

CHAPTER ONE

The Reawakening of the
Barbarian Principle

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φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ

—Heraclitus (DK frag. 123)¹

In what follows, I would like to speak both to our motivation for this collection of essays and then to the character of the essays themselves.

I

In his provocative essay in *Signs* on Husserl and the problem of non-philosophy and non-phenomenology, “The Philosopher and His Shadow,” Merleau-Ponty takes up the question of what eludes philosophy but which cannot nonetheless be dismissed from philosophy. “What resists phenomenology within us—natural being, the ‘barbarian’ source Schelling spoke of—cannot remain outside phenomenology and should have its place within it. The philosopher must bear his shadow, which is not simply the factual absence of future light” (S2, 178).² In the working notes to the *Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty proposes a “psychoanalysis of Nature” that takes up the question of the “ever new” and “always the same” in Nature, that is, “the barbarian principle” (VI2, 267), that which haunts the face of Nature.

Let us be clear: To take up the project of a psychoanalysis of Nature is to enter into an analytic relationship with the ψυχή of Nature, but that in turn assumes that Nature is both whole (Nature as such is thinkable) and animated. In a sense, it asks that we reengage the *anima mundi* of the Ancients, Nature as a living creature, animated by its ψυχή or *anima*. Otherwise, what is there to psychoanalyze? At the same time, the sensibilities that have largely governed Western (and increasingly global) thinking for the past four centuries would find such a project absurd. Merleau-Ponty's proposal is an affront to the manner in which the environment appears as something obvious to us. But this is not at all lost on Merleau-Ponty. The question of a psychoanalysis of Nature is at the same time the task of rethinking Nature as no longer something obvious, or quaint, but fundamentally as something worthy of being questioned and having the dignity of the question (*fragwürdig* in Heidegger's celebrated sense). Indeed, the question of Nature cannot be separated from Schelling's barbarian principle. A *Naturphilosophie* (in the manner of Schelling) or a psychoanalysis of Nature (in the manner of Merleau-Ponty) demand that both philosophy and analysis take up the question of their respective shadows.

What is this barbarian principle, this nomadic force, this source that always comes to being unexpectedly from within being, that resists our settled modes of thinking, rendering them ceaselessly plastic, but which thinking can neither wholly include nor exclude? Schelling, in the 1809 *Freedom* essay, calls this shadow *erste Natur*, that which is an "incomprehensible ground" and a *nie aufgehender Rest*, an irreducible remainder that cannot be resolved by reason even with the greatest exertion (I/7, 360).³ Merleau-Ponty speaks of "this excess of Being over the consciousness of Being as what Schelling wants to think in all its rigor [*Cet excès de l'Être sur la conscience de l'Être, voilà ce que Schelling veut penser dans toute sa rigueur*]" (N1, 62/N2, 38). Schelling strives to think *das Übersein*, that is, he wants to bear the shadow of Nature without self-deceit and without the expectation that it can be contained in (any) advance.

Deleuze and Guattari, at the end of their great period of productivity, argued in *What is Philosophy?* that "We will say that THE plane of immanence is, at the same time, that which must be thought and that which cannot be thought. It is the nonthought within thought. It is the base of all planes, immanent to every thinkable plane."⁴ A plane of immanence is the planomenon that determines the horizon of a philosopher's conceptual creativity, indicating what belongs by right to thinking. The horizon of philosophical concept creation, of thinkability as such, casts a shadow that the philosopher must bear. The problem of nonthought, what simultaneously must and cannot be thought, is

not another tiresome lamentation about the sorrows of finitude. It is the effort to unleash the powers of thinking's shadow. "Perhaps this is the supreme act of philosophy: not so much to think THE plane of immanence as to show that it is there, unthought in every plane" (WP, 59).

The Barbarian Principle: Perhaps the Supreme Act of Philosophy?

It is worth noting that in calling the philosopher to bear her shadow, Merleau-Ponty evokes Schelling, who at the time was a largely neglected thinker, at best on the shadowy periphery of the philosophical canon. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty would more expansively turn to Schelling when he gave three remarkable courses on the question of Nature (1956–1957, 1957–1958, and 1959–1960) at the Collège de France. Although, as Robert Vallier explains, the notes from these courses were in a less than optimal form (N2, xiii), it was nonetheless a boon for our appreciation of his late work that, more than three decades after his death in 1961, they appeared in an edition prepared by Dominique Ségлар called *La nature: Notes, cours du Collège de France* (1995). In 2003, Robert Vallier's welcome English translation appeared (*Nature: Courses Notes from the Collège de France*). In addition to providing a critical context for his unfinished magnum opus, *The Visible and the Invisible*, they also provide a striking philosophical inquiry into this present volume's organizing question.

In the first course, as Merleau-Ponty ruminates over some of the key figures in the Western legacy of the *Naturphilosophie*, he retrieves, in an extended investigation that also includes Bergson and Husserl, Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*. The latter, despite its meteoric arrival on the philosophical stage of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century post-Kantian thinking, had largely become a philosophical relic by the twentieth century (discredited by natural science, *aufgehoben* by Hegel, discarded by Marx, and largely enigmatic to prevailing philosophical sensibilities). Fortunately, Schelling's dormancy was not to last in all quarters, and early rumblings in France could already be detected in Samuel Jankélévitch's Schelling translations (*Essais*, etc.) and his son's study, *L'odyssée de la conscience dans la dernière philosophie de Schelling*.⁵ In the mid-century, Germany saw an explosion of confrontations with Schelling (Schulz, Tillich, Heidegger, Jaspers, Löwith, Habermas, Frank, Jähnig, et al.). Merleau-Ponty, for his part, remained sensitive to the philosophical developments across the Eastern border.

Merleau-Ponty, more so than some of these early readers in the renewed Schelling reception, was also presciently receptive to the problem of Nature in Schelling's thinking, and, despite some quibbles with

Schelling, he could see the power of a mode of thinking that sought to place “us not in front of, but rather in the middle of the absolute” (N2, 47). The thought of Nature, despite the many ways in which Schelling experimented with articulating its various dimensions and potencies, always remained at the heart of Schelling’s enterprise. As Iain Hamilton Grant recently contended in his provocative monograph, *Philosophies of Nature After Schelling*, even in the 1830 lecture course (*Introduction to Philosophy*), “which claims to have found the ‘Ariadne’s thread’ of history running through the ‘true Proteus of Nature,’” it does not follow that Schelling abandoned *Naturphilosophie* for a new project of freedom and history. The former “remains ‘the substrate of the entire system’ of philosophy.”⁶

Schelling, like a reawakening volcano, prophetically argued, “The idea of Nature as exteriority implies immediately the idea of Nature as a system of laws” (1/3, 6). Nature’s exteriority, its presence, its face, so to speak, conceals its unruly interiority. Viewed merely as the real, without the intervention of what Schelling called “speculative physics,” Nature seems to reduce to the interaction of bodies or forces according to set laws. This is the *Verhängnis*, the fateful curse, of modernity: Nature as a calculable and determinable system of objectively representable relations that can be studied scientifically. Moreover, as the representation of a closed set of recursive laws, Nature is something *before* us, in *front* of us, at the receiving end of the scientist’s discerning gaze. We are no longer *of* Nature, but rather *in* Nature, as if we were separate from it, albeit surrounded by it as an environment surrounds an independently standing investigative subject or fly finds itself in a bottle.

Schelling’s intervention did not foreswear science in favor of vague intuitions, idle musings, random conceptualizing, or the *Schwärmerei* of reducing the question of Nature to affective raptures. Schelling, deeply immersed in science, was fighting for a robust expansion of the range and character of science. Schelling understood this with admirable clarity: The struggle was not between philosophy (or art, or any or the other humanities) and science. The latter domains are not in the end an exclusive disjunction and there is no call to reconfigure all modes of knowing in accordance with the natural sciences. It was a struggle over the nature of science itself and, as such, its relation to other modes of knowing. In his beautiful 1807 essay on the relationship of the plastic arts to Nature, for example, Schelling reflected on the intertwining of the artistic imagination and the *Ineinsbildung*, the coming into form and image within Nature. As Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback articulates this relationship in the penultimate essay in this volume:

While in Nature the formlessness of the life of form (formation) appears immediately as forms of life, in art, the art forms make visible the disappearing of the formless life within form itself. In Nature, the formless life of form (formation, *die Formung*) appears from the point of view of its appearing *as* form. In art, it appears from the point of view of its disappearing *in* forms. Both Nature and art are alive, are ways of life.

Science can either decimate Nature, reducing it to the representation of bodies or forces subject to the laws that govern them (or any other closed system that seeks to fundamentally *represent* Nature), or it can provide new ways of retrieving the wisdom of the ancients regarding the question of Nature. It is important to note here that the former option has not won out in all quarters and that some significant enterprises in science (especially quantum physics, string theory, neuroscience, and some exciting developments in biology) have independently rediscovered the question of Nature beyond the flatlining that comprised modern positivism. In Schelling's time, the picture was becomingly alarmingly less complicated—a fate that we have not wholly evaded. In the *Freedom* essay, Schelling charged that the former view of science with its representation of Nature, or more precisely, its view of Nature as representable, is Nature-cide, the fatal flaw that epitomizes modernity: “Nature is not present to it” for modernity “lacks a living ground [*die Natur für sich nicht vorhanden ist, und daß es ihr am lebendigen Grunde fehlt*]” (I/7, 361). Nature therefore becomes an abstraction; its forces become mere repetitions of the same. Natural laws are its inviolable operators, and Nature is bereft of the miracle of natality, incapable of real progressivity, so that it merely repeats what it has always already been, “swiveling in the indifferent circle of sameness, which would not be progressive, but rather insensible and non-vital” (I/7, 345). Unless thinking illuminates the gap that allows one to think Nature as the eternal beginning, Nature occludes what is most forceful, most valuable, and most transformative within itself. As Schelling posed the question in *Von der Weltseele*: “How can Nature in its blind lawfulness lay claim to the appearance of freedom, and alternately, in appearing to be free, how can it obey a blind lawfulness” (I/6, ix)?

In Schelling's 1797 *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*, we find a remarkable line: “The ancients and after them the moderns quite significantly designated the real world as *natura rerum* or the birth of things [*die Geburt der Dinge*]; for it is in the real part that the eternal things or the ideas come into existence” (I/2, 187–188). In

this brief formulation, we can hear clear echoes of Plato, especially the *Timaeus*, a dialogue with which Schelling was occupied since his time at the Tübingen Stift.⁷ We also can hear an allusion to Lucretius' great atomist poem *De rerum natura*, which had finally appeared in a German translation by Franz Xaver Mayr thirteen years earlier.⁸ Mayr translated the poem into prose as *Von der Natur der Dinge, On the Nature of Things*, which, although certainly correct, inadvertently falls prey to the suggestion that Lucretius is explaining the essence (nature) of things, that is, telling us what things fundamentally are. For Lucretius, however, things are not a property of matter and the idea of matter does not entail things. Matter is still matter whether or not matter is configured into things. Things are an accident of matter, the power of Lucretius' famous *clinamen* or swerve of the atoms (book 2, lines 216–224). The *clinamen* happens in an “uncertain time” and an “uncertain space,” prompting Deleuze to insist that the “*clinamen* is by no means a change in direction in the movement of an atom, much less an indetermination testifying to the existence of a physical freedom . . . ‘*Incerto tempore*’ does not mean undetermined but non-assignable or non-localizable.”⁹ The *natura rerum* names not the essence of things, but their coming into being, their birth and emerging into presence from nonassignable or nonlocalizable space and time.

Although Deleuze is right to warn that the “Epicurean atom still retains too much independence, a shape and an actuality” (DR, 184), the *clinamen* nonetheless provocatively suggests the interiority of Nature, its shadow so to speak. The nonassignable or nonlocalizable ground of things does not suggest that there is some kind of unknowable thing at the origin of all other things. Rather, things in their formation as things do not come out even, but rather leave an irreducible remainder, a trace of chaos in the ordinary sense, as an indication not of their being, but of their coming into being. Schelling's translation of the ancient *natura rerum* as *die Geburt der Dinge* does not absurdly seek a more “natural” nature, the return to a mythic Edenic Nature. Rather, it attempts to think the question of Nature all the way through. *Natura*, after all, names not the set of all things but rather their “birth” (from *natus* “born,” pp. of *nasci* “to be born”). Using a distinction in Spinoza that Schelling held dear even as he critically transformed it,¹⁰ one could say that modern science studied *natura naturata*, already born Nature, but had lost the wisdom to think *natura naturans*, the progressive natality of Nature. Moreover, I think with this distinction, one is wise, as Jean-Luc Nancy counsels, not to “follow Heidegger's distinction” between φύσις and *natura* “as if he were marking the distance of a more ‘natural’ nature, one that would not have harbored the possibility of

human technology.”¹¹ The descent from φύσις to *natura* risks sounding like the time of *natura* is a time in which we are living some place wholly otherwise than Nature, that Nature is a lost paradise and that the Enlightenment, or perhaps the loss of originary Greek thinking, was tantamount to the *Fall from Nature*. The problem of contemporary *natura* is not that it has been lost, but that it is been degraded and humiliated.

Schelling does not mourn the loss of Nature, as if it could disappear, leaving us in non-nature. Rather, we have lost the wisdom and means to think more fully the thought of Nature, and the contemporary ravages of Nature’s immense global crisis reflects this incapacity. It is not a question of yearning for something more pristine, pining nostalgically for a lost home. The question of Nature is not the question of how and when to return to Nature. *It is a question of thinking more wisely about where we are right now.* The current catastrophe of Nature reflects our current inability to think philosophically about Nature. We know only the *presence* of Nature in accordance with *our interests*, and know little about how better to think the *coming to presence* of Nature, the natality of things from the shadow of nonassignable or nonlocalizable irreducible remainder of *natura naturans*. In this way we can see more clearly why Merleau-Ponty understands Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* as wanting to “attain” the *Ungewußt*, the unknown, and “not a science of nature” (or one could say: not an account of the nature of things in the representational sense). Hence, Merleau-Ponty considered Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* a kind of “phenomenology of pre-reflexive Being” (N2, 41). How is thinking to turn from Nature as it is *before us and for us* to Nature thought from the perspective of Nature itself? How do we think ourselves not from ourselves, but from the question of Nature?

Neither Merleau-Ponty nor Schelling attempt to answer these questions by dividing Nature into distinct and autonomous, free-standing domains (real Nature versus fallen or apparent Nature). They both in their own ways belong to the legacy of what Deleuze called the univocity of being—“a single voice raises the clamor of being” (DR, 35). In saying this, however, I do not find myself in agreement with Badiou when he argues that in Deleuze (or in the univocity legacy more generally) the “fundamental problem is most certainly not to liberate the multiple but to submit thinking to a renewed concept of the One” and a “metaphysics of the One.”¹² Hence, despite Deleuze’s “seemingly disparate cases” of analysis, his conceptual production in the end is “*monotonous*” (CB, 14), the ceaseless repetition of the same in which Deleuze must “refashion what he has already produced, and repeat his difference, in differentiating it even more acutely from other differences”

(CB, 14). This issue in the end exceeds the range of this introduction, but I would at least like to say that the point of univocity is not to insist on anything mathematically one. Univocity is an attempt to think immanence without something discrete transcending being. As he puts it in the first Spinoza book, unlike emanation (as in Plotinus), there is no “One-above-being.”¹³ The One is the clamor and the clamor is One. There is no way to think the One only as numerically one or as a singularity, for that would be to mistake it for something. To think the One as multiplicity, as difference, is to think the immanence of difference without recourse to remote causes,¹⁴ transcendent grounds, or any other ruses of what Deleuze and Guattari later call the “illusion of transcendence.” The latter is perhaps the premiere mirage to which thinking is subject, rendering immanence immanent *to something* and therefore always finding a way to magically rediscover transcendent objects lurking within immanence (WP, 49). Univocity thinks multiplicity without a “something beyond,” but with the infinite depth of the earth and the unprethinkability of the future.

For Schelling, *Naturphilosophie* was not an account of something called Nature, but it was rather philosophy endeavoring to think with, of and from Nature. It was the retrieval of a robustly natural way of thinking, so to speak, without resorting to the expulsion of the living shadow of Nature to an ontologically distinct domain (as in all onto-theology). It was an attempt to think of Nature as a progressive and dynamic whole, beyond the duality of appearance and reality, phenomenon and noumenon, immanence and transcendence, and Merleau-Ponty found this very attractive. As William Hamrick and Jan van der Veken recently argued, “Merleau-Ponty’s entire ontology is an attempt to recover that primary indivision in Being and find an adequate philosophy, beyond the limits of phenomenology, to *think* that indivision.”¹⁵ Schelling, in a manner that often has been grossly misunderstood, called this indivision “identity.” With the *Identitätsphilosophie*, Schelling never meant that everything is one and the same (*einerlei*), but as in the tradition of univocity, he attempted to think of the indivision of Nature. Merleau-Ponty discovered in Schelling the “primitive unity of conscious and unconscious activities” (N2, 42) and both “sought a way to think our fundamental indivision from Nature, the life that is ‘already there’ before the advent of reflection, and for both philosophers, Being is not an object. Both thinkers sought to overcome bifurcations of nature and classical philosophical antinomies of the one and the many, Nature and freedom, Nature and consciousness, and the infinite and the finite” (NL, 142). Ted Toadvine, in his recent *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy of Nature*,¹⁶ called this chiasmic univocity, this “mode of nondifference

with self” (MPN, 20), a “binocular ontology, that is, an ontology that recognizes the tension between both poles as constitutive of being” (MPN, 117). Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* insists, as Toadvine felicitously phrases it, not on “an *antiphysis* that breaks with nature, but rather nature’s recapitulation at the level of consciousness” (MPN, 119).

I think that it is fair to say that Merleau-Ponty did not fully appreciate or sympathize with what Jaspers characterized as Schelling’s “reflection on what is not reflection” (N2, 45). The question of the intellectual intuition remained at best unresolved for Merleau-Ponty. Again, it exceeds the boundaries of this introductory essay to take this issue up in its full complexity,¹⁷ but I think it is more important to say that both Merleau-Ponty and Schelling endeavored to rescue the question of Nature from its degeneration and depreciation into the concept of the *environment*, as if Nature were a mere staging ground for the great human drama. Nature cannot be measured by the anthropocentric reference point implicit in the notion of the environment (literally, that which surrounds us). For Schelling, Nature is not the environment or surrounding conditions in which a human being lives and human consciousness is not the center of Nature. For Merleau-Ponty, we are intertwined with and inseparable from the flesh of the world. As Toadvine aptly measures the issue, “*Environment* connotes the surrounding world, the setting, and implicitly this means the setting for human beings. Evernden makes a similar point: ‘There can only be environment in a society that holds certain assumptions, and there can only be an environmental crisis in a society that believes in environment’” (MPN, 6).

From Where Then To Raise the Question of Nature?

Perhaps not in environmental ethics, which at least inadvertently recapitulates the anthropocentric bias that is at the heart of many of the problems that it seeks to solve. Perhaps not even in the word Nature itself, for if by this word we mean the sorts of things that it has come to mean since the seventeenth century, we could just as well speak of getting beyond or away from Nature. In his 1807 Munich address, *On the Relationship of the Plastic Arts to Nature*, Schelling characterized this “dead” modern conception of Nature as a “dead aggregate of an indeterminable quantity of objects” or as abstract space filled with objects like a receptacle, or as raw materials for extraction and consumption—mere “ground from which one draws nourishment and sustenance” (I/7, 293). It may be a question of getting beyond this conception or it may be a question of retrieving or reviving—updated, of course, with

the extraordinary discoveries of the natural sciences—a more ancient sense of Nature. If it is the latter, it is not a reactionary agenda and a degeneration into nostalgia. It is a question of the relationship among philosophy, the sciences, and art.

A far more promising, and at times exhilarating, direction comes to the fore in recent Gaia science, an interdisciplinary—single disciplines are the monocultures of the mind—approach that is ripe for its ontological implications to be further developed and articulated. Schelling’s retrieval of the question of Nature pushes us closer to the strong version of the hypothesis, namely that in some way, at least metaphorically, the biosphere can in some respects be thought of as a superorganism (or what Schelling would call a “system of freedom”). In a certain respect, Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* was an attempt to rethink and retranslate what the Greeks (and most critically, Plato in the *Timaeus*) had called the ψυχή κόσμου, and the Latin-speaking traditions had called the *anima mundi*—the world soul. In *Timaeus* 30b-c, Timaeus himself imagines the κόσμος, in accordance with the likely account (κατὰ λόγον τὸν εἰκότα), as coming into being as a living and intelligent (ἔννοος) creature, an animal (ζῷον), endowed with ψυχή, the soul or animating force. Schelling called the second of his significant works of *Naturphilosophie*, *Von der Weltseele, eine Hypothese der höheren Physik zur Erläuterung des allgemeinen Organismus* [*On the World Soul: An Hypothesis of Higher Physics to Explain Universal Organism*] (1798), and it attempted to take up the question of Nature “as a whole” (I/2, 348) and in so doing, translate the wisdom of the *anima mundi* into the language of the emerging sciences.¹⁸

And where does one find this soul? Nowhere and everywhere for it is in a figurative sense Nature’s living shadow: “Because the principle is *everywhere* present, it is *nowhere*; and because it is *everything*, it cannot be anything *determinate* or *particular*; language has no appropriate term for it, and the earliest philosophies . . . have handed down to us an idea of it only in a figurative sense [*dichterische Vorstellungen*]” (I/2, 347; WS, 89). We have, and can only have, the likely (poetic representation), the bastard reckoning of the χώρα, the aorgic and unruly (non)ground of the universal organism. (The importance of Plato’s χώρα for Schelling, from his early essay on the *Timaeus*, written at the Tübingen Stift, to his dramatic allusions to the χώρα in the *Freedom* essay, should not be lost on us and they are taken up in this volume repeatedly, especially in the essays by Goudeli, Tsakiri, and Wiskus.)

Schelling’s prescient book on the *Weltseele*, both recalling ancient and modern (but not “modern” philosophical) wisdom,¹⁹ anticipates the reappearance of Gaia, the “universal organism,” as a possibility for

contemporary natural science, which “renews the ancient understanding of the Earth as a living subject rather than an inanimate object”²⁰ because “after 400 years of being virtually shelved by dominant mechanistic and reductionist perspectives, not only is *anima mundi* unabashedly expressed in Gaian literature, it has been turned into a research program within an interdisciplinary field charged to investigate it” (OGO, 7). Crist and Rinker review the contemporary names for *die Weltseele* (universal organism): “Gaia, biosphere, geophysiology, and Earth system, as well as (more controversially) living organism and superorganism” (OGO, 5). The latter terms are controversial because they reflect the strong thesis that the Whole works organistically. Schelling certainly embraced such language, although it is important to make clear that we are *not saying that there is ONE thing that everything is*. The inability of the superorganism to ground itself in itself and overcome the auto-progressivity of its plasticity produces an imageless image of the Whole as the repetition of difference in its prodigal and unprethinkable (*unvordenklich*) creativity.

Nature *as a whole* may be a differential and autopoietic superorganism, but it is one that is now at the tipping point of becoming a dangerously different kind of world. This is almost exclusively because modern industrial humans have lived *in* Nature in order to take *from* Nature. The climate emergency, pollution and the general degradation of the earth’s various habitats, biodepletion, overpopulation, and the intensive spread of invasive species have put us and the world’s immense non-human biodiversity in the midst of the sixth great extinction event,²¹ and, alas, we are its catalyst, a searing fruition of Schelling’s prophetic admonition that Nature is not present to us, and that our relationship to it lacks a living ground (I/7, 361).

It is not therefore that we have simply been wrongheaded in the way that we have conceived Nature in the past four centuries. I am in grateful accord with Toadvine and his claim that “in this newfound attentiveness to environmental problems and the race to solve them, the specifically philosophical dimension of our relationship with Nature is obscured. Indeed, it seems as though our myopic focus on solving ‘environmental problems’ distracts us from asking the most fundamental questions at stake” (MPN, 3). I would add to this, however, that it has also been a crisis of value. Schelling insisted again and again that modern philosophy did not value Nature, that it diminished it in order to trample all over it and exploit it. “The moralist desires to see Nature not as living, but as dead, so that he can tread upon it with his feet” (I/7, 17). At best modernity has deeply lacked gratitude for Nature, at worst, it has been hateful and bellicose toward it. Stephan Harding

forcefully observes: “utilitarian arguments for protecting biodiversity may not prevent it from being seriously degraded, for ultimately we may not be able to save what we do not love.” As he, along with Arne Naess²² and others, have argued, Nature has “intrinsic value regardless of its use to us” (GB, 122) and so Harding pleads for a recovery of the “ancient view of Gaia as a fully integrated, living being consisting of all her life-forms, air, rocks, soil, oceans, lakes, and rivers” (GB, 122).²³

Although this is not a book about Gaia science, it is a book that shares its desire to retrieve an ancient insight. Moreover, we argue that we must remember that this insight demands that on an ontological level we rethink the question-worthiness of Nature, that is to say, that we take up again the question of Nature’s shadowy interiority, the enigmatic quality of its ψυχή or *anima*. In his revealing study, *The Veil of Isis: An Essay on the History of the Idea of Nature*, Pierre Hadot draws our attention to the critical Heraclitean fragment: φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ—Nature loves to hide. Hadot translates this variously as “What causes things to appear tends to make them disappear (i.e., what causes birth tends to cause death)” or “Form (appearance) tends to disappear (i.e., what is born wants to die)” (VIE, 10). He then takes us on an impressive tour of the fragment’s storied history, and notes that with Schelling, “the secret of nature represents not a problem that science might solve but the original mystery of Being, its impenetrable and unexplorable character. In this perspective, ‘Nature loves to hide’ means that ‘Being is originally in a state of contraction and non-deployment’ (VIE, 301) and that “Nature originally represents a resistance to evolution, insofar as it is a will to remain within itself” (VIE, 303). Perhaps one could give these formulations an even more nuanced formulation, but Hadot’s basic insight is compelling. Schelling, along with Goethe, professed the kind of science that took, in a kind of “binocular ontology” (MPN, 117), the enigma of Nature (that φύσις and *natura* remain the friends of the concealed) as seriously as the myriad manifestations of Nature. This, one might say, was a powerful early experiment with what Merleau-Ponty would later propose as the psychoanalysis of Nature, an analysis that would have likely revealed that we have become a cancer on Nature’s soul.

II

This book is *fundamentally a collection of essays about the question of Nature*, occasioned by the intersection of the investigation regarding this question in Merleau-Ponty and Schelling’s respective paths of thinking.

The former is well read and digested, and philosophical appetites are ready to ruminate any new morsels. Schelling, on the other hand, remains a feast still largely unserved, although that is beginning to change.²⁴

The intersection of the newly resurgent Schelling and the chiasmic, Nature-oriented rethinking of the ontology of the flesh of the world for Merleau-Ponty, presents a rich occasion to take up again the question of Nature. Two important recent publications, Ted Toadvine's *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature*, as well as the edited volume, *Merleau-Ponty and Environmental Philosophy: Dwelling on the Landscapes of Thought*,²⁵ testify to Merleau-Ponty's importance for this task. But the aim of this volume is not merely to rehearse Merleau-Ponty's greatness or to again announce Schelling's relevance. It takes these two phenomena for granted. It is to investigate with renewed vigor *die Sache der Natur selbst*. With exception of two respective discussions on the relationship between gravity and light (Hilt and Wirth), this is not therefore a book about the many details of Schelling's own reflections on the scientific developments of his day. That is an exciting topic, but it is the topic for another, quite welcome, book. This volume takes up the question of the thought of Nature as such and there are plenty of motivations to recommence such a consideration. How does one think Nature, especially given the many philosophical indictments (including Schelling and Merleau-Ponty) that contend that the *representation* of Nature occludes that which it seeks to illuminate? In what manner does Nature most fundamentally address and compel thinking? The global ecological crisis, with the climate emergency, the acceleration of the sixth great extinction event, catastrophic overpopulation, the devastation of forests, and the general industrial degradation of the biosphere, are plentiful motivation and it is certainly the case that the current crisis of Nature explicitly or inadvertently haunts the background of each and every essay.

This is not, however, to imply that the question of Nature only again becomes a commanding question at the moment when its crisis is impossible to deny (unless you belong to the American Tea Party or like-minded organizations). This is an ancient question, and its varied cultural translations occupy most ancient philosophical traditions throughout the earth. It is a question whose power is self-warranting. In a sense, it is the wager that we can forgo our obsession with the paramount value of ourselves and think that all value, including our value, is *inseparable* and *indivisible* from the value of the Earth. As David Abram poetically makes this point:

Our nervous systems are thoroughly informed by the particular gravity of this sphere, by the way the sun's light filters down

through the sky, and by the cyclical tug of the earth's moon. In a very palpable sense we are fashioned of this Earth, our attentive bodies coevolved in rich and intimate rapport with the other bodies—animals, plants, mountains, rivers—that compose the shifting flesh of this breathing world. Hence, it is the animate, more-than-human terrain—this early cosmos that carnally enfolds us—that has lent us our particular proclivities and gifts, our specific styles of behavior.²⁶

The question of the Earth on a global level (the globe not as the philosophical and cultural diversity of the ancient earth, but the increasing and unsettling uniformity of a global corporate ideology), however, is only becoming harder and harder to think well. As the Kyoto School philosopher Ueda Shizuteru recently estimated the challenge:

It must be said that the grim global reality of today is the formation of a mono-world which renders meaningless the differences between East and West. . . . A hypersystematization of the world is bringing with it a swift and powerful process of homogenization that is superficial yet thoroughgoing. This in turn is engendering friction and even confrontation between ethnic groups and their cultures; the accelerating destruction of Nature. . . . Just like asphalt in a metropolis, the cement of the uniform world system is gradually yet thickly covering the entire world, including so-called outer space, and the thickness of this covering corresponds to the hollowness of the vacuum that is being spread.²⁷

These are huge challenges. This volume does not claim to provide an exhaustive account of the question of Nature nor does it propose to exhaust the immense resources of either thinker. It is rather an attempt to open up a three-way *dialogue* among the reader, Merleau-Ponty, and Schelling around the question of Nature against the at least implicit background of the Earth crisis. It is time to think dialogically about Gaia, both as a value in itself and in a time of impending ruin. In the *Freedom* essay, Schelling confessed that this particular work obviously lacked the form of a proper dialogue (it is in the classical treatise form), but that its contents had come into being “as if in a dialogue [*wie gesprächsweise*]” (I/7, 410). It is our hope that the implicit dialogues enacted within each essay will become, in being assembled together, a dialogue between the essays and with the reader, and in so doing, perform an element of the coming into Being that is at the heart of the question of Nature. In this sense, we hope that the book as a whole

can be read as a self-developing dialogue, much in the manner that Gadamer taught us to cultivate:

We say that we “conduct [*führen*]” a conversation, but the more genuine a conversation is, the less its conduct lies within the will of either partner. Thus a genuine conversation is never the one that we wanted to conduct. Rather, it is generally more correct to say that we fall into conversation [*in ein Gespräch geraten*], or even that we become involved in it [*wir entwickeln uns in ein Gespräch*]. The way one word follows another, with the conversation taking its own twists and reaching its own conclusion, may well be conducted in some way, but the partners conversing are far less the leaders than the led. No one knows in advance what will “come out” of a conversation. Understanding or its failure is like an event that happens to us [*wie ein Geschehen, das sich an uns vollzogen hat*]. Thus we can say that something was a good conversation or that it was ill fated [*unter keinem günstigen Stern stand*]. All this shows that a conversation has a spirit of its own, and that the language in which it is conducted bears its own truth within it—i.e., that it allows something to “emerge” which henceforth exists [*etwas “entbirgt” und heraustreten läßt, was fortan ist*].²⁸

This essay both simultaneously introduces the dialogue and partakes in it. Moreover, by bringing these two thinkers into conversation, it is our expectation that the whole will exceed the sum of its two respective parts. We have happily accepted Gadamer’s call to muster the generosity and charity to allow this conversation to be open-ended. How does Merleau-Ponty allow us to reappraise or perhaps even delineate more sharply certain features of Schelling’s thinking? Just as importantly: How does Schelling’s thinking, including aspects that Merleau-Ponty did not highlight, allow us to develop Merleau-Ponty’s thinking in new, perhaps unexpected and unanticipatable new directions? Most importantly: How does this conjunction of thinking, with all of its felicities and tensions, allow us to take up the question of Nature as such? In what new ways can the question of Nature both appear as a serious question and, in so doing, reappear as a different kind of question than we had imagined, given our propensity to think it merely as a question of environmental ethics and rights?

The book has been divided into three parts. The first part is both brief and introductory and it includes this essay, which seeks to orient the volume as a whole. It also includes a meditation by Patrick Burke,

with whom I worked bringing this volume together. In his engaging and poetic style, he offers a preparatory reading of the dialogue between Merleau-Ponty and Schelling. In order to facilitate a smoother exploration of the volume's contents and ambitions, each essay, with the exception of the present one, is accompanied by a brief abstract.

The second part of the book is dedicated to Schelling and the question of Nature. In a book that takes seriously the question of Nature's shadows, Joe Lawrence goes right into the crux of the issue in a vigorous investigation of nothingness at the heart of Nature. As we have seen, Plato's *Timaeus* is a critical text both for Schelling and for the issue as such and Kyriaki Goudeli takes up again the importance of this dialogue, both in itself and for Schelling. Spinoza, as we have also seen, is similarly important both for Schelling and for the guiding question of this volume, and Jeffrey Bernstein offers a careful study of the relationship between Nature and history in both thinkers. Finally, Vasiliki Tsakiri takes up the question of time in the middle period of Schelling's thinking.

The third part of the volume is dedicated to the intensive dialogue in and between Merleau-Ponty and Schelling. It is divided into three sections. The first is synoptic in scope and the first essay is a slightly revised version of the key essay by Robert Vallier, published earlier and referenced by several writers in this volume, on Schelling's importance for Merleau-Ponty. Dr. Vallier is the translator of the English version of Merleau-Ponty's *Nature* lectures, and this essay was among the first to work out the germane issues of the relationship. The second essay, by Josep Maria Bech, is an admirably thorough and insightful reconstruction of and meditation on Merleau-Ponty's relationship to Schelling. Taken in tandem, the two essays provisionally lay out the territory for the whole volume.

The second section takes up specific themes in the relationship between Merleau-Ponty and Schelling. Annette Hilt analyzes the relationship between freedom and necessity in Schelling's account of Nature, concentrating primarily on the *Freedom* essay, and measuring this reading against Merleau-Ponty's own understanding of Schelling. Angelica Nuzzo takes up the question of the body in Merleau-Ponty's reading of Schelling and Carolyn Culbertson takes up the question of wonder and Merleau-Ponty's complicated relationship to Schelling. Stephen H. Watson takes up the question of the barbarian principle in Merleau-Ponty's thinking in relationship to the latter's own sense of how one stands in relation to the philosophical tradition. Finally, Bernard Flynn reflects on the problem of Nature's interiority.

The third and final section takes up the relationship of both Merleau-Ponty and Schelling between art and Nature. For both Merleau-Ponty and Schelling, art was not a philosophical diversion, an optional bit of window dressing draped over more serious thinking. Art is critical to the question of Nature and it is testimony to the vitality of the barbarian principle. Jessica Wiskus pursues this through music (and does so quite musically I might add); Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback meditates on this relationship primarily through painting, particularly the work of Paul Klee. My essay takes up similar questions around Merleau-Ponty's work on Cézanne, but it does so by extending the analysis to the problem of the kinship between the polarizing forces of light and gravity as well as to the equally polarizing forces of willing and knowing.

I hope that it is fair to say that it is the collective belief of all of the authors that the intersection of the thinking of Merleau-Ponty and Schelling around the question of Nature offers profound and timely, even urgent, opportunities—as jagged and rough as all thought may be—to partake in one of the pressing questions of our times.

Notes

1. Pierre Hadot translates this as: “What causes things to appear tends to make them disappear (i.e., what causes birth tends to cause death)” or “Form (appearance) tends to disappear (i.e., what is born wants to die).” *The Veil of Isis: An Essay on the History of the Idea of Nature*, trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 10. Henceforth VIE.

2. For the simple purpose of consistency, this volume tends to use the phrase “barbarian” rather than “barbarous” or “barbaric.” The reference to the barbarian principle in Schelling is found in *The Ages of the World*: “This is a people that, in the good-natured endeavor towards so-called Enlightenment, really arrived at the dissolution of everything in itself into thoughts. But, along with the darkness, they lost all might and that . . . barbarian principle that, when overcome but not annihilated, is the foundation of all greatness and beauty” (I/8, 342–343/AW, 106).

3. All translations of Schelling, for better or worse, are my own responsibility.

4. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 59. Henceforth WP.

5. Vladimir Jankélévitch, *L'odyssée de la conscience dans la dernière philosophie de Schelling* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1933). His father's translations included the large collection, *Essais* (Paris: Aubier, 1946), as well as: *Les Ages du monde (suivis de Les Divinités de Samothrace)* (Paris: Aubier, 1949); *Lettres sur*

le dogmatisme et le criticisme (Paris: Aubier, 1950); *Introduction à la philosophie de la mythologie*, two volumes (Paris: Aubier, 1946). It should be noted that the early Jankélévitch translations have almost all been superseded by new French translations and that there has been a robust amount of revised French Schelling translations in the past couple of decades.

6. Iain Hamilton Grant, *Philosophies of Nature After Schelling* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006), 5.

7. For more on this relationship, see the essay in this volume by Kyriaki Goudeli (chapter four). See also chapter five of John Sallis, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 146–167 as well as the provocative discussions of Schelling's relationship to Plato in Bernard Freytag's *Schelling's Dialogical Freedom Essay: Provocative Philosophy Then and Now* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008) and Bruce Matthew's *Schelling's Organic Form of Philosophy: Life as the Schema of Freedom* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011).

8. H.B. Nisbet, "Lucretius in Eighteenth-Century Germany," *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 100, Supplement (2005), 115–133. For a provocative study of Plato's engagement of the question of Nature, see Peter Warnek's *Descent of Socrates: Self-Knowledge and Cryptic Nature in the Platonic Dialogues* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

9. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 184. Henceforth DR.

10. For more on Schelling's critical relationship to Spinoza, see chapters two and three of my *The Conspiracy of Life: Meditations on Schelling and His Time* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003). See also Jeffrey Bernstein's essay in this volume (chapter five).

11. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), 87.

12. Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 10. Henceforth CB.

13. Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1990), 172. Henceforth EIP.

14. "And the Cause appears as everywhere equally close: there is no remote causation. Beings are not defined by their rank in a hierarchy, are not more or less remote from the One, but each depends directly on God, participating in the equality of being" (EIP, 173).

15. William S. Hamrick and Jan van der Veken, *Nature and Logos: A Whiteheadian Key to Merleau-Ponty's Fundamental Thought* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011), 134. Henceforth NL.

16. Ted Toadvine, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern, 2009). Henceforth MPN.

17. For my thoughts on this issue, see the fourth chapter ("Direct Experience") of my *Conspiracy of Life*.

18. An excellent introduction to and translated extract of this work by Iain Hamilton Grant has recently appeared in *Collapse*, volume VI: *Geo/Philosophy* (January 2010), 80–117. Henceforth WS.

19. To my taste, the best account in English of the “modern” voices that Schelling extols (i.e., those he considered his scientific and philosophical companions and inspirations) remains Iain Hamilton Grant’s watershed work, *Philosophies of Nature After Schelling*.

20. Eileen Crist and H. Bruce Rinker, “One Grand Organic Whole,” *Gaia in Turmoil: Climate Change, Biodepletion, and Earth Ethics in an Age of Crisis*, ed. Eileen Crist and H. Bruce Rinker (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2010), 11. Henceforth OGO. For an excellent account of the early formation of this so-called “age of ecology,” see Donald Worster’s *Nature’s Economy* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1977).

21. In a particularly sobering assessment, Stephan Harding’s “Gaia and Biodiversity” initially sums up the current situation in the often used acronym HIPPO: Habitat destruction and fragmentation, Invasive species, Pollution, Population, and Overharvesting. He also turns to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005), which was “compiled by 1,360 scientists from 95 countries.” The data for the current ravages of HIPPO are devastating: “60 percent of the ecosystem services investigated have been degraded. Human activity has changed ecosystems more rapidly in the past fifty years than at any other time in human history. About 24 percent of the planet’s land surface is now under cultivation; a quarter of all fish stocks are overharvested; 35 percent of the world’s mangroves and 20 percent of its coral reefs have been destroyed since 1980; 40 to 60 percent of all available freshwater is now being diverted for human use; forested tracts have been completely cleared from 25 countries and forest cover has been reduced by 90 percent in another 29 countries; more wild land has been ploughed since 1945 than during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries combined; demands on fisheries and freshwater already outstrip supply; and fertilizer runoff is disturbing or suffocating aquatic ecosystems” (121). Stephan Harding, “Gaia and Biodiversity,” *Gaia in Turmoil: Climate Change, Biodepletion, and Earth Ethics in an Age of Crisis*, ed. Eileen Crist and H. Bruce Rinker (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2010), 107–124. Henceforth GB.

22. Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). “It is most advantageous to the ecological movement that as few as possible norms should be purely instrumental” (76).

23. In his profound book, *Animate Earth: Science, Intuition, and Gaia*, Harding argues that “This dawning awareness of the *anima mundi* in our times is in truth a reawakening of the old, non-dualistic animism that has been dormant so long. It is a reassertion of our indigenous soul, and of the felt solidarity with earthly nature common to our indigenous, tribal ancestors. Our task now is to explore ways in which the new animism can be integrated into the very heart of Western culture. Stephan Harding, *Animate Earth: Science, Intuition, and Gaia* (White River Junction, Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing Company, 2006), 29.

24. For the general contours of this change, see my “Schelling’s Contemporary Resurgence: The Dawn After the Night When All Cows Were Black,” *Philosophy Compass*, volume 6 (2011).

25. *Merleau-Ponty and Environmental Philosophy: Dwelling on the Landscapes of Thought*, ed. Suzanne L. Cataldi and William S. Hamrick (Albany:

SUNY Press, 2007). Henceforth MPEP. See also the excellent account of Merleau-Ponty's relationship to Schelling in the fifth chapter of NL, 123–144. See also Shlomit Tamari, "How Merleau-Ponty Can Provide a Philosophical Foundation for Vandana Shiva's Views on Biodiversity," *Comparative and Continental Philosophy*, 2.2 (2010), 275–289.

26. David Abram, "Earth in Eclipse," MPEP, 163.

27. UEDA Shizuteru, "Contributions to Dialogue with the Kyoto School," trans. Bret W. Davis, *Japanese and Continental Philosophy: Conversations with the Kyoto School*, ed. Bret W. Davis, Brian Schroeder, and Jason M. Wirth (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 30.

28. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, second, revised edition, trans. revised Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 385. *Gesammelte Werke*, volume one, *Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1990), 387.