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“PHYSICS OF THE IDEA”
AN INTERVIEW WITH IAIN HAMILTON
GRANT (2013)

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ABSTRACT: This is an interview with the philosopher Iain Hamilton Grant, author of *Idealism: The history of a philosophy* (Acumen, 2011) and *Philosophies of Nature After Schelling* (Continuum, 2008).

KEYWORDS: Speculative Philosophy; Realism; German Idealism; Schelling; Peirce; Hegel; Whitehead; Ray Brassier; Nature

1. *Hi Iain, and thanks for agreeing to do this interview. Tell us, how did you get started in philosophy? What made you become a philosopher?*

Two things got me started: art and material. Before I discovered that limitations of talent and technique made this improbable, I was attempting to be a performance artist, a sculptor and a musician and had therefore enrolled on a BA Fine Art at Reading University. During this time, I was working on a series of figures, in various media (copperplate, charcoal, silk-screen and acrylics), derived from headlamp-glare on the rain-soaked windscreen that absorbed my attention on a ten hour night-time bus journey from London to Edinburgh. The figure formed by light and rain on a moving screen reconstructed these physical elements as if constructing a four dimensional account of the dynamics of Kandinsky's and Malevich's most abstract compositions. This was the first move toward philosophy: abstraction and actuality are identical. The second had more to do with the material, and stemmed from working in metal. The physical hardness of metal is an alterable state, so that in

welding, it becomes liquid or can be drawn through with an electrical arc with less resistance than paper exerts on charcoal, was my Platonic moment, such that matter, the “darkest of all things”, revealed its capacity to become at the expense of its apparent solidity, its secure three-dimensional massiveness. Art taught me the fluidity of cave-bound appearance and that it could be pierced, that something lay on the other side of appearance that possessed a reality all the more striking for being impalpable, yet palpably achieved. At the same time, what were to me the exceedingly strange thoughts and forms communicated by the abstract languages developed in Joyce, Cage and Heidegger (whose *Being and Time* I had begun to appreciate, albeit less for its meaning than its extraordinary means), were becoming more immediate means to realize the aims my more or less ‘artistic’ investigations of matter had initiated. I began therefore to attend first year Philosophy classes, which began to introduce discipline into my thoughts, and that was it: the concept cut through more reality more quickly than the arc-welder through sheet-steel, and did so more impressively. If art had been for me the technique whereby the manipulability of reality was first demonstrated, philosophy now became a continuation of art by different means. I was fortunate while in Reading to be able to pursue my peculiar and unschooled fascination with Heidegger and, while following the traditional anglo-american curriculum of logic, semantics, and philosophy of science, to have enjoyed classes on Kant, Hegel and even Whitehead

2. *You are the author of *Philosophies of Nature After Schelling* (2006) and as a co-author, *Idealism: The History of A Philosophy* (2011). A theme which seems to undergird both of these books is that contemporary philosophy has yet to grasp the full creative potential of the Idea as it is registered in philosophical idealism, and that there are possibilities in contemporary philosophy for idealism where Idealism can be understood in such a way that it need not necessarily exclude important dynamics found within naturalism, materialism, and realism. I am wondering if you can speak specifically to the relationship between naturalism – or better yet, a “philosophy of nature” as you articulate it within your books – and the task of what you refer to as the “non-eliminative Idealism” proposed by Schelling, whom you closely follow but also modify. Specifically, elements of such a philosophy also appear in Bergson, Whitehead, or Peirce, but it is Schelling’s nature philosophy that is most important for you (it is probably important to note here just how close philosophically Peirce and Schelling were to each other, especially with respect to their outlooks concerning philosophical cosmology and physics). But it is Plato’s “physics of the Idea” that you knit with Schellingean nature philosophy instead, which in its own right yields some very unique insights and which has been an interest of yours for quite some time. What are some of the more important and fruitful connections between Schellingean idealism, Platonic philosophy, and philosophical naturalism, as you see it? How might these connections prove useful for 21st-century speculative philosophy? I am curious to know whether your research into Schelling and Plato at any point has crossed paths with Peirce’s own philosophy of nature, given the influences and connections involved?*

Before discussing Peirce, philosophical cosmology and the philosophy of nature, I would like to outline some general conceptions concerning the Idea and the character of Idealist philosophy to which the earlier part of your question alludes.

As directly as possible, Idealism is that philosophy that affirms the reality of the Idea. The point is not that any account of reality must be *from the standpoint* of the Idea, of the Ideal, or that the conceptual is insuperable, as for example McDowell has it; but rather that reality is incompletely furnished unless the Idea is included in it. Idealism is therefore eliminative just when the Idea is accounted the species of which other entities – usually nature or matter, but also appearances – are genera. Nothing in this case is or can be on the far side of the concept. This is eliminative in that it doesn't allow that the Idea be the Idea while nature be nature; rather the one must become an instance of the other, and the problem is exactly the same whether posed from the perspective of eliminative idealism or eliminative materialism. Idealism, when not eliminative, it seems to me – and I am particularly fond of pointing to some of its less read exemplars, such as Bosanquet or Pringle-Pattison – does not seek to account for one thing *in terms of another*, but for each thing exactly as it is. Such a view is evident in the fact that, for example, Plato's *auto kath'auto* has less to do with Kant's *Ding an sich* than with a simpler “itself by itself”: it is a causal account of subjectivity *independent of consciousness*, or the “it-attractor” by which whatever becomes becomes what it is.

To make the point as clear as possible, imagine an intrascientific contest regarding the actuality of the Idea. On the one hand, neuroscientists successfully eliminate talk of ideation from talk of brain structures, wherein nothing resembling “the Idea” is discovered. On the other, physics discovers that the Idea is an actuality. What is proven? That the Idea is not amongst the furniture of mentality but amongst that of actuality. This, it strikes me, is the Platonic tradition, and it is something that Schelling recovers – note the extended, critical discussion of the “substantiality” or “physical existence of the Idea” in the *Timaeusschrift* (70-73, 30-37), for example, or the following passage from the 1804 *System of Philosophy as a Whole*:

Merely reflective humanity has no idea of an *objective* reason, of an Idea that as such is utterly real and objective; all reason is something subjective to them, as equally is everything ideal, and the idea itself has for them only the meaning of a subjectivity, so that they therefore know only two worlds, the one consisting of stone and rubble, the other of intuitions and the thinking thereupon. (*SW* VI: 279)

In another direction entirely, if nature is considered the condition under which alone anything that can exist does so, then the nature that is includes precisely the Idea. Accordingly, to account for nature apart from the Idea simply misconstrues nature. But the risk of this misconstrual depends entirely on the species of our naturalism. If naturalism is based on what our best science tells us concerning nature, while this must be true if science is veridical (which if it were not would entail some very strange consequences), then the concept of nature formed on this basis depends entirely on which research programs are progressive in Lakatos' sense, and thus on what projects are being pursued. Yet no individual science has nature itself as its subject, and nor, due to ongoing questions of reducibility (for example, of biochemistry to physics), do any combination of the sciences, regardless of the period of science we are discussing, past or future. Inevitably therefore, a concept of nature formed on the basis of the best science, will be a partial concept, or a concept of part of nature. This is why a *philosophy* of nature is required, for if it is true that nature is that condition under which alone anything that can exist does so, then all that exists requires contextualization within a concept of nature that, by definition, cannot be exclusive or eliminative.

Further, nor can a philosophy of nature eliminate the false as such, since the generation of error is a function of at least the system of nature that produces ideation, so the capacity for error, the power of the false, must either be a part of nature or any ideation whatsoever is, merely by virtue of being such an event, true by definition. The only way a system of reason can be capable of falsity is if causal determination of the Idea is less important than its dependency: to be dependent upon nature for its production is not reducible to its being the effect of a cause, since if it is true that anything that can be is by nature alone, both the true and the false statement depend on "the nature that produces" (*e tou poiountos physis*, Plato, *Philebus*, 28a) but do so differently regardless of the causal identity of the production of ideation (i.e. that the same neurological means are employed in the production of both). Of course, taking a fully Platonic line, we may say that the Idea is precisely *not* produced, but rather that it is that in virtue of which there is production at all. In this case, we must introduce an additional species of causality, and not one, I think, that can easily be reduced to a species of final causation; the Idea is rather the perturbations of the finite in the infinite, as the *Philebus* says, such that the "becoming of being [*genesis eis ousian*]" is the becoming that being undergoes precisely because becoming is dependent on an end it cannot, by definition, attain. From this we gain a philosophy of nature that is neither "pulled" by ends nor "pushed" by beginnings, but one in which the dependency of whatever is on whatever else is establishes the form

not only of particular existents, but also of becoming itself. The corollary of ontogenesis or the becoming of being must be the being of becoming, its form *given* that becoming is, or consequent upon creation having occurred in whatever manner it has, did, or will.

What I find congenial in Peirce is that neither epistemically nor cosmologically does his concept of being yield to a species of finality whose character may be determined without approximation. And it seems to me that this is a characteristic that the majority of modern philosophers of nature share: the forms of becoming may be studied in domain-specific ways, for example, by *morphogenesis* in the life sciences; but the forms that qua becoming, becomings must assume if becoming is what they do, impose a particular discipline upon the thinking of process that, if the world is not eternal, as Proclus thought, is not only true of, but rather part of, the becoming they articulate. Again, then, the Idea is inseparable from the actuality. This is a world of irreducible operations on which mere items in it can only consequently be isolated by an operation that achieves this. These, then, are the operations characteristic of a philosophy of nature: genesis recapitulated in the genesis of isolation cannot be reversed, such that genesis itself is isolated, without an additional operation or continuation of genesis on which that isolation depends. And here, I think, we gain insight into the complex location of the Idea in nature: it is precisely the additional dimension articulated by the operation capable of abstracting its objects from the context on which they are dependent. And so too we gain an account of the isolation function on which the particularity of inquiries into nature as such depend.

I have not made any extended study of Peirce, but what seems to me important is that philosophers of nature such as Peirce and Whitehead be recovered not merely as historical instances but rather in the context of how their inquiries into nature present the conceptualization consequent upon it as modifications of precisely that process into which they are inquiring. I am particularly interested in the development of the dialectic of the physical whereby reflection upon it augments it in the dimension of the Idea without making the Idea into the finally determining instance of a nature directed towards it. Nature thought as ontogenesis cannot but have as a consequence that the thought that nature is ontogenetic must be consequent upon an ontogenetic nature. If it does not have this consequence, it is not a thought of nature as ontogenetic.

*3. I want to stay with another historical question just for the moment, but this time refer to your newer co-authored book, *Idealism: The History of a Philosophy in order to work out what philosophical idealism can offer. It is intimated that among contemporary philosophers, the full impact of Hegelian philosophy is still not fully understood. As Hegel's own philosophy of nature is "ominous" (for lack**

of a better way to put it), where does Hegel stand (if having any relevance for you) in your current work? I ask because you had quite a bit to say about Hegel in your talk which preceded Slavoj Žižek's talk, from this past summer of 2012. What should philosophers these days be doing with Hegel?

To ignore Hegel proves, I would agree with Foucault, to be impossible. Hence his recovery in contemporary philosophy, however attenuated such a recovery might seem on occasion to be by the mere *sociality* of reason rather than, as I might say, its naturalization. I will try to explain what I mean. The Hegelian problem that most interests me is how it is that from him, the *Science of Logic* completes the *Philosophy of Nature*. The latter is compromised in that its purpose is to demonstrate what we might call the consequent character of naturalistic realism, which is the function of his characterization of nature as the “self-estranged idea”. It is the philosophy of nature that mediates logic and mind, the “grasp of things in thought” (*Encyclopaedia Logic* §24), insofar as to think nature entails that thing and thought be thought as mutually repulsive, and their common locus in logic shattered and suppressed, in the inevitably vain attempt to think the thing as without its thought. This is a problem not just for Hegel, but for all concept-antecedent engagements with the historicity of existence, for which the problem of nature may be taken here as shorthand. That is to say, while the rediscovery of the concept from which it turns out its object has been articulated makes the concept insuperable, the concept is a member of the historicity of existence as much as its object. The latter is indeed, in this case, consequent upon the concept, but the concept's priority in this regard is only consequently a conceptual, but antecedently a natural-historical achievement. This is why the locus of an engagement with Hegel's *Naturphilosophie* should not be the phenomenon of life, as Beiser (2008) for example argues, but rather geology, with which he briefly deals in the *Philosophy of Nature* in order to dismiss mere chronology as “of no interest to philosophy” (§24.??); not the orbits of the planets, but cosmogony. Granting, with Hegel, that antecedence is not a problem of chronology, neither is it reducibly a matter of conceptual interiority, which was one of Schelling's major criticisms of Hegel's logic, that in it, “the concept was *everything* and left nothing outside itself” (*History of Modern Philosophy*, tr. Bowie, 134). Accordingly, the historicity of the concept, for Hegel, is a matter *internal* to the concept, from which the historicity of things thought becomes in consequence indissociable. Yet Hegel's demand for philosophy is that its beginning be not merely the beginning of philosophy, but of *everything* (*Science of Logic*, tr. Millar, 67). In this contrast lies everything interesting, and Schelling's advantage. When, at the start of the *Stuttgart Seminars*, he poses the interrelated problems of system and philosophical beginnings, he enmeshes the beginning of philosophy in the *problem* of a beginning that is not its own: “To what extent is a system ever possible? I would answer that long before man decided to create a system, there already existed one, that of the world-system or cosmos” (tr. Pfau, 197).

In other words, it is not thing but creation that the concept, insofar as it fails to embrace it in thought if it is thought as creation, nevertheless recapitulates creation insofar as it is thought.

Yet what Hegel presents is therefore a *morphogenesis* of the concept, as Bosanquet intimated in the subtitle of his own *Logic* (1911). Hegel does indeed discover rather than simply invent the movements of the concept, its functionality and its kinematics, its physics, a dimension that tends to be at once emphasized as the nature, ethos or character of the concept, and subjugated by the co-articulation of thought and thing that is the task, says Hegel, of logic insofar as it is to make a science of metaphysics. Taking this view of Hegel, and investigating the development of the functions and motions attaching to the concept, yields interesting results, insofar as the near Malevich-like “theory of the additional element” by which, in the *Differenzschrift*, on which I have been teaching a Masters course for some years now, Hegel begins to delineate his new science, would be simply a mechanical addition were it not for his discovery of the immanence of his additions to, for instance, the Kantian account of the antinomy. His procedure there already consists in discovering the movement halted by the understanding that remains therefore frustrated in reason, and thus freeing the motions of reason such that they complete the movement by retaining and augmenting their logical coordinates, so to speak, in the antinomy. Thus the additional element turns out to be the element in which the concept moves.

Logical functionalism has, of course, a post-Hegelian philosophical history in Frege and, as Ray Brassier has been excitingly showing, in Sellars’ metaphysics. But it is the coordination of this with the problem Schelling embraces but Hegel elides, of *creation*, that yields one of the chief untapped experiments of German Idealist philosophy in general, and it is precisely ignored by any philosophical re-appropriation of Hegelianism as jettisoning the problem of nature or as emphasizing only the intersubjective constitution of reason. The naturalization of logic is not simply a converse of Hegel’s logicisation of nature, but opens the concept, its insuperability notwithstanding, to the thought that its creation is not itself in thought. In consequence, the concept is constitutively mute with regard to that upon which it is consequent, which is ontology’s recompense for Kant’s demonstration that being cannot *issue from* reasoning. For me, these aspects of Hegel refocus attention on a problem that Platonic physics first articulated: why, if becoming is ceaseless, does it not have an *eidos* but rather power – why, that is, are power and intelligible causation non-identical? In *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling*, I argued, I now think wrongly, that the powers of the *Sophist’s* ontology are coincident with the causality of the Idea outlined in the *Phaedo*. On the contrary, while the Idea is the grasping of the rational ground of intellection in acts of intelligence, so too production is productive even in

intellection. Hence the asymmetry of the intelligible and the generative applies both to the intelligible and to the generative, and the two are indissociable.

4. *Recently some interesting overlaps between your work and Ray Brassier's have become apparent (for example, some of the ideas that have come up in each of your Berlin talks). In particular, while Brassier rejects vitalism and panpsychism outright, and while your work has come to stringently critique "traditional" vitalism and instead opt for a pluralist "neo-vitalism" of sorts (for example in the Q & A session of your Berlin talk you mention that you are not convinced that all of panpsychism is strictly false), you also seem to have some nuanced thoughts about panpsychism – a perspective which is often related to traditional forms of vitalism. Despite your critique you choose to focus on processes of vital compulsion fueled by a transcendental ground that either in full or in part operates by a non-conceptual form of negativity, an eternal "No," where this negativity is also curiously inscribed within the dynamics of the rational as much as it is inscribed within the irrational (a very good commentary on this idea, I think, is Krell's *The Tragic Absolute* and more recently, McGrath's *Dark Ground of Spirit*). In fact, on several occasions Brassier has suggested that we return to Hegel in order to revisit, and then modify, some of these dimensions, especially regarding a sort of non-cognitive "efficacy of primary transcendental synthesis," a "self-synthesizing potency" responsible for "intensive materiality."*

*For both you and Brassier, then, this negativity is indeed vital in its potency, a "vital negativity" therefore. I thought that this was an interesting point of cross-over between two very differently appearing philosophies, and it is in particular how I am able to dialogue with Brassier's form of naturalism given my own interest in contemporary "neo-vitalism" (with its corresponding dynamics of the divine *Potenzen*). It seems that this all begs the question of understanding the generic scope of systematic and speculative metaphysics: how this vital negativity is involved with your concept of "ground" generally as the non-preceding yet generative condition for what is in the particular, a cosmic animating source or power that is both "creative" as much as it is destructive, but which is also "upheld" by the physics of the particular bodies it helps to animate by sharing in a mutual form of force of creation/creativity (thus "powers").*

*Now, you have mentioned that an upcoming book of yours may be titled *Grounds and Powers*, and that you are working on considering grounds understood as powers in the plural. Given this interesting take on negativity or ground by both you and Brassier – if I am grasping this correctly – and given that you have stated "Being unconditioned, no experience thereof is possible" (experience of this unconditioned ground is impossible), you have also stated that, "the pursuit of grounds, the descendent dimension, is a vital element of philosophy." The result of this descent is a split between thinking the unconditioned (the Absolute) as a "production monism" or experiencing it as a "production pluralism."*

My question is this: I am wondering with the most generic naturephilosophy in mind, despite the localization of generative powers in the plural, could we not say that the more crucial and systematically useful (or speculatively daring) question might be to consider the generic quality of the vital negative, as such? Why a many for you here rather than the one? You have meditated on this particular problematic within transcendental philosophy in your article, "The Movements of the

World: The Sources of Transcendental Philosophy,” and I’d like to press you on the idea of how you defend your neo-vital pluralism. That rather than considering the conditions around the orbits of things, how would you respond to the claim that we may wish to consider descendance into generative conditions as such (if we are to attain the most encompassing explanation), from processes and powers to process and power as general category (this may be a question of orientation from the particular to the general or vice versa, still, the very nature of speculative philosophy and its definition remains up for grabs – a science of the particular or an account of the whole, or some synthesis of the two).

*Some philosophers have tried the conjectural and systematic route while balancing the created particulars with the source of their creation, aiming for comprehensiveness (Whitehead with his theory of creativity as a radical form of ground, but also Hartshorne and other process philosophers among whose ranks I would actually add the French philosopher Quentin Meillassoux, whose Surchaos could be understood as a fundamentally productive ground in a “process” sense). It was Meillassoux who said, “What is strange in my philosophy is that it’s an ontology that never speaks about *what is* but only about what *can be*. Never about what there is because this I have no right to speak about.” It seems that the conditions of generativity may possess a distinct integrity, “ultimacy” for some, that while no more “real” than what is produced, certainly deserves to be called out as an essential (perhaps even necessary) condition of creation and creativity, of contingency, and the like. What are your thoughts here concerning the varieties of transcendental philosophy in question, especially respect to the concepts of ground, of creativity, and of their ultimacy?*

Panpsychism is tempting from the point of view of an augmented naturalism. If, that is, thought is a worldly item, consistent naturalism must explain it as thought, with neurophysiology as its insufficient but necessary ground, if thought is additionally efficacious than its own actualization pathways. Because the alternative is that mindedness remains alien rather than worldly, panpsychism rejects emergence as proposing that mindedness must arise from what is without it. But temptation aside, the cost is too high: if once true, panpsychism is always true, such that mind is without beginning or end. As with the advent of life, with that of mind, the universe is irreversibly altered in its image. Not only must this again prove autochthonous, it must also propose a homogeneity-of-nature account insofar as it seeks to deny that, as Thomas Nagel puts it in *Mind and Cosmos*, the “mind-body problem is a local problem”. Yet it is precisely not a local problem insofar as emergence, if true, entails that every advent is such consequently upon an antecedent with which it is neither identical nor to which it can be reduced. Thus, I can accept the panpsychist thesis that mindedness is no special case only on emergentist grounds: it is because emergence is the emergence of aliens that mindedness is not a special case.

It is because I reject the mono-causal vision of the vitalist and the homogeneity-of-nature to which panpsychism by default adheres that I am a pluralist concerning the number and nature of efficacies or powers. I see no good reason to assume that we might restrict the plausible number of causes in nature to four, two or one, not least

because the laws of the early universe might not resemble those of the later. And if this were so, in what would their ‘transition set’, so to speak, causally consist? Precisely because they are later, I would add they cannot so resemble save in one crucial respect: every emergent is such just when it is dependent upon what it is not. And the same must apply to ground: if ground is antecedent in respect of its consequent, it is transcendently a second-order consequent but descendently, so to speak, a first-order issuant of that from which ground itself issues. Here there lies a philosophical decision: opt for essential reciprocity between ground and consequent, and metabolize the principle of sufficient reason; or eschew the ultimacy of grounds. Here there is a parallel with the dispositionalists in contemporary philosophy: either powers are capacities of entities, which are thus primitive with respect to powers, or entities must be consequent upon ungrounded powers. On this, Mumford’s highly Schellingian “ungrounded argument” is persuasive. It is for this reason that I would draw attention to the two species of negation to which you have in turn drawn my attention via Ray’s engagement with Hegel. Determinate negation (X not being not-X) is not identical to the negation of determinacy as such.

When therefore you quote me as saying that “the pursuit of grounds, the descendent dimension, is a vital element of philosophy”, I do not confuse the pursuit with the possession of grounds. That this element is “vital” does not mean that it is an instance of life, but that descendance is required because no ground is ultimate. There is a *dynamic* tension between grounds and unground, just as between antecedent and consequent, and the conceiving of this never seals *the process*. The negativity of what there is not, therefore, is precisely the unconditioning of grounds consequent upon the efficacy of consequents and the unconditioned efficacy by which creation occurs, if it does.

Regarding transcendental philosophy, what I was doing in the ‘Movements of the world’ essay was, in a word, to dispel the myth of the “single and sudden revolution” in the interests of the transcendental project. We can describe this as Kant does: the knowing that, in cognition, the objects of that cognition derive from the production of concepts, not from the causal paths of objects through the eye into the brain, as Aristotle had it. Kant’s peculiar invention consists therefore not only in the negative demonstration that there are no paths from things to thoughts (the Copernican revolution), nor from thoughts to things (the elimination of existence proofs), but also in the positive demonstration that in knowing, the concept is recursive on concepts. There are, literally, *powers* of the concept in the mathematical sense, by means of which from conceiving anything whatever can be ‘deduced’ a second-order knowing of the conceiving at issue. Such knowing is therefore above the ‘transcendental substrate’ (the totality of possible predicates) in precisely the sense that only some are

actualized in the knowing. It is this operativity that gives thought back its place amongst nature. Hence the pursuit of grounds, the ‘descendental’ dimension issues precisely from the doubling of the concept. Kant’s having noted that ‘dependency’ trumps ‘empirical origin’ (CPR A56/B80) provides a start; but because empirical origin is not the same thing as creation that the doubled concept has an indissociable externality, an ‘extainment set’, as it were, that cannot be “resolved into reason but remains ever in the depths”, as Schelling perfectly expresses it. Naturephilosophy thus entails both the extainment sets of the powers of the concept and confronts the ungrounding of nature in creation.

Thus it is creation rather than creativity with which I think speculative philosophy must be concerned if it is to sacrifice neither the powers of the concept nor the nature of which they form part. Creativity consists in the efficacy of additional powers, creation in the emergence of power where there was none. This is why the concept ‘thing’ is, as again Schelling says, simply “the abstract concept of worldly essences” (VII, 349), and also why a powers ontology must entail their ungrounding. The only systematicity there can be is consequent upon Urchaos, as the solar system shows.

5. Iain, thanks so much for taking the time to answer these questions. If you have any closing thoughts or would like to inform readers of upcoming projects, talks, or appearances, please feel free to use this space as you see fit. Please also feel free to tell us more about your forthcoming book, I am sure many are excited to hear any details that you can offer about. Thanks so much again.

Thanks for your interest, and your complex and fascinating questions. They have made me think.

It is the above project that forms the core of my repeatedly touted but yet to be completed *Grounds and Powers*. I will be treating of some of it, with Jason Wirth, at the Duquesne summer school on *Naturphilosophie*, which I am very much looking forward to. I also have some translations I want to publish, and some papers still in the pipeline, all of which contribute to this project. In part these will serve to make good my claim that Schelling’s is a *Naturphilosophie* throughout, and in part I want to tackle naturephilosophy in the context of contemporary ontology, particularly of the field ontology that Markus Gabriel has been doing such excellent work on, and the powers ontology that has become inescapable in contemporary metaphysics. If only they read Schelling. Naturephilosophy remains my concern not because I think nature is some vast thing that demands its ontological rights be recognized, but because it cannot be that what *is* is reducibly conceptual. Nature induces the descendental dimension into the powers of the concept, which is why thinking nature, or ontology,

is always *kata dunamin*, as Plato constantly concludes, between the Idea and what is not it.

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