*Von der Weltseele*

Loyola Philosophy Department German Reading Group

*Draft; selections: Schelling, AA I/6: 67-79; 215-218; 254-256*

[67]  What the aim of this treatise is, and why it bears this title, the reader will discover, if he has enough desire or curiosity to read the whole.

         The author finds it necessary to explain himself upfront on only two points, so that this attempt is not received with prejudice.

         The first is that no fabricated unity of principles is sought out or intended in this text. Indeed, the observation of general changes of nature, as well as the continuing existence of the organic world, leads the natural researcher to a *common principle,* which contains the (between inorganic and organic nature-fluctuating) first cause of all changes in the former [inorganic], and the last ground of all activity in the latter [organic]. [This principle], because it is *everywhere* present, is *nowhere*, and because it is *everything*, cannot be anything *particular* or *specific*, and for which language because of that has no particular designation, and whose idea the oldest (most ancient) philosophy (to which, after it has completed its circular path, ours will gradually return), has only passed onto us in poetic representations.

         But the unity of principles does not satisfy, insofar as it does not return to itself an infinite manifold of individual effects. —I hate nothing more than that spiritless striving, to destroy the manifold of natural causes through fictitious identities. I see that nature pleases only in the greatest richness of forms, and that (according to the expression of a great poet) in the dead spaces of decay, *caprice* delights itself. That single law of gravity, to which the most mysterious appearances of the heavens are ultimately led back, not only requires, but even causes, [68] that the heavenly bodies disrupt their course, and that so in the most complete order of the heavens the seemingly greatest disorder reigns. — In this way, nature has described the wide space, which it included with eternal and unchanging laws, wide enough to, within the same, entrance the human mind/spirit with an appearance of lawlessness.

         As soon as our observation elevates itself to the idea of nature as a *whole*, the opposition between mechanism and organism disappears. [This opposition] has halted the progress of natural science long enough, and could be contradictory to some of our undertakings.

         It is an old delusion, that organization and life are inexplicable from natural principles. —Should this be as much as to say: ‘the *first* origin of organic nature is to be *physically* unresearchable’— this *unproven* claim serves nothing, other than to beat back the courage of the researcher. It is at least allowed, to oppose one such bold claim with another equally bold claim, and so science gets nowhere. At least *a single* step toward that explanation would be made, if one could show that the hierarchy/series of stages of all organic beings had been formed by a gradual development of one and the same organization. —That our experience has taught us no alteration of shape in nature, no transition of form or species into another (although the metamorphosis of some insects, and if each bud is a new individual, also the metamorphosis of plants as analogical appearances could at least be cited) is no proof against that possibility. This is because a defender of the same could answer that the changes, to which organic as well as inorganic nature is subjected, could (until a general standstill of the organic world comes about) take place in ever longer periods, for which our short period (which is determined by course of the earth around the sun) provides no measure. And [moreover] that they are so large, that up until now no experience of the course of one and the same has been lived through. But let us abandon these possibilities, and see, what at all then is true or false in that opposition between mechanism and organism, in order to determine the limits most securely, in which our natural explanations must remain!

[69]  What it then is that mechanism itself, with which, as with a specter, you frighten yourself? — Is mechanism something that exists for itself, and is it not much more itself only the negative of organism? Must organism not be prior to mechanism, the positive prior to the negative? If now the negative is only ever explicable from the positive (darkness from light, cold from heat), and not vice versa, then our philosophy cannot proceed from mechanism (as the negative) but must proceed from organism (as the positive). And it is clearly not so much that this is to be explained from that, but rather much more that this is first explicable from that. It is not the case that where no mechanism is, there is organism, but conversely: where no organism is, there is mechanism.

         To me, *organization* is nothing at all other than the arrested stream of causes and effects. Only where nature has not inhibited this stream, it flows forwards (in straight lines). Where it inhibits it, it returns back into itself (in a circular line). Thus not *all* succession of causes and effects is excluded by the concept of organism; this concept only designates a succession, which *enclosed within specific limits* flows back into itself*.*

I will in the following show (through induction) that the original limit of mechanism cannot be further explained empirically, but rather is only to be *postulated*: since the world in its finitude is infinite, and an unrestricted mechanism would destroy itself, so must the general mechanism be inhibited *ad infinitum*, and so there will be as many *individual, specific* *worlds*, as there are spheres, in which the general mechanism returns into itself. Thus, ultimately, the *world* is an *organization,* and a *universal organism* is itself the *condition* (and insofar as it is the condition the *positive)* of *mechanism*.

         Viewed from *this* height, the individual successions of causes and effects (which deceive us with the appearance of mechanism) disappear, just as infinitesimally small straight lines disappear in the universal circle of the organism, in which the world itself proceeds.

[70]  What then philosophy has long since taught me—that the positive principle of organism and mechanism are the same—I have in the following text proved through induction,—that the general/universal changes of nature (upon which the condition/existence of the organic world depends), drive us ultimately to the same *first hypothesis*, upon which the natural researcher has long since made the explanation of organic nature dependent. The following treatise is divided into two sections, of which the first undertakes to seek out the first force of nature, which reveals itself in the general changes, the other undertakes to seek out the positive principle of organization and of life. The common result of these two sections is, that *one and the same principle connects inorganic and organic nature.*

[paraphrase: the general incompleteness of our knowledge of first causes (in electricity, and thermodynamics, etc.) and the poverty of expression have gotten in Schelling’s way here and there, and have led to and sometimes necessitated side discussions. These discussions have made it so that the light which he wanted to spread over the whole was too much scattered onto individual objects, but nevertheless, in the end, he’ll gather it all up again into a common focus. … Few feel the deficiencies here more than the author]

*Postscript*

This text is not to be considered a continuation of my *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*. I will not continue it, before I am in the state, to conclude it with a *scientific physiology*, to first give the whole roundness. At that time I considered it an accomplishment, to venture anything at all into this science, so that others can [71] exercise their intelligence in the discovery and refutation of error. I must nevertheless wish, that the reader and critic of this treatise is familiar with the ideas which are presented in that text. The authority to assume all positive natural principles as homogenous is only derived philosophically. Without this assumption (I presume that one knows what an *assumption for the purpose of a possible construction* is), it is impossible to construct the first concepts of physics, e.g., the theory of heat. —Idealism, which philosophy is gradually introducing into all sciences (in mathematics it is long since dominant, quite excellently since Newton and Leibniz), appears to be understandable to still few. The concept of *action at a distance*, e.g., upon which many still stumble, rests wholly on the idealistic representation of space: because according to this two bodies at the greatest distance from another can be represented as touching, and conversely, bodies which (according to the common understanding) are really touching, can be represented as acting on each other at a distance. —It is very true, that a body only *acts* where it *is*, but it is even so true, that a body only *is* where it *acts*, and with this one sentence is the last rampart of the atomistic philosophy overcome. —I must restrain myself from giving yet more examples here.

[75]

Veniet tempus, quo ista, quae nunc latent, in lucem dies extrahat et longioris aevi diligentia. Ad inquisitionem tantorum una aetas non sufficit. – Itaque per successiones ista longas explicabuntur. Veniet tempus, quo posteri tarn aperta nos nesciisse mirentur.

SENECA Nat. Qu. VII

[77]

Every movement that turns back to itself posits, as a condition for its possibility, a *positive* force, which (as *impulse*) instigates the movement, (as it were, approaches the line) and a *negative*, which (as *attraction*) leads the movement *back to itself* (or it hinders it from going forward in a straight line).

In nature, everything strives continually forward. That this is so, thereof we must seek for the ground in a principle which, as an inexhaustible source of a *positive* force, newly initiates and continually maintains the movement in the world. This *positive* principle is the *first force of nature*.

But an invisible violence/might/power leads all appearances in the world back in an eternal circular path. That this is so, thereof we must seek the ultimate ground in a *negative* force, which, by continually limiting the effects of the positive principle, brings back the universal/general movement back into its source. This *negative* principle is the *second* force of nature.

These two conflicting forces bound together, or represented in conflict, lead to the idea of an *organizing principle,* which forms the world into a system. Such a principle perhaps the ancients intended to designate as the *world soul.*

The original positive force, if it were infinite, would fall outside the limits of *possible perception*. Restricted through the force set in opposition to it, it becomes a *finite magnitude*. It begins to be an object of perception, or it reveals itself in *appearances*.

The sole *immediate* object of *intuition* is the *positive* in each appearance. To the *negative* (as the cause of the merely *felt/sensed*), one can only *infer*.

[78]

The *immediate object* of the *higher theory of nature* is therefore only the positive principle of all movement, or the *first force of nature*.

The force itself, the first force of nature, *conceals* itself behind the *individual appearances* in which is revealed, from the craving eye. In *particular materials*, it pours itself out through the entire universe.

In order to catch this *Proteus of nature*, which always recurs in changing form in countless appearances, we must cast our nets further out. Our way is slower, but more secure.

*.*

[...]

[79]

[...]

For each material fills its respective space only via an interplay of opposed forces; that they thus *permanently* fill *the same* space, that is, the body persists in its condition, one cannot explain without assuming the forces to be *active* in each moment and thus, through this assumption, the non-thing/absurdity of absolute rest vanishes of itself.

Each rest and thus each persistence of a body is solely *relative*. The body *rests* in relation to this *particular state* of matter; so long as this state continues (for example, as long as the body is solid or fluid), the moving force will fill out the space with *equal quantity*, i.e., they will fill the *same* space, and *to that extent* the body will appear to be at *rest.* However, that this space is continually filled is only explicable from a continuous movement. .

Thus that light spreads in rays in all directions must be explained on the basis that it is understood in *constant development* and in the *original* spreading. That also the light maintains relative rest, one can from that already infer that the light of an infinite number of stars does not propagate its movement to us.

The interest of natural science is to allow nothing *limitless*, to allow no force as absolute, rather only to view each of them always only as *the negative of its opposite*. Now, were we furthermore to allow whichever force we want to grow to the highest degree possible, still we will never be able to bring about the *absolute* negation of its opposite. Therefore, the endeavor of some, to  derive universal weight from the impulse of an unknown material which drives bodies into one another is completely in vain, because this material, since it makes other things heavy without itself being heavy, one would have to represent as an absolute negation of the attractive force. As such however it would cease to be an object of possible construction, it would at the same time lose itself in the universal repulsive force and would leave available no material principle for the explanation of universal weight/gravity, rather only the dark idea of a *force* as such, which one was trying to avoid with this assumption in the first place.

[...]

[215]

In general it seems to me that most natural researchers have as of yet missed the true sense of the problem of *the origin of organised bodies.*

If some portion of those accepts a special *life-force*, which as a magical force/violence cancels out all the effects of the natural laws in living beings, so they even thereby *a priori* eliminate the possibility of physically explaining the organization.

If, on the other hand, others explain the origin of all organization from *dead chemical forces*, they thereby cancel out all the *freedom* of nature in forming and organizing. Both, however, should be *united*.

1) *Nature should be in its blind lawfulness free*, and, *conversely*, *in its full freedom lawful*. In this unification alone lies the concept of organization.

[216] Nature should neither act simply *lawlessly*, (as defenders of the life force must claim if they are consistent), nor should it act simply *lawfully* (as the chemical physiologists claim); *rather it should be in its lawfulness lawless, and in its lawlessness lawful*.

The problem to be resolved is this: *how nature in its lawfulness claims the appearance of freedom, and conversely in appearing to act freely it nevertheless could be subject to only a blind lawfulness.*

For this unification of freedom and lawfulness we have no other concept than the concept of *drive*. So instead of saying that nature acts at the same time lawful and free in its formation, we can say that in organic matter, an original *formative drive* works, in virtue of which it takes on, preserves and continually restores a determinate shape/definite form.

2) The *formative drive* by itself is only an *expression* that original unification of freedom and lawfulness in all formations of nature, but not a *ground of explanation* of this unification itself. At the base/foundation of natural science (as a*ground of explanation*) it is a fully *foreign* concept which is not capable of construction— if it should have *constitutive* meaning— and which is nothing other than a barrier for researching reason, or the pillow/cushion of an obscure/dark quality, meant bring reason to rest.

This concept already presupposes organic matter, because each drive should and can only be operative in organic matter. This principle hence cannot indicate a *cause* of organization, *rather much more, this concept of the formative drive itself presupposes a higher cause of organization*. When one deploys/utilizes this term, one also *postulates* such a cause, because this drive is not conceivable without organic matter, nor it is conceivable without a cause of all organization.

Far removed thus from wanting to harm the freedom of natural research, this concept must much more extend/broaden/expand itself. Because it expresses that the *last* ground of organization, upon which one *comes into the organic matter itself*, it already presupposes organic matter. Thus it cannot be the first cause of organization, which even because of that, if it (the first cause) is to be sought, can only be sought *outside of it (organic matter)*.

[217]If the formative drive already presupposes organic matter in infinity, then as a principle it means nothing other than that one would like to seek the first cause of organization in the organized matter, this cause must lie in *infinity*. A cause, however, that lies in the infinite, is just as much a cause, that lies *nowhere*.

Thus in the concept of the formative drive lies the sentence: *that the first cause of organization in organized matter itself can be found* in infinity, i.e., absolutely nowhere. That such a cause, if it is to be found (which natural science nevermore does without), would have to be sought outside the organized matter. And so in natural science, the formative drive can never serve as a ground of explanation, but rather only as a reminder to the natural researcher to seek out a first cause of organization, not in the organized matter itself (ie. in its dead forming forces), but rather *outside of it*.

*Comment:* That the author/originator of this concept himself thought this with it, I am far from claiming, it is enough if from his concept follows what I have derived from it. —This concept, taken in the place of the theory of evolution, has first opened the path of possible explanation (which that theory circumvented at the outset). For, that this concept this path newly blocked, amd itself as the *first* ground of explanation was supposed to have served, I cannot believe, although some (for whom one such explanatory ground appears wholly comfortable) appear to believe it. To them, the formative drive the *last* cause of growth, of reproduction, and so on, but if someone goes above/beyond this concept, and asks through which cause the formative drive of the organized matter is continually maintained, they confess their ignorance and demand, that one remain ignorant with them. —Some with to have even found, that *Kant* himself in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* fosters/advances such a comfort/ease/convenience of explanation. [218] Regarding the assurances, that it is impossible, to go beyond the formative drive, one answers best *by* going beyond it.

3) I am fully convinced that it is possible to also explain the organizing natural processes from the *natural principles*. The formation of animal matter [Stoffs] would occur according to dead chemical forces without influence of an external principle, and likewise, bring about a standstill of natural processes, if an external principle, which is not *subject to chemical process*, continually effects the animal matter, always rekindles the natural process, and continually disturbs the formation of the animal matter [Stoffs] according to dead chemical laws. But now, if such a principle is presupposed, we can first fully explain the blind lawfulness of nature in all formations from cooperative chemical forces of matter, but the *freedom* in these formations, or the contingent in them from the disturbance (which in relation to the chemical process itself is *contingent*) of the particular formative forces of animal material by an external principle which is independent of the chemical process itself - or so it seems to me.

4) If the formative drive were the *absolute* reason of assimilation of growth, of reproduction, etc., then it would have to be impossible to analyze it further. It is however a synthetic term which has, like all terms of this kind, two factors, a *positive* (the *natural principle* by which the dead crystallization of animal matter is continually disturbed), and a negative a *negative* (the chemical powers/forces of animal material). From these factors alone the formative drive is able to be construed. If it however were an absolute reason, which were capable of no further explanation, then it would have to be present in organic matter *as* such, and would express itself in all organizations with equal force, just as gravity equally applies as a basic attribute to all bodies. Now however this great diversity is evident, for example in view of the reproductive power of various organisations, to prove that this drive itself is dependent on arbitrary conditions, thus is not the absolute reason.

5) The uniform growth of a whole body cannot be explained without attributing a *peculiar* (specific) *power of assimilation* to each organ. This itself is however an occult quality if a sustaining cause of the same besides/other than the organization is not assumed. Now one can establish as a *law that the more specific power of assimilation it has, the more difficult it is for it to be restored*. If the formative drive were the absolute ground of reproduction, no ground of the relative ease could be given with which one organ is restored in comparison with another. But if this drive depends, on the one hand, on the continuous influence of a positive natural principle on the organization, and on the other hand, on the chemical properties of the organic matter, one recognizes that the more specific and individual the chemical mixture and the form of an organ is, the more difficult its replacement must also be. Thus the power of reproduction betrays not only great *completeness*, but also *incompleteness* of an organization.

At the deepest level, this principle would reveal itself in the general *formative drive*, which we must presuppose as the principle of all organization, since the formative power/force, which also belongs to the dead matter, alone could only generate dead products. This most original predisposition of matter to organization lies in the forming powers/forces, which belong to the material as such, because without them no origin of matter, which is distinguishable through figure and cohesion, is conceivable. Exactly for this reason, however, because the formative drive also rules in the organic nature, a principle must be added to it in organic nature, which elevates the latter over the former. Hence the question arises, how the general formative power/force is converted/passes into becomes the formative drive?

It lies in the concept of the *formative drive* that the formation is not *blind*, i.e. does not take place solely through forces which are peculiar to the matter as such, but rather the *necessity*, which lies in these forces, the *contingency* of a foreign influence is added, which, by interrupting the blind forces of the matter, at the same time forces them to produce a particular shape. In this peculiar shape, which the matter left to itself does not take on, lies just the *contingency* of each organization, and this *contingency of formation* is in fact expressed through the concept of the formative *drive*.

[254] The formative *force* therefore becomes the formative *drive*, as soon as something *contingent*, such as the disturbing influence of a foreign principle, is added to the dead effect of the first.

This foreign principle cannot be again a *force*, because force is generally something dead; this dead thing which lies in mere *forces*, should be excluded here. The concept of *life force* is a completely empty concept. A defender of this principle even has the clever idea of viewing it as an analog of *gravity,* which he says, also cannot be further explained! — The *essence of life*, however, does not consist in a force at all, but rather in a *free play of forces*, which is continually maintained/sustained by some external influence.

The *necessary* in life are the general forces of nature, which are in play in it; the contingent, through whose influence this play is maintained/sustained, must be a *particular*, i.e., in other words, a *material principle*.

*Organization and life* express nothing at all *existing* in itself, but rather only a certain/particular *form* of being, a *something common(ality)? of numerous cooperating causes*. The principle of life is thus only the cause of a certain *form* of being, but not the cause of being itself, (for such a thing is completely unthinkable).

Thus the forces, which during life are in play, are not *special* or *distinctive* to organic nature. That which puts into play the natural forces, whose result is life, must be a *particular* principle that organic nature removes from the sphere of the general forces of nature, and which otherwise would be the dead product of forming forces, and transfers/displaces into the higher sphere of life.

Thus the cause of *all* organizations alone becomes *contingent*, as it should according to the concept/notion of organization: for nature should not bring it forth *necessarily*; where it emerges, nature should have acted *freely*. Only insofar as the organization is product of nature in its freedom (of a free play of nature) can it excite ideas of *purposiveness*, and only insofar as it excites these ideas, it is *organization*.

Now that principle, because/since it is the *cause* of life, cannot in turn be the product of life. Thus it must be [255] *directly* in contact /(2e: stand in direct relation) with the first organs of life. It must be universally distributed, although it only works where it finds a certain receptivity. Thus the cause of magnetism is present everywhere, and works/operates only on a few bodies. The magnetic stream finds the inconspicuous needle on the open, free sea as on in the enclosed chamber, and where it [the stream] finds it, it gives it the correct polar direction. Thus the stream of life, whenever it comes forth, meets the organs, which are receptive to it, and gives them, where it meets them, the activity of life.

This principle now is limited in its effects only through the receptivity of matter/stuff, with which it has identified itself, and the various organizations must have arisen according to the diversity of this receptivity. Exactly for this reason that principle, although receptive to all forms, is indeed originally *formless* (*amorphon*) and is nowhere presentable as *determinate* matter. So that universal principle of life could *individuate/individualize* itself in *particular* essences, just as it remains with all living beings through transmission through all generations (genders/species) in uninterrupted connection. —The principle of life did not come from beyond itself in the organic matter (like through infusion) — (a mindless/spiritless and indeed widespread idea)— rather conversely, this principle *itself* possessed/acquired the organic matter. Thus insofar as it individualizes itself in single/particular essences, and in turn gives these their individuality, it becomes/is transformed into an inexplicable principle, whose influence is only revealed to the individual sense as an ever more active *drive*.

This principle, since it is the *cause* of life, cannot now enter in as a *constituent* in the life-process; subject to no chemical relations, it is the *unchangeable* (aphtharton) in each organization.—Certainly, it cannot be said that this principle *suspends* the dead forces of matter in living bodies, but rather that it 1) gives these dead forces a *direction*, which they, left to themselves, in a *free, undisturbed formation*, would not have taken; 2) that it would always rekindle and continually maintain the *conflict* of these forces, which, if left to themselves, would soon have transferred to equilibrium and rest.

[256]Since this principle, as *cause* of life, withdraws itself from every eye, and so hides itself in its own work, it can only be recognized in the individual appearances in which it comes forth. And so the observation of inorganic as well as organic nature stands still before that unknown, in which the most ancient philosophy has already surmised the first force of nature

All functions of life and vegetation stand in such a connection with the universal natural changes, that one must search for the common principle of both in *one and the same cause*. We see, that the more abundant influx of *light* has as a consequence (/entails) a universal movement of organic nature, which one [doch] can not ascribe to the immediate influence of light itself, as far as we know its forces, but rather [one can ascribe] to a principle, which is *universally* distributed, and out of which itself perhaps light is, through unknown operations, first *generated*, just as [in turn], *this* serves to always rekindle that principle. It is at least striking, that the source of light does not dry up, and in the condition of air and the weather no remarkable change has occurred [vorgegangen ist], nevertheless, still some years distinguish themselves through general malformation and inhibited progress of vegetation. The causes of meteorological changes are not yet researched, and without a doubt are to be sought in higher processes. Even these changes prove an effect on sensible bodies, which one knows not to explain from the chemical or hygrometrical/(humidity) condition of air. —It is to be accepted, that apart from the constituents of the atmosphere, which we can present as chemical, in them [also] a special medium is distributed, through which all atmospherical changes are perceptible to living bodies. — When the atmosphere is overloaded with electricity, almost all animals reveal a special apprehension, during thunderstorms galvanic experiments better succeed, Hunter’s [der Hunter’sche?] lightning shines brighter — nevertheless this is no reason to believe that electricity is the *immediate* cause of these appearances. The sadness and lamentation of many an animal, have themselves heralded the onset of great earthquakes with altered colors of the sky, as if the same cause which shakes mountains and raises up islands out of the seas, also heaves the breathing breasts of animals— [These are] experiences which one cannot explain, without assuming a *universal continuity of natural causes*, and a *common medium*, through which alone all forces of nature operate on sensible beings.

Now since this principle maintains the continuity of the inorganic and organic world, and binds the entirety of nature into a universal organism, so we recognize newly in it that being, which the most ancient philosophy presciently greeted as the *common soul of nature*, and which some physicists of that time reckoned/held as one with the forming and shaping aether (the portion of the noblest natures).