

SCHELLING'S NATURPHILOSOPHIE

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1 *The Protean Schelling*

1. **The Early (Fichtean) Period** (1794-1796).
 2. **The Early Philosophy of Nature** (1797-1800).
 3. **The Philosophy of Identity** (1801-1805).
 4. **The Middle Period (Philosophy of Freedom)** (1809-1815).
 5. **The Late Period (Positive Philosophy)** (1820-1850).
- The *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature* (1799) is part of the “early” philosophy of Nature and marks the beginning of Schelling’s break with Fichte.

2 *Schelling’s Naturphilosophie*

Naturphilosophie: Nature is dynamic and productive Being (*Natura naturans*) from which all other particular beings (*Natura naturata*), including self-conscious rational subjects, are derived

1. *Realism*: Nature exists independently of (or metaphysically prior to) all forms of consciousness, even that of the transcendental subject.
2. *Naturalism*: Everything, including the rational/transcendental subject, is applicable in terms of the laws of nature.

3 *The Kantian Problematic*

3.1 *Nature & Ends*

End/purpose: that which is produced by the causality of a concept (e.g. an artifact)¹

Natural end/purpose: products of nature that are themselves ends, in which the parts are (i) possible in virtue of their relation to the whole; and (ii) reciprocally cause one another²

¹ the object of a concept insofar as the latter is regarded as the cause of the former (§10, 5:220)

² Now for a thing as a natural end it is requisite, first, that its parts (as far as their existence and their form are concerned) are possible only through their relation to the whole. ... then it is required, second, that its parts be combined into a whole by being reciprocally the cause and effect of their form. (§65, 5:373)

3.2 *Efficient/Mechanical vs Final Causation*

Final Causation: The representation (concept) of an end is the cause of that end (as an effect)³

Efficient Causation: The cause is metaphysically (and temporally) prior to the effect⁴

3.3 *Features of Natural Ends*

1. Reproduction⁵
 2. Self-maintained/organized⁶
 3. Parts exhibit reciprocal dependence⁷
- Explanation of these features in terms of a “formative force” (*bildende Kraft*)⁸

3.4 *The Paradoxical Character of Natural Ends/Purposes*

- If something is natural, then it is not the product of design (it is not an artifact or product of final causation)
- If something is an end, then it is produced in accordance with some conceptualized aim (i.e. it is a product of final causation)
- This conflict is expressed in the antinomy in terms of two theses:

Thesis: All generation of material things is possible in accordance with merely mechanical laws.

Antithesis: Some generation of such things is not possible in accordance with merely mechanical laws.

HOW (IF AT ALL) DOES KANT RESOLVE THIS PARADOX?

- Kant's strategy seems to hinge on recognizing that the thesis & antithesis are merely *regulative*

Constitutive Principle: A principle that is constitutive of the objects of experience (e.g. the Second Analogy principle that every event has a cause)

Regulative Principle: A principle that serves to unify, simplify and systematize concepts, and direct the understanding (the faculty of concepts) to its greatest extent, with a view to arriving at a systematically unified whole of knowledge (a '*scientia* or *Wissenschaft*)

- But does this distinction resolve the antinomy?
 - Not clear how even if thesis and antithesis are both regulative, that they are thereby compatible with one another
 - Why exactly is it that organisms are mechanically inexplicable?

³ an end is the object of a concept insofar as the latter is regarded as the cause of the former (the real ground of its possibility); and the causality of a **concept** with regard to its **object** is purposiveness (*forma finalis*). Thus where not merely the cognition of an object but the object itself (its form or its existence) as an effect is thought of as possible only through a concept of the latter, there one thinks of an end. The representation of the effect is here the determining ground of its cause, and precedes the latter. (CPJ §10, 5:219-20)

⁴ The causal nexus, insofar as it is conceived merely by the understanding, is a connection that constitutes a series (of causes and effects) that is always descending; and the things themselves, which as effects presuppose others as their causes, cannot conversely be the causes of these at the same time. This causal nexus is called that of efficient causes (*nexus effectivus*). In contrast, however, a causal nexus can also be conceived in accordance with a concept of reason (of ends), which, if considered as a series, would carry with it descending as well as ascending dependency, in which the thing which is on the one hand designated as an effect nevertheless deserves, in ascent, the name of a cause of the same thing of which it is the effect. (CPJ §65, 5:372-3)

⁵ First, a tree generates another tree in accordance with a known natural law. (§64, 5:371)

⁶ Second, a tree also generates itself as an individual. This sort of effect we call, of course, growth; but this is to be taken in such a way that it is entirely distinct from any other increase in magnitude in accordance with mechanical laws, and is to be regarded as equivalent, although under another name, with generation. (§64, 5:371)

⁷ Third, one part of this creature also generates itself in such a way that the preservation of the one is reciprocally dependent on the preservation of the other. (§64, 5:371)

⁸ An organized being is thus not a mere machine, for that has only a motive power, while the organized being possesses in itself a formative power; and indeed one that it communicates to the matter, which does not have it (it organizes the latter): thus it has a self-propagating formative power, which cannot be explained through the capacity for movement alone (that is, mechanism). (§65, 5:374)

4 Nature as Productive & as Product

- Tenets of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*:⁹
 1. Nature is inherently productive
 2. Nature as being and nature as product are distinct conceptions
 3. The conception of self-consciousness is (merely?) the highest form, potency, or expression of the productive forces of nature
 4. Nature is the "indifference" or basis of subject-object duality; otherwise expressed as the "absolute identity" of subject and object in nature
 5. Intellectual intuition is the non-discursive act of grasping the absolute (or the identity/indifference of subject and object)

⁹ Here, before we proceed to anything else, we shall briefly divide the whole of Nature into *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*. By *Natura naturans* we understand a being that we conceive clearly and distinctly through itself, without needing anything other than itself (like all the attributes which we have so far described), that is, God. The Thomists have also understood God by this phrase, but their *Natura naturans* was a being (as they called it) beyond all substances. (1:47-8).

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