

Deep Ecology and Nature: Naess, Spinoza, Schelling

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Article abstract

In this article I will critically engage with Arne Naess's Deep Ecological appropriation of Spinoza's concept of Nature. I will argue that Naess falsely opposes the creative and created aspects of Nature, rather than thinking these two in concord. Because of this, his concept of Nature falls apart into two realms, which makes it impossible to think of Nature as one united whole. I will discuss the problems this leads to then propose that Schelling's philosophy of Nature is more apt as a Deep Ecological philosophy. Schelling's concept of Nature explicitly defines Nature as the identity of productivity and product, so that the rift in Naess's conception is overcome.

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Deep Ecology and Nature: Naess, Spinoza, Schelling

Boris van Meurs

1 Introduction

1.1 Deep Ecology and the Dual Nature Problem

I want to start this article with an awkward question that takes us to the heart of the issue that I will discuss: how many Natures exist? What a strange question indeed! Isn't it clear that one cannot at the same time capitalize 'Nature' *and* speak of it in plural? Isn't it obvious that there should be only one Nature, one whole, one unity? This, at least, is the guiding intuition of deep ecology, as it has been developed by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess (Naess, 2005a, 383-384); Nature is a unity and all its separate parts are interrelated within its sphere. Deep ecology is deeply holistic. Yet, in this article, I will show that if we ask of Naess's philosophy how many Natures exist, the surprising answer will be: "two".

I will name this the Dual Nature Problem: the unintended splitting of the concept of Nature across two aspects which cannot be unified. Nature is to Naess at the same time both a whole (which is not divisible in any way) and a collection of many parts (which are divisions of the whole). These two sides of Nature are different in kind and, despite Naess's comforting remarks that ultimately they truly are unified (384), his philosophy fails to show us how this works. This mereology-gone-wrong results in a great rift through the concept of Nature, which leads to several problems for deep ecology.

The present article will trace the roots of the Dual Nature Problem and make a suggestion to change the metaphysical foundations of deep ecology. I will first explain what deep ecology is and why the Dual Nature Problem is an issue for it. Second, I will show that the Dual Nature problem arises from the philosophy of Spinoza, which is Naess's primary inspiration. I will then, thirdly, take the opportunity to introduce the philosophy of Nature of Friedrich Schelling as a good substitute for the Spinozist foundations of deep ecology. This late 18th century thinker had already spotted the problems in Spinoza that Naess inherits. Schelling's dynamic philosophy of Nature can cure the Dual Nature Problem by showing us a way to look upon Nature as a truly unified, unfolding whole.

1.2 Deep Ecology and Self-Realization

Deep ecology is an environmental and philosophical movement which argues that all living beings have an inherent, non-instrumental value and, moreover, that human society should radically reorganize itself to live up to this principle (Naess, 1995a, 67-68). Arne Naess coined the term Deep Ecology in a 1972 presentation which bore the title "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Deep Ecology Movement" (Naess, 1995b). The presentation explained that the aim of deep ecologists is to provide a long-range perspective on humankind's relation to Nature (151). This involves 'deeply' questioning the causes of ecological crises such as global warming and mass extinction all the way down to the philosophical level of how the being of Nature should be understood in responsible societies (Naess, 1995a, 72). If Nature is taken to be a pool of resources of mere instrumental value, deep ecologists argue that it will be hard to make visible the need to change the practices that have spawned forth from such an understanding (Shepard, 1995, 138-139). Naess, and many other deep ecologists with him, engage in the positive task of formulating alternative philosophical outlooks to inspire readers to look upon the world differently. These philosophies are ecocentric, or non-anthropocentric, meaning that their concepts apply to the non-human. In general, they provide what Naess calls "total views", or long-range "general orientation[s] with concrete applications" (Naess, 2005b, 399).

Naess's own philosophy is grounded mostly on Spinozist thought (Naess, 2005a, 392-393). Spinoza thought of Nature as an infinite whole (Spinoza, 1996, ID3, 1)¹, which he sometimes also calls God. Nature, or God, gives rise to all existing individual things (amongst which are humans; IP16, 13). Seeing that all beings follow from the same principle (Kober, 2013, 50), they develop within Nature in connection. In Naess's reading, this provides a holistic view of the world, in which relations to other existing things are of paramount ontological importance (Naess, 2005a, 388). Moreover, through understanding other (living and non-living) beings, we can gain a sense of the whole of Nature and understand better how we humans live intertwined with the world around us (385).

Naess reads in Spinoza a practical guide to move from a narrow focus on the self to a larger view on the universal Self which is constituted through a manifold of relations and is not limited to the human ego (cf. Sevilla, 2010, 29). He calls this self-realization, which refers to unfolding one's human essence through disregarding the "narrow ego" in a process of identification with other life forms (Naess, 1995b, 225). It is based on the Spinozist idea above, that through

¹ I will refer to Spinoza's *Ethics* by the following system. I first provide a roman number to indicate which part of the *Ethics* is meant, followed by a letter to indicate whether a definition or proposition is referred to. The number indicates the number of the definition/proposition. If the number is followed by an *S*, this means that I refer to the *scholium* of that particular proposition. The number after the comma indicates the page number on which the proposition/definition may be found.

understanding finite beings, one can understand the whole of Nature itself (Spinoza, 1996, VP24, 173). Finite beings are expressions of this infinite whole and hence they provide a way to meditate upon Nature *sub species aeternitatis* (VP21, 172). The process of self-realization is hence only possible if a path can be conceived from the finite, visible world to the infinite whole of Nature.

1.3 Why the Dual Nature Problem is a Problem

I will show below where the Dual Nature Problem arises in the philosophy of Naess, yet it should be clear beforehand that, if it indeed does occur, it will lead to issues for the theory of self-realization. For, if Nature is split across two different realms (the one of the infinite whole, the other of the finite parts), it becomes unclear how self-realization can succeed in a truly holistic understanding. Either one focuses on the whole in neglect of the particular beings, or one focuses on the particular beings without hope to cross over to the side of the whole.

It is precisely this that critics of deep ecology have problematized (Cavazza, 2014; Morton, 2013). Most notably, social ecologist Michael Bookchin, in the form of a vehement polemic, has argued that Naess's deep ecology leads to a cult of veneration of the whole, in complete neglect of the importance of the diverse, the plural, and particular (human) beings.

We lose sight of the individual self in an unending flow of Eco-la-la that preaches the 'realization of self-in Self' where 'Self' stands for 'organic wholeness'. [...] A 'Self' so cosmic that it has to be capitalized is no real self at all. It is an ideological category as vague, faceless, and depersonalized as the very patriarchal image of 'man' that dissolves our uniqueness and rationality into a deadening abstraction. (Bookchin, 2014)

If the infinite and the finite are separated, and if a unification with the infinite is called for, Naess's theory would indeed strive after an infinite that lies somewhere beyond particularity. It is this that Bookchin diagnoses: if infinite and finite are not understood in identity, the infinite can only be approached by "losing sight" (Bookchin, 2014) of the particular. The ontological gap of a Dual Nature has to be crossed, which abstracts from and denies particularity as such. The whole is reached only through a contempt for the particular as long as the Dual Nature Problem is not solved.

The problem has thus far been noticed only by Spinoza scholars Eccy de Jonge (de Jonge, 2003, 10) and Siebrand (1986), who both argue that Naess misinterprets Spinoza's concept of infinitude. I will return to this argument later, but it is interesting to see that other deep ecological scholars often inherit the problem. For example, in this journal, Guilherme has suggested a view on Spinoza's Nature as having a certain preference towards some of its

expressions over others (Guilherme, 2011, 70). This idea separates Nature as a whole from its expressions, as if Nature could meditate on its parts from a distance. Another example is Cheng's (2016) great article investigating the comparison of deep ecology with Mahayana Buddhism, where the Dual Nature Problem leads to a sheer finite understanding of Nature as "the totality of finite beings" (148). One can see how, in Naess's heritage, the confusion persists on this relation between whole and part.

My argument in this article will be that the philosophy of Schelling can be a solution to the Dual Nature Problem. I will first show that the Dual Nature Problem indeed arises in Naess's Spinoza interpretation, to then continue with an explanation of Schelling's alternative: Nature as pure production.

2 Naess and Spinoza

2.1 Introduction

Naess hoped to find in Spinoza an ecocentric, or non-anthropocentric outlook on the being of Nature, from which an ethics could be developed that stretches out to all beings, not just to humans (Naess, 2005a, 381). The ontological groundwork for these ethics is mainly developed through an appropriation of Spinoza's substance metaphysics (383-387). In this part of the article, I will trace Naess's interpretation of Spinoza's ontology, which is in large part focused on emphasizing the interdependency between the whole of Nature and its parts. This is the idea from which Naess attempts to develop an ecocentric philosophy, highlighting the interrelatedness of all beings. Primarily, I will argue that Naess fails to completely think through the immanence relation of the infinite in the finite. This will result in the Dual Nature Problem and leave Nature as being split in two: infinite creativity and the finite creations. I will secondly show how Naess's concept of 'understanding' leads to the idea of a finite God, or a finite Nature as the totality of things. I will argue that this concept is the consequence of Naess's failure to think of Nature as a unified whole, and show how it relates to Bookchin's argument above.

2.2 The immanent God

Of all the ideas in Spinoza's philosophy, the "completely immanent God" is the one that appeals most to Naess and this notion runs like an aorta throughout his entire Spinoza reception (383). Ironically, it is also his appropriation of this idea that will split his concept of Nature into two separated realms. In Spinoza's *Ethics*, God is a self-causing Substance (Spinoza, 1996, ID3, 1), beyond which nothing can exist (IP15, 10). All things are due to this Substance and fully owe their existence to it (IP25, 18). Put otherwise, the world is an expression, not a creation, of God;

the infinite is expressed through the finite. This is why Spinoza sometimes invokes an equivalence between God and Nature (IVPreface, 114), terms that will be used interchangeably throughout this article. In appropriating Spinoza, Naess continually stresses that the infinite God is just as dependent on the finite as the other way around (Naess, 2005a, 383-384). For, if the world of the finite is truly the expression of the infinite, the infinite would remain a sheer nothing without the finite things. "[God] is, in a sense, helpless without essences of particulars!" (383).

This leads Naess to emphasize that finitude is not a deviation from the perfection (as completeness) of the whole, but rather the expression of it. If there are no particulars, there can be no infinite. I will refer to this notion as a reciprocal immanence relation. It should be noted, as Naess does himself, that Spinoza does not explicate the immanence of God in terms of this reciprocity (383). The things indeed follow from God, but how God in turn would depend on the things is never mentioned (Spinoza, 1996, IP16, 13). It is therefore remarkable that Naess puts so much stress on precisely this aspect. The reason for this deviation of emphasis from Spinoza's *Ethics* may lie in Naess's attempt to develop a philosophy that can support the deep ecological principle that all living things have the right to blossom and flourish (Devall & Session, 1985, 70). If it can be shown that all existing things contribute somehow to the very being of the whole, which in turn determines the parts, this would be a valuable underpinning for such a theory.

To understand what the problematic aspect of Naess's concept of infinitude is, it is necessary to show what is needed to establish an immanence relation. Immanence is different from equation. If God is immanent in the world, this does not simply mean that God = world, but rather, as Naess phrases it, that the world of particulars is an expression of God's infinitude (389). This means that though the two may be fully dependent on each other to be, a difference is maintained as well. It is not the case that finite equals infinite. If the distinction disappears, the immanence turns into an equation as a dissolution of all difference. Naess seems to be aware of this when he distinguishes and opposes the finite and infinite in his idea of reciprocal immanence (383). He writes that God plays two roles, that "of being infinite and nonexplicable through particular finite things and the role of being thus explicable" (383). And in another essay, he states that

the term *Deus* in the *Ethics* has two functions. One is to point toward an infinite whole with infinite dimensions of creativity, not *in* time, but making time possible. The second function is to point to the manifold of finite creative beings manifesting and expressing the parts of that whole. (Naess, 2005b, 404)

There are hence two aspects to Nature: one is infinite, the other finite. In order to conceive of the immanence of the whole of Nature in its parts, Naess pulls apart Nature into a creative,

infinite force and the finite, created universe. So far, so good; it must be clear, though, that this separation can never be the end point of an immanence relation. If we now know how to conceive of the different *relata*, their full dependency on each other should be demonstrated next: the difference should be posed, only to be taken up into a new identity. If this second step fails, what one is left with is just two separated *relata*, of which it is only asserted and not demonstrated that they exist thoroughly together - behold, the heart of the Dual Nature Problem.

This is where Naess's Spinoza interpretation goes off the tracks: infinitude is thought of only in opposition to finitude. Admittedly, it is asserted multiple times that the infinite cannot be conceived without the finite (f.e., Naess, 2005a, 383, 391), but this is always stipulated without specifying why this would be the case. Another figure that Naess invokes is more telling for the problems that he runs into, which is the metaphor of infinite and finite Nature as different sides to a same medal. "The totality of things, *Natura*, would constitute the medal [...]. *Natura naturans* and *natura naturata* would constitute the two faces" (Naess, 2005c, 287-288). *Natura naturans* is the name for Nature as infinite creativity (Nature as Substance), *naturata* for that which has been created. Naess does two remarkable things through invoking this metaphor. First, he posits Nature as a totality of things, of which creativity and the created are mere aspects. Second, he opposes infinite creativity (*naturans*) to created Nature (*naturata*), so that one is the flipside of the other.

Spinoza scholar Eccy de Jonge rightfully notes in an article on Naess that this distinction is based on a misinterpretation of Spinoza's infinity concept (De Jonge, 2003, 10-11). In Spinoza, infinity, *natura naturans*, is not one side of the medal, but allegedly constitutes the very medal itself: "it is God or Nature conceived in itself and for itself as a self-contained autonomous being" (11). It is impossible that *natura naturans*, as the infinite Substance, can be conditioned as an aspect of particulars – this would inevitably reduce its infinitude. When Naess states that 'the things' make up the body of the medal, he therefore not only inverts Spinoza's theory entirely, but "[he also] makes it impossible to understand the nature of a finite being, for according to Naess, finite beings can only be explained in relation to the whole, which is the totality of finite beings" (11); this introduces an unintelligible circularity into the concept of both the whole and the finite.

Worse still, Naess's separation of the terms makes it inconceivable that Nature is only one Substance. If one looks carefully at the opposition that is constructed, it becomes clear that Spinoza's idea of the Substance as infinite is opposed to Nature as finite by Naess. This means that the infinite cannot be seen as all-encompassing, but that there is something that can be taken separately from it and put into opposition to it. As De Jonge carefully unravels, Naess's separation of the infinite and the finite indicates that there can be something beyond the

infinite (namely, the finite as such). However, in as far as the infinite is the cause of finites in Spinoza, it is impossible to conceive of this 'beyond' as actually existing (11). The problem, then, is not that Naess highlights that there is a difference between the infinite and the finite, but that he opposes the two. This opposition rips apart what Spinoza tried to unify through his Substance-concept.

In sum, Naess mistakes the infinite *natura naturans* for an aspect of a supreme whole of Nature that can be contrasted to the realm of the finite (Naess, 2005b, 402-403). I called this the Dual Nature Problem above. If Nature is conceptualized as such, no overarching identity principle can be constructed between the two realms of the infinite and finite. This is because the infinite is itself part of the opposition, which would call for something more infinite than the infinite to breach this rift. This, of course, is impossible. Concluding, even though there is a difference between infinity and finitude, this should not be conceived of as an opposition, since then Nature inevitably becomes a two-fold rather than a unified Substance. I will now trace the consequences of Naess's ontology all the way down to his notion of *understanding* and the finite God.

2.3 The Finite God

If Naess's Nature falls apart into an opposition between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, or between the infinite and the finite, it remains to be seen if and how this opposition is dissolved. I will argue that Naess does not succeed in a unification, which will result in a *neglect* of the infinite-as-infinite. It should be noted that Naess does make an attempt to realize "the union with the whole of Nature", which should occur "through the understanding of the particular things as a manifold of expressions or manifestations of Nature" (Naess, 2005a, 390). A union across the rift opened above is therefore to be established by understanding. Naess has a rather peculiar reading of this concept, which takes on the shape of a quintessential rationalism in Spinozism. Understanding is not to be read as "abstract thinking or contemplation", but as the "conscious, intuitive, intimate interaction [with particulars]" (390, emphasis removed). That is, by getting to know (more and more) particular beings in Nature, an ecological outlook is developed through a sense of how one thing connects with others. Spinoza's concept of *amor intellectualis Dei*, love of God through contemplation of essences, is re-interpreted as widening of one's own perspective on how things relate (391).

Since self-realization implies acts of understanding with increasing perspective, rationality and virtue increase with the development of understanding. The maximum is 'an understanding love of Nature,' *amor intellectualis Dei*. This implies acts of understanding performed with the maximum perspective possible, or loving immersion in and interaction with Nature. (391)

Understanding is an act of increasing perspective on particulars, working one's way upwards towards a total view which would equate to Nature as a whole. The widest one can unfold one's finite essence is through living in awareness of the connectivity of all single things in one's environment (Naess, 2005b, 402).

Does this conception truly unify the particular (*natura naturata*) with the infinite (*natura naturans*), as Naess suggests it should? He remarks that his approach here "does not lead away from the singular and finite" (390). This suggests that the widening of perspective still results in a perspective on particulars. It is therefore the question whether this type of understanding does not, in truth, halt at the level of particularity to not involve God as infinite. This suspicion is strengthened by Naess's claim that "whatever exists, exists as a particular thing, and nothing can exist or be conceived without things" (Naess, 2005c, 287). In as far as a widening perspective is still just a perspective on things, this would mean that either God as infinite is a thing or set of things, or that Naess has to further specify how more and more finitude can result in insight into the infinite.

Naess never completes this latter task, but does indeed resort to the notion of a "finite God" (Naess, 2005c, 285-290). To Naess, this God is nothing more than a set or a "totality of things" (287-288), which we already encountered as the body of the metaphorical medal referred to above. God is a container for things and not their principle or ground of being. His infinity stretches only as far as countable things go, which is therefore just an infinity expressed in finite terms (cf. Cheng, 2016, 148). What has happened here? I have shown above that Naess separated Nature-as-infinite and Nature-as-finite in order to distinguish them in their immanence relation, and I also warned that they were not brought back together but remained opposed. In Naess's account on understanding here, a union between the two is attempted to be formed only seemingly. What happens in reality is that Naess considers just one side of his medal metaphor: that of *natura naturata*, the realm of the finite. Understanding cannot cross over to the side of the infinite-as-infinite, since this was put into radical opposition to all things finite. Hence, the best it can do is pile all particulars on a heap, working its way towards a dot on the conceptual horizon that indicates nothing more than that this pile can reach an indefinite (though still measurable) height. It does not reach Nature as infinite, which would be the creative activity through which things exist at all. Rather, it starts from things and ends at their level of particularity: the consequence is a fully finite Nature. True infinity is left standing untouched on its other side of the conceptual medal (De Jonge, 2003, 12).

2.4 The Abstracted God

What I have shown above is that Naess wishes to think the infinite and finite in a reciprocal relation of immanence. I argued that a first step to develop such a perspective would be to

highlight a difference between the infinite and the finite. Naess does indeed do this, when he invokes the categories of the infinite as *natura naturans* and the finite as *natura naturata*. However, this separation takes on the figure of an opposition, as if both were different sides to a medal. In Spinoza, though, the infinite cannot be opposed to the finite, since the infinite as Nature denotes the coming into being of all there is - and this by definition excludes the possibility of opposing anything to it. Because of this separation, Naess's ethical theory of self-realization and understanding can at best take place at the finite level. Indeed, this suspicion is confirmed through Naess's efforts to conceive of a finite God. The infinite is left on its own side of the opposition and Nature is permanently split into two. All attempts at unification from the finite level onwards will remain stuck at the notion of a finite God as a set of all things.

This can be related to Murray Bookchin's suspicions that deep ecology embraces the category of a total Self (as infinite) that denounces particularity as such. The Dual Nature Problem denotes that, in as far as true infinity remains separated from the finite realm in Naess, no engagement with particulars can provide the concept of this infinitude (in contrast to what Naess had hoped to achieve). In as far as self-realization is a move of the finite towards the true infinite, particularity is always only the remainder of this original infinity. It is something that should be ignored, the medal should be flipped around. Since Naess failed to show how to conceive of the two except through the figure of opposition, the movement of the self to the infinite will always halt at some particular level, which it must deem as insufficient since this is never a true manifestation of infinity. The infinite only exists as a full abstraction from the finite realm, not as its ground, or as the force that breathes through all particulars.

What is needed to complete the figure of immanence is therefore to think of the relation between finite and infinite as one between *different relata*, that are not in opposition. I will show through Schelling's appropriation of Spinoza that even Spinoza himself may run short in thinking through this relation. Moreover, by providing an account in which the difference between the finite and infinite is a condition for their identity, Schelling moves beyond the impasse of the Dual Nature Problem.

3 Schelling and Spinoza

3.1 A Short Contextualization of Schelling

3.1.1 Objective

The task remains to conceive of another kind of reciprocal immanence relation. I mentioned in the introduction that it is Schelling who may be used as a source to engage with this problem, the reason of which I will exhibit in this chapter. The challenge is to appropriate his thought in light of the issues that Naess runs into. In order to do so, I will focus here mostly on his writings

on philosophy of nature before 1800. It is in these books that we find a proper struggle of Schelling with Spinozism, especially concerning the question of the relation between the infinite and the finite. Using Schelling as a thinker in juxtaposition to Naess can give new words to the whole-part issue that lies at the heart of deep ecology. In order to do so, I will first contextualize Schelling's thought concerning Nature. Second, I will present his arguments against Spinoza in the light of Naess's problems. As I have stated in the introduction, this can highlight the aspects that Bookchin problematized in Naess as being somehow present in Spinoza's theory itself. This will pave the way to, finally, show how Schelling overcomes the Dual Nature Problem and exhibits the unity of Nature in difference.

3.1.2 Schelling's Nature

For Schelling, Nature is an *infinite becoming* (Schelling, *First Outline*, 2004, 202 [284]). The task for a philosophy of Nature is to understand the way this infinite becoming can be identified with the finite beings that exist in Nature: "Insofar as we regard the totality of objects not merely as a product, but at the same time necessarily as productive, it becomes *Nature* for us, and this *identity of the product and the productivity*, and this alone, is implied by the idea of Nature" (202 [284], emphasis original). In Naess, I noted that Nature was left as being split between two opposite conceptions (of infinite and finite). It is precisely the attempt to identify Nature as a product and productivity that is the objective of Schelling's philosophy of Nature.

Schelling criticizes Spinoza concerning his lack of explaining of how one is to conceive of this identification (Schelling, *Ideas*, 1988, 15). I shall below exhibit two points of digression between the two thinkers. These points both relate to the issue of the lack of identity that Naess ended up with above. Please note that I will present Schelling's problems with Spinoza, rather than investigate the validity of these arguments in Spinoza himself. This is just a preparation of the ground for understanding the uniqueness of Schelling's own solution to this problem.

3.1.3 Schelling's Arguments Against Spinoza

Schelling wields two main arguments against Spinoza, which relate to what I have problematized in Naess above. First, Spinoza fails to provide a continuity between his infinite Substance and the finite products. Second, Spinoza's Substance (because of this) becomes a 'thing' and, by virtue of this, is not really infinite at all. I will explain these points in a little more detail, leading up to an exhibition of Schelling's own immanence-figure, which is characterized through its dynamics.

First, what is problematic to Schelling is that Spinoza does not know how to conceive of a

transition from the infinite to the finite, but, like Naess, supposedly separates the two. "How there can be *determinations* in an infinite external to us, Spinoza knew no way of making intelligible, and he sought in vain to avoid a transition from the infinite to the finite" (28, original emphasis). Schelling's suspicions can be grounded by quoting one of Spinoza's *scholia*, clearly installing a conceptual distance between God and things:

Since God's intellect is the only cause of things [...], he must necessarily *differ from them both as to his essence and as to his existence*. For what is caused differs from its cause precisely in what it has from the cause. (Spinoza, 1996, 1P17S2, 17, emphasis added)

God thus remains distanced as a cause for the things, which raises the question of 'where' the things are, if not in God or Nature. According to Schelling, the difference between the two is to be soothed, not outside the infinite, but within it. However, Spinoza's Substance, in Schelling's reading, produces the things outside of itself, which makes his Nature fall apart into two (Schelling, *Ideas*, 27). The issue with this is two-fold: first, it is an unexplained lacuna how things can even be beyond the Substance, which is infinite and should therefore have no 'outside' (27). Next, in as far as the Substance is supposed to be considered entirely through itself (Spinoza, 1996, 1D3, 1), the products of Nature can at best be epiphenomena, irrelevant for the Substance's being - there is no real identity to be found here.

Second, Schelling criticizes the resulting externality of the Substance to the particulars by calling it a 'thing' in his later *Philosophical Investigations*²:

The error of [Spinoza's] system lies by no means in his placing things *in God* but in the fact that they are *things*—in the abstract concept of beings in the world, indeed of infinite substance itself, which for him is exactly also a thing. (Schelling, 2006, 20 [417-420])

Relating the argument to the first one above, because the infinite is placed "outside of us" (Schelling, *Ideas*, 27) in Spinoza, it becomes a distanced and abstract object of thought rather than something that has to do with our actual being-here in Nature. If Spinoza cannot demonstrate the immanence of the infinite in the finite, it remains an empty category with no relation to the objects in the world. This is also a challenge to the Substance's infinity, considering that there is an entire finite 'realm' that it does not encapsulate. Again, this would break Nature apart into two, which would be unacceptable to Schelling. What should be

² This a later text by Schelling, written during what is generally considered to be part of another epoch in his thinking. However, I maintain that between these periods Schelling's attitude towards Spinoza remains unshaken, even though his own philosophy progressed considerably.

achieved, therefore, is to lift the philosophy of Nature above "an empty play with concepts", to then "[exhibit] the infinite *in* the finite" (Schelling, *First Outline*, 15 [80], emphasis added). In Schelling's own philosophy of Nature, the infinite is therefore reinterpreted as the principle of all Being, as the pure production of the things that are, never to be conceived of in isolation from them (cf. Schmied Kowarzik, 1996).

3.2 Schelling's Solution to the Dual Nature Problem

3.2.1. General overview

The Dual Nature Problem results from an acknowledgement of a tension between Nature-as-a-whole and its parts without taking this difference up again in a higher identity. I have shown that the lack of identification between the two sides of Nature in Naess was already problematized by Schelling in his arguments against Spinoza. What remains is showing how Schelling achieves this identification. Recapitulating what I have stated above, this should a) leave a difference between relata (infinite and finite), whilst b) showing how they can also be understood as the same.

The infinite is to Schelling not a *thing*, nor a *Substance*, but the *principle* of being (Schelling, *First Outline*, 13 [77]). This is denoted by the idea that it cannot be said of the infinite, here called the 'unconditioned', that it 'is':

One can never say of the unconditioned that it 'is.' For it is BEING ITSELF, and as such, it does not exhibit itself entirely in any finite product, and every individual is, as it were, a particular expression of it. (Schelling, First Outline, 13 [77], original emphasis)

Unlike Spinoza's Substance, Schelling's infinite bears not the predicate of existence, since to him existence always denotes something individual or particular. The infinite, as BEING ITSELF, is not something particular and it can thus not be said that it 'is'. It 'is' the principle of Being, that allows the things to be, without existing itself as a thing. Put otherwise, if Being itself would 'be' something, it would have to partake in an even higher principle of Being, ad infinitum. Seeing that being itself 'is' not, though all things still follow from it, Schelling comes to interpret the principle of Being as a productivity or a becoming. It is the coming-into-being of things, or, "every individual (in Nature) is only a form of being itself; being itself however = absolute activity" (14 [78]). Nature as infinite is a pure productivity.

This means that the infinite cannot be considered 'on its own', since its being only becomes manifest through the things that partake in it. It shows us as well that Schelling will never allow a separation of infinite productive Nature and finite productions, since the latter is nothing but

the becoming-manifest of the former. If the infinite is this absolute activity, which reveals itself through an absolute production, it will, however, not halt in the production of a limited product or a set of limited products (Gare, 2011, 48). Infinite productivity can only be made manifest through an infinite product: "a *finitude* which is never complete, i.e., which is *itself infinite*. In other words, it can only be presented by *infinite becoming*" (Schelling, *First Outline*, 15 [80]).

However, it is part of the definition of a product that it is conditioned, or limited, and that it can therefore never suffice to meet this requirement of infinite becoming. An infinite product is therefore one that is capable to be taken up again in infinite production: this is why Nature's creativity reaches beyond what it produces and urges the products to become productive themselves - to engage in ever new productions and reproductions (35 [101]). Empirical Nature, the finites which come and go, is therefore nothing but the ongoing production of this never-finished infinite-product, a ceaseless "configuration" of itself (35 [101-102]), which will continue through an endless series in a tireless attempt to exhaust a productivity that remains infinite (13-14 [78]).

Because of this emphasis on production, a finite product exists only as the figure which arises out of different forces engaging in a dynamic struggle. A product is a meeting point of different activities or *actants* that are interacting within infinite Nature (Hui, 2016, 82). Therefore Schelling conceptualizes the thing merely as a "monument, as it were, of those activities prehending one another" (Schelling, *First Outline*, 51 [114]), as a shape that emerges out of a continuously dynamic, underlying process. The product is in a sense an epiphenomenon of activity, and has no being beyond its becoming. Think of a whirlpool, that becomes visible as a relatively static figure amidst of turbulently flowing water, though being nothing more than the shape of this movement (206, [289]). Just as this whirlpool, all things in Nature are spawned forth as configurations of underlying forces. A thing is not a sum of these forces, but rather the dynamics that they engage in (Gare, 2011, 52-53). It is their rhythm or the "concept of [...] change itself, which is the only enduring thing in the change" (Schelling, *First Outline*, 51 [114]).

Whereas Spinoza's Substance seems to function as a kind of *substratum* of Being, a ground of existence, Schelling's infinite production knows not of such a static fundament (14, [78]). Being is, to Schelling, unfolding, coming-into-existence, production and not a faceless ground into which things carve themselves. The finite is not in contrast to the infinite, but is the self-construction of the infinite, its spontaneous unconcealment. In this picture, it cannot make sense to oppose productivity to products, since products can only *be* as an inhibition of productivity: it is their principle of existence.

3.2.2 Schelling's Immanence Relation

When discussing Naess, I argued that an immanence relation needs both a dependency and a difference between terms. In this recapitulation of Schelling's immanence figure, I will show that he does justice to both aspects. The identity, or connection, between the infinite and the finite is established by Schelling through a conceptualization of the finite as a pattern of infinite becoming. The finite is immanent in the infinite, because it is its principle of Being. This principle itself, however, is pure becoming and manifests itself only through each of its productions. Without the finite, the infinite would remain just activity without any form, just a nothing, a principle without effect, a conditioning without conditioned - in short, something inconceivable. The finite, however, is merely inhibited activity, a pattern of the infinite positing itself. It is never on its own nor beyond the infinite activity of Nature. This entails a full reciprocity between the two.

What then, is their difference, which should be sustained without disrupting their unity? If the product = productivity, do we not lose the *relata* in one monochrome blur? The difference in unity can be visualized by the mathematical figure of the line (Schelling, *First Outline*, 16 [81]). The infinity of the concept of the line is distinguished from the infinite many points on the line. Each point, though being limited, illustrates this original infinity of the line in which it is just a particular moment. The point can only be understood through the concept to which it adheres, whereas the concept is meaningless without its construction (to which Schelling refers as a proper evolution of the concept, 18 [83]). Yet, the concept of the line is not equal to the sum of the points on it and likewise, infinite Nature is not equal to the finite knots in its evolving net (Vater, 2015, 171). *There is a real difference*: infinitude is in Schelling pure activity as a principle, finitude is its realization. To produce itself as the infinite whole that it is, a line must proceed through single points (which, on their own, differ as well from the concept that allows them to be). Similarly, Nature has to proceed through (seemingly) finite products in order to realize itself as it is infinitely.

Immanence: the infinite as productivity is fully immanent in the products, there is no remainder. Reciprocity: because of this the products could not be without their principle, the principle would be nothing without its products. Sustained difference: the product does partially what the infinite does through itself in one go. This difference separates the *relata* of the relation, yet makes that they can only be conceived of through this relation. Identity is precisely this unity in difference, this difference within the unity of the infinite.

4 Deep Ecology and Schelling

4.1 Bookchin's Lament

I have argued above that Naess was unable to identify *natura naturans* with *natura naturata* in his interpretations of Spinoza. I called this the Dual Nature Problem. Therefore, the finite could not truly be united with the infinite, which might justify Bookchin's lament that deep ecology celebrates an abstracted Self that cannot stand the particular. This is in line with Schelling's arguments against Spinoza. Moreover, Schelling argued that Spinoza particularizes the infinite, which may explain why Naess fails to conceive of an identity between the infinite and finite. His process of identification takes place on the level of finite Nature, his goal is the infinite: because this distance is never bridged, the finite is looked upon with suspicion. I will now, in conclusion, delineate what a shift to a Schellingian understanding of Nature entails.

Does Schelling's account circumvent Bookchin's argument? What is different from Naess is Schelling's focus on identity in difference. The particular is never conceived of as truly different from the productive infinite in Schelling. To use the figure of the line once more, the particular is merely the sequential construction of an infinite line. There is a difference, in as far as the whole line can only be considered, as it were, out of time, whereas the constructing needs to take place step by step through time. Yet, ultimately it is the same line. The infinite or the whole is never considered in opposition or in distance to the particular. "The product [...] is nothing other than productive Nature itself determined in a certain way" (34, [101]). The infinite is not a thing in Schelling, it is not a Self that could empirically be given in any one concrete shape. It is, rather, the dynamic unfolding of all visible shapes and only through particulars comes to unconcealment. Appealing to this understanding of Nature is that it does not lead away from the particulars, since Nature itself is truly immersed in particularity. In this way, the Self or the infinite is never an abstraction from the particular, but its very ground of being at all.

Naess's idea of self-in-Self can in this figure no longer be geared towards a wide perspective on things as 'the whole', since the whole, or the infinite Nature, is always already active through all particular things. Since Schelling has thought the finite in concord with the infinite, what is left is not a 'move' towards the infinite, but rather the recognition of its presence in the finite. I would say that a theory of self-realization in a Schellingian framework would therefore urge us to investigate the forces that make possible our being-here, whilst delineating how our own activity shapes and influences our environments. The 'Self' is not an abstraction from the finite things, but, in Schelling's hands, may become a critical tool to move from a naive understanding of the world as it is given to one that unveils it in its becoming - "to tear *yourself* away from the common view which discerns in nature only what 'happens' - and which, at most, views the act as a *factum*, not the action itself in its acting" (Schelling, *First Outline*, 14-15 [79]).

4.2 Political Holism: From Being to Becoming

Schelling's framework also brings along the possibility to think of politics in relation to the question of Nature, something that deep ecology previously had trouble with, as Andy Scerri (2016) has shown. Scerri argues that the traditional holistic worldview has been adapted by free-market proponents, leading to a capitalist anti-thesis of deep ecology through its own methods. "It seems that two of the cardinal ideas once associated with the radical green normative project of deep ecology, the holistic critique of Enlightenment dualism and advancement of moral voluntarism, are today being used to legitimate exploitative social structures that radical greens otherwise oppose" (545). First stating that everything belongs to the whole, to then take this whole as a moral compass is to bar every possibility of a moral critique from the outside: there is a risk to justify the behaviours of all agents who pertain to be aware of their relatedness to their environment. "Holism combined with voluntarism make it very difficult to coherently advocate for deontological institutions that would stand outside of and regulate social relations from a position rooted in an alternative interest, since with holism, there is no 'outside'" (538).

Schelling's critique of the whole as a Substance dodges this bullet. Yes, Schelling is a holistic thinker (Gare, 2011, 52), but I have shown here that this whole is inherently dynamic. The whole is an active force; becoming is the central concept. Rather than thinking of self-causation as leading to an unchangeable Substance, Schelling thought of the whole as a vibrant and dynamic unconcealment of the world. This also means that the whole is not yet completed, it is still arriving in a sense.

Schelling's holism is so interesting for deep ecology because it de-moralizes the whole. In Spinoza, the whole was perfect and finished – the price of which was its distance to the actual existent beings, which I have dubbed the Dual Nature Problem. If we take, like Schelling, the whole to be the becoming which is fully immanent in Nature's products, Nature itself is *not yet finished*. There is no pre-established order to fall back on, rather, Nature itself is future-oriented. This ontological openness of the future makes it possible to conceive of the necessity of geopolitics in which the actual struggle between actors can be acknowledged. What Nature should be is not yet decided. The previous appeal of deep ecology to return to the guidance of the whole was an attempt to circumvent politics through ontology; Schelling's holism re-politicizes Nature. Nature cannot dictate what should happen, because it is still unfolding. In this way the need for politics is illustrated through the open-endedness of Schellingian ontology, avoiding the deadlock that Scerri (2016) noted.

4.3 Conclusion: How many Natures?

In conclusion, I have shown in this article that Naess separated the infinite from the finite in his interpretation of Spinoza's concept of Nature. This Dual Nature Problem made the category of the whole a dangerous one: it was both celebrated and always out of reach, always beyond the finite world. Schelling's vision on the whole is better suited to think Nature, because he thought of the whole not as an abstraction outside of time, but as the ongoing production of beings in the world.

Schelling can still be seen as a deep ecologist, because his philosophy is non-anthropocentric and provides a total view, a general philosophy with concrete applications. For Schelling, Reason is not something that set humans apart from the rest of Nature, seeing that Nature was reasonable itself according to him. Nature is "Mind born into objectivity" (Schelling, *Ideas*, 51) and "Nature should be Mind made visible, Mind the invisible Nature" (42), where Mind is the German *Geist*, denoting the unfolding of Reason. Mankind is not the master and possessor of Reason, but an (essential) part of its realization in the world. The practical thrust of Schelling's argument, which makes it suitable as a total view, is to think of Nature as dynamic, or to animate the dead object that most still consider it to be. Understand Nature in its becoming! This could be the slogan for a long-range total view, because it asks for a full de-objectification of Nature, leading to a perspective that can embrace and appreciate change, one that understands that all particular actions reverberate somehow throughout the whole of which they are a part.

When one would ask how many Natures there are, a Schelling-inspired deep ecology could now finally answer: "one". But, as I wrote above, because of this, there is no blueprint of what Nature should be like, no morality hidden in ontology; Nature has lost its function as a moral guide, because it is ultimately open-ended. It now comes as a question and as a warning. The question is "What is to be done?", since Nature no longer can give one this answer. The warning is that Nature is swarming with non-human becoming; it is not a dead object waiting for humans to be cultivated. It is not a stage upon which humans play, but a distributed field of becomings, all with their own interests, all inherently open, all susceptible to sudden and drastic change. This leads to a thrilling new outlook on Nature, along with the full and frightening awareness that humans can only control their environments so much, that there is a whole lot of becoming going on in Nature beyond what humans could ever conceive.

"Anarchy still lies in the ground, as if it could break through once again" (Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, 29 [359-360]).

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