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To cite this article: Dave Mesing & James Bahoh (2016) Guest Editors’ Preface, Comparative and Continental Philosophy, 8:3, 252-254, DOI: 10.1080/17570638.2016.1231874

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/17570638.2016.1231874

Published online: 27 Sep 2016.
Guest Editors’ Preface

Dave Mesing\textsuperscript{a} and James Bahoh\textsuperscript{b}

\textsuperscript{a}Villanova University, Villanova, PA, USA; \textsuperscript{b}Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, OA, USA

Each of the articles in this issue seeks to initiate new directions for debates around the status of Naturphilosophie in Schelling and/or German idealism and romanticism more generally. These articles examine conceptual innovations and nuances internal to Schelling’s system, the significance of Naturphilosophie in German thought, and more specific themes like life, death, time, desire, sensation, individuation, growth, and affirmation.

In their article, “Identitätsphilosophie and the Sensibility that Understands,” Graham Bounds and Jon Cogburn examine the concept of intellectual intuition as Schelling develops it, in distinction from Kant and Fichte. Bounds and Cogburn argue that most understandings of Schelling’s concept of intellectual intuition fail to account for the way in which he highlights the priority of receptivity over productivity within sensible intuition. Accordingly, they argue for a complex relationship between intellectual and sensible intuition, using the language of a sensibility that understands, in order to emphasize the perception of autonomous nature in Schelling’s identity system. Bounds and Cogburn then situate their argument about intuition within Schelling’s larger project, arguing that it enables him to develop a kind of “formal realism” about archetypical knowledge.

In her article, “The Role of Narration and the Overcoming of the Past in Schelling’s Ages of the World,” Katia Hay examines Schelling’s account of time and his use of narration in that text. With respect to time, Hay focuses especially upon the question of how the past comes about and the existential impact of this question in our lives. In contrast to scholarship that is inattentive to the narrative character of Ages of the World, Hay argues that it is crucial for addressing these questions about time. If for Schelling, the past does not arise as a product of the present as the present gradually slides away, but rather is generated at once with present and future, the past must be past from the start. This means that accounts of the origination of time as occurring in the past are mistaken, when taken naively rather than as our own narrations. To be consistent with this position, Schelling’s narration of the past in Ages of the World should not be taken as an account of events that gradually led to the present, but as a narrative engagement with processes originary of time that are occurring “right now.” Hay argues that for Schelling these processes are “a time above time” that should be understood in terms of the

\textsuperscript{1}This special issue of \textit{Comparative and Continental Philosophy} comes in the wake of the first meeting of the Pittsburgh Summer Symposium in Contemporary Philosophy. The PSSCP ran for 2 years (2013 and 2014) as a week long, intensive seminar series held at Duquesne University. The PSSCP was founded and directed by James Bahoh (Duquesne University), Jacob Greenstine (Duquesne University), Martin Krahn (Duquesne University), and Dave Mesing (Villanova University). The 2013 theme was “Schelling and Naturphilosophie.” The founders would like to thank Dan Selcer for his early and vital support of the seminar series.

\textit{CONTACT}  Dave Messing  mesingd@gmail.com
notion of Lauterkeit – a will that does not will or a purity that we recognize both within us and above us. Hay goes on to argue that Schelling’s depictions of Lauterkeit within the context of the question of time are also depictions of a certain aspect of human desire. Schelling’s exposition of Lauterkeit – together with that of a contracting and negating will that craves existence – gives a basic genealogical account of the nature and structure of our desires. The duplicity established in these wills leads to constitutive trauma and many of the existential difficulties in our lives.

Anthony Bruno’s contribution, “‘As From a State of Death’; Schelling’s Idealism as Mortalism,” reconstructs Schelling’s critiques of both Spinozism and idealism with respect to the intelligibility of death for philosophical systematization. Bruno traces the development of these critiques through Schelling’s response to both the Spinozism controversy in German idealism and to Fichte’s idealist understanding of life in the Wissenschaftslehre and related texts. According to Bruno, German idealism can be characterized as holding a view he terms “immortalism,” whereby systematic purposiveness or life is taken as the transcendental ground for experience. While Schelling held this position at one point, Bruno argues that he emerges as an internal critic to the tradition on this point, developing a position Bruno labels “mortalism,” or the view that death stands as a persistent presupposition for any philosophical system. Bruno explains the details of a systematic conception of death in Schelling’s work, and further situates Schelling’s uniqueness on this view through a contrast to Hegel in terms of the relation between method and system.

Kirill Chepurin turns to an analysis of Hegel’s Naturphilosophie in his contribution, “Nature, Spirit, and Revolution: Situating Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature.” Chepurin examines the consequences of Hegel’s anthropology for his philosophy of nature, tracing these in relation both to Hegel’s own system and as they constitute an implicit counter-position to Schelling. Chepurin suggests that Hegel’s philosophy of nature should be read “retrospectively” within the system, rather than “prospectively.” The latter, a standard methodological approach, interprets the philosophy of nature as logically and ontologically prior to the philosophy of spirit, which develops out of and is grounded in nature. Chepurin proposes to analyse Hegel’s Encyclopaedia for the implications and assumptions of the Naturphilosophie; he argues that this way of reading retrospectively shows how the linear, prospective narrative implied by Hegel’s placement of the philosophy of nature in the middle of his system is itself a product of spirit and philosophical knowledge. Chepurin accomplishes this reading through a careful reconstruction of the philosophy of spirit’s beginning in Hegel’s anthropology, showing how the ruptural element of what he labels the anthropology’s “theory of revolution” has important consequences for the relation between spirit and nature in Hegel’s system.

Andrew Mitchell examines remarks in Schelling’s Naturphilosophie about plants in order to show their relevance for understanding the concept of life. In his article, “The Botany of Romanticism: Plants and the Exposition of Life,” Mitchell discusses this in relation to both Goethe and Hegel. The chief thread in his analysis is the plant’s relation to difference. Both Hegel and Schelling draw from Goethe, but in very different ways. Mitchell summarizes the spiritualization process that ultimately leads Goethe to see the plant as an example of love between two genders, as the result of the plant’s growth. Goethe searched extensively for a primordial plant in order to provide the logical necessity for classificatory systems of any possible plant. Mitchell shows how this search becomes
dissociated from actual plants as Goethe turns to discussing a primordial process of metamorphosis, thereby identifying a “creative pulse” in plants that leads them to encounter difference in “spiritual contact with another.” Hegel marshals a Goethian account of metamorphosis in his philosophy of nature, but argues that a plant’s growth is conceptually inconsequential. He denies that plants have a soul, which is necessary in order to encounter another, according to Hegel. A plant is thus completely undifferentiated in itself. This contrasts with Schelling, who examines plants in a way that identifies contrasting pairs of positive and negative principles existing only in a dynamic equilibrium. Mitchell reconstructs Schelling’s complicated engagement with physics in order to show how Schelling understands the plant as part of the whole of nature. He then draws the consequences of this for understanding life in terms of plants: plants require light as an outside resource, and the need for this exposure demonstrates how plants are able to hold their place within life and in support of the whole of life.

Daniel Whistler’s article, “Schelling on Individuation,” turns to the problem of individuation as it emerges in Schelling’s identity system. Whistler argues that this problem radically differentiates Schelling from other German idealists, and he traces these differences to Schelling’s development of claims in his identity system that stand in tension with his work in Naturphilosophie. While Whistler does not see the identity system as inaugurating a radical new period of Schelling’s research that is totally divorced from his earlier work, he does argue that Schelling’s Naturphilosophie fails to make sense of individuality as a negation of the unconditioned. However, in the development of the identity system, Schelling changes his account of individuality to a model of affirmation. Whistler contextualizes the importance of the theory of individuation in relation to debates within German idealism, showing how Jacobi makes use of a remark in Spinoza’s Letter #50 to argue for the impossibility of demonstrating an absolute individual. This position is taken up most forcefully by Hegel, who maintains that this remark is a central tenet of Spinozist philosophy, and who argues eventually that individuation can only be accounted for in a sublated form through a speculative proposition. Whistler thereby turns to a thorough development of the shift from negation to affirmation in terms of Schelling’s account of individuation, unfolding the tensions of this shift within Schelling’s own system to show how he uses individuation to re-enter the metaphysical debates that were in the background during his initial construction of Naturphilosophie.