

Schelling's Version of Pure Rational Philosophy¹⁴

In the preceding chapter we noted Schelling's account of the way in which reason, emerging at last into autonomy, was employed by Continental Rationalists in a search for certainty. From Descartes through Kant, philosophy struggled to find an indubitable first principle, and to establish a science without arbitrary presuppositions. But Schelling believes none before him has successfully established a *purely rational* philosophy, and he intends to show how Reason, working autonomously, accomplishes the task. But three preliminary points must be checked.

First, What is the *object* of pure rational science? It is as Schelling repeatedly points out, nothing less than *Being itself*. The special sciences, as Aristotle observed, cut off and investigate merely a portion of Being. None of them treats universally of Being as Being. "The object of philosophy, however, can be nothing but the complete object, the whole of Being, Being without any diminution - the Ideal, as Kant put it" (V:477).¹⁵

Second, why conduct such a rational search for *Being itself*? Primarily, replies Schelling, it is a quest undertaken for its own sake. The knowledge of Being as such would be the highest *Sophia* and would represent the supreme science (Plato's *μεγιστον μαθημα*). But rational science is also pursued *for the sake of the special sciences*, for

these invariably take their objects and presuppositions for granted. (Physics, for example, is not interested in demonstrating the existence of matter; and so on). Unanimously they refer consideration and justification of their premises to that science which is not merely outside, but *above* them all. Furthermore, inasmuch as rational science deliberately seeks its object (Being) in order to deduce from it all the others, we may call this object the "Principle". Then the Science which proceeds *deductively* from this highest, unconditioned Principle, will be the highest science (V:478).

Third, How does the Science of Pure Reason get under way? How does it arrive at the Principle? Clearly not by way of *deduction*, replies Schelling, for the principle sought is itself ultimate and absolute, and any attempt to seek something more ultimate from which to deduce it would be absurd! But the only other possible method is *Induction*, in which reason moves from the particular to the general. Can this method be used here? Whence would come the particulars which lead to the general? Let us see.

A. The Analysis of Being

At the end of the last chapter, Schelling affirmed that the "modes of being which experience affords" are finally to be derived from original differences which belong to the nature of the Existent itself. Now he claims that *these modes or elements of the Existent are "immediately present to simple observation!"* (V:470). (As a rule, in what follows, we use "being" for "*das Sein*" - since in using this term Schelling seems to have in mind the unanalyzed character of being - and "the Existent" or "what is" for "*das Seiende*".)

(i) Schelling first discriminates the three elements or possibilities or moments or potencies of the Existent in the following manner:

Who could say, for example, that the pure and simple *Subject* of Being (*Sein*) is *not* the Existent (*das Seiende*)? Rather must we concede that the first possibility of the Existent is precisely the possibility of being a Subject. For any object whatsoever presupposes that to which it is object. Of course, what exists as subject cannot at the same time and in the same thought be the Existent as object. As subject, Being is posited as deprived - not as deprived of Being in general but as deprived of a certain *mode* (Art) of Being - for how could the whole of Being and even the non-Existent be nothing but subject? To be a subject is one mode of Being, to be an object is another (V:470).

The first mode, pure Subject, is also referred to as *das bloss wesende, gegenstandliches Sein* and *das bloss Sich seiende*. The second mode, pure Object, is called *ürstandliches Sein*, and *das ausser Sich seiende*. In addition, Schelling can say of the Subject that it is not the whole of the Existent but only that which is *able to be* the Existent. This does not mean that the pure Subject is *non-being* (*οὐκ εἶναι*, Nichtsein), but only that it is *not yet being* though perfectly well able to be (*μη εἶναι*). "Mere deprivation of Being does not exclude the power to be." Schelling therefore designates the pure Subject as -A.

-A is a potency of the Existent, since it contains what belongs to it, that which must not be lacking, but does not contain that which, outside of it, belongs to complete and perfect Being .. There is nothing which our thinking can posit prior to it; it is absolutely the first thing thinkable (*primum cogitabile*) (V:471).

The second thing thinkable is the Existent in which there is nothing of the Subject! That is, we are led next to pure subject-less being (+A) which can exist for itself as little as a predicate can exist without the subject which serves to support it. We now have two moments of the Existent.

We cannot posit in one breath, so to speak, the pure subject and its opposite, i.e., the pure subject-less existent. We can only posit the former (-A) first, and the latter (+A) subsequently. In other words, we can posit both only as *moments* of the Existent (V:471).

But now it becomes possible to posit a third moment which is *both* subject and object (hence $\pm A$), but each in a different way.

It will not be *in part* one and *in part* the other, but it will be each in an infinite way, hence it will be *completely* the one and *completely* the other, not at the same time [as each exists as such] but in the same way; for if it were a mixture, a concretion, of the two, it could be only *an existent*, and hence could not belong to that sphere where *nothing* is *an existent* but where each moment is *the Existent* ... and is infinite in its mode.

In this third mode of Being, the Being-in-itself (*das in-sich-Sein*) does

not cancel out the Being-outside-itself (*das ausser-sich-Sein*) or *vice versa* ... so we can call this third the Being-by-itself (*das bei-sich-Seiende*), that which possesses itself, that which possesses power over itself. (It is precisely this feature which distinguishes it from the two preceding moments, each of which is to be understood as completely self-limited; the one since it is deprived of power-to-be, the other since it is deprived of being).

... Now since this third moment is what it is, not for itself, but only in association with others, we can say of it, too, ... that it is only a moment or a potency of the Existent (V:471, 472).

These three potencies are capable of co-existing (since no one of them is the others), and mediate one another.

They are not three separate existents; rather do they mediate one the other and aid one another reciprocally to be moments of the Existent ... They are not merely compatible (*zusammen-sich-Vertragende*), as the pre-Kantian metaphysicians said of the most perfect Being, viz., that it united in itself all *realitates compossibiles*; rather do they require one another reciprocally and are true *consentes* - just as the Etruscans said of certain gods that they were born together and can disappear only together (V:474f).

(ii) But no sooner has Schelling shown the logical structure of the Existent (i.e., of the pure *Idea* of "what is"), than a new question arises. Obviously *the* Existent is not any one of the elements taken separately, nor, conceivably, is it nothing! Is it then constituted by all three elements taken together? Yes, but only in a *material* way, according to its matter (Aristotle), only as the Existent in outline, the mere figure or idea of the Existent and not the Existent itself. What we must discover is "what it is that *is* the Existent." "The Existent, the absolutely general, the *Idea* itself, requires something or someone of which it can be said that it is the cause of Being (*αιτιον του ειναι*)", or even the 'subject' of Being. And this something must be the opposite of all that is general. It must be "a real individual being" - determined, to be sure, by the *Idea*, but at the same time a *thing* (Kant's *Ding*, spoken about but never attained) whose reality is not derived from the *Idea* but is independent of it (V:474,495). Consider:

Just as each of the moments of the Existent is only *able to be* i.e., only a potency of the Existent, so the whole [-A+A±A] is *the* Existent alright, but the Existent which, in its turn, *is* not but only *can be*. It is the figure of the Existent, not the Existent itself. It is the stuff [or matter: Stoff] of the real Idea, not the real Idea itself ... It shall become reality only if there is someone or something which is these possibilities which exist hitherto merely in thought, as pure noemata.

But this [something or someone] who is these possibilities, cannot conceivably be itself another possibility, for all possibilities are enclosed (*fini*) in what we have called the figure of the Existent, and there remains only that which is not possibility but actuality, and which is related to the possibilities as that which is them. For the totality of possibilities (the figure of the Existent) is the absolutely general and cannot therefore be a self. It is the self-less, and as such it needs someone in whom it has its self. That which does not exist as a self needs something which is for it cause of being ... But this cause of being - and because it is this - is not itself a mode or stage of the Existent. It is not a fourth element or principle to be added to those we already know. It cannot be ranked on the same level as those to which it is Cause of Being. It belongs to a completely different order ... One must say, then, that it is *the Existent itself* (*αυτο το ον*), by which we mean that Being is not here a predicate but the essence itself (Unity of Being - *Sein* - and Essence - *Wesen* - in the opposed sense) (V:595f).

We may put it this way. In the phrase "that which is What is", we may distinguish the "that which is" feature from the "What is" feature. The "What is" feature contains "everything general": we have called it "the Existent" and seen that it contains three moments and represents the figure or general possibility of Being. The "that which is" feature, however, contains nothing general; it is not a *What*; in fact, "it is a reality which transcends all thought" to such an extent that the "what is" feature seems like "something super-added, something which came along later", an accidental quality (*συμβεβηκος*). Schelling recalls Aristotle's *Actus* (*ενεργεια*) for which matter was only a contingent property, a mere predicate (V:496).

Having arrived at "that which is" what is (*das das Seiende seiende*), Schelling searches around for a name for it. Since it is absolutely free of ideas and essence (considered in relation to itself and apart from "What is"), it cannot be *the One*, but only a *Somewhat*, *Εν τι*, a *Dieses*, a

τοδε τι ον, *das für-sich-sein-Könnenden*, the *χωριστον*. Since it excludes from itself everything general and therefore everything material, it cannot be *an* existent, or *the* Existent. It is "is-ness", *seiend*, *ου τι ον*, *αλλ απλως ον*. It is pure reality, and "whatever is further added to it, is due to its relation to the Existent." It is *the Actus* (Aristotle). Hence it is not to be grasped by any concept. One cannot *in general* say what it is, for unlike potency it is not an attribute. "The Actus in general is, properly speaking, not in the concept but in experience." Hence, concludes Schelling_κ, "if one wants to posit what the Existent *is* outside of the Existent and in and for itself ..., then one is no longer thinking but ... *seeing* (*schauend*)" (V:496-498). (Schelling avoids referring to the Actus as the Absolute Subject because, strictly speaking, it is *sub-ject* to nothing)(V:500f).

(iii) A final question for the present analysis remains: How do the Existent and its elements or potencies exist in the primary One? And Schelling replies that they are related to the latter as its attributes or predicates.

These differences [within the Existent] are now the differences of this determined One which finds in them its beginning, its middle and its end, by proceeding *from* itself (in its being-in-itself) *through* itself (as that-which-exists-outside-itself) in order to return *into* itself (the eternal being-by-itself). The being-by-itself is the Middle (*Mittlere*) between that which exists in itself and that which exists outside itself ... The determined One is the subject, object and the subject-object, i.e., those elements which could appear to be principles, are reduced to mere attributes of the One which is that which possesses itself in them completely and perfectly - although one cannot therewith conclude that it would not also be this in its being-for-itself. For what it is in a material way, in its being the Existent, it is equally in itself but in an *immaterial* way (*ασυνθετας*). In the elements, the Unity (*Einheit*) exists only in the first way [materially]; in the One itself ..., the Unity exists in the other way (immaterially) and is indestructible, for it can contain nothing possible, since it is an invincible and indissoluble individuality, an individual essence (*Wesen*) like no other. The individuality alone is stable; all else is dissoluble. The Unity of the One itself is that which does not disappear with that which is posited in the totality, but survives the latter as a reality which transcends all possibility.

The elements do not bother one another; that would occur only if one of them was in itself what the other wanted to be. But the difference between them, and hence the being which each of them has in the Unity rests precisely and *only* on the fact that one of them *is not* the other (not *eodem loco*) ... They differ only *κατα στερησιν*. ... It is simply a matter of something not existing in one which does exist in the other ... Real exclusion (as distinct from exclusion in thought) would entail that each wanted to exist for itself. But here each element is rather turned away from itself, -A deriving its power not from itself but from +A, both together deriving their power from $\pm A$, and all three together from that which is the Existent itself. (These elements are excluded as little as the center, circumference and diameter of a circle are excluded from the mathematical point which can be considered a circle *in potentia*.) They are not excluded because *they are not three existents, none claims a being for itself*; instead, each has only the being of that whose attributes it becomes, that to which they are all related as mere predicates. Hence their own being remains merely potential (V:499-500).

It may be true that in metaphysics nothing is less repetitious than repetition, but in this volume Schelling undoubtedly goes too far. There are no less than eight full-fledged recapitulations of the above points (i-iii), and a number of brief repetitions.¹⁶ But enough has been reproduced to give substance to Schelling's conviction that the search begun by Descartes has now reached its goal. For Schelling is confident that thought, pure Reason, has now arrived at absolutely indubitable Being, the One who is *the Existent* (with its three modes or potencies) and yet the One who *is*, independently of his being the Existent. This primary Being, this *πρωτως ον*, this particular "first that is" before all others (yet having all others in itself as their Cause) - this is the final end of pure thought. Nothing more is to be thought beyond this Being. What is possible by means of thought - that which *can* be thought - *has been thought*. It is the Thing entirely determined by the Idea (of which Kant spoke). It is the object, the Principle in which pure (non-mediated) thought has its goal, and Science its premise (V:501, 502).

B. Methodological Considerations

It is important to take note here of Schelling's lengthy reflections upon his own procedure. (i) First, there is his stress on Negative Potency

(the -A) as the starting point of process (and Schelling is happy to think that Coleridge understood the import of his thought). The idea of the most real being (*allerrealst Wesen*) does not exclude negation as such, since "negation can be as infinite, i.e., as free of negation, as position."

One can no more say that there is a negation in pure not *Being*, in the pure power to be, than one can say there is a negation in the will which does not will and which therefore is as if it were not. Such a will is not limited by negation. On the contrary, it represents infinite power ... But the will which, by its willing, rises into Being, is necessarily an affected and limited will. Pure power does not contradict pure Being. On the contrary: the more pure the former, the more powerful the attractive force of the latter. It is precisely because of the attractive force of pure Being that this pure power to be is the beginning ... Every beginning lies in deficiency. The most profound potency, to which all the others are attached, is the non-existent with its hunger after Being (V:475f).

(ii) A second point to note is Schelling's insistence that his method is "inductive" and "experiential". This raises two objections to which Schelling must reply. The first objection simply points out that Induction is generally understood to draw its elements *from experience* and cannot, therefore, be regarded as a way to that certain and definite science Schelling seeks. Schelling entirely agrees with this objection as stated:

The idea of philosophy arose only because mere experience *could not* be considered a sufficiently certain foundation, and because it was believed that its truth needed itself to be grounded. Even in the most favourable case, that of an Induction executed with the utmost care, the basis remains shaky, not only because it is *accepted* in a merely arbitrary way, but because it *is itself* completely arbitrary, and could just as easily 'be' as 'not be' - as we had to acknowledge in the case of the 'I am' of Descartes, which expresses a being which is doubtful not only for me who declare it but also *in itself*.

Philosophical consciousness can be compared to the sensibility of the eye which will not tolerate the intrusion of any foreign body. Thus, not only is this Induction not science, but also, if one imagined it possible

to pass from the principle thus obtained to deduction, one could never attain anything that could be regarded as Science in the absolutely definitive and unconditioned sense. So strongly do we conceive philosophy to be definitive and unconditioned, that we would rather give it up altogether than cease to think of it as a completely sovereign science (V:483).

The point to notice, however, says Schelling, is that it is purely arbitrary limitation to demand that Induction draw its elements *from experience*. What Inductive method seems inherently to require is not that one proceed from experience as such, but that one "proceed *from the particular to the general no matter where this particular comes from*" (V:483). If this is the case, then the "passage through" from the elements of the Existent (-A+A±A) to the Existent itself, is an example of Induction. "Should it be called Induction any the less because its moments are drawn not from experience (in the usual sense) but from *pure thought?*" (V:484). The fact is that this is the *only* kind of Induction that brings certainty, for its status as the product of pure thought means that we can be immediately sure of having omitted *no* element of complete being.

This reply leads Schelling to reject a second objection, namely, that his procedure is not "empirical". On the contrary, he claims, (dialectical) thinking *is* a genuine form of *experience*:

That nothing precedes the pure subject (-A) cannot be proved; one must *experience* it. Yes, experience it! ... To be sure, there are those who speak of thought as opposed to *all* experience, just as if thought itself were not an experience. One must *actually* think in order to *experience* the fact that what is contradictory is not thinkable. One must make the attempt to think simultaneously what is refractory to union (*Uneinbar*) in order to perceive the necessity of positing the *Uneinbar* not at the same time but at different moments, and to win in this way absolutely simple concepts.

Just as there are two kinds of Induction, so there are *two kinds of Experience*. The one tells us what is real and what is not real: this is experience commonly so-called. The other tells us what is possible and what is impossible: this kind of experience is enjoyed by thinking (V:508).

(iii) This leads Schelling to a further reflection upon his procedure. Not only is his analysis of Being “inductive” and “experiential”, but it is governed by that “clear and proper law of Reason”: the Principle of Non-contradiction. Schelling (V:487-493) discusses at length this great “law of all being”, the proper understanding of which, he claims, illuminates the nature and relationship of the moments of the Existent. He quotes Aristotle on this Law:

Since it is impossible in the same breath to formulate contradictory statements about one and the same thing and still be speaking the truth, it is clear that the opposition cannot exist in the thing itself. For one of the opposed propositions is a privation which implies a negation of a definite kind (of *Being*, for example, not of Being in general.) Hence, if it is impossible at one and the same time truly to affirm and truly to deny something, it shall also be impossible that that about which opposed propositions are formulated should be one and the same thing at the same time. And it is necessary to limit each proposition to a particular Where, or to say that one proposition refers to a particular part (e.g., that black refers to the eye) while the other (e.g., white) refers to the whole (*Metaphysics* IV, 6) (V:487f).

As hinted at already, Schelling recognizes at least *two kinds of negation*, distinguished in Greek by the particles *ου* and *μη*. *Μη* denies the reality while affirming the possibility (e.g., a sun-tanned face which by its nature *could be* white is only *non* white, i.e., *μη λευκον*); or, to put it another way, “*μη* denies the *actus* without thereby denying the being or the power-to-be of a thing.” On the other hand, *ου* denies totally, it denies the reality *and* the possibility, (e.g., “the voice is not white” is “*ου λευκον η φωνη*”, for not only is the voice not white, it *cannot possibly* be white) (V:488f).

Now, Schelling points out, whenever Aristotle spoke of the Law of Non-contradiction (viz., “that it is impossible for one and the same thing both to be and not to be at the same time”) he spoke only of *ειναι και μη ειναι*, never of *ειναι και ουκ ειναι*. Had Aristotle said the latter, he would have been limiting the principle to purely formal logical contradiction (as Kant would have it), for the “impossibility” involved would be an “eternal” logical one, and the addition of the phrase “at the same time” would be superfluous. But Aristotle’s use of *μη ειναι* made it necessary for him to add “at the same time” - for if one says

that it is impossible for a thing to be and not to be, the while affirming, by virtue of the use of $\mu\eta$, that the thing *can* be (later), then one must add "at the same time" to the original statement of the law. Thus, concludes Schelling, Aristotle (rightly) has *not limited* this law to strict logical opposites, but applies it to opposition in the broadest sense (V:488f).¹⁷

These logical considerations are important to Schelling for two reasons. First, because the Laws of Thought are for him the Laws of Being, determining not only the form of knowledge (as in Kant) but the *content* of knowledge as well. And secondly, because he holds that temporal succession is prefigured in the Idea. "The moments of the Existent behave entirely as phases which can no more appear *at the same time* than they can exist *in the same place*" (V:488).

Kant was certainly right in attributing only a formal significance to the principle of Non-Contradiction. But we cannot agree with him that no *before* or *after* is admissible in pure thought, for this is to limit thought too strictly and even to suppress it. It goes without saying that in pure thought the succession is purely noetic, but as such it is eternal and therefore indestructible. Just as the three elements of the Existent itself are pure potencies (they *are* in the sense that they wait for actuality), so the *before* and *after* are mere potencies (potentialities). They imply time, which becomes real when pure thought has been transcended. In fact, succession occurs in real time only because it was originally an intelligible, noetic and therefore eternal succession - just as we assume that in Nature the succession must have been predetermined in the Idea (V:493).

Finally, (iv) Schelling notes the identity of his procedure with *Plato's Dialectical method*.

... the way we have chosen to travel in order to discover the principle, agrees precisely with the description in Plato where he shows how the principle can be obtained ... and assigns to this method its appropriate name (V:504).¹⁸

Plato distinguishes two kinds of rational science (a *double intelligible*). In one, the reason makes use of certain sensible or concrete images (as in Geometry) in striving after the pure intelligible. In the other "nothing sensible or strange intervenes, but pure thought

associates intimately with the pure Intelligible." Of this kind, says Schelling, Plato writes:

Now learn what I call the other division of the Intelligible, namely, that which *reason itself* touches (*ου αυτοσ ο λογος απιεται*) when, *through the power of dialectic* (*τη του διαλεγεσθαι δυναμει*), it forms suppositions (*υποθεσεις*) which are *not* principles but *truly* mere assumptions (hypotheses), and uses them as ways of attacking and gaining access to what is *not* supposition but rather the beginning of all - the *principle* of all-being. Then, by grasping this beginning and attaching itself again and again to what is connected with this beginning, it (reason) can descend to the end [come down to a conclusion] without using the help of any sensible thing. It has simply set out from pure concepts, progressed through concepts, and ended in concepts (from *Rep.* VI, 511B) (V:505).

Obviously, Schelling's Inductive method and Plato's dialectic have much in common, and Schelling notes three similarities. First, both are Inductive in the general sense. Just as Plato used hypotheses to arrive at the Principle, so Schelling used what is merely capable of being the Existent, "that which is the Existent only hypothetically", to arrive at the Existent itself. Secondly, both are inductive in the special sense, namely, that it is reason (thought itself) which forms these premises or elements which, since they are the immediate and necessary products of pure reason, are "thought correctly and profoundly." Thirdly, in both methods reason finds the premises by means of its *dialectical* power and, since Logic is the *tool* of Dialectic or one *aspect* of the dialectical method (Plato), the premises are determined purely by their logical possibility or impossibility (V:506f, 510). And yet, the dialectical method is "not demonstrative but persuasive." Thus,

of what has been thus acquired in and through thought, *no proof* is possible, except *ad hominem*. One always addresses oneself mentally to another, leaving it up to this 'other' to come up with something which could be posited prior to the pure subject; but all the time one is certain nothing will be found and no reply given. One proceeds, moreover, without external form, *conversationally*, (dialogically), whence the name 'dialectical knowledge' which Aristotle resolutely opposed to apodictic science (V:509).

Plato tried to reproduce the *suspensive* character of the dialectical method in his Dialogues, many of which are models and master-pieces of this experimental method. Certain assumptions are set forth, then negated, so that the investigation "constantly oscillates between affirmation and negation, until in the last affirmation, victorious over all, every doubt disappears and there appears that toward which everything tends and which everything anticipates" (V:512). Such a method is, in fact, an indispensable tool in every kind of investigation, whether it be intelligent experimentation in the natural sciences or thoughtful determination of the meaning of historical facts. ("The whole of the First Book employed the historico-dialectical method"). It is a matter of "testing successively, in an experimental way, all possibilities as they progressively devolve from one another" for "he who does not consider something possible before he find it, will not find it" (V:511f).

Thus, the dialectical process has a *positive aspect* (the postulation of premises) and a *negative aspect* (in which the premises are negated or suppressed or "degraded" to the status of non-principles, mere suppositions, just steps that lead to the Unconditioned). The two aspects are inseparable, but it is in the negative aspect that, strictly speaking, Dialectic is distinguished from logic (V:509f). But even this negative aspect is not the last word. For Dialectic takes the elements, now reduced to non-principles, and *transforms* them into attributes of the Principle, "attributes which reason uses to produce science itself without having recourse to any sense-data" (V:513).

Independently of the Principle, the [potencies of the Existent] exist merely in thought, but with the Principle they become, as Plato said, *τω οντι υποθεσεις*, *actually possible principles ...*, attributes of Being. But ... inasmuch as they are thought prior to the Principle (hence purely *a priori*) they are mere subjects or potencies (V:514, 517f).

That they are, that they can exist as attributes, they owe to that which is them (i.e., to the Principle), but (and this is of great importance) *what* they are is not determined by the Principle. As far as their *what* is concerned, they are independent powers. The Principle has for itself the eternity and therefore the necessity of Being. They have for themselves the eternity and necessity of *essence (Wesen)*, of *thought*. They belong to the kingdom of eternal possibilities, and are truly what has been called the *essentiae* or *veritates rerum aeternae*, of which there has been so much abstract discussion since Leibniz (V:513).

The Dialectic Process is not a purely noetic one. It is proto-typical of the actual process in nature and history. Schelling holds that

if the elements under discussion really have the significance ascribed to them, they must have emerged as principles in the course of the historical evolution of philosophy, or at least in the history of human consciousness in general, for all development takes place progressively ... As far as philosophy is concerned, Aristotle has already drawn attention to the quite analogous succession of principles in Mythology and Philosophy.

In fact, this successive reduction of the possible principles to the (status of) attributes, which we have considered until now to be a purely noetic process, is a process which is proto-typical of the actual process of progressive emergences (*Entstehen*) which we observe in Nature; for on what could this step-by-step ascent rest if not on the fact that powers capable of affirming themselves as principles - but which are not principles - are precipitated into the process where they are reduced again to mere steps and transformed into attributes first of that which is above nature and finally of that which is above everything? ... It may be that just a penetrating look at nature will suffice to make credible the simple idea that the whole marvellous spectacle which unfolds there is only a repetition in a *real* and *actual* way of the process which we have come to know as an *ideal* process (*Gedankenprozess*) (V:514, 515).

Hence, if the Dialectical Method can be applied to nature, to the spiritual world, to everything! - then philosophy must take it with utmost seriousness. It is a notable fact, says Schelling, that this method (discerned in Plato but not taken from Plato) appeared "as soon as the philosophical spirit of modern times cast off completely and forever the yoke of medieval metaphysics" and found itself able "to walk once again the free paths of antiquity." It is the only authentic discovery (*eigentliche Fund*) of post-Kantian philosophy (V:516).

A fruitful philosophical activity might restrict itself to the deeper understanding of this method, and a more rigorous and comprehensive application of it in the light of our ever advancing and expanding experience (V:516f).

For Philosophy exists only for the sake of grasping the Principle. "The *ousia*, the Substance, the Subject, is precisely the *why* of Philosophy; it is that for whose sake alone Philosophy exists, that which is entirely proper to Philosophy" (V:517).

The "failure" of Aristotle to expound Dialectic as an instrument for attaining the Principle, provokes Schelling to lengthy discussion (V:519-541). It is enough here to note his conclusions.

First, Aristotle attacked the inadequacy of the Dialectic and the Sophistic of his time. The only difference he saw between them was that "the latter does not *want* to arrive at the truth, whereas the former *cannot*." Both concern themselves only with "the combinations of subjects and predicates, i.e., they move in the realm of appearance and possible illusion (V:520).¹⁹ "Their mistake is that they do not go beyond these accidentalities" - indispensable though these essential accidents are to demonstration - "in order to arrive at the substance, the thing itself which, in fact, they disregard" (V:524f). In other words, Aristotle's criticism is that Dialectic is not "philosophical."

It is important, however, to see what it is that Aristotle is attacking. The Dialectic of *his* time seems to have been an inferior kind of thinking which did not go beyond opinion and belief. It was what the majority enjoyed, and was served up by "quite an army of dialecticians who found their starting points and their premises in mere opinion, without going back to what is accessible to pure thought" (V:540). It was not the preserve of a particular school, but was basically the phenomenon of individual disputants, each equally right and equally wrong, trying to outdo each other in subtlety and wit. This, according to Schelling, is why Aristotle attacked it, while yet speaking of it vaguely and without naming anyone (V:540).

Nevertheless, concludes Schelling, even though Aristotle attacked this inadequate dialectic and theoretically ignored the dialectical method, the fact remains that he granted its usefulness in particular sciences and special investigations, and borrowed from it (far more than is usually thought) in the pursuit of his philosophical activity (V:541 cf. 520). Schelling finds in Aristotle the seeds of a higher (Platonic) dialectic:

For him, the syllogism is the only mode of scientific demonstration.
For Substance, hence also for the Principle, there is no demonstration,

but *there is another way to make it visible*. After all, there are in Aristotle notions and definitions which, applied in a consistent manner, lead to a dialectical method in Plato's sense. We find the seeds of a higher dialectic like that described by Plato, in Aristotle's distinction between that which exists by itself, or subject, and that which does not exist by itself, the *συμβεβηκος*, or attribute; in his distinction between essential and non-essential accidents; in what he calls the causes and principle of all that exists ... which seem to be for him what the *υποθεσεις* are for Plato; and especially in the fact that he designates these (causes and principles) as the first distinctions and oppositions (at the heart) of the Existent (V:526f).²⁰