

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*

Some of the antecedents of the Deep Ecology (DE) movement and its platform, particularly principles *one* and *two* (the intrinsic value of organisms and that diversity and richness contribute to their intrinsic value), and of ecopsychology can be found in Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*. Schelling's general claim is that, "The main function of philosophy is the solution to the problem of being (*Dasein*) in the world."¹ When both Deep Ecology and Ecopsychology maintain that authentic *Dasein* is predicated in the natural rather than in the civilized *decontextualized* and synthetic, they have both aligned, revisited, and/or co-opted Schelling's philosophy.

Beginning in 1795, Schelling begins to develop *Naturphilosophie* while embracing the Romantic Movement. In 1796 he meets another member of the Romantic Movement, Goethe, who secures a teaching job for him at the University of Jena. Soon after, Schelling proposes the crucial thesis that would color most of his work: *a transcendental idealism in which the relationship between consciousness and nature is mediated and produced through intellectual intuition. Intellectual intuition mediates self-knowledge and an understanding of nature in an indivisible process.* In Schelling words "...From now on there is no longer any separation between experience and speculation. The system of nature is at the same time the system of our mind."² This process describes both deep ecological mindful interactions as well as the psychological byproducts of these intimations--an ecopsychology. In short, core to *Naturphilosophie* is the claim that *both nature and "spirit" (the self, self-consciousness, and consciousness) are identical agencies. Thus mental reality emanates directly from a physical and palpable natural reality:*

...Then we can go in quite different directions—from nature to ourselves, or from ourselves to nature, but the true direction, for him to whom knowing (wisdom) is of supreme value, is that which nature itself has taken.³

As Wolfe Bolman, Jr. (1967) concludes after interpreting the previous quote, "In short, consciousness is but the highest power of nature itself, nature and mind are basically one."⁴ While insisting that nature has a reality of its own and that it is indivisible (with mind in it), he anticipates integrated ecological gestalts and DE's contribution of intrinsic value. Furthermore, his argument that intelligence is predicated on self-consciousness reminds us of the mindfulness talked about in DE while exploring *Natur*. Thus the human mind wrestles with the reality of nature and in doing so it creates for itself categories of thought and perception, including the idea of duality. Particularly insightful is Schelling's criticism of the scientific method when it *semiotizes* systems and

¹ Quoted from *Schelling: The Ages of The World*, (1967) translated by Wolfe Bolman, Jr. from the original under the German title, *Philosophische Brief über Dogmatismus und Kriticismus*, S.W., I, 1:313, 1795.

² Quoted from *Schelling: The Ages of The World*, (1967) translated by Wolfe Bolman, Jr. from the original under the German title, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*, (2nd Ed.) S.W., I, 2:39, 1803.

³ Quoted from *Schelling: The Ages of The World*, (1967) translated by Wolfe Bolman, Jr. from the original under the German title, *Allgemeine Deduktion des Dynamischen Processes*, S.W., I, 4:77-78.

⁴ Frederick de Wolfe Bolman, Jr. (1967) *Schelling: The Ages of The World*. NY: AMS Press, Inc.

processes where in the end the verbal tags seem to take a reality of their own as separate from the actual processes embedded in nature (objectification as alienation). If Schelling's philosophy is a preamble for ecopsychology, then we take from him also his failure to convince the scientific community of his time and perhaps delaying the development of both DE and ecopsychological approaches. Ironically, Iago Galdston (1957)⁵ and Paul Cranefield (1958)⁶ make the claim that Sigmund Freud himself might have been partially influenced by *Naturphilosophie*, particularly when it came to his conceptualization of the ego, id and super-ego. Frank Sulloway points out in his own and excellent biography of Freud⁷ that their views are not shared by most of Freud's biographers. But if true, Schelling's dynamic description of the interactive forces in nature of matter, light, and the organism could have anticipated Freud's own vision of a dynamic personality. Once again, if true, this is also a missed opportunity for psychology to the extent that there could have been an opportunity to include a more benign and encompassing view of *Natur* in his psychoanalysis from the "get go." In short, for Schelling at least, the conscious organization of thought and the unconscious dynamics of nature produce the phenomenological realization of "spirit" and of aesthetics. Ecopsychology too attempts to reconcile these *forces*.

Schelling does not conceive of a supernatural agency removed from our day to day experiences but of a total experience where mind and nature are one with it. Schelling's culminating integration of all his ideas, my oversimplification, are expressed in the equalization, MIND=NATURE=GOD, thus favoring a theistic interpretation of this intimation. This formulation is also represented in transpersonal psychology as ecopsychology. But even the secular ecopsychologist can draw important conclusions from this formulation to the extent that "god" can be interpreted to mean "Gaia," "presence," or "spirit" as psychologically meaningful metaphors for extended and elevated consciousness and *being* without adjudicating a theist origin to the total MIND-NATURE experience.

On therapeutic grounds, Schelling does not provide us with detailed interventions regarding how to integrate an ailing psychology into this triumvirate. To the extent that these are indivisible and consubstantial forces (MIND-NATURE-"Spirit"), it may be hard to argue, from Schelling's perspective, that any one person can be truly isolated or alienated, severed, from this whole—we obviously are not, we cannot be. Thus Roszak's idea of a latent *ecological unconscious*⁸ that can be cajoled, reenergized, or resuscitated back into active and healthy function could be construed to be consistent with *Naturphilosophie*.

To the extent that ecopsychology is therapy, assisted personal growth, counseling, or any other expert-mediated wellness practice, then *reawakening* and *reconnection* continue to

⁵ Iago Galdston, ed., *Freud and Contemporary Culture* (New York, 1957)

⁶ Paul F. Cranefield (1958). Josef Breuer's Evaluation of His Contribution to Psycho-Analysis. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* XXXIX: 319-322.

⁷ Frank Sulloway (1992). *Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend*. Harvard University Press.

⁸ Theodore Roszak (1996). *The Voice of the Earth: An Exploration of Ecopsychology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes, pp. 13.

be the formulae, in their many therapeutic iterations, that reinforces at least an already existing MIND-NATURE bond.