

## **Writing Nature Otherwise: Natural History and the Paradox of the Product**

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If one begins reading Friedrich Schelling's *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature* from the opening lines of the appended "Outline of the Whole," from the outset the *First Outline* already encounters its first insurmountable obstacle, the point, or the moment, from which nature begins. "Because to philosophize about nature," writes Schelling, "means as much as to create it, we must first of all find the point from which nature can be posited into *becoming*."<sup>1</sup> This problem results from nature's determinate identity. Nature, as Schelling defines it, is "being itself;"<sup>2</sup> it is at once both the infinite production and absolute inhibition of itself. Yet how did nature as unconditioned and pure productivity ever encounter such a radical and absolute inhibition that could have resulted in the first point of *becoming*? It turns out, as David Farrell Krell notes, that "Schelling is never able to answer these questions, each of which circles about the very problem he calls "insoluble." What he learns repeatedly is that heterogeneity can never be merely "introduced" into homogeneity."<sup>3</sup> It is precisely because of this circular rotation around this insoluble problem that Schelling's *First Outline* immediately overturns homogeneity in favor of heterogeneity, although the text still calls for the process of heterogeneity to end. For once the text has begun, its beginning is always eternally beginning, so that the text calls out for that homogeneous point to put an end to nature's endless productivity. Whereas some may point to nature as being this unified point, since Schelling represents nature as the point of identity between both productivity and product, the *First Outline* is unable to convincingly demonstrate that point at which heterogeneity transitions into absolute homogeneity. This duality inherent to nature gives way to a writing of nature in the *First Outline* that unworks the progressive history and organization that is ascribed to nature, evolution, and

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Schelling, *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 13.

<sup>3</sup> David Farrell Krell, *The Tragic Absolute: German Idealism and the Languishing of God* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 50.

productivity by writing a nature that is at odds with itself and is not self-same but is in fact never-ending.

This is to say that the kind of productivity seen in the *First Outline* does not proceed according to the rationale that narrates the unfolding of nature's progress; rather, nature rejects rationality in favor of an irrational overproduction that wildly exceeds the limits which the text imposes, guiding nature towards the archetype of some absolute organism. This overproduction is reflected in the writing of the text, in the excessive and profligate production of footnotes, questions, and reformulations that intersperse the reading, which interrupts, in the words of Georges Bataille, the "restricted economy" which the text appears to write and reveals the more "general economy" that the text's architectonic actually presents<sup>4</sup>. These footnotes are, in the words of Jean-Luc Nancy, "expressions" or remarks that are not merely summed up as appendices to the text. Instead, Nancy writes,

An economy of remarks seems to double up the economy of logical discourse: an economy of remarks, that is, a subordinated "detached" dispersed economy that does not obey the strict progression of the concept but rather chance encounters between the text and the good or (ill) fortunes of the writer.<sup>5</sup>

These footnotes also serve a second purpose, insofar as they are a manifestation of the text's *écriture* that reflects the volatile and ever-shifting trajectory of nature's wildly deranged production. Though Schelling may have failed to answer the question from whence did nature begin, the way nature is philosophically written and developed unworks and dislodges it from the discourse of transcendental idealism that would limit nature's auto-genesis, inviting the reader to read nature otherwise and discover the limitless potential that once lay subjacent, dark, and hidden within it.

### ***Natural History***

The *First Outline's* architectonic is spread out among three divisions: the first deals with a discussion of nature as the absolute, the second with the elucidation of three possible systems of anorganic nature, and the third explains John Brown's theory of excitability. Through these, Schelling presents nature as an activity that can be deduced as a "dynamic graduated series of stages"<sup>6</sup> and hence

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<sup>4</sup> Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy. Vol. I: Consumption* (New York: Zone Books, 1991). In Georges Bataille's *The Accursed Share*, he writes of the difference between general and restricted economies: "There can be anguish only from a personal, *particular* point of view that is radically opposed to the *general* point of view based on the exuberance of living matter as a whole. Anguish is meaningless for someone who overflows with life, and for life as a whole, which is an overflowing by its very nature." See Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, 39.

<sup>5</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Speculative Remark* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 48.

<sup>6</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 54.

be given to thought as a “natural history.”<sup>7</sup> But, as the divisions within the text itself show, Schelling is incapable of writing out this natural history systematically, for the *First Outline* is rather an assemblage of disparate articulations about nature than it is a coherent history of successive stages of development. Nevertheless, as opposed to Kant, who imagines natural history as a history of objects that places them within a certain time and place in nature, Schelling figures the concept of natural history in terms later developed by Joseph Henry Green, a British Idealist thinker, who introduces the idea of thinking nature through “physiogeny.” Physiogeny, according to Green, is “the history of nature, which studies this history as “preface and portion of the history of man,” so as to make the “knowledge of Nature” a “branch of self-knowledge.”<sup>8</sup> For Green physiogeny becomes anthropology, as he subsumes the history of nature into a temporalized Chain of Being in which nature works her way up from “the *polypti* to the *mammalia*,” “labour[ing] in birth with man.”<sup>9</sup>

This approach to natural history, on the other hand, remains tied up with the project of transcendental idealism developed in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, which views nature as a “primordial original” that is at once both free in the actions of the products it produces and necessary “through the confinement and conformity to law inherent in her.”<sup>10</sup> Yet, as opposed to the *System*, Tilottama Rajan writes, “Not only is this text [the First Outline] hardly a system so much as an assemblage, and thus a dissension or ‘strife’ of systems,”<sup>11</sup> the *First Outline*’s attempts to “fit” or “sublate” history, empiricism and various sciences—such as those developed by John Brown, J. H. Green, and Johann Christian Reil—into a writing of spirit through nature, results in Schelling finding these sciences writing spirit.<sup>12</sup> The text, therefore, offers the reader an instance of what Hegel had said of Schelling, that he “worked out his philosophy in view of the public,”<sup>13</sup> since the text boldly and visibly divulges its experimental style, allowing the public to view nature’s very real struggle with its own becoming. Reading nature in the *First Outline* in a straightforward manner becomes nearly impossible, for reading is led through a series of dissensions, inner conflicts, and contradictions that end up dissolving any progression that would amount to an end. This results in the dissolution of the architectonic of a “dynamic graduated series of stages,” set up by Schelling to guide the text, into the indifferent fluid and luxurious development that is written out in the philosophy of nature.

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<sup>7</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 44.

<sup>8</sup> Green, quoted in Tilottama Rajan, “Excitability: The (Dis)Organization of Knowledge from Schelling’s *First Outline* (1799) to *Ages of the World* (1815),” *European Romantic Review* 21, no. 3 (2010): 315-316.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Friedrich Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1997), 199.

<sup>11</sup> Rajan, “Excitability,” 317.

<sup>12</sup> Rajan, “Excitability,” 317.

<sup>13</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel’s Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1955), 513.

The natural history the text intends to write out is therefore undermined by the formless and infinite productivity of nature, which Schelling wrote in order to circumvent the traditional analysis of nature according to empiricism in favor of a construction of nature that metaphysically encapsulates it as both product and productivity. It is impossible to “know *nature as product*,” Schelling writes, for nature is known “only as *active*”; since “being itself is = to activity, then the individual being cannot be an absolute *negation* of activity.”<sup>14</sup> This perspective on nature is afforded by the intuition of it as an infinite product, since no finite product can provide actual knowledge of nature as both pure product and pure productivity. If nature cannot be empirically determined except through an “empirically infinite series,” then it can only be “presented by *infinite becoming*.”<sup>15</sup> Nature, as that which straddles the line between being and nothing, as a principle of being, that itself is not, and yet “manifests itself in each natural object”<sup>16</sup> is therefore neither merely being nor nothing, but slips imperceptibly into becoming as that which has already been. The reason for this is that Schelling cannot pinpoint when nature began in the same way that Nancy describes Hegel as not being able to pinpoint when it is that the *Aufhebung* begins, since “It has always been too early or too late for determining. . . . The whole logic of *sublation* has occurred in the sliding of a word and in the slipping of the text on this word.”<sup>17</sup> Speculative philosophy can only assume that the book of nature is and has always presently been in the process of its own becoming, and, henceforth, ascribes to nature the quality of infinite becoming, as it could not be otherwise thought or unthought.

In the same way that nature can only ever imperceptibly enter into becoming, so too does philosophy only enter into nature by means of a free “invasion,” for, as Schelling writes, “it would certainly be impossible to get a glimpse of the internal construction of nature if an invasion of nature were not possible through freedom.”<sup>18</sup> That is, philosophy enters freely into its theorization of the absolute as nature by means of the freedom of speculative philosophy. Through speculative philosophy, as an experimental writing, Schelling writes that nature is at once infinite productivity and the absolute product. Yet if we consider this creation of nature as at once a theorization as well as a writing of nature, an analogous question emerges between the two: how does one account for the permanence of objects in nature considered as absolute productivity or how does one account for the emergence of a text from the infinite process of writing? Schelling’s tenuous answer lies in the relation between the encounter of two opposed operations, processes, or what Schelling calls “tendencies” in nature,

Let one force be thought, originally infinite in itself, streaming out in all directions from one central point; then this force will not linger in any

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<sup>14</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 14.

<sup>15</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 15.

<sup>16</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 13.

<sup>17</sup> Nancy, *Speculative Remark*, 40.

<sup>18</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 196.

point of space for a moment (thus leaving space empty), unless an energetic activity opposing (retarding) its expansion did not give it a finite velocity. . . . [It] must be assumed that no product in nature can be the product in which those opposed activities absolutely coincide, i.e., in which nature itself attained rest. One must, in a word, simply *deny* all *permanence* in nature itself.<sup>19</sup>

The appearance of products in nature, according to Schelling, simulates an apparent permanence that conceals the productivity that lies behind it. The object, then, becomes for nature the limit of nature as subject—for nature as subject is always taken to mean nature as productivity, activity, becoming. The object, “the *resting, permanent*,” therefore, becomes the “chief problem of the philosophy of nature,”<sup>20</sup> as it is that which inconceivably inhibits nature as productivity. This opposition is not at all peaceful but is rather highly antagonistic and violent. Nature is “impetuous” in its retardation, and infinitely struggles against the products that appear in opposition to it. Therefore, nature attempts to “fill anew” each determinate product in an incessant “gush[ing]” of its force, but is forever traumatized by its encounter with its resistance, and is unable to overcome the dissension of those products that oppose it.

The traumatic character of this opposition is more clearly expressed in one of the footnotes appended to the text, where Schelling conceives of nature as a stream that “flows in a straight line forward as long as it encounters no resistance”; yet “Where there is resistance—a whirlpool forms,” wherein every “original product of nature is such a whirlpool, every organism.”<sup>21</sup> The whirlpool, like the organism, is never immobile or permanent, but is something “constantly transforming” and is said to be constantly reproduced at each moment by the vivifying force of nature. However, the whirlpool does not reflect the discourse of the main text. Instead, these whirlpools that are in constant transformation demonstrate that the main text is itself not a restricted economy but is rather more general; although the footnotes appear separate and distinct from the main text, they interact with and still belong to the economy of the text by doubling it. In the same way as when the activity of nature encounters a whirlpool and leaves that “stream of Nature’s activity . . . broken” or, even more traumatically, “annihilated,”<sup>22</sup> the footnotes unwork the operation of nature as “pure identity” by redirecting its production and reciprocally derange it. This footnote, like many others in the text, involutes the stream downwards inside the unfathomable depths of the resistance against the text and then sends the stream back outwards, not as it was before, but transformed and changed. In this way, the footnotes pose a threat to the “organic totality” of the main text, putting the authority—as both the government and author of the text—of nature under erasure. Instead of clarifying the main text, the footnotes frustrate the trajectory of the text, and

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<sup>19</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 17.

<sup>20</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 17.

<sup>21</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 18.

<sup>22</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 18.

demonstrate that, like the whirlpools, the text is not a composite organization but a “whole of articulated singularities.” Moreover, as Nancy says, “articulation does not mean organization,” since “by itself” it is rather “a juncture, or more exactly the play of the juncture.”<sup>23</sup> In this way, every product is a singularity that is articulated by something that does not actually participate or guarantee the organization of products, but merely assumes, plays with, or slides these distinct and incommensurable pieces of nature’s puzzle—product versus productivity— together in an experiment hoping for good results.

### **The Paradox of the Product**

The figure that Schelling introduces in order to inhibit and guide the text’s overproduction is the figure of the originary actants. Within the hierarchy of principles presented within the text the actants appear lower than the higher principle of nature; they too do not exist in space and, like nature, are originary productivities as well. However, actants cannot amount to nature even if all of them were amassed together, since they are at once originary productivities that are “truly *singular*”; each is “in itself whole and sealed-off, and represents, as it were, a *natural monad*.”<sup>24</sup> Schelling’s naturalization of the Leibnizian monad is here used to construct a multiplicity of singularities that are both individual and “*inconstructible*” because they are the “limit of all construction by virtue of which every construction is a determinate one.”<sup>25</sup> As such, actants provide the simple originary principle by which nature as infinite productivity can transfer its absolute force into restricted forces, determinate articulations, or propositions that are the substrate of all material products, much like the Higgs-Boson in quantum physics that provides the field that gives matter its mass. Actants, therefore, are not the originary force but are the mediate principles that transmit this force as “alterations”<sup>26</sup> of that force, “alterations—of cohesive force, of density, of specific gravity.”<sup>27</sup> These alterations, however, only exist because they have previously formed into one unified inhibition that resists the originary force of nature, opposing to it a collective activity to “*strive toward one and the same product*”<sup>28</sup> and modify the originary force of nature into something different. The actants, then, present the natural inhibition required for nature to enter into becoming, so that the indifferent activity of productive nature encounters the necessary difference of multiple and individual productivities that complete nature as the most original duality. In this sense, the actants’ relationship to nature as the inhibitive concept that sets nature into becoming is much like the notion of the “violence” of writing in Derrida and Paul de Man’s

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<sup>23</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 76.

<sup>24</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 21.

<sup>25</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 22.

<sup>26</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 22.

<sup>27</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 23.

<sup>28</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 24.

sense of deconstruction, insofar as writing is always an activity or a force that moves towards the creation of something out of nothing; writing is that which excludes that which comes before it as a force that does not merely negate it but makes it the possibility for production. Nature's productivity can never *actually* be since it requires the actants to recover productivity from its fundamental excessiveness and then direct these into formations, into words, or what are also known as the apparent products of nature.

Actants, in this sense, perform a second function by organizing and dispensing the infinite productivity of nature into restricted and yet mutual channels that Schelling can later use in order to initiate the economy of the graduated stages of nature: "For two different actants, there must be one common point in which they unite—(this point will be named—at a much lower level to be sure—the chemical product)." <sup>29</sup> And yet, as soon as the concept of the actant is articulated, it is undone by yet another footnote. The spectral nature of the actant as an inhibitive and productive point in the system is revealed once Schelling further questions the possibility of investigating the reality of the actants: "but the question is by what means these alterations have been produced, and this has not been answered by any previous research; and that question lies far higher—and yet deeper, and ultimately in the construction of matter." <sup>30</sup> Insofar as the actants are the principle that explains how matter can come to occupy space, as the writing that writes the words of the book of nature, it is ironic that the remark makes the origin of the actants dependent upon the answer to the paradox of materiality. In the same way as writing only exists insofar as it is in the process, in the activity of writing, the actants can only be insofar as we consider them in tandem with the construction of matter. The actants and matter then are mutually constructive and deconstructive, as the footnote unworks the trajectory of the text and tangles any distinct determination of firstness and secondness between productivity and product, since the question of materiality presses in upon the text too early for the text to process or digest it. While the main text is still in the midst of articulating itself, the articulation of the actant is seized by the voice of the footnote, which interrupts the temporal progression that would see nature exit out of the realm of pure productivity into the specific productivities of the actants that sustain the creation of the products or the matter of nature.

As it turns out, when Schelling had said that the chief problem of the philosophy of nature was the problem of "rest" or "permanence," he did not mean that since nature is already known to be active, we must account for where the idea of permanence originates. Definitely not. Rather, permanence, rest, and the heterogeneity of matter become the chief problem for the philosophy of nature since they are that which interrupts, eludes, and complicates the exposition of nature as simultaneously that which is absolute productivity and product. Whenever nature must account for the existence of matter, it is shown to be in

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<sup>29</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 24.

<sup>30</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 23.

dis-union with itself, throwing the concept of a totalizable organization into dissolution. The only option left for the philosopher of nature is to repress the gap that separates nature from its product, evidenced by yet another footnote that addresses the question of how to “*find the point in which this infinite multiplicity of diverse actants can be unified in Nature.*”<sup>31</sup> It is revealed that the “dynamical philosophy cannot even arrive at this problem” since it is not concerned with the “*constituents*” that make up the product of nature, because it assumes “the constituents are given through the product. The dynamist, therefore, does not ask how the product originates from these constituents; for the product *precedes* the constituents.”<sup>32</sup> But, as the footnote demonstrates, the articulation of precedence does not reflect the reality of the unfolding of nature, nor does it authorize the sovereignty of nature over its product. Thus, the remark, like matter, slips into the temporal and hierarchical organization of the text where it rhetorically should not belong but unquestionably exists.

Suspending for a moment the voice of the footnotes that consistently point to the unexplained “*cause* of the force of cohesion”<sup>33</sup> that unites the actants into one absolute inhibition of nature’s productivity, let us turn to the way that Schelling writes out the combination of actants as providing once again another derangement of the whole organization of the text. In a remark Schelling describes the cohesive force of nature as a “composite force” that is itself distinct from the “attractive force” that attracts the actants towards each other. Cohesion “strives against the universality of the attractive force, for it constantly *individualizes* and leaves the space outside the sphere within which it alone works *empty.*”<sup>34</sup> Granted that the force of cohesion cannot be accounted for, Schelling experiments with the idea that the totality of actants are organizable into a single unified action but remain individually distinct and free from each other. This, however, is maintained in order to sustain a rhetoric of regulative formation that imposes upon nature “a continual determination of figure from the crystal to the leaf, from the leaf to the human form,”<sup>35</sup> which follows the physiogonic history that establishes a typological continuity between nature as that which prefigures the fulfilled figure of man as the apex of creation. Yet, typology goes unfulfilled as each actant “deranges” the other in the same way that the footnotes derange nature’s approach towards the “production of the originary figure.”<sup>36</sup> The result of this mutual derangement in “the most original and most absolute combination of opposed actions in Nature [is] the *most original fluidity*, which . . . presents itself as a universally extended entity that simply works against nonfluidity (solidity), and continually endeavors to liquefy everything in nature.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 24.

<sup>32</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 24.

<sup>33</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 26.

<sup>34</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 26.

<sup>35</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 26.

<sup>36</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 26-27.

<sup>37</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 27.



It appears, therefore, that nature has finally produced its first, its most original product, the fluid, insofar as it is that “which comes nearest to pure productivity,” since, as Schelling writes, “The nearer Nature is to pure productivity the more formless, the nearer to the product, the more formed.”<sup>38</sup> Fluidity negates all individuation, having no desire or need to form into anything determinate, and hence must be the first product since it is the furthest distance from the absolute product. As such, the fluid is opposed to the actants, which remain individual and completely sealed off, and the opposition between the two furnishes “the drama of a struggle *between form and formless*.”<sup>39</sup> Pitted against each other in eternal opposition, actant and fluid dialectically provide the ground for the becoming of nature, since nature can never fall into absolute fluidity nor can it collapse into an absolute solidity. This endless struggle is the theatrical performance of the history of the “*various stages of development of one and the same absolute organism*,” which Schelling aptly calls an “ever-changing Proteus.”<sup>40</sup> The philosophy of nature therefore posits a positive sea change in the future, hoping that the absolute organism will at one point resolve its duality and put itself to rest. Yet, as is known in Greek mythology, Proteus, the god of the sea change, changes his shape in order to avoid telling the future, not so that he may reveal it.

Therefore, it is appropriate that Schelling attributes the title of “ever-changing Proteus” to nature, for it expresses the unpredictability and instability of the absolute organism as a body without organs. Like the whirlpool and the fluid, Proteus represents the unruliness of metaphorical language that Schelling experimentally uses to organize the disparate elements of the text and articulate nature as a process in infinite becoming. Yet the writing of these figures is caught in the same infinite transmutations that characterize nature in the same way as the whirlpools are in constant transformation. Each represents another instance of the eternal beginning that tries to collect and present an order of things but lacks the rule and order of a history, since the text delays its moment of unification for a time posited well into the future but which the text itself cannot presently resolve. In this sense, the constant transformation and unrest of nature as pure productivity as well as pure product resembles the writing of the text itself, a writing of nature that cannot find its end once it begins, unleashing upon Schelling, as the writer, a boundless object that repeatedly rejects the limits or directions which he tries to carefully inscribe and re-inscribe. As nature reveals itself to be non-coexistent with itself, so, too, does the text reveal to us the readers its own incommensurable and split identity.

This split, therefore, becomes the problem that Schelling encounters with the guiding structure of the stages of development, which posits a future at rest that is united in the completion of itself as absolute product. Each stage of development is written as contained within the gamut of development from the

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<sup>38</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 27.

<sup>39</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 28.

<sup>40</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 28.

lowest to the highest stage, providing a proportion of the determinate permutations of each organism that leads up to the production of the absolute product. But because Nature, as has been noted above, detests the individual, viewing each as “*misbegotten attempts*”<sup>41</sup> towards the final evolved product, nature as pure productivity constantly strives to eliminate the products it produces. However, this antagonism against the individual arises only in the context of Nature’s commitment to the project of the stages of nature, which is not necessarily an anthropology, but is rather characteristic of the indifference and frigidity of a totalitarian history. While it is true that nature struggles against each product and must tarry with the necessary process of formation that grounds the generation of individuals, once the individual reaches the stage of sexual, and hence reproductive, formation, Schelling writes that “The development of the sexes is merely the highest zenith of the process of formation, for it occurs by means of the same mechanism through which progressive growth actually takes place.”<sup>42</sup> The life of the individual, therefore, may mean very little from a cosmic point of view, as it is reducible to merely a transition of forces that intensify within it and then dissipate out into nature. And yet, once the individual reaches the point of sexual maturity, it has, in that moment, reached the apex of its own formation as the highest expression of nature and from then on assumes the destiny of its own reproduction. The individual, therefore, represents yet again the infinite work of writing, insofar as “each product of nature can split again into new products,” since “Nature organizes, where it organizes, to infinity.”<sup>43</sup> The autonomy of the individual represents, in this sense, the autonomy of the text as an unfixed product whose split identity divides and is reproduced infinitely in a reading that is never at once finished but forever reproduces into ever-narrowing spheres of interpretation.

What Schelling’s writing thus points to is the impossibility of any point from which one can write the beginning or the end of the history of nature. The *First Outline* expresses a translinear rather than a unilinear direction towards the absolute product that completely undoes the writing of the reproductive potential of the absolute organism. The *First Outline* thus provides a completely different process as opposed to the one imposed upon it by the *Introduction*, a process of dissent that elicits new forms and new individuals which inhibit the process of nature’s self-organization. If to philosophize about nature, then, amounts to creating it, the *First Outline*, written as it was in the midst of the *Introduction* and the *System*, emerges as a singular and idiosyncratic writing that is auto-deconstructive of its legislative position, demanding a submission of nature to its own profligate exchange between economies of restriction and excess, and which at no point will see nature as productivity dominate over its eternally reproducing products.

At the end of our reading of this text, Schelling’s representation of

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<sup>41</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 35.

<sup>42</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 37.

<sup>43</sup> Schelling, *First Outline*, 44.

Nature as a linear stream with a beginning, a middle, and an end becomes insupportable. The figure of nature as an absolute product or absolute organism turns out to be the absolute expression of the overproduction and agglomeration of its products that are forever transforming, deranging, and evolving out into nothingness or infinitude. If one would, at this point, interpret the *pathos* of this writing of nature, it would be a nature that wishes its book to end, a writing that seeks the respite of death in order to escape the at once eternal but also bottomless suffering imposed upon it by its entrance into life.