand in Schelling's system seems different from that of Kant, the demand for knowing itself can be conceived as a further elaboration of the demand for unity, for the unification of the knowing object (body and external world) and the knowing subject (freedom, soul and reason). Thus, the whole development of the system is for Schelling the self-intuition or the self-realization of the primordial ground, which is called the Self in *STI*. This activity is motivated by the demand for

knowing itself, and the whole system is therefore posited as the self-fulfillment of this innermost demand.

Since the essential nature of the system is activity, there are sequence, continuity and history in the *genesis* of the system. The construction of the system is equal to the demonstration of the genesis or the becoming of the system. This dynamical dimension is what the static system of Kant lacks. Andrew Bowie thinks that Schelling has found a way of “being a monist without ending up as a static reductionist”⁵¹ It is also because of this essential dynamic nature of his system that the system becomes at all possible.

(II) The System in *System of Transcendental Idealism*

A) Philosophy of Nature and Transcendental Philosophy

For Schelling, the entire system of philosophy is divided into philosophy of nature and transcendental philosophy. The former starts from the objective, that is, nature. It aims at solving the question about how the subjective coincides with or is annexed to the objective, or how nature comes to be presented. In philosophy of nature, Schelling attempts to show the necessity of the tendency of natural science to render nature intelligible: “The highest consummation of natural science would be the complete spiritualization of all natural laws into laws of intuition and thought.”⁵² In other words, philosophy of nature attempts to reveal the necessary spiritualization or becoming subjective of the objective nature. On the other hand, in transcendental

⁵¹ Bowie, Andrew. *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: an Introduction*. London, New York: Routledge, 1993, p. 75.

⁵² *ibid*, p.6

philosophy the subjective is made primary and it attempts to explain how the objective arises from the subjective, or how the world is emanated from the Self. Although these two sciences oppose to each other regarding their principle and direction, they “mutually seek and supplement one another”⁵³ It is obvious that Schelling’s division of the entire system of philosophy is made according to the division between the subjective and the objective, which is the fundamental condition of knowledge and consciousness. Then, why is such approach? Schelling himself has not explained that in *STI*, but we can attempt to comprehend it by means of the structure of transcendental philosophy.

Even though Schelling emphasizes the mutually supplementary relation between the two sciences, he does maintain that the role of transcendental philosophy is more important:

“even when the objective is arbitrarily posited as primary, we still never get beyond self-consciousness...this occurs in natural science for which being is no more fundamental than it is for transcendental philosophy, and which posits its sole reality in an absolute that is both cause and effect of itself – in the absolute identity of the subjective and the objective, which we call nature, and which in its highest potentiality is again nothing else but self-consciousness.”⁵⁴

It is evident that for Schelling self-consciousness is the highest or ultimate principle of transcendental philosophy, and even philosophy of nature must return to it. Hence, in the division of the entire system of philosophy, transcendental philosophy is

⁵³ *ibid*, p.7.

⁵⁴ *ibid*, p.17.

indeed the kernel and the absolute starting point. Philosophy of nature could be understood as a reference of or preliminary to transcendental philosophy, whose principles are determined by the latter. Schelling's system of transcendental philosophy is the progress of self-knowing or self-intuition of the primordial self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is something different from ordinary consciousness. The latter is based on the division and synthesis of the subjective and the objective, but the former is at once the subjective and the objective. However, in order to know itself as self-consciousness, as the identity of the subject and the object, self-consciousness must separate itself into the subjective and the objective. This is a necessary and primordial separation for the sake of the system, and this first separation is the first act which brings about the system. The existence and the relations between mind and nature are thereupon brought forth and determined. Therefore, it is understandable that Schelling divides the entire system into two according to the primordial separation of the subjective and the objective.

B) Self or Self-Consciousness

Self-consciousness, which is the first principle of the system of transcendental philosophy, cannot be regarded as the one manifested in ordinary reflection. As the first principle of the system, it is entirely out of consciousness and precedes the separation of the subjective and the objective, which is the necessary condition of reflection in ordinary sense. Instead of being either the subjective or the objective, the primordial self-consciousness is neither of them and at once both of them. Regarding the pure state of in-itself, it is neither the subjective nor the objective; regarding the final end of its self-intuition, it should be at once the knower and what is known, the intuitant and the intuited, the producer and the product.

Therefore, it is quite one-sided and superficial to think that the system is grounded on a subjective principle. On the contrary, the empirical concept of the self as the ground of philosophy is what is strongly opposed by Schelling. Thus, in his later works, Schelling claims that Descartes' first principle is the basic error of modern philosophy: "The I think, I am, is, since Descartes, the basic mistake of all knowledge: thinking is not my thinking, and being is not my being, for everything is only of God or of the totality."⁵⁵ "It is not I that know, but rather only the totality (All) knows in me."⁵⁶ Hence, the "Self" (Ich) in *STI* does not denote the subjective opposing to the objective, but the very *self-referential activity* of the first principle. In *STI*, "the Self", "self-consciousness", "self-intuition", "intellectual intuition", all refer to the same theme: presenting itself for itself by itself. The whole development of system has indeed already been anticipated by this self-referential principle, as Werner Marx has shown that the meaning of self-intuition, which denotes "increasingly intuition for itself", has already entailed the necessity to develop into a perfect form, that is, a system.⁵⁷

For the sake of self-intuition, the Self must become an object for itself, which is the whole task of the system. Thus, the Self is not something which exists before our knowing of it. Otherwise, the Self will become an external being, which is precisely the dogma whose existence has to be explicated. Instead, the Self comes to be a being insofar as it knows or intuits itself. Its being and knowing is one and the same, neither one of them can be separated from the other. Before knowing of itself,

⁵⁵ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *Sämmtliche Werke*. Ed. Schelling, K. F. A. Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856-61, I/7, p. 148. This quotation is translated by Andrew Bowie and quoted from Bowie, Andrew. *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: an Introduction*. London, New York: Routledge, 1993, p. 62.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, I/6, p. 140. This quotation is translated by Andrew Bowie and quoted from (Bowie, 1993), p. 61.

⁵⁷ see Marx, Werner. *The Philosophy of F.W.J. Schelling: History, System, and Freedom*. Trans. Thomas Nenon. Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1984, ch. 2.

the Self has not yet existed. Which part of the Self is intuited, that part will come to be and knowledge will be established:

“Transcendental philosophy cannot proceed from any theorem...A theorem is a proposition that proceeds from an existent. Transcendental philosophy, however, proceeds from no existent, but from a free act, and such an act can only be postulated...the act of production, which in transcendental philosophy must initially be intuited, and from which all other constructions of the science first come into being. What the self is, we experience only by bringing it forth, for nowhere but in the self is the identity of being and producing fundamental”⁵⁸

It is evident that although the system of Schelling is grounded upon one simple principle, it is not a system like the Euclidean one. Firstly, the first principle is not a theorem, rather, it is initially and essentially an activity. Secondly, the parts of the system are not derived from the principle, for the derivation of the parts from the first principle presupposes an analytical relation between them which is strongly opposed by Schelling. Instead, every step or stage in Schelling's system is a synthesis or reconciliation of the separation which is made before and a discovery of new separation. Hence, for Schelling, the parts of a system are not derived from the ultimate principle, but develop out of it. In a word, the origin of the system is not a theorem, but a demand and activity; the whole system is not a deduction, but history and development, and hence becomes a dialectical one.

⁵⁸ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Trans. Peter Heath. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978, pp.28-29.

C) Objectification of Intellectual Intuition

Since the Self is itself a knowing or intuiting activity, it is itself the intellectual intuition (intellektuelle Anschauung). Only an intellectual intuition, which is a free act, is a self-intuition of the first principle. The Self must present itself through intuition instead of discursive thinking, since only through intuition is the presentation immediate and direct, which alone can express the simplicity and oneness of the Self. The intuition must be intellectual because this self-intuition must be entirely free and active, without any passivity which is presupposed in sensible intuition. This direct, active and unconditioned intuition is indeed a creative intuition or knowing of the object, in which the object comes to be insofar as it is intuited. It is evident that Schelling's concept of intellectual intuition inherits much from that of Kant, but the contexts of them are entirely different. For Kant, intellectual intuition is only a regulative concept which delimits the cognitive powers of man: man only possesses sensibility and understanding, the power of intellectual intuition is impossible unless in God. Since Kant's system is not concerned about the existence and becoming of its objects, there is indeed no seat for the concept of intellectual intuition as the constitutive elements of knowledge, provided that intellectual intuition is a concept concerning creativity and becoming. On the contrary, inasmuch as the question why there is something instead of nothing, the question originated from the doubt about the existence of the external world, is the fundamental concern of Schelling's system, intellectual intuition becomes a central and constitutive concept in *STI*.

The whole task and development of the system in *STI* is that the Self, or intellectual intuition, as creativity and activity, ultimately becomes an object to itself,

the "objectification of intellectual intuition". (die objektiv gewordene intellektuelle Anschauung) The self-intuition, or the intellectual intuition, necessarily presupposes an object, and the ultimate object is itself, itself as an activity of self-intuition. In order to start this long journey, the Self has to split itself into the poles of the subjective and the objective. Once this splitting happens, the system departs from its primordial and simple identity of the subjective and the objective. The vocation of the Self is to synthesize the opposing poles *again* by means of the objectification of intellectual intuition.

D) Duality, Identity and Boundary

Schelling maintains that from the original duality in the Self, there arises consciousness and the objective is first generated; from the original identity in duality, the unification and connection of all knowledge and beings are brought forth. Duality and identity are at the same time the very natures of the activity of the Self. The contents and the parts of the system are spread out according to duality, while the unity and the completion of the system depend upon identity. Since both of the two directions of the system, that is, the spreading out of and the returning to the primordial ground, are ultimately natures of one principle or activity, there is at bottom no heterogeneous principles and Schelling's system is an entirely immanent one. In Kant's system, however, freedom and the idea of unity, which are recognized as the innermost ends of pure reason, by nature oppose to sensibility. Thus, it seems that even pure reason as a whole opposes to sensibility and the external world. If this is the case, whence do the latter come from? Schelling attempts to give an explanation of it by means of his contentions about duality and identity

The activities of spreading out from and returning to the ground are the origin of the ideal and real activities respectively. Schelling states that self-intuition is the activity which “intuits itself as infinite becoming”⁵⁹ Intuiting itself as infinite becoming means that intuiting itself as infinite activity. In order to intuit itself, the Self must become its own object, and the objectification of itself presupposes separation and limitation of itself. The Self must set boundary for the sake of intuition. The boundary distinguishes and delimits the poles of the subjective and the objective. Once the boundary is set and the primordial ground is separated into two poles, objects arise. Once the Self wants to intuit itself as the original identity of the poles and the infinite activity which brings forth the separation, the boundaries have to be abolished and transgressed. However, the boundaries cannot be abolished at all but can only be overcome gradually in time, for otherwise there will be no object, no becoming, and hence, no activity and no intuition. Therefore, in self-intuition, the Self is recognized as unlimited insofar it is limited, and is limited insofar it has unlimited power to act and produce. Without being unlimited, there can be no infinite becoming of objects; without being limited, the Self cannot substantiate itself into an object.

E) Theoretical and Practical Philosophies

a) Idealism and Realism

Since the boundary is imposed and transgressed by the Self's activity of knowing itself, it is determined by an ideal activity. But since the boundary is the necessary condition of separation and object, the boundary is posited as real. Equivalent to the distinction between the subjective and the objective, the ideal and

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.38.

the real is another fundamental distinction in Schelling's system. Accordingly, transcendental idealism is divided into idealism and realism, in which the former explains the ideality of the boundary, that is, how the process of the setting up and the transgression of the boundaries becomes knowledge, whereas the latter explains the reality of the boundary, which demonstrates how the limitation, which is originally a purely subjective one, becomes the objective and external one. It is clear that the division is made according to the fundamental twofold activities of the Self. Inasmuch as duality and identity, or the real and the ideal, are interdependent in the Self's intuition of itself, idealism and realism do mutually presuppose each other in spite of their being separated.

b) The Sequence of the System

Schelling's division of theoretical and practical philosophies is not as static as that of Kant's. They do not stand side by side or against each other. Rather, there is a *continuous sequence* proceeding from theoretical philosophy to practical philosophy. The sequence is based upon "a continual raising of self-intuition to increasingly higher powers"⁶⁰ The higher level it raises to, the more comprehensive the intuition is.

i) Theoretical Philosophy

According to the sequence, The Self firstly intuits the limitation and determination posited in the objective. In this stage only the limited becomes the object of self-intuition, which explains the existence and structure of objects which

⁶⁰ *ibid*, p.233.

are given in sensation. Thereafter, the Self also becomes an object to itself *qua sensing* through productive intuition (*produktiven Anschauung*). Productive intuition is the activity in which the ideal and the subjective aspect of the Self which acted actively and opposed to the objective before becomes the object of the self-intuition of the Self. In this way, the self now intuits the subject and the object entirely *objectively*, each of them becomes an objective concept, even the subjective becomes something external to the Self. Thus, there arises an absolute separation between the subject and the object, in which each stands in itself and opposes to the other: on the one hand, there is a self or subject which is wholly inner. On the other, there is a world which exists entirely external to the subject. Both of them are recognized *immediately* as though they are *given* facts. By means of these steps in theoretical philosophy, Schelling attempts to trace the genesis of the conditions of the knowledge about the external world and the inner self from the twofold activity of the first principle.

ii) Reciprocity and Organization

The consummation of the theoretical philosophy is the Self's intuition of organization. Within the sphere of theoretical philosophy, everything seems to be wholly objective, but *qua* an objective being, an organism is essentially the subject and the object at once in virtue of the two fold nature of the fundamental principle. Schelling maintains that reciprocity is the central concept which sustains the other categories of Understanding. It is by the concept of reciprocity that the concepts of substance and causality (or succession) become possible. I would not like to digress into the details of it, since only the systematicity as a whole is our concern here. Reciprocity designates the relation in which the objects are at once both cause and

effect to each other. It is indeed the basic character of all organization. Organization is therefore posited as the "highest power of the category of reciprocity"⁶¹. This unity of cause and effect, or the producer and the product, is exactly the very nature of the Self. Hence, Schelling states that "the intelligence is absorbed in its organism, it attains as wholly identical with itself."⁶²

At this stage, the system has traced the origin and genesis of nature (or the external world) both in mechanistic and organic (or teleological) senses. Is it the completion of the system, the complete intuition of the Self for itself? Not yet. In the preceding development of the system including the intuition of organization, the Self still intuited itself within the stages of *unconscious* production. For Schelling, even though the essentially reciprocal nature of organization is wholly identical to the nature of the Self, organization is still a mere product of the Self, in which the Self is still unconscious of its own production or its own very nature of activity.

It is apparent that Schelling's conception of organization inherits much from Kant's discourse on natural purpose or organized beings. Nevertheless, one should note that the positions and status of organic nature and mechanistic nature are essentially different in Kant. Organic nature for Kant is not an object of knowledge with objective validity, since organization is not the objective state of nature but is the subjective demand and presumption of pure reason. For Schelling, however, both senses of nature are equally products of the Self in its unconsciousness of itself, even in viewing nature as organization the Self's own nature and demand have not been

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 126.

⁶² *ibid.*, p. 129

transparent to itself. Therefore, according to the final end of the system, the Self must surpass the stage of unconscious production to the stage of conscious reflection.

iii) Practical Philosophy and freedom

Within production the Self is only aware of the products without being conscious of its own activity of production. When it goes beyond the stage of production, it steps into the stage of reflection and willing, from which the stage of practical philosophy begins. This breakthrough is accomplished by a free act of transcendental abstraction (*transzendente Abstraktion*), by means of which the Self can separate itself from unconscious producing and intuit itself as producing or acting as such. In order to intuit itself as producing as such, the Self must intuit itself as a producer or an intuitant. It should be noted that what producer means here is not the same as the subject in sensation, for the latter, likewise the object in sensation, is a mere product of production as well. However, the producer here is the origin and the active initiator of the whole activity of production.

Once the Self intuits itself as a producer, freedom arises, since now the Self can intuit itself as something which has will. There are two aspects of freedom or willing in *STI*. Firstly, the will is determined by individuality and natural inclination and directs to external objects. This is the objective activity in willing or freedom. In order to intuit this kind of will which is driven by natural inclination, the Self must intuit itself as something driven by a compulsion: "I must appear to myself objectively as driven to all my acts by a compulsion of my organic constitution...with a physical compulsion which itself is necessary as a condition of

the appearance of freedom”⁶³ In this aspect the will encounters many external limitations, and these limitations, just like the original separation and boundary, are the necessary elements for the Self’s intuition of freedom. However, since the freedom is expressed in terms of natural inclination and hence becomes explicable through natural laws, the appearance of freedom *qua freedom* is abolished. Another aspect, which is called by Schelling the ideal activity in freedom, is that the will directs to no external object, but to the “self-determination in general”: “The object of the ideal activity in willing is therefore nothing else but pure self-determining itself, or the self itself.”⁶⁴ This aspect of willing does consist with Kant’s categorical imperative or moral law, which is not determined by anything external, but is proclaimed by pure reason alone. Schelling’s conception of the ideal activity in willing wants to intuit willing *qua willing*, freedom *qua freedom*.

In Kant, the above two aspects of will are clearly separated. The first is in fact not freedom for Kant. Only in the self-determination of the will which is determined by no more than pure reason is there freedom and morality. On the contrary, the above two aspects of willing are inseparable for Schelling: “It is unthinkable that a finite being should strive after a purely formal morality, since morality itself, can become objective only through the external world”⁶⁵ The ideal activity in willing, namely the self-determination of the Self, must at last direct to external objects, and insofar it encounters external objects, it is unavoidably limited by the external world. For Schelling, both aspects of willing cannot act without each other in morality. Hence, Kant’s clear-cut discrepancy between hypothetical will and categorical imperative, which presupposes the clear distinction between nature and

⁶³ *ibid.*, p.186.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.187

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.194

morality, is thus blurred. Although for Schelling self-determination, which is similar to Kant's categorical imperative, is the essential nature of willing, it cannot merely stay in itself, for otherwise, it will never be conscious of itself and become an object of the Self. In addition, if this activity of self-determination is not fully conscious to itself, this action is not free will at all. Therefore, the free act of self-determination must *appear*, and in its appearance it must be confined and conditioned by external objects and other intelligences, and hence becomes a real will. Hence, Schelling emphasizes that freedom is an appearance:

"Insofar as it is not *absolute*, insofar as it is *empirical*, the self is free...just precisely insofar as the will is *empirical*, or *appears*, so to that extent it can be called free in the transcendental sense. For insofar as it is absolute, the will itself *transcends freedom*, and so far from being subjected to any law, is in fact the source of all law."⁶⁶

For Schelling, although self-determination is the essential ground of morality, the latter must include choice and direct to external objects. Freedom is only manifested in the conscious action of choosing, but insofar there is choice, morality is not entirely originated from the pure and absolute will. Accordingly, freedom is no longer a pure concept of reason in Schelling, rather, it is at the outset inseparable from the external world. From Schelling's conception of practical philosophy we can see the infinite tension between freedom and limitation.

In the stage of practical philosophy Schelling attempts to unveil the necessary separation and interdependency between the subjective and the objective.

⁶⁶ *ibid*, pp. 190-191.

or the conscious and the unconscious, in the free act. Although in the free act, the Self intuits itself as a producer and hence knows itself as the producing activity, which is an advance comparing to the preceding stage of theoretical philosophy, the Self still cannot intuit itself as the identity of the subjective and the objective, which is the final goal of its activity. The separation between the subjective and the objective, the conscious and the unconscious, is *ad infinitum* in free act as long as it remains as free act. Hence, the Self begins to search for the identity after the transcendental abstraction which splits itself as a producer from the mere products. This leads to the way to art which marks the completion of the system in *STI*.

(III) Art in System of Transcendental Idealism

A) The Final Destination of the System

It is evident that many important elements in Kant's system are absorbed by Schelling in his *STI*. In his division of the system into theoretical and practical philosophies and in the details of the discourses on them, Kant's influence is evident everywhere. However, the entire conception of a system or the systematicity is altered. From the view of Schelling, Kant's system is established by the primordial principle without itself being manifested. Therefore, the beginning and the ending of the system cannot be articulated clearly: Kant sometime emphasizes the primacy of freedom and unity, sometime emphasizes that the construction of a transcendental system is an ascending process from experience. Due to a different conception of systematicity, Schelling's system in *STI* has a definite beginning and ending. The system is the process or history of the Self's becoming of an object for itself by itself, that is, the objectification of self-intuition or intellectual intuition. The system is

completed only when it is "led back to its starting point".⁶⁷ The final destination is reached when the original identity of the Self becomes an object to it.

Although organization or organic nature in a large extent manifests the identity between the subjective and the objective, which is identical to original nature of the Self, the Self has not been aware of itself as a producer or the producing activity. Hence, the Self has not attained a complete intuition of itself, and the system has to continue. It is through reflection and willing that the Self is first aware of itself as the producer. However, reflection and willing presuppose an eternal tension between the subjective and the objective, the conscious and the unconscious. What the Self has to proceed is to seek for the identity of the conscious and the unconscious after the intuition of the opposition in willing. If art is the final step in the system, it must be simultaneously conscious and unconscious. For Schelling, the production of art is constituted by the separation of the conscious and the unconscious, whereas the final product of it manifests the harmony and identity of the conscious and the unconscious. It is in the *product* of art that the long struggle of the objectification of intellectual intuition can be finished.

B) Genius

The production of art is achieved by genius. Schelling thinks that the genius is something lying above and contrary to freedom in the production, which supplies the element of objectivity to the works of art. The role of genius in art is similar to that of destiny in willing. Destiny denotes the circumstance that every willing which directs to external object is unconsciously and necessarily conditioned by the

⁶⁷ Ibid, p.232.

external world, which becomes the unconscious, objective and necessary background of free act. In the production of art, the artist proceeds from a feeling of inner contradiction, in which he is *driven* involuntarily to the creation of artworks. Hence, the production of art is on the one hand a conscious and free act of the artist, on the other hand an act driven involuntarily by unknown force.

Schelling maintains that art is consisted of art and poetry. The former is the parts which are considered consciously and is what can be learnt. It is the technical part in art. On the contrary, poetry is the unconscious part of art, which is achieved by genius alone and is the most important element for the creation of a masterpiece. Although these two elements are opposite to each other, both of them are valueless without each other. It is evident that Schelling's concept of genius indeed comes from Kant. Genius is for Kant the "innate productive ability of the artist and as such belongs itself to nature... innate mental predisposition through which nature gives the rule to art."⁶⁸ Therefore, neither can genius be learnt, nor can a genius fully understand his own production. It is because the genuine author of the works of art is not the particular person but nature. This nature is certainly not the one which is mechanistic and blind, but the organic nature or the technic of nature. It is for Kant the view of nature out of the innermost demand of reason for unity and totality. Hence, genius is at bottom bestowed directly by the pure reason. This is a great insight of Kant, nevertheless, with regard to the whole system, the concept of genius does not gain any significance, since art does not have any important role in his system. Concerning the determination of the concept, Schelling inherits much from Kant, but at the same time re-examines the role of this concept under his new

⁶⁸ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*, Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987, p.307.

consideration and approach of the whole system. The concept of genius now becomes the keystone which contributes to the final step of the system, the completion of the self-intuition of the Self.

C) The Works of Art

The system is completed in the products of art, instead of its production. After the opposition between the conscious and the unconscious in its production, the products of art must display something beyond consciousness, that is, return to the unconsciousness. Otherwise, the system will end in consciousness, and the Self is ever in separation. This unconsciousness has twofold meaning: first, the work of art is created essentially by genius, which is an unconscious capability and activity. Second, the work of art has sensible and external form of existence which is outside and independent of the sphere of consciousness. In Schelling's works, the sensible and external existence is always regarded as objective and unconscious being. Hence, the product of art is an "unconscious infinity synthesis of nature and freedom"⁶⁹ after the separation of them in reflection and practical philosophy.

The meaning of works of art is depicted as infinite because understanding or reflection is incapable of expounding it fully. Understanding and reflection are conditioned by the separation of the subjective and the objective, which is only the state precedent to art. Through the works of art the Self acquires a complete realization of the identity, that is, a complete intuition of itself. Since all *appearances* of opposition and contradiction are removed, the works of art manifest an infinite

⁶⁹ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Trans. Peter Heath. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978, p.225.

tranquility which exhibits the primordial pureness and identity of the Self. The "infinite finitely displayed"⁷⁰ (Unendliches endlich dargestellt) is what essentially constitutes the beauty of the works of art. The beginning of the system is the intellectual intuition whereas the ending is the entire objectification of intellectual intuition, namely aesthetic intuition. Contrary to philosophy or the system of philosophy which reveals the objectification of the self-intuition of the Self in a sequence, the works of art manifest what the system of philosophy pursues at once in every single product. Only when the individual or singular objects are at the same time the thorough manifestation of the primordial ground can the system be regarded as completed, in which the separation between the subjective and the objective, the ideal and the real, the infinite and the finite, freedom and nature, are truly unified. Therefore, at least for the early Schelling, the final destination of the intellectual intuition is to express the infinite and identity in the individual works of art which can be universally recognized and acknowledged by all men.

D) Art and Philosophy

According to the above considerations, Schelling claims that: "art is the only true and eternal organ and document of philosophy."⁷¹ (die Kunst das einzige wahre und ewige Organon zugleich und Dokument der Philosophie sei) Richard Velkley has attempted to explain the meaning of "document" and "organ" here.⁷² Velkley thinks that the "organon-function" is not identical to the "documenting-function" of art. As a document, art alone provides an objective form

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

⁷¹ *ibid.*, p.231.

⁷² Velkley, Richard L. "Realizing Nature in the Self: Schelling on Art and Intellectual Intuition in the System of Transcendental Idealism". *Figuring the Self: Subject, Absolute, and Others in Classical German Philosophy*. Eds. David E. Klemm and Günter Zöllner. Albany. SUNY Press, 1997, p.149-168.

of intellectual intuition which is accessible universally. As an organ, or organon, art is the “organizing principle of unity within our knowledge”. Since art is the final destination and the ultimate end of the system, systematic unity, or systematicity, is guaranteed and realized in art. In both ways, art is paramount to the philosopher, and hence, superior to philosophy in *STI*.

Schelling has made several important comparisons between philosophy and art. Firstly, as I have specified above, philosophy exhibits the primordial ground in a way of system, that is, exhibits it in terms of process, sequence and development, whereas the works of art reveal the primordial ground at once and in every single object. Secondly, philosophy cannot depict the Self in external form, which is yet the very nature of the works of art. Thus, philosophy is incapable of exhibiting the identity of the oppositions thoroughly insofar it is based upon reflection and consciousness, which has the opposition between the subjective and the objective as its necessary condition. Besides, since the final end of the system is the complete objectification of intellectual intuition, reflection or consciousness can not be regarded as the final destination of the system as its ground is the dominance of subjectivity within the separation of the subjective and the objective. Hence, Schelling maintains that “only art can succeed in objectifying with universal validity what philosophy is able to present in a merely subjective fashion.”⁷³ Thirdly, although philosophy or science at its highest level shares the same target and mission with art, what art has already attained is only an endless task for philosophy or science. This distinction is based upon the first one, in which philosophy presents in process and development, while art expresses at once in every individual being. Thus,

⁷³ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Trans. Peter Heath. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978, p.232.

art is the ideal of science. Finally, and most importantly, even though philosophy attains to its highest point, it contributes only to the “fraction of a man”.⁷⁴ (ein Bruchstück des Menschen) It only concerns the soul, reason and the subjective element of a man. On the contrary, art brings the “*whole man*” (den ganzen Menschen) to the revelation of the highest and primordial ground, in which sensibility, feeling, and the body of man are not excluded but can be truly unified with his ideal and subjective conditions.

Hence, concerning the ultimate end of the Self, philosophy cannot complete the system entirely. The system does not end within philosophy, but *points outward to art*, an activity which has its products in finite beings instead of merely in thought. What philosophy can enclose is only the philosophy of art. It is for this reason that Schelling entitles the last part of *STI* as “Essentials of the Philosophy of Art according to the Principles of Transcendental Idealism”, instead of “Essentials of Art”. The works of art itself exist beyond consciousness and philosophy. It is not the philosophy of art the entire completion of the demand of the system, but the real works of art. What philosophy can at most attain is to reflect the nature of art and then to guide the ordinary consciousness to the true and profound meaning of art.

In the last pages of *STI*, the question why there is philosophy acquires a new answer:

“Philosophy was born and nourished by poetry in the infancy of knowledge, and with it all those sciences it has guided toward perfection. We may thus expect

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p.233.

them, on completion, to flow back like so many individual streams into the universal ocean of poetry from which they took their source.”⁷⁵

It means that art is the origin of philosophy. The whole system is constructed by philosopher, but whence did the philosopher first get insight into the primordial ground or the first principle, and hence attempts to exhibit and reconstruct the system entailed in the principle? In *STI*, it is likely from the works of art that the philosophers are firstly and unconsciously inspired. After the entire development of the system, philosophy becomes aware of its own origin and tends to return to it. The medium of the returning of philosophy and science is mythology, which can only be created by a new race in future. In *STI*, Schelling has not discussed much on mythology, but it will become a main topic in his *Philosophy of Art*.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p.232

Chapter Three: System and Art in Schelling's *Philosophy of Art*

(I) The Nature of the Philosophical Construction of Art

In *Philosophy of Art*, Schelling gives a detailed discussion about art in general and its various forms in particular. For Schelling, philosophy of art is a science of art, a philosophical construction of art. Hence, the following questions are raised: why is there a philosophical construction of art? From what principle and in what dimension is the construction spread out? The first question is equivalent to ask why the essence and significance of art become a concern for philosophers. In Schelling's conception, art is never a contingent object of philosophy. He does not think that all the objects in experience are qualified as objects of philosophy, rather, philosophy has its own *necessary* objects determined by its very first principle. Therefore, if art is a legitimate object of philosophy, it must be so necessarily, and thus the philosophy of art must be a necessary part of philosophy. Schelling maintains that "philosophy of art is a necessary goal of the philosopher, who in art views the inner essence of his own discipline as if in a magic and symbolic mirror."⁷⁶ Accordingly, if there is a necessary relationship between the objects of philosophy and philosophy, for Schelling there should be an intimacy and even identity between the essence of the objects and philosophy.

Hence, concerning the second question above, the principle and the dimension of the philosophical construction of its objects are determined by and derived from philosophy itself. The principles of philosophy are the principles of the construction

⁷⁶ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm, Joseph. *The Philosophy of Art*. Trans. Douglas W. Stott. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, p. 8.

of its objects, and thus the ultimate principles constituting the essence of its objects. It is within the dimension of philosophy that the construction is properly undertaken. The questioning about art, as a concern for philosopher, is entirely *within* philosophy. Furthermore, the construction of art within the dimension of philosophy is not mere one dimension of all possible dimensions such as historical dimension, political dimension, technical dimension, and so on. For Schelling, the philosophical construction is the only one genuine construction of art, only which can reveal the essence, the ultimate truth and the true significance of art. Other kinds of construction are not construction as such, and hence not science or philosophy, but only theories at most.

Then, what is a philosophical construction, or philosophy? Philosophy is, for Schelling, the only one science which is concerned about the Absolute or the absolute identity, the primordial ground of existence and knowledge. "The Absolute", "God", "the absolute identity", "the universe", all of them signify the same one, the primordial ground of existence and knowledge. This primordial ground should not be separated from its products, and vice versa. Otherwise, the ground cannot be recognized as ground since nothing develops out of it, and the existence of the products becomes a mystery and dogma which cannot be explained. From the perspective of philosophy, there are essential connections between all beings in the universe and the primordial ground, and some of the former are even perfect manifestations of the latter, such as the works of art. For Schelling, the connections between particular beings and the Absolute is possible only by means of their original identity, the identity in essence. In this way, the particular *in essence* is no longer mere particular, but is at the same time one and the same with the Absolute. The science which can fully penetrate this original identity or unity between the

particular and the universal is the only one which can be named philosophy.

Accordingly, philosophy is the science or knowledge which is concerned about and attempts to reveal the essential identity of its particular subject matters with the primordial ground. On the contrary, those which bear the name of "science" or "construction" but only investigate the particular as particular should only be named "theory". No matter how universal the rules and principles are in theories, they only construct and explain the objects by means of empirical discoveries and in relation to the concerns other than the object itself, in which the absolute ground and the essential nature of the objects can never be truly revealed. Hence, philosophy of art is, for Schelling, the "presentation of the absolute world in the form of art"⁷⁷, or "the science of the All in the form or potency of art"⁷⁸. Similarly, philosophy of nature is the presentation of the Absolute in the form or potency of nature. Art, nature, and history, are for Schelling the necessary objects of philosophy in which the unity or identity between the particular and the universal, the real and the ideal, can be properly revealed.

(II) General Philosophy and Specific Philosophies

A) General Philosophy

In *Philosophy of Art*, an important distinction between a general philosophy and the specific philosophies is made, which is a distinction usually used by Schelling after his *System of Transcendental Idealism*. In *STI*, the idea of a general philosophy

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 7.

⁷⁸ Ibid p. 16.

is indeed anticipated but not yet thematized. At the outset of *STI*, Schelling states that philosophy can be divided into philosophy of nature and transcendental idealism. Afterward he introduces the principles and directions of these two philosophies. However, what is that philosophy which is divided into two specific philosophies? It is apparent that the philosophy being divided is the general philosophy in Schelling's conception after *STI*. It should be noted that although the general philosophy is the highest and ultimate philosophy, or philosophy as such and in itself, Schelling has never devoted a book to the discourse on it. His discourse on general philosophy is mainly scattered over his works within 1801-1808, that is, the period or stage generally characterized as philosophy of identity. Instead, he only discusses the specific philosophies such as philosophy of nature, philosophy of art, philosophy of mythology, and so on, in book length throughout his life. The deep reason for this is that general philosophy, like the absolute ground, cannot manifest itself in itself, a philosopher cannot attain to general philosophy directly and immediately: "[N]othing inheres in philosophy as absolute, or we know nothing in philosophy as absolute. Rather, we always know only the absolutely one or absolute unity, and this absolutely one only in particular forms."⁷⁹

General philosophy is manifested or completed only through specific philosophies. Since specific philosophies are concerned about the particular objects in connection and unity with the Absolute, general philosophy necessarily seeks itself through particular objects. It corresponds precisely to the relationship between the Self and the real or the objective existence in *STI*. Hence, with reference to *STI*, we can infer that general philosophy in *PA* is not a dead doctrine, but an *activity* which seeks to objectify itself for itself through the particular, real and finite objects by

⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 15.

means of the specific philosophies in order to attain its own self-intuition or “self-affirmation”⁸⁰:

“Philosophy emerges in its most complete manifestation only within the totality of all potences, since it is to be an accurate image of the universe; the universe, however, = *the absolute, represented in the totality of all ideal determinations.*”⁸¹

Although general philosophy as such or in itself, which is only concerned about the essence and nature of the Absolute, cannot be recognized at the outset, it must be *postulated* in order to account for the origin and the possibility of the specific philosophies. However, without specific philosophies, general philosophy is merely empty, its completion and realization can only be attained through the totality of specific philosophies. Hence, the specific particular objects are necessary objects of philosophy no matter in specific or in general sense.

B) Indifference and the Goal of Specific Philosophies

For Schelling, general philosophy intuits the primordial principle or ground in itself. Since it simply views the latter as original One, antithesis and unity have no seat in it. Like the first principle in *STI*, from which antithesis and hence unity must be generated in order to attain to the complete self intuition, specific philosophies, including the philosophy of art, are developed out of the same antithesis between the

⁸⁰ In PA, Schelling always uses “self-affirmation” to signify the original activity of the God or the Absolute. It is the same activity named as “self-intuition” or “intellectual intellection” in *STI*.

⁸¹ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *The Philosophy of Art*. Trans. Douglas W. Stott. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, p. 14.

multiplicity or particularity since otherwise, there will be two substances or essences instead of one, and the whole doctrine will become a dualistic one as opposition is taken as a primordial fact. Hence, for Schelling the Absolute is never a concept opposing multiplicity, and multiplicity can never be regarded as a substance.

B) Determination, Potence and Perspective

The Absolute in itself is all along beyond any opposition, insofar opposition and diversity only happen in the objects with specific determinations: "Diversity among things is only possible to the extent that this indivisible whole is posited under various determinations."⁸³ Anything having determination means that it has limit and is separated from and opposes to other objects. Thus, the Absolute has no determination. Only when the Absolute enters into the world of opposition, there arises determination. In Schelling, the concept of determination is equivalent to that of potency. The development of the Absolute after self-separation or within the world of opposition is the potency of the Absolute. Potency is what cannot appear unless in certain circumstances. Without separation and opposition, there is no way for the Absolute to act and appear. Hence, once the Absolute acts, there arise determination and potency; once there arise determination and potency, the Absolute cannot intuit itself in its original and pure state.

Particular beings are not something contrary to and different from the Absolute. Rather, they are different degrees of manifestation of the essential self-affirming activity of the Absolute or the essence. In other words, they are different potencies or determinations of the Absolute. According to *STI*, the existence of the external world

⁸³ Ibid.

and that of the particular real objects are the products of the activity of self-intuition of the Absolute or the Self, in which separation and limitation, and hence antithesis are necessary processes and products. Different kinds of objects are products of *the same activity* in its different stages, in which certain degrees of limitation and unity take place. Since the particular beings change nothing actually in the essence, but are the manifestations of the essence, they are various determinations of the essence only in ideal sense, instead of in real sense. In Schelling's conception, what is ideal is always connected to knowledge. Therefore, as ideal determination of the essence, potences or forms are the self-knowledge of the Absolute through particular beings.

Up to now, it is apparent that although essence and form are distinguished by concept, they are never real opposition; rather, they are interwoven at the very beginning: essence is form in universal, and form is essence in particular. Hence, Schelling repeatedly emphasizes that from the absolute or philosophical *perspective*, the particular is simultaneously the absolute; from the empirical *perspective*, the particular are separated from the absolute and from the necessary connection with other beings. Schelling's description of this distinction as different perspectives further confirms that the difference is only an ideal one, that is, it is related to the self-knowledge of the Absolute. In the former perspective, there is always a unity between the universal and the particular; whereas in the latter, there is only differentiation between the particular beings and between the universal and the particular. This paradoxical relationship between the absolute and the particular is the most pivotal contention in Schelling's philosophy, which has never been renounced by him throughout his life.

ideal and the real, the subjective and the objective, the infinite and the finite, and struggle to achieve the unity or the indifference (die Indifferenz) of the separated poles. "Indifference" is a unique concept used by Schelling after his *STI*. It does not mean disregard, as we usually use in English. On the contrary, the meaning of this concept is apparent in the literal meaning of this word: in-difference, the negation of difference. Since difference means separation and hence opposition, the concept of indifference is equivalent to Schelling's concept of unity. Although indifference or unity is the negation of difference or opposition, it cannot be confused with the Absolute or the primordial ground itself, as indifference or unity only happens after separation. What indifference negates or reconciles is only the appearance of difference in different objects, but not the objects. It means that the unity is not attained by means of elimination of one separated pole or of subordination of one under another. Rather, what it reveals is the essential identity *within different and particular objects*. Hence, instead of elimination of one camp by another, indifference displays the highest *interpenetration* and harmony of the opposite camps.

Thus, the highest goal of specific philosophies is never the original or simple Absolute in itself, but only the indifference or unity of the antithesis. Though it seems that specific philosophies are inferior to the general philosophy, it must be noted that only the specific philosophies are the philosophies *really* undertaken by philosophers, general philosophy is ever a postulate only. Since the indifference or the unity of the antithesis is the highest goal of specific philosophies, and general philosophy must be completed through specific philosophies, indifference becomes the only *real* destination and demand of general philosophy and the Absolute. It is for this reason that Schelling in *PA* repeatedly maintains that the universe is All or

totality, as All or totality does not unify the world by means of eliminating any one being, but includes all beings with perfect harmony and interpenetration.

(III) Essence and Form

A) One Essence

The relationship between general philosophy and the specific philosophies, or that between the primordial ground and the particular beings, can be further exposed by means of the distinction between essence and form. This is a crucial distinction in *PA* and other Schelling's works within the same period. For Schelling, the Absolute is the essence, and there is only one essence. General philosophy intuits merely and directly this only one essence. All particular beings within the universe are only forms or potences, that is, specific determinations of the Absolute within the world of appearance. In this way, if philosophy is the discipline which studies the essence of the objects, there is only one philosophy:

“Yet there is only *one* philosophy and *one* science of philosophy. What everyone is calling different philosophical sciences is either something totally oblique as regards philosophy, or is only a series of representations of the one and undivided whole of philosophy in its various *potences* or from the viewpoint of various ideal determinations.”⁸²

Since the Absolute or the essence is one, it cannot be divided for the sake of the emergence of multiplicity or particularity. Besides, it cannot oppose against

⁸² Ibid, p. 14.

(IV) Universal Categories: the Real, the Ideal and the Indifference

A) The Real Unity and the Ideal Unity

The antithesis in specific philosophies, and thus in particular objects, is that between the real and the ideal, the objective and the subjective, the finite and the infinite, the necessary and the free. All of these designations of the antithesis are one and the same and are only differentiated within different contexts. In general philosophy there is no antithesis at all, but the antithesis of the real and the ideal is for Schelling the real, necessary and essential antithesis recognized in philosophy of art.⁸⁴ The real and the ideal, insofar as particular forms or potences, are at the same time the manifestation of the Absolute. Instead of being a mere pole in opposition, each in itself is a unity between the universal and the particular, what make them different are only their sequence and direction of development within the whole system. Thus, it is more accurate to designate them as the “real unity” (die reale Einheit) and the “ideal unity” (die ideale Einheit).

A unity is a resolution or a synthesis of an opposition. Since there is first of all a separation, the unity must be generated and directed in a direction, from one pole of the opposition to another. Either one of the poles predominates in the process of unification. The real unity is the “informing of the infinite into the finite”⁸⁵, whereas the ideal unity is the “informing of the finite into the infinite”⁸⁶. In the former, the

⁸⁴ Schelling designates the essential antithesis as an antithesis between the real and the ideal almost everywhere in PA. However, it should be noted that there is no essential difference between the antithesis of the objective and the subjective, which is often used in Schelling's early essays and *STI*, and that of the real and the ideal, which is often used between the works in 1800s. This is only a difference in terminology, and the designations are always shown interchangeable within his works.

⁸⁵ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *The Philosophy of Art*. Trans. Douglas W. Stott. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, p.85.

⁸⁶ Ibid. Schelling here discusses the real unity and the ideal unity in terms of poesy and art. Since poesy and art are unities in different ways for Schelling, what they represent, i.e., the real and the ideal, are not mere opposition, but within them there is unification. That is the reason for my quotation of

infinite develops itself into the finite and manifests itself within the finite. In this case, the finite is the destination and the infinite is entirely embodied in the finite, hence the real is predominant. Regarding the ideal unity, the finite elevates itself into the infinite, points toward the ideas, in which the ideas are the destination, and hence the ideal is predominant.

B) The Sequence of the Unities in the System

According to *STI*, we know that system for Schelling is never a static one, but is an activity engendered from the very nature of the Self or the Absolute. It is all the time dynamic, developmental, and historical. Thus, instead of being a mere ordering and positioning of the elements, there are sequences of the parts of a philosophical system, in which the parts are divided as stages. For Schelling, the real unity is always the first one, and then the ideal one, the indifference or unification comes forth finally. This sequence is not an arbitrary one, for, with reference to *STI*, the whole history or system of the Absolute is the genesis of the opposition between the real and the ideal followed by the resolution of the opposition for the sake of self-intuition or self-affirmation of the Self or the Absolute.

In the separation of the real and the ideal, the Absolute always firstly intuits itself within the product (the real) instead of the producing activity (the ideal). It is because the real is the first contrary to the Absolute which is in itself purely ideal and infinite. It is firstly through the positing of and informing into the real that separation

these sentences even at here Schelling does not use the words "the real unity" and "the ideal unity" but "the real side of genius" and "the ideal side of that". The original sentences in German are as follows: "Die reale Seite des Genies oder diejenige Einheit, welche Einbildung des Unendlichen ins Endliche ist, kann im engern Sinn die **Poesie**, die ideale Seite oder diejenige Einheit, welche Einbildung des Endlichen ins Unendliche ist, kann die **Kunst** in der Kunst heissen." (*Philosophie der Kunst* 460/461)

and limitation within the Absolute become possible and actual, which is the first step of the Absolute to step out of its state of in-itself. The system progresses to the final destination, namely the complete manifestation of the Absolute for itself, through the struggle of the ideal (the nature of the Absolute in itself) with the real, the ever transgression of the limited towards the infinite. Hence, the informing of the finite into the infinite is the second step lying between the separation and the unification which pushes the system to go forward. The final step is no doubt the perfect synthesis of the real and the ideal, the objective and the subjective.

C) The Totality of the Universal Categories

Since the Absolute is the All or the totality of the universe, each unity or potency, as a proper manifestation of the Absolute, has to encompass within itself the whole of the universe including the other series of unity. Besides, since the real unity and the ideal unity oppose each other as particular unities, there must be something in order to unite them: the indifference of the real and the ideal. Hence, the real, the ideal and the indifference are the “universal categories” (allgemeine Kategorien)⁸⁷ of the universe and the system of philosophy in Schelling. From the perspective of the Absolute, each of the three encompasses the others. It is certain that the indifference encompasses the real and the ideal unities since it is a higher synthesis of the two. With regard to the real and the ideal unities, as each of them is a unity or a synthesis, each encompasses the real, the ideal and the indifference, that is, the universe, within itself. The Absolute in its full manifestation is the totality of these universal categories: “God as the infinite affirmation of himself *comprehends* himself as infinitely affirming, as infinitely affirmed, and as the indifference of both, though he

⁸⁷ Ibid, p.48.

himself is *none* of these in particular.”⁸⁸ The “infinitely affirming” is equal to the ideal unity, and the “infinitely affirmed” the real unity. The Absolute in itself is none of the categories since there is only potentiality within it and the whole universe has not yet been brought forth; the completely manifested Absolute is also none of the categories since it is the totality of them.

D) Schematism, Allegory and the Symbolic

Although each of the three unities encompasses the others and hence the whole universe within itself, it is only a symbol of the Absolute, not the Absolute in and for itself. “The symbolic” (Symbolischen) is a crucial concept in *PA*. The symbolic is distinguished from schematism and allegory. For Schelling, schematism is the “representation in which the universal means the particular or in which the particular is intuited through the universal”⁸⁹, whereas allegory is the reverse of schematism, “in which the particular means the universal or in which the universal is intuited through the particular.”⁹⁰ The symbolic is “the synthesis of these two, where neither the universal means the particular nor the particular the universal, but rather where both are absolutely one.”⁹¹ The schematism suggested by Schelling is no doubt inherited from that of Kant. The schema is a sensually intuited rule for the production of an object, which is the universal rule guiding the production of the particular object, but nevertheless becomes fully apparent only when the concrete image is brought forth. It should be noted that although Schelling’s conception of schematism is similar to that of Kant, the significance and position of it are totally different in

⁸⁸ Ibid, p.24.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p.46.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

⁹¹ *ibid.*

their systems. Among the symbolic, schematism and allegory, only the first one is a unity or an indifference which *is* simultaneously the universal and the particular. In the cases of both schematism and allegory the universal and the particular are separated. The only difference is that in schematism the particular is still somehow concrete appearance of the universal, through which the latter can be expressed in different degrees within different concrete objects. There is still inter-connection between the two, though never an identity. On the contrary, the particular and the universal are totally separated in allegory without any inner interaction, in which the former is entirely subordinated to the latter. The particular is merely the means to the universal, which is replaceable and has no meaning within itself.

It seems that the distinction between schematism and allegory is equivalent to that between the real unity and the ideal unity, for they share the similar directions of development. Besides, Schelling has even stated the correspondence between the triplicity of schematism, allegory, the symbolic and that of the real unity, the ideal unity and the indifference⁹². However, it should be noted that schematism and allegory do not really correspond to the real unity and the ideal unity respectively, since the former are never unities. The symbolic, on the contrary, is the only unity and indifference of the particular and the universal. Thus, both of the real unity and the ideal unity are symbolic. Accordingly, insofar the works of art are manifestations of perfect unity between the particular and the universal, they are essentially symbolic. Thus, the works merely contain schematism and allegory are not true and perfect works of art, for schematism and allegory are not indifference or unity of the

⁹² Ibid, p.48. Although Schelling does state the correspondence between schematism and the real unity, and that between allegory and the ideal unity in this page, his discourse on this issue is really confused and inconsistent throughout the work. For example, he all the time takes language as schematism in PA, but schematism is sometimes taken as the real in the case of matter, sometimes as the ideal when language is the foundation of the ideal series of art. Therefore, disconnecting the real from schematism and the ideal from allegory seems to be a way out.

universal and the particular, which is the essential nature of the works of art in Schelling.

E) The Sequence of the Specific Philosophies

According to the sequence of the genesis of the real unity, the ideal unity and the indifference of both, the specific philosophies, as potences or forms of general philosophy, emerge in the same way of progression: philosophy of nature is the first one which is the real potence of general philosophy, then philosophy of spirit (transcendental idealism) as the ideal potence emerges, and finally arises philosophy of art, the indifference of the real and ideal potences. Inasmuch as each of the three unities or potences has to encompass the whole universe within itself, within each unity (i.e., the real unity, the ideal unity or the indifference of these two unities) the three unities arise successively. Within philosophy of nature, matter is the real, light the ideal, and organism is the indifference, which is the perfect unity of the particular and the universal within nature. Regarding natural sciences, magnetism is the real, electricity the ideal, and chemistry the indifference. In transcendental idealism, knowledge is the real which assumes the thing-in-itself, action is the ideal which realizes freedom and the infinite, and art is the indifference, through the products of which the Absolute can completely objectify and hence intuit itself.

Following the conclusion of *STI*, Schelling maintains in *PA* that philosophy of art is the highest potence. Concerning the superiority of philosophy of art to philosophy of nature, Schelling states that "through such philosophy the inspired natural scientist learns to recognize symbolically or emblematically the true archetypes of forms in works of art, archetypes he finds expressed only in a confused

fashion in nature.”⁹³ This contention has already been anticipated in *STI* when Schelling in there maintains that although organization manifests a perfect unity of the real and the ideal, the parts and the whole, it is not the final destination of the Absolute, for at this stage the latter only intuits in itself before separation and consciousness, but not for itself after separation and unification within consciousness. Thus, what nature expresses is at best only a confused and unconscious manifestation of the Absolute.

(V) Philosophy of Art

A) Art as the Perfect Reflex of the Absolute

a) Art as the Object of Philosophy

By means of philosophy of art, art is revealed as the indifference or the unity of the universal and the particular *within the particular*. Philosophy, or the general philosophy, “presents the absolute in the archetype so also does art present the absolute in a reflex or reflected image.”⁹⁴

“Philosophy is the immediate of direct representation of the divine, whereas art is immediately or directly only the representation of indifference as such... The degree of perfection or of reality of a thing increases to the extent that it corresponds to its won absolute idea and to the fullness of infinite affirmation, and thus the more it encompasses other potences within itself. Hence, it is clear that art enjoys the most immediate relationship to philosophy and distinguishes

⁹³ Ibid, p.8.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p.16.

itself from it only by virtue of the determination of particularity or of the reflected nature of its images. For art is, by the way, the highest potency of the ideal world.”⁹⁵

The divine is the Absolute in itself, in which there is not yet any separation and limitation, and hence no seat for indifference. Indifference only takes place after separation and thus must only be a potency. What art reveals is only the indifference after long series of separation instead of the Absolute in itself, that is, the divine. Since general philosophy is the direct intuition of the Absolute in itself, it is more primordial and original than art. Philosophy as such has the almighty power entirely and directly generated out of the Absolute. Thus, Schelling maintains that “philosophy is the basis of everything, encompasses everything, and extends its constructions to all potences and objects of knowledge. Only through it does one have access to the highest.”⁹⁶ It is for this reason that art becomes an object of philosophy, and not vice versa. It is also for this reason Schelling claims that “the ideal is always a higher reflex of the real”⁹⁷. Nevertheless, since potency is necessary for the Absolute, and likewise specific philosophies for the general one, philosophy and art are indeed interdependent: “both encounter one another on the final pinnacle, and precisely by virtue of that common absoluteness are for one another both prototype and reflex”⁹⁸

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p.29.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p.13.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p.6.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p.6.

b) Art as the Cradle of Philosophy

More importantly, Schelling points out that the ancients designate mythology, the essential element of art recognized by Schelling, as the “common source of poesy, history and philosophy”⁹⁹, which is the prime matter from which all else issued. The Greek mythology is the *initial* universal intuition of the universe or the archetypal world, which was recognized as the “foundation for philosophy”¹⁰⁰ and determined the entire direction and development of Greek philosophy. It is apparent that this contention echoes the last pages of *STI* which expresses that art is the cradle of philosophy. Accordingly, the relationship between philosophy and art could be articulated as follow: as a postulate, philosophy as such is more divine than art; as a reality, philosophy as such or the general philosophy is only an empty concept. Nobody can attain to the intuition of the Absolute initially, instead, the grasp of the primordial ground can only be inspired at the outset by the most perfect reflex of it within experience and particular beings, that is, genuine works of art. Hence, it is indeed one-sided and superficial to interpret that in *STI* art is superior to philosophy, whereas in *PA* the case is opposite.

c) Art as the Universal Organ and Document of the Whole System of Philosophy

In order to clarify the paramount significance of art in *PA*, the multiple meanings of “philosophy” in Schelling’s thought should be discriminated carefully. When Schelling says that art is paramount to philosophers, he means that art is a higher potency than nature and spirit, and as a specific philosophy the philosophy of

⁹⁹ *ibid*, p.52.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid*.

art is a higher one than philosophy of nature and transcendental idealism. Nevertheless, when Schelling declares that philosophy is the basis of everything, his point is that general philosophy, as a necessary postulate, is the highest and ultimate power which directly and immediately grasps the nature and activity of the Absolute. Combining the contentions included in *PA*, we can get a more comprehensive view concerning the significance of art than that included in *STI*, which claims that art is the universal organ and document of philosophy. On the one hand, art is the final step and the highest potency regarding the goal and the demand of the narrower system of transcendental idealism; on the other hand, art, as a perfect indifference of the particular and the universal within the particular, is a necessary *reflex* of the divine but empty Absolute, which is the only object of general philosophy. Thus, art is the objectification (document) and the organizing and uniting element (organon) of the whole system constituted by general philosophy and specific philosophies.

B) The System within Philosophy of Art

a) The Universal Categories within Philosophy of Art: the Real, the Ideal and the Indifference

The system of philosophy of art is constituted by the various forms of art, which are determined according to the triplicity of the real unity, the ideal unity and the indifference of both. These forms of art are not only valid within the sphere of art, but are also the forms of all beings in the universe, for they are the universal categories in Schelling's system. The indifference is the essence or universal content of works of art, which is fully expressed in mythology, especially in Greek mythology. For Schelling, Greek mythology is the perfect exemplar of works of art. The Greek gods are simultaneously particular and universal, limited and absolute,

each of them represents the entire universe within itself. Besides, the collectivity of them constitutes a totality of the universe and a poetic world which is independent from ordinary experience, knowledge and morality. Within this poetic world possibility is simultaneously actuality, idea simultaneously reality, in which every being is eternal for they are symbols of the divine Absolute.

*After the indifference*¹⁰¹, there arises a juxtaposition of the real and ideal series of art forms. Inasmuch as each of the primal forms in essence takes up all other forms or unities within itself, the triplicity of the real, the ideal and the indifference reappears again under these two primal forms. Within the real side of the world of art comes forth the formative arts, in which music is the real, painting the ideal and plastic arts the indifference, whereas within the ideal side the verbal arts arises, in which lyric is the real, epic the ideal, and drama is the indifference. Within each of the specific forms, the triplicity reappears again and again.

For Schelling, verbal art or poesy is a higher potency comparing with formative art, for formative art does not allow the absolute act of self-intuition or self-affirmation appears as ideal, but only through something *other*, that is, the real, whereas poesy manifests the Absolute *directly* as an *act* of producing, instead of a being. Poesy is the idea or the essence of language, in which the universal is expressed through something real without ceasing to be ideal. Only by means of differentiation from ordinary language or prose does poesy attain the essence of language. Contrary to the logical use and mechanical sequence of thought which are constitutive to our ordinary language and prose, poesy is “composed for the ear”¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Schelling repeatedly emphasizes that the indifference or the synthesis is the first. I am embarking upon the issue about mythology in detail in a later chapter.

¹⁰² Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *The Philosophy of Art*. Trans. Douglas W. Stott. Minneapolis:

(not for the logical and practical mind) through language which is in part simpler, more beautiful and beyond common laws or regularities. Hence, the indifference within verbal arts, which manifests the absolute *act* of self-intuition or self-affirmation within particular works, is the highest unity in philosophy of art, and even in the specific philosophies. The tables below illustrate the basic structure of the system of general philosophy and the system of philosophy of art:

i) The System of General Philosophy

The Absolute, God, absolute identity

Self-affirmation

Intuited directly by general philosophy

Activity/	the affirmed		the affirming		indifference
State	reality		ideality		relative identity
World/	the real world		the ideal world		real world = ideal world
Potence	nature	→	spirit	→	art

Specific

philosophies of nature → of spirit → of art

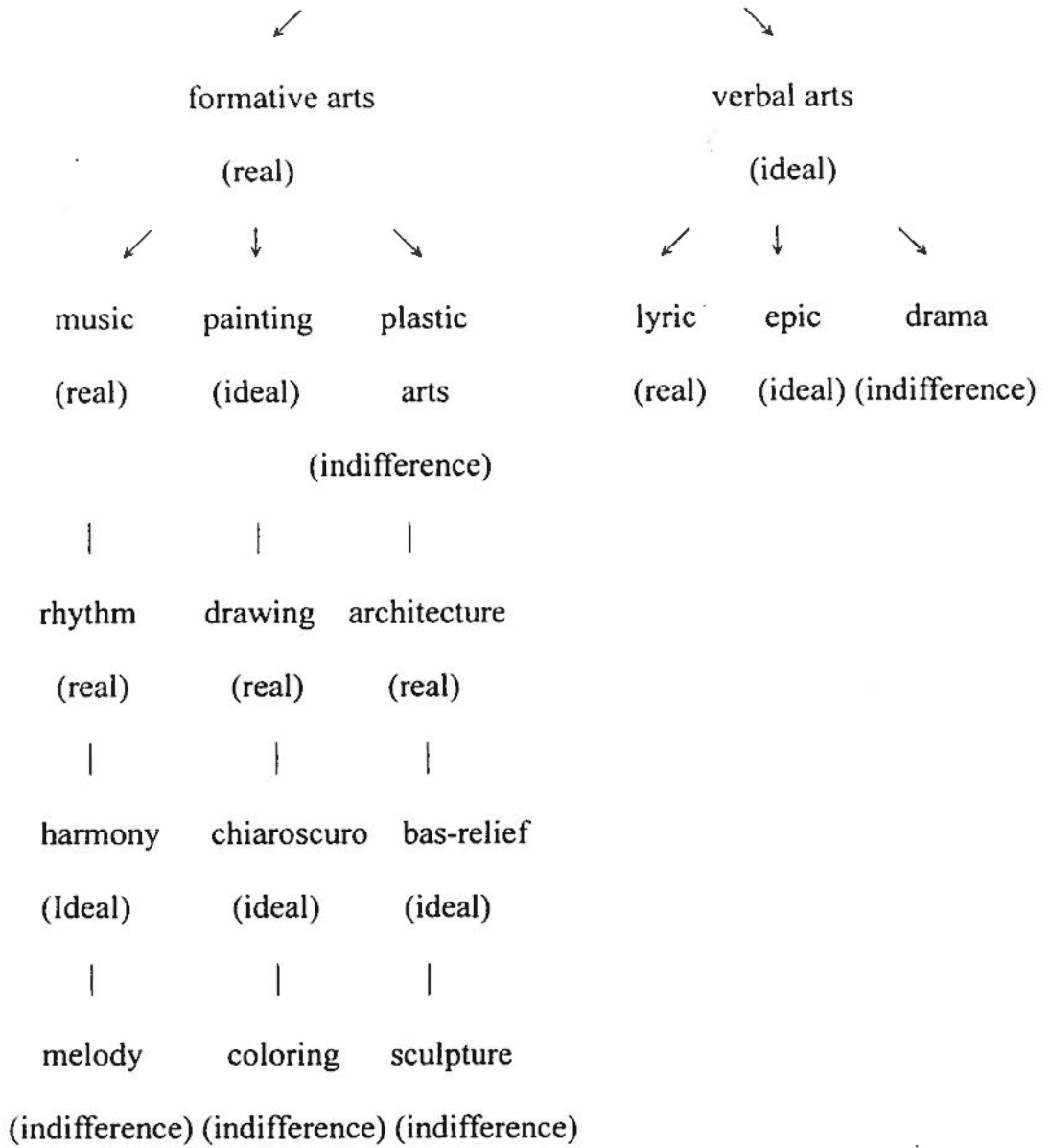
(transcendental idealism)

	↓		↓		↓
Real	matter (being)		knowledge		formative arts
	↓		↓		↓
Ideal	light (activity)		action		verbal arts
	↓		↓		↓
Indifference	organism		art		mythology

ii) The System of Philosophy of Art

Greek Mythology

(original indifference, universal content of art)



[The specific forms of verbal arts are constructed in a more complicated and amalgamative fashion, which cannot be articulated as clearly as in the case of formative arts]

Concerning the sequence of the formative arts, Schelling notices that many scholars do not consider music as a kind of formative arts, and the sequence of the specific forms of the formative arts is always so arranged that plastic arts comes the first, then painting, and finally music. This sequence is in fact determined according to the degree of dematerialization, in which the finite or the sensible is gradually excluded along the progression to the Absolute. It is certainly not the case of Schelling's system, and he criticizes that it is based on a "misunderstanding of the potences in philosophy."¹⁰³ The most notable example is Hegel's system of art.¹⁰⁴ The consummation of the real series of art in Schelling is instead the perfect indifference of the particular and the universal entirely within the particular, which is the case of sculpture, in which matter becomes a proper expression of the Absolute. Although music is a form of art in which the infinite is separated and embodied into the finite, it is nonetheless an act rather than a being, which cannot entirely fulfill the demand of the real series of art forms:

"[I]n music that informing of the ideal into real still manifests itself *as act*, as an event, and not as being; it appears as merely relative identity...in the plastic arts, finally, the infinite is wholly transformed into the finite, life into death, spirit into matter...and *only* because it is now wholly and absolutely *real*, is the plastic work of art also absolutely ideal."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Ibid, p.200.

¹⁰⁴ I will discuss Hegel's system of art in the next chapter.

¹⁰⁵ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *The Philosophy of Art*. Trans. Douglas W. Stott. Minneapolis:

b) The Historical Dimension of the System of Philosophy of Art: Antiquity and Modernity

i) Time

In addition to the essential antithesis between the real and the ideal, there is a *formal* antithesis between antiquity and modernity within Schelling's system of philosophy of art, which constitutes the historical dimension of the construction. What determines the antithesis as a nonessential one is the condition of time inherent in this antithesis. For Schelling, time has no seat in the Absolute, but is only a condition of particularity and limitation as such. Thus, time is only a necessary condition in the understanding, but in reason it is entirely out of place. The Absolute is eternal in itself, within its possibility is by nature one and the same with actuality, and reality comes forth immediately or simultaneously from idea. The Absolute in itself is absolutely all and positive. On the contrary, time appears as succession, which necessarily consists of negation or suspension: a being is absent when it has not yet emerged, and becomes absent again when it is succeeded by something else. Thus, eternity, or the absolute presence, in principle lies beyond any determination of time or duration no matter how long it is.

Nevertheless, in examining art in the concrete, it is unavoidable to encounter the condition of time. Although philosophy of art aims at revealing the essential or true meaning and significance of art in terms of ideas and with connection to the Absolute or primordial ground of existence, it cannot escape a detailed study of the concrete works of art. Otherwise, the investigation becomes a merely abstract one. Besides, the ideal construction of art cannot replace the real impression which is brought forth

by the concrete works of art to the audiences. Even though a historical construction of art is not the essential part of philosophy of art, it is a necessary element for a final completion of the construction of art: "Only in the history of art does the essential and inner unity of all works of art reveal itself, a unity showing that all poetry is of the same spirit, a spirit that even in the antitheses of ancient and modern art is merely showing us two different faces."¹⁰⁶

ii) The Ancient and Modern Arts

Since art in its very essence is the indifference of the particular and the universal within particular beings, the genuine masterpieces of both ancient and modern art are equally in essence perfect expression of the indifference. The ancient and modern art are different only in form. Since the antithesis between the real and the ideal is the essential and universal one, we can subordinate the antithesis between antiquity and modernity under that between the real and the ideal. When the ancient and modern arts are opposing to each other, the former can be conceived as a real potency, whereas the latter an ideal potency. Schelling's discourse on the antithesis between ancient and modern art is scattered all over *PA*, for it is not the essential and universal antithesis directly emerged from the activity of self-intuition or self-affirmation of the Absolute, hence, it does not constitute the basic structure of the system of philosophy of art like the antithesis between the real and the ideal.

In Schelling's conception, the art of the ancients, especially the Greeks, expresses a universal intuition of the universe as nature, and nature was generally conceived as eternal in the ancient Greeks. On the contrary, modern art, such as

¹⁰⁶ *ibid*, p.19.

mythology of Christianity, manifests a universal intuition of the universe as history, in which change and transformation becomes the universal law. The ancient comprehension of the real and the ideal, the finite and the infinite, is represented wholly and perfectly in their works of art, in which particular beings are perfect symbols of the Absolute and hence the value and significance of particularity are entirely preserved. Thus, the ancient art or the Greek art is a "regeneration of nature within the sphere of art" which expresses only eternity, but contains no real history in which the finite beings are in different stages and degrees suspended and negated according to the destination and the development of history. Hence, in ancient art the antithesis between the particular and the universal is all the time suspended, but in modern art it cannot be overcome until the final stage.

The historical character of modern art is intimately connected to the homesickness of modernity:

"This is the actual turning point of ancient and modern religion and poesy. The modern world begins when man wrests himself loose from nature. Since he does not yet have a new home, however, he feels abandoned. Wherever such a feeling comes over an entire group, that group turns either voluntarily or compelled by an inner urge to the ideal world in order to find a home."¹⁰⁷

In the ancient time, since the works of art are perfect interpenetration of the finite and the infinite, the particular contains meaning within itself. It was a blessed age which was devoid of vanity and struggle. The particular beings lost their meaning only after the separation and opposition of the real and the ideal, in which the finite

¹⁰⁷ *ibid*, p.59.

becomes mere means to the infinite. The phenomenal world hence becomes a vanity, and the world of ideas becomes another world which is the higher destination for the finite to struggle toward. For Schelling, philosophy and science were encompassed and unified within the Greek mythology, the prototype of ancient art, only after the separation of the real and the ideal and the becoming predominance of the ideal principle is philosophy separated from mythology and becomes independent to art. Hence, the emergence of philosophy marked the beginning of modernity.

Why is there the emergence of philosophy out of mythology? Within ancient art there was indeed no destination and struggle since everything was eternal, and the particular was identical with the Absolute. Nevertheless, like the Absolute, ancient art has to step out the state of in-itself and to proceed to a development or history in order to attain complete self-intuition and genuine identity between reality and ideality:

“The realistic mythology of the Greeks did not exclude the historical dimension. On the contrary, it only really became mythology within that historical dimension-as epic. Its gods were originally natural beings. These nature gods had to extricate themselves from their origin and become historical beings in order to become truly independent, poetic beings. Only here do they become gods; before, they were idols.”¹⁰⁸

In a reverse fashion, the final destiny of modern art is attained when “the succession of the modern world has transformed itself into a *simultaneity*”¹⁰⁹, the totality of the

¹⁰⁸ *ibid*, p.76.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid*, p.74.

succession. Hence, if mythology is the pure expression of the essence of works of art, in antiquity this essence was attained at the outset, whereas in modernity the essence becomes the final destination which has not yet been attained, but has to be struggled for. Separation was the destiny of the ancient world, and unification is the destination of modernity.

In addition, since in the ancient world of art the finite is simultaneously the infinite, individual is identical to collectivity, the artists in antiquity were always nameless, even Homer was a name of an identity between individual and collectivity. The final destination of modern art, on the contrary, will be attained by individual great poets. Every great poet of modernity structures *from his own* age into a whole, and hence creates from the content of his world *his* mythology, a final interpenetration of the particular and the universal by means of the struggle from the individual to the infinite or totality. The issues on mythology and on ancient and modern arts will be further discussed chapter Eight.

(VI) Evaluation of Schelling's System of Art

It is obvious that Schelling undertakes a systematic approach in his philosophy of art. He firstly constructs art as the universe in the form of art, determines the essence and position of art within the system of general philosophy. Then, the essence or prototype within the world of art, that is, mythology, is constructed. Finally, art as the particular, or the diversity of forms of art is explicated in the sequence of the real potence, the ideal potence and the indifference of both. Many scholars may be suspicious towards this systematic and orderly construction of the most complicated and intricate phenomenon. It is undeniable that Schelling's

determination and explanation of specific forms of art are sometimes far-fetched and confused, and his views on the specific art forms are to a large extent influenced and limited by his time. Nevertheless, the confusion in the specific determination of concrete works of art does not undermine the significance of the essential contentions in Schelling's philosophical construction of art. If we attempt to construct art in relation to the primordial ground of existence and knowledge, instead of only concerning about the empirical knowledge and significance of it, the universal categories suggested by Schelling in his system of art are indeed helpful and valuable to the investigation.

In addition, Schelling's system of art is in fact not a neat and an orderly one. His system is full of paradoxical language. The division between the parts is never clear-cut, but is full of interpenetration, and under each element or part an infinite separation and unification are always anticipated. Hence, instead of being a simplification or reduction of the complex phenomenon of art, Schelling's system is an endeavor to display the complicated world of art in terms of scientific language and concepts, which is also an attempt to reconcile the opposition between art and science.

Although *Philosophy of Art* is the lecture given by Schelling in his stage of philosophy of identity, and the contentions within it do have many similarities with that of his other works in the same period, we can see that there is no essential contradiction and conversion between the views on art and philosophy in *STI* and *PA*. Thus, the suggestion of Schelling's conversion from *STI* or his early thought to philosophy of identity, and hence his transition from romanticism to idealism, should be re-examined. This will be the task of the Part Two of this dissertation. Before

dealing with this problem, the views on art of Hegel and the early German Romantics should be first expounded.

Chapter Four: System and Art in Hegel's Aesthetics

Hegel's Lecture on aesthetics is indeed a tremendous work which has immensurable impact on his contemporaries and subsequent thinkers. A comprehensive investigation on Hegel's aesthetics is undoubtedly a great project, however, it is not the main task of this dissertation. In this chapter, the main ideas of Hegel's aesthetics will be discussed in order to make Schelling's conception of art more readily understandable through a contrast with Hegel.

(I) From Hegel's System to Aesthetics

A) Systematicity, Necessity and Unity

Similar to Schelling, Hegel's discourse on art is involved within a more general system of philosophy as a whole, which is a system of the essentiality of all existence and knowing, while art at the same time encompasses a system within its own sphere. Thus, Hegel maintains that it is "the task of an encyclopedic development of the whole of philosophy and its particular disciplines to prove the Idea of the beautiful with which we began, i.e. to derive it necessarily from the presuppositions which antecede it in philosophy and out of the womb of which it is born. For us the Concept of the beautiful and art is a presupposition given by the system of philosophy"¹¹⁰ It is apparent that for Hegel a proper investigation into the essential nature and genuine significance of art is a science or philosophy of art, and the philosophical comprehension of art is never detached from the context of the whole system of

¹¹⁰ Hegel, G. W. F.. *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*. Trans. T. M. Knox. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1975, p. 25.

philosophy.

Systematicity is a necessary demand and an inner development of the Absolute or the Concept (Begriff)¹¹¹. For Hegel, “the Absolute”, “the absolute spirit”, “the spirit”, “the Concept” and “the Idea” are indeed synonymous and are different only in context and the point of emphasis. Hegel’s system is also a self-realizing and self-development program. In Hegel, it is the Concept that undertakes the whole progress, everything real and particular is implicit in the Concept before being articulated. Hence, the Concept is not only something ideal and abstract, it is also the ground of real beings. In order to realize the whole essence and potentiality within itself, or to realize the entire truth of self-knowledge, the Concept must separate or alienate itself from itself and give rise to reality. It is apparent that Hegel’s Concept does not mean the concept in our ordinary language. In our ordinary language, concept is something merely universal and opposing to real beings, but in Hegel, the whole reality is implicit in and generated out of the Concept:

“But the Concept as such does not abide within itself, without development (as the understanding would have it); on the contrary, being the infinite form, the Concept is totally active. It is the *punctum saliens* of all vitality, so to speak, and for that reason it distinguishes itself from itself.”¹¹²

Thus, Hegel’s Concept is not something opposing to the real and the particular, rather,

¹¹¹ ‘Begriff’ is sometimes translated in English as ‘notion’. It does not denote the determinate and limited concepts of the Understanding, but rather designates the free and essential substance of existence and knowledge which can only be fully revealed in thought. For Knox, it contains the meaning of essential nature.

¹¹² Hegel, G. W. F.. *The Encyclopaedia Logic, with the Zusätze : Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*. Trams. T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, and H.S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991, p. 245.

it is the origin of the separation and the unification of thinking and reality. When the Concept attains comprehensive knowledge of itself, that is, the complete unity of the universal and the particular, or the ideal and the real, the Concept can be called the Absolute: "The True is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development. Of the Absolute it must be said that it is essentially a *result*, that only in the end is it what it truly is; and that precisely in this consists its nature, viz. to be actual, subject, the spontaneous becoming of itself."¹¹³ The Absolute is the final destination of the self-development progress of the Concept. In order to attain to the Absolute, the Concept has to go through many moments in which different contradictions and unifications take places. For Hegel, and Schelling as well, the moments appear in a necessary sequence and order, and this necessity constitutes the systematicity of their systems.

Hence, for both Hegel and Schelling, systematicity is not a particular characteristic of particular objects or spheres of knowledge. Instead, it is the necessary and universal demand for the unity or connection of all beings and knowledge. No matter in ordinary belief or scientific research, this unity or connection is always presupposed, and this very presupposition indeed contributes to the progress of life and knowledge. Although there are indeed scattered views and beliefs, only the belief in unity or connection of beings and knowledge truly generates positive power to push human beings forward, which is the vocation of all ages. It follows that for both philosophers the contradiction or dualism between the subjective and the objective, or that between the ideal and the real, is a true and important problem, and the explanation and the resolution of this fundamental

¹¹³ Hegel, G. W. F.. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977, p. 11.

contradiction into an ultimate unity should become the central issues of philosophy and even art: "When philosophy has thoroughly understood how to overcome this opposition, has it grasped its own essence and therefore at the same time the essence of nature and art."¹¹⁴

B) Hegel's Concept

Similar to Schelling, Hegel's Concept (Begriff) in its primordial state is purely and simply ideal in itself. However, it is the essential nature and demand of the Concept to appear to itself, or to become an object to itself within itself for itself. This appearing, and hence the product of it, namely appearance, are essential and necessary to the absolute spirit or the Concept, since "truth would not be truth if it did not show itself and appear, if it were not truth for someone and for itself, as well as for the spirit in general too."¹¹⁵ As the essence or substance of existence and knowledge, the Concept is not something transcendent to which the world has no direct relation, rather, the Concept is immanent in the whole world since every existent is the product generated within the development of the Concept's appearing to itself. Thus, the existence and position of every existent are determined by its degree of explicitness of the Concept's self-appearing. It is apparent that for both Hegel and Schelling, the Absolute contains an *inner* purpose, which becomes the ground of explanation of existence, the opposition of beings, and their ultimate unity.

In order to appear to itself, the Concept must particularize itself from its absolute infinity and universality into finite beings, for only in that way can it

¹¹⁴ Hegel, G. W. F.. *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*. Trans.T. M. Knox. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1975, p.56.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.8.

become an object to itself. An object essentially presupposes the division between the subjective and the objective, and this division also indicates at the same time the finitude of the two poles. For Hegel, finitude is synonymous to particularity, which means incompleteness concerning the goal of the Concept's self-appearing. Hegel describes this incompleteness as 'abstract', while the goal of the Concept's appearing to itself is the *concrete* revelation of the Concept. Although all particular existents are based on the separation and synthesis of the opposing ideal and real aspects of the Concept, the unity manifested in particular existents is not thorough and complete. Since all particular existents are to different degrees abstract, the concrete and full appearing of the Concept must not lie in any kind of particularity but on universality and ideality alone, the original nature of the Concept in itself.

C) Ideality and Negativity

Regarding the most crucial divergence between Hegel and Schelling.: Although both of them recognize the necessity of a system, and admit that the genesis of the system of all existents and knowledge is originated from the immanent activity and development of the self-realization of the primordial and highest principle, for Hegel the goal of the activity is attained only by negation of all finitude, whereas for Schelling the final destination is achieved by thorough unification and identity of the infinite and the finite, instead of subordinating the latter under the former . In Hegel's system, the essential nature of the Concept or the spirit is ideality and negativity. In fact, these two aspects are the same:

“The spirit particularizes itself within and negates itself, yet this particularization and negation of itself, as having been brought about *by itself*,

it nevertheless cancels, and instead of having a limitation and restriction therein it binds itself together with its opposite in free universality.”¹¹⁶

The appearing or the actualization of the spirit is attained by the act of absolute or infinite negativity which puts finitude into itself and then cancels it. What the spirit cancels or negates in its process and development of appearing are the one-sidedness, externality and finitude of the particular, which is the products of the self-appearing of the spirit in the moments before attaining complete self-knowledge. In Hegel, the spirit must first recognize the finitude in itself and then negates it. Recognizing finitude as finitude entails the awareness of its own insufficiency, and recognizing this insufficiency in itself implies the consciousness of itself as one which should be more than this finitude. The insufficient and finite existent is therefore negated as the proper nature of the spirit, and the spirit is thus pushed forward to its more concrete and comprehensive self-appearing. Thus, it is through the infinite negation that the process of the Concept's self-appearing gains progression.

For Hegel, the Concept or the spirit is in its own account purely subjective, ideal and inward, without the objective standing over against it. Nevertheless, it is the inner demand of the spirit for self-knowing that constitutes the universal characteristic of every existent: on the one hand it is external and particular; on the other hand, it has the spirit or the Concept *implicitly* as its substantial element. Everything particular is thus the Concept in certain extent remaining implicit, and this one-sidedness or abstraction is the very defect or insufficiency which should be negated and superseded by the Concept or the spirit. This “cancellation of the

¹¹⁶ *ibid*, pp. 92-93.

negation”¹¹⁷ or the “negation of the negative” is for Hegel what makes the life becoming affirmative and contributes to the resolution of the contradiction between the subjective and the objective, the infinite and the finite, the sensuous and the ideal. It should be noted that Hegel’s conception of infinite negativity is not the Concept’s negation of something other than itself, rather, what it negates is only the imperfect appearance produced by itself. Hence, it is in the Concept’s *self-determination* that it remains purely and simply “a self-relating affirmative unity”¹¹⁸ by means of negativity.

D) The Realm of the Ideal

Accordingly, nature, in the sense of mechanistic one in which everything is connected by blind causality and quantitative rules, has the spirit or the Concept inherent in it only implicitly, for the spirit has not yet been conscious of and free for itself. Hegel maintains that in mechanistic nature “the different parts are only an abstract multiplicity and their unity is only the insignificant one of the uniformity of the same qualities.”¹¹⁹ If the Concept or the absolute spirit is the highest principle of reality and knowledge, all existents including the dead matter are products of the self-appearing of the Concept, and hence in principle are unities of the real and the ideal, in which the ideal plays as their substance. However, when nature is treated as mechanistic, externality manifests purely as externality, and matter purely matter. Spirituality hides behind the appearance and is usually treated as something beyond the mechanistic nature, which leads to an opposition between externality and spirituality, or that between the sensuous and the ideal. Since the Concept or the

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p.97.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p.109.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p.116.

spirit is essentially the One, the spirit's appearance in mechanistic nature is entirely inadequate to its true essence.

On the contrary, if there is appearance in reality which is at the same time the revelation of the essence of the spirit, it belongs to the realm of Ideal and hence to the realm of absolute spirit. The Ideal is for Hegel the thorough embodiment of the spirit and the complete unity of the opposition between the ideal and the real within the particular and sensuous existent, in which the existent is fully immersed in spirituality, and the spirit entirely actualizes in real beings. The beauty of the works of art is neither the Concept expressed in Logic, in which the content is the Idea or the Concept *as such* developed in the pure element of thinking without any consideration of the sensuous and particular appearance in reality, nor the Concept manifested in nature, in which the Concept is entirely implicit without consciousness of itself. The realm of the Ideal, instead of lying in abstraction beyond the objective and real world, is the presentation of the spirit "within objectivity in the finite spirit's recollection or inwardization of the essence of all things-i.e. the finite apprehends itself in its own essence and so itself becomes essential and absolute."¹²⁰ The realm of the Ideal is the final stage of Hegel's system, in which the genuine essence of the world is soon revealed and the ultimate unification of the real and the ideal is readily completed.

The first moment within the realm of the Ideal or the absolute spirit is art, which is an immediate and sensuous knowing of the nature of Concept in the form and shape of sensuous and objective beings. The Absolute is presented in art to *contemplation* and *feeling*, instead of thinking. This moment of the activity of

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, p.101.

Concept's self-appearing is then superseded by religion, which is a pictorial *thinking*, and the Concept is fully transparent to itself in the final stage, namely philosophy, which is the *free thinking* of absolute spirit, devoid of any restriction and limitation from finitude and particularity. Since our central issue is art, the following discussion will focus on Hegel's contentions on art and its relation to philosophy, whereas his discussion on religion will be omitted.

(II) Hegel's Aesthetics

A) The Essence of Works of Art

Similar to Schelling's idea of the essence of works of art, Hegel maintains that "it is precisely the unity of the Concept with the individual appearance which is the essence of the beautiful and its production by art."¹²¹ Within this unification the sensuous or the particular is preserved entirely, that is, preserved in its *individuality*. It is the concrete and individual existent which nevertheless reveals the absolute spirit that constitutes the genuine works of art. Hence, each genuine work of art should be treated individually and independently. In appreciating works of art, we do not put our attention on the matter as such, but on the meaning expressed through the combination or organization of matter. The combination or organization of matter in artistic production, although is only the technical side of art, is already an activity of spirit in higher sense comparing to the case of mechanistic nature, and through this spiritual and conscious activity the sensuous and particular existent is thus liberated from the confinement of pure externality and then becomes an expression of the ideal and absolute spirit. Similarly, Schelling also repeatedly emphasizes that it is not the

¹²¹ *ibid.*

sensuous element which constitutes the essence of works of art, and the significance of works of art should not be conceived by means of sensibility and in relation to empirical purposes.

Thus, for both Hegel and Schelling, only the works of fine art can express the beautiful. In contrast, natural beauty is only a confused concept, for nature has not yet attained to the stage of self-consciousness of the Absolute, let alone the complete resolution or unity of the sensuous and the ideal which constitutes the very essence of the beautiful. In addition to the organization of matter, the works of art express a meaning which lies far beyond the sensuous and real world. In philosophy this meaning is considered in its pure ideality, however, it cannot be conceived in art without the sensuous expression. In works of art, the sensuous and the ideal, the form and the content are interpenetrated with each other, in which each cannot sustain itself without the other—an entire unification of the two poles. Only by means of this unification, the sensuous existent in its entirely individual status is simultaneously the adequate expression of the absolute spirit. It is apparent that on the essence of works of art, there is indeed an agreement between Schelling and Hegel.

B) The Role of Art in Hegel's System

Nevertheless, art is not the final destination of the activity of Concept's self-appearing and the completion of the system of philosophy for Hegel. It is the most obvious difference between Schelling and Hegel. For the latter, although in genuine and perfect works of art the expression is totally adequate to its content or meaning, that is, the absolute spirit or the Concept, art is never the perfect and full revelation of the Concept, for in it the essentially pure and ideal Concept is still

immediately mixed with, even though in a perfectly united sense, the sensuous and the particular. Hegel thinks that the destination of the self-realization of the Concept should be the appearing of the inherent character and universal principle of it in thought. Thus, anything alien to and opposing to the very nature of ideality of the Concept should be omitted eventually. Hence, the insufficiency of art lies in the fact that it is not a purely ideal unity, but the unity which must be presented through the aspect of reality which is alien and opposing to pure ideality.¹²² It follows that for Hegel, the truth in art is "in fact contaminated and concealed by the immediacy of sense."¹²³ Since the works of art cannot be detached from sensuous material, and the sensuous or the real expresses certain degrees of immediacy, in which the Concept is in different extents implicit and unconscious of itself, the essence of the Concept is still concealed in works of art and the former has to go further on its road to entire self-knowing.

It is obvious that the appearing of the ideal within the real is not an insufficiency for Schelling no matter in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* or *Philosophy of Art*. It is precisely this perfect and genuine unification presented in works of art that constitutes the highest potency of the Absolute. For Schelling, the Absolute in its pure ideality is only a necessary postulate of general philosophy which cannot be manifested and actually comprehended. Once the activity of self-intuition or self-objectification of the Absolute started, the Absolute must intuit itself with reference to its opposite, the real and the particular, instead of in its pure essence and state. Accordingly, Hegel's system looks more like a circle, in which the ending is entirely the same as the beginning. Although Schelling claims that the end of a

¹²² see *ibid*, p.115.

¹²³ *ibid*, p.9.

system must return back to its starting point, the ending of his system indeed contains more than the beginning. Not only is the essence of the primordial ground revealed at the end, but also the whole development and reality of the Absolute. If the Concept in Hegel's system is empty in its pure and original state, after the long struggle with the sensuous through the activity of actualization, the destination of his system is still empty if all actuality and reality are negated and cancelled at last.

On the part of Schelling, the possibility of Hegel's task is not without doubt: although in thinking the spirit is liberated from the encountering of the immediate sensuous existent, it still inevitably involves the separation of the subjective and the objective. Even though the objective in pure thinking does not acquire sensuous appearance, it is still in principle the part which is determined by something other. Thus, the necessary separation within pure thinking makes it doubtful how thinking can adequately express the true essence of the Concept, especially when the Concept is postulated as the One. Although Hegel himself thinks that his dialectic is not merely and simply a negation since what is negated is at the same time being preserved, only *the same essence or substance* is preserved and affirmed. The reality which is alien to the pure ideality all along remains as accidental, and hence is repeatedly negated. It follows that in his system the complete self-appearing of the Concept is accomplished only by means of making use of the real as *mere means*, instead of through genuine reconciliation of oppositions in which both of the poles were truly preserved and respected as ends. The means can indeed be thrown away after the attainment of the final goal. In this way, a more important question arises: what is the meaning and significance of life, which extremely intermingles with reality, after the attainment of the highest goal of the Absolute? In other words, what is the significance of the system if it eventually negates reality and hence life?

In Hegel's system, there is essentially temporal element. For example, the significance of art to the spirit belongs only to the past, what the present age mostly needs is philosophy and the philosophy of art instead of art itself. There is indeed expiry for the different moments in the development to the final destination. On the contrary, in Schelling's conception, although different potences have different positions within the system of general philosophy and hence have different degrees of significance concerning the highest vocation of the Absolute, Schelling repeatedly emphasizes that from the absolute viewpoint, all potences are unities of the universal and the particular and hence are identical, they are different only when being treated as particular as such. Hence, nature, art and philosophy (in narrower sense) share the same identity when viewed absolutely, and the real and the ideal are in principle and at bottom identical. It is for this reason that though Schelling's system is presented as the history and development of the self-intuition of the Absolute, he always underscores the exclusion of temporality from the essential construction of his system, for temporality necessarily presupposes negation and opposition. Schelling's conception is doubtlessly disapproved by Hegel since in the latter's eyes the real is never identical to the ideal, but is only subordinate to and negated by the latter. Since temporality is the essential element of Hegel's construction of his system, what is characterized as the past can at most be presented as remembrance. In this way, the significance of art is for Hegel only a memory, a memory of the past golden age. The future of human beings is no longer based on art, but philosophizing instead.

C) Hegel's System within Art

Hegel's system within the sphere of art is derived directly from his general

conception of art within the system of philosophy as a whole. The system is constructed according to the general tendency of development which can be divided into the beginning, the perfection and the decay. No matter the development of the general system of the particular art-forms or of the individual arts, this general rule or tendency is determined mainly according to the relation between meaning and expression, or that between content and form. Regarding the general development or phases within art, there is a division into the symbolic art, the classical art and the romantic art which correspond to the beginning, the perfection and the dissolution of art respectively. In addition, within each of the phases the three-fold development from beginning through the perfection to dissolution reappears again.

a) Symbolic Art

In symbolic art, the spirit still *seeks* for its genuine expression, in which the works of art are not adequate presentation of the absolute Idea. The shortcoming of symbolic art first appears in its deficiency of shape or form, in which some are too crude whereas some are too multifarious. However, it should be noted that the deficiency of shape or form is not essentially due to a lack of skill and talent, but proves rather "a deficiency of the Idea which constitute the meaning."¹²⁴ Since every existent is a product of the self-appearing of the Idea or the Concept, the absence of the adequate expression of the Idea in the sensuous indicates that the Idea itself has not yet been apparent to and conscious of itself. Thus, on the part of the meaning or the Idea, it is still abstract and indeterminate; on the part of expression, the shape of symbolic art is hence always arbitrary or even distorted. Meaning and expression have not yet united, and in this separateness the meaning always transcends its

¹²⁴ *ibid*, p. 300.

external expression instead of being perfectly enclosed within the latter.

The transcendence and indeterminateness of the meaning constitute the general character of sublimity in symbolic art. Since the Idea is still abstract, indeterminate and transcendent, it still appears as measureless, and this immeasurability is mainly what constitutes sublimity of the object in aesthetic judgment since Kant. Although for Hegel the works of the symbolic art are in distinction from symbol, the purely arbitrary sign, the former do not bring itself before us in its concrete individuality but only in its universal quality of meaning, which shares the same crucial nature of symbol or sign. For example, lion represents courage. It is not *this* particular lion which expresses the meaning, but lion in general. Besides, in symbolic art, even the shapes are indeterminate. It follows that the same shape can express several meanings, or the same meaning can be expressed in different shapes. Hence, in symbolic art only the abstract meaning encounters the abstract shapes.

With regard to the development within symbolic art, it is sub-divided into the unconscious symbolism, the sublime art and the conscious symbolism. The first stage is only a transition from nature to art and marks the beginning of art, in which there is only immediate and unconscious identity which is still undivided into contradiction, and the inconformity between meaning and expression has not yet been confronted by artistic consciousness. The third stage is the symbolic proper in which art is first developed. The shapes now stand before us as “problems” and urge us to contemplate and conjecture the meaning lying behind them. Thus, in conscious symbolism the meaning is consciously perceived as something sublime and transcendent, and the shape something limited and allegorical. The works of art are something pointing beyond themselves, instead of enclosing what they mean within

themselves. In the sublime symbolism which lays between the above stages the meaning is first separated from the shapes and makes the latter as negative and external and hence subordinate to the former. In this second stage there is always distortion of shapes which proves the subordination of the shapes to the sublime and transcendent meaning. It is apparent that symbolic art is far from being the adequate expression of the ideal of beauty or art, and due to this very deficiency there is the dissolution of symbolic art and the emergence of classical art.

b) Classical Art

For Hegel, the essential nature of works of art is the unification of meaning and expression. It means that the form or shape of works of art is adequate to express the meaning. Hegel thinks that it can be attained only when both the shape and the meaning become well determinate. The identification of the spirit and the sensuous should not be based on mere neutralization of them, but rather on the *Aufhebung* of the spiritual to the higher totality where the identity between the real and the ideal can be grasped. When the spiritual attains more explicit self-consciousness, the sensuous becomes more concretely determinate.

Classical art is the perfect efflorescence of art for Hegel. In classical art the shape is restricted and determined, and only humanity determined as *concrete individuality* constitutes the central expression and content of true beautiful works of art in classical art. The mechanistic nature is inadequate to express the ideal of art for it is entirely blind and material, in which only externality but no spirituality becomes explicit. Concerning the organism in nature, although it is a perfect unity of the universal and the particular, since for Hegel there is no self-consciousness or ego in

animal, what is *visible* to us in the animal organism is not the soul or the spirit, and the substance is still implicit in animal body. Thus, although from science we know that animal organism contains purposiveness, the animals are seldom taken as individuals but only as species. This lack of individuality at the same time proves the lack of subjectivity and *inwardness* of animal organism. In this way, only the human body, as well as his feeling, deeds, and actions, can adequately express the inwardness and spirituality in the particular and individual existents. This individual human body and character are precisely the main subject matter in classical art.

Similar to Schelling, Hegel thinks that the Greek art and the Greek gods are the representatives of the classical art, the perfect stage of art. For Hegel, in the worldview of the Greeks “beauty begins its true life and builds its serene kingdom.”¹²⁵ The Greek art and the Greek gods adequately express the Absolute in individual and concrete forms and characters. Thus, like Schelling, the Greek gods are for Hegel simultaneously the finite and the infinite, the sensuous and the spiritual, necessary and free. Nevertheless, on Hegel’s account, although classical art attains the highest vocation of art and beauty, it still remains abstract for the spirit, since it is only the “untroubled harmony”¹²⁶ in which the individuality has not yet alienated and the spirituality of the Concept has not yet been recognized as spirituality as such. In contrast to the blissful gods in Greek mythology, Christianity reveals a more spiritual and hence modern view, which is “an endless movement and drive into an extreme opposition and into an inner reversion to absolute unity only by canceling this separation”¹²⁷. The deficiency of the classical art lies precisely in that the gods are immortal and blessed, they act according to their own nature, but never involved

¹²⁵ Ibid, p.437.

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 436.

¹²⁷ Ibid, p.435.

in misery, suffering and struggle. Without experiencing death they will never resurrect from death to the absolute spirit.

Hegel's comment on Greek mythology and Christianity is just opposite to that of Schelling, though both of them have similar comprehension about the nature of the subject matters. For Schelling, Christianity started from the separation of the ideal or the infinite from the totality presented in Greek art, which marks the beginning of modernity. This separation is in some sense a loss in Schelling, yet Hegel regards it liberation. For Hegel, from the prevalence of Christianity on, the spirit leaves the domain of art to a higher unity and presentation of the spirit. On the contrary, Schelling thinks that the final destination of scattered modernity is to *return back* to simultaneity, the totality and complete unification expressed in mythology proper. Since the Ideal of beauty is never a final destination of Hegel's system, the classical art is only a transitional moment for him despite its attainment of the summit of beauty.

Classical art is also sub-divided into three stages: the first one is the process of formation, which is the preliminary stage for the perfection of classical art, in which the actual appearance of the true content and the genuine shape or subject matters may be produced by gradually overcoming what is negative and inappropriate for the expression of the Ideal. The second stage is the true summit of the classical art form, in which the Greek art, especially its sculpture and mythology, are the representatives. The final stage is the dissolution of classical art and the transition to the romantic art. Since in classical art humanity in its concreteness and individuality is determined as the adequate expression of the Concept, the humanity portrayed, no matter in mythology or sculpture, must be itself divine, instead of ordinary and vulgar. This is

the reason why the gods, who are not transcendent to human world but are full of humanity such as feeling, passion, desire, as well as wisdom, become the most suitable themes for the Greek art. In the final stage of classical art, people turn away out into the ordinary, vulgar and godless aspect in humanity, which discloses falsity and negativity in humanity and the expression of art. The unity of meaning and form in classical art is thus separated: the *inner* meaning then stands by itself on one side, and the *external* shape or form is detached from the unity with the meaning and is therefore negated on the other. It leads to the rise of the romantic art, in which the Idea withdraws subjectively into itself.

c) Romantic Art

Classical art presents the perfect art form in which the spirit interpenetrates with the corporeal. Nevertheless, for Hegel, the essence of art does oppose to the true essence of the spirit, in which the spirit is supposed to be pushed “back into itself out of its reconciliation in the corporeal into a reconciliation of itself within itself.”¹²⁸ The true content of romantic art is therefore the absolute *inwardness* which comes from spiritual *subjectivity*. The spirit then acquires its independence and freedom by means of absolute negation of everything particular.

In classical art the divine god with individual humanity is determined as the most adequate form, which proves an affirmation of at least some particular existents. When art develops to the romantic stage, not only do the divine individuals become forms of the works of art, but also the ordinary reality, the whole of mankind and its entire development. Hence, the subject matters of romantic art are infinitely extended

¹²⁸ *ibid*, p. 518.

into multiplicity without bounds. Nevertheless, for Hegel this infinite multiple forms only serve one God, the inwardness and pure subjectivity of the Concept or Idea. It follows that this liberation of the subject matters of art from the necessity of particular forms contributes to the *contingency* of the sensuous *again*: all materials are the expression of the One Idea, hence all of them are mere means without necessity and affirmation within itself, and the inner life of the Concept thus becomes *indifferent* to the ways of configuration.

The development within romantic art is determined according to the degree of the liberation of form or expression. The first stage is the expression formed by religion as such. This form of art is supplied by the specific history of redemption or the life of Christ, in which the spirit turns negatively against the finitude after torment of struggle and battle. Then chivalry arises to become a prevailing form of art, in which the form is liberated from the sacred elevation of finite man to God which is expressed in Christianity into entirely mundane reality. However, there are still particular feelings and themes which are generally adopted as the adequate expression of works of art in chivalry: honor, love and fidelity. For Hegel, they are not ethical qualities or virtues, but only forms which express the romantic "self-filled inwardness"¹²⁹ of the subject, and provide means for the self-recognition of the subject.

The final stage of romantic art, which marks the complete dissolution of art, is presented in the formal independence of character which culminates in subjective humor. Hegel thinks that in subjective humor only the person of the artist which comes on the scene, it is the artist himself who enters the material and by this mere

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 553.

subjective art *commands* the material. Thus, the spirit and the sensuous forms become independent to each other again: the material becomes alien to the meaning again, and humor becomes a free art of caprice. In the preceding stages, there is still specific limitation on the subject matter, but in humor every restriction is dissolved, the artist can employ his skill or talent on *any* material of whatever kind. It contributes to the dissolution of romantic art, and hence dissolution of art at all: on the one hand, the external existents become entirely arbitrary and contingent; on the other, the subjectivity and inner life of the spirit is liberated from any confinement and contamination from the sensuous and the real. There is *again* an entire separation between the ideal and the real, the particular and the universal. In short, the symbolic art, the classical art and the romantic art are the 'striving for', 'the attainment' and 'the transcendence' ¹³⁰ of the Ideal of beauty respectively.

D) The Dissolution of Art

Accordingly, Hegel's contention on the dissolution of art is never pessimism toward the future production of art. Quite the other way, he does affirm the infinity and richness of future artistic production. Hegel thinks that classical art like a "cheerful activity in a house richly furnished...the poet and artist is only the magician who evokes them, collects and groups them"¹³¹, whereas in romantic art the artist does not produce according to any presupposed necessary form, and hence "rises entirely free, with no [given] material, purely creative and productive."¹³² When the rule and subject matter are no longer fixed, the form and material in modern art become more and more multiple and contingent, everything can equally

¹³⁰ Ibid, p. 8.

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 555.

¹³² Ibid, p. 556.

become the medium of art insofar it can express the spirituality and inwardness of the Concept. Hence, although the future production of art cannot attain the same significance as that of classical art in its own age, the highest level of creativity in modern art is indeed anticipated by Hegel.

It is evident that Hegel's conception of romantic art corresponds much to Schelling's discourse on modern art: both of them recognize that creativity is the essential principle of modern art, and thus the spiritual or the ideal becomes the dominate element. The crucial divergence lies in their different anticipation on the future development of art. For Hegel, the future production of art will become more and more free and creative and hence go more and more far away from the ideal of classical art, and hence the ideal of art at all. Even though some of the modern artists practice and follow the classical ideal, it is not the art form adequate and significant to the present age. The significance of classical art, and hence art as such, belongs entirely to the past days. The future development will progress according to the model of romantic art, and hence the dissolution of art is the final conclusion of the development in art. On the contrary, Schelling anticipates a future re-unification of the scattered individuality and the universal primordial ground by means of new mythology. He thinks that even the modern art should have a purpose to develop into simultaneity of the infinite and the finite, which is the essence of art. Thus, the art in future is for Schelling the process of returning from the inessential nature to the very essence of art which was expressed in Greek mythology. In Schelling, both the essence and significance of art are preserved in future development of art and even the whole system.

It is apparent that the construction of Hegel's aesthetics is derived from the

general rule of the development: firstly the beginning or preparation, then the perfection, and finally the dissolution. It is indeed a rule of temporality, which is strongly rejected by Schelling in his essential construction of the system of art. Accordingly, in Hegel's account, the perfection of classical art, or mythology, emerges after the overcoming of the insufficiency of symbolic art. He repeatedly claims that Greek mythology did not come forth firstly, whereas Schelling emphasizes that unity comes first, and separation and allegory only emerge later. This dispute is not so much a quarrel about historical issue, as a diversity in the innermost nature of their systems. The primordial ground in itself for Schelling is not yet separated but at the same time also a primordial unity or identity of the potentially separated parties. Hence, even the beginning of the system is a *totality* which anticipates the unity within the opposite, and determines the vocation to attain a genuine unity of the universal and the particular, the ideal and the real. On the contrary, the beginning of Hegel's system is only an empty, indeterminate, and immediate concept, namely 'being', which is only something being negated in the system. Thus, Dieter Henrich puts that "Hegel sees the origin only as the process. There is no idea of turning back to the origin...nor longing for the reestablishment of the lost unity...There is neither return to the substance nor interpretation of the process as depending eternally on some origin."¹³³ Similarly, Andrew Bowie maintains that "the complete revelation of interdependence is the Absolute idea, which has taken up into itself the truth of all the preceding elements."¹³⁴ Both of them point out that in Hegel's system there is in fact no *self-grounded* origin which alone can give explanation to existence and the ground of positivity. Without the

¹³³ Henrich, Dieter. *Between Kant and Hegel : lectures on German idealism.* Ed. David S. Pacini. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003, p. 309.

¹³⁴ Bowie, Andrew. *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: an Introduction.* London, New York: Routledge, 1993, p. 161.

postulation of this self-grounded origin, what is included in Hegel's system is only infinite negativity, and affirmation is only attained by double negation, negation of negativity. Hence, the beginning and the end of his system is never a unity constituted by positive affirmation of the opposite parties. In this way, classical art is not regarded as the beginning and the final destination of art, and the art of future is never the complete unity of the sensuous and the spiritual, but the absolute separation of them instead, which constitutes the dissolution of art. Although Schelling's criticism of Hegel's system as a negative philosophy and his own suggestion of a positive philosophy are made in his later period, his conception on art in his early period does anticipate this later contentions.

E) The Division of Individual Arts

Hegel's basic division in the system of individual arts is based on the position of art in his general system and his division of the particular art forms. For Hegel, the lowest individual art form is architecture, which marks only the beginning of art, for architecture uses the heavy and dead matter as materials which are entirely non-spiritual. Besides, the form of it is bounded together regularly and symmetrically, just like mechanistic nature, in which only a purely external reflection of the spirit is presented, since the spirit still lies deeply behind the rules of mechanistic nature. Thereafter comes sculpture. Although sculpture is the remarkable representative of the summit of classical art which expresses the perfect unity between the sensuous and the spiritual, it is still constituted by means of heavy matter in its spatial entirety.

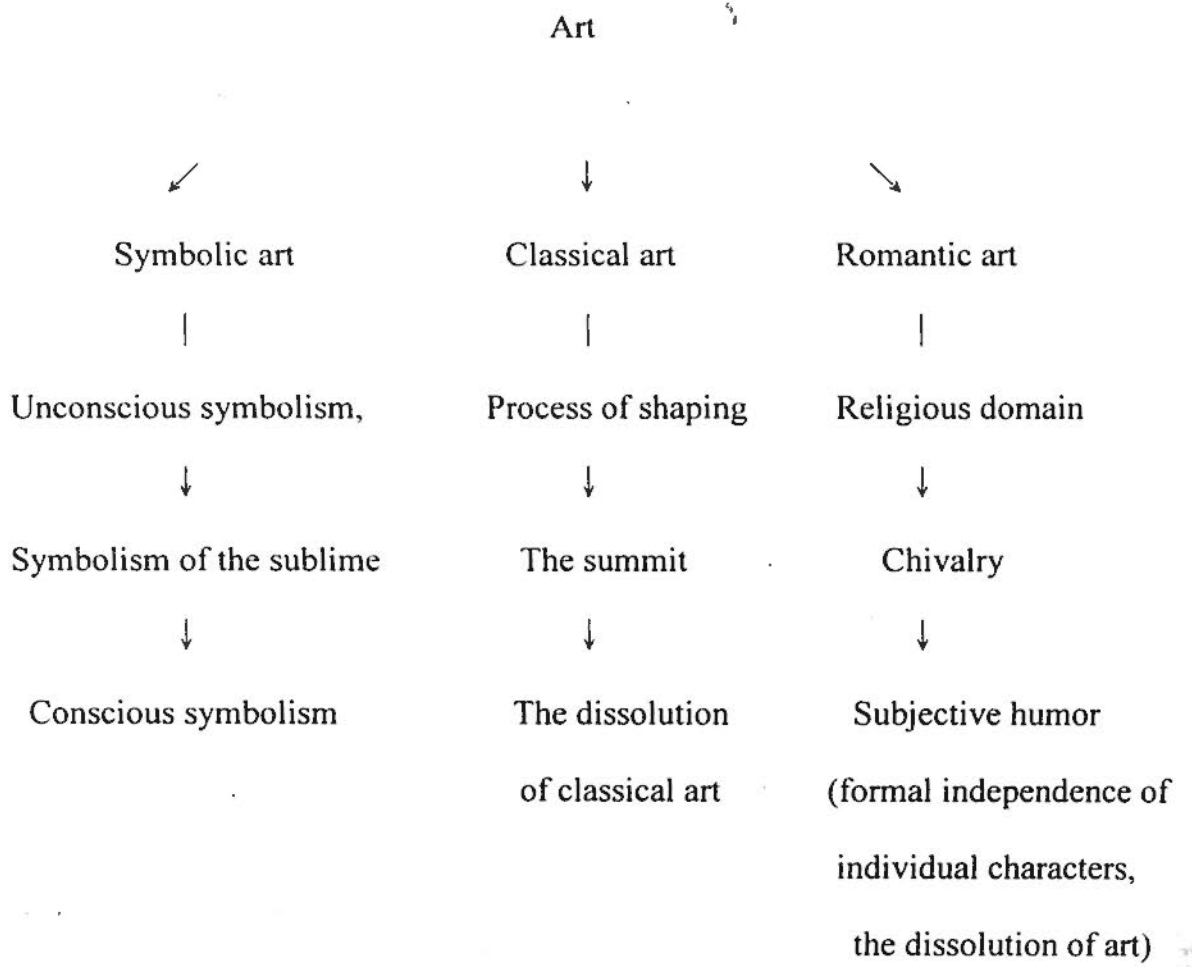
In order to overcome this deficiency in the plastic arts, there emerge the romantic arts which have a mission to express the *inner* side of life. The lowest art

form in romantic arts is painting, which does not use heavy matter as its material, but only the shapes in order to inwardize and spiritualize the object. Nevertheless, the material of painting is still visible, hence, there arises music. For Hegel, the proper element of music is the inner life as such, since it only expresses through a medium which quickly vanishes and is cancelled at the very moment of expression. However, although the medium of music is invisible, it is still a sensuous element, and this imperfection leads to the arising of poetry, which is “the absolute and true art of the spirit and its expression as spirit.”¹³⁵ In poetry the proper material is only thought, and language in poetry is treated by Hegel as genuine immaterial, since sound in poetry does not preserve on its own account as that in music, but only appears as mere external and arbitrary designation of content.¹³⁶ The words in poetry are not in itself meaningful, but only points outward to the inner spirituality of the spirit. The inner division within each art form is also established according to the above pattern, from the objective to the subjective, from the necessary to the free, from the material to the spiritual. Since the division and development within each individual art form is quite complicated, and this is not the main enquiry of this dissertation, I would not go into the detail of it. The basic structure of Hegel’s system of art is illustrated in the tables below:

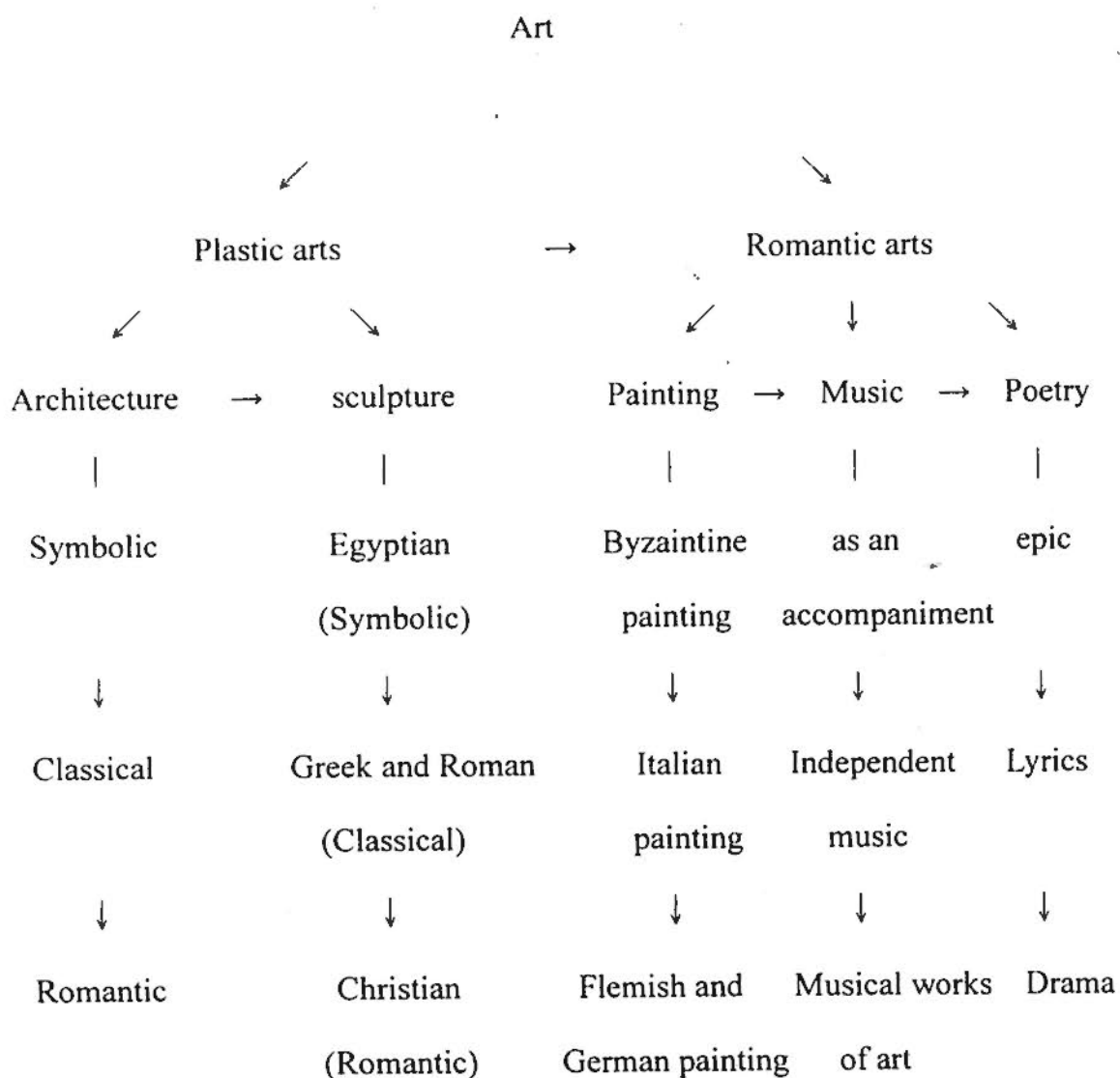
¹³⁵ Ibid, p. 626.

¹³⁶ Whether language is arbitrary is indeed disputable. For example, Hegel’s contemporary, Wilhelm von Humboldt, holds a remarkable different view. See Humboldt, Wilhelm Freiherr von. *On language: on the diversity of human language construction and its influence on the mental development of the human species*. Ed. Michael Losonsky. Trans. Peter Heath. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

(i) The General Structure of Hegel's System of Art



(ii) The Structure of the System of Individual Arts



It is apparent that this system of individual arts is constructed according to the degree of dematerialization, which is the general tendency and direction of the development of Hegel's general system of philosophy, instead of a development constructed according to the Ideal or essence of beauty. In fact, this kind of construction had been forecasted and rejected by Schelling twenty years before.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ See previous chapter.

In short, according to the basic structure of the Hegelian system, the unity of the finite and the infinite, or of the sensuous and the ideal manifested in art, is achieved by means of repression and subordination. The final deficiency of art is that it only arouses feeling and contemplation of the subject toward itself, instead of fermenting pure articulated thinking. Manfred Frank and Andrew Bowie, in line with Schelling and the early German romantics, argue that reflection or articulated thinking is never a reconciliation of the problematic oppositions, instead, it itself presupposes the indispensable schism of the subjective and the objective, which are precisely the problem to be explained and resolved.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ See Frank, Manfred. *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*. Trans. Elizabeth Millan Zaibert. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004, and Bowie, Andrew. *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003.

Chapter Five: System and Art in Early German Romanticism

German Romanticism is often divided into three phrases: early Romanticism (Frühromantik) within 1797 and 1802; high Romanticism (Hochromantik) within 1803 and 1815; and late Romanticism (Spätromantik) within 1819 and 1830. From a philosophical perspective, the first phrase is generally held as the most important one. Although Romanticism has long been regarded as a literary or an artistic movement which advocates feeling and passion at the expense of strict and sterile rationality and philosophizing, many scholars have attempted to expose the philosophical insight and foundation brought out by and inherent in the early German Romantics. Manfred Frank has devoted two important works to this issue.¹³⁹ Romanticism is surely a complicated movement and its periodization may not be as clear-cut as the division stated above. Nevertheless, the above periodization, despite its being controversial, is very useful and necessary for the delimitation of the discussion of this dissertation. In investigating Schelling's philosophy of art, it is necessary to confront his thought with the philosophical insight of the early German Romantics, as the early German Romantics were the important contemporaries with whom Schelling had close relation and friendship, and Schelling is even acknowledged as a member of the early German Romantics in the discussion of some scholars such as Manfred Frank and Frederick Beiser. Hence, understanding Schelling's concord with and difference from the early German Romantics helps us to grasp Schelling's specific view more accurately and penetratingly.

In this section, the philosophical insights on system, philosophy and art of the

¹³⁹ Frank, Manfred. *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik: Vorlesungen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989 and Frank, Manfred. *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*. Trans. Elizabeth Millan Zaibert. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004.

early German Romantics will be discussed. Early German romanticism is a complicated movement in which many people and thoughts are involved. Since this dissertation does not aim at an investigation on early German Romanticism, but only attempts to use it as an important reference for the investigation on Schelling's philosophy of art, the thought of early German Romanticism will not be discussed comprehensively and in detail. Hence, although early German Romanticism involved many figures and the roles of some of them were not without controversy, only the most leading figures Friedrich Schlegel, Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis) and Hölderlin will be included in this chapter. There are indeed many subtle differences among their views, and they are always distinguished with reference to their membership of different circles: Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis belong to the Jena circle whereas Hölderlin the Berlin circle. However, since an investigation on their thoughts is not the main target of this dissertation, only the most common insights of the three leading figures will be discussed.

(I) The Common Problematic of Early German Idealism and German Idealism

A) The Kantian Legacy

Like Schelling, the peculiar views of the early German Romantics are much inspired by Kant and Fichte. In fact, many of the romantics were the first readers of Kant and the students of Fichte. Thus, the thoughts of Kant and Fichte are always accounted as the starting point and common ground of the romantic discussions and dialogues. It implies that notwithstanding the differences between the early German romantics and the German idealists regarding the conclusion of their thoughts, all of them share the common problematic: the metaphysical problem concerning the

primordial ground of the world, and the unity of reason and experience. As I have shown in previous chapters, what Kant is mainly concerned with is indeed a metaphysical question, the question about the nature of reason and the unity of different employments of reason, which are the ultimate principles beyond and priori to any empirical search. In regard to this concern, however, for Fichte, Schelling and Hegel alike, Kant does not answer the question well, he leaves the dualism or heterogeneity unresolved and unexplained and hence fails in disclosing and articulating the unity of reason. Kant's recognition of the necessary demand of reason for unity and freedom and his denial of any search for the ultimate one principle which is constitutive to the unity of heterogeneous uses of reason indeed frustrated his successors.

Inspired by Kant's recognition of the necessary demand of reason for unity and freedom, the idealists as well as the romantics attempt to find the way to fulfill this innermost demand of reason. Hence, even though German romanticism is generally recognized as a literary and artistic movement, it is at least in its early phase the thought motivated by the problematic deeply rooted in the conception of reason developed from Kant. Thus, Friedrich Schlegel states that "What appears to be unlimited free will, and consequently seems and should seem to be irrational or supra-rational, nonetheless must still at bottom be simply necessary and rational."¹⁴⁰ It makes clear that early German Romanticism is not simply a counter-Enlightenment movement which only advocates the primacy and significance of feeling and passion, but was founded upon the ultimate essence and demand of reason.

¹⁴⁰ Schlegel, Friedrich. "Critical Fragments 37" in *Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 5.

B) The Unity of Reason and the Freedom of Reason

Reason's demand for unity and freedom is actually the same thing. In ordinary and natural consciousness there always presupposes the oppositions between the subjective and the objective, the spiritual and the sensuous, the universal and the particular. One is really frustrated by these oppositions only when one questions about the ground or origin of the opposing poles and hopes to search for an adequate explanation about the heterogeneity. In this philosophizing activity one feels uneasy about the separation and is directed by the belief and the ideal of ultimate unification of the opposing poles. This philosophizing or questioning is indeed already a mark of freedom of reason, a separation from the natural, mechanical and blind mode of consciousness. Thus, whatever the conclusion may be, the freedom of human reason is already disclosed within the process of the questioning. It is in this way that the search for the unity of reason is simultaneously the realization of the freedom of reason. In natural consciousness which unconsciously presupposes the oppositions as its necessary conditions, not only can the unity never be attained, but also do the demand and question never arise.

The fulfillment of the demand of reason, if there is really such purpose or activity, must be executed by reason itself, since otherwise reason only operates under the influence of external factors and cannot become the highest and free legislator as that described by Kant. Hence, the fulfillment of the demand of reason must be reason's self-fulfillment. Novalis wittily presents the nature of the self-fulfillment of reason:

“One person succeeded—he lifted the veil of the goddess at Sais—But what did

he see? he saw—wonder of wonders—himself.”¹⁴¹

This recognition of man himself after a long struggle represents the self-referential character of reason and its activities, which is the basic belief of Kant’s idealistic and also romantic successors. The crucial question is how the self-fulfillment of reason develops.

(II) The Infinite Approximation in Early German Romanticism

A) The *Bildung* of Humanity

For Schelling, and also for Hegel, the problem is resolved by the articulation of the systematic and dynamic development of the Absolute’s self-intuition or self-realization. The Absolute or the ultimate principle is not a dead doctrine but is essentially an activity with a final purpose to know or to intuit itself. It is only in this way that it can become a principle of existence and life without abstraction and simplification of the vivid and complicated phenomena of life. Both Schelling and Hegel optimistically believe that after the thorough unfolding of every stage of the development of the Absolute’s self-intuition, in which it itself is separated and united again and again in different degrees and contexts, the self-fulfillment of reason’s innermost demand can at last be attained. The self-intuition or self-realization of the Absolute in Schelling and Hegel is translated into the self-elevation and education of humanity in the early German Romantics. Frederick Beiser has rightly pointed out that the main ethical concern of the early German Romantics is *Bildung*, which can

¹⁴¹ Novalis. “Logological Fragments II 29”, In *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 76.

be loosely conceived as education or personal development.¹⁴² Friedrich Schlegel repeatedly emphasizes the prime importance of education and elevation of humanity: "Every one is artist whose central purpose in life is to educate his intellect."¹⁴³ "The need to raise itself above humanity is humanity's prime characteristic."¹⁴⁴ Similarly, Hölderlin also states that "The great poet is never abandoned by himself; he may elevate himself as far above himself as he wishes."¹⁴⁵

It is under this context that Novalis makes his famous claim about romanticism:

"The world must be made Romantic. In that way one can find the original meaning again. To make Romantic is nothing but a qualitative raising to a higher power. In this operation the lower self will become one with a better self...By endowing the commonplace with a higher meaning, the ordinary with mysterious respect, the known with the dignity of the unknown, the finite with the appearance of the infinite, I am making it Romantic."¹⁴⁶

In this claim Novalis points out two most important beliefs of early German Romanticism: unification and self-elevation. For Novalis the unification of the

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¹⁴³ Schlegel, Friedrich. "Ideas 20" in *Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 96.

¹⁴⁴ Schlegel, Friedrich. "Ideas 21" in *Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 96.

¹⁴⁵ Hölderlin, Friedrich. "Reflection" in *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters on Theory*. Trans. And Ed. Thomas Pfau. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1998, p. 45.

¹⁴⁶ Novalis. "Logological Fragments I 66", In *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 60. The original text of this citation is as below: "Die Welt muss romantisirt werden. So findet man den urspr[unglichen] Sinn wieder. Romantisiren ist nichts, als eine qualit[ative] Potenzirung. Das niedre Selbst wird mit einem bessern Selbst in dieser Operation identificirt. So wie wir selbst eine solche qualit[ative] Potenzenreihe sind. Diese Operation ist noch ganz unbekannt. Indem ich dem Gemeinen einen hohen Sinn, dem Gewöhnlichen ein geheimnißvolles Ansehn, dem Bekannten die Würde des Unbekannten, dem Endlichen einen unendlichen Schein gebe so romantisire ich es." See Harsg. von Paul Kluckhohn und Richard Samuel. *Novalis Schriften; die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1960, V. 2, p. 545.

oppositions is a kind of self-elevation to the ideal of humanity or reason. *Bildung* is not, as Beiser puts it, only the *ethical* concern of the early German Romantics, but should be considered as their overall concern about life which is mainly expressed in their pursuit of the upbringing, elevation and self-realization of humanity. Their conception of perfect and full humanity indeed shares the same structure with the ultimate demand and idea of reason continually described in previous chapters.

It should be noted that for the early German Romantics humanity or reason is not a concept which merely designates the essence of human beings, but also one which denotes the essence of the whole world or the ground of existence and development of the world. Humanity or reason cannot be treated as an external objective of *Bildung* under which man's development and progression are prescribed and subordinated, since in this way man is still confined within natural or mechanical causality and his cultivation becomes a mere mechanic process without freedom and dignity. Instead, the *Bildung* of humanity for the early German Romantics must be a *free* process originated within itself and has the destiny and ideal posited by itself. Since humanity or reason cannot have its destination outside itself, the final destination and ideal of *Bildung* must be a thorough self-realization by means of self-revelation, the complete presentation or appearing of its own essence and nature.

Then, what is the essence and nature of humanity or reason? This question must be considered in two aspects: one is concerned with reason as the primordial ground of existence and development of the world; whereas the other is concerned with reason as the final destination of *Bildung*.

B) The Romantic Conception of the Past Ground

a) Being and Separation

The early German Romantics have clear discrimination between the two aspects above. Hölderlin in his "Judgment and Being" presents it explicitly: "Being—expresses the connection between subject and object. Where subject and object are united altogether and not only in part, that is, united in such a manner that no separation can be performed without violating the essence of what is to be separated."¹⁴⁷ Being, which is equivalent to reason in itself, and hence to Schelling's Absolute or the Self in itself, denotes the very *past* in which separation had not yet occurred, which *was* the absolutely One. At this point the early German Romantics do share a common view with Schelling. The problem is whether this past can be present. Concerning this issue, the early German Romantics give definitely a negative answer. Hölderlin continues to state that "there and nowhere else can be spoken of *Being proper*"¹⁴⁸, since this Being cannot be confused with any identity or unity. Even the propositions "A = A" and "I = I" presuppose a necessary separation between the subject and the object, the identity presented in the propositions is only attained *after* separation.

Hence, judgment, and thus all kinds of consciousness including self-consciousness, presupposes the "arche-separation"¹⁴⁹ (Ur-Teilung) between the subject and the object. Paradoxically, this arche-separation reversely presupposes "the concept of the reciprocity of object and subject and the necessary presupposition

¹⁴⁷ Hölderlin, Friedrich. "Judgment and Being" in *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters on Theory*. Trans. And Ed. Thomas Pfau. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1998, p. 37.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

of a whole of which object and subject form the parts.”¹⁵⁰ This reciprocity between separation and wholeness in its perfect state is for Hölderlin an “infinite unity, which is once the point of separation for the unified as such, but then again also point of union for the unified as the opposed, finally is also both at once.”¹⁵¹ Although this infinite unity is a union higher than that in contrast to separation, it is still not the primordial and absolute Being itself. In any kind of judgment and consciousness the primordial ground all along mingles with separation which violates its own pure essence and nature. If that is the case, how can we recognize and posit Being or the primordial ground? Hölderlin thinks that the primordial ground can only be recognized and appears *negatively*, just like the case that only through resistance and punishment can one recognize the moral law within himself:

“The first time that the law of freedom discloses itself to us, it appears as punishing. The origin of all our virtue occurs in evil.”¹⁵²

Moral law, as categorical imperative, must be recognized as a law proclaimed freely by the subject himself. Not one of the idealists or the romantics attempts to violate this formal determination of moral law laid by Kant. However, it is questionable for Hölderlin that in what situation does one really recognize moral law as moral law. Without any resistance and punishment the law cannot *appear*, since we cannot distinguish between the law and mere inclination in ordinary situation or state of being well. Similarly, without any separation, that is, the violation of the essence of Being, the latter can never appear and be recognized.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Hölderlin, Friedrich. “On the Operation of the Poetic Spirit” in *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters on Theory*. Trans. And Ed. Thomas Pfau. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1998, p. 71.

¹⁵² Hölderlin, Friedrich. “On the Law of Freedom” in *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters on Theory*. Trans. And Ed. Thomas Pfau. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1998, p. 34.

b) The Tragedy of Reason

Hölderlin's "Judgment and Being" clearly proclaims the impossibility of the appearing of Being or the primordial ground itself, since what we can access is only judgment or consciousness, which already presupposes the separation of the subject and the object, the element violating the very essence of Being. Similarly, Novalis claims that "we *seek* the absolute everywhere and only ever *find* things"¹⁵³ (Wir *'suchen* überall das Unbedingte and *finden* immer nur Dinge.¹⁵⁴) The Absolute, or Hölderlin's Being, can only be demanded and presupposed. We actually live within experience and confront concrete and individual objects which are only the products of the paradoxical reciprocity and alternation of separation and union. Since the early German Romantics never think that we can abstain from particularity or sensibility and escape entirely from experience, they must acknowledge the impossibility of the full appearing of the primordial ground and the completion of the system constituted by the self-fulfilling activities of reason. Regarding this impossibility, Hölderlin describes it as tragic: "Now in the tragic...original matter can only appear in its weakness."¹⁵⁵ This belief in and emphasis on the impossibility of the returning to and complete appearing of the primordial ground mark the crucial difference between the early German Romanticism and the German Idealism including Fichte, Hegel and also Schelling. It is by this reason that Karl Ameriks think that the early German Romantics are the true post-Kantians who genuinely follow Kant's restriction on the extension of reason and the extension of philosophizing against the

¹⁵³ Novalis. "Miscellaneous Observation 1" in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 23.

¹⁵⁴ Harsg. von Paul Kluckhohn und Richard Samuel. *Novalis Schriften; die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1960, V. 2, pp 412-413.

¹⁵⁵ Hölderlin, Friedrich. "The Significance of Tragedies" in *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters on Theory*. Trans. And Ed. Thomas Pfau. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1998, p. 89.

overwhelming subjectivism developed by German Idealism and culminated in Hegel's system.¹⁵⁶ It is doubtless that there is much resemblance between the *conclusions* of the early German Romanticism and that of Kant, however, the former is not a mere and simple return to the latter, since they did go through a questioning about the primordial ground or the absolute principle and proceeded an infinite struggle for attaining or unveiling this ground which were attempts strongly disapproved by Kant.

C) The Creativity and Positive Significance of Dissolution and Death

For the early German Romantics the paradox and reciprocity of Being and consciousness constitute the development, progress and system of reason's self-fulfillment. Hölderlin describes this development as recollection and dissolution. The former indicates the recognition or remembrance of the primordial One or reason in itself within individual activity or consciousness, whereas the latter denotes the further separation of the subjective and the objective. The processes of recollection and dissolution occur again and again, and *ad infinitum*. Though dissolution is a violation of the essence of the primordial ground, it is necessary for the occurrence of newly developed life and for the progression toward further unification and more complete recognition of the primordial ground. Hence, Hölderlin emphasizes that the dissolution "appears not as weakening and death, but as a reviving, as growth...not as annihilating violence, but as love, and both together as a (transcendental) creative act"¹⁵⁷ In the same way, Schlegel's concept of

¹⁵⁶ See Ameriks, Karl. "Hegel's Aesthetics: New Perspectives on Its Response to Kant and Romanticism". *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* 45-46(2002): 72-92.

¹⁵⁷ Hölderlin, Friedrich. "Becoming in Dissolution" in *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters on Theory*. Trans. And Ed. Thomas Pfau. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1998, p. 99.

self-restriction is almost equivalent to Hölderlin's dissolution. Self-restriction means opposing itself to the others, which is nevertheless "the most necessary and the highest duty" because "one can only restrict oneself at those points and places where one possesses infinite power, self-creation, and self-destruction."¹⁵⁸ Thus, self-restriction, the delimitation of individuality and the opposition of itself to the others, is for Schlegel at the same time a creative and free act.

Accordingly, death acquires a positive sense in the insight of Novalis: "Death is the Romanticizing principle of our life. Death is minus, life is plus. Life is strengthened through death."¹⁵⁹ "Death is a victory over the self—which, like all self-conquest, brings about a new, easier existence."¹⁶⁰ Hence, "Life is for the sake of death. Death is at once the end and the beginning—at once separation and closer union of the self."¹⁶¹ It is doubtless that death dissolves what life has united and accomplished, however, without death life cannot be depicted as a whole or as a unity. Besides, without death there is no possibility for new development. Hence, death is for Novalis at once a separation and a closer union of life. It is apparent that for the early German Romantics only through the seemingly negative concepts of dissolution, or self-restriction, or death can new things and new life be brought forth. But what is the significance of the occurrence of infinitely new things and new life?

D) The Romantic Conception of the Future Destination

a) Infinite Progression of Reason

¹⁵⁸ Schlegel, Friedrich. "Critical Fragments 37" in *Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 4.

¹⁵⁹ Novalis. "Last Fragment 5" in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 154.

¹⁶⁰ Novalis. "Miscellaneous Observation 11" in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 24.

¹⁶¹ Novalis. "Miscellaneous Observation 15" in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 25.

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For the early German Romantics the primordial ground is not only a regulative postulate posited *behind* for the sake of experience and knowledge, but also an ideal explicitly posited in the future as the *target* of the elevation of man and culture. Novalis states that “the conceptions of times past draw us toward dying—toward disintegration. The conceptions of the future—drive us toward living forms—to incorporation, the action of assimilation. Hence all memory is melancholy—all premonition joyful”¹⁶² The future target is for the early German Romantics constitutive to the present and to the emergence of new life. The Romantic transformation of the primordial ground or reason in its original unity and freedom from a regulative postulate to the constitutive target hinges upon the common belief shared by the early German Romantics and the German idealists: a dynamic and systematic development of the original activity of self-appearing of the primordial ground in which every existent is a product of separation and unification of the ground in different degrees. This basic belief is absolutely new and alien to Kant. Hence, besides a tragic acknowledgement of the impossibility of the complete appearing of the primordial ground, the early German Romantics do have a more positive and enthusiastic insight into the process of the self-appearing of the primordial ground and the self-elevation of man: infinite progression.

iii) Pantheism

The progression proceeds from the natural consciousness in which everything separated is treated simply in its particularity to the elevated and universal view which regards the individual and finite objects as objects which are simultaneously

¹⁶² Novalis. “Miscellaneous Observation 123” in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p.45.

and *immanently* connected to other objects and the infinite totality of the world. Novalis addresses this connection and unity of the individual and the universal, the finite and the infinite, as pantheism: "The state and God, like spiritual being, do not appear *singly* but in a thousand, manifold forms. Only pantheistically does God appear *wholly*—and only in pantheism is God *wholly* everywhere, in every individual."¹⁶³ Similarly, Schlegel thinks that "every philosophy of philosophy that excludes Spinoza must be spurious."¹⁶⁴ Spinoza is generally known as a pantheist, who suggests the immanency of the Substance or God within particular existents. From the view of the early German romantics Spinoza's doctrine is far from perfect and without mistakes, among which the most important error is Spinoza's conception of the substance as something objective which thus undermines the very concept of freedom. Since the relation between the thought of Spinoza and that of the romantics is a complicated question, I would not like to digress into this issue, which is not the main focus of this dissertation. What is important here is that the Romantics hold an immanent view on the union of the particular and the universal within individuality. The primordial ground, or the God, is not something outside the world and the particular objects within it. Rather, the ground can never be separated from its own products. Hence, the infinite progression to the future should not be undertaken outside the world and particular objects, or should not consider something beyond the world and objects within it as its final destination.

¹⁶³ Novalis. "General Draft 20" in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 127.

¹⁶⁴ Schlegel, Friedrich. "Athenaeum Fragments 273." in *Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 56.

iv) The Romantic Homesickness

Accordingly, Novalis further claims that “philosophy is actually homesickness—the urge to be everywhere at home”¹⁶⁵ Many scholars including Manfred Frank, Andrew Bowie, Frederick Beiser have pointed out that the early German Romanticism was a movement to regain the union again when confronting the crises of alienation and disenchantment in modernity. They rightly point out that the Romantic movement is urged by the frustration of homesickness. However, the demand and solution of this homesickness should be further explicated. The early German Romantics do not aim at finding *one* home *abstractly* either in the subjective, or in the objective, instead, they demand for founding the home *concretely* upon *every* individual existent. More importantly, this concrete progression or solution of homesickness must be performed in practice, through the confrontation of the really existent objects within experience *one by one*: “the tendency to the universal is indispensable for the true scholar. But man must never seek something indeterminate—an ideal, like a fantast—a child of fantasy. He must proceed only from one determinate task to another.”¹⁶⁶

Hence, the progression becomes infinite and can never be completed, and thus the life of an educated man is eternally a struggle. Although the progression or the self-fulfillment of reason can never be completed, Novalis does acknowledge the value of the progression: “Every natural distress is a reminder of a higher home, a higher nature that is more akin to us.”¹⁶⁷ Though there is never a completion of the

¹⁶⁵ Novalis. “General Draft 45” in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 135.

¹⁶⁶ Novalis. “Last Fragments 17.” in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 156.

¹⁶⁷ Novalis. “Last Fragments 41.” in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany,

final destination of human reason, there is indeed an approximation toward the self-appearing of the primordial ground, in which every step forward is indeed venerable. This infinite approximation becomes the major theme of Manfred Franks' interpretation of early German Romanticism.¹⁶⁸

b) The Romantic Concepts of Totality, Community, Love and Friendship

The romantic approximation is one towards totality. Since the early German romantics deny the possibility of restoration and complete appearing of the pure One or the primordial ground, the destination of their struggle can at most be the totality which includes and determines all connections between individual existents instead of the pure ground before any separation and reality. This totality must be approximated *a posteriori* within time and experience. In order to approximate to this final destination and to accomplish self-elevation, man needs to enlarge his scope and to form community unceasingly and continuously: "Perhaps there would be a birth of a whole new era of the sciences and arts if symphilosophy and sympoetry became so universal and heartfelt that it would no longer be anything extraordinary for several complementary minds to create communal works of art."¹⁶⁹ Schlegel's suggestions of symphilosophy and sympoetry are based upon the romantic ideal of community. He thinks that "there is no self-knowledge except historical self-knowledge. No one knows what he is if he doesn't know what his contemporaries are, particularly the greatest contemporary of the brotherhood, the

N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 163.

¹⁶⁸ see Frank, Manfred. *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*. Trans. Elizabeth Millan Zaibert. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004

¹⁶⁹ Schlegel, Friedrich. "Athenaeum Fragments 125." in *Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 34.

master of masters, the genius of the age.”¹⁷⁰ For the early German romantics community is one perfect expression or symbol of totality, their final destination. In community all members are connected and bonded by means of the idea of wholeness or unity, whereas in this wholeness and unity every member can simultaneously preserve its own individuality. Thus, within community individuality, opposition, universality and unity are closely and necessarily combined. A man’s conscious and active participation in community manifests his elevation from the natural and crude mode of separation or solitude to the more universal and united mode of life which preserves and elevates both of his individuality and divinity. The mission of a cultivated or educated man is therefore to make a continuous endeavor to enlarge and elevate his scope by means of taking part in more communities and the community of communities.

Accordingly, love and friendship are very important matters for the early German romantics since they are the binding forces which are necessary and foundational for the constitution of true community. Besides, both love and friendship first presuppose the limit of the subject himself and his opposition to the others and then bring forth a bond or union between the subject and the others: “The first principle in love is to have a sense for one another, and the highest principle faith in each other.”¹⁷¹ Hence, love is always described as a crucial principle of romanticism. The romantic insight into love and death is indeed a resonance of the pre-Socratic philosopher Empedocles, who treats love as the principle of combination and life, whereas strife as the principle of dissolution and death, the

¹⁷⁰ Schelgel, Friedrich. “Ideas 139.” in *Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 107.

¹⁷¹ Schelgel, Friedrich. “Athenaeum Fragments 87.” in *Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 28.

infinite alternation of the two principles constitutes the infinite becoming of the world.

(III) Philosophy and Art in Early German Romanticism

Concerning the subject matter of this dissertation, the relation between philosophy and art (or poetry) is quite complicated in the minds of the early German romantics. Sometimes they make a distinction between philosophy and art and give a more superior status to art over philosophy, but sometimes they tend to identify philosophy and art, and sometimes they even think that philosophy is the true way to approximate to the final destination of reason. In fact, the discourses and fragments of the early German romantics are full of paradoxical terminologies and contentions. It should be noted that the prevalence of paradoxical discourses in Romantics' writings is not due to their incapability of presenting in a clear and strict way, but rather results from a reason deeply rooted in their philosophical insight: existence itself is the product of the paradoxical mingling of separation and union, and self-elevation must proceed along with the paradoxical and even magical combination of the particular and the universal, of separation and union. For the early German romantics, the world and life are ever in a state of becoming, in which change and alternation infinitely take place without any pause. Therefore, strictness, precision, clarity are for them only the requirements of science and theoretical reason, which are very limited and inappropriate for the presentation of the nature and demand of reason and the way of the progression to disclose the totality of existence and the world. Thus, the discourse and terminology of the early German Romantics are with great flexibility, and the reader must notice the context in order to understand their meaning.

A) The Opposition between Philosophy and Art and the Superiority of Art over Philosophy in the Progression of Reason

Concerning the early German romantic conception of the relation between philosophy and art, it is better to articulate their opposing relationship contained in the romantic discourse first. Hölderlin has made a clear differentiation between philosophy and art:

“Just as philosophy always treats only one faculty of the soul, such that the presentation of this one faculty constitutes a whole and that the mere cohering of the parts of this one faculty is called logic, so poetry treats the various faculties of man, such that the depiction of these various faculties constitutes a whole and that the cohering of the more autonomous parts of the various faculties can be called rhythm.”¹⁷²

He thinks that philosophy effects the subordination of man's various faculties under one faculty, whereas in art or poetry all faculties coincide into a whole without violating the individuality and freedom of any one faculty. Hence, art or poetry is for Hölderlin the highest and most divine activity of human beings:

“man, in a too subjective as well as in too objective states, seeks in vain to reach his destiny which consists in that he recognize himself as a unity contained within the divine...For this is possible only in beautiful, sacred, divine sentiment, in a sentiment which is beautiful because it is neither merely pleasant

¹⁷² Hölderlin, Friedrich. “Remarks on ‘Antigone’” in *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters on Theory*. Trans. And Ed. Thomas Pfau. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1998, p. 109.

and happy, nor merely sublime and powerful, nor merely unified and tranquil, but is everything at once and can exist for itself.”¹⁷³

This beautiful sentiment which combines *everything* equally and impartially is the highest expression of poetic spirit, and the ideal or essence of art or poetry. In contrast to this all-inclusive nature of art or poetry, philosophy is only an activity which merely treats the ideal and spiritual element as essential and ignores the particular and the sensuous.

It is apparent that this distinction between philosophy and art does accord with Schelling’s view in the last pages of his *System of Transcendental Idealism* in which he maintains that philosophy expresses only a fraction of man, whereas art is concerned with the whole man. Similar to Hölderlin, concerning the general development of the progression of reason, Novalis maintains that at first there is a sharp separation between the discursive thinker and the crude intuitive poet, the second stage of civilization comes when the opposing poles begin to touch each other in diverse ways from which countless eclectics emerges, the final stage “is achieved by the artist, who is at once tool and genius. He finds that this original division of absolute philosophical activities is a deeper division of his own being—whose survival rests on the possibility of its mediation—its combination. He finds that...a capacity within himself to move from one to the other, to change his polarity at will...he perceives that both must be united in a common principle.”¹⁷⁴ The significance of art or poetry lies in its nature which can accomplish the genuine

¹⁷³ Hölderlin, Friedrich. “On the Operation of Poetic Spirit” in *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters on Theory*. Trans. And Ed. Thomas Pfau. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1998, p. 77.

¹⁷⁴ Novalis. “Logological Fragments I 13” in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 50.

interpenetration of the subjective and the objective, the discursive and the intuitive, the particular and the universal, without subordinating one pole under another.

B) The Final Identity between Philosophy and Art

a) Novalis' Magical Idealism

Accordingly, if philosophy is one transcending the former states of separation by means of truly recognizing the interpenetration of the opposition and the paradoxical relation of separation and union, it does raise itself to the poetic spirit and becomes identical to art or poetry. Novalis describes the development of history of philosophy within the context of the romantic progression: first there is empiricist, the passive thinker, whose way of thinking is an effect of the external world and fate; then there is a transition to the dogmatists, thereafter come Kant and Fichte, and finally magical idealism emerges.¹⁷⁵ For Novalis, the philosophies before magical idealism were still confined within different degrees of separation and partiality, only the magical idealism begins to present the genuine interpenetration of all oppositions. Novalis' magical idealism is a description of his own thinking. Idealism in this way no longer signifies the subordination of the real under the ideal, or the objective under the subjective, but manifests reason's very impartial capacity for recognizing the interpenetration of the oppositions. Hence, magical idealism is equivalent to romanticism for him which shows the identity and combination of art and philosophy.

¹⁷⁵ See Novalis. "Teplitz Fragments 33" in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 107.

b) The Interpenetration of Philosophy and Art

More importantly, since genuine art or poetry is the interpenetration of everything, the opposition between philosophy and art must be at last reconciled. Otherwise, art without philosophy or reflection only repeats the primary opposition between the discursive philosopher and the intuitive poet: “all true poets up to now made poetry organically without knowing it...so that for the most part they were only poetic in details—but the whole was usually unpoetic, Logology will necessarily bring about this revolution.”¹⁷⁶ Hence, for the early German Romantics philosophy should be raised to the poetic spirit, and art in turn should combine itself with reflection and knowing. “In philosophy the way to science lies only through art, just as the poet, in the other hand, finds his art only through science.”¹⁷⁷ This interpenetration of philosophy and art is their genuine destinies in which the true essence of them which grounds the romantic paradoxical discourse on philosophy and art is revealed.

Accordingly, when the early German romantics praise the divine significance of art or poetry in the progression or approximation of reason towards the disclosure of the totality of the world, the art they mean is never the one contrast to philosophy, but the one combined with the latter. In the same way, when the romantics acknowledge philosophy as the leading activity or practice for the self-elevation of humanity, this philosophy is never the mere discursive and partial one, but must be one elevated to and combined with the poetic spirit.

¹⁷⁶Novalis. “Logological Fragments I 37” in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 56.

¹⁷⁷Schelgel, Friedrich. “Athenaeum Fragments 302” in *Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 60.

Excursus: Conclusion of Part I

Until now, it is quite apparent that Schelling, Hegel and the early German Romantics do share the same problematic inspired and left by Kant. Kant's critique of the traditional metaphysics and his establishment of the new conception of reason both animate and frustrate his successors. On the one hand, the unity and freedom of reason become the basic belief and the starting point of the German idealists and the early German romantics, on the other hand, frustrated by the dualism of the sensibility and the understanding, of appearance and thing-in-itself, what they attempt to undertake is the genuine accomplishment and realization of the unity and freedom of reason in order to give foundation and explanation of the opposing stage of existence and to point out the true direction of human vocation.

Schelling and Hegel believe that the self-realization of reason's unity and freedom can be accomplished at the end of their systems, though they end up their systems in apparently different ways. This belief on the completion of system marks their crucial difference from the early German romantics, who deny this possibility of the completion of reason's vocation. However, contrary to Hegel, Schelling in his early stage acknowledges the highest significance of art concerning the completion of his system of reason, in which art is conceived as the perfect unification of the subjective and the objective, the sensuous and the spiritual, the particular and the universal. It indeed shows Schelling's intimacy with the early German Romantics.

Thus, some scholars classify Schelling as one major figure of German idealism, whereas some count him as a member of early German romanticism. Besides, there are also interpretation of and arguments about Schelling's transition from

romanticism to idealism between his early period before 1801 and the period of philosophy of identity till 1809. The first part of this dissertation has exposed and unveiled the general philosophical concern, the systematic approach and the major positions of aesthetics or philosophy of art within the systems of Kant, Schelling, Hegel and the early German romantics, which paves the way for the second part. In what follows I will embark upon an investigation into the so-called transition of Schelling from romanticism to idealism, and attempts to make a clarification of the unique position of Schelling's thinking with reference to romanticism and idealism in his early and middle period (till 1809) through the issue on art.

Part Two: Schelling, Romanticism and Idealism

Chapter six: Early German Romanticism and German Idealism

In this part an internal and crucial problem of Schelling's aesthetics, his relation to romanticism and idealism, will be tackled. Without sorting out the romantic and idealistic elements in his philosophy and explaining his so-called transition from romanticism to idealism, the significance of art in Schelling's philosophy can never be fully articulated and unveiled. In order to undertake the above tasks, an examination of the difference between romanticism and idealism as well as their interrelationship becomes our preliminary investigation.

(I) General Outline of Idealism and Romanticism

A) The Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment

Romanticism burst out in the last decades of 18th century and prevailed over many European states such as France, Germany, England and Italy by the 1830s and began to dissipate by mid-19th century. It was a large-scale and complex movement and gave a great impact on several important cultural aspects such as literature, philosophy, art and politics. Contrary to the Enlightenment, the subsequent romanticism is always acknowledged as an advocate of feeling, passion and fantasy at the expense of rationality or reason. Thus, it is always held that romanticism is a reaction to the Enlightenment. Isaiah Berlin, in his investigations in Vico, Hamann and Herder, points out that the Counter-Enlightenment movement, which is characterized as relativism, anti-rationalism, vitalism and organism, is closely related

to German romanticism.¹⁷⁸

Similar to romanticism, the Enlightenment was also a very complex cultural movement to which a clear-cut definition is difficult to give. Generally speaking, European culture was greatly affected by the Newtonian ideal of science widespread in the age of the Enlightenment, which to a large extent contributed to the prominence of science and technology in modern age. Inspired by the Newtonian ideal, the powers of reason in recognizing causality and processing calculation are fully cultivated, by means of which men can make analysis of and prediction from data successfully and fruitfully, gaining thus more accurate knowledge of and more powerful control over the universe and himself. In this way, men intensely realize his own power to understand the world and to achieve a better life after the detachment from God and the emancipation from lords. As a result, men's *empirical* rationality is better and better developed.

It is apparent that feeling of beauty does not seem to have any significance concerning the exploration and investigation of the universe according to the Newtonian ideal. Within the world of rational sciences, like logic and mathematics, what feeling of beauty arouses may only be a confusion. Accordingly, feeling, passion and fantasy are ignored and even oppressed by virtue of their incapability of obtaining knowledge and truth under the Newtonian ideal. When the Newtonian ideal becomes the central ideal and popular belief, the significance of feeling, passion and fantasy is even suspected and negated regarding their contribution to virtue and good life. If we define the Newtonian ideal as the central theme of the Enlightenment, it

¹⁷⁸ See Berlin, Isaiah. *Three critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann, Herder*. Ed. Henry Hardy. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000.

evidently contradicts the belief of romanticism, and the latter can be understood as a reaction against the Enlightenment, the Counter-Enlightenment.

Nevertheless, Kant in his famous essay "What is Enlightenment?" expresses a different understanding of the idea of the Enlightenment than that founded upon the Newtonian ideal. Kant thinks that the Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity which is the inability to use one's own understanding without guidance from the others. It is due to man's laziness or cowardice to practice his own reasoning that they become submissive to authorities and lose his own freedom. Hence, the target of Enlightenment for Kant is to realize man's own freedom to exercise reason *publicly* in questioning about and making judgment on *all* matters, like an impartial and free scholar without any subordination and obedience to any authorities or institutions. In a word, what the Enlightenment enlightens should be man's own vocation for free thinking, that is, freedom.

Perhaps we can treat the awareness of the Newtonian ideal as an attempt to get rid of the general submission to theology, and thus, as a step forward to disclose reason and freedom in mankind. However, there is indeed no place for true freedom within the Newtonian ideal. The mechanistic view on nature becomes another authority or dogma to which man's way of thinking still remains submissive. The influential mechanistic view on nature is even applied generally to the understanding of society and human being, and man therefore becomes a part of the mechanistic and quantitative world in which everything is determined by blind causality. This leads to the many crises of modernity: the high rate of division of labor results in alienation in community; scienticism hinders man from comprehending the true significance of cultural activities like art and religion; the mechanistic and blind

operation of the universe upsets man's search for value and purpose in the world and hence revives nihilism, and so on. In this way, man's manner of thinking is not free and he cannot fully recognize the many different kinds of manifestation of his free will. Kant's idea of the Enlightenment is thus an objection to, or at least an amendment or re-examination of, the ideas dominated by the Newtonian ideal.

Besides, one remarkable suggestion of Kant on the idea of the Enlightenment shows a vivid difference from the Newtonian ideal. Kant emphasizes that his age has not reached an enlightened age, but was rather in an age of enlightenment. In fact, the enlightened age is the lofty ideal of all ages and all ages should be ages of enlightenment. This implies that the essential destiny of human nature lies precisely in his *progress* to get rid of the errors of the previous ages and to increase its degree of freedom and enlightenment. Although Kant was a very important and influential philosopher in the age of Enlightenment, his view did not represent the mainstream of his age. Rather, what he expresses is the ideal of the Enlightenment, that is, what the Enlightenment should be, instead of what it is. We can see that his proposal does not stick to any historical context, but is one universal to all ages and cultures which represents the ultimate ideal of all true philosophers from the past to the future. In this way, the idea of the Enlightenment is not one contradictory to that of romanticism, instead, the latter, if it carries the same solemn and lofty ideal as that of the Enlightenment suggested by Kant, is in fact a continuation and realization of the former. It seems that the relationship between Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment is indeed complicated and paradoxical. Concerning this issue, Damon Linker shows that the seed of Counter-Enlightenment has already been laid in Kant,

the philosopher who is general known as one represents Enlightenment.¹⁷⁹

B) Idealism and realism

On the part of idealism, it is a long tradition developed from ancient Greek philosophers especially Plato. In modern philosophy, Berkeley, Leibniz, Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel are generally recognized as idealists. Idealism is generally acknowledged as the philosophical standpoint which maintains that the mind or reason is the only reality and thus the physical and real world is merely an appearance of the mind or reason. Therefore, the real world only gets determinations and inner essence on the basis of the ideal mind. In other words, idealism first presupposes the opposition of the mind and the world, or the ideal and the real, and then gives priority to the former over the latter. Sprigge suggests that for the idealists the physical world is determined “*either* (1) only as an object for mind, *or* (2) only as a content of mind, *or* (3) only as something itself somehow mental in its true character, a disjunction we shall sum up as the thesis that the physical is derivative from mind.”¹⁸⁰ Under this general description, many different doctrines, no matter monistic or pluralistic, empirical or transcendental, epistemological or ontological, are all included as different variations of idealism. It is obvious that Kant’s transcendental idealism differs greatly from Berkeley’s idealistic doctrine. Whereas the former maintains that the comprehensibility of objects and the validity of our knowledge, that is, the *truth* of the external objects, are determined by our subjective faculties of cognition, the latter on the contrary attempts to lay claim on the *existence*

¹⁷⁹ See Linker, Damon. ‘From Kant to Schelling: Counter-Enlightenment in the Name of Reason’. *Review of Metaphysics* 54(2000): 337-377.

¹⁸⁰ Sprigge, T.L.S.. Idealism. In E. Craig Ed., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. London: Routledge, 1998.

of physical objects by demonstrating that only minds exist, that is, physical objects as physical and material do not really exist, but is only mind-dependent and ultimately produced by mind. The later German idealists Fichte, Schelling and Hegel attempt to surpass Kant's discreet and limited proposal in order to explain the existence of the external world according to the purpose and dynamic progress of mind or spirit, which was a newly developed approach in their age. What opposes to idealism is realism, which by the same token first presupposes the opposition between the mind and the world, but conversely makes the real as the only reality. The opposition between idealism and realism is the endless debate in philosophy which stretches from the ancient to recent discourses such as the contemporary discussions on philosophy of mind.

Both idealism and realism endeavor to find the unitary principle and explanation when man confronts and feels uneasy about the heterogeneous constituents of the world. It should be noted that by the concepts "mind", "spirit" or "reason", most of the above idealists including Plato, Kant and the German idealists basically understand the rational capacity or intelligence excluding feeling, passion and disposition. The latter are classified into the real expressions which are passive and determined by external factors. For the idealists, a person predominated by passion and sensuality only is not competent enough to dissect the secret and details of the mechanistic nature. Hence, for most of the idealists, mind or spirit in essence must be the active, free and independent power which can entirely determine its own activities. Accordingly, one criticism of idealism in the general sense is that it neglects the significance and importance of actuality and passivity, and overlooks the factuality of man's always being determined and affected by the external world. In this way, the tension between romanticism and idealism becomes apparent.

Romanticism is not equivalent to realism, but being partly in line with realism and in contrast to idealism, romanticism attempts to do justice to feeling, passion, and fantasy, which are indispensable elements of men ignored and despised by extreme idealism.

(II) Early German Romanticism, German Idealism and their Common Concern

In order to clarify the position of Schelling and hence to gain a clear idea of the essence and significance of art within his system, the above rough outline of the basic positions of romanticism and idealism in general is not enough. Rather, the specific contexts of romanticism and idealism must be further delimited. In what follows the difference and interrelationship between early German romanticism and German idealism will be discussed. Romanticism in Germany is generally divided into three phases: early Romanticism (Frühromantik) from 1797 to 1802; high Romanticism (Hochromantik) from 1803 to 1815; and late Romanticism (Spätromantik) from 1819 to 1830. The dividing years may be debatable, but it is basically accepted to divide it into 3 phases since they show vividly different characteristics no matter in their respective concerns or solutions. Although Schelling was alive till 1854 and still active in 1840s, only early German Romanticism is discussed within this dissertation because on the one hand it is among the romantic phases the most philosophical one which indeed laid the philosophical and rational foundation for the later development of German romanticism; on the other hand, the years of early German romanticism began with Schelling's proposal of philosophy of art in his early stage, which was a topic seldom discussed in his later period. In addition, within the years of early German romanticism Schelling was most intimate

with his romantic contemporaries, and thus the early German romantic impact on his philosophy in general and his philosophy of art in particular is absolutely indispensable.

Concerning German idealism, most scholars believe that it is a variety of idealisms which include the thoughts of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, and there seems a continuous development among them, with succession for and criticism of the antecedent ones. It is mostly acknowledged that German idealism aims at articulating the nature of the Absolute, the ultimate ground of existence and knowledge, and positing the Absolute as purely spiritual and originally ideal. Only regarding this target, German idealism shares much with other idealists. What is original and peculiar to German idealism lies in their dialectical and systematic approach, in which a self-referential character and a demand for self-intuition or self-realization are posited as the essence of the ground or the first principle. According to this basic assertion, a peculiarly dynamic development of this ground comes forth and constitutes the systems of the German idealists. The systematic approaches of Schelling and Hegel have been discussed in previous chapters.

In this chapter, the difference and relation between early German romanticism and German idealism will be investigated, and the investigation of this chapter is based on the discussion in the previous chapters. There are many leading figures of early German romanticism, among which I limit myself only to the thoughts of Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, and Hölderlin, for it is impossible to include all romantic figures especially when it is not the main concern of this dissertation. Since whether Schelling is a romantic or an idealist is precisely the subject matter of this dissertation, and this chapter is only a preparation for this investigation by means of

clarifying the difference and relation between early German romanticism and German idealism, Schelling's thought will not be included in this chapter, no matter how much his thought conforms to the romantics and the idealists. Besides, scholars have argued for Fichte's impact on and intimacy to romanticism, but since Fichte has not devoted much specific discussion to the problem of art, his thought will not be considered in this chapter and even in this whole dissertation. Thus, in this chapter I take Hegel the sole representative of German idealism, since scholars are almost unanimous in acknowledging Hegel's system as the culmination of German idealism. In addition, he devotes much detailed discussion to the issue on art, which is highly relevant to the concern and subject matter of this dissertation.

I have repeatedly emphasized that the early German romantics almost share the same philosophical concern and problem with that of German idealists, that is, the difficulties left by Kantian philosophy, the inconsistency between reason's ultimate demand for unity and the dualistic result of the system. Manfred Frank puts that "the term 'Being' in early German Romanticism implies a monistic program of explanation. It presupposes the object of Kantian idea of a 'supersensible ground of unity between theory and practice' as existing...that which I call 'Frühromantik' shares the same object and determination with the project of absolute idealism."¹⁸¹ Perhaps due to their insights into the crises of modernity, the early German romantics and the German idealists were the poets and the philosophers who found it was too distressful to tolerate the rupture and disharmony in the oppositions between the real and the ideal, the finite and the infinite, the particular and the universal. Thus, wholeness, unity and harmony become the ideas they were ever striving for.

¹⁸¹ Frank, Manfred. *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*. Trans. Elizabeth Millan Zaibert. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004, p. 56.

They are encouraged and inspired by Kant's postulate of the demand of reason for freedom, unity and wholeness, and endeavor to refine, develop and even surpass Kantian system on the basis of its very idea about the essence of reason. The decisive steps of both the early German romantics and the German idealists to go beyond Kantian system and its theoretical difficulties are to postulate the concept of the Absolute, or other synonymous concepts, as the ground of existence and the world, and bestow it with the content from the Kantian suggestion of the ultimate demand of reason. Although Kant makes a claim for the demand of reason, he has never further determined this demand as the ground of existence and the world. Within his system the ultimate ground or the first principle of existence is not a valid and significant question and is thus dismissed. Kant's delimitation of the domains of regulative principle and constitutive principle, of the domain of comprehensibility, was fractured by his immediate successors when they revived the genuine concern about the ultimate ground and first principle of existence and knowledge on the basis of the very insight of Kant.

In my opinion, besides Kant's important, useful and systematic discrimination of different employments of reason and of different kinds of principles, the main reason for Kant's inspiration to the early German romantics and the German idealists is to a large extent due to his innovative concept of the demand of reason. The essence of reason or intelligence has long been discussed by the philosophers before Kant, but most of them investigate the problem in a static and objective manner, that is, treating reason or intelligence as something without change and purpose, as something already well-formed or well-developed and is something awaiting for being dissected or defined. In this way, the concept of reason is scarcely different from the concept of natural beings regarding their basic structures and

presuppositions. Kant's suggestion of the demand of reason is indeed powerful and significant in resolving and criticizing the difficulties of traditional metaphysical doctrines. Accordingly, the concept of reason would no longer be a static one but should have dynamic implications: not only can it have movement, more importantly, since it is purposeful, a development and an approximation to a goal can even be anticipated from this very concept of reason. This is precisely the peculiar and innovative approach of the early German romantics and the German idealists.

(III) Three Major Discrepancies between Early German Romanticism and German Idealism

A) The Discrepancy on the Final Destination of System

In spite of the common concern and problem shared by the early German romantics and the German idealists, they diverge from each other significantly and become rivaling trends of thought with almost equal status and audience. The most remarkable difference between them lies in their different judgments on the highest discipline, or the final destination, which can adequately and sufficiently fulfill the innermost demand of reason for unity and self-realization. On the part of early German romanticism, it is art instead of reflection that can attain the final goal of reason, whereas German idealists especially Hegel think that only reflection and thought can completely and truly attain the final destination of reason. The difference is undoubtedly noticed by most scholars, such as Andrew Bowie:

“...in the main the Idealist response to the division in modernity is to seek new philosophical foundations on the basis of the Cartesian and Kantian conception

of the founding role of self-consciousness. For Idealism, what philosophy can analyse in the activity of consciousness is a higher form of the intelligibility present in nature, so that the task of philosophy is to show how our thinking is the key to the inherent intelligibility of things. The essence of the Romantic response, on the other hand, is a realisation that, while it must play a vital role in a modern conception of philosophy, the activity of consciousness is never fully transparent to itself."¹⁸²

He further maintains that the difference of the early German romantics from Hegel "lies in the way this position leads to the aesthetic as the location of affective and other ways of being which philosophy (and science) cannot definitively explain and which require other modes of articulation"¹⁸³ Bowie's interpretation of the trends of thought is to a large extent a resonance of Frank's works on early German romanticism, whose main theme is that the essential feature of the early German romantics and its peculiarity lie fundamentally in their views on art and philosophy.¹⁸⁴

a) Reflection

It is clear that in Bowie's interpretation, philosophy is comprehended in the idealistic sense and is made entirely contrary to art or poetry. An idealistic philosophical doctrine or system is based upon the subjective or mental principle. Since Descartes, at least in the comprehension of the German idealists and the early

¹⁸² Bowie, Andrew, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 63.

¹⁸³ Ibid, p. 163.

¹⁸⁴ See Frank, Manfred. *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*. Trans. Elizabeth Millan Zaubert. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004 and Frank, Manfred. *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik: Vorlesungen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989.

German romantics about him, the subjective or mental principle is further determined as self-consciousness. Although both Schelling and Hegel launch criticisms on Descartes and Kant, especially on the principle of self-consciousness suggested by the former, the essential self-referential character of the first principle or the Absolute, in their own systems is also a development out of the concept of self-consciousness. Besides, for Hegel, self-consciousness is the essential or primary thinking which acts in a rational way. Thus, self-consciousness becomes synonymous to reflection, and reflection is therefore made as the essence of philosophy.

Reflection is not merely the action directing towards the inner, but must be performed in a rational or articulate way as well, in which a clear and definite object must be raised and subsumed under the subject, and the subject must be aware of its object. The subject should then be aware of the opposition between the subject and the object and then assimilates the object into itself. Emotions, feelings, intuition and mere awareness of the subject itself can not yet be considered as acts of reflection, for in these activities the subjects may not have clear awareness of the object and the desire to assimilate the object into itself. Rather, the subject is often predominated by something real and external in feelings and emotions. It is also dubious whether the Cartesian conception of self-consciousness denotes such kind of reflection or thinking excluding the subject's intuition and feeling of itself, since his "*ego sum*" in its own essence may be an intuition prior to any rational reflection. It withstands the universal doubt, the rational examination of the foundation of knowledge. In other words, his questioning about the foundation of science or truth is an act of reflection, but his insight into the immediate existence of the thinking I seems not. Perhaps there may be a misinterpretation of Cartesian conception of self-consciousness within the German idealists, but it is not the focus of this dissertation, instead, their own

contentions and challenges to their supposed antagonist should be considered

b) Intellectual Intuition

It is thus apparent that for the idealists reflection is contrary to intuition. One remarkable difference between reflection and intuition is that the former acts discursively and in a mediate way whereas the latter acts directly and immediately. Since Kant, intuition has been divided into two kinds, sensible intuition and intellectual intuition. The former denotes man's faculty of sensibility, which depends on the givenness from without. On the contrary, the latter is entirely active and no object of which exists outside of the intuitant. Kant himself rejects man's capability of intellectual intuition, what he acknowledges is only the indispensable role of sensible intuition playing in experience and human cognition.

However, for Fichte and Schelling intellectual intuition becomes the original activity of the ultimate ground or the first principle which brings forth the whole system of knowledge and existence. Besides, it is also the essential power for philosophers to have insight into or knowledge of the absolute ground. Intellectual intuition is for Schelling, at least in his early stage, the activity of self-intuition or self-realization of the Self, and his whole system presented in *System of Transcendental Idealism* is the objectification process of intellectual intuition of the Absolute or the Self, the realization of the very essential nature and activity of the Self by the Self itself. In short, for Fichte and Schelling intellectual intuition becomes the key concept or activity which engenders the whole system.

The case of Hegel is just the opposite. In Hegel's view, intellectual intuition,

regardless of how active and free it is supposed to be, is just an undeveloped immediacy which should be superseded by reflection and articulation. His system is directed to the aim of overcoming the immediacy, and from the perspective of the absolute spirit, intuition, regardless of sensible or intellectual, has no positive significance besides being overcome within his system. The first subject matter of his system in *Phenomenology of Spirit* is sense perception and in his *Logic* the concept of being. Both of them are the most immediate experience for most people, and thus become the first objects to be overcome in his system. Hence, for Hegel sensible intuition is something inferior and defective, and intellectual intuition something mystical and obscure.

On the part of the early German romantics, Manfred Frank indicates that “the way in which knowledge of the Absolute is acquired must correspond to a mode of comprehension (Auffassungsmodus) other than that of consciousness (or self-consciousness). And for both Schelling and Hölderlin, this alternative mode is ‘intellectual intuition’...Hölderlin claims, exactly as Schelling had, that the Absolute (or Being) does not make self-consciousness evident, but rather makes ‘intellectual intuition’ evident, in which, other than in the dividing and dispersing judgment—the subject and object are ‘intimately unified’.¹⁸⁵ Although the early German romantics and Schelling have different understanding of the meaning of intellectual intuition and the concept of the Absolute, both of them have insight into the intimacy between intellectual intuition and the concept of Being or the Absolute. They positively recognize that if we desire to grasp Being or the Absolute, the ultimate ground of existence and the very origin of unity of the world, only intellectual intuition is

¹⁸⁵ Frank, Manfred. *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*. Trans. Elizabeth Millan Zaubert. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004, p.89.

competent to undertake the task, instead of reflection or thinking.

c) Genius and Aesthetic Idea

Both the early German romantics and the German idealists recognize that genuine works of art must be created by genius, which is the unconscious creativity endowed by a mystical origin. The Kantian impact is apparent in this common belief, for he maintains that genius is the "innate productive ability of the artist and as such belongs itself to nature... innate mental predisposition through which nature gives the rule to art."¹⁸⁶ Kant's concept of nature here does not denote the mechanistic nature, but nature understood in the sense of life. Thus, genius is entirely excluded from the sphere of consciousness and reflection, conversely, what can be learnt or reflected contributes only to the technical part of the works of art. Although technical perfection is indispensable to the masterpieces, for Kant, Schelling, and the romantics it is never the essence of the extraordinary works of art. The essence of a genuine artwork lies in the unconscious creativity which manifests infinite meaning and miraculous harmony out of contradictions and oppositions.

For Kant the essence of works of art manifested in the aesthetic ideas is created by genius. An aesthetic idea is the counterpart of a rational idea. A rational idea is a concept to which no intuition is adequate. On the contrary, an aesthetic idea is an intuition to which no determinate concept is adequate. Hence, no language can express it completely and adequately. An aesthetic idea can be understood in three aspects. First, it points beyond the bounds of experience. Second, they are inner

¹⁸⁶ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*, Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987, p. 307

intuitions to which no concepts can be completely adequate. Third, it tries to exhibit rational concepts and give sensible expression to empirical concepts with a *completeness* which cannot be found in mechanistic nature. An aesthetic idea is formed by the imagination in its productive and creative use to create another nature out of the material given by the mechanistic nature. With regard to the third aspect, the imagination creates aesthetic attributes of a (rational or empirical) concept in sensible works via expressing the concept's implications and its kinship with other concepts, with an aim of presenting something that "prompts the imagination to spread over a multitude of kindred presentations that arouse more thought than can be expressed in a concept determined by words."¹⁸⁷ Hence, through the creation of aesthetic attributes and presentation of an aesthetic idea, art aesthetically *expands* the concept (both rational and empirical) in an unlimited way. Accordingly, the meaning of a genuine work of art is rich and inexhaustible. This richness and inexhaustibility of the meaning of the works of art are highly valued by Kant's romantic successors and become a major concern of Schelling, who first makes the problem of art and its relation to philosophy the paramount issue of his system.

Kant's definitions of rational ideas and aesthetic ideas seem to be symmetrical, but in fact it is not the case: The rational ideas cannot appear in sensibility at all, otherwise they are not pure and transcendent. Therefore the rational ideas must be limited within the domain of pure reason. However, the aesthetic ideas not only cannot be expressed by mere sensibility, but also cannot be exhausted by concepts. Although aesthetic ideas must be expressed in sensible objects, the meaning of it is far beyond the determination of sensibility. Otherwise, it cannot be called "idea". If they can be exhausted by concepts, they cannot gain any independency and can be

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 315.

therefore entirely reduced to concepts and hence to rational ideas. Since the aesthetic ideas can somehow be expressed by language and sensible objects but never be completely determined, the domain of aesthetic ideas, which is beyond sensibility and pure reason, is more extensive than that of rational ideas, which is confined in pure reason alone. This asymmetry between rational ideas and aesthetic ideas has not been articulated by Kant himself, but we can draw the conclusion according to the nature of the different kinds of idea proposed by Kant. Hence, according to Kant's discussion on aesthetic ideas, the early German romantics further consider that only the aesthetic ideas inherent in the genuine works of art can attain the ultimate synthesis or unification of oppositions between the finite and the infinite, the conscious and the unconscious. Reflection and consciousness, on the other hand, must be founded upon the separation and opposition between the subjective and the objective, the ideal and the real.

d) Contingency

The very reason for Hegel's denial of art as the final destination of reason or the absolute spirit is that since the works of art are essentially created by genius which is something contingent, the accomplishment and the universal acknowledgment of the system cannot be guaranteed. Besides, the indispensable, sensuous and finite element of works of art also manifests the dependency and passivity of human reason, and passivity always leads to arbitrary or contingent results. The primacy of thinking in Hegel's system as well as in other idealistic doctrines is not without reasonable consideration. For them certainty and truth always exclude contingency and obscurity. Reflection or thinking is supposed to be an entirely immanent activity which is therefore fully active and apodictic. Thus, explaining the world by means of the

principles of thinking or identifying the structure of the world with that of thinking can secure that everything in the world is necessary and hence comprehensible. Overall speaking, idealists in general feel deeply uneasy about contingency and incomprehensibility. Furthermore, they think that contingency undermines the universality of the doctrines which is taken as the common goal of all philosophical contentions.

On the part of the early German romantics, their acknowledgment of art as the highest discipline or the final destination of reason reserves a place for contingency and mystery. They think that the immanency and necessity of thinking are only something generated from self-enclosed activity, which ignores the reality and factuality of existence and the world. If we do recognize that reality, phenomenal world, contingency and incomprehensibility are inevitable and undeniable, we cannot afford to simply eliminate and disregard them merely because of our fear of them.

e) The Discrimination and Fusion between Art and Philosophy

The above only accounts for the case when philosophy and art are considered as opposite to each other. In fact only Hegel holds it. On the part of the early German romantics, although the separation and distinction between art and philosophy are recognized, the boundary between these two disciplines is always intentionally blurred. In fact, the fusion of art (or poetry) and philosophy is the highest ideal of the early German Romantics.

Hölderlin presents a typical discrimination between art and philosophy acknowledged by the early German romantics: "just as philosophy always treats only

one faculty of the soul, such as that the presentation of this one faculty constitutes a whole and that the mere cohering of the parts of this one faculty is called logic, so poetry treats the various faculties of man, such that the depiction of these various faculties constitutes a whole and that the cohering of the more autonomous parts of the various faculties can be called rhythm.”¹⁸⁸ Novalis maintains that “science in the broadest sense is what is pursued by scholars—masters of determinate art—and philosophers are masters of indeterminate, free art.”¹⁸⁹ For many philosophers including Hegel, philosophy should be treated as rigorous science. Hence, one of the targets of Hegelian system is to overcome the initial indeterminacy in other disciplines. It is obvious that an idealistic conception of philosophy is not consistent with the romantic conception of philosophy. The idea of philosophy for the former only corresponds to the conception of science of the latter. Novalis further suggests that “the scholar and the craftsman proceed mechanically in their simplification...The philosopher and the artist proceed *organically*—If I may describe it so—they combine freely by means of a pure idea and separate according to a free idea...develops and shapes itself freely into a form which contains indeterminate individuals and is infinitely individual and capable of being cultivated in any way.”¹⁹⁰ In this way, philosophy is identical to art and contains indeterminate individuality, which is contradictory to the Hegelian conception of philosophy as a science being possessed and completed by a universal spirit.

Novalis presents a brief outline of the general tendency of philosophy:

¹⁸⁸ Hölderlin, Friedrich. “Remarks on ‘Antigone’” in *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters on Theory*. Trans. And Ed. Thomas Pfau. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1998, p. 109.

¹⁸⁹ Novalis. “Logological Fragments II 31” in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 77.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 32, pp. 77-78.

“PHILOSOPHY. Originally *knowledge and action are mixed*-then they separate and in the end they are to be *united again*, cooperating, harmonious, but not *mixed*.”¹⁹¹ The separation of knowledge and action is only the intermediate phase of the whole enterprise of philosophy. The Kantian system can be seen as a perfect example of this. The Hegelian system, despite its attempt to reconcile the separated parts articulated in Kantian system, shows a separation rather than unity, for the manifold faculties are finally subordinated under one faculty instead of being integrated into the latter. Novalis states that “philosophy can only be represented in practice and cannot, like the activity of genius, be described at all.”¹⁹²

The last phase of philosophy is indeed a poetizing of philosophy which exalts philosophy from a determinate science founded upon oppositions to the activity which magically unites the boundaries between individuals and that between the individual and the universal. Mary Strand calls this notable unity of art and philosophy advocated by Novalis the romantic ideal of “crossing boundaries”. She characterizes Novalis’ project as follows: “He attempts to break through the confines of Enlightenment, rationalistic thinking and rigid categorization of knowledge in his plans for an encyclopedia entitled ‘*Das Allegmeine Brouillon*’ (1798-99). The barriers between philosophy, aesthetics and other disciplines as well are dissolved in this text, inspiring flexible, poetic, experimental thought.”¹⁹³ The fusion of art and philosophy is also brought forth by means of philosophizing of poetry: “Poetry is the hero of philosophy. Philosophy raises poetry to the status of a principle. It teaches us

¹⁹¹ Novalis. “General Draft 1” in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 121.

¹⁹² Novalis. “Last Fragments 39” in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 162.

¹⁹³ Strand, Mary R. *I/You: Paradoxical Constructions of Self and Other in Early German Romanticism*. New York: Peter Lang, 1988, p. 23.

to recognize the worth of poetry. Philosophy is the *theory of poetry*. It shows us what poetry is, that it is one and all.”¹⁹⁴ However, as art is more flexible and creative than philosophy, for the early German romantics art still plays a more leading and significant role in the fusion of art and philosophy, as depicted by Schlegel Friedrich:

“Romantic poetry is a progressive, universal poetry. Its aim isn’t merely to reunite all the separate species of poetry and put poetry in touch with philosophy and rhetoric. It tries to and should mix and fuse poetry and prose, inspiration and criticism, the poetry of art and the poetry of nature; and make poetry lively and sociable, and life and society poetical.”¹⁹⁵

Accordingly, art is the essential activity which contributes to the fusion of art and philosophy, in contrast, philosophy at most reveals the worth and significance of poetry.

It is apparent that in the romantic fusion of art and philosophy, the essence of art does not change but the conception of philosophy has to undergo remarkable alteration. The reason for the fusion of the disciplines and the primacy of art rather than philosophy in prompting the crossing of boundaries, as Mary Strand puts it, is that “it brings chaos, chance and ‘*Systemlosigkeit*’ into systems, which keeps them alive and ever changing by resisting and destabilizing rigid, categorizing thought. We see, again, why he calls poesy the ‘*Schlüssel*’ of philosophy, for without it thinking becomes inflexible and new thoughts or discoveries an impossibility”¹⁹⁶ The case of

¹⁹⁴ Novalis. “Logological Fragments II 41” in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 79.

¹⁹⁵ Schlegel, Friedrich. “Athenaeum Fragments 116.” in *Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 31.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 26.

Hegel is just the opposite: for Hegel the theory of art becomes more significant than the creation of artworks in modernity and in the future, since the absolute spirit is no longer satisfied with art but is progressing towards philosophy, the only activity which can attain the final destination of the system.

In the previous Part, we know that the conception of the essence of art is basically alike in the systems of Schelling, Hegel and in the fragments of the early German romantics. Their crucial difference rather lies in their conceptions of philosophy and hence the relation between art and philosophy. It is apparent that Hegel will disagree with Novalis' conception of the development of philosophy and the fusion of the two disciplines. Speculation about and articulation of the inner structure of thinking are for him all along the very essential tasks of philosophy, and thus philosophy should not be confused with art in which the spiritual ideal is contaminated by the sensuous and the particular. In a word, concerning the highest discipline which can best reveal the ultimate ground and attain the final destination of reason, the early German romantics think that the fusion of all disciplines led by poetry, that is, the poetizing of all human disciplines, is the most divine activity. For Hegel only philosophy in its completely determinate and articulate sense which strips off any contamination from and confusion with sensibility, immediacy and indeterminateness can become the highest discipline in the system of philosophy.

B) The Discrepancy on Diversity and Unification

Accordingly, the second crucial discrepancy between early German romanticism and German idealism arises. It is the question what the poets and the philosophers ultimately desire: unification or diversity? Andrew Bowie maintains that the German

idealists desire “to reveal the higher unity in the diversity of the sensuous world and thus to prevent a disintegration of the world into merely instrumentalised particulars.”¹⁹⁷ On the part of the early German romantics, the final destination is expressed in Schlegel’s notion of wit (Witz), which is “the capacity to create random correspondences which suggest a unity of totally diverse phenomena, and thus of the whole world, in the manner of a myth...it is characterized by randomness, suddenness and transience, rather than possessing an enduring meaning-giving function.”¹⁹⁸ Besides, Novalis also thinks that “the poet must have the ability to imagine other thoughts, and also to represent thoughts in all kinds of sequences and in the most diverse expression.”¹⁹⁹ It is apparent that the idealists search for ultimate unification, whereas the romantic poets desire diversity in the end.

b) The Romantic Search for Diversity and the Idealistic Search for Unification into One

The division is consistent with the general impression on romanticism. Arthur Lovejoy puts that there is “a fundamental preference for diversity and complexity”²⁰⁰ in early German romanticism. In the view of the romantics “art shall always go on bringing new provinces of life within its domain and achieving ever fresh and original effects.”²⁰¹ Morse Peckham maintains that diversitarianism is one important character of romanticism, which is recognized as a positive value, “for the diversity of things and their uniqueness is the proof of the constant intrusion of novelty in the

¹⁹⁷ Bowie, Andrew, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 62.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 64.

¹⁹⁹ Novalis. “Last Fragments 42.” in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 163.

²⁰⁰ Arthur O. Lovejoy. “On the Discrimination of Romanticisms” in Gleckner, Robert F. and Enscoe, Gerald E. ed. *Romanticism: Points of View*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962, p. 52.

²⁰¹ Ibid, p. 53.

past, the present, and the future.”²⁰² It is by means of this diversitarianism that romanticism attacks idealism, as Albert Gerard puts it, as the “tyrannical *primacy* of reason.”²⁰³

The romantic search for diversity roots in two fundamental romantic beliefs. First, the early German romantics tend to respect the totality or wholeness of human faculties. It denotes that they attempt to respect the significance of all human faculties or activities. They treat human beings as organism in which every faculty is connected with the others and none of them should be made the master. Although the faculties have distinct characters and each has its own quite independent domain of employment, all faculties must cooperate to realize the purpose of the whole organism. Hence, human faculties, no matter sensibility or understanding, passion or reason, activity or passivity, should be respected and equally cultivated.

It is evident that Kant’s discussion on organized beings does make a great impact to his contemporaries and successors. For Kant, a thing can be regarded as a natural purpose if it is “both cause and effect of itself”²⁰⁴. This concept of purpose is distinct from the practical concept of purpose under which the events and actions are always caused by something external to them. An organized being is sustained by a principle of unity or wholeness, and in order to preserve the unity of the whole, the parts of an organism have to become cause and effect of each other reciprocally. Even if there are deficiencies in some parts, the other parts will compensate the inadequacies and maintain the unity of the whole. It means that all the parts of an

²⁰² Morse Peckham. “Toward a Theory of Romanticism” in Gleckner, Robert F. and Enscoe, Gerald E. ed. *Romanticism: Points of View*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962, p. 218.

²⁰³ Albert Gerard. “On the Logic of Romanticism.” in Gleckner, Robert F. and Enscoe, Gerald E. ed. *Romanticism: Points of View*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962, p. 234.

²⁰⁴ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*, Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987, p. 371.

organism have the power to produce and should not be neglected or overlooked. Kant's conception of organism became an important concept in the discourses of both the early German romantics and the German idealists. According to this concept, the early Schelling establishes his philosophy of nature which assigns the organic nature certain priority over the mechanistic nature. Even in Hegel's system there is still place for organism, and his definition of organism is almost the same as that of Kant.

Nevertheless, contrary to the early German romantics, Hegel never truly regards human beings as organism, and his system is never constructed according to the ideal of organism, for the final result of his system only leads to the subordination of the various faculties of reason into one and hence makes reflection or pure thinking the master of all human faculties and the whole system. Thus, Hegel's system is not like an organism which gives equal value and respect to the constitutive parts. Morse Peckham rightly points out that different from idealism, dynamic organism is the basic belief of romanticism which grounds the romantic diversitarianism: "Lovejoy stated that the three new ideas of romantic thought and art were organicism, dynamism, and diversitarianism. He says that they are three separate and inconsistent ideas. I agree that they often appear separately, but I am convinced that they are all related to and derived from a basic or root-metaphor, the organic metaphor of the structure of the universe."²⁰⁵ Although this is the conviction on romanticism in general, it is very useful for our discrimination between early German romanticism and German idealism.

²⁰⁵ Morse Peckham. "Toward a Theory of Romanticism" in Gleckner, Robert F. and Enscoe, Gerald E. ed. *Romanticism: Points of View*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962, p. 217.

Another basic romantic belief of the early German romantics which supports their search for diversity is the conviction of continuous enlargement of every individual's scope. According to the romantic ideal, one should be comprehensively cultivated. Since man is far from being comprehensively cultivated, the early German romantics extremely urge for something new and unknown. Thus, anything new, no matter how eccentric it is, is desirable for them. In order to search for something new, one has to connect oneself to the others with greatest variety. In this way, all of the human faculties are activated for being further cultivated. Based upon this fundamental conviction, the conclusion of the romantic discourses never leads to the dictatorship of particular viewpoints.

Contrary to this romantic belief, Hegel's system does not recognize the significance of all faculties and scopes, and hence does not truly facilitate exploration in all directions upon the completion of his system. Hegel thus faces the suspicion or criticism of the denial of any new development after his all-inclusive and complete system. In a word, many scholars challenge the arrogance and closeness of Hegel's system. I would not like to digress into this issue, but it should be noted that Hegel never denies that new things will actually arise after the completion of his system. For example, although he proclaims the dissolution of art in modernity, he never intends to deny the emergence of new works of art. Even though sense certainty is the first state superseded by the spirit, it does not mean that Hegel denies the existence of this state in human cognition after its being overcome. What he denies or disapproves is the *significance* instead of the existence of certain states or faculties of reason. Hence, the controversy between the early German romantics and Hegel does not lie in whether there will be new things or new events, but in whether the new things have equally indispensable significance.

For Hegel, the significance of anything new depends on which faculty it belongs to and the position of the faculty within the system. Thus some faculties for him are inferior, such as sensibility, but some are more superior, and the more inferior ones should be overcome and elevated since they as such do not have enough significance. Besides, Hegelian system seems to reduce everything including the new ones into its already established systematic and universal constitution. In this way, something new cannot be respected and preserved as new after the completion of Hegelian system. On the part of the early German romantics, their demand for diversity and novelty does correspond to their vocation to cross the boundaries of different disciplines, for the crossing of boundaries does not merely denote unification or fusion of the disciplines, but also destruction of the established constitutions and creation of new disciplines. Hence, the romantic search for diversity and novelty proceeds, as Schlegel suggests, in an incessant alternation of self-destruction and self-creation.

b) The Romantic and Idealistic Conceptions of Universality

After accounting for the romantic search for diversity, we soon find that the romantic concept of diversity does contain unification or synthesis, and hence diversity and unity are indeed not strictly opposing concepts for the early German romantics. They do not strive for mere diversity and scattered new things, instead, they are well aware that the ultimate destination of reason is back to the infinite, universal and absolute ground of the world and man can only approximate the destination by means of cultivating their lives with greatest variety. Novalis maintains that "the tendency to the universal is indispensable for the true scholar. But man must never seek something indeterminate—an ideal, like a fantast—a child of

fantasy. He must proceed only from one determinate task to another.”²⁰⁶ Exploring new things and taking part in more and different communities are not only matters of quantitative increase, but of qualitative enlargement and elevation, by means of which man can realize more connection and union with the others in the world. Thus, for the early German Romantics searching for diversity is simultaneously searching for union:

“Centripetal force is the synthetic striving of the spirit—centrifugal force the analytical striving of the spirit. Striving toward unity—striving towards diversity. Through the mutual determination of each by the other—that higher synthesis of unity and diversity itself will be produced—whereby one is in all and all in one.”²⁰⁷

Novalis’ conviction implies a peculiar romantic conception of universality, as brought out by Schlegel: “False universality is either theoretical or practical. The theoretical type is the universality of a bad lexicon, of a record office. The practical type originates in a totality of involvement.”²⁰⁸ Concerning universality in the genuine sense, it is “the successive satiation of all forms and substances. Universality can attain harmony only through the conjunction of poetry and philosophy...the life of the Universal Spirit is an unbroken chain of inner revolution; all individuals—that is, all original and eternal ones—live in him. He is a genuine polytheist and bears within himself all Olympus.”²⁰⁹ It is evident that the romantic concept of

²⁰⁶ Novalis. “Last Fragments 17.” in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 156.

²⁰⁷ Novalis. “Logological Fragments 40.” in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 79.

²⁰⁸ Schlegel Friedrich. “Athenaeum Fragments 447.” in *Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 92.

²⁰⁹ Schlegel Friedrich. “Athenaeum Fragments 451.” in *Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 93.

universality denotes the union of the individual and the universal attained by means of progressive elevation and enlargement of the former. Any philosophical doctrine which endows primacy to either cognition or action, or either the ideal or the real, is defective for the early German romantics. Not any one of them, but only the totality, is the master of the world. The romantic conception of totality is one full of concrete and individual contents, instead of being a mere abstract idea. Hence, totality for the early German romantics is both prior and posterior to experience and life. Concerning totality as the ideal or demand, it is prior to any experience; but concerning it as a real goal, it is posterior to life for it must be attained gradually through the cultivation of individual lives. Hence, Schlegel thinks that true scholars are ones who desire to reveal the universal or the absolute but at the same time remain as polytheists.

Hegel's system is also based on the enlargement and elevation of the spirit, and it is in his own terms a process advancing from abstract to concrete knowledge. However, the final result of his system is not the totality of the individual phases, but the pure manifestation of the absolute spirit which strips off all hybrid elements and experience. Hence, the individuals are not the true contents of the absolute or the totality, but only something being passed by and eliminated at last. They have significance only when the spirit is progressing toward the final destination, but once the system is completed they must retire from the last achievement. Hence, the universality Hegel finally arrives is not one that essentially includes individuality and diversity, but one that essentially supersedes the latter. Hence, the early German romantics tend to combine the concepts of diversity and unification, and for them true unification is the union of diverse and individual beings; whereas in Hegel there is a clear discrimination between diversity and unification, since for him the ultimate

unification is the predomination of one principle after long and complex struggle, instead of a genuine synthesis of the diverse and heterogeneous elements and beings. The above senses of unification are indeed familiar to most people: we always ideally acknowledge that unification should be the genuine integration of different elements with equal respect and significance, but in actual cases, such as political unification, the goal is always achieved by means of submission and subordination of some to one, either voluntarily or compulsorily.

C) The Discrepancy on the Possibility of the Fulfillment of the Primordial Demand Issued by Reason

a) The Romantic Conception of the Incompletion of the System

The above discrepancies between early German Romanticism and German Idealism indeed show their fundamental disagreement on the possibility of the fulfillment of reason's ultimate demand. Manfred Frank says that for Novalis "the formula of philosophy as a 'longing for the infinite' is thus an indication of philosophy's intrinsic openness (or the non-final nature of its claims)."²¹⁰ He thinks what the early German Romantics deny is the possibility of the complete realization of the Absolute by means of philosophy. Instead of reflection and philosophizing, only by feeling or faith can we grasp what is the original: "Feeling is rather the name for an ideal limiting case of consciousness on which we cannot count in an epistemic respect. That is, feeling is originally not a case of 'knowledge'... Thus, we have acknowledged a presupposition that cannot be questioned, that cannot be resolved

²¹⁰ Frank, Manfred. *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*. Trans. Elizabeth Millan Zaibert. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004, p. 174.

into knowledge, and without which philosophy cannot advance a single step."²¹¹ Since consciousness (including self-consciousness) and knowledge presuppose separation, for the early German Romantics philosophy in the limited sense is doomed to fail in searching for the undifferentiated ground and restoring the lost unity out of oppositions.

Does it mean that they propose another possible way to the final destination? Andrew Bowie further points out that "the Romantic conception of the unrepresentability of the absolute led to the idea that the work of art always points to its own incompleteness, while at the same time adverting to what is beyond it. This conception prefigures the characteristic sense in modernist art of a continual striving for something which is never really achieved, but which is the apparently inexhaustible motor of new aesthetic production."²¹² Not only do they deny philosophical or reflective access to the original ground and the totality of the world, but the significance of the works of art in presenting what reason demands for is also ultimately rejected. The necessary separation within reflection makes it impossible to express the original unity and the ultimate totality of the world, even though the romantics acknowledge art as the final destination or the highest discipline, it does not mean that they think art can completely fulfill the primordial demand of reason, as the role of philosophy or thinking in Hegel's system.

The early German romantic proposal is not one attempting to replace philosophy by poetry—in fact, the boundary between philosophy and poetry is intentionally blurred—but one which absolutely denies the possibility of the

²¹¹ Ibid, p. 171.

²¹² Bowie, Andrew, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003, p.122.

completion of reason's self-realization. The previous chapter has accounted for that romantic conviction of the unrepresentability of the Absolute. The unrepresentability is explicated mainly in two ways. First, if we attempt to grasp and intuit the original ground before separation, namely Being, it is absolutely impossible since our self-consciousness and all beings in the world are already products after Being's separation. The original non-separated Being is in essence what cannot appear. On the other hand, if we want to present the totality of the world within which every concrete individual is interconnected instead of the pure idea of totality without any concrete content, the only way is to investigate the empirical and individual objects one by one, which is indeed an infinite process without end. Hence, the early German romantics can only abandon the search for the original Being and devote themselves to the infinite process of realizing the totality of the world. Although this process is essentially without an end, at least there is progression if man can dedicate his life to it.

It is apparent that the above romantic beliefs are greatly consistent with that of Kant. Kant strictly limits the concepts of absolute and totality as regulative ideas, which are only indispensable postulates of human knowledge and action. They are pure concepts which cannot appear. Any attempt to investigate them and to derive a system from them should be denied. For the early German romantics Being or totality is only the never-attained ideal which is necessary for human struggle, cultivation and elevation. Hence, Manfred Frank claims that Novalis was on the path "toward a re-Kantianization of philosophy and away from the arrogation of claims to absolute knowledge put forth by Fichte and Schelling."²¹³ Andrew Bowie also puts

²¹³ Frank, Manfred. *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*. Trans. Elizabeth Millan Zaibert. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004, p. 175.

that “the early Romantics’ response to the question of absolute truth was precisely to make it a regulative idea which was a reminder of the finitude of our thought. This conception led them to link truth to art, because art manifested that reminder in a way which could always lead to new and unexpected insights, whereas systematic philosophy attempted to ‘foreclose’ something which, given our finitude, must necessarily remain open.”²¹⁴ Sharing with the same concern with the German idealists which attempt to unify the unnerving oppositions and separations, the early German romantics tend to recognize the tragic impossibility of the very mission and suggest the only empirical and endless way to approximate to the lofty ideal.

b) The Romantic Conception of Art as Reminder

Hence, for the early German romantics the significance of works of art does not lie in their complete unification of the oppositions and full revelation of totality, but in their own incompleteness and their nature of pointing beyond themselves. Schlegel maintains that “a work is cultivated when it is everywhere sharply delimited, but within those limits limitless and inexhaustible; when it is completely faithful to itself, entirely homogeneous and nonetheless exalted above itself.”²¹⁵ According to the nature of pointing beyond itself, genuine works of art can further motivate and inspire new and original productions *ad infinitum*. It is evident that this romantic conception of artworks inherits much from Kant’s determination of aesthetic idea as something which expands the concepts in an unlimited way and prompts further activities of various human faculties.

²¹⁴ Bowie, Andrew, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 143.

²¹⁵ Schlegel Friedrich. “Athenaeum Fragments 297.” in *Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 59

Concerning the nature of works of art, although the early German romantics acknowledge that the works of art can attain the unification and harmony of the real and the ideal, the individual and the universal, they never think that any one of genuine works of art can reveal the ultimate unification once and for all. Instead, different works of art only contribute to limited unification and point toward a fuller one beyond themselves. Schlegel remarks that "the romantic kind of poetry is still in the state of becoming; that, in fact, is its real essence: that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected...It alone is infinite, just as it alone is free...in a certain sense all poetry is or should be romantic."²¹⁶ Thus, the early German romantics all along hold the view expressed in Hölderlin's 'Judgment and Being', 'On the Law of Freedom' and 'On the Concept of Punishment', in which the main idea is that the infinite can only announce itself *negatively* through the incompleteness and insufficiency of every particular and finite being. The latter is only at most a *reminder* of Being, and besides reminder there is no alternative way to grasp Being.

Art is among the various beings the most powerful reminder. In Schelling and Hegel's discussion, ancient art, mainly the Greek art, is the perfect manifestation of the ideal of beauty, which completely reveals the union and harmony between the real and the ideal. Schelling's distinction between the symbolic and allegory to a large extent corresponds to the nature of ancient and modern (romantic) arts, in which the former is the perfect unification of the real and the ideal, whereas the latter is the struggle of the finite to go beyond itself toward the infinite. Similarly, Hegel also thinks that classical art, the genuine presentation of the ideal of beauty,

²¹⁶ Schlegel Friedrich. "Athenaeum Fragments 116." in *Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 32.

expresses the interpenetration of the sensuous and the spiritual whereas romantic art shows the disintegration of the unification in which the sensuous element loses its own significance and becomes a means to present the inner spirit. Both agree that ancient art is finished and limited whereas the modern or romantic art is unlimited but incomplete. The major difference is that Schelling thinks that the ancient art is the model for *all* works of art including the modern art, but Hegel maintains that although classical art represents the golden age of art, it belongs only to the past and has no significance to the future development of art. The romantic art, even though it is by nature incomplete, indeed contributes to the progression toward the final destination of reason. Concerning this issue, the early German romantics are indeed in agreement with Hegel. Novalis thinks that “the antiquities are at once *products of the future and of times past*. Goethe contemplates nature like an antiquity—character of antiquity—the antiquities are from another world. They are as if fallen from heaven...The antiquities do not touch one but all senses, the whole human essence.”²¹⁷ Although the antiquities perfectly express the totality of the world and the essence of human beings, they belong to the times past or to another world which are not the products of this modern world, in which man has to struggle against the state of separation and opposition.

Since there is no longer complete union in the works of romantic or modern art, and they always point toward the infinite beyond themselves, for Schelling and the romantics these works are by nature allegorical. Andrew Bowie recognizes a similarity between this allegorical nature of modern art and Kant’s conception of the sublime: “Allegory points beyond itself and it is therefore not, as a symbol is, a

²¹⁷ Novalis. “General Draft 3.” in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, pp. 122-123.

sensuous embodiment of what it means. In this respect allegory is analogous to Kant's sublime."²¹⁸ The allegorical nature of works of art indicates that art cannot completely present the Absolute and totality within itself, or the sensuous and finite elements can no longer sufficiently present the meaning of the works. The meaning of the works lies in somewhere out of the concrete and finite works, Thus, works of art can only act as a reminder and express the Absolute negatively by means of its own incapability. Regarding this structure which presents the Absolute negatively, there is indeed correspondence between romantic conception of allegory and Kant's conception of the sublime, since both of them maintain that the infinite or the supersensible is only indicated by means of the inability of the sensibility to represent its object.

However, Bowie's linkage of the romantic concept of allegory and Kant's sublime omits a crucial discrepancy between them. In the judgment of the sublime the sensibility exhibits its limitedness and incapability, and the feeling of the sublime arises by means of negating and abandoning sensibility. In contrast with the unification and harmony between the cognitive faculties presented in the beautiful objects, what the sublime expresses is the opposition between the heterogeneous faculties. As a result, sensibility cannot gain any respect and positive significance for its own sake within this kind of judgment. It is apparent that the crucial romantic insight into equal respect for all faculties including the sensibility is contrary to Kant's conception of the sublime. Bowie's linking of the romantic allegory with the Kantian sublime seems to imply that the allegorical works of art are themselves entirely incapable of presenting the Absolute or the totality. However, for the early

²¹⁸ Bowie, Andrew, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 64.

German romantics, not only art, but everything or every activity is incapable of presenting the Absolute, or can present it negatively at the most. It turns out that if we entirely accept the correspondence between romantic allegory and Kantian concept of the sublime suggested by Bowie, the difference of art from and its superiority to other activities such as science, morality and philosophy cannot be justified. Hence, it must be the case that for the early German romantics the works of art can *in a certain degree* within themselves reveal the unification and harmony between the real and the ideal, or the finite and the infinite, and they can further inspire and activate the genius to create and recognize the union in other concrete beings or in a more comprehensive way. Thus, the romantic allegory should better be considered as a combination of the beautiful and the sublime, rather than as the latter alone.

c) The Idealistic Conception of the Completion of the System

On the part of Hegel, to seek for the completion of the system of philosophy is his very task. As an idealist, when encountering the opposition between inner mind and the external world, Hegel definitely intends to explain or determinate the latter according to the former. He attempts to articulate the structure and significance of experience *completely* in terms of the structure of thinking. Thus, thinking is posited as the foundation of everything external and sensuous. What is unique in Hegel's terminology in contrast to that of his idealistic companions is that only he identifies the Absolute or the ultimate ground with the Notion (or the Concept). For Hegel, things and events in the natural and spiritual worlds are only different determinations or moments of the Notion or thinking:

“the Notion, simply as thought, as a universal, is the immeasurable abbreviation of the multitudes of particular things which are vaguely present to intuition and pictorial thought; but also a Notion is, first, in its own self *the* Notion, and this is only one and is the substantial foundation; secondly, a Notion is *determinate* and it is this determinateness in it which appears as content; but the determinateness of the Notion is a specific form of this substantial oneness, a moment of the form as totality, of *that same Notion* which is the foundation of the specific Notion. This Notion is not sensuously intuited or represented; it is solely an object, a product and content of *thinking*, and is the absolute, self-subsistent object.”²¹⁹

For Hegel the real and the external are not in essence real and external, but only specific determinations of the absolute spirit or thinking. The task of his system is to make this ultimate truth apparent and to eliminate all illusions and misunderstanding. The illusions emerge in the states of immediacy and indeterminacy, that is, the states in which the spirit has not yet fully realized itself. Hence, in order to attain the truth the spirit must proceed to know itself. For Hegel the foundation and the first principle of philosophy must be thinking, and only by means of speculation and reflection can the philosophical system be genuinely established.

Accordingly, what Fichte, Schelling and the early German romantics call intellectual intuition is for him only something immediate and indeterminate. Instead of being the first principle of philosophy, it should rather be overcome first:

²¹⁹ Hegel, G. W. F.. *Hegel's Science of Logic*. Trans. A. V. Miller. New York: Humanity Books, 1998, p. 39.

“Philosophy, if it would be science, cannot, as I have remarked elsewhere, borrow its method from a subordinate science like mathematics, any more than it can remain satisfied with categorical assurances of inner intuition, or employ arguments based on grounds adduced by external reflection. On the contrary, it can be only the nature of the content itself which spontaneously develops itself in a scientific method of knowing, since it is at the same time the reflection of the content itself which first posits and *generates* its determinate character.”²²⁰

What Hegel's system intends to overcome and eliminate is immediacy and indeterminateness in whatever senses. What is sensuous, external, individual and finite should be restored to the underlying structure of thinking. Thus, within the Hegelian system, individuality and sensibility *as such* cannot gain any significance and respect like that in early German romanticism, the sensuous as sensuous or the individual as individual is only illusion and misunderstanding resulting from the Notion's unconsciousness and incomplete realization of itself, which is precisely what has to be overcome in the system of philosophy. Furthermore, the directness and immediacy of intuition (including the intellectual one) are precisely the reason for Hegel's rejection of any intuition as the basis of thinking and reflection. Instead, this is only the undeveloped moment of thought, as the Notion has not been conscious of its own specific determination within what is called intuition, no matter the sensible or intellectual one. Intellectual intuition is for Schelling and the romantics something mysterious and incomprehensible, like the concept of the genius. However, as the target of the Hegelian system is to articulate the essence of every kind of being, everything mysterious and incomprehensible should be

²²⁰ Ibid, p. 27.

overcome and becomes comprehensible.

d) Immanency and Necessity in Idealistic System

It is evident that what Hegel desires to establish is a monistic system with one absolute principle which can eliminate the problems brought forth by dualism. In fact, it is the intense demand of reason for unity underscored by Kant that sustains the search for a monistic system. A coherent monistic system with strong appeal should be an immanent one: "This spiritual movement which, in its simple undifferentiatedness, gives itself its own determinateness and in its determinateness its equality with itself, which therefore is the immanent development of the Notion, this movement is the absolute method of knowing and at the same time is the immanent soul of the content itself."²²¹ Only an immanent system can truly leave room for the concepts of absolute, unity and totality, since there is nothing outside of it. Dualism necessarily presupposes separation and opposition, and hence the concepts of absolute, unity and totality cannot be justified. More importantly, the immanency guarantees another important requirement of the system: necessity.

Hegel attempts to build up a system in which every content and every stage is necessary. It implies what the German idealists ultimately hope for, i.e., everything in my mind and in the world can be grasped and there is no seat for anything unknown, mystical, contingent and doubtful. Therefore, the necessity of the genesis and the development of the system guarantee its completeness and exhaustiveness. If we treat early German romanticism as a counter-balance of the Enlightenment, German idealism, in this sense, is what succeeds to the ideal of the Enlightenment,

²²¹ Ibid, p. 28.

i.e., everything can be understood and cognized. Of course Hegel makes subtler distinction between understanding and reason, ordinary cognition and speculation, but the ultimate demand and the final destination of his system do echo with the basic position of the Enlightenment which upholds rationality at the expense of sensibility, intuition, imagination and feeling.

If the Hegelian system acquires immanency and necessity, there is no doubt that it can be completed. And only when thinking is made the first principle or ultimate foundation of the system can the latter acquire immanency and necessity. It is immanent since the external world has been engulfed into the Absolute. Hegel's science of logic constitutes the essential part of his whole system which includes two concrete sciences, philosophy of nature and philosophy of spirit. The science of logic is for Hegel the investigation of the categories of the concrete objects without any concern about the concrete objects *as such*. It only investigates the thought as thought in their complete abstraction and examines the existence and the genuine essence of the reality by means of and in terms of reflection or thinking. Hence, the Hegelian system presents a wholly inner world and accordingly an immanent world. With regard to necessity, the Hegelian system pursues a kind of necessity which does not allow anything unknown. What is contingent or accidental denotes something about which we do not fully know, or something still immediate and indeterminate. If there exists at bottom only thinking, everything thus becomes in principle within control. And since it is possible for thinking to investigate itself fully and exhaustively, it can at last eliminate contingency and make all of its moments necessary and determinate when it comes to a complete realization of itself.

The early German romantics have the same goal as Hegel, i.e., to establish a

monistic world out of separation and opposition. A genuine monistic world must be an immanent one. If there is anything external to or outside of a world, there must be at least two heterogeneous worlds and a monistic world thus becomes absolutely impossible. Hence, the romantics also insist upon the immanency of the whole world. However, what they signify by the concept of immanent world is not one limited within the sphere of spirit or thinking, but one including the reality or the external world *as such*, for the first principle for the romantics is not thinking, but Being, the primordial origin and union of thinking and reality. Since thinking is only one part of the whole immanent world, incomprehensible things always exist. Hence, contingency, accident and mystery do have their positions within the romantic worldview. Since thinking is not the only constituent of the world and is only something derived from Being, the existence of contingency, accident and mystery can never be eliminated. It is evident that different from Hegel, what the romantics insist is an immanent but not a necessary world.

For Hegel the entire structure of thinking and the genuine foundation of the whole system can only be revealed at the last moment of the system: "Logic, on the contrary, cannot presuppose any of these forms of reflection and laws of thinking [of that of ordinary sciences], for these constitute part of its own content and have first to be established within the science. But not only the account of scientific method, but even the Notion itself of the science as such belongs to its content, and in fact constitutes its final result; what logic is cannot be stated beforehand, rather does this knowledge of what it is first emerge as the final outcome and consummation of the whole exposition.²²²". Instead of being intuited and postulated at the beginning of the system, the entire power and the genuine position of the Notion itself can only be

²²² Ibid, p. 43.

presented and articulated at the last moment, since the Notion can realize itself only by means of overcoming its previous ignorance and errors, a negation of the negative, according to the necessary development of the system..

For the early German romantics the situation is entirely different. The concept of Being, the pure ground of thinking and reality, is postulated at the very outset of philosophical consideration, or it is something unconsciously presupposed by every conscious activity. If the common task of early German romanticism and German idealism is to realize the complete unity of separation and opposition, this unity is for the romantics only the very beginning and is lost forever in thinking and reality. Man can only strive to approximate to the unity, but is doomed to fail in a complete presentation of it. Hence, the romantic project is never-ended. In contrast, Hegel intends to disclose the fact that what appear to be separated and opposing are indeed mere different determinations of one principle, namely thinking.

After accounting for the crucial discrepancies between early German romanticism and German idealism, the philosophical position of early Schelling especially in his philosophy of art and the question of Schelling's transition from romanticism to idealism can be investigated in the following chapters.

Addendum: On 'The Oldest System-Program of German Idealism'

I would like to argue that the oldest system program of German idealism is indeed basically a position maintained by early German romanticism, and it reflects the intermingling of early German romanticism and German idealism.

After Franz Rosenzweig's discovery of this long forgotten document in Hegel's handwriting in the Berlin *Königlichen Bibliothek* in 1913 and his publishing of this fragment in 1917, many controversies arose and among which the authorship of the fragment became a focus of discussions. Rosenzweig himself alleges that the true author is Schelling rather than Hegel. In line with Rosenzweig, Ludwig Strauss thinks that the author is Schelling under Hölderlin's influence. However, Wilhelm Böhm challenges the view of Rosenzweig and claims that the author should be Hölderlin. Otto Pöggeler and later Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert rather defend Hegel's authorship of the fragment. They justify their views mainly by means of two kinds of evidence: one is the thought of the philosophers expressed in their works; the other is based on the life history of the philosophers.

Within this fragment there are crucial views which are remarkably incompatible with the basic belief of German idealists, especially Hegel. The fragment claims that "poetry achieves a higher dignity, she becomes again in the end what she was in the beginning—*teacher of humanity*; for there no longer exists any philosophy, any history; poetry alone will survive all other sciences and arts"²²³ It is evident that only the early German romantics and early Schelling endow such superiority to art

²²³ 'The Oldest System-Programme of German Idealism' in Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 155.

over philosophy as the final destination of reason. Hegel, on the contrary, must not approve such kind of view, since for him the final destination of the absolute spirit must be philosophy and the significance of art belonged only to the past. Hence, it is impossible for Hegel to agree with that contention: “the highest act of reason, which—in that it comprises all ideas—is an aesthetic act, and that *truth and goodness* are united as sisters *only in beauty*...Philosophy of the spirit is an aesthetic philosophy.”²²⁴ For Hegel the idea of beauty did play a role in the union of all ideas, but it happened only in the past when the spirit was still confined within intense immediacy and indeterminateness. However, the moment should be overcome by modernity and philosophy.

Hence, the program’s proposal of a new mythology, which attempts to combine ideas and senses, and aims at the “equal cultivation of all powers of the individual as well as of all individuals”²²⁵, is definitely rejected by Hegel. The oldest system program demands that no power should be suppressed and all powers should gain their own freedom and significance. However, within Hegel’s system, the various powers are ultimately suppressed by and subordinated to one power—thinking or reflection. According to the discrepancies between early German romanticism and German idealism articulated above, the main ideas and the final demand of the oldest system program are indeed romantic instead of idealistic. Hence, the declaration of Hegel’s authorship of this fragment is largely suspicious.

The idea in the fragment which can be treated as idealistic is mainly expressed in the following statement: “The first idea, of course, is the representation of myself

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid, p. 156.

as an absolutely free being. Simultaneously with the free, self-conscious being, there emerges an entire world—from out of nothing—the only true and conceivable creation *out of nothing*.”²²⁶ It seems that the fragment intends to derive the existence and essence of the world from an absolutely free being which seems to be something ideal, inner and subjective. It is indeed a general approach shared by Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. However, the determination of the absolutely free and self-conscious being is not without crucial differences between them, among which the determination of intellectual intuition is a notable point of divergence. This fragment has not implied whether the absolutely free being is essentially thinking or intellectual intuition, thus it is undetermined whether it consists with the thought of Hegel or Schelling. Since Schelling’s intellectual identity as an early German romantic or a German idealist is still a problem, and Hegel is the best representative of German idealism, it is necessary to discriminate with whom the idea at issue consists if we want to justify whether or not this fragment is an idealistic one. But since it is indeterminate with whom the idea at issue consists, we can see this idea as one shared by the early German romantics and the German idealists. Although the early German romantics seldom theoretically explain the existence of the world in terms of the one free spirit, they do have some relevant insight into it: Novalis puts that “actuality in all true arts one idea—one spirit—is realized, is produced from within—the world of spirits. For the eye it is the visible world a priori—for the ear the audible world a priori—for the moral organ the moral world a priori—for the organ of thought the conceivable world a priori and so on. All these worlds are only different expressions of different tools of one spirit and its world.”²²⁷ For Novalis, the emergence of the world from the one free spirit is due to the spirit’s demand for

²²⁶ Ibid, p. 154.

²²⁷ Novalis. “Logological Fragments II 19.” in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 73.

self-understanding: "In this way one understands the self only in so far as it is represented by the nonself. The nonself is the symbol of the self and serves only for the self-understanding of the self. Conversely, one understands the nonself only in so far as it is represented by the self and as this becomes its symbol."²²⁸ It is clear that for Novalis the nonself is founded on the essence and demand of the self.

On the part of Schlegel, creative philosophy is for him what "originates in freedom and belief in freedom, and show how the human spirit impresses it law on all things and how the world is its world of art."²²⁹ He maintains that the world is created as a work of art by the spirit, hence, the early German romantics are not concerned about the emergence and essence of the mechanistic world, but about an organic one. Therefore they claim, "Ideals that seem unattainable to themselves are for that reason not ideals but mathematical phantoms of a merely mechanical mind...and only a perfect mind could conceive of ideals organically."²³⁰ This organic view towards the world leads to the criticism of natural science especially physics in the following fragment: "I would like to once again lend wings to our slow physics which has been moving so laboriously by way of experimentation...it does not seem that present physics can satisfy a creative spirit as ours is or should be."²³¹ I do not intend to argue that these seemingly idealistic ideas about the emergence of the organic world from the free and creative spirit are at bottom romantic claims. Rather, they are instead the ideas shared by early German romanticism and German idealism.

²²⁸ Novalis. "General Draft 1." in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 121.

²²⁹ Schlegel Friedrich. "Athenaeum Fragments 168." in *Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 39.

²³⁰ Schlegel Friedrich. "Athenaeum Fragments 412." in *Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 83.

²³¹ 'The Oldest System-Programme of German Idealism' in Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 154.

Other important ideas in the fragment such as the freedom and divinity of human spirits are also the common ideas of the early German romantics and the German idealists, which do not help to determinate the stance and authorship of the fragment.

Therefore, based on the remarkable romantic contention on the superiority of art, the romantic demand for equal cultivation of and respect for all human powers, and the indeterminateness of the initiator of the other main contention in the fragment, this oldest system program of German idealism is more likely a romantic proposal. In fact, for the early German romantics even the distinction between romanticism and idealism is never clear-cut, for example, Novalis calls his romanticism “magical idealism”:

“An empiricist is: one whose way of thinking is an effect of the external world and of fate—the passive thinker—to whom his philosophy is given. Voltaire is a pure empiricist and so are several French philosophers—Ligne tends imperceptibly to the transcendent empiricists. These make the transition to the dogmatists. From there the way leads to the enthusiasts—or the transcendent dogmatists—then to Kant—then to Fichte—and finally to magical idealism.”²³²

Accordingly, Hegel’s authorship of this fragment is the most implausible. Since Schelling’s identity or position as a German idealist is still in question, both of his authorship and Hölderlin’s of this fragment are possible.

²³² Novalis. “Teplitz Fragments 33.” in *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 107.

The fragment is indeed an appropriate exhibition of the intermingling of early German romanticism and German idealism. Similarly, Schelling's thought also exhibits to a large extent such kind of intermingling, according to our following investigation.

Chapter Seven: Schelling—Consistent or Capricious?

(I) The General Interpretation of Schelling's Intellectual Position

The German idealists, especially Schelling and Hegel, research into various topics within a system throughout their lives. Unlike Hegel, who is known as an encyclopedic philosopher, Schelling is always regarded as a capricious thinker. Most scholars and readers recognize that Hegel integrates all of his topics—such as that on mind, on logic, on art, on right, on history—under one extensive system. However, the general impression on Schelling so far is quite the contrary. Many readers find that his thought is confused and ever in the process of changing. It is obvious that the researches into Schelling are far more sterile than that on Hegel, especially beyond the German speaking world. Schelling thus is like being covered by a mysterious veil, and his thought seems to be uncanny and obscure. Concerning this situation, Andrew Bowie notes that “attitudes to Schelling’s philosophy can usually be gauged by seeing whether the commentator or critic thinks that Schelling has a fundamental philosophical idea or that he is a Proteus capable of flashes of insight but incapable of a sustained philosophical project. The degree of admiration or hostility will depend on this judgment.”²³³ Similarly, Dale Snow describes that “Schelling is often read as something of a philosophical chameleon, defending a position only to quickly abandon it for another, and then another. In other words, he is read as offering a succession of unsatisfactory attempts to provide a system comparable in scope to the systems of Hegel or Schopenhauer.”²³⁴

²³³ Bowie, Andrew. *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: an Introduction*. London, New York: Routledge, 1993, p. 12.

²³⁴ Snow, Dale E.. *Schelling and the End of Idealism*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 2.

Counteracting the above general impression on Schelling's thought, both scholars attempt to expose the fundamental and consistent project of Schelling. Snow argues that in Schelling's thought there is "a fundamental tension that pervades all of Schelling's writings, that serves as the impetus for bringing into question the possibility of metaphysics."²³⁵ Bowie also puts that in Schelling's attempts "there is a sense in which he can be said to pursue one fundamental project, albeit one that might initially seem so general as to be meaningless. Manfred Frank talks of the 'Schellingian fundamental thought, according to which being or absolute identity is irreducible to the happening of reflection.'"²³⁶

Nevertheless, Bowie still acknowledges the transitions within Schelling's thinking even though he recognizes the one fundamental project of Schelling. In fact, his interpretation of Schelling's thought is more or less affected by the standard periodization of Schelling's philosophy. Schelling's philosophy is generally divided into three periods. The publishing of *System of Transcendental Idealism* is often regarded as the end of Schelling's early thought. Hence, the philosophy of nature and transcendental idealism are the most important doctrines of his early philosophy. The period from 1801 to 1808, in which Schelling mainly focuses on the problem of identity, is regarded as the middle phase of his philosophy, or the period of his philosophy of identity. From 1809 onwards, after the publishing of the *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*, Schelling is regarded as in his late period which is concerned more with freedom, with the dark side of the origin of existence, and with revelation. There may be various versions of the division of

²³⁵ Ibid, p. 3.

²³⁶ Bowie, Andrew. *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: an Introduction*. London, New York: Routledge, 1993, p. 12.

Schelling's phases of thought. Deng An-qing, for example, places transcendental idealism into philosophy of identity, and thus philosophy of nature alone becomes the important doctrine of Schelling's early thought.²³⁷ No matter how the boundaries of the different phases are defined, a threefold division of Schelling's thought is up to now the most widespread description of his philosophy.

Bowie's interpretation of and comment on Schelling are apparently based on the above periodization. Although the threefold division does not necessarily entail that Schelling's philosophy is always in transition, it indeed leads to such an impression and conviction. In fact, many scholars who maintain such kind of periodization of Schelling's thought are convinced that there are apparent and important transitions in Schelling's philosophy. The most problematic phase is the middle one, which is the nucleus of the transitions in Schelling's philosophy. Many scholars, including Manfred Frank, Andrew Bowie and Antoon Braeckman, think that the philosophy of identity displays the most idealistic dimension of Schelling's thought and shows apparent discrepancy with his early and late thought. Nature and art no longer play any important role in the philosophy of identity, but only the Absolute and philosophy are questioned about. This changing of concern easily suggests an affinity between Schelling's philosophy of identity and Hegel's logic, since both seem to focus on thinking alone, and intend to reconstruct the whole world in terms of the activity of the absolute thinking spirit. Thus, most scholars find in Schelling's philosophy of identity discernible divergence from his early and late thought so that two major transitions in Schelling are recognized: one is that from his early thought to the philosophy of identity, the other is that from the philosophy of identity to his late thought. Many scholars also recognize that the early and late thought of

²³⁷ see 鄧安慶：《謝林》，台北：東大圖書公司，1995。

Schelling are in many ways similar, so some even think that the second transition is one returning to the concern of the early period.

Since Schelling's discourses on art are concentrated in his early and middle thought, the so-called second transition will not be discussed in this dissertation. Regarding the first transition, Antoon Braeckman describes it as a transition from "romantic idealism" to "absolute idealism"²³⁸. In fact, he has not explained his terminology, and his terms are somehow ambiguous. I think by the word "idealism" he designates the post-Kantian current of thought which aims at reconciling or unifying the dualism left by Kant. The two major approaches in completing this task are shown in the Early German romanticism (romanticism) and the German idealism (idealism). I think the former corresponds to Braeckman's "romantic idealism" whereas the latter comports with his "absolute idealism". Instead of "romantic idealism" and "absolute idealism", other scholars rather distinguish the discriminative romantic and idealistic elements in Schelling's philosophy, and if there is any transition in his philosophy, the transition should in the first place be considered as one from romanticism to idealism, which is easier to comprehend than that from "romantic idealism" to "absolute idealism".

Therefore, in order to examine Schelling's transition from romanticism in his early thought to idealism in his philosophy of identity, and hence to make apparent the significance of art in Schelling's philosophy, two questions have to be considered. The first question is whether Schelling is a capricious thinker, who always changes his mind and does not sustain any consistent or fundamental concern and contention.

²³⁸ See Braeckman, Antoon. 'From the Work of Art to Absolute Reason: Schelling's Journey toward Absolute Idealism'. *Review of Metaphysics* 57(2004): 551-569

If the answer is affirmative, then there arises the second question: what is the transition between his early and middle thought and how can we make sense of it?

Concerning the second question, the meaning of “transition” must first be clarified. There are indeed two possibilities. “Transition” can indicate mere change without any connection and relationship between the antecedent and subsequent states, the subsequent state being an entire abandoning of the antecedent. Besides, “transition” can denote another kind of change in which the substantial element is preserved no matter how many changes occur between the states. In this way, “transition” becomes similar to “development”. There are indeed significant discrepancies between these two meanings, and the most important one is that the latter shows continuity and identity whereas the former does not. Regarding the thesis of Schelling’s transition between romanticism and idealism, many scholars consider “transition” to designate mere change if they maintain that Schelling is a capricious thinker. Therefore, the meaning of the above thesis is that: Schelling in his early thought was likely a German romanticist, showing remarkable and strong inclination to romanticism and criticism of modernity and rationalism, but for some reason he abandoned his romantic thought and threw himself to German idealism in his later proposal of philosophy of identity. This thesis does imply the prevalence of inconsistency, discontinuity and disunity in Schelling’s philosophy, and supports the contention that Schelling is a capricious thinker.

Many scholars, with few exceptions, maintain or incline to maintain the thesis of Schelling’s transition from romanticism to idealism without thematically providing any sufficient or good reason for this transition in order to make sense of this change. Antoon Braeckman is one of those rare ones who directly and

thematically confront the question of the explanation of Schelling's first transition. However, in order to explain the "sudden change", he attempts to argue that there is a remarkable affinity between the romantic concept of the work of art in *System of Transcendental Idealism* and the concept of absolute reason articulated in *Darstellung des Systems meiner Philosophie* in 1801. Braeckman claims that the *Darstellung* "introduces aesthetic concept of absolute reason"²³⁹, which marks the decisive shift from romanticism to idealism. Furthermore, for Braeckman the introduction of "aesthetic concept of absolute reason" is an "internalization of work of art" in Schelling's identity philosophy. Hence, the positions of Schelling's early thought and his philosophy of identity are not mutually exclusive and without relation. In showing the relation of the two positions, Braeckman argues that, first, the romantic view of Schelling on art is included in the idealistic one; second, both of the two views have a common structure and a common function.

With regard to the first argument, Braeckman claims that the external aesthetic intuition of the *System of Transcendental Idealism* is later internalized and replaced by a complex intuition within knowledge itself. It implies that reason in philosophy of identity is the combination of intellectual and aesthetic intuition: "in the *Darstellung*, the intuition of reason thus seems to combine the distinctive functions of the intellectual and the aesthetic intuitions of the transcendental system."²⁴⁰ However, it should be noted that the "internalization of works of art" is indeed a contradictory concept. The works of art must be finite and sensible beings, or they essentially exhibit through sensuous elements. The specific nature of works of art is that they can reveal the infinite and Absolute within finite and sensible beings. If

²³⁹ Ibid, p. 553.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 560.

“internalization of works of art” means to internalize the sensuous element of works of art, it does make no difference from canceling the works of art at all. Braeckman’s conception of reason is indeed entirely an internal mental power, thus it itself does not include any sensuous element, for what is sensuous must be something external. It follows that Braeckman’s conception of reason, the only way to reveal the Absolute, as the combination of intellectual and aesthetic intuition becomes impossible, since within his discourse there is inner contradiction between art and reason. Hence, Braeckman fails to support his contention that the romantic view of Schelling on art is included in his idealistic position in philosophy of identity.

Regarding the common structure and a common function between art and reason, Braeckman points out that in both spheres there is identity of subjectivity and objectivity. Both art and reason reveal “a kind of knowledge” that supersedes reflection. The difference between philosophy and art only lies in the domains in which they produce. I agree with Braeckman that art and philosophy (or reason) do share this common structure and function, yet this does not help in understanding Schelling’s changing of position from romanticism to idealism. Rather, what it supports is the opposite view, namely, the view that Schelling was a consistent thinker, the transition is a development within a consistent project, instead of being a sudden and mere change which subverts the previous position. In fact, Braeckman’s approach to the problem is at the outset questionable, for instead of giving an explanation of the sudden change, that is, explaining why Schelling abandoned his early romantic thought, what Braeckman attempts to expose is that the change is not sudden and entire, that is, there is connection and development instead of mere abandoning and change between Schelling’s early and middle thought.

Unlike Braeckman, who intends to expose the affinity between Schelling's romantic thought and his philosophy of identity, Richard Velkley instead attempts to explain why the view on art and philosophy in *System of Transcendental Idealism* was given up by Schelling shortly just after its publication. For Velkley, it is the sheer contingency and the ephemeral character of art that leads to its failure in sustaining its role as the organ of system of philosophy. It is because genuine works of art must be produced by genius, but genius cannot be learned and is only a gift bestowed by an unknown force. Therefore, genius is not guaranteed, and hence, the completion of philosophical system based on art cannot also be guaranteed. Thus Velkley claims that "the true goal of the philosophical system is to universalize intellectual intuition in the form of a philosophical religion, or in a symbolic embodiment of the highest ideas. Clearly Schelling aims through the philosophy of art to prepare the ground for such a religion, which replaces both revelation in dogmatic theology and the purely rational faith of critical (Kantian) theology."²⁴¹ Thus, the shift of view on the roles of art and philosophy in Schelling's philosophy of identity can be regarded as the dissatisfaction with the contingency of art and the attempt to ground the system of philosophy on an absolute, universal, eternal and necessary principle. In this way, the concern with religion, revelation and mythology in Schelling's later thought can be seen as the return to or reaffirmation of the contingency of existence. In order to examine the validity of Velkley's suggestion, we have to investigate in the following pages whether Schelling's philosophy of identity excludes contingency.

In this chapter, I intend to argue for the unity and consistency of Schelling's philosophy, and hence reject the thesis of his transition from romanticism to idealism

²⁴¹ Velkley, Richard L. "Realizing Nature in the Self: Schelling on Art and Intellectual Intuition in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*". *Figuring the Self: Subject, Absolute, and Others in Classical German Philosophy*. Eds. David E. Klemm and Günter Zöllner. Albany: Suny Press, 1997, p. 159.

and the general impression on Schelling as a capricious thinker. It should be noted that the examination of Schelling's transition from romanticism to idealism, or of the consistency of Schelling's philosophy, are indeed closely related to the subject matter of this dissertation, for Schelling's contentions on the significance of art and on the relation between art and philosophy (or reason) within his early and middle thoughts are the most crucial elements which contribute to inconsistency and transition of his philosophy, if there is really such kind of change. In order to defend the consistency of Schelling's philosophy and to reject the thesis of his transition from romanticism to idealism, three aspects of his thought will be discussed in this chapter. The first one is the consistency of Schelling's view on art and that on the relation between art and philosophy in his early and middle thoughts, which is a narrower but the key problem on the issue of transition. In what follows the opinion on the consistency and unity of Schelling's philosophy maintained by Schelling himself in his late period will be exhibited. Finally, in order to show the essential compatibility of Schelling's early and middle thoughts, an elaboration of the fundamental and unique concern of Schelling throughout his life will be embarked upon.

(II) The Consistency of Schelling's position on Art and Philosophy in his Early and Middle Thought

Schelling's views on art and on the relation between art and philosophy are mainly included in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800) and *Philosophy of Art* (1802-03). Besides, some important insights about the topics are also included in *Bruno* (1803) and the speech "Concerning the Relation of the Plastic Arts to Nature" which was released in 1807.

A) Basic Position in *Philosophy of Art*

a) General Interpretation of the Basic Position in *Philosophy of Art*

It is remarkable that at the end of *System of Transcendental Idealism*, Schelling claims that art is the eternal doctrine and organ of philosophy, and the Self is fully revealed and intuited through the works of art, which marks the final destination of the self-intuition of the Self or of the objectification of intellectual intuition. At this very end of the system art is revealed as the very origin and final destination of philosophy and sciences. He maintains that philosophy was born and nourished by poetry, and the future development of sciences is to return back to poetry, like the individual streams flowing back to the ocean.²⁴² It is evident that at this time Schelling places art higher than philosophy regarding their significance and primordially within his system.

In his *Philosophy of Art*, the status of art and philosophy maintained in *System of Transcendental Idealism* seems to be overturned, and there is indeed evidence for this overturning:

“Insofar as the ideal is always a higher reflex of the real, the philosopher necessarily possesses an even higher ideal reflex of that which in the artist is real. This indicates not only in a larger sense that art can become the object of knowledge in philosophy, but more specifically that outside of philosophy and other than through philosophy, nothing can be known about art in an absolute fashion.”²⁴³

²⁴² See Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Trans. Peter Heath. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978, p. 232.

²⁴³ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *The Philosophy of Art*. Trans. Douglas W. Stott. Minneapolis:

Concerning the significance of philosophy, Schelling claims that philosophy, instead of art, is the ultimate foundation of all knowledge:

“Philosophy is the basis of everything, encompasses everything, and extends its constructions to all potences and objects of knowledge. Only through it does one have access to the highest. By means of the doctrine of art an even smaller circle is formed within philosophy itself, one in which we view more immediately the eternal in a visible form.”²⁴⁴

Hence, “philosophy is the immediate or direct representation of the divine, whereas art immediately or directly only the representation of indifference as such.”²⁴⁵ It seems that art no longer has the power to reveal the ultimate ground or the first principle, and philosophy of art is a science which discards the superiority of art over philosophy and attempts to construct art according to the principles of philosophy and to subordinate art under philosophy again. It is indeed Hegel’s main idea on art, as I have elaborated in the fourth chapter. Nevertheless, this kind of interpretation is a garble of what Schelling expresses in his *Philosophy of Art*.

b) General Philosophy and Specific Philosophies

In order to gain a clearer and more proper idea of Schelling’s view, the distinction between general philosophy and specific philosophies, which is an important discrimination suggested by Schelling since his philosophy of identity,

University of Minnesota Press, 1989, p. 6.

²⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 13.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 29.

must first be made. Since I have discussed it in chapter Three, only the key points will be re-emphasized here. What “philosophy” means in the above quotations is only the general philosophy. Philosophy of art, in another way, is a specific philosophy. Although philosophy of art is a philosophical construction of art, it does not necessarily entail a reduction of art into philosophy. Schelling also puts that philosophy of art is “the presentation of the absolute world in the form of art”²⁴⁶ What does it mean?

General philosophy is one which views “the stern countenance of truth in and for itself.”²⁴⁷ It is the direct and absolute knowledge of the absolute and primordial origin. What it is concerned about is only the Absolute *as such* and *in itself*. However, Schelling thinks that “nothing inheres in philosophy as absolute, or we know nothing in philosophy as absolute. Rather, we always know only the absolutely one or absolute unity, and this absolutely one only in particular forms.”²⁴⁸ Hence, it is empty for general philosophy to stay within the sphere of the absolute and the divine, just as the Self remains entirely unconscious and empty before its activity of self-intuition. Thus, general philosophy, no matter how divine and sacred it is, must first descend to the vulgar in order to fulfill its own demand: the absolute science of reason, or philosophy in the sense which is the “full expression of absolute identity as such or of the divine to the extent that it is the principle of resolution of all potences”²⁴⁹.

On the part of human beings or philosophers, we can only access the general

²⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 7.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 13.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 15.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 28.

philosophy *indirectly* by means of starting and ascending from various specific philosophies. In *Philosophy of Art*, philosophy of art is determined as the highest potency or the highest specific philosophy over that of nature and history. For Schelling, art “enjoys the most immediate relationship to philosophy and distinguish itself from it only by virtue of the determination of particularity or of the reflected nature of its images.”²⁵⁰ Schelling even puts at the outset of the lecture that both art and (general) philosophy “encounter one another on the final pinnacle, and precisely by virtue of their common absoluteness are for one another both prototype and reflex.”²⁵¹ Hence, Schelling claims that philosophy of art is the necessary goal of philosophers. In fact, it is also the only possible highest philosophy which can be *really* accessed by philosophers.

Concerning the superiority of philosophy of art over other specific philosophies, Schelling maintains that through philosophy of art “the inspired natural scientist learns to recognize symbolically and emblematically the true archetypes of forms in works of art, archetypes he find expressed only in a confused fashion in nature.”²⁵² Although philosophy of nature is one specific philosophy in which general philosophy realizes its own potentiality and essence, it is never the most perfect and appropriate mirror or reflex of the Absolute. Philosophy of art, in which the unity and indifference between the real and the ideal, the particular and the universal, the free and the necessary are thoroughly manifested, is the only perfect reflex or exhibition of the very essence of the Absolute. Accordingly, in *Philosophy of Art* art is not entirely swallowed up by philosophy, as in the case of Hegelian aesthetics. Rather, art all along preserves certain sense of independence, and this independence is

²⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 29.

²⁵¹ Ibid, p. 6.

²⁵² Ibid, p. 8.

necessary for the goal of general philosophy. Regarding philosophy as general philosophy, the status of art is definitely lower than that of philosophy, for general philosophy is the very postulate and origin of all philosophies; but regarding philosophy as specific philosophy, philosophy of art is the highest one over philosophy of nature and transcendental idealism.

Hence, the conclusions about the significance of art and about the relation between art and philosophy in *System of Transcendental Idealism* and *Philosophy of Art* do not show any incompatibility. Since the concept and determination of general philosophy emerged after *System of Transcendental Idealism*, what “philosophy” means in *STI* are only philosophy of nature and transcendental idealism, and when Schelling claims that art is the eternal doctrine and organ of the system of philosophy, by “philosophy” he especially designates transcendental idealism including philosophy of nature. In fact, there is continuity between philosophy of nature and transcendental idealism, and the first one-third part of *STI* is indeed a reiteration of the contentions included in philosophy of nature. Therefore, Schelling’s view on the relation between art and philosophy in *STI* is equivalent to that between philosophy of art and other specific philosophies in *Philosophy of Art*, and concerning this matter, the claim on art in *STI* still has full validity in *Philosophy of Art*.

B) Basic Position on Art in Other Works

a) In “Concerning the Relation of the Plastic Arts to Nature”

After the lecture of philosophy of art, Schelling seldom talks about the problem of art. Concerning this subject matter, what is left is only the speech “Concerning the Relation of the Plastic Arts to Nature” which was released in 1807. This speech,

which was issued in the later period of Schelling's philosophy of identity, gives important evidence for the consistency of Schelling's philosophy at least on the problem of art. It supports that although he does not talk about this topic in later period, he does not abandon the early view on this topic.

In the speech Schelling criticizes and rejects the theses of art as imitation of nature and as pure expression of soul, in which the former negates originality and creativity in artistic production, whereas the latter neglects the significance of definite forms. For Schelling both of the views go into opposite extremes and only the unity of them is the true essence of art:

“...not everything in art is the outcome of consciousness, that an unconscious force must be linked with conscious activity and that it is the perfect unanimity and mutual interpenetration of the two which produces the highest art. Works which lack this seal of unconscious science are recognizable by the palpable absence of a life which is autonomous and independent of their creator, while on the contrary, where it is in operation, art simultaneously imparts to its work, with the greatest lucidity of the intelligence, that unfathomable reality by virtue of which it resembles a work of nature.”²⁵³

It is apparent that the conception of works of art here greatly resembles that in *System of Transcendental Idealism* and *Philosophy of Art*, which maintain that the works of art display the perfect reconciliation and indifference of the real and the ideal, the conscious and the unconscious. Thus, correct taste is which will “delight in

²⁵³ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. Trans. Michael Bullock. “Concerning the Relation of the Plastic Arts to Nature” in Read, Herbert Edward. *The True Voice of Feeling: Studies in English Romantic Poetry*. London: Faber, 1953, p. 331.

seeing a being depicted in its individual aspect as well, worthily and as autonomously as possible; indeed, the Deity would look down with pleasure upon a creature that, gifted with a pure soul, also vigorously asserted the loftiness of its nature outward and through its sensuously effectual existence."²⁵⁴ In fact, what the theses of art as mere imitation of nature and as pure expression of idea and soul presuppose are the basic positions of realism and idealism in raw and extreme sense respectively. Therefore, the reconciliation of these theses in the genuine works of art also manifest the unity of simple and extreme realism and idealism, in which neither of them is relinquished nor subordinated to each other. Rather, both are necessary to and hence at bottom indifference with one another. This is definitely the conception comes from *System of Transcendental Idealism* and *Philosophy of Art*.

Apart from the determination of the essence of works of art as the perfect reconciliation of pure nature and pure soul, more importantly, Schelling also implies in this speech that art is the highest potency within the sphere of specific philosophy:

“Where charm is manifested in fully worked out form, the work is perfected from the viewpoint of nature, nothing more is wanting, all demands are satisfied. Here too soul and body are in perfect concord; the body is form, charm is the soul, though not soul *per se*—but the soul of form or the natural soul...But the beauty of the soul *per se*, blended with sensuous charm: this is the highest apotheosis of nature.”²⁵⁵

It is greatly compatible with the contention in *Philosophy of Art* that what philosophy

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 353

²⁵⁵ *ibid*, pp. 342-343.

of art reveals is at most the perfect indifference and identity of reality and idea, instead of idea as such before any separation and unity. Besides, Schelling in this speech also expresses that the interpenetration of the real and the ideal is the highest possible goal for philosophers.

Schelling's conception and presentation of art is clear enough in this speech. However, his conception of nature is indeed problematic here. Sometimes by "nature" he designates the blind mechanistic nature, sometimes the organic nature, sometimes even the creative and original force which produces nature no matter in mechanistic or organic senses. Besides, the terminologies in this speech are quite different from his other works and lectures within the phase of philosophy of identity. Perhaps since the speech was given to audience without vigorous philosophical training, by virtue of the nature of this speech Schelling tends to use less vigorous terminologies. Hence, when Schelling maintains here that the beauty of the soul *per se* blended with sensuous charm is the highest apotheosis of nature, what he means by "nature" is not the mechanistic nature, nor the organic nature, but the primordial and creative force which is manifested in nature, namely the Absolute or the Self.

Since art is still treated as the highest potency over nature (mechanistic and organic) and history, or philosophy of art is still regarded as the highest specific philosophy, Schelling claims in this speech that "we may as well confess that in this hope for the rebirth of an absolutely original art, it is pre-eminently the fatherland we have in view...this nation must reach its conclusion in an original art."²⁵⁶ How amazing resemblance is there between this claim and that at the end of *System of Transcendental Idealism* which calls for a return of sciences and philosophy into

²⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 357.

poetry by means of new mythology.

b) In *Bruno*

In *Bruno*, the first question is the relation between truth and beauty:

“Whether there is a point where truth and beauty are identical—where they are equally unconditioned, neither one dependent on the other nor subordinated to it, each one for itself the highest reality.”²⁵⁷

The whole dialogue can be treated as one developed from this question. The first task of *Bruno* is to demonstrate the identity of beauty and truth, and the main proof is that only the concepts of things are beautiful: “the eternal concepts of things are more excellent and more beautiful than things themselves; moreover, they alone are beautiful. Indeed, the eternal concept of a thing is necessarily beautiful.”²⁵⁸ Therefore, a work of art is beautiful solely in virtue of its truth, and “the unique and exalted truth is not accidental to beauty, nor is beauty accidental to truth.”²⁵⁹ This view is not anything alien after the investigation of the contentions on art or the beautiful in *System of Transcendental Idealism and Philosophy of Art*. In the latter Schelling definitely suggests that “truth and beauty are merely two different ways of viewing the one absolute.”²⁶⁰ Moreover, he states at the very beginning that the object of philosophy of art is the sacred art, the “unveiler of the ideas”, which illuminates pure souls and are inaccessible to sensible eyes. Within *System of*

²⁵⁷ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *Bruno, or, On the Natural and the Divine Principle of Things, 1802*. Ed. and trans. Michael G. Vater. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984, p. 120.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 127.

²⁵⁹ Ibid p. 128.

²⁶⁰ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *The Philosophy of Art*. Trans. Douglas W. Stott. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, p. 17.

Transcendental Idealism, his contention about art as the origin and destination of sciences and philosophy implicates the ultimate identity between beauty and truth. And in *Bruno*, since the identity between beauty and truth is demonstrated, the identity of philosophy and poetry is also proved as well.

The subsequent discussion in *Bruno* is led by the identity of truth and beauty: since absolute truth is identical with beauty, and every beautiful work necessarily presents in sensuous and finite elements, the questions about the emergence and significance of reality, finitude, particularity and multiplicity arise. How to explain the emergence of individuality and its indifference or identity with ideas and the Absolute thus become the central problems in *Bruno* and in Schelling's philosophy of identity as well. Although there is no more discourse on art in the discussion of *Bruno* after the demonstration of the identity of beauty and truth and that of poetry and philosophy, the significance of its questioning about art cannot be overlooked. *Bruno* does manifest the role and significance of the problem of art, and more importantly, demonstrates the continuity from the conclusion that philosophy of art is the final destination of specific philosophies to the arising of philosophy of identity, in which the emergence of finitude and the relation between the finite and the infinite are reconsidered by virtue of incitement from the problem of art.

(III) Schelling's Self-Evaluation as a Consistent Thinker in his Later Period

Although many scholars and readers are convinced that Schelling always changes his mind and concern, he all along affirms himself as a consistent philosopher. He himself believes that there is inner and essential connection of his philosophical doctrines throughout his life, from the early to the late period.

A) In *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*

Schelling's essay on human freedom in 1809 is always regarded as the beginning of his late thought and the important turning point of his philosophy especially for the scholars who are interested more in his late thought. Dale Snow states that "in *Of Human Freedom*, Schelling shattered the assumptions that had provided the framework for his earlier thought. He had conclusively demonstrated, at least to himself, that it was as impossible to return to a preidealistic metaphysics as it was to remain within the worldview of idealism; the need and desire to go beyond idealism gave rise to what he later came to call the positive philosophy."²⁶¹ Jason Wirth also puts that "Schelling's earlier investigations were like the Platonic dialogues, raising the concrete up to the level of the Good, just as the bewildered philosopher emerges out of the cave and confronts the glory of the sun of the Good. But what if, like Plotinus, one were to begin with the One, with the blazing sublimity of the Good, and move in the reverse direction? Rather than asking how the ideas lead to the Good, one would ask how the Good produces ideas. This is the turning point that the *Freedom* essay occasions."²⁶²

Many philosophers and scholars are impressed by the existential insight in Schelling's late thought, and the most famous ones among them were Kierkegaard and Heidegger. Kierkegaard attended Schelling's Lecture on philosophy of revelation in 1841 and that on philosophy of mythology in 1842. Although Kierkegaard was disillusioned with Schelling's view in his lecture on philosophy of mythology, he was

²⁶¹ Snow, Dale E.. *Schelling and the End of Idealism*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 181.

²⁶² Wirth, Jason M.. *The Conspiracy of Life: Meditations on Schelling and his Time*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003, p. 156.

impressed by Schelling's concern about actuality and his question about existence, and this to a certain sense contributed to Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel. Through his reading of Schelling's treatise on human freedom Heidegger comes to a critique of traditional metaphysics in his *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*. He starts with an analysis of system in general, then unveils the meaning of pantheism, fatalism, human freedom, a metaphysics of evil, metaphysics in general, and finally the historical and ontological position of Being as Will. For Heidegger, freedom is the foundational question of the whole system, so he calls Schelling's system the "system of freedom". Within this system of freedom, the question of evil is the leading question and is also the foundation of the question of Being, the central question in Heidegger's own thought: "The key question of the main investigation is the question of the inner possibility and of the kind of reality of evil. The intention of the investigation is to provide a full and live concept of human freedom. Thus the right center for the plan of the system of freedom is to be gained. And this system wants to answer the fundamental question of philosophy of the essence of Being in a sense which comprehends all impulses to thought. A *metaphysics of evil* is the foundation of the *question of Being* as the ground of the system which is to be created as a system of freedom."²⁶³ Under Heidegger's reading, freedom is no longer an attribute of human beings, but the very ground of Being and the whole system. And since what is free cannot be grounded, the whole system and Being are groundless. This groundlessness determines the factuality and incomprehensibility of freedom. For Heidegger, this contention about the primordial ground as groundless marginalizes Schelling from idealism, which searches for the ultimate ground of the system within intelligence. Thus, affected by this interpretation made by a great

²⁶³ Heidegger, Martin. *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985, p. 104.

philosopher, many scholars tend to acknowledge that Schelling's late thought from his essay on human freedom in 1809 contributes the end of idealism, which is remarkably different from his early and middle thought. It implies that something entirely new was brought forth in Schelling's philosophy from 1809.

Nevertheless, Schelling himself is not aware of such kind of novelty and transition. At the very outset of the essay on human freedom, Schelling emphasizes that the philosophical investigation into the nature of human freedom is necessarily and essentially included in a system:

“...such investigations may be concerned with the relation of this concept to a whole systematic world view....since no conception can be defined in isolation and depends for its systematic completion on the demonstration of its connections with the whole. This is especially the case in the conception of freedom, for if it has any reality at all it cannot be a merely subordinate or incidental conception but must be one of the dominant central points of the system.”²⁶⁴

This opening remark is indeed astonishing for one who first got the impression on Schelling's late thought which is described above before his reading of the essay. System completion is a remarkable target for Schelling in his early and middle period, and this is also the most notable characteristic of German idealism. If the investigation into the nature of human freedom must be incorporated into the system, which is constructed by Schelling from the very beginning, then it cannot be

²⁶⁴ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*. Trans. James Gutmann. La Salle, Ill: Open Court, 1936, p. 7.

something entirely new to his system. Instead, this investigation has to be guided by the principles of the system which have been established and constructed before. Thus, Schelling states that "only a finished and completed system could have followers in the true sense of the term. Up to the present the author has never set up such a system, but has only presented special aspects of one and has very often shown these in certain relationships only, as, for instance, in polemical connections."²⁶⁵ Accordingly, the development of Schelling's philosophy, or the so-called change of his mind, is the presentation of different special aspects of one system, such as nature, spirit, art, absolute identity, and including human freedom. Besides, Schelling himself was very aware of the necessary connection between these aspects. Hence, instead of being an entirely new approach, Schelling's questioning into the nature of human freedom is as well a continuous development of the one system, like the other aspects tackled before.

Schelling describes that the intention of his system or all of his efforts is all along "a mutual interpenetration of realism and idealism."²⁶⁶ He continues to describe that based on this intention: "...there developed a Philosophy of Nature, which as a mere physics could indeed stand by itself, but which was always regarded, with respect to the whole of philosophy, as merely one of its parts (that is, its real part, and which would permit of being raised into a genuine system of reason only by first being completed by an ideal part wherein freedom is sovereign.)"²⁶⁷ It is apparent that for Schelling there is continuity between his philosophy of nature and the investigation into the nature of human freedom, in which the former is his earliest doctrine whereas the latter is the so-called entirely new inquiry. At this stage

²⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 4.

²⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 23.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, pp. 23-24.

Schelling still sustains his basic conception of the nature of system: a system must be a monistic one. What a philosophical system demands for is the unification or reconciliation of the real and the ideal, and it is possible only by means of the ultimate identity of the opposites: "If this system is really thought of as the doctrine of two absolutely different and mutually independent principles, it is only a system of self-destruction and the despair of reason."²⁶⁸ Since Schelling in his late period barely discusses the matter of art, and his discourses in that period can be and should be examined independently, I would not digress into the detail of his discussion on human nature. What I would like to argue is that Schelling himself has never intended to cut the continuity between his early doctrines and the later ones.

B) In *On the History of Modern Philosophy*

Schelling's review and affirmation of his earlier philosophy in his late period is more evident in his Lecture *On the History of Modern Philosophy* given in 1827. Within this lecture, Schelling traces the path of philosophy from Descartes to Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Fichte, Jacobi, Hegel and to himself. Regarding his own works, Schelling gives in this lecture high appraisal to his own *System of Transcendental Idealism*: "If any of you wants now or in the future to get to know the gradual course of development of modern philosophy exactly and from the original texts, then I can do no better than recommend to him the study of this *System of Transcendental Idealism*; in it he will already recognize, under the exterior of Fichtean thinking, the new system, which sooner or later had to break through this exterior; he will already find the *method* fully applied in this work which was only

²⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 28.

later used on a greater scale”²⁶⁹. The late Schelling does not recant or annul his early doctrine, instead, he claims that the true method or the principle of philosophy is fully applied in the work, and his later works are mere extension and development into a greater scale according to the discovery of this early doctrine. It evidently manifests the confidence of the late Schelling in his early doctrines and his vindication of the continuity and consistency of his early, middle and late thought. Besides, for Schelling the continuity between his philosophy of nature, transcendental idealism and philosophy of identity is determined by the ever-progressing nature of the whole system of philosophy:

“From this it follows, then, that this philosophy is in nature with its first steps, or it begins from nature—naturally not in order to remain in it, but in order subsequently, via an ever progressing heightening, to transcend it, to move beyond it, and to raise itself up to spirit, into the really spiritual world. This philosophy could then be called *Naturphilosophie* at the beginning, but *Naturphilosophie* was only the first part or the foundation of the whole. Nature was itself only *one* side of the universe or of the absolute totality in which the absolute subject is first completely realized; nature is the relatively ideal world. The world of spirit was the other side. Philosophy had to descend into the depths of nature in order to raise itself from there to the heights of spirit. The other side of the system was, therefore, the philosophy of spirit. If the whole system was called *Naturphilosophie* for that reason, then this was only *a denominatio a priori* [designation in terms of what is preferable], or really *a priori*, thus a designation of what came first in the system, but which was, as such, rather what was subordinate in it. it was basically difficult

²⁶⁹ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *On the History of Modern Philosophy*. Trans. Andrew Bowie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 111.

to find a name for this system, precisely because it contained annulled *within itself the oppositions of all earlier systems*; it could in fact be called neither materialism nor spiritualism, neither realism nor idealism...I had called it the 'identity system'...in this system all differences, namely every difference of matter and spirit, of good and evil, even of truth and falsity, were annulled, that according to this system it was, in the everyday sense, all the same."²⁷⁰

The above paragraph gives an account for the development and continuity between Schelling's philosophy of nature, transcendental idealism and philosophy of identity. Schelling states that the later system annuls within itself the oppositions of all earlier systems, thus, the later system should be comprehended as a continuation instead of a mere annihilation of the earlier ones. Although at the beginning of the new system there may be something opposing to the old ones, but even so it is continuation instead of mere opposition, for what oppose to each other must be first connected to each other. It is precisely Schelling's basic contention about the dualistic but dynamic relation between the subject and the object or between the ideal and the real that constitutes the succession and continuity of his systems. What "opposition" means in Schelling's systems is not an eternal and a static state in which the opposing camps merely aims at canceling each other. Rather, it is an eternally dynamic process which in essence implicates further separation but also unification *again*:

"Unity or spirit eternally calls for the opposites, because it can be generated only through progressive increase by means of this opposition. But opposition, for its part, also eternally calls for unity or spirit, because only in spirit can it

²⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 120.

become conscious of itself, grasp itself, and comprehend itself as eternity. Here then is the highest inner harmony....they are all mutually external and free from each other, each one is its own principle which has its own root in itself, and yet they are coherently joined, not through an external link, but rather are connected to each other through an inner necessity."²⁷¹

The "highest inner harmony" of all oppositions and all beings is the ultimate belief of Schelling which effectively associates the different systems proposed by him. This harmony is the first postulate of the whole system and the final result of it as well. As the first postulate it is the pre-established harmony, the concept which is first suggested by Leibniz and is greatly emphasized by the early Schelling; as the final result it is fully revealed only after the entire development of oppositions in which the Self or the Absolute is completely conscious of itself. Hence, this highest inner harmony includes a paradoxical content: it is the origin and the destination of opposition and unification. In addition, there is also a paradoxical relation between opposition and unification: they are the origin and the destination of each other. From this paradoxical relation an eternal progressing force of the whole system is generated, which sustains the development, continuity and consistency of the different stages of the whole system.

As I have repeatedly maintained, the main concern of Schelling's philosophy, and that of Fichte and Hegel as well, is to unify the seemingly eternal opposition between the real and the ideal, or between the objective and the subjective, which is presupposed and even reinforced by former philosophers including Kant. Thus, since

²⁷¹ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *Ages of the World*. Trans. Slavoj Žižek. Mich: University of Michigan Press, 1997, pp. 144-145.

Schelling is a philosopher who is always concerned with and aware of the question of identity and unity, an accusation of caprice against Schelling should be made under much more consideration and evidence. Although many scholars insist upon the novelty of Schelling's late thought, the late Schelling yet endows great affirmation to the early and middle thought and the connection between his philosophy of nature, transcendental philosophy and philosophy of identity:

“One can understand that this system was initially taken up with a delight which no earlier system had aroused or any later system would arouse again...As that philosophy embraced the whole of reality (*Wirklichkeit*) – nature, history, art – everything lower and everything higher, and, so to speak, showed man his whole knowledge, it had to affect the spirit of the other sciences as well to a greater or lesser extent, and one can really say that it was not just in philosophy *as such* that it produced a change in the view of things and the way of considering things in general.”²⁷²

Hence, in the eyes of Schelling himself, he all along undertakes the same project, a continuous and consistent one in which the value and the significance of the earlier works are always highly and consciously affirmed by the thinker himself. Furthermore, his own conviction of the continuity between his philosophy of nature, transcendental philosophy and philosophy of identity rejects the thesis of his transition from romanticism to idealism between his early and middle thought.

²⁷² Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *On the History of Modern Philosophy*. Trans. Andrew Bowie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 130.

(IV) Schelling's Fundamental and Unique Concern and Project

A) Schelling's Concern for Existence and Reality

If Schelling is a consistent thinker and devotes himself to one fundamental project throughout his life, then what is this project? More accurately, what is this Schellingian project in distinction with that of Fichte, Hegel and the early German romantics, the post-Kantian thinkers, who all attempt to search for the unity of the oppositions? I agree with Dale Snow that Schelling's philosophy is a philosophy which "answers to life":

"Against Hegel, Schelling declares that we need a philosophy that can measure itself by life; a philosophy that would take its force from reality itself and would then also produce something actual and lasting...What is revealed...is the very tension operative throughout Schelling's entire philosophical career: the tension between system and life."²⁷³

In a word, what make Schelling different from Hegel are his genuine concern of and respect for existence and reality. If we acknowledge that the pursuit of unity and identity out of opposition and separation is the fundamental and ultimate demand of reason and philosophy, what motivates this pursuit is the Absolute's very instinct to exist, to exist in reality. The Absolute, the primordial ground of existence and knowledge, the divine God, is with no doubt an essential concern for Schelling, but a mere questioning about the Absolute as such and in itself cannot satisfy him. For

²⁷³ Snow, Dale E.. *Schelling and the End of Idealism*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 3.

Schelling, the Absolute or the primordial ground must by nature necessarily entail existence and reality. Otherwise, it is not the genuine ground. If we treat Schelling as a philosopher of unity, he is definitely not one who is only interested in the world of ideas and concepts, instead, the unity he pursues must be an all-inclusive one, especially one which contains the real world in which we live and raise question.

Accordingly, asking about the essence and nature of the super-sensible Absolute is for Schelling equal to investigating into the essence, origin and formation of existence and reality. These two questions are indeed two sides of the same coin, and a genuine and complete system must consider both of them. Thus, we can trace the two roots of Schelling's central concern: one is his study of philosophy, especially that of Kant and Fichte; another is his deep feeling or realization from experience that the whole world is a unity of the real and the ideal. The former provides the foundation and direction for his philosophy, and the insufficiency and the errors of the former philosophers motivate Schelling to create his own new way out. Comparing to it, however, the latter was the prime source of Schelling's thought, for without this primordial experience, it is impossible for Schelling to admire the philosophies of Kant and Fichte and to criticize the philosophers who leave the unity unresolved and overlook the true significance and position of reality and existence. Hence, the question about existence is a fundamental concern for Schelling upon which the problem of the unity of oppositions is founded, and the relation of these two problems characterizes the unique concern and approach of Schelling's philosophy.

The question about existence is indeed a more difficult and complicated one than that about the mere Absolute, since the latter *may* be finished, or at least can

acquire logical validity by means of constructing ideas and concepts alone. In addition, subsuming something under a more general concept is far easier than demonstrating the emergence of particular and even contingent things from a universal origin. However, what Schelling mostly devotes to is precisely the question about existence. This question is indeed the one first raised by Leibniz: why is there something instead of nothing? This is the key problem recognized by Schelling from his very youth and is sustained throughout his life. In his early age before his writing of philosophy of nature, Schelling has already determined the general direction and approach of his philosophy. In his early writing "Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism", he has already emphasized the great significance of the question about the emergence of existence in philosophy:

"...the *Critique of Pure Reason* started its contention from that point alone. *How did we ever come to judge synthetically?* This is what Kant asked at the very beginning of his work, and this question lies at the base of his entire philosophy as a problem concerning the essential and common point of *all* philosophy. For expressed differently, the question is this: *How do I ever come to egress from the absolute, and to progress toward an opposite?*"²⁷⁴

The egression from the absolute and the progression toward an opposite denote precisely the emergence of the real, the particular and the finite, for only particular and finite beings are something lying outside the absolute and something in opposition to the others. The essential problem of all philosophy posited by Schelling is in fact not one merely expressed differently from that of Kant, rather, it is a

²⁷⁴ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. "Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism: Third Letter" in *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge: Four Early Essays, 1794-1796*. Trans. Fritz Marti. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1980, p. 164.

transformation of the Kantian problem from that which focuses on the question about unity to that focuses on the problem of existence. Hence, he claims in his very youth that “the main task of philosophy consists of solving the problem of the existence of the world.”²⁷⁵

Schelling’s emphasis on the problem of existence is sustained and re-emphasized in his late period especially through his distinction between positive and negative philosophies in criticizing Hegel. For Schelling, negative philosophy is one which does not care for the question of existence:

“It put itself beyond all contradiction thereby, but precisely because of this it also gave up its claim to objectivity, i.e. it had to confess to being a science in which there is no question of existence, of that which really exist, and thus also not at all of knowledge in this sense, but only of the relationships which the objects take on in mere thinking”²⁷⁶

Schelling’s positive philosophy, on the contrary, relates to existence and leaves nothing outside itself. It must step into the most complicated region which is full of particularity, contingency and opposition and then attempts to reveal the origin, nature and significance of this region and everything within it.

B) The Essential Role of *System of Transcendental Idealism*

The question why there is something instead of nothing is for Schelling not only

²⁷⁵ Ibid, “Seventh Letter”, p. 177.

²⁷⁶ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *On the History of Modern Philosophy*. Trans. Andrew Bowie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 133.

a question about why, but also about how and what. The question about the origin of existence is for Schelling at the same time one about the essence, nature and formation of existence. From this perspective, the development and continuity of his philosophical systems can be considered as the development of the question about existence. Schelling's philosophy of nature gives him a romantic outlook and wins him praises and early prestige precisely in virtue of that this philosophical doctrine shows his unique and valuable concern with and respect for existence and reality against the subjective philosophies. Nevertheless, the approach of his philosophy of nature is an ascending one, in which the way of the elevation from the blind and mechanistic nature to the absolute origin is demonstrated. Therefore, the philosophy of nature is rather an important preliminary to the system which genuinely explains the descending emergence of reality and existence, that is, Schelling's transcendental idealism.

Transcendental idealism, although is a system constructed by Schelling in his very youth, is the system in which almost all of the principles and aspects of his later thought have already been determined and anticipated. This system alone covers several important problems: on nature, on theoretical knowledge, on morality, on history and on art. On the contrary, Schelling's later systems have not been so comprehensive. Instead, they are only concerned about specific topics. I believe that Schelling's transcendental system lays the foundation of his later systems, and the latter are supplements, modifications and further development of the former. Without the former being the case, the latter will lost their context and fountain. Hence, if we accept that Schelling is a consistent thinker, his transcendental idealism indeed occupies a determinative position.

It should be noted that not all of the topics discussed in transcendental idealism are reviewed by later Schelling. Take nature, the later Schelling almost repeats what he maintained in the early period. Not only is art seldom discussed in his late period, but also his discourse on history. Besides, Schelling's later discussion on the dark ground or abyss of human freedom is not something entirely new to his early transcendental idealism. In discussing about genius Schelling in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* states that the identity of the conscious and the unconscious inherent in the works of art can only be revealed objectively by an unknown dark force or destiny:

“This unchanging identity, which can never attain to consciousness, and merely radiates back from the product, is for the producer precisely what destiny is for the agent, namely a dark unknown force which supplies the element of completeness or objectivity to the piecework of freedom, and as that power is called destiny, which through our free action realizes, without our knowledge and even against our will, goals that *we did not envisage*, so likewise that incomprehensible agency which supplies objectivity to the conscious, without the cooperation of freedom, and to some extent in opposition to freedom, is denominated by means of the obscure concept of genius.”²⁷⁷

Dissimilar to his philosophy of nature, what transcendental idealism embarks upon is to trace and demonstrate the genesis of the different matters out of the absolute Self by means of the essential self-referential nature and activity of this very origin. Thus, it is evident that the fundamental problem of Schelling's transcendental idealism is

²⁷⁷ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Trans. Peter Heath. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978, p. 222.

the question about the emergence and essence of reality and existence.

C) Schelling's Concern for Existence in his Philosophy of Identity

If Schelling's transcendental idealism and his late thought on human freedom, revelation and mythology are questions about existence in specific and particular subject matters, his philosophy of identity attempts to investigate into the same question in a general approach. Although Schelling suggests a general philosophy, which deals with the pure Absolute as such and in itself, this general philosophy is not something essentially opposing to and separated from specific philosophies. Rather, they are mutually interdependent: specific philosophies must emerge from and for the sake of general philosophy. On the other hand, the general philosophy must complete itself *in the form of* specific philosophies. Thus, Schelling's discussion on general philosophy is soon directed into the question about the emergence of multiplicity from one, individuality from universal and finite from infinite, that is, the question about existence. For example, after the demonstration of the identity between truth and beauty, and hence between philosophy and poetry, the dialogue in *Bruno* is entirely about the emergence of multiplicity and particularity, namely the relation between identity and difference. The relation between identity and difference is the central problem of Schelling's philosophy of identity, but this problem is at bottom the question about existence, rather than a mere conceptual speculation.

After the unveiling of the fundamental question about existence and of the relation between general philosophy and specific philosophies, the many original and new distinctions made in Schelling's philosophy of identity can be comprehended

with lesser effort. The distinction between essence and form, being and becoming (or Nonbeing), the eternal and the temporal, the universe and the appearance, the absolute identity and indifference, the qualitative and the quantitative, intuition and reflection, and so forth, are indeed equivalent with that between general philosophy and specific philosophies: the seemingly opposing elements indeed interpenetrate each other, and if the latter poles are dissolved into the former and viewed from the aspect of the absolute, they are in fact identified with the former:

“Both the universe and the appearance are posited as equally eternal; or however eternal the universe may be, the appearance will be just as eternal, though as appearance. (The last phrase serves to refute the notion of an equal dignity of the two. The universe is unconditionally eternal, whereas the appearance is eternal only to the extent that the universe is, and yet this appearance is immediate and eternal together with the universe).”²⁷⁸

Appearance is thus not something entirely illusory and negative, and hence should be overcome or cancelled at all. Regarding the significance of the appearance, Schelling in his Würzburg Lecture (1804) states that it is the necessary expression of the Absolute or the universe:

“because it is the absolute position of the universe, i.e., the universe itself by which the particular is being posited as mere Nonbeing, it follows that this Nonbeing as such, and precisely by virtue of the fact *that* it is a Nonbeing, is an *expression* of the universe, and the universe can be recognized in it, although

²⁷⁸ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. “System of Philosophy in General and of the Philosophy of Nature in Particular (1804)” in *Idealism and the Endgames of Theory: Three Essays*, trans. Thomas Pfau. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994, pp. 175-176.

not immediately, but in mediated form, i.e., by way of a reluctance or reflection—and with this we have finally established the entire significance of the *appearance*.²⁷⁹

If the opposing poles are viewed discretely and separately as themselves, the ideal camp is divine and the real camp is relatively illusionary insofar as it is the mixture of Being and Nonbeing. Regarding these two perspectives, there are two kinds of unity or synthesis: absolutely identity and indifference:

“Each one, the real universe and the ideal universe, dissolves in its absoluteness into the other one and thus into an absolute identity... Within the real universe and, likewise, within the ideal universe, each considered as such, we cannot exhibit the absolute identity but merely the indifference of both factors.”²⁸⁰

The indifference of the opposing elements, in distinction from their absolute identity, is the “reciprocal dominance of one factor over the other or in the equilibrium of the two”.²⁸¹ The absolute identity, the state before any separation, is something essentially impossible to appear, for only the unification and equilibrium of opposition can be exhibited, and once there is opposition, the Absolute enters the realm of appearance. In the same way, general philosophy, the science has the absolute identity as its object, is something impossible by itself only. Concerning its own task, it must embody in specific philosophies which take different appearance and specific unifications as their objects.

²⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 182.

²⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 190.

²⁸¹ Ibid, p. 191.

Many scholars consider that Schelling's philosophy of identity is intrinsically different from his transcendental idealism with regard to its concern and approach, but through our analysis, what the former maintains turns out to be not excluded from and is even anticipated by the latter. Schelling's doctrine of the general philosophy is indeed an important *supplement* to the part about the nature of the Absolute as such which has not been discussed in such *detail* in his transcendental idealism. Besides, the relation between general philosophy and specific philosophies, the essence and the form, or the universe and the appearance discussed in philosophy of identity, pertains to question about existence in terms of general concepts instead of particular subject matters, which is necessary for a strict, scientific and complete system.

In this chapter I have attempted to argue that Schelling is all along a consistent thinker regarding his concern and basic principles of his systems. Therefore, the theory of essential change between his early and middle periods and that between his middle and late periods are indeed not tenable. Instead of change of basic belief and position, the phases indicate change of aspects of one fundamental philosophical project which is concerned with unity *and* existence. In the next chapter, the uniqueness of Schelling's consistent philosophy and his contentions on art will be further investigated with reference to early German romanticism and German idealism.

Chapter Eight: Schelling's Reconciliation of Early German Romanticism and German Idealism

Both Manfred Frank and Andrew Bowie think that Schelling's contention on art in *System of Transcendental Idealism* and *Philosophy of Art* are not entirely compatible and consistent, rather, the former presents romantic spirit while the latter inclines more to the view of German idealism.²⁸² It almost becomes the standard interpretation of Schelling's philosophy of art and his teaching in general. In the same way, many scholars acknowledge the division between Schelling's transcendental idealism and his philosophy of identity, and argue for his transition from romanticism to idealism within this period. The previous chapter embarked upon the question whether there is transition in Schelling's thought in different phases and concluded that there is central and consistent concern and position in the philosopher's seemingly distinguishing intellectual phases. Inasmuch as there is no essential alteration between Schelling's early thought and his philosophy of identity, the argument for Schelling's transition from romanticism to idealism becomes doubtful, thus, the uniqueness of Schelling's system and its relation to early German romanticism and German idealism should be re-examined. Concerning this re-examination, Schelling's discourses on art play the central role. Besides, the significance of art can be further exposed by means of this undertaking.

Andrew Bowie maintains that "Schelling's word is often uneasily located

²⁸² See Frank, Manfred. *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*. Trans. Elizabeth Millan Zaibert. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004, Frank, Manfred. *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik: Vorlesungen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989 and Bowie, Andrew, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003.

between Idealist and Romantic views."²⁸³ What this chapter attempts to tackle is precisely an articulation of this uneasily located position of Schelling. Concerning this problem, there can be four possible assertions: (1) Schelling is in fact an early German romantic. (2) Schelling is a German idealist. (3) Schelling is both an early German romantic and a German idealist. (4) He is neither a romantic nor an idealist. Of the four positions, the third view which indicates that Schelling is at the same time both a Romantic and an idealist must be untenable, since early German romanticism is essentially incompatible with German idealism except their common problem derived from Kant. Besides, if the third view means that Schelling is sometime a Romantic and sometime an idealist, it is also indefensible according to Schelling's own declaration of the consistency of his own thought as being accounted for in the previous chapter. Since early German romanticism and German idealism are incompatible with each other on the essential and important issues, the first two assertions should be modified into: (1) Schelling is *essentially* an early German romantic. (2) Schelling is *essentially* a German idealist. If we argue for either thesis, any element of the other camp in Schelling's thought must be eliminated or at least treated as unimportant or accidental. Concerning the fourth assertion, if the "neither nor" indicates that Schelling's thought has no relation to early German romanticism and German idealism, or involves no element of the two intellectual camps, then there is no meaning and significance to re-examine Schelling's position *with reference to* early German romanticism and German idealism. This is obviously not the stand of this dissertation.

Contrary to the above four assertions, if we investigate the romantic and

²⁸³ Bowie, Andrew, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 107.

idealistic elements in Schelling's thought, especially in his philosophy of art, then we soon find that the romantic and idealistic elements are equally important in his thought, and he is certainly not essentially a romantic or an idealist. In this chapter I will argue that the equal importance of romantic and idealistic elements in Schelling's philosophy of art reveals Schelling's attempt of a reconciliation of early German romanticism with German idealism, which is the very demand and destination of the Absolute or Reason.

(I) The Romantic Position in Schelling

A) The Significance of art in *System of Transcendental System*

The most remarkable discrepancy between early German romanticism and German idealism lies in their opposing contentions about the significance and positions of art and philosophy, in which the romantics insist that art is the highest way to the ultimate truth and unity, whereas for the German idealists thinking or reflection is the most appropriate activity in presenting the Absolute. According to that division, Schelling's conclusion made in *System of Transcendental Idealism* is undoubtedly a romantic claim. Art as "the only true and eternal organ and doctrine of philosophy"²⁸⁴ indicates that art is the final destination of the Absolute's self-intuition or self-knowing, which marks the completion of the system of philosophy. Deriving from that view, Schelling further maintains that poetry is the origin of sciences and philosophy.²⁸⁵ Thus, art becomes the cradle as well as the destination of philosophy, and philosophy here does not gain the highest status in

²⁸⁴ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Trans. Peter Heath. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978, p. 231.

²⁸⁵ See *Ibid.*, p. 232.

expressing the very nature and activity of the ultimate ground. The disqualification of philosophy for completing the Absolute's self-intuition is based upon the degree of the objectification of intellectual intuition expressed in reflection and discursive thinking. The objectification of intellectual intuition is the objectification of the Absolute for itself, which is the primordial demand and essential activity constituting the existence and forms of the world. The Absolute demands for complete self-knowing, and in order to fulfill this demand it must become its own object and separate itself into subject and object, the infinite and the finite, the ideal and the real. Late Schelling describes this primordial separation and objectification as the "fall" of the divine ground. The complete objectification comes to be when all the potential dimensions of the Absolute and the unity of them are brought about.

Art's superiority over philosophy concerning the objectification of intellectual intuition is based on two points: first, art can truly recognize and unify opposition. Any genuine and excellent work of art must present the perfect harmony of matter and spirit, the real and the ideal, the finite and the infinite. On the contrary, thinking or reflection, which is entirely a spiritual activity, is not necessarily concerned with reality. Even though the reality is thought about, the real, finite and concrete beings must be reduced into concepts, thus, the reality as such cannot preserve its own state and meaning in pure thinking or reflection. Secondly, the objectification of intellectual intuition requires to be universally acknowledged by all human beings. Since works of art essentially display the infinite in the finite, their sensible existence enables them to be universally recognized by people of whatever classes and degree of education: "How, that is, can it be established beyond doubt, that such an intuition does not rest upon a purely subjective deception, if it possesses no objectivity that is universal and acknowledged by all men? This universally acknowledged and

altogether incontestable objectivity of intellectual intuition is art itself. For the aesthetic intuition simply is the intellectual intuition become objective.”²⁸⁶ Philosophy, although all the while struggling for universality and asserting itself as a universal science, is always inaccessible to the numerous ordinary and even highly educated people.

In *System of Transcendental Idealism*, in order to argue for art's superiority over philosophy in revealing the ultimate truth, Schelling emphasizes that the beauty of the works of art must be what can be universally acknowledged. However, he seldom talks about this issue in his later discussion about the significance of art. In fact, this second demand of the objectification of intellectual intuition can be derived from the first one. If the Absolute desires to know itself completely, it must become fully objective to itself and to the divine medium. This divine medium is human beings, the beings which are developed to have self-consciousness, the consciousness by means of which the self can know itself. Determining the significance of art and philosophy according to their degree of objectification of intellectual intuition shows that metaphysics is consistently the central concern of Schelling and his discussion on art is essentially related to the problem of metaphysics. Manfred Frank's interpretation of the significance of art and philosophy in *System of Transcendental Idealism* focuses much on Schelling's discussion on the objectification of intellectual intuition.²⁸⁷ According to the above discussion, it is evident that the conclusion of *System of Transcendental Idealism* expresses a romantic position.

²⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 229.

²⁸⁷ See Frank, Manfred. *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik: Vorlesungen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989, Vorlesung 9, 10, and the Chinese translation: 曼弗雷德·弗蘭克著，聶軍等譯：《德國早期浪漫主義美學導論》，吉林：吉林人民出版社，2006，第九、十講。

B) The Significance of Art in *Philosophy of Art*

Manfred Frank thinks that romanticism is the philosophical thought which demands for renouncing the possibility of reflection to present the Absolute, and uses art as the only compensation for the renouncement of reflection. In this way, Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* is romantic, whereas his *Philosophy of Art* and Hegel's *Aesthetics* are not. The latter ones are works of German idealism, which maintain that by means of reflection the Absolute is capable of presenting itself sufficiently.²⁸⁸ I have repeatedly emphasized that there is no essential change between *System of Transcendental Idealism* and *Philosophy of Art*, rather, the latter is a detailed supplementary or a consistent development of the former. Not only the concrete examples, but also the essential principles of *System of Transcendental Idealism*, are deeply elaborated in *Philosophy of Art*.

The kernel of the consistency of the works lies in the relation between general philosophy and specific philosophies. In *Philosophy of Art*, general philosophy, the science of the Absolute *in itself*, is only the postulate and beginning of the whole system. It necessarily falls or develops into specific philosophies in which the specific forms of the Absolute are concerned. Without the specific philosophies, the general philosophy alone is empty, just as the status of the Absolute before any separation. This absolute and empty state in itself cannot generate any knowledge and fulfill the Absolute's very demand for self-intuition. It follows that general philosophy can never become a genuine philosophy or knowledge without the development in specific philosophies. Although general philosophy is the postulate

²⁸⁸ see 曼弗雷德·弗蘭克著，聶軍等譯：《德國早期浪漫主義美學導論》，吉林：吉林人民出版社，2006，頁196-197。

of the specific philosophies, only through the entirety and completion of the latter can the former truly be established. Otherwise, general philosophy is only a speculative and abstract science, which has nothing to do with existence and reality. We can further infer that general philosophy is not something independent and differentiated from specific philosophies, but is precisely the unity of the latter.

Regarding the specific philosophies, the philosophy of art is determined as the highest philosophy in *Philosophy of Art* and 1804 Würzburg Lecture, for it is that very specific philosophy which is finally constituted and established. Accordingly, if general philosophy is the entirety and unity of all specific philosophies, and philosophy of art is the final and highest one among the latter, it is reasonable to conceive that art still enjoys a higher status than philosophy. It is higher in two senses. Firstly, philosophy of art is higher than other specific philosophies such as philosophy of nature and philosophy of spirit (transcendental philosophy). Besides, we can even regard art as something higher than general philosophy, even though in his philosophy of identity Schelling maintains that general philosophy is the basis of everything and is the most divine science, for general philosophy is destined to develop into the highest potency and can be really established only after the completion of the latter. In this way, there is a surprising affinity between the contentions in *System of Transcendental Idealism* and *Philosophy of Art*: both state that art is the cradle and destination of philosophy.

Perhaps some will argue that what Schelling concludes in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* is the highest status of art, whereas in *Philosophy of Art* he only recognizes the outstanding significance of the *philosophy* of art. Accordingly, they may infer that what Schelling is concerned about is in fact philosophy rather

than art, and hence his *Philosophy of Art* is a presentation of an idealistic project and expresses a different view from *System of Transcendental Idealism*. It is indeed undeniable that Schelling's focus in *System of Transcendental Idealism* is art whereas in *Philosophy of Art* the philosophy of art. Nevertheless, it should be noted that art and philosophy of art do not have essentially different meaning in Schelling's thought. When we talk about art *as such*, we always assume that we are talking about the essential or substantial character of it without considering anything external or accidental. The problem is whether Schelling's philosophy of art observes art from an external or accidental dimension. His answer is certainly negative. He has never discussed art without regarding its essence:

“Only theory concerns itself directly with the particular or with a goal, and only according to theory can a project be executed empirically. In contrast, philosophy is totally unconditioned and without external purpose. Even if one were to object that the technical side of art is that whereby it acquires the appearance of truth, the concern for which might then fall to the philosopher, this truth is nonetheless merely empirical. That which the philosopher must recognize and present in it is of a higher sort, and is one and the same with absolute beauty: the truth of the ideas.”²⁸⁹

What distinguishes philosophy of art from a theory of art is that only the former can present the genuine truth, essence and meaning of art, while the latter is merely concerned with something empirical about art and adds something external to it. Hence, only philosophy of art can reveal the true nature of art, and the observation from philosophy of art is the most appropriate content of art as such. If we want to

²⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 7.

know about the true nature of art as such instead of leaving it unexplained, there is no other suitable way besides philosophy, the knowledge related to the primordial ground.

In addition, there is specific limitation of the word "art" in Schelling's discussion. What he mentions is only the essence of art, that is, the essence of art is revealed instead of still being covered in his discourse. When the history of consciousness enters the domain of art, the essence of art must also be revealed. Otherwise, the Absolute cannot become fully conscious of itself. Art, as the final destination of the self-intuition of the Absolute, plays the role as a final revealer of the whole history of the latter. Thus, it is not something whose essence is still hidden. Rather, its essence should be self-evident for itself at this stage. Otherwise, it is not qualified to be the final revealer but is merely an object waiting for being dissected. Hence, in Schelling's discourse, art is already conscious of its own essence and is therefore not different from a philosophy of art, the true knowledge (or consciousness) of the true essence of art.

C) The Unification of Art and Philosophy

Accordingly, we can see the intimacy between art and philosophy in Schelling's discourse. To conceive art as the cradle and destination of philosophy implies that art and philosophy share the same vocation and essence. In fact, in philosophy of identity, Schelling emphasizes that there is only one Essence, and the difference between different beings is only a formal and quantitative one. The equivalence of art and philosophy of art clarified above further supports this intimacy between art and philosophy. It is evident what Schelling intends to bring about is the unification of art

and philosophy. His anticipation of new mythology in which philosophy and sciences flow back into “the universal ocean of poetry from which they took their source” is precisely an expectation of the unification or the indifference of art and philosophy. This preference for the unity of the two disciplines is certainly a romantic position.

In contrast, Hegel distinguishes art from philosophy clearly. Although for him the essence of art is also determined according to the primordial demand of the system, art has never been confused with philosophy, the purely spiritual activity. The distinction between them is very clear and there seems no possibility for the unification of them. What is approved is only the renouncement of art’s significance in fulfilling the demand of the absolute spirit along the further development of the system. In a word, for Hegel art was only significant in the past, what will have significance in the future is only philosophy or thinking. The past and the future cut off any intimacy and unification of art and philosophy. Art is only abandoned by and subordinated to philosophy in Hegel’s system. Therefore, Schelling’s view on the unification of art and philosophy is surely a romantic position which is contrary to that of Hegel.

(II) The Idealistic Position in Schelling

Concerning art’s greater significance than philosophy in revealing the ultimate truth of the world, both *System of Transcendental Idealism* and *Philosophy of Art* obviously present a romantic position which greatly differs from Hegel’s aesthetics, in which art is only an imperfect form because of its sensible existence. However, it is too hasty to conclude that Schelling was an early German romantic. The position of early German romanticism and its dispute with German idealism is in fact subtler.

A) The Completion of the System

The most apparent and primary difference between the romantics and the idealists is presented in the controversy over the status of art and philosophy, but the most profound discrepancy lies in the ultimate question whether it is possible to complete the vocation of Reason or the Absolute. Regarding this question, the romantic answer is negative while the idealistic positive. Hence, the early German romantics can at most acknowledge an infinite approximation to the Absolute, whereas the German idealists are optimistic to and in search of the completion of the system. What about Schelling's true stance concerning this issue?

For the German romantics, although art is the highest activity through which the Absolute is revealed, what it can contribute is at most a temporary resolution. The revelation of the Absolute is not an absolute and perfect one, but is only attained in certain degree through every individual work of art. Manfred Frank insists that the romantic unification in works of art is only a "fragile" one expressed at present. When one attempt to fix this unification, the unity has already disappeared, and makes the identity something past.²⁹⁰ For the romantics the original and pure state of the Absolute can never be adequately presented even in the greatest work of art, since once it is presented, it in principle loses its own pure and original state. Thus, the universality presented in the works of art is for the romantics something defective. Schlegel calls this defective romantic universality the "fragmentary universality" (*fragmentarischen Universalität*).

²⁹⁰曼弗雷德·弗蘭克著·聶軍等譯：《德國早期浪漫主義美學導論》，吉林：吉林人民出版社，2006，頁219。

On the part of Schelling, he never presents such kind of pessimistic view especially in his *System of Transcendental Idealism*: “though science at its highest level has one and the same business as art, this business, owing to the manner of effecting it, is an endless one for science, so that one may say that art constitutes the ideal of science, and where art is, science has yet to attain to.”²⁹¹ Here Schelling is convinced that art can completely and consummately reveal the unification of oppositions, and hence the demand of the Absolute and the system can be finally fulfilled by means of art. Hence, Schelling has never suspected the possibility of the completion of the vocation of the Absolute, which is more akin to the idealistic view. The German idealists believe and postulate that the system can be completed, that is, after a long journey of dialectics, the Absolute can finally know itself sufficiently.

We can see here Schelling’s hovering between romanticism and idealism: on the one hand, in line with the romantics, he denies the *comprehensibility* of the Absolute; on the other, like the idealists, he affirms the *attainability* of the Absolute’s goal. The first view depends on the crucial consensus of Schelling and the romantics that the Absolute cannot attain its own complete self-knowing by means of discursive thinking or reflection, for in thinking or reflection the whole existence must be consciously separated into the subjective and the objective, and the entire reality cannot preserve its own essence and meaning in pure thinking. Although the second view diverges from that of the romantics, it is as important as the first in Schelling’s thought. This divergence from the romantics and affinity with the idealists depends upon Schelling’s basic conviction on the vocation of the Absolute or the system. What the early German romantics emphasize is the failure to present the Absolute *in*

²⁹¹ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Trans. Peter Heath. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978, p. 227.

its pure and original state. However, it has never become the vocation and destination of the systems in Schelling and the German idealists. Schelling as well as other idealists has not dared to claim that by means of the system the Absolute can return to its original and not yet separated state. It is absolutely impossible since once the world exists, or there is something instead of nothing, the Absolute cannot ruthlessly cancel the existence of the world. If existence cannot be cancelled, the Absolute can never return back to its original state: it is an eternal farewell to itself once the Absolute desires to know itself.

B) Necessity and Strictness of the System

Concerning the nature of art, Schelling's discourse inclines more to the romantic view; but concerning systematicity of the presentation of philosophy of art, Schelling shows much affinity with the German idealists. The romantic poets avoid systematic presentation and advocate fragment writing, and they sometimes even in discrete phrases at most express their philosophical opinion in short essays. On the contrary, all of the so-called German idealists, namely Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, present in rigid systematic form. In fact, this form of presentation may be the most remarkably common feature of them which is taken as the symbol of the idealistic spirit. The controversy between systematic presentation and fragment writing is closely related to the basic positions between early German romanticism and German idealism.

It is generally recognized that a system is a totality of thought which is based on one fundamental principle from which every part of the whole can be derived. Many contemporary scholars criticize that a strict system always eliminates contingency and freedom in life, and is therefore inapt for us to understand and describe

experience. This kind of system is generally regarded as a deductive one as well. However, a philosophical system can never be strictly deductive. In fact, a system presented in words is essentially impossible to be strictly deductive, even though it is borrowed from the mathematical form of a deductive system, as the one presented in Spinoza's *Ethics*. Only the format of presentation of the system can be taken as strictly deductive, the content is always vague and ambiguous for the mathematicians and logicians because unlike mathematical symbols, words of natural languages are necessarily polysemous. Hence, any system of philosophy, as long as it is not a purely logical and symbolic one, can not be a strictly deductive one. The relations between the premise and the conclusion, and that between the first principle and the consequence, are not truly alike in philosophical and mathematical systems, especially when the former is concerned with existence and reality instead of merely investigating the form of pure thinking independent from reality. Thus, it may not be appropriate to judge the validity and significance of a philosophical system by means of mathematical standard.

Hence, strict deduction is not a necessary requirement of a vigorous system of philosophy. A system not constructed by deduction does not imply that there is no necessity concerning the relation between the parts, for necessity is the very nature of a system, it only has to be sought independent of the mathematical deduction. Within Schelling's system the role and significance of each part and the relation of the parts are determined by a fundamental principle. Since the parts are *a priori* determined, there is necessity in the construction of a system. Schelling and other German idealists show another alternative of system construction with necessity but not developed through strict deduction. The revolution lies in the belief in *vitality* of the first principle and the system. Under the construction of German idealism, the first

principle is no longer a static one, but one which essentially demands and acts. In the same way, system is no longer a mere determination and ordering of different things concerning a central problem, but a development and progression according to a final *telos*. Hence, the consequence of the idealistic systems is not derived from the first premise, but is *produced* or *created* by the latter. In this way, the German Idealists, including Schelling, reform the meaning of "constitution". In Kant, constitution is almost equivalent to determination²⁹². Since the pure concepts of the Understanding can apply to and hence determine the sensible objects, they are constitutive to valid human knowledge and are the constitutive elements in the system. In contrast, the ideas are the concepts transcending the limit of experience and have no sensible equivalence. Thus, they cannot determine the sensible objects and hence are not constitutive. On the part of Schelling, *constitutive means creative*. Since the first principle is the ground of knowledge and existence and is itself essentially active and creative, it constitutes the whole system by means of its creation.

(III) Schelling's Unique Position in Comparison with Early German Romanticism and German Idealism

A) Reflex of the Absolute as the Final Destination

The cardinal difference between the early German romantics and the German idealists is what is taken to be the vocation of art or philosophy. In Hegel's system, this thesis of the Absolute's returning to its own original state is fundamentally invalid, for his system does not even postulate the Absolute at the beginning. Since

²⁹² Kant very seldom use the word "constitution", he only speaks of "constitutive". The word "constitution" is always used by Hurszel, with similar meaning to that of Kant.

the Absolute can be realized only at the end of the system, it itself necessarily contains the trances of all beings and knowledge rather than being a pure and simple concept. On the part of Schelling, what the system can attain is at most the perfect *reflex* of the Absolute. In the final stage of the system the Absolute becomes its own prototype and reflex. It is its own prototype since everything comes from it itself; it is its own reflex because it can only see itself in the mirror produced by itself. Without the prototype, the reflex can never exist; without the reflex, the prototype can never be realized. Thus, the Absolute can never intuit itself other than its own reflected image, and what it can and should demand for is its own perfect reflex, in which its entire essence and potentials can be adequately reflected.

Since Schelling never posits the romantic demand for returning to the Absolute in its pure and original state, it is naturally that he does not recognize the essential and eternal failure of art and the whole system in revealing the Absolute. Besides, Schelling's thesis on the final destination of the system as the perfect reflex of the Absolute is also different from Hegelian position, for reflex and prototype are interdependent concepts, if the latter is denied, the former is senseless. There is no pure and original Absolute in Hegel's system, rather, the Absolute finally attained is precisely the Absolute *itself*. Only after the long voyage of negation does the Absolute *come to exist*. Hence, we can see the uniqueness of Schelling's idealistic positions.

It is apparent that the romantic, idealistic and Schellingian positions are highly consistent in themselves, what differ are their basic premises in response to the common problem. Their common problem is the unification of the opposition and heterogeneity in the world urged by the very demand of reason. Kant on the one hand

inspires their yearning for the genuine unity, on the other, the dualism left by his system upsets his successors and prompts them to find the solution in other ways. Schelling, the romantics and the idealists, all of them attempt to solve the problem by means of a dynamic and dialectical approach, in which the ground of unity is posited as a primordial demand for and act to know itself. Nevertheless, when we examine their approaches with more precision, it is clear that they have different premises and determinations to their dynamic approaches. For the early German romantics, the ultimate premise is that the Absolute ultimately demands for self-intuition of its pure and original state, yet Hegel's premise is that the Absolute can finally come to realize and constitute itself through the negation of the defective states in experience. Different from these two premises, the Absolute in Schelling is postulated as the very beginning and ground of the existence of the world and the system of philosophy, and what it ultimately demands for is complete self-knowing, but this self-knowing is only possible in the perfect reflex, which is the complete objectification of itself, of its entire essence and potences.

B) Schelling's Unique Position on Mythology

a) The Greek Mythology

Concerning the nature of art, I have shown that for the early German romantics art, even though as the most divine activity, can only presents the unity temporarily instead of completely, and for Hegel the significance of art in revealing the Absolute has gone by. Schelling's position in *System of Transcendental Idealism* and *Philosophy of Art* is definitely contrary to that of Hegel. How about the relation of his position with that of the early German romantics regarding this question? In other words, what is Schelling's unique position on art in comparison with the romantics?

Schelling's discourse on the classical and modern arts and mythologies in *Philosophy of Art* provides important clues for the above question. In this work mythology, especially that of ancient Greek, is treated as the essence and paradigm of all works of art. Schelling calls it the "first content of all art".²⁹³ By "content" he does not mean the concrete one, but the substance, hence, "content" in Schelling's context is always synonymous to "essence". Schelling maintains that the ancients themselves designated mythology as the common source of poesy, history and philosophy, among which "poesy is the primal matter from which all else issued."²⁹⁴ Since mythology is the product of poetic spirit, it is itself a concrete work of art, and is therefore also the paradigm or the "highest archetype"²⁹⁵ of the poetic world. Although art in modern age is far different from Greek mythology, as the essence and paradigm of all works of art no matter in what districts and ages, the latter indeed provides the guidance and inspiration to art in modern age and even in future. On the part of the early German romantics, although they deliver much praise to the Greek art, they do not think that modern art or romantic art should model on the ancient one. Friedrich Schlegel claims that "all the classical poetical genres have now become ridiculous in their rigid purity."²⁹⁶ "In the ancient we see the perfected letter of all poetry; in the moderns we see its growing spirit."²⁹⁷ Even though for the romantics the ancient art is in certain sense perfect, it cannot present the spirit of modern age in which growing spirit and originality are more emphasized.

²⁹³ Ibid, p. 45.

²⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 52.

²⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 36.

²⁹⁶ Schlegel, Friedrich. "Critical Fragments 60". *Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 8..

²⁹⁷ Schlegel, Friedrich. "Critical Fragments 93". *Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 11.

In Schelling's discourse, Greek mythology manifests perfect synthesis or unity of the finite and the infinite, the real and the ideal. The Greek gods are individual and limited beings which simultaneously express the infinite and the absolute. For Schelling the determining law of the world of Greek gods is "strict separation or limitation on the one hand, and equal absoluteness on the other."²⁹⁸ Accordingly, the Greek gods must have distinct characters and each character can express the equally absolute identity. Hence, most of the gods are mighty and blessed, they do not have any genuine struggle and suffering. Since for them there is no difference and separation between necessity and freedom, actuality and possibility, they act naturally but simultaneously freely. They live naturally because they are themselves perfect and complete, and hence there is no serious pursuit for them. We can see in *Iliad* that when human beings were fighting for their lives arduously and painfully, the gods treated the war merely like a game.

Furthermore, since the gods are within their distinct characters simultaneously absolute, we can make no valid value judgment on them. When encountering Greek mythology, we find that the discrimination between right and wrong, good and evil seems to be invalid and inappropriate. If we try to judge the gods by means of our familiar moral standard, most of the gods will not deserve any respect and the value of the whole mythology becomes incomprehensible. It is because the Greek gods are beyond good and evil, or more accurately, *before* good and evil. Their freedom comes from their nature, not from their overcoming of evil and passivity. They have concrete and limited characters but never limited by circumstances, and they act ever actively. The collectivity and totality of the gods constitute a world, in which every

²⁹⁸ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *The Philosophy of Art*. Trans. Douglas W. Stott. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, p. 36.

distinct and individual feature at the same time expresses the Absolute, and mythology is the description of this completely free and objective poetic world.

Since the Greek gods are self-sufficient and blessed, they need not struggle, and the whole world of the poetic beings need not have any progression. According to that, Schelling describes the world of Greek mythology as eternal and static, just like nature. In the previous chapter I have accounted for the romantic ideal of art which stresses on diversity, progression and originality. It is evident that although some of the romantics agree with Schelling's comprehension of the nature of Greek mythology and give out much appreciation to the harmony expressed in ancient art, their ideal of art for their times and for the future is not based upon Greek mythology.

b) Modern Mythology—Christianity

Although mythology is regarded as the essence and paradigm of all works of art, the art which pursues progression, diversity and originality is never omitted or denied by Schelling in his *Philosophy of Art*. His discourse on the nature of modern art is almost equivalent to the romantic view. In modern art the real and the ideal, the finite and the infinite, are no longer unified, instead, there is conspicuous separation between them. This separation leads to the homesickness of modern age: "The modern world begins when man wrests himself loose from nature. Since he does not yet have a new home, however, he feels abandoned. Wherever such a feeling comes over an entire group turns either voluntarily or compelled by an inner urge to the ideal world in order to find a home."²⁹⁹ The separation is expressed "when the idea

²⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 59.

of the infinite emerges and a relationship to fate can develop.”³⁰⁰ Within Greek mythology, there is no idea of infinity and fate, only when the paradise is lost is man aware of his own finitude and poverty, and infinitude then becomes the main object for the artists to strive for. The incapability to attain the infinite and the ideal brings the feeling of fate to human beings. This is not only a separation of the two spheres, but also a separation of value. Finitude thereafter becomes something inferior and invaluable, in contrast, the infinite and the ideal become the origin and pinnacle of value. Hence, in modern art, including art in our contemporary time, many artists are intent on effacing any concrete content and element in their works.

In Greek mythology, since every god is complete and absolute, the whole world is eternal, and there is no separation of the past, the present and the future. Temporality has not arisen there and history has not emerged as well, if history is not taken as mere aggregate of events but as progression and development. On the contrary, the nature of modern art is founded upon the concepts of struggle and history. When the world and value are separated, there arises struggle, by means of this the concepts of the past, the present and the future emerge, which constitute the conception of progression, and hence history.

Schelling devotes many pages to discuss Christianity, the modern mythology. If Greek mythology (or other equivalent mythology) is the archetype of ancient art and of all art in general, Christianity is the archetype of modern art and even modern age. Within this modern mythology, the perfect state is no longer expressed in real, objective, concrete and individual beings. Rather, the God is purely ideal and infinite. The story of Christianity develops along man's removal of his finitude and his

³⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 52.

subordination to the purely ideal and infinite, and within this progression what man eternally hopes for is to abandon his identity as man, to wash away his original sin. Hence, although Jesus is the incarnation of God in concrete and finite being which somehow expresses the unity of the finite and the infinite, Schelling insists that he is the last god, who "comes to mankind in its lowliness and takes on the form of a servant in order to suffer and to nullify the finite by his own example."³⁰¹ As he throughout his life exhibits the pain of finite beings and preaches the ideal of the infinite, unlike the blessed gods in Greek mythology, Jesus is the most suffering god. For Schelling, this image of a suffering god should not be the genuine subject matter of art, rather, what genuine painting prefers to depict is Christ as a child, as if only in the indefiniteness and vagueness of the child can the miraculous admixture of the divine and the human be fully expressed. Since the modern world and its art are based on the struggle and history of the homeless beings, it is obvious why the romantics advocate progression and transformation in modern art.

Inasmuch as in modern age the finite is separated from the infinite and every individual is no longer simultaneous the infinite, in the works of art which essentially pursue the unity of the opposing poles, the finite can only *signifies* the infinite or at most expresses the unity temporarily or in certain degree. Hence, when a work of art is produced, it should soon be transcended, or the artist should soon produce another work in another way. Hence, in modern age the artists need to develop as variously as they can, and to explore more possibilities and produce more diverse works. It seems that only by means of this diversity can modern age somewhat fill in the vacancy between infinite possibility and finite actuality.

³⁰¹ Ibid, pp. 63-64.

The separation of the finite and the infinite also leads to the romantic ideal of originality. On the part of Greek mythology, not only are the gods the unity of the finite and the infinite, the author of it is also such kind of unity: "*Mythology can be neither the work of an individual person nor of a collectivity nor of the race...but rather conclusively of the collectivity to the extent that it itself constitutes an individual and is the equal of an individual person.*"³⁰² The author of the Greek mythology is the most perfect genius, in which individuality and collectivity, consciousness and unconsciousness, are completely synthesized. But in modern age, since the finite is only the finite, and the subject only the subject, individuality of the modern artists becomes protrudent. The modern artists unavoidably stamp their own insignia and worldviews on their works, and make their works representative and universal to their own age, which in fact is more limited when compared with the ancient ones. Nevertheless, this limitedness gives rise to the possibility of originality. If everything is as eternal and complete as nature, there is no room for original creation. Only when there is mediocrity can one recognize the exceptional originality of genius.

Thus, Schelling underscores that the fundamental law of modern poesy is originality, in which every poet creates his own mythology. In modern age, the more original one is, the more universal one will be, for originality is the universal principle of modern art. An original work is not something merely produced by the subjectivity and the individuality of the artist, instead, if it is recognized as original, it must as well express the universal worldview or ideas of a particular age. According to the very nature of modern art, the complete unification between the finite and the infinite is impossible, yet originality is a particular and specific kind of

³⁰² Ibid, p. 51.

synthesis of the oppositions in modern age. If progression, change, history and diversity are essential nature of modernity, originality should be the highest ideal in modern era, by means of which man shows his own capacity and brilliance for his eternally progressive struggle.

c) New Mythology

Notwithstanding the correspondence between Schelling and the romantics on the nature of modern art, their anticipation of the art of the future is antagonistic. The romantics think that the essence of modern art or romantic art is also the essence of future art, like Hegel, for them ancient or classical art is merely something past. Although they always acknowledge that the final state of the development of reason should be the complete unification of art and philosophy, they at bottom deny the possibility of this ideal and disapprove the direction of artistic production based on ancient art which attempts to express the harmony and unity of the finite and the infinite *in the finite*. Schelling, on the contrary, anticipates that after the long progression and development of modern art, a new mythology like the ancient Greek one will emerge *again*. The succession in modern art will be finally manifested as a totality and transformed into simultaneity: "Christianity, however, is already portrayed through the course of time and through the activity of the world spirit merely as a transition and as an element of or perhaps merely one part of the new world, that part in which the element of succession in the modern era will finally be manifested as a totality."³⁰³ This anticipation further confirms that Greek mythology is the archetype of all art.

³⁰³ Ibid, p. 76.

Now, the question is why there is such kind of discrepancy between Schelling and the Romantics. It is quite evident that Schelling's discourse on the relationship between ancient and modern arts is analogous to that between the Absolute in itself and the Absolute for itself. Schelling maintains that Greek mythology, though in its perfection and eternity, does not exclude the historical dimension, and precisely in becoming historical beings can the gods become truly poetic beings. The whole world of Greek mythology just like the Absolute in its pure and original state, in which the entirety is not yet separated and every potency are absolutely identified. Nevertheless, the Absolute by nature cannot stay in this state and essentially demands for being itself truly, that is, for complete self-knowing. In order to know itself it must separate itself and fall into historical progression or development. Similarly, for the sake of being truly poetic being, the ancient art must break itself down and fall into the modern era. This is really a fall, a fall from the blessed paradise into the suffering world.

The whole modern era and its art are therefore only the process of the self-knowing of the Absolute, instead of being the destination. The destination is for Schelling to attain a complete unity again, and the anticipation of this destination guides the direction and the process of the development of modern art. Hence, the ancient and the modern arts essentially demand for each other:

“The realistic mythology of the Greeks did not exclude the historical dimension. On the contrary, it only really became mythology within that historical dimension—as epic. Its gods were originally *natural being*. These nature gods had to extricate themselves from their origin and become historical beings in order to become truly independent, poetic beings. Only here do they become

gods; before, they were idols...Precisely the opposite will be the case in modern culture. It views the universe only *as history*, as a moral realm, and to that extent it manifests itself as antithesis. The polytheism possible within it is possible only through delimitation *in time*...*They* will not be able to become truly gods, living, independent, and poetic, until they have taken possession of nature, or until they have become nature gods. One must not seek to force the realistic mythology of the Greek onto Christian culture; one must rather, in quite the reverse fashion, seek to plant its idealistic deities into nature itself, just as the Greeks place their realistic gods into history. This seems to me to be the final destiny of all modern poesy."³⁰⁴

Without modern art, the ancient art can only stay in its naïve, static and unconscious state; without the eternal harmony and complete identity inherent in ancient art, modern art will ever be confined in homelessness and restlessness. Both in themselves are incomplete, and the final completion can only be attained by means of the perfect synthesis of them, that is, the new mythology. Accordingly, the new mythology will not be a simple return to the Greek mythology, just as the final destination of the Absolute must not be a simple return to its original not-yet-separated state. It must not be so because it is impossible in principle.

We can see that the different contentions of Schelling and the romantics on art in the future depend upon their ultimate demand and premises. For the former, the Absolute ultimately demands for the synthesis or unification of everything, hence the ideal of art in the future should be a complete synthesis again; for the latter the most profound desire of the Absolute is to intuit itself in its pure and original state after

³⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 76.

separation, as this desire is radically impossible to satisfy, the genuine development of art in the future can only perform in never-ending struggle and progression. The difference from the romantics shows Schelling's unique position on art. And since the thesis of new mythology anticipates an entire completion of the system, which is in line with an idealistic ambition, Schelling's contention on mythology shows his attempt to reconcile the romantic and idealistic positions.

C) Closeness and Openness in Schelling's System

a) Closed Conclusion with Open Content concerning the Future Development of Art

The controversy between Schelling, Hegel and the romantics over the nature of future art does have important significance, for it greatly affects the development of art and even the whole society in the future. Many contemporary scholars may think that the open-ending of the romantic contention leaves more rooms and possibilities to future development. Besides, since it does not limit the future development to any specific possibility, it is a more cautious argument. In contrast, Schelling's anticipation seems to be dogmatic and invalid in contemporary age, as that of Hegel.

First of all, it must be clarified that the premises and the conclusion of Schelling in his philosophy of art are almost entirely different from that of Hegel in his aesthetics. Second, we must note that perhaps our age has not yet developed to the stage which can make impartial judgment on the anticipations. We must be careful not to be so arrogant to regard ourselves as the appropriate measure. In fact, the contemporary art which tends to present abstractly and reflectively always causes confusion and frustration. Instead of presenting objectively and universally, the

contemporary art develops in a more subjective manner and becomes more distant from the public. It prefers expressing in distorted images or even in pure forms, which only deepens the separation and disintegration of the finite and the infinite, the real and the ideal. Thus, it only arouses and strengthens the essential problem of modernity without providing any solution.

Although arousing the problem is definitely a significant task, but by means of abstract works of art alone it is impossible for man to escape from the abyss of suffering. The romantic conclusion about the future of art is drawn from their ultimate metaphysical position: It is absolutely impossible to intuit the Absolute in its pure and original state. However, this premise is indeed problematic. The difference between the premises of Schelling and that of the romantics lies in what they regard the Absolute ultimately to demand. It is doubtless that we always find it difficult to judge the truth of the first premise of a metaphysical theory since it is always beyond the limit of experience, but comparing the two premises, we find that the romantic position may come from an illusory yearning, just like we always ask "who I am", and presents the question like "what is my original characters", as if something in myself does exist purely and originally. However, we will gradually realize that I can only be the one ever in development and any question about the I before any development is invalid, for when I begin to exist, I begin to develop. Thus, I can no longer search for the pure and original I, but the I within and after certain stages of life. In this way, Schelling's ultimate premise—the Absolute seeks itself in the most perfect reflex after separation and development—seems to be more reasonable and convincing than that of the romantics.

Then, what about Schelling's conclusion of art of the future? Is it dogmatic and

closed? Will art come to an end when the final destination is reached? These are the general impressions on the systems of the German idealists including Schelling. However, within Schelling's system infinite possibility for the future development of art is still preserved. Regarding the romantic contention, the complete unity of the finite and the infinite, the real and the ideal, are impossible both *a priori* and *a posteriori*. However, on the part of Schelling, the completion is possible *a priori* but impossible *a posteriori*. It is possible *a priori* because the postulate is at least a consistent and reasonable one, it is impossible *a posteriori* since the final poetic world should be the world in which *everything* is simultaneously finite and infinite, real and ideal, individual and universal, and every particular feature and value are equally absolute. It must be completed *a posteriori* and *ad infinitum*.

Even though this goal is attained, the activity of the Absolute and life will not thereby come to an end. Greek mythology, the universal content and first archetype of all art, was not endowed by God but was created by genius. It is reasonable to further conceive that the emergence of Greek mythology was itself a complete unification after a long development unknown to us. Nevertheless, the paradise cannot last long, since prolonged peace and happiness always make one forget oneself, forget the entire essence and potentials of oneself. Thus, out of an ultimate demand, the essence of the Absolute urges itself to be ready for yet another cosmic cycle: "Rome, which had collected all the world's splendor into itself, lay crushed under its own massive weight. The complete saturation and satisfaction of all objective needs generated boredom and an inclination toward the element of the ideal."³⁰⁵ Similarly, complete saturation and satisfaction of all poetic needs generate boredom and oblivion, and a new cycle will be activated. The unity will be broken

³⁰⁵ Ibid, pp. 59-60.

and separation will emerge again.

b) Closed Format with Open Content concerning the System

Many scholars criticize the systematic presentation and ambition of the German idealists including Schelling. They think that by means of the system which is constructed under strict and necessary development, the philosophers can only draw dogmatic conclusion within their own minds and throttle the reality, diversity and complexity of life. Nevertheless, although the idealists regard their systems as strict and rigid, they are never a deductive one like that of mathematics. Thus, a strict system which develops *a priori* and with necessity does not necessarily eliminate reality and life. Other than necessity, a system also demands for unity and a fundamental principle. Once we have question about the world, we at the same time desire to explain the world, and an explanation without necessity and certainty is always regarded as unsatisfactory. A demand for explanation with necessity and certainty is at the same time a demand for an ordered world, in which the relation between different objects are determined, or in which there is lawfulness and harmony between the objects. This lawfulness and harmony are the crucial expressions of a unified body. The fundamental force which supports the various and manifold objects in the phenomenal world is unity, the ultimate force of bonding and harmonizing. Although the phenomenal world is complex and seemingly heterogeneous, as it should be treated as a unity for the sake of our comprehension, a fundamental principle should also be postulated as the foundation of this entire world.

Since man by nature are not content with a merely empty postulation of the

ultimate ground and unity of the world once he starts to reflect and ask, the German idealists, the successors of Kant, endeavor to give an account for the essence of the first principle and the relation between it and the manifold beings, instead of merely staying in the Kantian position which only articulates the concepts of God, absolute and unity. Accordingly, the systems of German idealism attempt to explain the *entire* world, the ultimate ground and the emergence of the spiritual and the natural worlds. Concerning the particular objects, the system intends to explain particularity as such and the crucial particular objects in which the absolute principle can be reflected, instead of considering arbitrarily every possible particular object. Thus, a systematic construction is necessary for the people who really have metaphysical doubt, for what distinguishes metaphysical doubt from other questions is that the former asks about the totality and the ground of the world. Totality is the inner connection, lawfulness and harmony of beings in the world, and the ground is the first principle of the world. Both of them imply a demand for necessity. Besides, asking about the ground naturally leads to a question about the emergence of the world, and hence a description of the whole development of the world becomes indispensable. Totality, ground, necessity, whole development of the world, all of them are the basic elements of the idealistic systems. As I have stated in the Introduction, Schelling's philosophy in general and his philosophy of art in particular are essentially concerned with metaphysical questions. Therefore, it is natural and reasonable for him to develop a system of philosophy instead of fragment writing, even his position has great affinity with the early German romantics.

Although the early German romantics insist on fragment writing, it does not indicate that they are not involved in philosophical reflection. The previous chapters have attempted to account for the consistent philosophical position of the German

romantics even though they express it in seemingly scattered fragments. Unless they do not think, once they think they must demand for consistency regardless of what their positions are. This demand for consistency and unity in thinking is the very nature of human reason. In this way, the fragment writers do not merely pursue diversity and novelty devoid of focus and consistency. Hence, the opposition between fragment and system is not an absolute one. Rather, both of them are expressions of thought and are at bottom created out of consistent views. Thus, unity and necessity are not only the indispensable requirements for an idealistic system, but are the inner constituents of the seemingly diverse and scattered fragments of the romantics as well.

In my opinion, the kernel of systematicity in German idealism does not lie in the strict format, rather, it lies in the very demand for a beginning and an ending, a whole story. The system must anticipate an ending, and the ending in idealistic systems is always the recurrence of the beginning. Schelling insists that the ending of a philosophical system should return to its beginning, the system is completed when it is "led back to its starting point"³⁰⁶ For the idealists, the unity can only be possibly attained by means of this immanent, complete and closed systematic construction. It is immanent and closed because it is fundamentally *self-referential*, outside the principle there is nothing.

Although the romantic open conclusion seems to leave infinite possibilities for future development, by means of this open ending alone the separation in modernity will only be deepened, but never be solved. Kant recognizes the ideas as necessary

³⁰⁶ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Trans. Peter Heath. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978, p. 232.

postulates and hence leaves eternal hope to human beings, whereas the early German romantics, after questioning about the unity and the primordial ground of existence disproved by Kant, reaffirm the Kantian position that the ground and the absolute unity can only be regarded as postulates, but at the same time eradicate the hope left by Kant by means of a final announcement of the failure of the Absolute's task to fulfill its own demand for unity. Thus, what they contribute is only an empty yearning for something absolutely impossible, but not a real hope. On the contrary, we can see the positive significance of systematicity: if we acknowledge that the idea of unity is a fundamental and universal demand of human beings and is greatly important for the development of sciences and cultures, only by means of a *genuine hope* for the complete unity can the development be really sustained, and without this real hope for unity the suffering of homelessness in modernity can never be alleviated.

Since Schelling repeatedly emphasizes that the system should begin from the Absolute, and his system has a completed and closed ending, one may think that his system is a dogmatic one. However, the closed ending of Schelling's system does not prohibit the future development of the world and hence is not a dogmatic one. Schelling's conclusion in his system is in fact closed in form but open in content. Concerning art, revelation and religion, the ends of the system proposed by Schelling in different periods, all of them lie beyond the domain of pure thinking and reflection. Thus, the ending of Schelling's system does leave room for the future development with unexpected possibilities, for out of the domain of pure thinking, there is place for factuality and contingency. Besides, the *complete* unity of the real and the ideal in *every* particular being and work is indeed a very lofty ideal for human beings. Hence, although the presentation of Schelling's system is completed, the realization of it

extends into a distant future.

Although both Schelling and Hegel emphasize the necessity of a system instead of fragment writing, and both of them endeavor to construct a system with unity, necessity and a closed ending, there is an ultimate difference which greatly determines the significance of their systems: the essence of Hegel's absolute spirit is thinking whereas the Absolute for Schelling is the primordial ground of thinking and existence. The latter has never neglected reality and reduced it into the form of thinking. For Schelling, thinking in itself is in per with reality, for both of them are only the products of the Absolute, instead of being the ultimate producer. It is evident that this remarkable difference is determined by their different concerns: Schelling is always concerned with reality and existence as such, while Hegel has seldom expressed genuine concern about this issue. Hence, it is quite reasonable that many scholars make criticism of Hegel's dissolution of being into thinking in line with Schelling. Andrew Bowie puts that in Hegel's system "there is no 'question of being' and no difference between 'ontic' access to particular beings and the 'ontological' fact that all such access is secondary to the 'intuitive', immediate fact that being is disclosed at all, which can never be explained in ontic terms. The contrast between Hegel's attempt to absolutise reflection and Schelling's insights during his career into the resistance of the intuitive ground of thought to reflection offers an instructive model for investigating modern philosophy."³⁰⁷ It is also clear why Schelling's lecture on positive philosophy has inspired many important subsequent philosophers.

It is at all generally acknowledged that Hegel is the culmination of German

³⁰⁷ Bowie, Andrew, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 137.

idealism, and Schelling's system is the one preparing for this culmination. However, it is quite apparent that they do not share the common ultimate and essential concern, and hence a genuine continuity between Schelling and Hegel is highly questionable. If the Hegelian system is the representative of German idealism, then we should say that even though Schelling's system shares the same formal structure (unity, necessity and closed ending) with that of Hegel, it nevertheless deviates from the typical idealistic construction.

Andrew Bowie distinguishes German idealism from early German romanticism in the following way:

“For idealism, what philosophy can analyse in the activity of consciousness is a higher form of the intelligibility present in nature, so that the task of philosophy is to show how our thinking is the key to the inherent intelligibility of things. The essence of the Romantic response, on the other hand, is a realization that, while it must play a vital role in a modern conception of philosophy, the activity of consciousness is never fully transparent to itself. It can therefore never be finally incorporated into a philosophical system, because what we can consciously know of ourselves does not exhaust what we are.”³⁰⁸

The idealists present too much confidence in thinking and put insufficient respect for and concern about reality. On the contrary, the Romantics doubt too much about thinking and even about art, the noblest activity defined by the romantics themselves, and are pessimistic to the completion of the system. It follows that Schelling is neither a pure idealist nor a complete romantic. Different from the former, he does

³⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 63.

not intent to reduce reality into the forms of thinking and to make consciousness the ultimate foundation and principle of the system. Rather, what he ever attempts to realize is the equal respect for and complete harmony of reality and thinking. Unlike the romantics, he affirms the significance and indispensability of systematic thinking in comprehending nature, reality and the primordial ground. This hovering between German idealism and early German romanticism shows that Schelling's philosophy in general and his philosophy of art in particular are all along an attempt on a reconciliation of the two significant but partial philosophical positions.

Conclusion

(I) The Primordial Demand and Final Destination

From the above exposition, we come to see that art in Schelling reveals the primordial demand and becomes the final destination of Reason. Art therefore becomes the central issue of philosophy, and what traditional philosophy was concerned about and intended to complete now become the vocation of art as well. There establishes an essential and necessary connection between art and philosophy, and the former is now regarded as capable of showing a possible way out of the maze of the latter.

It is Kant's unique and brilliant insight that reason essentially contains a demand. From Descartes on, modern philosophy attempts to unveil and emphasize the law-giving or law-grounding character of human reason. To give such account of reason is also a major undertaking of Kant in his first and second *Critiques*. However, what Kant unveils is more than that. He points out that the traditional metaphysical questions and answers are brought forth by the very demand of Reason. Other than the pivotal role in traditional metaphysics, Reason's demand for unity is also vital in the possibility and progress of valid human knowledge. Thus, the essential demand of Reason is a twofold one: on the one hand it demands an explanation of the primordial ground of knowledge and existence; on the other, it demands unity of the world.

The essential or primordial demand of Reason is indeed intimate with the three postulates suggested in Kant's second *Critique*: A demand is a will, and a demand in

the face of determination shows the originality and freedom of the will, for it exists before any condition and thus arises unconditionally. Thus, the primordial demand of Reason exhibits a will with absolute freedom. The immortality of soul implies the desire for the unity and continuation of the soul or the self. By the same way, the demand of Reason is also a demand for unity, but in a more general sense. The postulate of the existence of God evidently displays the demand for an ultimate ground of truth and existence. The metaphysical questions activated by the primordial demand of Reason are precisely questions about the ground of truth and existence.

Although the demand of Reason and the postulates are regarded as regulative principles and not as constitutive elements of experience or of valid human knowledge by Kant, it is only through the doctrine of the regulative principles that we can see the genuine depth, profundity and originality of Kantian philosophy. Schelling's philosophy, and that of his idealistic and romantic contemporaries as well, is based on Reason's demand for ground and for unity. Although Kant is the first who suggests the demand of Reason, he does not fully articulate the foundational power of this demand within his system. Following Kant, Schelling further maintains that the demand is the first activity of Reason or the Absolute, and makes it the ground of his explanation of the origin of truth and existence. Schelling and his contemporaries venture to step into the sphere which is just opened up but not fully exposed by Kant.

If Kant rejects any inquiry into the ultimate and unitary ground of knowledge and existence, not only does his system contain insoluble problems of dualism and inconsistency, but the systematicity of his system is also questionable. For Schelling, a strict philosophical system cannot be one without ground or without the awareness

and affirmation of a ground. Otherwise, it is only a doctrine instead of a system. Different from a philosophical doctrine, a system of philosophy must be essentially concerned about wholeness and totality, rather than particular problems. The system is a necessary framework in which every particular problem can find its own place and significance. How can the wholeness and totality be investigated? If we can only encounter particular beings and particular problems, how can we approach the question of wholeness and totality? It should be noted that the question of wholeness or totality is not equivalent to that of mere universal and general principles, for one can have opinions on the latter without having any awareness and confrontation of the former. Besides, the ground of universality as such is also open to question in the former. *Questioning about the wholeness and totality is for Schelling equivalent to exhibiting the whole process and history of the activity of the primordial ground.* He attempts to investigate the wholeness and totality in terms of the dynamic development of the very ground of knowledge and existence. Hence, a complete system of philosophy should essentially include the description of the origin and the destination of the activity of the ground. That is why Schelling emphasizes that a system should include a beginning and an end. The system is now no longer something static, but is *essentially* an activity, a life.

Kant puts that human reason demands for a ground and unity, based on this very insight, Schelling further convinces us that this essential demand of human reason is the very reflex of the essence of the absolute ground, the Reason. A demand is the request asking for fulfillment, and fulfillment can be attained only through activities and efforts. In order to fulfill this primordial demand truth and existence come to be. What the primordial demands is only for its own self-intuition or self-knowing. Since at the outset there is nothing outside it, it only demands for itself, for its own

appearance. What the ground demands for is to become itself, become fully transparent to and conscious of itself. It originally is *nothing*, only after its own production can it gradually *become* the ground of truth and world. I have repeatedly argued in the main text that it is the only possible and consistent way for a philosophical construction of the ground of a unitary world.

Grounding knowledge and existence neither on the subjective nor on the objective but on a primordial demand is a remarkable step forward to the metaphysical question in the light of Kant. In traditional metaphysics and modern philosophy since Descartes as well, demand, yearning and hope do not have any seat in a rational system, but Schelling and his contemporaries are convinced that any concept of rationality should be rather grounded upon them. Instead of a propositional truth or a personal god, the primordial demand is one before anything determinate and is posited as the origin of truth and the world. Since the demand is before any knowledge, it is impossible to grasp it in the way of proposition. In addition, the primordial demand is not at the outset transparent to itself as a demand, so the story of the production and development out of the demand is not one like the creation under a personal god with clear and free will. Schelling's system emphasizes the unconsciousness in the production out of the ground, once the essence of the demand is presented and enters into consciousness the development of the system is close to its end. The late Schelling who suggests the ground as an un-ground (*Ungrund*) or an abyss (*Abgrund*)³⁰⁹ shows his increasing concern about the unconscious and incomprehensible feature of the ground before any production and

³⁰⁹ See Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *Ages of the World*. Trans. Slavoj Žižek. Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1997 and Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*. Trans. James Gutmann. La Salle, Ill: Open Court, 1936. The concepts of "Urgrund", "Ungrund" and "Abgrund" are also central to Heidegger's late thought. To articulating he meanings of these concepts in Schelling and the relation between Schelling and Heidegger concerning these concepts are indeed another independent undertaking.

activities. Hence, the ground posited by Schelling is not like any one suggested in traditional metaphysics and theology. Since the ground is essentially a demand, other than the question of how truth and world are constituted, the position of the primordial demand is also a response to the question why there are truth and world.

Many scholars think that Schelling fails to give successful argument and proof to his assertion, and his speculation goes too far away from experience and common sense. My response is that the subject matter itself is in principle far away from common sense, especially if "common sense" refers to beliefs determined by the truth model in natural sciences. The ground posited by Schelling cannot be proved and is all along a postulate. When accounting for the discrepancy between Schelling and the early German romantics, many scholars, including Manfred Frank and Andrew Bowie, sometimes present that the Absolute or the ground is for the Romantics only a postulate while for Schelling it does really exist. This distinction is indeed mistaken. An attempt to articulate the essential feature of the ground does not necessarily contradict the position of the ground as a postulate. Schelling himself surely knows that if he posits the ground as something really exists, he has to provide a proof, but his account for the ground and even for the whole system is not supported by a satisfactory proof. In fact, the ground in Schelling is never posited as something really exists. In his early essay "Of the I as the Principle of Philosophy or on the Unconditional in Human Knowledge" published in his age of twenty, Schelling has already claimed that the Absolute or the ground cannot be any kind of thing. Instead, it is unconditional, and hence not a thing. Anything that really exists must be a thing, but in Schelling's conception the ground should be before reality and beyond any determinate or conditioned thing. Hence, the position of the ground as the origin of truth and reality in his system must be a postulate, no matter how

detailed Schelling has accounted for it. From Schelling's system, we can see that although a postulate is one which can never be proved, it does not therefore prohibit us from further investigation into the essence and significance of it. Otherwise, only natural science deserves to be called knowledge and truth, not only metaphysics, but also art, history and religion will not make sense at all. Once stepping into the sphere of metaphysics, experience no longer supports the undertaking of the philosopher, instead, the philosopher must rely on extraordinary insight (or intuition) to establish new grounds for its own work.

The status and significance of art for Schelling (at least in his early period and his philosophy of identity) lie in the end of the system. Only at this stage can the ground and its meaning be fully manifested. Once the essence and meaning of the ground are manifested, the significance of different objects and their relations with the ground can be genuinely disclosed. Thus, Schelling in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* emphasizes that science and philosophy was brought up by art in their infant stages. If art is the final stage of the system, why he says that art brought up science and philosophy at the very beginning? The system is one constructed by philosopher, who has already known the whole development before his launching of the construction. How can he know it? It is probably that philosophers who are interested in metaphysical question and capable of giving significant response are those inspired by great works of art, no matter works of nature or by the artists. The works of art display inexhaustible meanings which point beyond the material and man-made beings. This is what an ordinary being in reality lacks. The works of art also drive one away from propositional truth and reflection. A genuine work of art must first call forth contemplation and what Gadamer calls

“genuine and comprehensive participation”³¹⁰ rather than cognition and reflection. In both ways a work of art pilots one to go beyond thinking and experience. The inexhaustibility of the meaning of the works of art must not come from knowledge or experience, but can only emerge out of the primordial ground, i.e., the primordial demand and force of life.

Although Schelling maintains that works of art are created by genius, his concept of genius is not equivalent to the one criticized by subsequent philosophers. Heidegger criticizes that the works of art should not be understood as works created by genius, since this concept of genius implies a philosophy grounded on subjectivity which is for him suspicious: “All creation, because it is such a drawing-up, is a drawing, as of water from a spring. Modern subjectivism, to be sure, immediately misinterprets creation, taking it as the sovereign subject’s performance of genius.”³¹¹ It is generally known that Kant is the first who suggests the pivotal significance of the concept of genius in art and places it in his system of philosophy. This concept later becomes the common foundation of the idealistic and romantic views on art. We ordinarily think that a genius is an artist who has brilliant skills and insights, or it is the special ability of particular artists. In this way the concept of genius is surely intimate with the concept of subjectivity. Thus, grounding art on this subjective power and making art the central issue of philosophy naturally result in a subjective philosophy which is unacceptable to many contemporary philosophers and even to Schelling.

However, the concept of genius in Kant, German idealists and early German

³¹⁰ See Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and method*. New York: Continuum, 1994, p. 124.

³¹¹ Heidegger, Martin. “The Origin of the Work of Art” in *Basic Writings from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*. Ed. and Trans. David Farrell Krell. London: Routledge, 1993, p. 200.

romantics is never one we ordinarily comprehend. In Kant's word, genius is "innate productive ability of the artist and as such belongs itself to nature... innate mental predisposition through which nature gives the rule to art."³¹² Therefore, neither can genius be learnt, nor can he fully understand his own production. It is because the genuine author of the works of fine art is not the particular person but nature (technic of nature). Technic of nature is the essential regulative view of human beings on the world. It is the very essence of human reason to demand for unity and organic connection of all beings in the world. According to this demand, men first presume this unity and connection before constructing his knowledge of the world. Hence, the genuine author of the works of art is the ground which originates knowledge and experience, and artists are only the incarnations of this ground. By the same token, Schelling articulates that genius, as the essential element of the creation of works of art, comes from the unconscious instead of conscious activity of the artists. Within the context of Schelling's system, we know that the unconscious is not the hidden ability of the subject, but the force beyond the subject and directly comes from the ground. Hence, proposing the crucial significance of genius in art does not necessarily commit one to a subjectivistic philosophy, at least it is not the case in Kant, Schelling and the early German romantics.

Schelling's insistence on the genius as the producer of genuine works of art is synonymous to his basic conviction that the true author of the works of art is in fact the ground, the ground before subjectivity and objectivity. By means of understanding art philosopher can grasp the essence of the ground and its whole development. Since through art the ground is first and fully manifested, art is

³¹² Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*, Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987, p. 307.

regarded as the final destination of the ground or Reason—Reason in the sense of the Absolute or the intangible supersensible instead of mere human reason. In fact, for Schelling human reason is only a reflex of the Absolute.

Schelling's discourse on the essence and significance of art within a system of philosophy does anticipate major contemporary philosophical concern and views. Heidegger, a leading figure in contemporary philosophy, echoes much with Schelling on the issue of art. Although Heidegger himself seldom refers to Schelling and shows confidence in his own originality, as Andrew Bowie emphasizes, his thought is indeed indebted to the early German romantics including Schelling: "The fact is that Heidegger, far from carrying out a final break with the past, actually follows many of the paths we have already investigated, although he radicalizes some of the ways of exploring them...some of Heidegger's best work is closer in certain ways to that of the Romantics than to much of the intervening philosophy."³¹³ For Schelling, the essential feature of works of art lies in their complete reconciliation of the unconscious and the conscious, necessity and freedom, reality and thinking. Art thus fulfills the ultimate demand for unity of the ground. For Schelling truth and world are generated out of the activities and development of the self-intuition of the ground. The demand for unity is also originated from this self-intuition, since the ground must first separate itself for the sake of intuiting itself, and re-unify itself in order to become fully transparent to itself. Although the ground is postulated at the outset of the system, the ground can only fully realize itself through works of art at the end of the system. Before the revelation from art, any conception of truth especially that of natural science is still groundless and open to question, for the essence and ground of

³¹³ Bowie, Andrew. *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: the Philosophy of German Literary Theory*. London: Routledge, 1997, p. 138.

truth is still covered, the ground is still separated from itself and is searching for itself. *Only when the ground fully realizes itself does it become the ground, and can truth and existence first attain their foundation.* In other words, ground *becomes* ground and truth *becomes* truth first through works of art.

The final conclusion: rather than being a mere revelator of truth, art is the origin of truth.

Postscript:

Schelling's Impact on Contemporary Discussions on Truth and Art

A) Schelling and Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art"

In Heidegger's important essay "The Origin of the Work of Art", we soon find the resemblance between Schelling and Heidegger:

"Art lets truth originate. Art, founding preserving, is the spring that leaps to the truth of beings in the work. To originate something by a leap, to bring something into being from out of its essential source in a founding leap—this is what the word 'origin' [*Ursprung*, literally, primal leap] means."³¹⁴

In this essay Heidegger repeatedly describes that in the works of art truth "happens". For him the works of art are something extraordinary and unusual in which the

³¹⁴ Heidegger, Martin. "The Origin of the Work of Art" in *Basic Writings from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*. Ed. and Trans. David Farrell Krell. London: Routledge, 1993, p. 202.

essence and ground of truth can be revealed, and only when the essence and ground of truth are revealed can truth genuinely arise. Schelling's metaphysical pursuit can be understood as an investigation of the essence and ground of truth. This is also what Heidegger is concerned about, but comparing with Schelling, Heidegger confronts more serious and critical crises resulted from the prevalence of natural science. Thus, in investigating the question of truth, Heidegger is more conscious of the problem of the truth model manifested in natural science and attempts to ground this kind of truth upon a more primordial and authentic one, such as that of art. For Heidegger, genuine truth originates from works of art which strips off all features of truth presupposed in natural science and common sense, among which "usefulness" is the major feature. This is the objection to the truth originate from subjectivity, in which the object is regarded as something conforming to the condition of subject and can be manipulated by the latter. On the contrary, truth happens in works of art by uncovering and disclosing a world in which every thing emerges in its own features. Similarly, Schelling's system endeavors to reveal the forms and significance of different objects within different stages or contexts. The manner of truth in which the object conforms to the subject is only one intermediate stage of the whole development of the system. It is neither the first stage, nor the final. Hence, this manner of truth has yet to be grounded, instead of being able to ground others.

The stages in Schelling's system are determined according to the opposition and synthesis between the conscious and the unconscious, the subjective and the objective. Different worlds and hence different truths are the result of different productive activities and strives. Heidegger also presents that truth happens from opposition and strife: "It is the opposition of the original strife. The essence of truth is, in itself, the primal strife in which that open center is won within which beings

stand and from which they set themselves back into themselves.”³¹⁵ For Heidegger truth occurs in the strife between “world” and “earth”. There is much correspondence between this pair of concepts and Schelling’s “potence” and “ground” and other synonymous concepts. Andrew Bowie has accounted for this correspondence:

“The notion of ‘world’ means much the same as it does in his earlier work, namely the horizon within which things are always already intelligible. The ‘earth’, on the other hand, is the resistance of things against which the emergence of the world becomes possible...The new conceptual pair almost certainly has its origin in Schelling’s middle philosophy, which is usually known as the philosophy of the ‘Ages of the World’, on which Heidegger works during the 1930s and to which he also returned in the 1940s. In the essay ‘On the Essence of Human Freedom’ of 1809, upon which Heidegger writes a whole book, Schelling talks of the ‘real, which is the patent source of Heidegger’s ‘earth’, as the ‘ungraspable basis of reality in things, the remainder that never comes out, that which can never, even with the greatest exertion, be dissolved into understanding, but remains eternally in the ground’.”³¹⁶

In fact, the similar pair of concepts does not emerge since Schelling’s middle works, but has already been suggested in his early period with different terminologies. Countering Bowie’s view on the periodization of Schelling’s philosophy, I have accounted for the consistency of Schelling’s thought in chapter Seven. The questioning of the ground of existence was all along Schelling’s unique concern, and in his early twenties he has already recognized that. The later clarification of the

³¹⁵ Ibid, p. 180.

³¹⁶ Bowie, Andrew. *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: the Philosophy of German Literary Theory*. London: Routledge, 1997, pp. 176-177.

essence of the ground and of the relation between the ground and the concrete beings has already been implied in his early conception of the Self or the Absolute as something which cannot appear. Down to the context of Schelling's discourse on art, Heidegger's "world" and "earth" are similar to Schelling's "form" and "essence" suggested in *Philosophy of Art*. "Essence" is the primordial ground and reservoir of any potential being, whereas "form" is the determinate and specific appearance or reflex of the essence. The essence as such never appears and what we can know is only the forms. The forms are the only dwellings of beings and the worlds for us.

One more remarkable similarity between Heidegger and Schelling is that both of them connect art with truth and hence with history. The system of Schelling, especially his transcendental idealism, is regarded by himself as a history of self-consciousness. The dynamical and developmental characters of his system present its essential historical dimension. Heidegger notes that "history is the transporting of a people into its appointed task as entry into that people's endowment."³¹⁷ In this formulation history can be regarded as the progress of the fulfillment of a primordial demand. The demand is primordial since it is not posited by any subjective will and desire. Instead, the demand is before any subjectivity and consciousness and ultimately makes the latter possible. This demand or "appointed task" is exactly what Schelling's history of self-consciousness is grounded upon. Hence, both Schelling and Heidegger think that history emerges out of a primordial demand and develops as the fulfillment of this demand.

Concerning the relation of art and history, Heidegger maintains that art is

³¹⁷ Heidegger, Martin. "The Origin of the Work of Art" in *Basic Writings from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*. Ed. and Trans. David Farrell Krell. London: Routledge, 1993, p. 202.

essentially historical:

“The origin of the work of art—that is, the origin of both the creators and the preservers, which is to say of a people’s historical existence—is art. This is so because art is in its essence an origin, a distinctive way in which truth comes into being, that is, becomes historical.”³¹⁸

Art thus opens not only truth, but also history: truth itself is a happening, and art is the origin of happening. Happening means a beginning, and whenever there is a beginning, a history emerges. It seems that in Schelling’s system the case is rather opposite, that is, art is the product instead of the origin of history. However, as I have explained above, the meaning of final destination of the system is that only through which the ground first realizes itself and truth first becomes truth. It is the origin of the insight of the philosopher who constructs the system. In the same way, history first *becomes* history only through the works of art. Before attaining to the stage of art history is blind to itself. The construction of history developing from the primordial ground to art is indeed subsequent to the realization of history as mediated through the works of art. Hence, Schelling’s conception of the relation between art and history does at bottom agree with that of Heidegger.

However, there is one critical difference which lies in Heidegger’s especially emphasis on history as history of a people. Heidegger is more concerned about the history of particular peoples, and this shows the development and turn of contemporary philosophy after Hegel. Schelling’s history is the general history of the self-intuition of the Absolute, he never accounts for the history of particular cultures

³¹⁸ Ibid.

or peoples. Within his discourse of art, he takes a cosmopolitan view under which the commonality of works of art from different cultures is considered, with the particular contexts of them are ignored. For Heidegger, the history of a people depends on the peoples' thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) and projection (*Entwurf*). It is based on the particular facticity and possibility of a people that history (of a people) genuinely emerges. It is evident that Schelling has not disclosed the existential characters of human beings and hence fails to unveil the particularity and facticity of history. Nevertheless, Schelling's system can anticipate and accommodate this direction of research. In his *System of Transcendental Idealism*, he has emphasized the significance of destiny in constituting the essence of morality. Destiny, which is constituted by reality and other human beings, comes before any subjective, conscious and even free decision. Besides, his increasing emphasis on the significance of unconsciousness and positive philosophy shows his increasing concern for being and existence. Thus, although Schelling has not brought the contemporary concern to the fore, his system does not block the possibility and deny the significance of the research into history of a people and the foundation of it. Instead, the contemporary questions on art, truth and history all have their seats reserved in his system.

I do not dare to undertake here a detailed research into the relation between the thoughts of Schelling and Heidegger, which would be another serious and great task. What I intend to show through the very brief comparison is that Schelling does anticipate some important issues in contemporary philosophy, even though he has long been ignored and a systematic approach to metaphysical question like his is generally offensive to contemporary philosophers.

B) Schelling and Gadamer's Concept of Human Sciences

What reveals through art and the whole system is indeed the self-understanding of Reason or the primordial ground. Self-understanding discloses truth of itself. Besides within the content of Schelling's discourse on art, the relation between art and truth is also presented in the very approach of his discourse on art. Diverging from the early German romantics, Schelling adopts a "scientific" and systematic approach instead of writing fragment and poetry. This scientific questioning of art exhibits the interpenetration of art and science in another way. The science of art is entirely different from natural science. The science of art is essentially a metaphysics which is concerned about the ground in the sphere of art. On the contrary, the question of the ground of truth and existence does not preoccupy the natural scientists. The superior law as well as the entire preoccupation for natural science is rather causation without further questioning its foundation and limitation. Once the scientists question the foundation of the rule, they transform into philosophers. Hence, Schelling's science of art and natural science in general are different kinds of science, and the former is presumably a foundation of the latter.

Different from artists, philosophers are involved in the question of art, instead of an impulse to create. Philosophy and art, and hence philosophers and artists, approach the same ground in different manners. Insofar they ultimately reveal the same ground, they can interpenetrate each other, but since they reveal in different manners, we can not equalize them in haste. After getting insight from the works of art, the whole construction of the philosophers are entirely within consciousness. After the first insight gained from art, which is the perfect reconciliation of the conscious and the unconscious, the philosophers now attempt to represent the

revelation in consciousness and reflection. They have to articulate clear questions. This is the vocation of philosopher *as such*. What makes Schelling different from Hegel is that although he attempts to unveil the ground and its whole development in consciousness and reflection, his system always recognizes the limitation of reflection and points beyond the sphere of thinking. As I have discussed in chapter Eight, Schelling's system is therefore closed in form but open in content, which is an endeavor to reconcile the idealistic and romantic demands. He on the one hand attempts to exhaust and complete the framework of thinking concerning the question of the ground. In fact, it is what a system of philosophy necessarily desires. On the other hand, he attempts to display the limit of thinking by exhausting it, and hence he recognizes the significance of individuality, finitude and contingency, which are as such excluded from or reduced to the sphere of pure thinking in modern philosophy culminated in Hegel.

Gadamer objects the approach of German idealism for it always neglects finiteness:

“If speculative idealism sought to overcome the aesthetic subjectivism and agnosticism based on Kant by elevating itself to the standpoint of infinite knowledge, then, as we have seen, this gnostic self-redemption of finitude involved art's being superseded by philosophy. We, instead, will have to hold firmly to the standpoint of finiteness.”³¹⁹

“To hold firmly to the standpoint of finiteness” can be regarded as a main concern of many important contemporary thinkers against the standpoint of speculative idealism.

³¹⁹ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and method*. New York: Continuum, 1994, p. 86.

However, we can see that chronologically speaking Schelling has already concerned about the indispensable significance of finiteness as such before the culmination of the system of pure thinking in Hegel. Hence, we can somehow associate Schelling's philosophy, the science of science, with what Gadamer suggests as "human sciences":

"human sciences are connected to modes of experience that lie outside science: with the experiences of philosophy, of art, and of history itself. These are all modes of experience in which a truth is communicated that cannot be verified by the methodological means proper to science."³²⁰

Schelling's investigation into art is also a science originated from the extraordinary experience of art and hence discloses the truth which grounds the mode of truth in natural sciences.

Even though Gadamer is convinced that philosophy should hold the standpoint of finiteness, any reflection or investigation into the finiteness and individuality of the works of art inevitably contains universal claim. However, it does not mean that the finite and the particular are at last swallowed up in the universal by any kind of science. Human sciences, like Schelling's philosophy of art and his system in general, should be regarded as the kind which displays a magical harmony and interpenetration of the finite and the infinite.

Even so, similar to Heidegger, the emphasis of Gadamer and Schelling is different. The latter never adopts the strategy which uses thinking to prove its own

³²⁰ Ibid, "Introduction", p. xxi.

limitation and groundlessness, as what Schelling does in his system of philosophy. Besides, the question of the absolute and the primordial ground before the facticity of different peoples and cultures is also not considered by Gadamer. Instead of first establishing the general framework for understanding particularity and finiteness, contemporary philosophers prefer to hold the standpoint of finiteness by means of investigating individual subject matters directly and in a more detailed way.

Hegel is generally regarded as the culmination and the end of modern philosophy and metaphysics. Contemporary philosophy tends to regard itself as an escape from the impasse of modernity or as something entirely new. By means of an investigation into the discourse on art of Schelling, we come to know that the above story is not a completely correct description. Schelling's philosophy, which has long been overlooked, does serve as a bridge to connect "modern" to "post-modern" philosophy. Furthermore, it even gives us insight into a reconciliation of modern and post-modern philosophies. One major contribution of Kant can be presented in the following statement: "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind."³²¹ The whole construction of his system is indeed guided by this insight. Similarly, from Schelling's philosophy we learn that the primordial ground without life is empty, life without the primordial ground is fundamentally impossible. Life, the most complex complex, is the eternal battlefield and playground of reality and thinking, unconsciousness and consciousness, opposition and unity, finitude and infinitude...

³²¹ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith. Macmillan: London; St. Martin's: New York, 1968, p. 93.

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