Sebastian Gardner

The Desire of the Whole in Classical German Philosophy

Abstract. *The notion that we are bound to desire the whole – i.e., that we rightfully aspire to exist as complete and undivided entities, Totalitäten – is familiar from Schiller's Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen. My discussion aims to indicate (i) the logical peculiarity of this desire, (ii) its internal relation to post-Kantian concerns, (iii) the specific argument for its necessity given in Schiller's Letters, (iv) the arguable limitations of Schiller's account, (v) the alternative versions of it (and critical views of Schiller) found in Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, and (vi) the platonistic-formalist dimension of this development.*

Die Idee, dass wir dazu bestimmt sind, das Ganze zu begehren – d.h., dass wir rechtmäßig danach streben, als vollendete und ungeteilte Wesen oder „Totalitäten" zu existieren – ist uns aus Schillers Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen vertraut. Das Ziel der Diskussion in diesem Beitrag ist, Folgendes zu erläutern: (i) die logische Eigentümlichkeit dieses Begehrens, (ii) seine innere Beziehung zu den Aufgaben der Nachkantianer, (iii) das in Schillers Briefen gelieferte Argument für die Notwendigkeit des Begehrens, (iv) die möglichen Grenzen von Schillers Theorie, (v) die alternativen Ausarbeitungen dieses Arguments (und kritischen Stellungnahmen zu Schiller) bei Fichte, Schelling und Hegel, und (vi) die platonistisch-formalistische Dimension dieser Entwicklung.

> "All of his life he had this ability to imagine himself completely. Everything always added up to something whole. How could it not be when he felt *himself* to add up, add up exactly to one?" – Philip Roth, *American Pastoral* [1]

1 Introduction

It is plausible that there are certain desires with quasi-platonic objects which are presuppositions of all rational mental life. Theoretical reflection aims at the

1 Philip Roth: *American Pastoral.* London: Vintage 1998, pp. 190 – 191.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110579802-011

True, and practical reflection at the Good; and in so far as the True and the Good have determinate conditions, such as systematic form, desires for these objects too may be ascribed to subjects simply in virtue of their rationality. What makes these desires, or ways of describing them, platonic is the implication that their ultimate objects are abstract universals, and that particular concrete things, or states of affairs, are aimed at in so far as they are held to embody those objects, that is, give them actuality or make them present.

The notion that we as individuals desire the whole in the sense of our *own* wholeness – a desire to *be* or exist as a whole, to exemplify or realize Wholeness as such – is of a different order. It is not clear that any such desire is a requirement of either theoretical or practical rationality, nor what it amounts to when stated in such a bare form. What does 'existing as a whole' comprise? What does it exclude? And how can wholeness *as such* be desired, positively and on its own account, as opposed to, more simply, desiring freedom from internal conflict, or a feeling of inner harmony, or the fulfilment of one's deepest desires?

If any text in the modern philosophical tradition promises to answer these questions squarely, it is Schiller's *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (1795). One of the central and well-known claims of this work (hereafter, *Letters*) is that the desire of the whole – "totality of character", "totality of being", "totality of our nature", existence as "a whole complete in itself" without any "trace of division"[2] – constitutes, on *a priori* grounds, a necessary end of desire in general. My aim is to trace this axiological theme in classical German philosophy, which has received relatively little attention in comparison with the role of concepts of unity and totality in theoretical philosophy, yet forms a no less important part of its legacy. As the platonic provenance of the phrase testifies, the individual's desire of the whole is not a discovery (or invention) of classical German philosophy, but post-Kantian thinkers articulate it in distinctive terms that reveal its rational significance for modern individuals, making it intelligible that an aspiration to wholeness, intertwined with multifarious conceptions of the individual's identity as what matters most or ultimately to them, should have entrenched itself in the discourse of the modern world. It is highly plausible, for reasons that will emerge, that this would not have been possible but for Kant, on the one hand in reaction against his austere account of self-identity, and on the other employing materials he had provided. In the main part of this paper I will try to show how Schiller's conception of individual wholeness as a comprehensive desider-

2 LAE IV, 7; VI, 11 and VI, 15; XVII, 2; XVIII, 4. Quotations are from the Wilkinson & Willoughby translation, *On Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters* (LAE, followed by letter and paragraph number), with minor modifications.

atum goes beyond the limited ambition of mediating Kant's harsh ethical vision.[3] Its fate thereafter is a complex matter which there is space to treat only selectively, with a view to establishing that the issue remains high on the agenda in the wake of Kant, and to indicating the different ways in which Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel may be interpreted as critically reworking the *Letters*' holistic ideal.[4] What follows has a schematic character but I hope that something will be gained by singling out the theme and giving it a systematic outline.

2 Conceptual preliminaries

As already observed, the notion of a desire of the whole as such is not transparent, and before going further it will be helpful to say something about how it is related to and distinguished from other concepts in its vicinity, in particular freedom and selfhood. What must the desire of the whole be, if it is not to be paraphrasable without remainder in terms of neighbouring concepts such as these, and if its role in our mental economy is not merely instrumental? The following brief remarks are simply observations in conceptual analysis, designed to indicate why elucidation of the concept may be expected to require post-Kantian philosophical resources.

To desire wholeness is not, under that description, to desire autonomy. There is a path to be plotted from existing-as-a-whole to the enjoyment of freedom conceived as substantiality – subsistence by virtue of oneself alone[5] – but the bare concept of wholeness does not without further elaboration yield the idea of law or law-giving. At a minimum it may be granted, following Leibniz, that, given the type of non-aggregative thing that a person is, some "principle of unity" is involved in its wholeness, but whether this principle qualifies as a law and if so whether it is given from within or without, are further matters – as is also the metaphysical distinctiveness of a person's wholeness in comparison with that of other things, hence also its candidacy for constituting freedom in an axiologically significant sense.

Of course, if an appropriately contentful sortal telling us what *kind* of wholeness is in question is introduced – our being essentially the creatures of a loving

3 Schiller's is not however the very first post-Kantian statement of the ideal: it had been set forth in Wilhelm von Humboldt's 1792 contribution to Schiller's *Neue Thalia*.

4 What the texts of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel offer by way of explicit commentary on the *Letters* is limited, so my discussion here will be extrapolative. What happens to the ideal of wholeness in *Frühromantik* demands a separate treatment.

5 See LAE XI, 4.

God, or members of a certain sort of community, or natural beings with such and such needs – then everything changes, for the kind-term will then determine what counts as wholeness, and the theory or world-view to which it belongs will explain why wholeness-*qua*-*K* is desirable and how it can be achieved. Once rendered determinate by a theological or other substantive teleological context, it becomes misleading to talk of the desire for the whole as such, with the implication that it is self-standing.

This highlights what is perhaps most logically peculiar in the notion that wholeness *as such* can be desired. It is an implication of this specification that the desire goes beyond any set of determinate contents: since the desire is precisely that whatever items are collected under it should *count as* a whole, the wholeness which they are required to collectively exemplify cannot derive from or be definable in terms of them. But if wholeness functions independently of sortals, and if it also, in the way just explained, transcends and determines whatever contents might fall under it, then it represents a *purely formal* condition – which, again, makes it is hard to see how, absent a neoplatonic sheer identification of the Good with Unity or Oneness, it can merit or elicit desire.

If there is a desire for wholeness, and if, to repeat, it does not arise from a rational intuition – if it is not grounded on an apprehension of the Good, the shape of which the subject seeks to emulate or reproduce within itself – then it is natural to suppose – for want of any alternative, and because the desire is for one's *own* wholeness – that it arises, if not from our rational capacities, narrowly conceived, then from some other dimension of selfhood. However, the desire of the whole cannot be identified with a desire for selfhood *simpliciter*, for two plain reasons: in order for the desire to be ascribed, a self to which it can be ascribed is presupposed, and if wholeness is the object to be realized, then it cannot already be actual. We are plenty familiar with talk of the self as something which is not given but which needs to be produced or achieved,[6] but selfhood *qua* life-achievement is a long way from the bare 'I' of theoretical and practical apperception, and it seems overwhelmingly likely that striving after selfhood in the sense of an achievement, whatever it might comprise, presupposes rather than explains the desire of the whole.

6 The notion has acquired a strong Nietzschean association, though it can also be found in the Mill of *On Liberty*. Characteristic of such later nineteenth-century individualism is (1) its accent on uniqueness, qualitative difference from others, in contrast with the universalism of classical German philosophy (though it too has some antecedents in the period, in Friedrich Schlegel and Wilhelm von Humboldt); (2) abandonment of metaphysical grounding in favour of a purely *a posteriori* view.

Everything thus far suggests a puzzle in the concept of the desire of the whole, which makes it appropriate to acknowledge the existence of alternatives to taking the notion at face value. One such alternative is suggested by the Lockean tradition, here taken to include analytic discussion of the problem of personal identity. This approach separates sharply the question of what constitutes basic numerical sameness from all of the more axiologically invested issues surrounding selfhood. These last, on the Lockean view, are properly expressed in terms of a concern for psychological integration and other conditions pertaining to the functional organization of mental states that go beyond what is needed to secure the bare self-sameness of persons. Construing the desire of the whole in this way – though of course it may be allowed to have psychological importance – allows it to be deflated into something philosophically manageable and non-puzzling: stripped of platonism, it amounts to seeking the elimination of structural causes of psychological conflict. Psychoanalytic theory offers itself as a way of thinking about what this might involve.

The Lockean requirement that the self-sameness of persons be cashed out in terms of determinate empirical states of affairs – facts of psychological causation and continuity, and perhaps elements of bodily identity – has proved remarkably hard to meet, but there is nothing straightforwardly incoherent in this general approach and it is not easy to give reasons for dissatisfaction with it. It may be observed however, that it forces on us a dissociation, which does not come naturally to us, of questions of numerical identity from other ways of thinking about the self which are no less fundamental. Thoughts of what I am or amount to, of what I might make of my life, the sense in which I may or may not add up to something, and equally of the way in which a certain decision may, Lord Jim style, be thought to put one's self as a whole at stake,[7] do not seem at first glance to concern a fundamentally *different topic* from Locke's "forensic" question of what makes a person the same over time. At any rate, ordinary self-reflection does not cleanly separate the two questions in this manner. Of course, these supra-Lockean ways of conceiving the self may be confused, and may be held to reflect the legacy of now unsustainable Judaeo-Christian forms of thought, as Nietzsche claims. But if so, then adjustments are needed, for on the face of it we put such a strong conception of the self to work whenever we seek to characterize and evaluate ourselves *in toto*, or confront the prospect of our own death, or project ourselves comprehensively into the future.[8] This suggests that

7 If all this sounds too hazy to cut much ice, Kierkegaard's *Sickness Unto Death* gives a focussed idea of what it means to deploy the concept of the self in this way.

8 Or when, on Kant's account, our intelligible choice of radical evil fails to subordinate the principle of self-love to the moral law.

in order for there to be entities of the sort that Lockean criteria of identity seek to track, a non-Lockean conception of the self must first have been deployed by the entities themselves in their own self-production: meaning that Lockean criteria offer a third-personal, sideways-on, past-orientated representation of sameness, which may be suited for purposes of public *Verwaltung*, and may pick out something necessary in the empirical substratum of selfhood, but which fails to capture the internal principle of unity of forward-living subjects.

For present purposes we do not need to dwell further on this question, for it is enough to have indicated the revisionist tilt of the Lockean deflation and the *prima facie* plausibility of the notion that we have a primitive conception of the self which, for better or worse, is too strong, too nebulous, to be accommodated by any empirical specification of the conditions of personal identity.[9] And if that is so, then the familiar Lockean schema does not offer a way of understanding the desire for wholeness.[10]

3 Kant: the constitutive impossibility of wholeness

It should be clear why the import of these reflections is broadly Kantian. It seems to belong to the logic of the desire for the whole that it arises directly from the self, whence its unconditional character. In addition, it is neither subsumable by any determinate concept nor derivable from any set of contents; hence it qualifies as formal or "pure". As such, it recalls Kant's analyses of various items, which it appears to superimpose on one another in a way characteristic of the post-Kantian development: of the 'I' of apperception, which both determines and is secured by the *a priori* formal unity of consciousness; of the moral law, in so far as it moves the will directly by virtue of its form, of lawfulness; of the objects of aesthetic reflective judgement, in so far as these hover between sensible content and concepts of the understanding, as forms exhibiting a pure purposiveness that commands a non-empirical interest; and of the Ideas

9 These remarks draw on Wollheim 1982, Ch. 1. See also Wiggins 1998.

10 Another way of deflating the desire of the whole, very distant from Locke, is found in Sartre's inverted Fichtean claim that selfhood – which does indeed on his view necessarily imply wholeness, and which belongs to the sphere of value rather than theoretical philosophy – is a species of transcendental illusion: we as individuated instances of *être pour-soi* are necessitated to desire a totalized, self-identical mode of being which self-consciousness precludes. This supplies Sartre with an *a priori* basis for analysing desire in general as exclusively an expression of Freedom, in Part 4, Chapter 2 of *Being and Nothingness* (see esp. pp. 87–88, 101–102, 198–199).

of reason, in so far as these denote no object of their own but totalize the objects of the understanding.

And yet we find in Kant himself no underwriting whatsoever of the kind of concern present in the desire for wholeness postulated by Schiller. To the contrary, the Kantian system seems intended to scotch the aspiration, in ways that I will spell out. The vital question, in this light, is the following: If materials furnished by Kant are employed by successors such as Schiller to vindicate the desire of the whole and provide for its real possibility, does this amount to bringing the Kantian system to its proper conclusion, by completing its stalled movement towards coherence? Or does it instead evince a misunderstanding of the elements which Kant separates and holds in a carefully qualified architectonic unity, spurred on by a *schwärmerisch* desire?

The issues here are of vast complexity, but one basic point concerns the absence from Kant of any account of how (to put matters in a tendentiously anti-Kantian way) the several I's which find themselves distributed across the various sides of the Kantian divides – theoretical *vs.* practical, sensible *vs.* intellectual, Nature *vs.* Freedom-&-Reason – grasp their identity with one another. In what does our knowledge of the identity of the I of inner sense with the I of apperception, of the I of empirical practical reason with that of pure practical reason, and of the I as bearer of intelligible character with the I of empirically instantiated agency, consist?

The question is often advanced as a lethal objection to Kant's practical philosophy. Kant's defender may argue, however, that a compelling explanation and justification can be given of the alleged *aporiae*. Neither the structure of theoretical cognition as the First *Critique* reveals it to us, nor moral consciousness as the Second *Critique* analyses it, require any contentful grasp of or insight into the hypothesized 'ground of unity' of the 'multiple I's': indeed Kant's transcendental theory of knowledge and metaphysics of morals presuppose its unavailability and incorporate arguments for why this is not a privation but a strict condition for theoretical and practical necessity of the only sort that we are acquainted with and that could make any sense to us. There is moreover no conceivable situation in which an epistemic question concerning the identity of the 'multiple' I's with one another could arise, since none can present itself independently of the possibility of the others: when each comes to figure in thought, it does so *as* interlocked with the others. No skeptical threats need to be deflected, therefore. For all of these reasons it is possible and necessary, the Kantian may argue, for us to affirm and endorse, not only in theoretical cognition but across the board, constitutive divisions in human personality, the elimination of which (*per impossibile*) would destroy our identity as thinkers and agents.

4 Schiller's *Letters*: the axiological necessity of wholeness

The dualism objection to Kant exposited above, in its full generality, is at the heart of Fichte's enterprise (to which I will return later) and also, in a more localized version, the nub of Schiller's dissatisfaction with Kant in the *Letters*.

Schiller's relation to Kant has many aspects, but it is safe to say that the chief point on which the *Letters* put pressure is the relation of Freedom and Nature within the individual subject, which Kant may seem to have conceded, in the Introduction to the Third *Critique*, requires a fuller principle of unity than the Critical system had previously delivered. In this work Kant may be regarded as picking up on the separation maintained in the Second *Critique* of the two components of the highest good – complete virtue, and corresponding happiness – the necessary systematic unity of which Kant affirms but defers to the afterlife: prompting the objection (not put as such by Schiller, but in the spirit of the *Letters*) that the unity posited by Kant lies exclusively on the Freedom-&-Reason side of the dichotomy and hence remains incomprehensible to Nature and therefore of no value from its standpoint. At stake in the mediating efforts of the Third *Critique* are, accordingly, the capacity of Kantian philosophy to appease the voice of our own nature which legitimately complains of the sacrifices demanded by the moral law,[11] and to secure the meaningfulness of moral agency in a natural world governed by empirical causality.[12]

It is clear by implication from the opening of the *Letters*, though not said in so many words, that Schiller's verdict on the Third *Critique* is negative. The specific point to be pursued here – separated out from other lines of thought integral to the overall argument of the *Letters* – is Schiller's extraction of the desire for the whole from the Freedom/Nature dichotomy, this being the respect in which he goes beyond his earlier critical treatment of Kant in *Über Anmut und Würde* (1793).

The terminology of the *Letters*, it is often observed, is highly diffuse: contrasts multiply exponentially as Schiller repeatedly recharacterizes the problematic structural opposition within human personality,[13] overlaying a good dozen non-equivalent distinctions on top of one another before finally settling (in Letters XII and XIII) on the newly theorized opposition of *Formtrieb* to *Stofftrieb*. But

11 *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (1788), Ak. 5, p. 127.

12 *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790), Ak. 5, pp. 451–452.

13 Helpfully collated by Wilkinson & Willoughby in their Appendix III.

what may appear a lack of conceptual discipline, giving the work literary force but obscuring its analytical import, has a philosophical rationale. The reason Schiller takes this course is that to fix our disunity in a single definitive opposition would imply that the missing whole can be realized *merely* by resolving the dissonance of those two specific terms – which is of course exactly Kant's procedure in the Third *Critique*. Having acknowledged that there *appears* to be a problematic *Kluft* between Freedom and Nature,[14] Kant does not look for an overarching unity behind or above it, but instead attempts to throw a bridge across it by extending and deepening our understanding of each of its sides. Thus we learn in the Critiques of Aesthetic and Teleological Judgement that Nature affords *Ahnungen* and seeming *Darstellungen* of Reason in general and more specifically of moral reason, and that our power of feeling is able to transpose Freedom into certain appearances of Nature. These affinities assure us that the domains of Freedom and Nature have some degree of joint intelligibility – enough for our purposes. Schiller's counter-claim is that a stronger unity, one which cannot be reduced to a relation of harmony between any set of *relata* – wholeness or *Totalität*, as distinct from mere unity or *Einheit* – is axiologically necessary. His strategy is accordingly to direct our attention to a *non-relational* whole transcending any designation of its parts, and in order to bring into view this supra-relational One – and get us to see that the problem goes deeper than Kant thinks and calls for more than mere principles of "transition" from Freedom to Nature[15] – Schiller continually modulates his vocabulary; this rhetorical practice is an instrument of the philosophical formalism which is integral to Schiller's project in the *Letters*.

The textual and argumentative course of the work bears out this construal. In the opening letters Schiller describes a *de facto* opposition of motive forces in the populace as they appear from the standpoint of the legislator, for whom they provide both materials for statecraft and obstacles to legislative programmes, and who must accordingly calculate their strength and tendency. In the letters that follow, this standpoint is exchanged for a variety of *internal* characterizations, which take up the perspective of each motivational element in turn and articulate its defining aim. This analysis allows Schiller to model the relations of conflicting elements in game-theoretic, state-of-nature terms: subjective life is shown to pose a problem of collective rationality. The legislator's moral-political problem is converted into the psychological-metaphysical problem of each,[16]

14 *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Ak. 5, p. 195.
15 *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Ak. 5, p. 196.
16 LAE IV, 5.

for it comes to be seen that, without the construction of a new party internal to the subject capable of representing the adjudicative standpoint of the *Staatskünstler*, which requires in turn that it exhibit a 'third character',[17] the deadlock of competing drives cannot be broken.[18] Accordingly Reason generates an Idea of something that would occupy the position of sovereign or *volonté générale* within the individual to facilitate the cooperation and flourishing of their drives. Critical philosophy instructs us that this Idea, though grounded *a priori*, has yet to be equipped with an object. The requisite transition from the empty Idea of something defined merely by its role, to a determinate concept of its occupant, requires a turn towards experience and *Wirklichkeit*, not because anything actual *qua* merely given could testify sufficiently to its objective reality, but simply as a basis for forging the relevant concept.[19]

Had Schiller's aim been more circumscribed – in the way that it is in *Über Anmut und Würde* – the next step would have been to turn directly to the experience (and analysis) of beauty. Instead, when the speculative argument gets underway in Letter XI, Schiller begins by laying down a fundamental, *a priori* distinction between (i) *Person* or *Persönlichkeit* – the self-grounding, unconditioned, absolute, *niemals wechselndes Ich* – and (ii) their *Zustand* – the mutable, contingent, temporal, conditioned determinations or "condition" of the I. Only then does Schiller introduce, in Letter XII, the distinction of *Formtrieb* and *Stofftrieb*, and these are defined, crucially, in terms of their discrete roles in giving concrete expression to respectively the *Person* and their *Zustand*. These *Grundtriebe* are not perspectives, or agencies, in their own right but aspects and derivatives of a single, non-aggregative, implicit whole.[20] Neither could exist without the other, for if either completely fulfilled its aim, it would be destroyed.[21] The provisional standpoint of the opening letters, in which modern fragmentation seemed to be taken at face value, is thereby overtaken – and so too is the Third *Critique*, in so far as it told us that the weak harmony of Freedom and Nature postulated by Kant suffices to encapsulate human individuality. If Schiller is right, Kant's conception of systematic unity reflects but does not remedy the dilemma that plagues modernity.

17 LAE III, 5.

18 The point is recapitulated at LAE XIII, 2n.

19 LAE X, 7 and XVI, 1–2.

20 For this reason – and contrary to what is often claimed – the intention of Schiller's drive theory is opposed to that of Nietzsche, for whom *Triebe* provide a means of deconstructing talk of the unitary self. The difference is clear from the account of will and choice as distinct from drives in LAE XIX, 10.

21 LAE XIII, 5.

Schiller's thesis of the primacy of the unitary self is essential for the argument of Letters XVIII–XXI, the philosophical foundation of the *Letters*. Having argued that the aesthetic offers the unique means to wholeness, Schiller underlines in Letter XVIII the apparently contradictory character of the task which he now faces, of showing the aesthetic to be possible: *Materie* and *Form*, though fully distinct and directly opposed, must be united to a point where no trace of separation remains.[22] Schiller argues accordingly that a solution is thinkable only on the supposition of an original state of "unlimited determinability", which, he says, we must understand as implicating a whole that predates the formation and activation of the *Grundtriebe*, and out of which they are differentiated – in the same way that our intuition of infinite space precedes and makes possible, through limitation, its determinate instances.[23] Leaving aside the details of Schiller's complex defence of this supposition, the key point for present purposes is that what ultimately validates Schiller's claims for the real possibility of the *Spieltrieb* and its actuality in the experience of artistic beauty, thereby supplying the basis of our possible wholeness, is *Geist*'s being an "absolute unity" which is (i) at least formally distinct from its drives, and (ii) primordially "neither matter nor form, neither sense nor reason".[24]

The purpose of this highly abbreviated overview of the *Letters* is to show that Schiller recovers the desire of the whole through critical reflection on the Freedom/Nature opposition bequeathed by Kant, by advancing from recognition of the problem of our manifest internal dissociation, to the insight that wholeness as such and in itself, transcending the mere harmony of Freedom and Nature, is an unconditioned good, and by supplying in addition a theoretical account of its intelligibility; from which it follows that the opposition within us of Freedom and Nature need not and should not be accepted as the constitutive necessity claimed by Kant.[25] And plausibly, as noted at the beginning, it is only against the background of an account such as Kant's, which is at once ground-clearing and axiologically ambitious, that the desire for wholeness can emerge with such distinctness: that is, in philosophical circumstances where (i) selfhood has been analysed in strictly formal terms, liberated from both substantial ('dogmatic') teleological metaphysics and empirical psychological analysis, and (ii) a

22 LAE XVIII, 2 and XVIII, 4.

23 LAE XIX, 5.

24 LAE XIX, 9. LAE VI, 6, hints at a further metaphysical ambition, not pursued by Schiller himself but registered in Hegel's acclaim of the *Letters* (HW 13, p. 91).

25 LAE XXII, 5, gives an especially clear sense of the platonic character of Schiller's thought – explored in depth by Pugh 1996.

direct necessary connection has been drawn of bare selfhood with freedom and value *überhaupt*.

Indirect confirmation for this thesis concerning the importance of Kantian formalism can be found in Herder, who also reacted strongly to the Third *Critique* and had campaigned for quite some time before its publication, and that of the *Letters*, against the reason-supremacism of *Aufklärung*. The difference from Schiller lies in Herder's view that our alleged dividedness is fundamentally a *philosophical* error – a misconstrual of the phenomena, not a feature of them. It is corrected by countering the falsifications of analytical abstraction, avoiding reliance on putative *a priori* truths, and, above all, exhibiting the continuity of humanity's variegated development from its natural origins, as Herder attempts in his philosophy of history and as prescribed by his early metaphysical essay on the sources of cognition.[26] It is true that Schiller posits an original unity in Greek culture, but this he regards as having suffered a real destruction: for Schiller the *Kluft* has full historical, social and psychological reality, which means that the whole, though in one sense pre-existent, as we have seen, is also, in another and compatible sense, something that needs to be brought into existence. Herder's programme of philosophical reform has by contrast the character of a clarification of vision designed to expose the *actual* wholeness of human beings. What Schiller regards as the defective incompleteness of modern individuals, revealing a division so deep as to call for aprioristic analysis, is understood by Herder simply as the determinacy of personality properly consequent upon man's cultural differentiation, and as reflecting modern man's rightful aspiration towards even greater self-realization. Herder can adopt this relatively sanguine perspective because he rejects the Kantian formalism which Schiller takes as his starting-point in favour of a single divinely informed *Kraft* manifest equally in human beings and the rest of the natural order.[27] In the way noted earlier, in such a context the desire for the whole need not be considered self-standing.

26 *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784–1791) and *Vom Erkennen und Empfinden der menschlichen Seele* (1778). The latter makes plain the contrast with Schiller's *Letters*: the only real division in human personality following directly from our constitution, on Herder's account, results from the fact that *Kraft* in general, which is what unites our cognitive powers, has two aspects, one intensive and the other extensive.

27 Herder's progressively critical view in the later 1790s of the Kantianized tendency represented by Schiller is discussed in Haym 1980, pp. 631–697. Schiller reports in a letter to Körner, 7 November 1794: "Herder abhorriert sie [the *Letters*] als Kantische Sünden." Herder's full-throated condemnation of the "durchaus-Formelle, mithin Höchst-Leere" generated by critical idealism is in the Vorrede of *Kalligone* (1800), p. 649.

5 The desire of the whole in Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel

The German Idealists, viewed as critics of Schiller, accept the desideratum articulated in the *Letters*, while disagreeing with Schiller on two fundamental points of method: they reject (i) his isolation of the desire of the whole from all of the other philosophical issues surrounding Kant's legacy, and (ii) his claim that the aesthetic provides a sufficient basis for forming an adequate conception of individual wholeness. On Fichte's more conservative alternative, when the implications of Kantianism are understood correctly, there is no problematic *Kluft* between Freedom and Nature. Schelling and Hegel by contrast depart from Kant by (as it were) bringing into the picture Book V of Spinoza's *Ethics*: no adequate conception of individual wholeness, they maintain (on this point concurring with Herder) can be formulated without reference to a greater Whole.

The upshot is a double criticism of the *Letters*. First, as promoting a conception of wholeness which is merely phenomenological and subjective: real wholeness must have deeper metaphysical roots, without which the experience of unity cannot have the value claimed for it and remains a mere *als ob*. What separates Fichte from the absolute idealists is just his continuing conviction that these roots can be found in the I. And, second, as remaining too close to Kant: Schiller does not see that Kant's failure to provide for individual wholeness is connected to other limitations of his system. The two points are brought together in the charge that Schiller's elevation of aesthetic unity burdens an item which Kant had designed as essentially *compensatory*, as standing in for and merely *intimating* a ground of unity not available to our cognition, with the role of an absolute; even when Schiller's innovations to Kant's aesthetic theory are taken into account, this amounts to asking what has the status of a mere *Symbol* to serve as a metaphysical reality.[28]

This criticism has the ring of truth,[29] but the question of its effectiveness is complicated somewhat by the fact that a closely similar objection is formulated

28 Thus when art returns to a position of philosophical indispensability in Part VI of Schelling's 1800 *System des transcendentalen Idealismus*, it is on the basis not of a new aesthetic doctrine but of a non-Kantian metaphysics.

29 It is pressed in Henrich 1982 and Frank 1989, Vorlesung 7. Henrich asserts that the movement of thought initiated by Schiller cannot be completed within the Kantian framework (pp. 253, 255); Frank imputes a contradiction concealed by Schiller's indecision between Kantianism and a more expansive idealism (p. 117). Both charge Schiller with failing to clarify the sensible self-objectification of reason which he postulates. While this is of course true, it is not clear that

and answered by Schiller himself in the *Letters*. In a succinct passage expounding transcendentalist modesty and metaphysical agnosticism in Letter XIX,[30] Schiller grants that he has explained neither (i) how two opposed drives in the same being are possible, nor (ii) how beauty is possible, but then declares the irrelevance of such ultimate issues to the task at hand. For our finite axiological purposes, it does not matter if the wholeness treated in the *Letters* is 'merely' transcendental.[31] The 'Fourth Paralogism' character of Schiller's strategy becomes explicit when he talks, in the closing letters, of reclaiming "Schein von dem Wesen", of the "Welt des Scheines" as a "wesenloses Reich", and of *Schein* as "selbständig".[32] In order to show that Schiller is inadequate by his own lights, it is necessary therefore to show that his strategy of retreating to transcendental modesty cannot succeed. In the view of the German Idealists, who regard such adulterated Kantianism as hopelessly compromised, this presents no obstacle.

As noted earlier, the 'multiple I' problem in Kant is addressed by Fichte at a level not broached by Schiller. Fichte's objection to Kant on this score can be put (very summarily) by saying that it makes no sense to propose to merely interrelate different I's, each uncovered originally in a different context, on a basis of systematic unity, since this unity of rational relations can have no other source than the I itself – an entity which in any case, by its very nature, in order to exist at all, must grasp itself as the ground of whatever manifold it encompasses. This suffices to motivate the Jena *Wissenschaftslehre* – both its attempt at a fundamental unification of theoretical and practical reason, and the attempt to derive Nature within the subject from the Freedom of the I.[33] It also shows why Schiller's and Fichte's projects should intersect cleanly at one point yet diverge immediately after, as reflected in their uneasy historical relationship. The *Letters* cite approvingly Fichte's *Einige Vorlesungen über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten* (1794), which affirm that it is man's vocation to be *einig mit sich selbst*, to achieve *vollkommene Uebereinstimmung mit sich selbst*.[34] But the meaning of this is for Fichte complex and non-Schillerian. In one sense, for Fichte, the desire of the

it amounts to a strictly internal criticism of Schiller. A parallel assessment is reached by Pugh on the basis of considering Schiller as instead a neoplatonist metaphysician, 1996, Ch. 9.

30 LAE XIX, 9. Kant troubled to transcribe this passage: *Opus Postumum*, Convolut 1, Ak. XXI, p. 76.

31 Just as, Kant shows the identity of a substance is not required in order to be a thinker.

32 LAE XXVI, 10–11; XXVI, 13; XXVI, 8.

33 In the *Grundlage des Naturrechts* (1796–1797).

34 LAE IV, 2n, and Fichte, *Einige Vorlesungen über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten* (1794), FW 6, pp. 298, 299. Schiller also approves the *Wissenschaftslehre*'s concept of *Wechselwirkung*: LAE XIII, 2n. Yet in 1795 Schiller refuses to publish Fichte's own letters on aesthetic theory, which postulate a unitary original drive. See Beiser 2005, pp. 144–147.

whole is unfulfillable – "completely unachievable".[35] In another sense its object is *already* secured: transcendental philosophy proves it to be so, in so far as the *Wissenschaftslehre* shows that the opposition of Freedom and Nature within the subject, manifest in ordinary consciousness, is downstream from an irrevocable unity which it reexpresses and to the reality of which it testifies.[36] The metaphysical problem that worries Schiller is therefore already solved, for our consciousness of the necessity of striving manifests our wholeness, and to seek the unity of Freedom and Nature in the further sense of their quasi-*identity*,[37] and to ask moreover for this to be *given* in experience (in the form of "eine vollständige Anschauung"[38]), is in effect to want to cancel the task that constitutes rational self-consciousness. To desire the whole as Schiller understands it, in Fichte's perspective, is tantamount to wishing not to strive, yet striving is what gives us knowledge of our wholeness. Schiller's project may thus be diagnosed as resting on a confusion, mistaking the 'rift' in ordinary consciousness which is a condition of agency, hence also of self-consciousness, for a deficiency in selfhood.[39] As for the more specific problems of political order and moral psychology that launch the project of the *Letters*, Fichte believes these have their own solutions, in the practical philosophy developed from the *Wissenschaftslehre*.

In Fichte's eyes, the *Wissenschaftslehre* thus overtakes the *Letters* and vindicates Kantianism, on the condition that it is regrounded in a way that disposes of the doctrine of our constitutive non-wholeness. But it can also be understood why Schiller may consider Fichte to have missed the problem. If the original objection to Kant was that nothing in ordinary consciousness counts as an experiential realization of wholeness, then Fichte has done nothing to answer it, since the wholeness of the "absolute I", like Kant's highest good, is a merely noumenal matter, with significance for Freedom in its dealings with Nature but not for Nature itself; whatever its rational necessity for Reason, it appears to Nature as a *mere* postulate.

35 Fichte, *Einige Vorlesungen*, FW 6, p. 300.

36 Whether and in what sense this unity 'exists' – whether the concept is regulative or constitutive – is a moot point of Fichte interpretation but not directly relevant to the disagreement of Fichte and Schiller.

37 LAE IV, 1; XIV, 2; XV, 2–3, where it is called *lebende Gestalt*; and XVIII, 4.

38 LAE XIV, 2.

39 All this is clear in Fichte's *Einige Vorlesungen*, which endorse the asymmetry of the components in Kant's highest good, FW 6, pp. 299–300. Fichte declares that "die Vernunft liegt mit der Natur in einem stets dauernden Kampf", which can never end as long as we are not ourselves gods (FW 6, p. 316). That on the contrary we *are* gods, or as good as, at least in the making, is asserted in LAE XI, 7.

The charge is corroborated, the Schillerian may argue, when we examine Fichte's account in the *System der Sittenlehre* of what he calls *der Trieb auf das ganze Ich*[40]:

> [T]he I is here to be thought of not as objective but as both subjective and objective [...]. This is what is meant by the expression 'the *entire* I' [...]. [O]ne can grasp this concept of oneself only *partially* [...] that is, in such a way that one thinks only of what is objective as dependent upon what is subjective, and then thinks of what is subjective as dependent upon what is objective; but one can never grasp it as a single, unified concept in this manner [...]. The essence of the I is neither what is subjective nor what is objective, but rather an identity [...]. But can anyone think this identity as himself? Absolutely not [...]. Consequently, we never think the two together but only *alongside* each other and *after* each other; and by means of this process [...] we make each of them reciprocally dependent on the other [...]. [T]he I is unable to grasp itself in and for itself. It is purely and simply = X.[41]

There can be, Fichte adds, no *feeling* of the drive-to-the-whole-I, only a "thought" thereof.[42] In Schiller's terms, this is not a solution to the problem but a statement of it.[43]

The dialectic arrives here at a difficult and interesting point. On the one hand, it is true that Fichte offers nothing that exhibits the fully even-handed, double-sided intelligibility demanded by Schiller.[44] Even though the *Trieb* which the I discovers itself to be when it reflects on itself objectively is not a mere mechanical force, and *in a sense* combines traits of Freedom and Nature, it cannot stand proxy for the I as a whole, for the reason that Fichte gives: it represents the I only as *objective*. On the other hand, it is not clear that, even in enlarged Kantian terms, Schiller's demand is coherent. Schiller must express the desire for the whole in terms that make sense to and speak on behalf of Nature as much as Freedom.[45] But how can this be done? The disaggregative development which humanity has run through has left us not 'down below' in Nature but 'up here' on the side of reflective Freedom, looking down (or across the

40 Fichte, *System der Sittenlehre*, FW 4, p. 40. The theme is discussed in Wood 2016, pp. 118–120, 156–157, 220.

41 *System der Sittenlehre*, FW 4, pp. 41–42 (*System of Ethics*, pp. 45–46).

42 *System der Sittenlehre*, FW 4, pp. 53–45.

43 Fichte's solution sets opposing elements "alongside" and "after" one another: Schiller by contrast denies that there can be succession in beauty (LAE XXV, 5).

44 Schiller calls it a "doppelte Erfahrung" (LAE XIV, 2). Aesthetic experience is interpreted by Fichte – in the text rejected by Schiller, 'Ueber Geist und Buchstab in der Philosophie. In einer Reihe von Briefen' (1795) – as a manifestation of Freedom alone; it is, as in Kant, of high significance for rational life but not a requisite of it.

45 In the "complete anthropological view", "living feeling too has a voice" (LAE IV, 3).

Kluft) at the Nature which we find within ourselves. Schiller's desire for the whole appears equivalent to a longing on the part of Freedom *qua* rational *subject* to unite herself with Nature as the *desired object* – which amounts to an irrational wish for fusion with what is unconscious or desire to grasp empirically what is necessarily non-empirical.[46] If so, then it cannot be complained that Fichte's regrounded Kantian programme of subordinating Nature to Freedom leaves anything intelligible to be desired.[47]

The root of the problem, it may be suggested, is that the priority and supremacy of Freedom/Reason is an integral part of the Kantian package, and that if Schiller wants to correct it, then he first needs to extract himself from Kant's subject-prioritizing, Nature-deflating framework: if there is to be certification of the real possibility of wholeness in Schiller's sense – an actual experience which elicits desire of wholeness and reconfigures us appropriately – then a greatly altered conception of the field of possible experience and the Freedom/Nature opposition is required.

Herder, had he wished to make an internal criticism of the *Letters*, might have made levelled this objection. The argument can be made, however, that Fichte's idealist successors, Schelling and Hegel, show how Schiller's insight into the rights of Nature-within-us, though not formulable in the terms of subjec-

46 Hence the ambiguity in Schiller's attempt to treat Freedom/Reason and Nature symmetrically, his alternation between (i) a flat opposition of Freedom and Nature as respectively normative law and its absence or negation, and (ii) a contrast of two types of normative law. Of special relevance is LAE XII, 2n, which grapples with the problem of how we should describe a condition of pure feeling, i. e., pure being-Nature, since, awkwardly, this appears to amount to *Selbstlosigkeit*: Schiller's solution is to modulate it to a condition of being *ausser sich* or *von sich*.

47 In accordance with Wood's assessment: "We fundamentally misunderstand Fichte's ethics if we take it to be about the superiority or the dominance of the rational over the natural [...]. Our human vocation is, through reason, to reunite them" (2016, p. 157). Fichte can be understood to be making the relevant point against Schiller – or alternatively, as failing to understand him – when he rejects as unintelligible Schiller's complaint that his own account makes no provision for Schiller's "Trieb nach Existenz" or "Stofftrieb", countering that this can concern nothing other than "die *Darstellung des Stoffs* im Gemüthe" (letter to Schiller, 27 June 1795, *Schiller's und Fichte's Briefwechsel*, p. 37). The difficulty for Schiller is to communicate the *import* of feeling, its signifying *more* than a limitation on Freedom, whence the impasse with Fichte: Schiller in his letter of 3 – 4 August 1795 characterizes their differences as irresolvable, insisting that they arise from differences of feeling rather than disagreement over philosophical principles, and so, like quarrels over judgements of taste, must be left unresolved (*Briefwechsel*, pp. 44 – 55). If Fichte anywhere comes close to granting the validity of Schiller's ideal, it is in his description of *höheren Sittlichkeit* in the *Fünfte Vorlesung* of his *Die Anweisung zum seligen Leben* (1806), FW 5, pp. 468 – 471, but the approximation is at most partial.

tive idealism, can be accommodated without surrendering the advances made by Kant in favour of Herderian naturalism.[48]

Schelling's early engagement with the problematic of the *Letters* overlaps with Fichte's but also moves forward in the direction just indicated. In the early *Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie* (1795) and *Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kritizismus* (1795) Schelling too holds that striving is a condition that finite rational beings cannot overcome: if to want wholeness is to want absolute unity, hence absoluteness, then it is a desire for the elimination of *objects*, hence for the self's annihilation.[49] Yet equally it is true, following Spinoza, that nothing can rightly be desired but God or absolute identity.[50] This necessity stems directly from the overarching formal commitment of human reason to unity, demonstrated by Kant. Now this immediately alters our understanding of the desire of the whole: if the desire of God or the absolute is a desire for identity with it, then to desire one's *own* wholeness is to desire to reproduce in oneself the *wholeness of the Whole*.[51] The task of practical philosophy for Schelling centres accordingly on a non-theistic yet religious aspiration, and the various ethical theories which he sketches in the course of his development after 1800 turn on what it might mean exactly for the self to be aligned with the Whole, and to reproduce its infinitude within the sphere of the finite. The significance of artistic beauty lies for Schelling in the fact that it communicates, not a wholeness that we could really exemplify, as Schiller maintains, but an absolute unity that is impossible for us; its role is anamnestic, reminding us of what we have lost forever, yet properly desire to recover and can hope to recuperate in an oblique, ethico-religious form.[52]

Schelling's more direct treatment of Schiller's aesthetic programme is found later, in the Introduction to his 1802–1804 lectures on the philosophy of art. What Schelling says here allows a straight line to be drawn from the analysis of human personality in the *Letters* to the structure that defines his idealism in opposition to that of Kant and Fichte. The difficulty facing Schiller, as described above, was to articulate the desire for the whole in strong terms that do not allow a model of one-sided imposition, such as Fichte's, to count as providing its

48 A strategy which also allows Schelling and Hegel to recruit Schiller as a ground for dissatisfaction with the *Wissenschaftslehre*.

49 SW 1, pp. 194–198 and 315–316.

50 SW 1, p. 197.

51 This is simply a reminder of what Schiller himself asserts but then sets aside: our lack of wholeness does not consist only in our internal *Zerrüttung*, but is also a matter of our each being only *ein einzelnes kleines Bruchstück des Ganzen* (LAE VI, 3 and VI, 7).

52 SW 1, p. 285.

best solution. Now in Schelling's terms the insight to which Schiller is attempting to give voice is captured in two theses of his own, which immediately overcome the difficulty: (1) Nature is not alien to Freedom but rather its mirror, for it too is organized internally by an opposition of subject and object. This blocks the Kant-Fichte objection that it is nonsensical to treat Nature symmetrically with Freedom. And (2) the identity of Freedom and Nature is constituted by a point of "absolute indifference" – a concept which is of wholly general and absolutely fundamental philosophical significance, validated by its essential role in all contexts of philosophical reflection.[53] In this light, Schiller's groping after a synthesis of Freedom and Nature in the *Letters*, incited by the Third *Critique*, was altogether on the correct path but hampered by the assumption that it could be grasped uniquely *via* the specificities of aesthetic experience.[54] The upshot is that Schiller was right to find wholeness prefigured in beautiful art – indeed that is exactly what a philosophy of art grounded on absolute principles establishes – but not to think that an adequate understanding of the nature of wholeness, or the conditions of its realization, can be gleaned directly from the aesthetic in isolation.

Hegel's early texts contain no explicit references to the *Letters* yet engage with Schiller's problem of wholeness frontally, and with more sympathy for his outlook than either Fichte or Schelling – a difference accounted for by Hegel's preoccupation in the 1790s with the legacy of Christianity and its confrontation with the Hellenic ideal expounded by Schiller and, relaying many Schillerian concerns, by Hölderlin.[55] In fragments from the end of that decade Hegel defends Schiller's holistic aspiration but at the same time insists that its realization rests on a complex set of conditions, in what amounts to a far-reaching critique of the *Letters* and the wholesale conversion of its aesthetic programme into social theory and a renovation of religious concepts.[56]

For Schiller realization of wholeness takes place within a culture, which is the necessary vehicle of aesthetic education, and it presupposes a body politic, the problems of which provide the starting point of the *Letters*.[57] Yet Schiller follows Kant in resolving beauty into operations of subjectivity, analysing Kant's

53 At several places Schiller may be considered to be groping after Schelling's concept: LAE XIX, 10; XX, 4; and XXI, 4. On the connection see Frank 1989, pp. 119–120.

54 SW 5, pp. 361–368. It may be presumed that Schelling includes Schiller among the "einige vorzügliche Köpfe" that have made progress in aesthetics after Kant.

55 See the neoplatonic identification of "das Eine" and "das Wesen der Schönheit" in the eulogy of the Athenians with which Band 1 of *Hyperion* concludes, pp. 81–82.

56 HW 1, 244–250 and 419–427.

57 Indeed the ideal of wholeness is "repräsentiert durch den Staat" (LAE IV, 2).

Vermögen into *Kräfte*: Schiller interprets the final aim of cultural and political life in terms of aesthetic unity, which is in turn defined in terms of, and originally instituted within, the individual subject's relation to an object. In that sense, the wholeness of any collective, whether of a *Volk* or the state, is on Schiller's conception transferred out, genetically and conceptually, from individual self-consciousness, in the same way that Kant constructs the concept of a kingdom of ends out of the individual's self-relation. Whence the aptness of Schiller's concluding reference to a "kingdom of play".[58]

Hegel's criticism, as we may reconstruct it, rests on the thought that the demand for wholeness cannot be fulfilled under conditions that leave the subject confronted with an unmediated opposition. While it is true that the play-drive eliminates opposition, this occurs only *within* the bounds of the aesthetic experience, *intra*-subjectively, and it therefore leaves intact the basic opposition of the subject to sheer external objectivity. Hegel's point may then be put by asking, first, how the individuality here presupposed is initially possible if not as a necessity-in-relation;[59] and second, what the value of 'being a whole' can amount to, if that whole is a nullity from the standpoint of *the* Whole or if the Whole which comprehends the individual is itself a nullity[60] – a predicament closely similar to that later described in the *Phenomenology* as an Unhappy Consciousness. Without certification through relation-to-other, the experience of fulfilment in Schillerian self-consciousness effectively presupposes a solipsistic self-abstraction from the objective world, and yet Schiller's hypothesis requires that it be exported from the aesthetic context. And so what must be substituted for consciousness conditioned by the play-drive, Hegel argues, is consciousness of reciprocal intersubjectivity, in which we find the privileged unity reserved by Schiller for aesthetic experience, a unification of activity and passivity, spontaneity and receptivity, practical and theoretical orientation, and Freedom and Nature, but without residual opposition to anything unmediatedly external.[61] Hegel's enlargement of the field of possible experience to include intersubjective recognition answers Schiller's demand, and it transforms the religiously con-

58 LAE XXVII, 8.

59 The intersubjective conception, like the more general conception of individual wholeness as dependent on the Whole, is not absent from Schiller: LAE XV, 5, and XXVII, 7. But Schiller makes it conditional and consequent upon beauty. Hegel reverses this order.

60 HW 1, p. 246.

61 This is true at any rate once the 'We' of self-consciousness has come to know Spirit as comprehending Nature.

ceived Whole which Schelling designates as the antecedent and transcendent source of individual wholeness, into the immanent *We* of objective spirit.[62]

6 Platonizing Kant

The desire of the whole is proposed by Plato's Aristophanes in the *Symposium* as the solution to the problem of the obscurity of love: sexual desire does not aim at mere physical enjoyment, and lovers are unable to conceptualize their longing; only when they are invited to melt into one another and be made bodily one do they come to understand it.[63] Aristophanes' speech, it has been observed, veers peculiarly close to Plato's own thought: once the mimetic-mythical mode of presentation is removed, we have a rough, preliminary approximation to the doctrine that the Form of the Good is the object of desire in general.[64] Taking a step back from the detail of the preceding discussion, and with a view to making the connection with Plato more definite, let me now indicate how the rediscovery of the desire of the whole in classical German philosophy can be viewed as a platonic enrichment of Kant.[65]

The stimulus to the Schillerian development plotted above, it may be suggested, lies in Kant's remarkable combination of two elements which stand in tension if not opposition: a very strong requirement that the Many be subjected to the One, which must be given antecedently; and an equally emphatic denial that the antecedent One can be cognized directly or as anything other than the unified Many as given to a subject. In this lies the distinctiveness of Kant's non-platonic conception of form, his "transcendental formalism", as Robert Pippin puts it[66]: form comprises a rational function specifying and expressed in a subject's operation on a given manifold. Assuming the adequacy of this model for theoretical cognition, the question is that of its success in the practical or axiological context.

62 Whether or not the individual's wholeness is derivative for Hegel in the way it is for Schelling depends on the level of development of the *We*, and, of course, on how the relation of subjective to objective spirit in Hegel is interpreted.

63 *Symposium*, 192b – 193d.

64 This ancient quarrel of poetry with philosophy resurfaces in the Fichte-Schiller-*Streit:* Fichte criticizes the *Letters* for employing an imagistic, metaphorical mode of exposition which stands in need of translation into thought; Schiller asserts its indispensability.

65 The implicit agenda of Schelling's 1794 *Timaeus* essay.

66 Pippin 1982, Introduction.

A problem arises for Kant, critics may argue, on account of the symmetry he maintains of desire with belief. Realizing the Good, as Kant conceives it, consists in rendering the *Stoff* of practical reason, the manifold of inclinations, conformable with law. This strategy would be impeccable if desire aimed at the Good in the same way that the belief aims at the True – that is, if it aimed simply to fix with justification on certain objects and states of affairs. Kant must suppose this to be so, since the implication of his account is that, just as the end of theoretical cognition is to give systematic shape to our representation of what is real, the second-order desire governing desire in general is in effect to translate ourselves into practical *syllogisms* – in which our desires, collated and given the form of lawfulness, represent the major premise, the minor premise identifies a certain life-course made empirically available by the world, and the conclusion is our actual willing of that life. And if Kant is right, the separation of Freedom and Nature which his account implies is no less acceptable in the practical sphere than it is in the theoretical, for in both it supplies a necessary framework of justification.

Spelling out Kant's commitment to this syllogistic construal of practical existence helps to explain why Jacobi (and others) object that Kantian practical reason embodies a lifeless, mechanical conception of the Good – as having the repugnant upshot that we exist for the sake of legality.[67] To the fore in Jacobi's later writings is an internal criticism of Kant concerning what he regards as Kant's botched attempt to repair the axiological deficit created by his rationalism and idealism.[68] The skewed and self-stultifying character of Kant's system is manifest, Jacobi argues, in his official subordination of theoretical to practical reason – the doctrine of the primacy of pure practical reason, which supposedly gives objective reality to what theoretical reason cannot grasp – yet simultaneous assimilation of human desire and axiological need to a model suitable only for empirical knowledge of mechanical nature. Kant's underlying error is to fail to grasp the platonic implications of his own insight that the Good is what presides over the unity of our cognitive powers. In addressing the task of establishing the conditions under which desire can be counted rational, Kant assumes that we are already activated and set in motion by reason, hence drawn to

67 Jacobi, *Werke*, vol. 3, pp. 39–41.

68 Jacobi, *Ueber das Unternehmen des Kriticismus die Vernunft zu Verstande zu bringen* (1801), *Werke*, vol. 3, pp. 175–195, and *Von den göttlichen Dingen und ihrer Offenbarung* (1811), *Werke*, vol. 3, pp. 340–378. In both places Jacobi measures Kant's shortfallings in relation to Plato, yet allies Kant with Plato in opposition to Spinozism. Jacobi's own alliance with Plato is asserted in *Werke*, vol. 2, p. 58.

the Good, and this is a foundational datum that Kant not only cannot explain but also cannot accommodate, given the conclusions of his theoretical philosophy.

Now Jacobi's catastrophic assessment of Kant's whole project is of course not shared by Kant's idealist successors, but they do accept Jacobi's verdict that the Unconditioned which Kant agrees is axiologically indispensable cannot be realized by practical reason as Kant conceives it. If Kant's fundamental difficulty is that he tells us what it is to act rationally without telling us how we can set value on our being the kinds of entities that act thus, then it is this existence-as-practically-rational that requires primary validation. What cannot be done, however, under the philosophical conditions newly established by Kant, is to lay claim to direct and independent cognition of a transcendent motivating source of value – hence the futility of any simple reassertion of platonic or theistic doctrine of the Good (and of Jacobi's own *Glaubensphilosophie*). A revised post-Kantian conception of the Good must instead work out from Kant's formalism. And the basis for doing so is already present in Kant's conception of the Fact of Reason – a consciousness of form that incorporates its own "incentive", i. e., which is necessarily and immediately motivationally efficacious. Kant himself acknowledges the singularity of this phenomenon – "Die Sache ist befremdlich genug"[69] – but without admitting it to be an anomaly. Emancipating the platonism implicit in the Fact of Reason from the constraints imposed by Kant without casting aside the achievements of Critical philosophy, which include its deep differentiation of Freedom from Nature, begins with Schiller, who proposes that repairing Kant means avowing the desire of the whole as the form that constitutes the true and ultimate *a priori* of desire.[70] This desire, Schiller tries to show, has the same logical character as Kant's moral law – unity, universality, unconditionality – but does not implicate, rather it overcomes, the opposition of Freedom and Nature. The programme of post-Kantian idealism does not grow out of Schiller, but the *Letters* articulate one of its central themes and, connectedly, exemplify a strategy employed by all of the German Idealists, namely the restoration of an authentically platonic dimension to Kant's formalism.[71]

69 *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, Ak. 5, p. 31.

70 Notably, Schiller talks of "das Factum der Schönheit" (LAE XXV, 7).

71 Arguably it is Jacobi's refusal to recognize this dimension of the post-Kantian idealist development which allows him to sustain his nihilism objection – exemplified in his assumption that the pure formality of the Fichtean I entails its complete emptiness (*Werke*, Bd. 3, pp. 39 – 41).

References

Ak. | Kant, Immanuel: *Gesammelte Schriften*. Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften (ed.). Berlin: De Gruyter 1900 ff.
FW | Fichte, J. G.: *Sämmtliche Werke*. I. H. Fichte (ed.). 8 vols. Berlin: Veit & Comp 1845 – 1846. And: *Nachgelassene Werke*. I. H. Fichte (ed.). 3 vols. Bonn: Adolph-Marcus, 1834 – 1835.
HW | Hegel, G. W. F.: *Theorie-Werkausgabe in 20 Bänden*. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (eds.). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1970.
SW | Schelling, F. W. J.: *Sämmtliche Werke*. 14 vols. K. F. A. Schelling (ed.). Stuttgart: Cotta 1856 – 1861.

Beiser, Frederick (2005): *Schiller as Philosopher: A Re-Examination*. Oxford: Clarendon.
Fichte, Johann Gottlieb (2005): *The System of Ethics According to the Principles of the Wissenschaftslehre* [1798]. Breazeale, Daniel/Zöller, Günter (trans. and ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Frank, Manfred (1989): *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik: Vorlesungen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
Haym, Rudolf (1980): *Herder nach seinem Leben und seinen Werken dargestellt*. Berlin: Gaertner.
Henrich, Dieter (1982): "Beauty and Freedom: Schiller's Struggle with Kant's Aesthetics". In: Cohen, Ted/Guyer, Paul (eds.). *Essays on Kant's Aesthetics*.. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Herder, Johann Gottfried (1998): *Kalligone* [1800]. In: Irmscher, Hans Dietrich (ed.). *Werke*. Vol. 8. *Schriften zu Literatur und Philosophie 1792 – 1800*, pp. 641 – 964. Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag.
Hölderlin, Friedrich (1957): *Hyperion oder der Eremit in Griechenland*. Band 1 [1797]. In: *Sämtliche Werke*. Vol. 3. Beissner, Friedrich (ed.). Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
Jacobi, Friedrich Heinrich (1812 – 1825): *Werke*. 6 vols. Roth, Friedrich/Köppen, Friedrich (eds.). Leipzig: Gerhard Fleischer.
Pippin, Robert (1982): *Kant's Theory of Form: An Essay on the* Critique of Pure Reason. New Haven: Yale University Press.
Pugh, David (1996): *Dialectic of Love: Platonism in Schiller's Aesthetics*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's.
Sartre, Jean-Paul (1995): *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* [1943]. Barnes, Hazel E. (trans.). London: Routledge.
Schiller, Friedrich (1847): *Schiller's und Fichte's Briefwechsel*. Fichte, Immanuel Hermann (ed.). Berlin: Veit & Comp.
Schiller, Friedrich (1982): *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters* [1795] [*Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen, in einer Reihe von Briefen*]. Translated by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby. Oxford: Clarendon.
Wiggins, David (1998): "The Concern to Survive". In: Wiggins, David. *Needs, Values, Truth: Essays in the Philosophy of Value*. Oxford: Clarendon, pp. 303 – 312.
Wollheim, Richard (1982): *The Thread of Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Wood, Allen (2016): *Fichte's Ethical Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.