

On the True Concept of Philosophy of Nature and the Correct Way of Solving its Problems

F.W.J. Schelling

Translated by Judith Kahl and Daniel Whistler

Translators' Introduction

This text, originally entitled, *Appendix to Eschenmayer's Essay concerning the True Concept of Philosophy of Nature and the Correct Way of Solving its Problems* and attributed to 'the Editor'¹, appeared in January 1801 in the first issue of the second volume of the *Zeitschrift für spekulative Physik*, which Schelling himself edited. Schelling had first requested an essay from Carl August Eschenmayer for publication in the *Zeitschrift* in March 1799 and finally received an extensive critique of his own *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature* in September 1800. Eschenmayer's critique, *Spontaneity = World-Soul, or the Highest Principle of Philosophy of Nature*, takes up the first 68 pages of the January 1801 issue of the journal and, following a piece by Philipp Hoffmann on the construction of illness, Schelling appended his own 'addition'² to Eschenmayer's essay. While Schelling presented such an addition to Eschenmayer as a means 'to come to a complete understanding with you'³, the text itself quickly turns into an attack not only on Eschenmayer's own methodology and construction of material qualities, but also any idealist pretension to explain nature. At issue, then, is the fundamental question of the priority and extensivity of Schellingian philosophy of nature in relation to Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*.⁴

¹ The shorter title by which the essay is more widely known was given by K.F.A. Schelling in the *Sämtliche Werke*.

² F.W.J. Schelling, Letter to Eschenmayer, 22/9/1800, excerpted in Manfred Durner, 'Editorischer Bericht' in *Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe I/10: Schriften 1801*, ed. Durner (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 2009), pp. 15-6.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Further discussion of the content, aims and context of the essay can be found in Whistler's accompanying

The present translation is based on volume I/10 of the *Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe [HKA]: Schriften 1801*, edited by Manfred Durner (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 2009), pp. 85-106. Quotations from Schelling's *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature* and its *Introduction* are taken from the edition translated by Keith R. Peterson (Albany: SUNY, 2004); references to Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* cite the edition translated by Peter Heath (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1978).

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[85] The concept I have of the science that I name 'philosophy of nature' has been quite clearly explained in many passages in the second issue of the first volume [of this journal]⁵, and the relation I believe I can establish between it and transcendental philosophy is ascertainable from those same texts by anyone who is fairly accurately informed about the state of contemporary philosophy.

Already in the *Introduction* to my *Outline of the System of Philosophy of Nature*, there is the following passage on p. 15:

Up to this point the idea of speculative physics has been deduced and developed; it is another business to show how this idea must be realised and actually carried out. The author, for this purpose, would at once refer to his *Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*, if he had no reason to suspect many even of those who might consider that *Outline* worthy of their attention would come to it with certain preconceived ideas, which he has not presupposed, and which he does not desire to have presupposed by them.⁶

essay.

⁵ *Translators' note*. A reference to Schelling's *Universal Deduction of the Dynamic Process* published therein.

⁶ *Translators' note*. F.W.J. Schelling, *Introduction to the Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature* in *HKA*

And the following are given as such presuppositions:

- 1) That many people misled by the term ‘philosophy of nature’ expect transcendental deductions of natural phenomena, the same as exist in various fragments [of the transcendental system] elsewhere; [86] for me, however, philosophy of nature is a self-sufficient whole and is a science fully differentiated from transcendental philosophy.
- 2) That many will find in my *Outline* their own concept of dynamic physics – namely, where I cite the [theory] that all specific changes and differences in matter are merely changes or differences of the degree of density – but this is not my opinion.

It is precisely on these points that Eschenmayer disagrees with me in the above critique of my *Outline of Philosophy of Nature*. As important to me as the judgment of this sharp-witted philosopher on my work must be, for, after Kant, he was the first to secure the grounds for a dynamic physics, I do so wish that he had not so happily left unread that *Introduction*. For, to judge from a number of passages, he was not acquainted with it while composing his critique, as I refer to it explicitly in the Preface to the *Outline* in relation to the very concept of this science [of philosophy of nature], which I had everywhere only presupposed [in the *Outline* itself]. Otherwise, Eschenmayer would have seen that his objections to me were not completely unexpected. He would have not only adduced arguments against my treatment of this science, but would also have begun to find answers to them on the basis of my presuppositions – and so we would have been one step further on than we are now.

After Eschenmayer saw that he had been deceived in expecting to find transcendental philosophy or a part of it (I know not which) in my *Outline*, there were only two possible hypotheses: *either* that I did not know at all that point of view which Eschenmayer holds as true – the idealist – which is of course difficult to believe, since instead of being sketched at the beginning of the work as is usual, this viewpoint is rather hidden in the middle of it, and without doubt banished there on purpose. For the author says clearly enough in one passage: philosophy of nature is for him a result of unconditional empiricism (this word, as one can deduce from the *Introduction*, being used instead of *realism* [87], which would have been a very awkward expression). *Or* [the second hypothesis is] that the author had taken fright before the imposing mass being put in place by the cranks of idealism and perhaps still more before certain catchy questions which have emerged out of the collision of idealism with experience. For example:

Is it the case that the new-born child who first gazes upon his mother has projected this mother and with her the sun, whose rays now illuminate his eyes for the first time?

And other such questions, like those set out in *Clavis Fichtiana seu Leibgeberiana*⁷, from which I will only take a few more as examples:

For example: the man whom I encounter means to leave home by a free decision, but how is it now possible that he is simultaneously located on the street by means of my necessary act of producing?

⁷ *Translators' Note*. An anti-Fichtean polemic published in 1800 by J.P. Richter. None of these examples originate from the *Clavis*. The initial example of the new-born child comes from Eschenmayer's *Spontaneity = World-Soul* (*Zeitschrift für spekulative Physik* vol. 2.1, p. 16).

Or:

Here is a tree which someone planted fifty years ago for posterity, how is it that I now produce it as it is through productive intuition?

Or:

How happy is the idealist that he can consider the divine works of Plato, Sophocles and all other great minds as his own?

In regards to the last of which, the questioner must not forget to measure the extent of this happiness by other (e.g. his own) works.

[88] These are only examples of the sorts of questions that could easily lead to embarrassment; however, they are not [embarrassing] for me, and anyway, both before and after the appearance of my *Outline*, I have provided proof from which one can conclude that an idealist point of view on nature is not alien to me. Without doubt, there is a reason for the *fact* that I separate philosophy of nature and transcendental philosophy from one another and have tried to generate the latter in a quite different direction than the former. If the reason for this fact has not been extensively disputed in this journal before now, then this is merely because for the time being the journal is devoted more to the internal culture of this science than to investigating and proving its possibility (of which I am personally certain), and also because this proof can be achieved successfully only in a general presentation of philosophy. The next issue of this journal, however, is to be dedicated entirely to the new working through and development of my system from its first grounds⁸; I will thus use this opportunity to very briefly sketch it and make solely the following remarks.

⁸ *Translators' Note*. Schelling's *Presentation of My System of Philosophy*, which has precisely this aim, occupied

If it were just a matter of an idealist type of explanation, or rather construction, then this is not to be found in philosophy of nature as I have established it. – But then was it just a matter of that? – I have expressly proposed the opposite. – If therefore the idealist construction of nature as I establish it is to be judged, then it must be judged according to my *System of Transcendental Idealism*, but not my *Outline of Philosophy of Nature*.

But why then should it not be idealist? And is there (and the author agrees with this) in general another type of philosophising than the idealist? Above all, I hope that this expression is to be further determined [in what follows] than it has been up until now. There is an idealism of nature and an idealism of the I. For me, the former is original, *the latter* is derived.

[89] I wish that, above all things, philosophy on philosophising would be distinguished from philosophy itself. To be able to philosophise, I must already have philosophised, for how else would I know what philosophising is? If I now emerge from this to find out what philosophising itself is, then I see myself merely as something known in myself – and during this entire investigation I never get out of myself. – There is no question that this philosophy on philosophising is subjectively (in relation to the philosophising subject) the *first*, but there is just as little doubt that in the question ‘how is philosophy possible?’ I assume *myself* already in the highest potency, and therefore the question is likewise only answered for this potency. – The derivation of this potency itself in turn cannot be provided by the response, for the *question* itself already presupposes it. As long as I maintain myself in this potency while philosophising, I can behold nothing objective other than in the moment of its entry into consciousness (for the latter is precisely the highest potency, to which I have raised my object once and for all through freedom) and no longer in

its *original* coming-into-being at the moment of its *first* emergence (in *non-conscious*⁹ activity). As it comes into my hands, it has already run through all the metamorphoses which are necessary for it to rise up into consciousness. – To see the objective in its first coming-into-being is only possible by *depotentiating* the *object* of all philosophising, which in the highest potency is = I, and then constructing, from the beginning, with this object reduced to the first potency.

This is only possible through abstraction, which must now be determined more precisely – and with this abstraction one moves from the realm of the doctrine of science¹⁰ into *pure-theoretical* philosophy. The doctrine of science is not philosophy itself, but philosophy about philosophy. In it, the equality posited by consciousness between the object – *about* which one philosophises and which in philosophising is the producing, the *act*¹¹ – and the subject – *which* philosophises, and which in the self-same act¹² is the reflecting, the intuiting – is never annulled¹³ – and must never be annulled if it is to be claimed that that object = [90] I. For consciousness, when it is once attained, consists precisely in the perpetual identity of the *act* and the *intuiting* of this activity¹⁴; the act is not *in itself* = I, it is = I only *in* this identity of act and reflection on this act. And since the doctrine of science takes its object into that very potency where it is already raised into identity with reflecting, as = I, it can never construct this identity, thereby never escaping the circle of consciousness. As such, it can only construct what immediately appears to consciousness – that is, *everything*¹⁵ only in its highest potency.

Although the doctrine of science initially attempts to derive *consciousness*, owing to an inescapable circle it ends up employing all those *means* which this already *completed*

⁹ bewußtlosen

¹⁰ Wissenschaftslehre

¹¹ Handelnde

¹² Akt

¹³ aufgehoben

¹⁴ Handeln

¹⁵ Alles

consciousness (in the philosophising subject) presents to it to exhibit everything in that potency in which it is already raised into consciousness. It therefore takes its object (act, producing) already to be I, although it has only first become I at that moment when reflection posits it as identical with it. [This moment], however, first occurs in *free* and *conscious activity*. This act in *free* activity is the same objective [element] which acted in non-conscious intuition; it is now a *free* act solely because it is posited as identical with the intuiting.

If I now abstract from what is first posited in the philosopher's object by this free act, there remains something *purely objective*. By means of this self-same abstraction, I move to the standpoint of *purely theoretical* philosophising (exempt from all subjective and practical interference): this pure-theoretical philosophising results in *philosophy of nature*; for by means of that abstraction, I reach the concept of the pure subject-object (= nature), from which I then rise to the subject-object of consciousness (= I). The latter becomes the principle of the idealist or, what means the same thing to me, the practical part of philosophy; the former is the principle of the pure-theoretical part; both in their union give the system of ideal-realism which has become *objective* (the system of art). With [this system of art,] philosophy, which in the doctrine of science [91] must proceed from a merely subjective ideal-realism (contained in the consciousness of the philosopher), produces itself out of itself, as it were, and so is completed.

Through the gradual but *complete* becoming objective of the pure subject-object, the (intuiting) activity, which in *principle* is limitlessly ideal, raises itself to the I, i.e. to the subject for which that subject-object (that ideal-real) is itself object. From the standpoint of consciousness, nature appears to me as objective and the I as subjective; from this standpoint I cannot otherwise express the problem of philosophy of nature than as it is still expressed in

the Introduction to my System of Idealism – that is, *to let the subjective emerge from the objective*.¹⁶ Expressed in higher philosophical language, this means the same as:

‘to let the subject-object OF CONSCIOUSNESS emerge from the PURE subject-object.’

Many philosophical writers (among them one of late who has undertaken to judge something grounded in idealism, something that has only been made possible through him, although he ought to be convinced that he has yet to obtain sufficient knowledge of it) appear to have taken this *objective* [element], from which philosophy of nature should proceed, I don't quite know for what, but certainly for something objective in itself. So, it is no wonder if the confusion in their representations proliferates substantially on the back of this. I presuppose that I am speaking to those [readers] who are well-aware of what philosophy understands by the objective.

For them, ‘objective’ signifies the same as ‘real’. – *For me*, as they could have seen from the System of Idealism, the objective is itself *simultaneously the real and the ideal*; the two are never separate, but exist together originally (even in nature). This ideal-real becomes objective only through [92] the emerging consciousness in which the subjective is raised to the highest (theoretical) potency.

With nature-philosophy¹⁷ I never emerge from that identity of the ideal-real; I continually preserve both in this original connection, and the pure subject-object from which I proceed is precisely that which is simultaneously the ideal and the real in the potency 0. From this comes into being for me the ideal-real of the higher potency, the *I*, in relation to which the *pure* subject-object is already objective.

¹⁶ *Translators' note*. See F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism in HKA I/9*, pp. 29-30; Heath trans., pp. 5-7.

¹⁷ Natur-Philosophie

The reason that those who have grasped idealism well have not understood philosophy of nature is because it is difficult or impossible for them to detach themselves from the subjective [element] of intellectual intuition. – For the purpose of philosophy of nature, I demand intellectual intuition as it is demanded in the doctrine of science; however, I demand, in addition, abstraction from the *intuiting* in this intuition, an abstraction which leaves behind for me the purely objective [element] of this act, which in itself is merely subject-object, but in no way = I, for the reasons provided above.

Even in the System of Idealism, in order to devise the theoretical part, I had to take the I out of its own intuition, to abstract from the subjective in intellectual intuition – in a word, to posit it as *non-conscious*. – However, insofar as the I is non-conscious, it is not = I; for the I is only the subject-object insofar as it cognises itself as such. The acts, which are there established as acts of the I and so in the highest potency, are genuinely acts of the pure subject-object, and are *as such* not yet *sensation, intuition* etc. They only become them by being raised into consciousness.

I expect no one to understand my general plan. It is against my will that I here speak of what I intend; for what one intends is best spoken about by doing it. Anyway, those who do not agree with me on the principle can still [93] participate in the investigations, since they are free to translate all the propositions which are necessary for their own understanding into the idealist potency. For *within* science, it initially matters little in which way nature is constructed, if it is only constructed. For a start, [the above] is not a matter of natural science, but an altered point of view on philosophy as a whole and idealism itself which the latter will sooner or later be forced to accept. – Idealism will remain; it will only be derived from first principles, and in its first beginnings from nature itself, which until now appeared to be in the starkest contradiction with it. Moreover, as I have already remarked, the *doctrine of science* will never get to this point. – To be subjectively possible, all philosophising, even the purely

theoretical by which nature-philosophy comes into being, presupposes the doctrine of science and grounds itself on it. – *The latter*, precisely because it is the doctrine of *knowing*¹⁸, can take everything only in the highest potency and must not abandon this. – It is, however, a question not of the doctrine of science (a closed and complete science) but the system of knowing itself. – This system can come into being only by abstracting from the doctrine of science, and if the latter is ideal-realism, it [the former] has only two major parts – a purely theoretical or realist part and a practical or idealist part. Through the union of these two, ideal-realism cannot again come into being, but rather real-idealism must come into being (what I have called above ideal-realism become objective and) by which I understand nothing other than the system of art. Only it must not be imagined as if these parts are separate within the system itself, as I here represent them. – In it, there is absolute continuity; it is *One* unbroken series, which proceeds from the simplest in nature to the highest and most complex, the artwork. – Is it bold to want to establish the first, truly universal system which ties together the opposed ends of knowing? – That person who understood the System of Idealism and followed my investigations in philosophy of nature with some interest will at the very least not take it to be [94] something absolutely impossible. He will have seen how gradually from all sides everything approaches the One, how already very distant phenomena, which have been sought in quite different worlds, shake hands and as it were impatiently await the final binding word to be spoken about them. If, at the very least, an initial plan is successfully executed, one will thereupon find comprehensible and thus acceptable the idea that it is to be made from completely different sides and that one first tries to correct individual investigations before one unites them as parts of one and the same whole. – No one will find it unnatural for me to consider everything which can now occur as means to this end. For, not before it is both necessary and useful will I try to agree with others on *what is first*, and then

¹⁸ *Wissens-Lehre*

it will appear, anyway, of its own accord and free of contradiction. For those for whom the preceding is still not clear, I shall say nothing further than I do not proceed in this manner without reason. I know that it leads to the goal and I will pursue it undisturbed, without glancing behind me at objections which are made against it and which will be answered by the future results themselves.

As soon as I began to proclaim philosophy of nature, the following objection was frequently made to me: I *presuppose* nature without asking the critical question of how we thus come to suppose a nature. Eschenmayer seems to have something like this in mind. I answered that whoever raises himself by abstraction to the pure concept of nature will see how I presuppose nothing for the construction but what the transcendental-philosopher likewise presupposes. For what I call *nature* IS for me nothing but the purely-objective [element] of intellectual intuition, the pure subject-object, what the transcendental philosopher posits as = I, because he does not make the abstraction – from the intuiting – which is necessary if a purely-objective, i.e. a theoretical, philosophy is to come about. – That pure subject-object [95] is already determined by its nature (the contradiction which lies within it) to activity and indeed to determinate activity. This determinate activity gives rise, passing through all its potencies, to a series of determinate products, while it potentiates itself both with what is unlimited in it (the ideal) and with its products. – Whether these products are those which are presented in experience or not does not initially concern me; I look merely to the self-construction of the subject-object. If from this [self-construction] arise products and potencies of ideal activity that can be shown in nature, then I clearly see that my attempt was genuinely a deduction of nature, i.e. a philosophy of nature. I have therefore not presupposed what *you* think of as nature, but rather derived it (although you will permit me, after I have performed the experiment for myself, to announce my philosophy in advance as a philosophy of nature). In general, I have presupposed nothing but what can immediately be

taken from the conditions of knowing itself as a first principle, something originally and simultaneously subjective and objective, through the activity of which a consciousness is also posited, alongside the objective world as such. For this consciousness [the objective world] becomes object and vice versa. With this concept we have reached back further than Spinoza managed with his concepts of *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, which are merely relatively opposed, and *both* are only the subject-object regarded from different points of view.

Philosophy of nature has this advantage over idealism, that it proves its propositions purely theoretically, and has to make no particular, practical demands, unlike the latter which precisely for this reason possesses no purely theoretical reality, as I have already observed in the Preface to my System of Idealism.

By means of the fact that I abstract from the intuiting activity in intellectual intuition, I take the subject-object only from its own intuition (I make it non-conscious), but not from mine. It is constantly conceived in my intuition as *my* construction, and I know that throughout I only have to do with my own construction. The task is: to make the subject-object thus objective, and to generate it from itself to the point where it [96] coincides as one with nature (as product). The point where it becomes nature is also that where the unlimitable in it raises itself to the I and where the opposition between I and nature, which is made in common consciousness, completely disappears, so that nature = I and I = nature. At this point where everything which is still activity (not product) in nature is transferred into the I, nature endures and lives only in this I which henceforth is one and all and in it everything is contained. And it is at this point that idealism begins.

What has therefore been established in the System of Idealism under the names of theoretical and practical philosophy is already to be regarded as the idealist part of the complete system of philosophy. The acts which are derived in the theoretical part of idealism

are acts whose simple potencies exist in nature and are established in philosophy of nature. – The coming-into-being of these higher potencies fall into the transition from the realist to the idealist part; *as* consciousness comes into being, all earlier acts raise themselves into sensation, intuition etc. – Because philosophy of nature and transcendental philosophy have been spoken of as opposed yet equally possible orientations of philosophy, many have asked which of the two is accorded priority? – Without doubt, philosophy of nature, because it lets the *standpoint* of idealism itself first come into being, and thereby provides for it a secure, *purely* theoretical foundation. However, the opposition between philosophy of nature and idealism has the same worth as the traditional opposition between theoretical and practical philosophy. – Therefore, philosophy returns to the ancient (Greek) division into physics and ethics, both of which are united through a third part (poetics, or philosophy of art).

Eschenmayer, it is true, feels that it is not yet time to speak of a system of philosophy of nature. I would be anxious to know how long we will have to wait and how we shall know in the future that the time for this science has come? – Perhaps when experience has progressed further? – But *how far* [97] are we really with experience? – This can only be judged from philosophy of nature. Experience is blind and must first learn to see its own richness or lack through science. Moreover, a completely a priori science cannot be dependent on contingent conditions like that of the progress of experience; rather, on the contrary, the latter must be accelerated onwards by the former by presenting ideas which lead to invention. Of a self-sufficient science one can never in general say: it is not yet time to invent it, for it is always time for it to be invented. – Therefore, one will always only be able to say: this specific attempt to establish science has not yet succeeded. – That what I have established in my Outline of Philosophy of Nature is not even taken by myself to be *the system itself* is already explained in the title of the work and very specifically in its Preface, where I write: ‘The author has too lofty a notion of the magnitude of his undertaking to

announce in the present treatise anything more than the first outline, let along to erect the system itself.’¹⁹ – I also explained that this piece was not primarily meant for the general public, but for my students. The academic teacher who has to proffer a completely new science cannot hope to make it sufficiently understandable without a manual; and to the extent that he does not wish to waste time with dictation, there remains no other option but the press. It is unfair to demand the same perfection of a work which appears for such a specific purpose, expressly stated to be a result of circumstance, as a piece worked out for a general purpose and with the necessary effort. – However, taking into account these contingent conditions, it was still impossible to think of a *system* of philosophy of nature, as long as one could not yet presuppose the standpoint for it. There remained nothing else but to lead the science to the point from which it could *begin* to become system. This was effectively achieved through that piece. The germs of the system, as I will establish it in the future, all lie scattered therein, and the theory of dynamic process, which is the foundation of all speculative physics and even of the doctrine of organic nature, is expressed quite determinately there in outline and introduction. – In such a presentation [98] all possible levels of reflection²⁰ on which the philosophy of nature can rest must necessary be run through and noted, and the highest which grasps all others under itself and which must be the principle in any effective system could here rather only be the *result*.

Of these levels of reflection, that of the atomist is without doubt the first; it was thus natural to use it to find a way into the system. However, I do not consider the customary form of atomism a viewpoint that could play a role in any true philosophy of nature, even as an inferior level of reflection; and this is clearly shown by the fact that I have transformed the atoms of the physicist into something completely different. – So, I surrender the whole of the atomist viewpoint to Eschenmayer and to those willing to count the cost of using it. By

¹⁹ *Translators’ Note*. F.W.J. Schelling, *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature* in HKA I/7, p. 65; Peterson trans., p. 3.

²⁰ Reflexionspunkte

means of the construction, which is still to appear in full but has already begun to be presented and justified [in the *Outline*], all those principles attacked by Eschenmayer, together with the system from which they spring, annul themselves. For example, take the principle so objectionable to Eschenmayer: every quality is action of a determinate degree for which one has no other measure than its product. – Who speaks here? The atomist. And for him, from whence does the measure of a degree come? No degree is possible except by an inverse proportion²¹ of opposed factors; for example, a determinate degree of velocity [is constituted] by the inverse proportion of the space passed through and the time taken to do so. However, the atomist lacks such a measure, since for him action does not refer to a determinate proportion of opposed forces, but to something *absolutely* simple²². The difference between my viewpoint and Eschenmayer's does not lie in *these* principles, but rather in the fact that, in the proportion of original forces to each other, he has claimed that solely a quantitative difference, determinable by the relative excess or deficit of one or the other force, is possible, and as can be seen from the first part of his treatise, he claims this still. Moreover, by these different quantitative proportions, as well as the formulae through which they are expressed, he believes that he has derived *all* specific differences of matter, although they will never give him anything except differences in specific degrees of density, and so a host of other determinations [of matter] remain entirely indeterminate.

[99] *I* try to construct the qualitative determinations of matter from another relation of two forces to each other than [this quantitative ratio] which determines specific weights²³. Since Eschenmayer believes he has determined these qualitative determinations by means of such a quantitative proportion, to which they are in fact never reducible, he therefore neglects

²¹ *Translators' note.* *Verhältnis* is variously translated in what follows as 'proportion', 'ratio' and 'relation', depending on context.

²² *Translators' note.* 'Singular' (as in: without relation) is also a possible translation.

²³ Schwere

them *as* specific properties. For what is understood by the specific but the unconstructable, or rather that which cannot be constructed?

Since, for *Eschenmayer*, in matter there is nothing but this same proportion of forces which determines the degree to which it fills space, something else *positive*, something containing the ground of another determination, cannot be posited for him even by a change in degree. Therefore, the properties of a body must for him always stand in direct proportion to the degree to which they fill space. – Now, I would like to know how the specific weight of iron, for example, could be directly proportional to the considerable coherence of this metal, or how the specific weight of mercury could be directly proportional to the weak coherence of this metal? – Even by a change in the specific weight – and he knows nothing of matter but this – nothing would ever change but the specific weight. Now I desire to know how, from this change in the specific weight, any other determination of matter that did not stand in a precise proportion to it could emerge? – *Eschenmayer* himself admitted a long time ago that the series of qualitative determinations of matter is in no way parallel to the series of specific weights, and he admits it again now. – And how does he answer this difficulty? By the question: whether *experience* can arbitrate between the product that is to be constructed and reason which constructs? – However, the product which one is charged with constructing is known – prior to achieving this task – only through experience, so the question actually runs: whether experience is to arbitrate *between* experience and constructing reason? – Put like this, an affirmative answer is clearly absurd. – For myself, I ask, on the contrary: should not the coincidence of the product found in experience [100] with the one which has been constructed be the most certain mathematical proof of the *correctness* of the construction? – This is not at all to speak of whether or not construction should occur *in general* (this goes without saying), but of what is constructed *correctly*. – Such an occurrence cannot really be proven with the general saying: the human spirit is the legislator of nature. This saying is

quite good: there is no doubt that reason gives laws to nature, even that reason always constructs correctly – the question, however, is in an individual case: WHETHER *reason* has actually constructed effectively? – From the fact that reason gives laws to experience it does not follow that it has the right to contradict experience; rather, just because it is its legislator, [reason] must be in the most perfect agreement with it, and where this is not the case, it can be rightly inferred that it is not legislating reason that has constructed, but some empirical [form of] reason. – In the philosophy of nature, I claim: nature is its own legislator.²⁴ Eschenmayer cannot grasp how, having presupposed this, one could still make the effort to construct nature. – If *Eschenmayer* had the same concept of nature as me, that claim would be as little strange to him as that which he opposes to it as the basic principle of rationalism: the human spirit is its own legislator. If this were true, one could ask, how could the philosopher make that vain effort to construct the I with all its determinations? – human spirit is human enough to have got on with it, or rather it has already got on with it.

It is certainly true that in the philosophy of nature I consider that subject-object which I call nature in its self-construction. One must have raised oneself to the intellectual intuition of nature to conceive it. – The empiricist fails to so raise himself, and for this precise reason *he* is the one always constructing in all his claims. It is therefore not astonishing to find what has been constructed and what should have been constructed so seldom coincide. – Because the philosopher of nature raises nature to self-sufficiency and lets it construct itself, by necessity he can never end up opposing it to constructed nature (i.e. experience) or correcting it according to [constructed nature]. The constructing cannot [101] err, and the philosopher of nature just requires a secure method to prevent it from erring through his interference. Such a method is possible and the next task is to make it known. However, [the question of] whether he has correctly applied this method, which in itself must be infallible, can ultimately be

²⁴ *Translators' note.* See Schelling, *First Outline in HKA I/7* p. 81; Peterson trans., p. 16.

resolved for the philosopher only by its success – that is, by the coincidence of that nature constructing itself before our eyes with that nature that has been constructed. Therefore, for him experience is in fact not the principle but the task of construction, not the *terminus a quo* but the *terminus ad quem* of construction. – Where this *terminus ad quem* is not attained, one can rightly infer that either the correct method was not applied or it was applied incorrectly or in an incomplete manner.

I return to the question of the basis for the specific properties of matter. – Eschenmayer himself has tried to move the investigation forward in the preceding treatise. He now takes into account relations which he elsewhere has not; that is, the relations of bodies to the different senses, whose differences he once more tries to present as merely a matter of degree²⁵. I find the whole thing very astute with individual claims of compelling truth; however, the fundamental question, for the sake of which this whole apparatus is assembled, still remains unanswered; that is, *how* by mere differences in degrees of density are these different relations of bodies to the senses posited? – The author does not link the above result that was discovered in a different way, as if through anticipation, back to his basic principle: the common expression of an object is its specific density. Therefore, as he himself states (p. 56), the entire investigation decides nothing with respect to the principal point. Rather, it appears that this new way has led the author into new difficulties, for he now must claim that the senses, which have been put into play, are differentiated merely by degree²⁶. Instead, a more helpful way would be to have previously determined *what* is actually raised by varying degrees into the senses? It cannot be the same as that which lies at the ground of the gradation of matter (i.e. that which affects the senses). This leaves unanswered [102] the following questions. What gradation of matter is required for it to be an odour or a ray of light, i.e. to be the gradation of sense corresponding to the sense of smell or the sense of sight? And how do

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these gradations of matter that acquire a determinate relation to a specific sense relate to those which acquire a determinate relation to the electrical or chemical process? – Without doubt, each determinate gradation of the latter kind corresponds to a determinate relation of bodies to the senses, and *vice versa* – but what is entirely lacking here is a binding concept, and this leaves a wholly unresolved antithesis.

I do not want to speak at the moment of the gaps in the theory proposed by *Eschenmayer* (which he could just fill in through future investigations), but rather focus on the first principle, namely that the differences between all the senses are *merely differences of degree*, which he – as far as I understand it – has neither proven nor even made reasonably comprehensible. It seems to me that it all comes back to the following main claims.

- 1) There are different senses (which he postulates provisionally).
- 2) Each of these senses has its own distinctive sensation (which he again postulates).
- 3) Between the different sensations of one and the same sense there is merely a difference of degree; for example, the different sounds which one and the same body emits.
- 4) Within the general sphere of each sense's sensation, and even in the absence of the determinate differences of degree in (3), there are further differences which appear specific (for example, the specific sounds of a violin and a flute even when playing the same high or bass notes).
- 5) Therefore different gradations appear in (3) and (4): the former grounded on an arithmetic proportion, the latter on a geometric proportion. – 'It is [103] thus explained how in addition to its (inner) proportion between degrees, the sound can take on still another (external) proportion. Specific different sounds are merely different intensities: the maximum of one tonal series always

passes over into the minimum of another.’²⁷ The same is applicable to all the other senses, only the analysis for them is not pursued in sufficient depth. For example, specific different odour-sensations are only different intensities of one and the same (geometric?) basic proportion, whereas each specific type of odour contains an arithmetic series.

- 6) Even such a proportion, as between specific different sensations of one and the same sense (4), is repeated between the different senses themselves, so that here too the minimum of one (for example, light) immediately passes over into the maximum of another (for example, sound-sensation?).

We will abstain entirely from remarking on this cleverly devised theory – in part because such remarks are easy to make, in part because we can always refrain from doing so until, by sustained construction, the author has derived his theory *from his first principle*, on which we do not agree.

Its main principles have been extracted in order to facilitate comparison with our own point of view on this matter.

It appears to us that we are not far away from Eschenmayer, since he allows for the validity of another proportion than the merely arithmetic (through which specific weight alone is determined). After admitting to a geometric proportion – perhaps of forces? – he will also admit that the possibility of different dimensions of matter (which can never be perceived from the merely arithmetic) depends on their various relations to each other in space. Therefore, he will admit that, as there are only three dimensions of matter, only *three* different relations of forces to each other are possible in reference to space. We will agree with each other that in the *first* construction plainly only the third dimension (over which

²⁷ *Translators' Note*. Eschenmayer, *Spontaneity = World-Soul*, p. 48.

gravity²⁸ [104] alone has power and in which – when it is perfectly produced – the first two [dimensions] are effaced) arises. Therefore, we will also agree that in the *first* construction nothing but an arithmetic relation of the two forces to each other is given; hence, the production of different dimensions *as such* is only possible by a *reconstruction* of the product. We will thus raise the product above the first potency, at which Kant, for example, constructed, and into a second, where the construction no longer depends on the simple opposition of two forces, but on the opposition between the ideal activity of the higher potency (light) and the constructing [activity] of the first [potency]. Where the product is suspended at different levels of reconstruction, it first receives *qualities*. These qualities refer to nothing but the different relations of bodies to the different moments of reconstruction. What is more, far from being dependent on a specific weight, they are posited in matter by means of the tendency of ideal natural activity to annul weight. After we wrest the product away from the first construction, we will have forever given it life and made it capable of all the higher potencies. We will find that uniform nature which forever repeats itself only in higher potencies repeats *all* the functions of the preceding potency even in the organism, and indeed here in the function of sensibility. It will have to be accepted that the difference between the senses is as little a matter *of mere degree* as the difference between two forces or two poles of a magnet, and that for us the sense of sight represents an *idealist* pole and the sense of touch a *realist* one (from which it will subsequently be explained why, because its external condition is an ideal activity that works at a *distance*, the former is not at all limited by spatial conditions as the latter is). We will glimpse in the other three senses only a repetition of the three moments of the reconstruction (magnetism, electricity and the chemical process) occurring at a higher potency (from which it can be immediately explained once again why in respect to the first an arrangement of rigid bodies has been exquisitely made,

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while the organ of the second spreads out on a surface and the third ultimately appears bound to a half-fluid organ). For us, then, nature will no longer be a dead, merely extended whole, but rather [105] a living whole which increasingly reveals the spirit incarnated in it and which, by means of the highest spiritualisation, will in the end return into itself and complete itself.

The difference which prevails between *Eschenmayer* and myself in respect to the *whole* treatment of nature ultimately rests merely on the fact that *he* retains the opposition between spirit and nature that occurs in *consciousness*, and requires the former as the single factor for constructing the latter. On the other hand, *for me*, in transcendental philosophy what he ascribes to nature is in the I and in philosophy of nature what he ascribes to the I is in nature. I am compelled to infer such a fundamental difference between our viewpoints from statements like the following, ‘An absolute quantum of activity is distributed between two opposed potencies (spirit and nature), so the more activity in me, the more negation in nature, and vice versa’²⁹ (which is true from a lower level of reflection, but false from a higher one). ‘The original principle which according to *Baader* wafted down from the breath on high into the statue of Prometheus and brings to life the first throb in the pulse of nature (the interplay of its duality) – is *spontaneity*’³⁰, which *he* posits in spirit, whereas *for me* what does all this is *in nature itself* – the active *soul* of nature. For I do not admit two different worlds, but without reservation only *one and the same*, inclusive of everything, even what in common consciousness is opposed as nature and spirit.

If *Eschenmayer* would care to clarify this point, science could only gain by it.

It now appears that even idealism has its spirit and its letter – and is to be understood in different ways. In the following issue, I hope to begin the new presentation of my system with an enumeration of these different ways, and to show how in the end one is forced to

²⁹ *Translators’ Note*. *Eschenmayer, Spontaneity = World-Soul*, p. 8.

³⁰ *Translators’ Note*. *Eschenmayer, Spontaneity = World-Soul*, pp. 6-7.

solely affirm that view which I have characterised above, namely that in which all dualism is forever annihilated and everything becomes absolutely one. Since I must hope [106] that Eschenmayer has become more familiar with my viewpoint both through my System of Idealism and through the present debate (in this journal) than was possible for him through a mere reading of the *Outline*, we might now be able to be informed of each other's viewpoints very quickly and find out whether we both actively, or only in appearance, proceed from *the same* principles.

Having spoken up until now only of those points on which Eschenmayer and I are, at least apparently, in disagreement, I would love to now speak of those which unite us, or at least those ingenious statements of his to which I must accede. However, space does not allow this at present. In conclusion, I only ask Eschenmayer to compare what he writes on p. 58 about the *fourth* principle, spontaneity, as indwelling *in us* with what he cites on p. 65 of his dissertation: 'Causam, quae ab absolute aequilibrio arcet, *sol* ministrare videtur'³¹ – so that he can enter into agreement with me on that point which is still in doubt. This impulse of spontaneity falls within the sphere of nature itself; it is *light*, the sense of nature, by means of which it sees in its restricted interior and which tries to wrest that ideal activity imprisoned in the product away from the constructing [activity]. As the former is day, so is the latter (the constructing [activity]) the night; the former is the *I* of nature itself, the latter its not-I. And so, simple in itself, pure activity becomes *empirical* (colour) through its conflict with constructing activity, whereas constructing activity, in conflict with pure activity, is forced to become *ideal* for the product, to reconstruct it and subject it to different forms: now as magnetism where the two factors of indifference remain within it, now as electricity where it must look for one factor of indifference outside of itself in another product, and now as chemical force where the attainment of one or both of the factors of indifference requires a

³¹ *Translators' note.* 'The sun seems to serve as the cause which prevents absolute indifference.' Eschenmayer refers to this principle in *Spontaneity = World-Soul*, p. 65, citing his own 1796 Tübingen dissertation (p. 19) in *Medicine on the principles of natural science*.

third. This continues until in the end the pure, immortal activity which exceeds all limits, as *ideal* activity, is wedded to the product, and lies at the basis of life in nature, and, by an ever-higher potentiation, life is raised by degrees into the *highest* indifference.