

# Pittsburgh Summer Symposium in Contemporary Philosophy

Duquesne University  
Dept. of Philosophy  
Pittsburgh, PA

## Call for Applications

We are pleased to announce the Pittsburgh Summer Symposium in Contemporary Philosophy, held at Duquesne University. Details for the program are as follows:

### Schelling and *Naturphilosophie*

August 5 - 9, 2013

(Optional Participants' Conference, August 3-4)

*“What then is that secret bond which couples our mind to Nature, or that hidden organ through which Nature speaks to our mind or our mind to Nature?”* (Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature)

*“The concept of nature does not entail that there should also be an intelligence that is aware of it. Nature, it seems, would exist, even if there were nothing that was aware of it. Hence the problem can also be formulated thus: how does intelligence come to be added to nature, or how does nature come to be presented?”* (System of Transcendental Idealism)

#### **Seminar Leaders:**

Prof. Iain Hamilton Grant (University of the West of England, Bristol)

Prof. Jason Wirth (Seattle University)

#### **Course Description:**

In recent years there has been a surge of research on the work of the German philosopher F.W.J. Schelling, aided in the English-speaking world by a number of recent translations. This movement has included reexaminations of Schelling as a figure in the history of philosophy, as a source of influence on a number of twentieth century thinkers, and as a rich resource for addressing contemporary philosophical debates.

Schelling's distinctive influence in the history of philosophy has been, in part, a product of his objective approach to transcendental idealism. In opposition to Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, which argued that

the subject must be the fundamental ground for transcendental idealism, Schelling argued that an objective approach, taking the form of *Naturphilosophie*, is equally necessary for explaining the subject-object form of knowledge. Additionally, in his later works, Schelling's concepts of freedom, existence, and the non-ground, would give some of the earliest critiques of Hegel's absolute idealism, and would later influence thinkers like Kierkegaard, Marx, and Nietzsche. In the twentieth century, the impact of his work would continue. His *Freiheitsschrift*, for instance, forms an important part of the conceptual context within which Martin Heidegger developed his notions of event, ground, and the plight of the human being, operative in the 1930s and early 40s. Likewise, Schelling's influence profoundly marked Maurice Merleau-Ponty's later ontology of the flesh, his understanding of art, the unconscious, and the provocative task of doing a "psychoanalysis of Nature."

More recently, Iain Hamilton Grant has mobilized Schellingian *Naturphilosophie* as a basis for recasting epistemological and metaphysical or ontological issues regarding the relation of physics and metaphysics, the nature of time, the nature of ground, and more broadly calling for a radical reevaluation of the post-Kantian philosophical framework dominant over much of the last two centuries. This project has established one of the major arms of the recent movement to rethink the realist/anti-realist debate. Likewise, Jason Wirth has revitalized Schellingian accounts of the Good, intellectual intuition, aesthetics, nature, and life in contemporary debates. He has also worked to put Schelling into conversation with a number of other recent thinkers, both Western and, notably, of the Japanese Kyoto School.

Other contemporary philosophers have also taken up Schelling in related manners. Markus Gabriel, for instance, has integrated Schelling's notion of non-ground into his "domain ontology" and its treatment of the nature of the world (or more properly the non-existence of the world), mythology, evil, contingency, and necessity. Further, in the Lacanian meta-psychology of Slavoj Žižek and Adrian Johnston, Schelling's philosophy has been used to give an account for the genesis of the transcendental subject out of natural and material substance conceived with reference to *Trieb*, or drive.

This summer symposium will bring together interested graduate students, postdoctoral students, and junior faculty for a week of discussion, lecture, and close textual study concerning this important philosopher. The topic for the seminar is Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*. We will examine questions about nature, objectivity, matter, life, knowledge, and whether or not transcendental philosophy can be reconciled with the findings of the empirical sciences. All texts and discussion will be in English.

### **Application:**

We invite current graduate students, postdoctoral students, and junior faculty in philosophy or related disciplines to submit an application composed of a C.V. and a short letter of intent (500 words maximum) to **[pghsummersymposium2013@gmail.com](mailto:pghsummersymposium2013@gmail.com)**. The deadline for applications is **April 5, 2013**. The seminar will be limited to 20-30 participants. For more information as it becomes available, we have created a website for the symposium:

<http://pghsummersymposium.wix.com/pghsummersymp2013>

**Participants' Conference (August 3-4):**

In order to facilitate a further exchange of ideas and research, a participants' conference will be held the weekend before the seminar begins. Applicants who receive notice of acceptance as participants will be asked - if interested - to submit an abstract of up to 500 words on any theme related to the topic of the seminar. The participants' conference will take place on Saturday and Sunday, August 3-4, 2013.

**Financial Information:**

There will be a \$125 registration fee for each participant of the seminar. This money will be used for a conference dinner, celebration, and daily expenses such as coffee, etc. Please note that participants will be responsible for arranging their own housing as well as financing most of their own meals for the duration of the symposium. However, with respect to lodging, we expect a number of arrangements with graduate students will be available on a first come, first serve basis.

**Organizers:**

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