

poetical visions and, on closer examination, reveal their ephemeral transient character. Thus during the earlier period of his career when he lived, wrote, and lectured in Jena and Weimar, he thought that he had found in the Beautiful and in Art the consummation of his philosophical system, the revelation of the Absolute or truly Real; but the solution satisfied him only for a moment.

27.
This only a
transitional
point of
view.

In his system of Transcendental Idealism, which was published in the year 1800, Schelling had passed through that phase of philosophical development in which he assigned to Art the highest function. He had there attained to what he considered a higher position than that occupied by his predecessor Fichte. The latter's interest was centred in the ethical problem. For him the conscious self was the beginning, its development in the sphere of self-constrained freedom, the end of life and the problem of philosophy. From this point of view he had neglected nature. His career coincided momentarily with that of Schiller, but he never did justice to the spirit of Goethe's implied but unwritten philosophy of nature. This was reserved for Schelling, who realised that a better understanding of the problems formulated by Kant on the one side, and forming the deeper interests of the new era of culture on the other, could only be attained by moving the centre of thought away from the extreme subjective position of Fichte, by recognising the underlying unity of nature and mind. Accordingly, Schelling took up in real earnest an idea thrown out by Kant. Goethe himself had done the same, as he explained in a series of autobiographical