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Schelling versus Hegel on Individuation

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Abstract

This paper compares the views of Hegel and Schelling regarding the problem of individuation, i.e. the question of what makes an individual (a) numerically distinct from others and (b) the very individual it is. My focus is on how Hegel approaches this problem in his metaphysics and how that relates to Schelling's views as articulated in his 'negative philosophy'. While Hegelians like Robert Stern and Karen Ng are optimistic that Hegel can solve the problem of individuation, I argue that Schelling puts forward an objection that both challenges Hegel's account and provides a rationale for taking seriously Schelling's own insistence on a pre-logical dimension of being.

In his famous last letter to Hegel, Schelling (1975: 471) expressed the hope that any serious philosophical differences between him and his former intellectual companion could be easily resolved if stated clearly. However, this has not been the case up to the present day. In my view, this has a lot to do with an overemphasis on Schelling's direct criticisms of Hegel, as articulated in the *Lectures on the History of Modern Philosophy* (cf. *SW*: X.126–65).¹ For a long time, comparative studies of the Schelling vs. Hegel genre came in two flavours: the first suits Hegelians with a taste for debunking inadequacies in Schelling's interpretation of Hegel (Henrich 1958; Brinkmann 1976; Houlgate 1999; 2022: 154–55). The second serves Schellingians with a predilection for polemical attacks on Hegel's 'betrayal of God' (Fuhrmans 1957: 307) or the questionable assessment that Schelling's later insights 'led him to smash his way out of the mould of German idealism' (Laughland 2007: 37).

As far as Schelling's direct criticisms of Hegel are concerned, I agree with Rush that Schelling rarely succeeds in 'constructing an argument from premises that Hegel would accept to a conclusion that he cannot' (2014: 225). That Schelling's objections seem so often to be strangely beside the point of Hegel's argument is all the more puzzling as it is hard to believe that he simply misunderstood a philosopher whose views he himself helped to shape (cf. Horstmann 1986: 306).



However, it is neither the case that Schelling simply abandoned an idealist metaphysics nor that his engagement with Hegel is confined to the narrow bounds of polemics. It is thus increasingly acknowledged that Schelling's direct criticisms are 'not [...] the most productive focus for investigation' (Dews 2023: xii). As a consequence, the spotlight has moved from Schelling's objections to the opening, method and ending of Hegel's *Logik*, towards exposing differences in the positive views of both thinkers.² However, the metaphysics of individuality, in particular the problem of individuation, remain under-explored in this literature.³

At the same time, there are several reasons that speak in favour of approaching the Schelling-Hegel controversy in terms of these issues: for one thing, the prospect of giving an explanation of individuality is something both authors value, so that if Schelling should succeed in exposing a difficulty in Hegel's account, he would succeed in demonstrating a problem of genuine concern to Hegel himself. As we have seen already, this is not always the case with regards to other anti-Hegelian ideas in Schelling's philosophy. For instance, Schelling's much cited demand for an explanation of why there is anything at all (cf. *GPP*: 94/7) is not obviously one that Hegel would accept as relevant in the first place.⁴

A further reason for focusing on issues of individuation is that they have important repercussions for other points of deep disagreement between both thinkers. This concerns especially their distinct interpretations of being as either always already conceptual (for Hegel) or as having a pre-conceptual dimension (for Schelling). While Hegel strives to exorcise any appeal to a remainder of being which resists conceptual grasp, the latter is all-important for Schelling; not the least because his great project of supplementing a priori, speculative metaphysics with a philosophical interpretation of mythology and revelation depends on it. At the same time, it seems to be a fair request to demand a justification of why one should accept Schelling's appeal to such a pre-conceptual aspect of being in the first place.

As I hope to show, the problem of individuation is a key to understanding why Schelling departs from Hegel in this respect: it is *because* Schelling entertains a distinct view of individuation that he rejects Hegel's version of the unity of being and concept and it is (at least in part) *because* he thinks his arguments against a conceptual principle of individuation are convincing that he feels justified in demanding radically distinct forms of philosophical inquiry. At the same time, it should be clear that if Hegel succeeds in solving the problem of individuation within his conceptualist framework, then an important reason to take Schelling's project seriously would drop away. With that much at stake, we have every reason for further investigations into the respective accounts of individuation proposed by these authors. In what follows I will therefore: (1) elaborate on what I mean by 'individuation'; (2) discuss Hegel's theory of individuation; (3)

present Schelling's argument from individuation; and (4) evaluate to what extent this argument presents a serious threat to Hegel's account.

I. The Problem of Individuation

Unfortunately, there is not one single way of formulating the problem of individuation, so it is vital to clarify how I understand it for the purpose of this paper.⁵ 'Individuation' can be used *epistemically* to designate the activity of a knower who discriminates one thing from another, but it is usually assumed that this presupposes a *metaphysical* sense of individuation referring to a fact about things themselves, namely how they differ from one another. That which determines that individuation occurs is called the *principle of individuation*. Regarding the latter, Lowe suggests the following definition:

[W]hat 'individuates' an object, in this [metaphysical] sense, is whatever it is that makes it the single object that it is—whatever it is that makes it *one* object, distinct from others, and the very object that it is as opposed to any other thing. (2005: 75)

Strictly speaking this definition runs together at least two distinct problems, namely:

- (a) What determines that X and Y are two i.e. numerically distinct things?
- (b) What determines that X is the very thing it is, as opposed to being Y?

The first of these questions asks for that which makes, say, Callias and Socrates *two* distinct human beings, while the second asks what determines that Callias is the one he is, and no other, that he is Callias and not Socrates. It is important to keep these two senses of individuation apart, for although ideally the principle of individuation will serve us with the solution for both problems there can be accounts that only solve problem (a) but not (b).

For instance, Aristotle famously argued that two human beings like 'Callias or Socrates [...] are different in virtue of their matter' (*Met.* VII.8, 1034a5–10).⁶ Here matter is supposed to account for the fact that Callias and Socrates are two rather than one. Thinking of a situation in which both individuals exist simultaneously, say a joint symposium where Socrates dines at Callias's richly decorated tables, we might be convinced indeed that pointing to their matter is enough for explaining what makes them two. Socrates has *his* parcel of matter and Callias has *his* own as well. Now, one may challenge this account by raising the question of what makes distinct parcels of matter distinct (Lowe 2005: 77–78) or by

constructing thought experiments involving the migration of matter from one individual to another (Fine 1994). That granted, there is a *prima facie* appeal to the idea that two (simultaneously existing) individuals can have the same form but not the same matter, which therefore makes them numerically distinct in the sense of question (a).

However, as Elizabeth Anscombe once observed, accepting the above-sketched solution to the puzzle about numerical difference among individuals does *not* entail that any individual ‘is who he is because of *the* matter of which he is composed’ (Anscombe et al. 1953: 94). Matter, even if said to provide a respectable solution to question (a), may still leave us wanting regarding question (b). For how does matter factor into what makes Callias the one he is, namely Callias, and not Socrates? In fact, both parcels of matter seem to be doing the exact *same* job in both men, namely that of ‘enmattering’ human form. One might object that surely they are doing this in different ways, because, for instance, Socrates is snub-nosed while Callias is not. But then it is no longer matter but form (accidental form in this case) that turns Callias from a mere token of a type into the unique human being that he is. Matter, even if it was to make two individuals numerically distinct, does not seem to be an ideal candidate for what makes each of them the very individual it is, something with a unique identity, something that cannot be substituted by another token of the same kind.

Hegel certainly did not propose that matter is the principle of individuation. His own account rather has to do with the idea that the universal or essence of things entails a further determination to particular, and ultimately individual, ways of being. Hegel’s solution, however, can be seen to run into a similar predicament regarding question (b) and this is what I hope to elucidate by presenting Schelling’s argument from individuation.

That said, one may wonder whether Hegel is at all interested in solving problem (b). Perhaps, uniqueness or non-substitutability are to him what the idea of a private self is to Bernard Bosanquet: the ‘pathos and bathos of sentimentalism’ (1913: 36). However, I agree with Karen Ng that Hegel’s discussion of individuality in the Idea of Life indicates the opposite. According to Ng’s analysis ‘it matters to the living being that it is itself and not something else’ which means (among other things) ‘that it is itself and not substitutable for another member of the same species’; for instance, it matters ‘that I am Karen and not Isabel’ (Ng 2020: 226). This analysis is convincing, as Hegel explicitly states that the living individual’s ‘being for itself’ comprises an ‘identity of the individual with itself’ (*SL*: 683/12.186) and therefore something that goes beyond merely being a further token of a type.

Independently from his discussion of life, Hegel states that individuality requires a surplus over and above numerical difference from other things. This is precisely what Hegel finds missing in Spinoza, whom he accuses of reducing

the individual to that which ‘refers to itself by setting limits to every other’ (SL: 87/21.101). While this model may yield a system of countably distinct units, it fails to grasp the self-reference of each individual by thinking of it exclusively in terms of its limits which ‘are references to the other’ so that ‘the individual’s existence is not in the individual’ (SL: 87/21.101). As Hegel promises, his own Doctrine of the Concept will do better by explaining how an individual can be ‘more than just restrictions on all sides’ (SL: 87/21.101). Indeed, Hegel says at one point that an individual, such as, for instance, an individual human being, is ‘infinitely unique [*unendlich eigenthümlich*]’ (SL: 16/21.15),⁷ which strongly suggests interest in what I formulated above as question (b).

II. Hegel on individuation

In Hegel’s eyes, the antidote to Spinoza’s emaciated account of the individual is Leibniz, for whom individuality ‘becomes the principle’ (TWA: 10.164–67). It therefore hardly comes as a surprise that many readers of Hegel (e.g. Harris 1983: 165; Stern 2009b) have proposed that he defends a solution appealing to Leibniz’s principle of the *identity of indiscernibles*. According to the latter, no two individuals can be exactly alike, which is usually taken to mean that they cannot agree in all their intrinsic properties. Where Hegel discusses the principle he highlights that it does ‘more than’ merely presupposing numerical plurality in as much as it treats distinct things as ‘differentiated by a *determination*’ (SL: 366/11.271). Although it is debatable whether Leibniz himself understood the principle as offering a metaphysical explanation of numerical diversity, Hegel reads Leibniz’s account as an attempt to do so.⁸ On this approach, the explanation of numerical difference is thus understood to rest on the fact that each individual has a unique qualitative make-up. Therefore, *if* the identity of indiscernibles is understood as a successful explanation of what makes any two individuals numerically distinct, it has the additional benefit of also ensuring the unique identity of each.

At the same time, it remains controversial to what extent Hegel positively endorses aspects of the above-described, Leibniz-inspired approach: according to Robert Stern’s (2009b: 358) interpretation, Hegel’s doctrine of the concrete universal inherits a Leibnizian element in as much as the concrete universal is the basis upon which each individual can have a unique qualitative makeup. However, while Hegel clearly takes an interest in Leibniz’s metaphysics of individuals, it cannot be denied that he also entertains a pronounced criticism of the identity of indiscernibles. This has led, for instance, Robert Pippin to suggest that Hegel ‘attacks the so-called law of diversity (Leibniz’s law), which holds that any thing is utterly unlike any other, as an insufficient formulation’ (1989: 221).

In what follows, I will rehearse both strands of interpretation, beginning with Stern's *particularization view* and then turn to a recent expression of the opposite account (Southgate 2014). As I will show by the end of this section, both accounts are ultimately unsatisfactory because they either fail to acknowledge Hegel's critique of Leibniz or to solve problem (b).

In the Doctrine of the Concept Hegel emphasizes that the universals fundamental to his ontology (known in the literature as *concrete universals*, *genus-concepts*, or (*substance-*) *kinds*) are necessarily particularized in terms of adjectival qualities. Hegel suggests a tight connection between the universal (or genus), the qualitative makeup and the singular existence of individual objects: '[a]ll things are a *genus* [...] in one *singular* actuality with a *particular* character' (EL: §179). The universal thus never occurs independently from an individual. At the same time the individual also requires the presence of a universal as its immanent essence:

If we consider, for example, Caius, Titus, Sempronius, and the other inhabitants of a city or a country, then the fact that they are collectively human beings is not merely something common to them, but their *universal*, their *genus*, and all these individuals would not be at all without this, their genus. (EL: §175A)

The universal thus figures as the substantial basis required for there to be an individual at all. Moreover, Hegel maintains that the connection between universal and individual specimen requires the latter to have accidental properties. That is, one cannot be a human individual without being so *in a particular way*: 'one cannot', Hegel insists,

speak of the universal apart from determinateness which, to be more precise, is particularity and singularity. For [...] the determinateness is not being imported into the latter from outside. [...] the universal has determinateness in it above all as particularity; [...] [moreover it also] is *absolute determinateness*, that is, *singularity* and *concreteness*. (SL: 532/12.35)

'The universal', as Hegel also puts it, 'must *particularize* itself' (SL: 713/12.215) and that means it cannot exist unless instantiated in individual things with particular qualities. Thus, according to Hegel, there is no such thing as the universal *mankind* without individual men or women instantiating it; likewise, there are no individual men or women without particular qualities characterizing them.

These ideas have given rise to an interpretation (Stern 2009a, 2009b) according to which the universal figures as a principle of individuation by means of its necessary particularization into manifold properties. If individuals are

always *particularized* universals, that means they will always have properties by which they can differ. This, according to Robert Stern, implies that for Hegel two individuals ‘can only be distinct if they have different properties’ and consequentially it ‘would appear [...] that like Leibniz, Hegel must deny that two things could ever be qualitatively identical’ (Stern 2009b: 359).

This interpretation suggests that, while embedding his account into the broadly Aristotelian doctrine of the universal’s particularization, Hegel ultimately follows Leibniz and accepts the *identity of indiscernibles* (cf. Stern 2009a: 174), according to which it is impossible for two numerically distinct things to have the exact same properties. This does not necessarily mean that Hegel also agrees with Leibniz that *all* properties are *equally* relevant for individuation. It does mean, however, that the concrete universal individuates things in as much as its particularization makes them qualitatively *unlike* one another.

This solution answers both questions (a) and (b): according to it, two individuals differ numerically because they have different properties and, by Leibniz’s principle, for each of them, there is a unique set of predicates applying to this very individual and no other. What makes Callias Callias and not Socrates is his unique character, and although they share the same universal essence of humanity, *this* universal is also responsible for them expressing it in an ‘infinitely unique’ way (*SL*: 16/21.15).

By establishing the identity of indiscernibles as a fundamental metaphysical principle, Leibniz thought himself to have ‘pu[t] an end to’ speculations about such things as perfectly similar twins or indistinguishable, ‘perfect spheres’ (Leibniz 1996: 57). Such speculations, however, were to retain their momentum, even to our present day as demonstrated by Max Black’s (1952) seminal paper. Hegel certainly finds something of philosophical value in Leibniz’s insistence that difference between individuals can never be wholly without connection to their intrinsic qualities. However, he also casts doubt on the validity of Leibniz’s principle which is ‘surely in need of demonstration’ (*SL*: 366/11.271). One might be tempted to think that Hegel aims at providing such a demonstration himself but there is textual evidence to the contrary.

Most notably, Hegel worries that appeal to qualitative difference or the ‘unlikeness’ of things blurs the lines between the epistemic act of discriminating them and the metaphysical facts concerning what makes something an individual independently from an observing subject. Hegel thus argues that a link between the separate existence of individuals on the one hand, and their qualitative unlikeness on the other, can only be established if an ‘external reflection’ steps in and creates it by ‘refer[ring] what is different [*das Verschiedene*, i.e. distinct individual substances] to likeness and unlikeness’ through the act of ‘*comparing*’

(*SL*: 364/11.268). The fact that two individuals differ in quality therefore only amounts to

an external difference which is not, in and for itself, the difference of the unlike itself. Whether something is like or unlike something else is not the concern of either the like of the unlike; each refers only to itself, each is in and for itself what it is; identity or non-identity, in the sense of likeness or unlikeness, depend on the point of view of a third external to them. (*SL*: 363–64/11.268)

In keeping with these remarks from the *Science of Logic*, Hegel makes a similar point in his *Lectures on Logic*:

Difference [of the qualitative type] is indifferent [*gleichgültig*], it is without interest. One can point out differences anywhere. But that to which I relate something, to this it is not related through itself, it is me who brings it into this relation. In order for the relation to be an interesting one, it is important [*es kommt darauf an*] that the differentiated entities be essentially differentiating [*begrenzend*]. Mere [qualitative] difference, however, is something external. (*GW*: 23,1.351)

While this is not the place to provide a detailed reconstruction of Hegel's objection to Leibniz, it should have become clear that Hegel denies that qualitative differences among individuals provide the grounds for their numerical distinction. From Hegel's point of view the fact that one individual is, say, red while the other is blue, has more to do with how *we* discriminate these objects than with what makes them distinct individuals in the first place. Note that in making this move Hegel does *not* sever the ties between the character of the 'differentiated entities' and their distinctness. By contrast, he explicitly states what something must be like in order to count as numerically distinct from others, namely 'essentially differentiating [*begrenzend*]'. While embracing the idea that differences among individuals are tied to their intrinsic determinations, Hegel doubts that we can legitimately point to *any* accidental quality of an individual and assume that this is part of what creates its distinction from other things. This role is reserved for those characteristics of an individual that play a dedicated role for separating it off from others. Relating this train of thought back to Leibniz, Hegel writes:

Whether two things are equal or unequal is just a comparison that we make, something that happens within us. [...] Difference must be difference in itself, not for the sake of our

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comparison, instead, the subject must have this determination in itself, as its own; the determination must be immanent to the individual. It is not just us who differentiate the animal by means of its claws, instead it thereby essentially differentiates itself, fights back and maintains itself. (*TWA*: 20.241)

The fact that Hegel points to the natural defences of animal organisms (e.g. their ‘claws’)⁹ has given rise to an alternative interpretation of his views on individuation. Along these lines, Southgate (2014) has suggested that Hegel rejects the identity of indiscernibles and appeals instead to certain essentially difference-making characteristics of individuals that, in the case of animal organisms, become manifest in terms of defensive organs, such as teeth, claws or the like. It is by means of these ‘weapons’ that individuals enact their distinction from one another and not through the comparative acts of an observer who spots qualitative differences among them. According to Southgate, Hegel therefore claims that:

[E]ach individual sets itself apart from other things through its inherent characteristics, say, its natural defenses. But in no way follows from this that these characteristics are unique: a tiger would be no less capable of differentiating, defending, and preserving itself if it had, say, an identical twin. (2014: 98)

Although I think that appeal to the natural defences of animals can only provide *examples* for how a far more general metaphysical principle manifests itself, Southgate’s interpretation goes in the right direction and provides a starting point for an alternative to the standard Leibnizian reading. Most notably, it gives me an opportunity to establish a connection between the topic of individuation and the ideas of self-preserving and self-realizing activity that Hegel considers fundamental for his concept of life as a logical category.

Some readers might worry here that the idea of life is the wrong place to look for Hegel’s account of individuation—or indeed his solution for any basic ontological problem. The idea of life, it might be argued, depends on the underlying theory of concept, judgment and syllogism and applies it to the specific domain of living beings. Hence, if Hegel has a solution to the problem of individuation, it is to be expected at these earlier stages of the dialectic and not in the idea of life, or so it might be felt.

However, I do not share the view that the idea of life merely applies a ready-made ontology which has been established by the end of the syllogism chapter. Instead, I think that there are important developments subsequent to this point and that the doctrine of syllogisms only intimates solutions which are then further developed (not just applied) on the level of the idea. Luckily,

Hegel himself is very clear that the notion of the concept is fully developed only on the level of the idea which he therefore calls ‘the *adequate concept*, the objectively *true*, or the *true* as such’ (*SL*: 670/12.173). What makes the idea an *adequate* concept, is the fact that only on this level the concept ‘has truly attained its reality’ (*SL*: 673/12.176). Here, Hegel uses ‘reality’ as a technical term indicating that the concept acquires ‘*determinate* being’, which it ‘possesses in its particularity and singularity’ (*SL*: 673/12.176). To some extent, this is something Hegel grants already to the ‘concept as such’ (*SL*: 673/12.176). However, he also leaves no doubt that the determination or realization of the concept is fully present no sooner than we reach the level of the *idea* which makes its first appearance in the self-purposiveness of life: the ‘concept, much as it has truly attained its reality, is this absolute judgment whose *subject* [...] is, [...], *self-directed purpose*’ (*SL*: 673/12.176).

Therefore, according to Hegel, the realization of the concept (as not just universal but also particular and singular) is fully graspable only when we begin to grasp the concept as self-purposiveness. And that is something we do not do in the first third of the Doctrine of the Concept but only when we reach the level of the idea, the first stage of which is life. Thus, according to my reading, life is indeed the right—or to use Hegel’s term—the *adequate* place to look for his account of individuation. This does not mean that the dialectic of concept, judgment, and syllogism would not contribute to his theory of individuation. But it does mean that we should not think of it as a ready-made ontology which only needs to be applied to specific domains of reality but rather as an important step on the way to a more developed ontology which takes shape for the first time in Hegel’s logic of life.

In the latter, Hegel argues that living beings (as paradigmatic cases of individuals) differ from one another in virtue of their capacity to protect the inner structure holding among their parts. Instead of qualitative uniqueness ‘a vital power of resistance’ (*SL*: 683/12.186) is considered to determine that one individual differs from another. As Hegel puts it in the *Phenomenology* (§246/140), individuals, in order to be individuals at all, must have means for self-protection, such as in the case of animals, ‘teeth’ or ‘claws’ through which each individual ‘*separates* itself from others’; it is ‘by means of these weapons’ that an animal ‘*maintains* itself in its independence and in its detachment from the generality’. Having such means for resistance is a manifestation of an underlying capacity of self-preservation which then figures as the true ground of an individual’s separate existence.¹⁰

On this reading, individuation is linked to the properties of the individual, but unlike Leibniz, Hegel only accepts *certain* properties as individuating, namely those related to its capacity for self-maintenance. This capacity is not just an accidental feature but linked to the essence of each individual. For any individual

must have such a capacity in order to count as an individual at all.¹¹ Importantly, this does not imply that individuals must differ in terms of being qualitatively unlike one another. What matters is that they are able to withstand causal interactions threatening their inner structure. Indeed, such capacities for resistance and self-preservation can be the same in many, distinct individuals.¹²

Above we have seen that, on the particularization account, the universal grounds difference in as much as it is necessarily particularized into particular features through which the individual can be said to differ qualitatively from others. But this implies that it is somehow predetermined that the universal's particularization yields a *unique* qualitative makeup in each case. As a consequence, the identity of indiscernibles continues to play a role for individuation that is hard to square with Hegel's criticism of this principle.

Through the self-preservation reading, we get to understand the universal's role for individuation without having to appeal to Leibniz's principle. Here, the universal accounts for one individual's numerical distinction from another by entailing capacities for withstanding causal interaction. This commits us to the claim that to convey some version of such a capacity is necessarily included in the notion of a concrete universal. At the same time, it frees us from having to assume belief in the identity of indiscernibles on Hegel's part.

That being said, this reading also has an important disadvantage, namely that it does not seem to provide us with an account of individuation in the sense of question (b). For if individuals differ by having capacities for resistance towards each other, numerical difference among them rests on capacities that are *common* to many, rather than unique to an individual. The essence of what it means to be, say, a tiger may entail that individual tigers have sharp teeth and claws and that this is how individual tigers set themselves apart from one another. However, this is true for all members of the kind *tiger* so that these capacities hardly provide grounds for what makes any individual tiger unique and non-substitutable for another. The self-preservation view, it seems, tells us what needs to be the case for there to be many, differentiated units—but it fails to give us a sense of what makes each of these units the very one it is.

To recapitulate, I have pointed out two interpretations of Hegel's theory of individuation. The first treats him as endorsing the identity of indiscernibles. On this view the universal figures as the principle of individuation because its particularization is claimed to bring about qualitative uniqueness. The second interpretation explicitly appeals to a more restricted range of individuating properties, namely to those that have to do with an individual's capacity to keep away harmful influences from its inner structure. These properties are difference-making not in the sense that A has them and B lacks them but in the sense that both A and B (in virtue of having such properties) prove to be mutually exclusive spheres of activity. While the idea of qualitative uniqueness makes no appearance

in this second interpretation, it retains the intuition that individuals differ due to their intrinsic determinations entailed by their universal or kind. However, it is unclear how this second alternative can account for the fact that individuals are unique in the sense that they cannot be substituted for another member of their kind.

We thus face a dilemma: either we opt for the particularization reading and accept its tension with Hegel's critique of Leibniz; or we opt for the self-preservation reading but then have to accept Hegel's difficulty in explaining what makes each individual the one that it is. I will now turn to Schelling and present his discussion of the problem of individuation. As I hope to show, Schelling's argument can be seen to confirm that both versions of Hegel's account are problematic and that therefore individuation poses a serious challenge to his metaphysics.

III. Schelling

The focus of my reconstruction is Schelling's so-called *Presentation of the Purely Rational Philosophy*. Being the centrepiece of Schelling's so-called *negative philosophy*, this work has a twofold task: on the one hand, it is meant to provide Schelling's version of a metaphysics¹³ of being as being thought and as such it operates in a realm where 'the laws of thought are laws of being' (*SW*: XI.303). In this respect Schelling's project is indeed similar to Hegel's *Logic* as a 'science of *things* captured in *thoughts*' (*EL*: §24). On the other hand, however, Schelling's negative philosophy is also meant to show that any such inquiry ultimately arrives at a point of crisis where its limitations become evident and we come to see that a priori metaphysics itself is not enough to fully disclose the nature of being. As such, it also provides a justification for Schelling's insistence on a distinct form of inquiry (the *positive philosophy*) which acknowledges a priority of being over thought and proceeds through an analysis of mythology and revelation.

Within this outline of Schelling's later philosophy, the problem of individuation makes its appearance as an aspect of the crisis that is supposed to make the limits of a priori metaphysics evident. For this reason, the place to look for Schelling's views on individuation is his negative philosophy and in particular its most elaborated version, namely the *Purely Rational Philosophy*¹⁴ with its complex assessment of how far a metaphysics of pure thought can proceed with the task of answering the question: 'What is being [*das Seyende*]?' (*SW*: XI.291)

For Schelling, this question has a characteristic ambiguity: on the one hand, it puts in front of us the task to establish basic, ontological principles that elucidate what it means to be at all. This task constitutes the main part of Schelling's

negative philosophy and yields the so-called ‘potencies’ as his account of the principles of being as being thought. On the other hand, however, a further task is to scrutinize whether these principles themselves exhaust what it means to be or if something further is required that actualizes them. As is well known, Schelling, unlike Hegel, claims that logical being requires an actualizer distinct from itself. Consequentially, for Schelling, there is not only logical being but also pre-logical being which actualizes the former.

Schelling identifies these two senses of being with the terms *quidditas* and *quodditas* i.e. the *What* and the *That* of being. The *What* denotes the rationally graspable, logical structure of being, while the *That* points to the cause of being which, for Schelling, ‘can only be pure actuality. As such, it cannot be grasped by any concept. After all, thought reaches no further than to this [pure actuality]. That which is only actus escapes the concept’ (*SW*: XI.316; cf. *GPP*: 202/161). Clearly, the admittance of such a pre-logical dimension of being puts a sudden end to the similarities between Schelling’s and Hegel’s metaphysics. It is important to note, though, that Schelling *never* advocated the view that reality was devoid of rational structure. Even in his final writing period he maintained ‘that whatever *Is* must also have a relation to the *concept*’ and that what ‘has no relation to thought, also does not *truly exist* [nicht *wahrhaft Ist*]’ (*SW*: XI.587). But what sort of relation could that be, given that Schelling also wants to maintain that being retains a facet that resists conceptual grasp?

The fact that Schelling goes as far as to speak here of the ‘unity of being and thought [Einheit des Seyns und des Denkens]’ (*SW*: XI.587) can seem puzzling and even inconsistent with his conviction that being is (in an important sense) pre-conceptual. However, Schelling also states that the talk of a ‘unity of being and thought’ can and has been understood in many ways. For the Schelling of the *Spätwerk* it is crucial that ‘unity’ does not indicate a *symmetrical* relation such as, for instance, *identity* or *congruence*. Rather, he thinks that the unity of being and thought involves an asymmetry according to which ‘being is the first, thought is only what comes second or what follows’ (*SW*: XI.587). This is not to say that thought enters the scene only in the guise of thinking subjects; it is the *world*, of which Schelling says that it lies in the ‘nets [...] of reason’ (*SW*: X 143–44). At the same time, he thinks that these nets latch onto a being which is prior to thought and is in this sense pre-conceptual.

For Hegel, by contrast, the ‘fact that there is rhyme and reason to the world’ (*EL*: §24R), that it is cast in a ‘diamond net’ through which everything is rendered ‘intelligible’ (*EN*: §246A), is a corollary of the insight that the unity of being and thought is a matter of symmetry: ‘being is known to be in itself a pure concept and the pure concept to be true being’ (*SL*: 39/21.45). Where Hegel specifies the nature of the relation between being and thought he speaks of their ‘identity’ (cf. *EL*: §88A). While, for Hegel, identity is not a matter of just lacking

difference, it is a symmetrical relation which also seems to be at work in the ‘simple sentences’ that appear both in the *Philosophy of Right* and the *Encyclopaedia Logic*: ‘*What is rational is actual, And what is actual, is rational*’ (PR: §6). Such an account leaves room for ‘transitory, and insignificant’ (EL: §6) modes of being such as *Dasein* and existence which are not fully rational. What it does away with entirely, however, is anything like a being which is in principle prior to thought or an actuality that resists conceptual grasp altogether.

Schelling, as we have seen, does not deny that actuality has an intelligible structure but he finds himself unable to vindicate the claim that this structure exhausts what it means to be. Instead, his own analysis of pure thought suggests a pre-logical foundation which conditions the presence of a meaningful reality. The obvious question to ask is why we should admit a pre-logical dimension of being in the first place. All the more so, as it makes it difficult to understand how the actual world can still be open to rational inquiry while at the same time harbouring within itself a foundation that is opaque to reason. Solving this problem surely is far beyond the scope of this paper. I do hope to present, however, a reason to take Schelling’s standpoint seriously, by discussing his argument from individuation. For on Schelling’s view, there is little hope of coming to terms with the problem of individuation without accepting a pre-logical dimension of being.

To make this point, Schelling starts by giving an example: if a painter wanted to carve out the individuality of a person like Callias, what would he focus on? He might, for instance, start by equipping his subject with properties such as ‘brown of colour or white, with full hair or bold and so on’ (SW: XI.405). And indeed, such properties are part of what Callias is, they convey what Callias is *like*. But even the most extensive array of such properties would not, according to Schelling, represent Callias as the very individual he is: ‘none of this is Callias’ (SW: XI.405). As Schelling points out, ‘nothing is contained in this [collection of properties] that he [Callias] would not share with others, in conjunction this would amount to nothing more than material similarity’ (SW: XI.405).

Schelling directly addresses here the second sub-problem of individuation as defined above in terms of question (b): *What determines that X is the very thing it is, as opposed to being Y?* and claims that appeal to adjectival properties is insufficient for solving this problem. The argument seems to be this: properties are traditionally conceived of as universals and as such they can be shared by many individuals. But if Callias’s properties can be shared with others, how could they make him an individual being, *different* from all others? As we have seen above, the escape route for a proponent of this view is to appeal to the identity of indiscernibles. But apparently this is not something Schelling envisages, since he states that even the conjunction of Callias’s properties constitutes similarity but not identity with Callias.

In the face of this, Schelling discusses an alternative account which is inspired by Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Schelling assumes that Aristotle discusses a version of his own question regarding the cause of being (cf. *SW*: XI.403).¹⁵ What could help us to understand better what constitutes the being of an individual is Aristotle's concept of *eidōs*. The obvious question is how the Aristotelian *eidōs* should be understood in order to answer questions like 'What constitutes the being of Callias?'

The scholastics, Schelling points out, 'have translated it with form' (*SW*: XI.406) in order to contrast it with matter which is essentially passive and receptive. 'Recently', Schelling continues, 'some translate it with *concept*, but the concept, according to them, contains the What (the *ti estin*), although they later add: the concept is the *solely actual*. But they say the same thing of the universal, and they attribute this doctrine also to Aristotle' (*SW*: XI.406). Make no mistake: these recent translators are Hegel and his followers; leaving this aside for the moment, we can say that in the passage at hand Schelling lays out how he believes *eidōs* should *not* be understood. The view he discusses is that the concept of a thing contains something, namely a universal, which figures as the source of its being. As it is clear from the context, the universal referenced by Schelling is the kind to which an individual belongs.

In fact, kinds can be seen to play a role for singling out individual things. They cut the world into *types* of objects, like living beings, oak trees or books, and, as we have seen via Hegel, they can even be understood to account for an individual's capacity to differentiate itself from other things. That being said, Schelling insists that appeal to a genus-concept never gets us to the unique identity of an individual:

To the question: what is Callias? one can answer by virtue of a genus-concept [*Gattungsbegriff*], for instance: he is a living being; but that which is for him the cause of being (in this case the cause of life) is not something universal. It is not second ousia but ousia in the first and highest sense, *prote ousia*, and the latter is *unique* to each and for *nothing else*. The universal by contrast, is common to many [...]. (*SW*: XI.406–407)

Schelling draws from the Aristotelian distinction of primary and secondary substance. While primary substances are individuals (*this* man, *this* living being), secondary substances are kinds (*man*, *living being*). He concedes that secondary substances constitute the way of being for their individual instances. Callias is a living being and he could not also be a rock or a book. However, Schelling argues, such ways of being are still 'common to many'. There are many living beings and they all share a common way of being, namely life. The same applies to lower-level kinds: there are many men and women who, just like Callias, exist

in the way of a human being. If, however, kinds are universals and as such *sharable*, it is hard to see how they should bring about individuality. The nature of individual being therefore cannot be a sharable universal (like secondary substance)—instead it must be itself essentially un-sharable and individual, it must be primary substance.

Therefore, Schelling insists that a sharp distinction must be drawn between *what* a being is like and what is *the cause of its being*:

[I]t is two entirely different things to know what a being is, *quid sit*, and that it is, *quod sit*. The former—the answer to the question: *what* it is—accords me insight into the essence of the thing, or it provides that I understand the thing, that I have an understanding or a concept of it, or have *it itself* within the concept. The other insight however, *that* it is, does not accord me just the concept, but rather something that goes beyond just the concept, which is existence [*Existenz*]. (GPP: 128–29/57–58)

Against the backdrop of the problem of individuation we can now see why Schelling insists on this distinction. He insists on it because he thinks that neither the adjectival properties nor the kind of an individual can play the role of a principle of individuation. Instead, this role must be played by the very existence of the individual. As long as we are looking for ways of characterizing Callias, adjectival properties and kinds are just fine. However, they do not deliver anything that could make Callias the very individual he is. Therefore, Schelling insists that the cause of individual being, is not the *What*, its way of being, but the *That*, the very fact of its existence. For Schelling, factual existence is thus the only ‘thing’ that is truly singular, precisely because it predates the realm of universals.

IV. Evaluation

Having reconstructed Schelling’s views on individuation it remains to be shown to what extent they challenge Hegel’s account. I will consider both the particularization and the self-preservation readings.

On the particularization version, Schelling’s argument in relation to adjectival properties applies: it is not clear why a universal kind should never be particularized in the exact same way. However, one may want to object that Hegel never said that the identity of an individual rests on its qualitative character alone. Far from this, Hegel claims that an individual can only have particular qualities

because of the underlying substance-kind or concrete universal immanent to them:

What the individual human being is in particular, this is only insofar as he is, above all, a human being as such and in the universal sense [*im Allgemeinen*], and this universal is not only something external to and alongside other abstract qualities or mere determinations of reflection. (*EL*: §175A)

Hegel also never leaves out an occasion to remind us that the ‘lowest conception one can have of the universal as connected with the singular is this external relation that it has to the latter as a mere *commonality*’ (*SL*: 549/12.52; cf. *EL*: §20R, §163A1). The point, also of Stern’s particularization reading, is that concrete universals are creative powers, not empty shells that are merely common to many things.¹⁶ So even if Schelling’s criticism applies to ‘abstract’ universals, it may still be beside the point regarding their ‘concrete’ counterparts which lie at the heart of Hegel’s account. That being said, on the particularization reading, it does seem to be exactly these *abstract* universals that carry the main burden in terms of individuation.

In terms of the self-preservation view, we have discussed an account that makes the inner activity of the individual and its capacity to resist external impact a key feature of Hegel’s take on individuation. The appeal to ‘essentially differentiating’ characteristics in terms of powers to resist does represent a move away from merely adjectival properties. Instead, this account addresses something essential for the creative power of the universal to become manifest in a ‘singular actuality’.

One may thus object to Schelling that his account of genus-concepts fails to acknowledge the level of complexity Hegel associates with the concrete universal. For the latter is not meant to be merely a property of the individual but instead the principle of its activity and interrelation with other things. Indeed, we have seen how this account can help to explain what accounts for an individual’s numerical distinction from others without appealing to Leibniz’s principle and its emphasis on qualitative difference.

However, we have also seen that Hegel’s ‘essentially differentiating’ characteristics still leave us wanting with regards to the uniqueness and non-substitutability of individuals. That is, while outlining ways in which an individual must be able to behave in order to count as a separate unit, these ways can be *similar* among many. As a result, they do not seem to convey something that that would allow us to count Callias and Socrates not only as two tokens of a type but moreover as two unique beings to whom it matters that they cannot be substituted for one another.

Of course, this does not rule out that Hegel may have other resources to account for the uniqueness of individuals. One attempt to identify such resources has recently been presented by Ng who points to Hegel's discussion of universality in the objectivity chapter. There, Hegel suggests that a certain class of objects, namely self-conscious individuals, is characterized by an ability to actively work against their own immanent universal and to thereby realize their singularity in an especially developed form: 'in the *singularity* of its "I" it [self-consciousness] absolutely exists *in and for itself* and can oppose itself to its objective universality and *alienate* itself from it' (*SL*: 639/12.141–42). Ng argues that this capacity of self-alienation which is pertinent to the self-conscious individual helps to see how Hegel can indeed explain individual uniqueness as non-substitutability:

Without the ability to oppose its genus, the ability to be self-alienated with respect to its genus, the object is not, strictly speaking, an individual (it remains a mere particular, a token of its type entirely interchangeable with other tokens of the same type). (Ng 2020: 232)

On this interpretation of Hegel, it is possible alienation from the genus which constitutes an individual's uniqueness. Of course it is itself a matter of (exegetical) debate, whether the above-quoted remark about the relation of singularity and universality in self-conscious beings is meant by Hegel to provide an account of their uniqueness. However, if we assume, for the sake of the argument, that Ng is right about this, there can still be worries about the argument itself. For it seems to be the case that many individuals can be alienated in exactly the same way: it is precisely the problem, say, of those having to perform dehumanizing labour that individuals become interchangeable in what they do, that their activity ceases to express that it is performed by someone with a unique identity. While Hegel is speaking explicitly about a case in which the individual alienates 'itself' rather than being alienated by something other than itself, this does not seem to make things different: if Socrates can enter into an alienating relation to himself, so can Callias, and if these instances of self-alienation are unique, this presupposes the uniqueness of the involved individuals rather than establishing it. This is not to say that there could not be further resources for an explanation of individual uniqueness in Hegel, but it is to say that the one recently proposed by Ng does not seem to get Hegel out of the trouble Schelling is causing him.

I therefore think that there is no easy way to shake off Schelling's point that individuality must be constituted by something that is not sharable by many. His way of making this point includes the idea that individuality must be constituted not by the form of an activity but instead by activity as such, by the pure act of being which Schelling identifies with the *That* as opposed to the

What of things. Thus, what Schelling ultimately wants to show through his engagement with the problem of individuation is that the acceptance of a pre-conceptual aspect of being cannot be avoided. This has important consequences not so much for the content of Schelling's later philosophy but rather for its justification.

The intellectual verve of Schelling's *Spätphilosophie* has had an undeniable and lasting impact on Hegel-critical tendencies in the continental tradition. At the same time, appreciation of the Schellingian option has largely remained a matter of preference. In fact, Schelling himself used to advertise his own ideas, especially his 'positive' philosophy, accordingly: '[t]he positive philosophy is the truly free philosophy; whoever does not want it should just as well leave it alone. I propose it to everyone freely' (*GPP*: 182/132). However, this way of advocating a philosophical system is suspicious. For, as Hegel had already pointed out in reaction to the early Schelling's cavalier attitude towards arguments: in 'philosophy, one demands proofs for what is being proposed' because otherwise one's philosophical standpoint remains 'an assertion, an oracle saying, to which one has to acquiesce' (*TWA*: 20.428).

The claim that speculative metaphysics arrives at an impasse because being ultimately turns out to retain an irresolvably pre-conceptual facet, and that, because of this, speculative metaphysics needs to be supplemented by a distinctively different type of inquiry, would remain such an assertion had Schelling not made substantial efforts to justify his position in a way that actually challenges Hegel's alternative. In the greater scheme of his work, this justification is Schelling's negative philosophy in its entirety. However, it should have become clear that the latter's treatment of individuality provides an important key to understanding why Schelling thinks that any 'purely rational' inquiry will ultimately have to acknowledge its limits and concede that being is, in an important sense, pre-conceptual.

In what has been said, I have made an effort to show that Schelling does indeed identify a serious issue with Hegel's metaphysics and why he thinks that this issue makes the assumption of a pre-conceptual aspect of being inevitable. Nothing of what I have said is meant to insinuate that there could not be Hegelian counter-moves through which the problem of individuation may receive a satisfactory solution *within* a metaphysics of pure thought. However, I hope to have shown that neither the particularization view, nor the self-preservation view are sufficient in this respect.¹⁷

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Notes

¹ Abbreviations used:

EL = Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Part I: Science of Logic*, trans. K. Brinkmann and D. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

EN = Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970).

GPP = Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, trans. B. Matthews (Albany: SUNY, 2007)/*SW*: XIII.

GW = Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1968–).

Met. = Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. R. McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941).

PS = Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977)/*GW*: 9.

SL = Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. G. di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)/*GW*: 11,12,21.

SW = Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856ff.).

TWA = Hegel, *Theorie Werkausgabe* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1969).

² Bowie distinguishes ‘the question of whether Schelling understood Hegel correctly’ from the question ‘whether Hegel or Schelling is actually right’ (1993: 128). Admitting Schelling’s deficits in terms of the former, Bowie frames his comparison in terms of the latter and argues that the key disagreement concerns the ‘assumptions concerning the relationship of abstract philosophical concepts [...] to what they are concepts of’ (1993: 128). Gabriel (2011, 2015) points out differences between Hegel and Schelling regarding the modal status of ontological categories, while García (2016) compares their engagement with the Aristotelian concepts of *energeia* and *entelechia*. Dews identifies ‘the status of potentiality’ as ‘the core of the metaphysical dispute between Schelling and Hegel’ (2023: 13), which then paves the ground for more specific comparisons regarding the ontological argument, mythology and religion, as well as the respective conceptions of freedom.

³ Independently from explicitly comparative intentions, Whistler (2016) analyses the development of Schelling’s account of individuation between 1799 to 1806, while Sandkaulen (2004) addresses the topic in the context of the *Freedom Essay*. Schelling’s later period, however, remains rarely discussed regarding the issue of individuation.

⁴ From a Hegelian perspective it can seem to be a category mistake to demand a ground or cause of being in the global sense Schelling’s question implies. As Stern puts it, Hegel could reply ‘that while concepts like “cause”, or “ground”, or “essence”, and so on make sense when applied to matters within it [reality], they do not make sense when applied to it as a totality—so that in this way, the question of why there is being and not nothing drops away’ (2009c: 34).

⁵ Besides the epistemic and metaphysical senses of ‘individuation’ there is an opposition between those who interpret the problem to be about what is definitory for an individual

as opposed to a non-individual (Castañeda 1975; Gracia 1988) and those seeking to provide an explanation of what makes individuals distinct from one another (Lowe 2005), where this is regarded as a necessary (although not a sufficient condition) for being an individual. In this paper I proceed according to the previously mentioned account. Some readers may feel that Hegel, as a post-*Kantian* philosopher would want to resist such a strict distinction between metaphysics and epistemology. In one sense, I do in fact think that Hegel's *Logic* takes no interest in epistemology: namely in the sense of a theory of how subjects apply categories to empirical data. Whatever it therefore offers regarding the problem of individuation cannot have anything to do with how we use concepts to single out some object within what we experience through our senses. However, 'epistemic' might also be understood to capture a far more general investigation into what 'concepts, or conceptual capacities, [are] necessary to render intelligible any objective content' (Pippin 2019: 16). *This* investigation is of concern for Hegel, and it can be labelled 'epistemic' in as much as it explores conditions of knowledge and intelligibility. At the same time, it is always accompanied by a parallel metaphysical investigation into 'the intelligibles, [into] what there is to be thought—being' (Pippin 2019: 14). My concern is with how Hegel approaches the issue of individuation in this latter sense, i.e. in terms of what makes 'the intelligibles' countably distinct and unique beings. I am not at all denying that this metaphysics will also provide the key to answering the question of how, according to Hegel, anything can be *known* to be an individual; however, this is not a question I intend to answer in this paper.

⁶ Ultimately, Aristotle's view is more complex. However, I am not interested here in the correct reading of Aristotle but rather in an example for a view that that solves only problem (a) and not (b).

⁷ Here and throughout translations have been modified where necessary.

⁸ Some passages in Leibniz do in fact invite this interpretation: '*there cannot be two individual things that differ in number alone*. For it certainly must be possible *to explain why they are different* [my emphasis], and that explanation must derive from some difference they contain' (Leibniz 1989: 32). Against the view that Leibniz seeks to explain numerical diversity in terms of qualitative diversity, Russell has argued that Leibniz's 'doctrine evidently presupposes both kinds of diversity' (1900: 55) so that neither depends on the other. While this may be true for Leibniz himself, *Hegel* takes Leibniz to argue that numerical difference does *depend on* qualitative difference, 'that things are diverse from each other *by virtue of* [emphasis mine] unlikeness' (*SL*: 366/11.271). What further supports this reading is the way Hegel renders §9 of the *Monadology*. According to the (reliable) translation of Ariew and Garber, Leibniz writes: 'there are never two beings in nature that are perfectly alike, two beings in which it is not possible to discover an internal difference, that is, one founded on an intrinsic denomination' (1989: 214). This is to say that numerical difference is always *accompanied* and *indicated* by qualitative difference. However, that is *not* the same as claiming a dependence relation between both kinds of diversity. Hegel, however, renders this very passage like this: 'Es kann nicht zwei gleiche Dinge geben; denn sonst eben wären sie nicht zwei, nicht unterschieden, sondern ein und dasselbe' (*TWA*: 20.241). 'There cannot be two things which are [exactly] alike; for if this was the case,

they would not be two, they would not be differentiated but one and the same [thing]'. *This* proposition does suggest that numerical difference *depends on* (rather than just being accompanied by) qualitative diversity. Similarly, Southgate (2014: 81) writes that, to Hegel, §9 presents itself as evidence that Leibniz seeks to provide a 'sufficient reason' for numerical diversity and that this reason consists in 'an intrinsic denomination[n] of the thing'. The bottom line is this: while the historical Leibniz may have been content with presupposing numerical diversity, Hegel reads him as someone who attempts to provide a metaphysical explanation for it. Note that this statement remains neutral regarding Hegel's evaluation of the success of this attempt.

⁹ Cf. *PS*: §246/140; *EN*: §370R, §370A.

¹⁰ Hegel associates capacities of resistance with the notion of 'irritability', which he regards as derivative on the underlying activity of 'reproduction', i.e. the process in which living beings constantly recreate the order that turns their parts into an organic whole (cf. *SL*: 682–83/12.185–86; *EL*: §218A; *PS*: §§265–66/150; *EN*: §353, §353A).

¹¹ For Hegel, the gold standard of objects that have this feature clearly are living beings. But he also discusses analogous cases, such as for instance the 'elasticity' and 'self-subsistence' of the mechanical object through which it 'repels within it the positedness of an other and retains its self-reference' (*SL*: 637/12.139). What teeth and claws are to an animal is 'elasticity' to a piece of physical matter which also resists (although in a more primitive way) external impact: either by being hard enough to withstand it or by evading it and thereby maintaining itself, at least in the sense of something that has its own share of space (cf. *EN*: §265).

¹² On my reading, Hegel accepts the possibility of qualitatively identical individuals, i.e. individuals that agree in all their non-relational properties. However, one might argue that capacities of resistance can never be literally the same in two individuals because they are uniquely tied to these individuals. Exploring this approach is beyond the scope of my paper but my worry would be that, like trope-theoretic accounts of individuation (cf. Lowe 2006: 27; cf. 2005: 83), it runs into issues of circularity: it would have to make the uniqueness of a capacity dependent on its bearer and the uniqueness of the bearer dependent on the capacity.

¹³ As Schelling (1870: 241) writes in a letter from 1852, the central doctrine of the *PPR*, namely 'the doctrine of the principles i.e. the potencies is my [Schelling's] metaphysics'.

¹⁴ There are possible alternatives for engaging with Schelling's negative philosophy, for instance *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy* (*SW*: XIII.1–174) and the *Other Deduction of the Positive Philosophy* (*SW*: XIV.337–56). While these texts can be helpful additional sources, one should not forget that Schelling himself explicitly wanted the *Presentation of the Purely Rational Philosophy* (together with the shorter essay *On the Source of Eternal Truths*) to represent the negative philosophy in his final system (cf. Fuhrmans and Schelling 1959: 17; Müller-Bergen and Egidio Sartori 2007; Buchheim and Hermanni forthcoming).

¹⁵ Schelling interprets Aristotle's notoriously difficult expression 'ti ên einai' as denoting the 'cause of being' in each thing (*SW*: XI 402). Aristotle links the terms 'ti ên einai' and 'eidos' in *Met.*: 1032b1: 'by 'eidos' I mean the 'ti ên einai' of each thing, and its primary substance'. Schelling thinks that 'eidos' should be interpreted as 'actus'. In the sense addressed here, actus is not totally separated from the universal structure of an individual: 'the What is contained and

grasped [*begriffen*] in the That': (*SW*: XI 407). There is a further sense of actus which Schelling reserves for God, where the actus is even more independent from the universal (cf. *SW*: XI 412; García 2016: 124). In both cases, however, there is a *distinction* between the act and the structure of being, so that also finite individuals have a source of unsharable singularity.

¹⁶ It has been argued (cf. Lebanidze 2019: 78–79, 106) that Stern's reading of the concrete universal puts too little emphasis on the dynamic aspect of the universal as a formative and creative source of activity. However, Stern nowhere denies the dynamic aspect of the universal, in fact, the very idea of particularization can be seen as an active self-expression of the universal.

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