

Nature, Thinking

From Romanticism and Idealism to
Ecological Philosophy

The Association for Continental Philosophy of Religion international conference
July 9-11 2024



Welcome

On behalf of The Association for Continental Philosophy of Religion and Liverpool Hope University, we extend a warm welcome to all conference participants. We're excited to be hosting such fantastic keynote speakers, and an international programme of presentations.

This booklet contains the timetable, Zoom links and abstracts that you need to navigate the conference. As we are spread across multiple time zones, we have had to space the sessions throughout the day. We understand that people will not be able to attend every one; for that reason, they will be recorded and circulated to participants. However, we do encourage you to attend as much as possible, to keep those threads of continuity and debate that are so important to any conference.

We look forward to a really enjoyable conference, to expanding our thoughts and making stimulating new connections.

We hope everything is easy to follow. Do contact us if you encounter any problems.

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Timetable

(see pages 5-7 for full Zoom links)

Tuesday July 9th (All times are British Summer Time: GMT+1)

Time	Content	Zoom link
1100-1230	KEYNOTE: Simon P. James 'Is Anything Natural?'	<u>A</u>
1400-1530	Rewilding and wildness George Crompton, 'Wilding the Blean: How adjacent methods of conservation reveal agentic sub-currents' Linde De Vroey, 'The Romantic Roots of Rewilding' Natan Feltrin, 'Beyond the Oikos: Rewilding as Resistance to Biopolitical Domestication'	<u>B</u>
1600-1730	Romantic rethinking of nature and culture Chiara Li Mandri, 'Once Again On The Nature-Culture Dichotomy: Some Reflections Alongside Giacomo Leopardi' Cecilia Saez, 'Nature as <i>désouvement</i> : Defending Nature's creative force from Schlegel's concept of <i>romantische Poesie</i> '	<u>C</u>
1800-1930	Parallel sessions Session 1: Transcendentalism and alternative ways of knowing nature Colby Dickinson, 'Emerson's Fourfold Uses of Nature: Philosophical Interventions with Environmental Implications' Chris Dunn, 'The Poetics of Knowing – The Goethean Ideal and Other Alternatives to Technological Science' Session 2: Nature, history and politics beyond humanism: speculative possibilities Callum Barrell/Sara Raimondi, 'Nature as a Temporal Problem in Nineteenth-Century Thought' Carol E. Richardson, 'Quantum Romanticism: An Integral, Fractal, Systems Philosophy of the Self-Organizing Intelligence of Nature' Lucas Scott Wright, 'The Ecological Politics of <i>Indifferenz</i> : Immanence and Transcendence in Schelling's Philosophy of Nature and the Philosophy of Liberation'	<u>A</u> <u>B</u>

Wednesday July 10th (All times are British Summer Time: GMT+1)

Time	Content	Zoom link
0900-10.30	<p>Physis and poesis in the anthropocene</p> <p>Lorenz Moises J. Festin, 'Between <i>Physis</i> and <i>Poiesis</i>: Tracing Back the Rootedness of Technology in the Threshold of Nature'</p> <p>Philipp Quell, 'Thinking Bodies - Aristotle's Physiology of Thinking'</p> <p>Michele Vadilonga Gattermayer, "'La natur est mort, vive la nature!'" The hybrid nature of the Anthropocene'</p>	<u>C</u>
1100-1230	<p>Revisiting Romantics: Novalis, Schelling, Schlegel, and the Philosophy of Nature</p> <p>Fenia Chatzinikolaou, 'Mining the depths of the self: Novalis' <i>Ordo Inversus</i> explored through Nature's reflection'</p> <p>Alexandros Daskalakis, 'Nature's Mythology: On Schelling's reading of Dante'</p> <p>Georgios Sagriotis, 'Friedrich Schlegel's Deduction of the Earth and the Anthropocene'</p>	<u>A</u>
1330-1530	<p>Romanticism Renewed?</p> <p>Jean-Yves Heurtebise, 'Transcultural Ecological Thinking: Overcoming Eurocentric Romanticism & Green Exoticism'</p> <p>Levi van den Bogaard/Yogi Hale Hendlin, 'Reclaiming Romanticism: Eco-poetic Responses to the Metacrisis'</p> <p>Jonathan Coope, 'Neo-Romanticism within eco-activism – and its critics'</p> <p>Arthur Obst, 'Romanticism for the Future: Verticalizing the Political Spectrum'</p>	<u>B</u>
1600-1730	<p>Schelling and the speculative philosophy of nature</p> <p>Kamila Kwapińska, 'Transcendental geology: the common origin of thought and matter'</p> <p>Alexander Riedel, 'Schelling's <i>Naturphilosophie</i> Amidst Speculative Realist and Contemporary Ecological Thought'</p>	<u>A</u>
1800-1930	<p>KEYNOTE: Jason M. Wirth</p> <p>'A Psychoanalysis of Nature's Shadow during the Anthropocene: Schelling after Merleau-Ponty'</p>	<u>C</u>

Thursday July 11th (All times are British Summer Time: GMT+1)

Time	Content	Zoom link
0900-10.30	<p>Complicating nature: paradox, horror and holism</p> <p>David Baumeister, ‘Kant and the Paradox of Sustainability’</p> <p>Bogdana Stamenković Jajčević, ‘Alexander von Humboldt’s Methodological Holism and Gaia Theory’</p> <p>Enrico Piergiacomi, ‘Marvels and Horrors of the Environment. A Tension in Fracastoro’s Medical Poetry?’</p>	<u>B</u>
1100-1300	<p>Attitudes and affects: from apathy to wonder</p> <p>Jordan Adshead, ‘Rethinking Apathy’</p> <p>Hanock ben Pazi, ‘Back to the Notion of Wonder: Heschel's Philosophy as a Response to Sustainability’</p> <p>Tom Greaves, ‘What are Ephemeral Events?’</p> <p>Tansy Watts, ‘Froebelian Pedagogy as Everyday Activism in Support of a Sustainability Agenda’</p>	<u>C</u>
1400-1530	<p>Hegel, Arnim and Jonas on Nature</p> <p>Giulia Battistoni, ‘The variety of life forms as constituents of a single living organic system: Insights into biodiversity from Hegel and Jonas’</p> <p>Miriam Feldman-Kaye, ‘Mount Sinai and the Wasteland of Creation’: The Ecological Phenomenology of Hans Jonas’</p> <p>Çiçek Yavuz, ‘Bettina von Arnim as a Romantic Philosopher of Nature’</p>	<u>A</u>
1600-1730	<p>KEYNOTE: Patricia Viera</p> <p>‘Zoophytographic Thinking with the Amazon’</p>	<u>B</u>
1800-1930	<p>POETRY READING: Lyric Ecologies: Thresholds to the More-Than-Human (followed by interview and discussion)</p> <p>Eleanor Rees and Andrew Mears</p>	<u>A</u>

Zoom Link A

Chair: Steven Shakespeare

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/87851287338?pwd=svu4oX9bqur9OFdEbxoblv1xSiLzOQ.1>

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Zoom Link B

Chair: Duane Williams

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Zoom Link C

Chair: Robert Booth

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Keynote Abstracts

Simon P. James (Durham): 'Is Anything Natural?'

Writers such as Bruno Latour and Steven Vogel argue that we should give up thinking in terms of what is natural and what is not. Yet their arguments fail. To regard an entity as natural in the relevant sense is to acknowledge its independence from human activities. And acknowledging this can be part of what it means to accord the entity the respect it deserves.

Simon P. James is a Professor of Philosophy at Durham University in the UK. He has written a number of articles on environmental philosophy as well as several books, including *Zen Buddhism and Environmental Ethics*, *The Presence of Nature: A Study in Phenomenology and Environmental Philosophy*, *Environmental Philosophy: An Introduction* and *How Nature Matters: Culture, Identity and Environmental Value*. He is currently writing a book about death and extinction for Oxford University Press.

Jason M. Wirth (Seattle): 'A Psychoanalysis of Nature's Shadow during the Anthropocene: Schelling after Merleau-Ponty'

My talk discusses Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* and the *Freedom Essay* in two interrelated contexts: Merleau-Ponty's turn to Schelling as part of his broader late concern with a "psychoanalysis of nature" and the importance of these issues for the unfolding ecological emergency.

Dr. Jason M. Wirth is Professor and Chair of Philosophy at Seattle University. His recent books include *Nietzsche and Other Buddhas: Philosophy after Comparative Philosophy* (Indiana 2019), *Mountains, Rivers, and the Great Earth: Reading Gary Snyder and Dōgen in an Age of Ecological Crisis* (SUNY 2017), a monograph on Milan Kundera (*Commiserating with Devastated Things*, Fordham 2016), *Schelling's Practice of the Wild* (SUNY 2015), and a translation and critical edition (with Alexander Bilda and David Farrell Krell) of Schelling's *On the Deities of Samothrace* (Indiana 2024).

Patricia Vieira (Coimbra): ‘Zoophytographic Thinking with the Amazon’

In my talk, I reflect upon Amazonian thought and its connection to the more than human world, based on recent writings by Amazonian Indigenous authors, as well as on anthropological and philosophical studies. I then tease out the consequences of Amazonian thought for our understanding of artistic creation together with more than human beings.

Patricia Vieira is Research Professor at the Center for Social Studies (CES) of the University of Coimbra in Portugal. Her fields of expertise are Latin American and Iberian Literature and Cinema, Utopian Studies and the Environmental Humanities. She heads the European Research Council Consolidator project “ECO – Animals and Plants in Cultural Productions about the Amazon River Basin” and co-coordinates the Gerda Henkel Foundation funded project “Resilient Forest Cities: Utopia and Development in the Modern Amazon.” For more information: www.patriciavieira.net

Eleanor Rees and Andrew Mears (LHU): Poetry Reading and Discussion 'Lyric Ecologies: Thresholds to the More-Than-Human'

Poets, Eleanor Rees and Andrew Hykel Mears, will read selections of new work which they understand, to differing degrees, to be written with the more-than-human. Poetry is presented here as a threshold space between concept and embodiment, an abstract realm existing in the matter of imagination or an ambient poetics in which sound underscores the emergence of clarity. The lyric subject is a site for the mediation between nature and culture. Both poets draw on posthuman, new material concepts to think their poetics. Following the reading, Steven Shakespeare will lead a Q&A to explore the philosophical claims circulating in the poetry and to consider further the role of poetry in nature thinking.

An internationally recognised poet, Eleanor Rees was born in Birkenhead. She has published five collections of poetry, *Tam Lin of the Winter Park* (Guillemot Press, 2022), *The Well at Winter Solstice* (Salt, 2019), *Blood Child* (Pavilion, 2015), *Eliza and the Bear* (Salt, 2009), and *Andraste's Hair* (Salt, 2007), which was shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best First Collection. Selections of Eleanor's poems have been translated into French, Spanish, German, Lithuanian, Slovak and Romanian. (Versopolis, 2016, 2019, 2024). She is the recipient of an Eric Gregory Award, an Irish Glen Dimplex New Writers' Award and a Northern Writers' Award and is a senior lecturer in creative writing at Liverpool Hope University in the School of Humanities.

Andrew Mear's poetry has been published by *PN Review*, *Propel Magazine*, *Tears in the Fence*, *The Oxonian Review*, *Pariah Press*, *Anthropocene Poetry*, and elsewhere. He is a Practice as Research PGR student at Liverpool Hope University. Researching poetry's potential as a climate action tool, he is developing principles of Ambient Eco-Poetics to articulate the reciprocal, more-than-human world to which we belong. His research interests include uncertainty as a field of meaning, anti-capitalism, non-standard conceptions of time, anarchism, posthumanism, and sensuous experience as ways of knowing. He is the managing editor of [*Ambient Receiver*](#), a journal of creative ecologies focussed on creative practice as a means to attune to our ecology

Abstracts

In alphabetical order, sorted by first author's last name

Jordan Adshead (Durham): ‘Rethinking Apathy’

Despite living through an extraordinary state of ecological crisis we nevertheless remain able, for the most part at least, to abide strangely unperturbed as though things were perfectly ordinary. Following Kari Norgaard, I refer to this condition as “apathy” and intend this in a very general sense close to the original Greek *apatheia* meaning, literally, “without pathos”. I do not, then, necessarily assume any kind of *moral* failure ordinarily implied in the vernacular sense of this term, wishing only to highlight this curious condition of estrangement.

Beginning from the simple premise that apathy is a modification of human behaviour, I argue that we can clarify the nature and possibility of apathy by investigating the very character of human existence itself. If, as phenomenological research demonstrates, human existence is shaped in advance through engaged participation in its surrounding world, and if apathy is a modification of human behaviour, then we should expect to find apathy itself somehow operative within this field of living experience.

This elementary phenomenological insight will provide us with a basic framework and orientation for rethinking apathy. We will thus forego any prejudice which posits apathy from the start as a kind of “*inner* state” variously conceived as mistaken beliefs, cognitive bias, lack of interest, etc. I argue that, in alignment with the situated structure of human existence, we must approach apathy as a “modification of my relations with others and with the world”, a certain “style of conduct” (Merleau-Ponty 1965, 52). Apathy thus announces itself to us as a particular way of being *in the world*. We are thus free to ask *how*, exactly, our relations with the world and others are modified when we assume an apathetic bearing. How are we *involved* with our surroundings when apathy has us in its clutches? Ultimately, the aim of my research is to clarify the nature and existential possibility of apathy and to probe how apathy is articulated in and through the urban-virtual milieu of contemporary post-industrial society.

Callum Barrell and Sara Raimondi (Northeastern University London): ‘Nature as a Temporal Problem in Nineteenth-Century Thought’

This paper explores nineteenth-century philosophies of nature from the vantage point of contemporary Anthropocenic, posthumanist, and post-anthropocentric theory (see, for example, the work of Bruno Latour and Rosi Braidotti). Despite their differences, each construes nature as a temporal-historical problem whose origins can be traced to a broadly conceived Enlightenment humanism and the cherished dualisms it has allegedly given rise to: nature and society, science and art, matter and spirit, mind and body, human and nonhuman. As Helge Jordheim argues, ‘[a] long as human history is measured by a clock or by the standard of civilization and progress, nature will continue to be shut out, as by necessity’. German Idealism is often caught in the crosshairs of such critiques as a preeminent form of humanism’s multiple anthropocentric trajectories. Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, for example, have welcomed the ‘metaphysical degradation of history’ that attends the rejection, on critical posthumanist and post-anthropocentric grounds, of Hegel’s ‘saga of Spirit’. Hegel’s infamous (although frequently misunderstood) claim that ‘[w]e do not, therefore, see in Nature the coming-to-be of the universal; that is, the universal side of Nature has no history’ is frequently taken as a point of departure for Anthropocenic, critical posthumanist, and post-anthropocentric theory, which seeks to inscribe nature within plural and simultaneous temporalities that neither separate nor privilege the human. Consequently, Hegel’s philosophy of history—and, arguably, philosophy of history tout court—is seen as an irredeemable by-product of a now untenable humanism. The paper then considers alternative readings of Hegel, the Idealist tradition, and nineteenth-century humanism that have emerged in response to these now established critiques. Nicholas Mowad, for example, has read into Hegel’s work an anticipation of ‘bioregionalism’, while Alexander Máthas and others have re-

evaluated the legacy of German Idealism from a posthuman and post-anthropocentric perspective. The paper concludes by returning to its original question: what do these scholarly debates tell us about the relationship between philosophies of nature past and present?

Giulia Battistoni (Boston/Verona): ‘The variety of life forms as constituents of a single living organic system: Insights into biodiversity from Hegel and Jonas’

My proposed paper presents and discusses for the first time some relevant passages from Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature, deriving from them some insights that can be fruitfully related, in contemporary terms, to the topic of biodiversity. On this basis, it then addresses the normative status of biodiversity and life and, in doing so, places Hegel’s thought in dialogue with Hans Jonas’ 1966 “The Phenomenon of Life” and 1979 “The Imperative of Responsibility”, in the belief (which will be demonstrated) that Jonas’ theory of the living organism has a strong idealist and romantic core. The ultimate goal is to present a biocentric foundation for an anthropocentric environmental ethics, and specifically for a theory of biodiversity, by developing a position that recognizes on the one hand the continuity between human beings and nature (conceiving the latter as a system, a large living organism that derives its vitality from all its particularizations, distinctions and varieties) and on the other hand the privileged role of the human being as the most perfect organism, which bears upon herself the responsibility for the world in which she lives. This is how an ethics of responsibility elaborated on the basis of Jonas’ theory of the organism, which carries traces of the Schellingian and Hegelian philosophy of nature, can be fruitful in contemporary debates on environmental ethics.

David Baumeister (Stuttgart): ‘Kant and the Paradox of Sustainability’

This presentation offers some reflections at the intersection of the philosophy of Immanuel Kant and the present-day global environmental crisis. It is proposed that Kant’s thought has unexplored relevance for this crisis neither insofar as it offers potential solutions for the crisis (and so ought to be defended), nor insofar as it is to blame, on grounds of the influence it has had, for the emergence of the crisis (and so ought to be critiqued). Rather, it is proposed that Kant’s greatest relevance for our thinking of the global environmental crisis lies in the way his thought models the paradoxical structure of prevailing social and political responses to the crisis in late capitalist Western societies, specifically those made in the name of “sustainability.”

It is argued that, like us today, Kant embraces a paradoxical vision of human beings as *both* natural, animal, physical, phenomenal beings *and* extra-natural, rational, intelligible, noumenal beings. This double vision is evidenced across multiple critical-period texts, but is also differentiated from the more “naturalistic” or “holistic” vision of the human/nature relationship that Kant articulates in certain pre-critical works.

This “both/and” structure is labeled the “Kantian Paradox,” echoing several previous, albeit non-environmental, framings of a certain “paradox” inherent to Kant’s thought. It is suggested that this is not just Kant’s paradox, but our own, as evidenced in the paradoxical nature of the three prevailing frameworks of sustainability in use today: the three pillars model, the Brundtland definition, and the menu of UN Sustainable Development Goals. It is suggested that, by studying Kant and, more specifically, the developmental arc of his view of the relationship of human beings to nature, we can learn something about ourselves and about the ways that we tend to think about this relationship today, especially within the “sustainability” and “environmental” movements.

Hanoch Ben Pazi (Bar Ilan): 'Back to the Notion of Wonder: Heschel's Philosophy as a Response to Sustainability'

"Among the many things that religious tradition holds in store for us is the *Legacy of wonder*." (Heschel, *God in search of Man*, 43)

Abraham Joshua Heschel directly confronts Max Weber's claim in his famous article "Science as a Vocation" (*Wissenschaft als Beruf*), in addressing the perceived challenges of modernity and secularism. Weber claims that the purpose of science is disenchantment (*Entzauberung*) - the removal of magic from the world. According to Weber, modernity assists humanity in retreating from magic and myth through processes of rationalisation.

Heschel seeks to emphasise the contribution of religion to restoring wonder and the lack of knowledge - to reality. Further, in his view, the philosophy of Judaism is the way in which humans respond to challenges arising from wonder and standing in front of the mystery of the universe, existence, and nature.

One of the greatest human difficulties facing the challenge of sustainability is humanity's desire to control nature, using it as a resource for human needs. However, in the second half of the 20th century, we realised the significant damage that humans cause in their actions and utilization of resources. As human beings, we must acknowledge the obligation to stand modestly in front of nature and accept responsibility for our environmental issues. "Being Human" takes on a new meaning today, and Heschel offers one of the main contributions of religion to the discourse on the environment: by restoring wonder to our consciousness, granting honor to our environment, and providing a response to our ignorance about the destructive impact of human existence.

"Being human," according to Heschel, means being humble and wondering in the face of the challenges of sustainability.

Donald Borrett (Toronto): 'The experiential reality of the infinite: Is it scientifically tenable?'

To convince the scientific naturalist of the necessity to romanticize nature, the approach must be expressed in an idiom that they accept, using the criteria with which they judge the validity of propositions. The challenge is to preserve freedom, beauty, goodness and the ineffable as experienced, yet maintain the rigor and objectivity of the sciences that have been implicated in their disenchantment. Developments in dynamical systems theory point to an approach within which universal properties applicable to all systems independent of content can be identified. It follows that this approach can be used to develop a mathematical model isomorphic to the phenomenal field in which these elements retain their experiential qualities. Because the model has explanatory and predictive capabilities and can yield reproducible quantitative consequences, it may foster acceptance by the scientific naturalist of a complementary and romantic view of our relationship with nature.

All experience has an invariant form characterized by presence in absence in which the present experience is meaningful because of what is absent. This invariant can be modelled in a temporal ontology in which the visible flux of presence generates time horizons of absence that feedback onto presence to generate the next state. Such a system is autonomous, anonymous and ambivalent. It can be shown that any system of this form must have only two states isomorphic to two phenomenological experiences: the unity in difference of pre-reflective experience in which the horizons of absence are experienced as infinite and the dichotomous one of reflective experience in which such is not the case. Further consequences of the experiential reality of the infinite in the model will show how a complementary, romantic view of our relationship to nature can be developed with the rigor and objectivity of the natural sciences.

Levi van den Bogaard, Yogi Hale Hendlin (Erasmus): ‘Reclaiming Romanticism: Eco-poetic Responses to the Metacrisis’

In a time of ecological catastrophe, rapidly declining planetary health, and growing social disintegration, modern western culture still relies heavily on the Romantic tropes of individualistic authenticity, escapist fantasy, and esoteric delusion. Shifting scientific paradigms, however, appear to vindicate certain axioms formulated by Romantic figures in resistance to the growing industrialization and urbanization of their lifeworld. The 5EA turn in cognitive science affirms the embodied and affective dimensions of cognition (Varela, Thompson & Rosch 2017, Thompson 2010, Varela & Maturana 1992). The Extended Evolutionary Synthesis within evolutionary biology confirms the need for a more integrative and holistic framework (Laland & Uller 2019, Noble 2017, Pigliucci & Müller 2010). And the growing field of biosemiotics resituates a poetics of being at the heart of the meaning-making processes of sign activity among living beings. As multiple biosemioticians have argued (Weber 2019, Wheeler 2006; 2016, Hoffmeyer 2009), the field revives core aspects of romanticist thought, which takes a creative, animate, and more-than-human world to speak to us in poetic yet empirical ways impossible to capture through a rationalist and reductive scientific approach.

Our paper proposes a reclamation of Romanticism from individualistic interpretations by exploring the movement's rootedness in specific geographical and temporal contexts, as well as its potential as a framework for understanding collective (i.e. holobiont) flourishing amidst the ecological metacrisis. Central to this reclamation is the notion of brilliance as an emergent quality of a group, where different threads develop through composite interactions among individuals within a particular terroir. By reframing the original Goethe, Humboldt, and Schelling project through this lens, we move away from notions of separation—whether from others, place and time, or into esotericism—and towards a more integrated understanding of human-environment reciprocity. In times of global environmental change, when our collective flourishing becomes fundamental to any notion of “our” “own” “individual” flourishing, revisiting these themes in a scientifically grounded yet non-reductive manner seems urgent.

Fenia Chatzinikolaou (National Kapodistrian University of Athens): ‘Mining the depths of the self: Novalis' *Ordo Inversus* explored through Nature's reflection’

According to Novalis, reflection consists in a single act, in which the object is formed simultaneously through opposition to the intuiting I, and through its concept. Reflection, thus, occurs as a series of oscillating, mirroring oppositions between the I and the object. This process, alongside feeling and intuition, constitute representation. Although he follows Kant in stating that the world takes form inside the I's mind, he steps a bit further by recognizing that a constitutive separation takes place during this process. He argues that when the I reflects, it is forced to break down the represented unity it had created, namely in “matter and feeling, form and reflection”. In other words, the representation of identity, even though completely necessary, is a mere, inverted illusion: this is what Novalis names the *ordo inversus* of the I, where “the image is always the inversion of being”. Fortunately enough, there is a solution to this fallacy, which lays in reflection's duplication. In Manfred Frank's reading, when reflection reflects on itself it inverts the inverted, reestablishing the order. In my presentation I will argue for a second solution for the *ordo inversus* problem, which comes in reflecting upon Nature. Taking into consideration Novalis' claims that Nature and the I are “one and the same being – only reversed”, and that both of them are, respectively, immediately or mediately conditioned by God, we understand that they share a

symmetric correspondence. Thus, in reflecting upon Nature, the I reflects upon its reversed self. This way it mirrors the inverted and it reestablishes the order without the need of a reflective duplication. The example I choose to showcase is the craftsmanship of mineral mining which stands, in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, Novalis' unfinished novel, as an allegory for diving into the depths of the I.

Jonathan Coope (De Montford): 'Neo-Romanticism within eco-activism – and its critics'

The 1960-70s saw new movements of environmental and countercultural activism emerge in the West, challenging aspects of technological modernity. Some of these movements' supporters, such as historian Theodore Roszak, espoused what Leo Marx termed a 'neo-Romantic' critique of science, technology and modernity. Some later eco-activist scholars developed these 'neo-Romantic' arguments further.

This paper re-examines the neo-Romantic critique, and its development among subsequent eco-activist scholars e.g. Charlene Spretnak's ecofeminism; Chris Smaje's agrarian localism. But I also re-consider some of the key intellectual critiques made *against* neo-Romanticism and eco-Romanticism.

The fiercest intellectual resistance to neo-Romantic activism arose from two sources: first were critics who still cleaved largely to techno-scientific notions of reason and rationality; second were critics (e.g. Dana Phillips, Slavoj Žižek) who drew from Continental philosophy. Comparing these two quite different modes of critique today reveals hitherto unforeseen continuities between them.

Recent 'eco-modernism' (e.g. Ted Nordhaus, George Monbiot) is the latest movement to dismiss eco-Romanticism as 'outdated' and to continue defending modernity and technological progress against their Romantic detractors. Nevertheless, as ecocrisis deepens and as the academy globalizes, neo-Romanticism may discover new allies – not least among Indigenous decolonization and post-development movements, which seek to resist western 'development' and to robustly defend the Earth.

George Crompton (LHU): 'Wilding the Blean: How adjacent methods of conservation reveal agentic sub-currents'

West Blean and Thornden Woods is a 490-hectare rewilding site in Kent, managed by Kent Wildlife Trust. A former commercial timber site, the Blean has been the focus of a significant trophic rewilding endeavour, most notably with the introduction of European Bison in 2022. This effort was undertaken with the support of Wildwood Trust, a conservation charity which runs native zoos and wildlife breeding programs in Kent and Devon. One such zoo can be found adjacent to the Wilder Blean rewilding site.

These two sites were visited and read as living texts with an ecocritical approach, using the concept of 'sympoiesis', or 'making-with'. This conceptual analysis was established from Beth Dempster's 2000 paper 'Sympoietic and Autopoietic Systems: A New Distinction for Self-Organizing Systems', and Donna Haraway's 2016 book *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Combining these ideas with the Goethean approach of 'participatory observation' enhances the concept of agency within the phenomenology of nature to allow for a multi-thinking, interrelational Nature.

The sites visited presented conflicting demonstrations of agentic interplay despite being similarly aligned in ethos. The Wildwood Trust keeps the agency of its inhabitants confined in favour of its paying human visitors. Wilder Blean, meanwhile, has a more balanced agentic scale, tipped in favour of the wild ponies, pigs, and bison.

Both can be described as conservation charities aiming to support native British wildlife, yet they exhibit radically different scenarios of wildness. This contradiction unveils the sub-currents through which humans and the more-than-human are constantly engaged in a push-pull of agentic relations. This offers a clarifying insight for wildlife conservation, and how the modern shift towards rewilding is enhancing the agency of non-human nature.

Alexandros Daskalakis (Panteion) : ‘Nature’s Mythology: On Schelling’s reading of Dante’

The philosophy of nature, or *Naturphilosophie*, has been critical of mechanistic and deterministic science since its inception in the late 18th century. However, its main objective was to draw attention to how dynamic and comprehensive the natural world is. In this way, the philosophy of nature makes an effort to reconsider how humans relate to the natural world. The idea of Friedrich Schelling, and particularly his *Naturphilosophie*, is essential to comprehending this kind of relationship. By seeking to go beyond Kantianism and develop a new philosophical framework that could support the observation of nature, Schelling's methodological and ontological insights would guide the philosophy of nature into the 19th century. However, the development of a new mythology of nature forms the foundation of Schellingian endeavors to carry out the concept of a new *Naturphilosophie*. It appears that the philosophy of nature is a symbolic practice as a result. This paper aims to clarify the relationship between artistic and scientific practice within the Schellingian framework. Our intention is to demonstrate how an unparalleled reading of Dante's *Commedia* passes through this interaction. In his short essay *Ueber Dante in philosophischer Beziehung*, Schelling argues that Dante and the new mythology may be reconciled with the principles of *Naturphilosophie*. As a result, we will see that Schelling was briefly in a position to contribute jointly with poetry to the Romantic objective of bringing art and science together.

Andréa Delestrade (LSE): ‘The Universal Bodies of Nature: Rethinking Chakrabarty’s Anthropocene Philosophy of History with Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy of Nature’

Is there a possibility to think the ecological crisis through the logic of History, or is the Modern concept of ‘History’ rather driven to its end? I examine Chakrabarty’s and Merleau-Ponty’s strategies to end ‘History’ in their reflections on Nature, and I argue that if Chakrabarty’s diagnosis of the necessity to end ‘History’ to give space to ecological thinking is right, Merleau-Ponty’s strategy proves more effective, as it enables us to think the philosophical end of ‘History’ *while* retaining the necessity of a political ecology attentive to differentiation and domination. I first develop Chakrabarty’s insights on the exhaustion of ‘History’ as a concept, both in its Eurocentric and anti-Eurocentric variations, and the need to replace it with a *negative universal History* which substitutes a positive teleology (being-toward-freedom) for a negative teleology (being-toward-catastrophe), and de-centers human subjectivity and freedom in a phenomenologically empty ‘species universalism’. I then argue that *evacuating the body*, the possibility of phenomenological apprehension and hence of thinking particularity, while retaining a universalising teleological dynamic, leads Chakrabarty to a *Eurocentric status quo*, that is, an abstract universalism that flattens out the thought of difference. I finally turn to Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of Nature, and argue that it offers us a productive articulation of the philosophical experience of Nature, including in its contemporary destruction, and the political differentiation and domination at stake in this ecological crisis. I provide a phenomenological apprehension of the climate crisis, albeit a *non-Eurocentric* one, which would not be predicated on European or Anthropocene-like universalism, by insisting on two features of his philosophy of Nature: first, the chiasmic intertwining of Nature

and History (which recasts universality as foundational); second, the necessity of institution and expression in this intertwining, which gives space to think the political condition of the climate crisis, in its sedimentation, domination, and creativity.

Linde De Vroey (Antwerp): ‘The Romantic Roots of Rewilding’

Originating in North American wilderness conservation, rewilding has rapidly conquered Europe and the UK as a more accessible vision for nature restoration and human life. Despite its popularity, rewilding is also highly criticised as just the next revival of a Romantic longing for wilderness and re-enchantment, fuelled by nostalgia and escapism, while prioritising subjective sentiments over real ecological benefits. Though rewilding is undoubtedly indebted to Romantic thought, the origins and implications of this legacy are rarely studied beyond the (North American) “wilderness idea”.

However, rewilding is also inspired by other Romantic themes, such as re-enchantment, nostalgia and modernity critique, which may deliver valuable contributions to rewilding today. This paper deals with the double-edged Romantic legacy of rewilding, as equally part of its appeal and a main cause for critique. Taking a genealogical approach, I question the foundations of these critiques on rewilding, and re-situate rewilding in a Romantic and modern philosophical tradition in dialogue with such philosophers as Rousseau, Schiller, Nietzsche, and Weber. I show how rewilding can indeed be criticised as an affirmation of a Romantically inspired “subtraction story” of disenchantment and discomfort with modernity; but also how its Romantic roots can contribute to rewilding’s engaged critical practice by questioning the mechanistic worldview, the domination and exploitation of nature, and the modern Enlightened ideal of progress. At the other hand, contemporary rewilding arguably inherited elements of Enlightenment thinking through its adoption of scientific methods and economic paradigms, which may produce tension with Romantically inspired ideals. By studying these legacies, this paper aims to disclose some of these tensions, provide a more nuanced disposition of contemporary rewilding in relation to its Romantic roots, and shed a light on the dynamics that constitute rewilding’s critical core.

Colby Dickinson (Loyola University Chicago): ‘Emerson’s Fourfold Uses of Nature: Philosophical Interventions with Environmental Implications’

The reductive binaries amassed by humankind’s global cosmologies in order to legitimate various linguistic, social, religious and political constructs are routinely called into question by desires both religious and philosophical to offer more robust representations for nature (e.g. as argued in Carol Kaesuk Yoon’s *Naming Nature*). Often a fourfold scheme is presented in response as the embryo of philosophical reasoning itself, an attempt to eschew binary logics and their hegemonic hold upon humanity, including the logics of exclusion they perpetuate, in order to complexify nature by seeing beyond the labels and appearances which rely upon reductive, dualistic generalizations.

Such fourfold logics are as prevalent in the ancient four senses of scripture as they today are in the later Heidegger’s mystical fourfold underlying everything that is—earth, sky, mortals, divinities—which brought more complexity to his worldview than his earlier dualistic writings had indicated (e.g. the Volk opposed to ‘the They’), Alain Badiou’s fourfold scheme of truth (i.e. science, art, politics and love), Jean-Luc Marion’s fourfold scheme of idol, event, flesh and icon, and William Desmond’s fourfold categorization of idiotics, aesthetics, erotics and agapeics.

This paper will discuss Ralph Waldo Emerson’s four uses of nature (i.e. commodity, beauty, language, discipline) in order to illuminate how multiple aforementioned later philosophical fourfolds, as critiques of dualistic thought, are also intent on complexifying nature beyond human reductive tendencies—what is ultimately the essence of Romanticism that remains with us still. As

such, Emerson's elaboration of a fourfold project provides us with an unacknowledged roadmap for re-conceiving nature that many contemporary continental philosophers have followed.

Christopher J. Dunn (Colorado): 'The Poetics of Knowing – The Goethean Ideal and Other Alternatives to Technological Science'

What relevance does Romanticism continue to have for understanding and managing nature? This paper will focus on the complex relationships between place, embodiment, knowledge, and ethics, particularly the tension between the detached stance of objective science and the intimate, transformative encounters with place and landscape so integral to some other forms of science and varieties of knowing, such as indigenous knowledge or those following in the Romantic tradition and founded on narrative or lyric.

This paper will present alternatives to modern science, and thus modern thought, by taking a historical look at the development of forms of poetic inquiry, particularly those that emerged as deliberate responses to the emergence of modern science, by considering the work and lives of hybrid-scientists like Alexander von Humboldt, H.D. Thoreau, and Goethe on the way toward an ethic of encounter and scientific practice—a wild ethic. Each responded to an emerging modern science by deliberately refining and integrating experience into their methods.

Prior to the emergence of modern science, the moral, aesthetic, and scientific spheres were more united. A historical consideration of the context of this development is crucial for understanding renewed possibilities for a reunited approach to comprehending and managing nature. This historical consideration will begin with Henry David Thoreau in order to investigate the moral and historical dimensions of scientific practices as an important corrective to scientific and technological mediation.

Miriam Feldmann-Kaye (Bar Ilan University): "Mount Sinai and the Wasteland of Creation": The Ecological Phenomenology of Hans Jonas'

This paper will bring phenomenology and environmental philosophy into conversation through a study of Hans Jonas' interpretation of Edmund Husserl. Hans Jonas, a creative Jewish philosopher of ecology and environmental thought, was among several figures who studied under the phenomenologists Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger at the universities in Marburg and Freiburg. Several philosophers charted a similar course, notably Emmanuel Levinas and Edith Stein. Both these thinkers went on to develop themes of responsibility and empathy respectively, offering their own interpretations and critiques of phenomenology. This paper will illustrate how Hans Jonas, drawing on Jewish religious theological ideas, interpreted this phenomenological and hermeneutical thinking towards original understandings of the environment and biological world. Jonas, in his work, *"The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age"*, explores the ideas of nature and religion, and emphasises the importance of human responsibility for preservation of the Earth for future generations. The paper will suggest that this study continues to influence later continental philosophy: Jonas' and Levinas' respective ideas of responsibility have, in their own ways, paved a path for contemporary philosophers to engage in animal ethics, notably Jacques Derrida's 'Animality' and Hélène Cixous' discussion of pets vis-à-vis her theodicy.

Natan Feltrin (UNT): 'Beyond the Oikos: Rewilding as Resistance to Biopolitical Domestication'

This paper challenges the traditional conceptualization of nature as an 'oikos'—a structured, managed environment analogous to a household—arguing that such a perspective not only simplifies the complexities of natural systems but also perpetuates a biopolitical logic that subjects both human and other-than-human entities to stringent control. It advocates for redefining rewilding not merely as ecological restoration but as a radical, anti-domestic philosophy aimed at countering the *oikos* paradigm. This paradigm, predominantly driven by economic and managerial priorities, often neglects ecological richness and suppresses natural creativity. Within this framework, ecological concerns are disproportionately influenced by economic interests, leading to an ecology of scarcity where nature is managed or developed without acknowledging its inherent, autonomous messiness.

The paper proposes that rewilding should celebrate wildness as a form of life that opposes the organizational and controlling impulses of the *oikos*, promoting autonomy and spontaneity against anthropocentric norms. This approach highlights the intrinsic value of spontaneous interactions and the complex, chaotic processes that characterize natural systems, challenging the notion that nature requires meticulous categorization and management.

By framing 'wildness' not only as an ecological state but also as a philosophical and political stance against biopolitical control, the paper advocates for an ethical, integrated engagement with the multispecies world. It calls for a conservation approach that recognizes wildness as a dynamic force capable of fostering vibrant and equitable relationships, positioning rewilding as a fundamental challenge to the biopolitical organization of life. This shift towards more-than-human stewardship seeks to negate the anthropocentric ecologies of the Anthropocene, paving the way for a framework that respects and enhances the agency across species boundaries.

Lorenz Moises J. Festin (De La Salle): 'Between *Physis* and *Poiesis*: Tracing Back the Rootedness of Technology in the Threshold of Nature'

The significance of *physis*, the Greek term for nature, can be elaborated in relation to its cognate verb, *phuomai*, which signifies budding forth or being borne. This is also true with the Latin *natura* as the infinitive *nasci* means to be born, the participle of which is *natus* (born). *Physis* or *natura* represents a vital principle which instigates the process of bringing forth something. Heidegger regards such a process as a case of disclosure which he considers the very essence of truth as suggested by the Greek *aletheia*. This prompts him not only to relate *physis* with *poiesis*, the Greek for productive activity, but also to argue that *techne* and technology, insofar as they indicate *poiesis*, are likewise a case of disclosure and thus of instantiating truth. According to Heidegger, what is worrisome about modern technology is not so much the apparent danger it poses as the oblivion of its original essence, which has to do with bringing forth something from its concealment. The problem is that, for purposes of systematization, we have reduced such essence to the intensive exploitation of nature for more efficient production of goods, stockpiling these as reserves for later use. Still, that is not the only way in which the essence of technology finds realization. For fine art or artistic creation too is as much a case of *techne* as the more familiar technological production. In this paper, I argue that in view of Heidegger's take on its essence, technology can very well be brought back to its fundamental rootedness in the threshold of nature just as both *physis* and *poiesis* converge in their objective of bringing into disclosure what used to be concealed.

Tom Greaves (UEA): ‘What are Ephemeral Events?’

One key claim of idealist and romantic *nature-philosophy* is that aesthetic experience and artistic practice can teach us things about nature that we cannot learn from natural science. In this presentation I will follow up on this claim in the contemporary idiom of eco-phenomenology by introducing and exploring the idea of *ephemeral events* as a significant aesthetic dimension of our experience of nature. I will present two key features of ephemeral events: i) that they disturb and reconfigure the life-world context in which they take place, whilst enduring only as long as the phenomena whose appearance they make possible; ii) that those phenomena are already disappearing as they make their appearance. I will go on to address the apparently paradoxical nature of events that do not change anything in a lasting way, and contrast ephemeral events to Events in a major key, ‘epical events’, that have been the focus of much continental philosophy. On the basis of that distinction, I will ask whether we do indeed need to keep some sense of the evental to comprehend this dimension of our experience, or whether we should think uneventfully or unexceptionally about nature, as the Daoist inspired aesthetics of François Jullien seems to suggest.

Jean-Yves Heurtebise (FJU/CEFC): ‘Transcultural Ecological Thinking: Overcoming Eurocentric Romanticism & Green Exoticism’

Regarding the contributions of Romanticism to contemporary Ecological Thinking, there are two opposite considerations. On the first hand, scholars working in the field of humanities will stress the contribution to Ecological Thinking of Pre-Romantic and Romantic poets, novelists and thinkers from Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Bernardin de Saint Pierre to Wordsworth and Coleridge to Schiller and Novalis to Emerson and Thoreau. All the way towards Aldo Leopold’s *Land Ethics* and Rachel Carlson’s *Silent Spring*. In this regard, Romantic Ecological Thinking will be a “transcendentalist” and “counter-enlightenment” endeavor. On the other hand, scholars working in the field of social sciences, anthropologists and sociologists, will stress that our current environmental predicaments originated in a Western modern framework of thinking which, in the age of the Scientific Revolution and/or the Industrial Revolution, comes to separate nature from society, environment from culture. In this regard, our ecological salvation will come from Asia and Chinese Ecological Civilization or, even more radically, from Aboriginal Environmental Knowledge and pre-sedentary humanity forms of life and belief. Any attempt to link contemporary Ecology with European Romanticism will be criticized as “Eurocentric” and “colonial”. While humanities scholars will reveal and disclose the conceptual contribution of “*naturalphilosophy*”, social sciences scholars would claim that the concept of “*nature*” is in itself the problem. We aim at overcoming both claims by demonstrating that the opposite claimants share more common assumptions than they will assume. We will contend that though the post-colonial reading of European Ecological Romanticism can act as a good *pharmakon* to cure naïve Eurocentrism, it’s also generating its own poison in the form of Green Orientalism and Green Exoticism. Both modern Romanticism and post-modern Eco-criticism share counter-enlightenment assumptions that could become impediments in the face of our looming human-ecology collapse.

Bogdana Stamenković Jajčević (Belgrade): ‘Alexander von Humboldt’s Methodological Holism and Gaia Theory’

Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859) represents one of the most significant figures of the 19th century. He was a famous explorer and investigator, Goethe’s close friend, and Darwin’s idol. His famous voyages were marked by the discovery of various natural phenomena, such as isothermes

and the so-called Humboldt current in the Pacific Ocean. Many overseas species bear his name (e.g., *Lillium humboldtii*, *Hylocharis humboldtii*, *Spheniscus humboldtii*, etc.). Alongside his brother Wilhelm, Alexander founded the famous Humboldt University in Berlin. Finally, his observations about human harmful impacts on ecosystems and nature made him an inspirational figure in contemporary ecology.

This presentation aims to explore Humboldt's naturalistic theory and examine whether his holistic understanding of nature has been revived in Lovelock's Gaia theory. I start with a brief examination of Humboldt's *methodological holism* and identify several fundamental hypotheses of his theory. As I explain, Humboldt believes that all natural phenomena are mutually connected into a holistic network representing the Whole, i.e., nature. Next, I turn to the analysis of the *Gaia* concept and show that Lovelock restores Humboldt's fundamental idea that nature represents a holistic system of interconnected phenomena. I finish off with some remarks about Humboldt's thoughts on the evolution of species and conclude that Lovelock revives Humboldt's idea of the *common evolution* of organisms and their environment. Thus, there are important similarities between Humboldt's methodological holism and Lovelock's Gaia theory:

- (1) Both theories continue the philosophical-scientific tradition of understanding nature as a unique holistic system.
- (2) Both scholars acknowledge and emphasise the ability of living organisms to modify their environment in order to survive.
- (3) Finally, Humboldt's undefined idea about the common evolution of organisms and their environment is being formulated and further developed in Lovelock's theory.

Kamila Kwapińska (Kent): 'Transcendental geology: the common origin of thought and matter'

Quentin Meillassoux in his book *After Finitude* claims that thought and matter share "nothing, not an origin, nor the condition of being." This lack of kinship is based on the notion of absolute contingency, meaning that rationality emerged out of nothing; reality is neither necessarily rational nor is responsible for the production of thought. Meillassoux's philosophy deals with the problem of correlationism, that it is impossible to think about something in abstraction from the fact that it is already given to an entity. Meillassoux resolves correlationism with absolute contingency because it proves that mind must have superior qualities that allows it to speculate on the things that are not given.

The talk will critique Meillassoux's speculative philosophy from the perspective of F. W. J. Schelling's *First Outline on the Philosophy of Nature*. First, I will present how Schelling's notion of contingency explains a common logic of becoming for thought and matter. Secondly, I will address inaccuracies in Meillassoux's critique of Schelling's philosophy as based on the totalisation of the subject-object relation and vitalism. Finally, I will show how Schelling offers a way out of the correlationist circle on the basis of meontology, organicism and cosmic realism. Transcendental geology as a method proves that the organic and the inorganic share conditions of being, and that this relation is fundamental to thought. In conclusion, Schelling's mode of speculation is better suited to explore the nature of reality in accordance with contemporary biology and ecology. Meillassoux's argument is incoherent with the fact that thought and matter indeed share the common origin and the condition of being. For example, the finding of the Last Universal Common Ancestor proves that the first organic cell emerged out of inorganic matter, and that all the ingredients necessary to create and sustain life were already present in the primordial soup.

Chiara Li Mandri (Palermo): Once Again on the Nature-Culture Dichotomy: Some Reflections Alongside Giacomo Leopardi

In this essay, I embark on an exploration of hitherto uncharted dimensions within the philosophical reflections of Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837), scrutinizing them through the lens of environmental philosophy. Specifically, I examine the enduring dichotomy between nature and culture, a cornerstone of environmental thought. The uniqueness of Leopardi's reflection, which will be highlighted throughout the essay, lies precisely in its ability to incorporate elements characteristic of romanticism and idealistic dialectics, without, however, aligning itself with any specific movement.

The problematic relationship between nature and culture resonates profoundly in Leopardi's conceptual journey where Nature and Reason, central figures in his philosophical framework, undergo significant transformations. This evolution – from initial opposition to a complex relationship in the last phase, akin to a *continuum* – is dissected through the analytical lens of ecofeminist studies, with particular attention to Kate Soper's seminal work, 'What is Nature'. Employing a dual-track methodology, involving both synchronous thematic exposition and diachronic analysis, this exploration not only illuminates Leopardi's philosophy but also unveils untapped possibilities for contemporary environmental studies. The emergent thought, identified as a distinctive form of naturalism, maintains its significance despite critiques from ecofeminist theories.

Jeffery L. Nicholas (Providence College): 'Nature and Reconciliation: What if Nature is Already Unified and We're Too Blind to See It?'

The Romantics sought to “re-enchant” nature in response to Francis Bacon's view of nature as empty material to be dominated. Building on this Romantic approach, first Schelling and then Hegel sought to develop an account of nature as a unified whole. Where Schelling saw a division in natural things that resulted in halves seeking reunification, Hegel saw a hierarchy in nature moving from the less unified to the more unified natures found in organic bodies. These attempts reject lifeless nature suited for domination by seeing spirit, or “Geist,” in nature and attempting to reconcile Geist and matter. Yet, Hegel still maintains a hierarchy in nature, echoing Bacon's view even if in different form. In short both Schelling and Hegel understand some aspect of nature as alienated.

These views contrast with those of some Native American peoples such as the Lakḥóta. For instance, Vine Deloria jr., a Lakḥóta theologian, wrote that human alienation from nature arises, not from being itself, but from a corrupted relationship due to human action. For Deloria, Christians are unlikely to change their view of creation as fallen and, thus, unlikely to reconcile with nature while being Christian.¹ Lakḥóta understand nature as a sacred circle, capturing the notion that, for them, all beings are equal. Practically speaking, where Europeans can justify property ownership in land, the Lakḥóta would find such a practice as crazy as owning one's mother.

In response to the conference's aim, this paper seeks to understand how views of nature, even when influenced by Romanticism, can lead to settler colonialism, challenge the boundaries of mind and matter, and assess the metaphysical and religious stakes of Romantic/naturephilosophical thought. It does so primarily by developing the outlines of what a contemporary philosophy of and from nature might look.

Arthur Obst (Princeton): ‘Romanticism for the Future: *Verticalizing the Political Spectrum*’

In August 2023, *OpenAI* CEO Sam Altman declared his allegiance to a dream of societal salvation through technological advance. “I am a believer that all real sustainable human progress comes from scientific and technological progress,” he stated on an episode of *New York Time’s* “Hard Fork” podcast. The next day, he was ousted from his position as CEO. To the best of our knowledge, his exile was, at least in part, attributable to philosophical fissures between himself and the rest of the board concerning whether the AI future we are all fast approaching is a world we should wish to live in (Metz, Mickle, & Isaac, 2023).

Consciously or not, Mr. Altman’s fundamental faith in technology puts him in the company of Futurist polemics going back one hundred years. In the early 20th century, Filippo Marinetti described the Futurist political project as follows: “we are collaborating with mechanics in destroying the old poetry of distance and wild solitudes, the exquisite nostalgia of departure, and in its place we urge the tragic lyricism of ubiquity and omnipresent speed” (Marinetti 2009b: 94). Seduced by the automobile, Filippo Marinetti believed human beings could and should master nature for human benefit: “we must break down gates of life to test the bolts and padlocks (Marinetti 2009a).

Scholars of history might find such rhetoric familiar, as Altman and Marinetti seem to be picking sides in an old debate. With the scientific revolution came the philosophical transformation called the Enlightenment: many who once found their strength in God’s grace now found their faith renewed in the promise and power of Reason. René Descartes dreamed of a world where humans became “the lords and masters of nature,” a fate not only desirable “for the invention of innumerable devices... but also, and most importantly, for the maintenance of health, which is undoubtedly the chief good” (1992, pp. 142-143). The Romantics, however, rejected this faith in Reason; they maligned mechanism and uplifted wild “Nature” in its place. The Romantics insisted that a poetical politics of distance and wild solitudes, a value-system based on finitude, ignorance, and awe—in a word, a *humble* worldview—was essential to achieve any sort of future we would want to live in.

In 1973, F.M. Esfandiary published his own manifesto for Futurism, arguing that now irrelevant was the roundly conservative spectrum of the political right and left. Today, he insisted, there was only up and down: those who would follow Marinetti’s call, and those who would embrace a “back-to-earth purism—a reactionary resistance to all progress” (Esfandiary 1973: 38). For the benefit of humanity, Esfandiary believed, “we must urgently overcome the more basic tyrannies of nature—the arbitrariness of evolution—the limitations of the human body—the confinements of Time and Space.”

In this presentation, I argue that Esfandiary was, at least partially, right. The Up and Down Wing, as a political axis, is as important today as the Right and Left. However, contrary to his perception, I argue the Up Wing is winning. I trace the Up/Down dialectic in American political and environmental history, and show how important intellectual figures including Thomas Jefferson, Henry David Thoreau, and Aldo Leopold each can be understood as trumpeting a Romantic, ‘back-to-earth’ mentality against the tide of Enlightenment modernity. I further suggest the American Wilderness movement is one of the few successful, although imperfect, examples of a truly Romantic politic. Yet, far from betraying its antiquated character, I insist this Romantic edge gives the “wild talk” persisting in environmentalism today unique potential to transform our increasingly dysfunctional society (Oelschlaeger 1995).

Enrico Piergiacomi (Technion): ‘Marvels and Horrors of the Environment: A Tension in Fracastoro’s Medical Poetry?’

In his poem Syphilis, or the French Disease, the Italian philosopher-poet and practitioner Girolamo Fracastoro (1478-1553) speaks at length about this disease, as well as of his etiology and therapy. Among the many topics studied during his medical-poetical investigation, one also finds a reflection on the external environment, i.e., the continuous discoveries within the natural world of new harmful seeds and microbes. These are often brought about after some human discoveries and relative modifications of the environment. It is the case of syphilis itself that Fracastoro believed was imported into Italy due to Christopher Columbus’ voyage to America.

Such a topic seems to receive an ambiguous treatment. On the one hand, Fracastoro thought that these discoveries/modifications of the environment introduce some dangers, or “unruly microbes”, hence that they should be feared and even criticised. In this respect, he is in the footsteps of Lucretius, who in book V of his poem *On the Nature of Things* – which provided to the Syphilis poem also an essential model of scientific poetry – warned his readers not to exceed in the technological progress, for the latter may bring great evils and not always important goods.

On the other hand, Fracastoro interpreted the natural world as a source of marvels. A pandemic or the phenomenon of the “unruly microbes” can be seen with great curiosity and can raise many philosophical questions, hence it stimulates intelligence and love of knowledge. It is not surprising to note, in this respect, that Fracastoro even sees the discoveries/modifications of the environment as partly positive. If these changes to nature had never been made, we would not have had the opportunity to study syphilis and the mysteries that this disease displays.

This ambiguity cannot be explained with the simple affirmation that it might depend on the poetic meaning. Fracastoro repeats the same claim in book II of his work *On Contagions Disease*. In the talk, I would suggest that, rather than solved, the ambiguity should be read as an interesting tension between two areas of inquiry: the ethical and the aesthetical-epistemological. Such a hypothesis raises the further question of whether it is better to prefer a safe world with fewer marvels or a menacing universe.

Philipp Quell (Vienna): ‘Thinking Bodies - Aristotle’s Physiology of Thinking’

This paper essays to capture the dimension of Aristotle’s philosophy of life. According to my hypothesis his notion of life is contrary to modern sciences which try to seize the essence of living beings through the articulation of laws or taxonomies. Consequently, they presuppose that the ground of nature is a priori field of forms. Accordingly, the nature is regarded as known if experiments uncover and proof these forms. In this vein, I want to show three things:

(1) With reference to the first two books of the *Physics*, I will display that Aristotle represents a crucial conjuncture, because on the one hand he tries to uncover the causes and first elements of Nature (*φύσις*) and with that provides a role model for modern sciences, on the other hand, however, he presupposes a field of motion from which living beings emerge immanently. As a result, he thinks of living bodies as emergencies of a priori motion or, to be more precise, as individualized entanglement of motion which conflicts with the assumption of a static ground of a priori forms.

(2) I will verify this with some assumptions in *De Anima*. Additionally, I will argument that Aristotle conceives consciousness as an effect of his dynamic notion of the body, for he comprehends the faculties of sense and mind as resonance effects of entangled motion.

(3) Finally, I want to sketch how this resonates with contemporary findings of Immunology, describing the immune system as a strive for the equilibrium of bodily processes instead of a self-defense machine,¹ and Neurosciences, conceiving of consciousness as a decentral phenomenon which engenders through the activity of different brain areas.

Carol E. Richardson (CIIS): ‘Quantum Romanticism: An Integral, Fractal, Systems Philosophy of the Self-Organizing Intelligence of Nature’

Quantum physicists and quantum biologists enjoy a mathematically-inspired romance with the wonders of nature at the quantum level. When viewed at this level, Nature seems to exist much of the time in states of quantum indeterminacy, that is, relationships of possibility with a range of probable states of expression. The scientific romance finds itself expressed through a wide diversity of theories of the nature of the Universe, from string theory to quantum foam, to the amplituhedron geometric theory, to visions of multiple universes.

Approaching this quantum nature of Nature from the more romantic, wholistic views of the right hemisphere of the brain, rather than from the fragmenting views of the left hemisphere of the brain, one can begin to discover the self-organizing abilities of the energies of Nature at all levels of scale. In non-equilibrium states, energy is available for systems to self-organize at all scales, from a single particle on up to galaxies.

This quantum romantic view of Nature reveals a fractal intelligence inherent within all levels of the self-organizing systems of Nature. Indeed, Nature is self-organizing, or Self-organizing at all levels of scale. Everything in Nature occurs as a system, from quantum wave functions to the Universe as a whole.

The romantic integral systems approach recognizes Nature not as some *thing* that has been intelligently designed, but as embodying intelligence in all levels of being, such that Nature IS intelligent. Ecosystems are the perfect example of the expression of Nature’s self-organizing intelligence, for if ecosystems were not wise, collapse of ecosystems would have been the norm, rather than the exception for hundreds of millions of years on Earth.

Alexander Riedel (Fordham): ‘Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* Amidst Speculative Realist and Contemporary Ecological Thought’

In his *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling*, Iain Hamilton Grant promotes a version of Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* that is non-somatic and non-phenomenal, whereby natural force is ontologically prior to the emergence of bodies and of subjectivity. That is, the early Schelling’s Romantic project exhibits, for Grant, a view of nature understood as a non-telic movement, characterized by an incessant recapitulation of productive forces. Similarly, in *Vibrant Matter*, Jane Bennett works within a similar framework that advances a vital materialism that understands matter characterized by vibrancy. This vibrancy is agential in its own right, “out-side” of subjectivity. Such a view, I maintain, can in many ways be likened to Grant’s understanding of Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie*. Yet, in my view, there has been an underwhelming number of attempts to expand on this similarity, between Grant’s speculative realist uptake of Schelling and Bennett’s new materialist ecology. Such a comparison would, at any rate, emphasize the relevance of Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* for contemporary ecological philosophy. In order to show this relevance, I first trace through the ways in which Grant understands Schellingian natural productivity as a non-linear movement of forces.

What comes to be identifiable or distinct as something – be it a sedimentary rock located in Midwest America or a painting displayed at the Louvre – are but the crystallizations of preexisting forces that are always subject to yet more instantiations of aimless recapitulation. From this, I end by analyzing some of the ways that Bennett’s ecological thought is similar to Grant’s project with Schelling, primarily through an explication of her notions of “thing-power” and “assemblages.” The vibrant matter operative in these notions displays nature understood as a conglomeration of forces that exhibit an “aliveness.” One can certainly say, then, that Schelling’s Romantic *Naturphilosophie* is very much an important piece for these contemporary strands of ecological philosophy.

Mariana Alkimin Rincon (Nova University of Lisbon): ‘Spinozism of physics: On Schelling’s Philosophy of Nature in 1799’

1F.W.J. Schelling in his “Introduction to the First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature” published in 1799 defines his Philosophy-of-Nature as a “Spinozism of physics”. The purpose of this communication is to examine what we should understand in this definition. Alongside Transcendental Philosophy, Philosophy-of-Nature takes care of the problem of agreement (*Übereinstimmung*) between Nature and the Self, but it differs in terms of the direction of its path. It starts, as a principle, from Nature or the real towards the Self or the ideal, while Transcendental Philosophy takes the opposite route. In both cases, there is a presupposed scientific intention that is self-founding. In an equivalent way to his “Philosophical Letters”, we see that the systematic and unconditioned realization of a philosophical science does not imply that it must be unique. On the contrary, two systems are possible. Philosophy-of-Nature, in this context, is parallel to transcendental philosophy, and aims, as a science, to deduce natural products from Nature itself as a principle. Being considered as a subject, as active, the Self that knows is relegated to its product. The first assumption of this science is, therefore, an activity that spontaneously generates regular structures in its products even if we are not aware of them. More specifically, the assumption is the Spinozian-inspired consideration of the totality of objects as, on the one hand, a mere product (*natura naturata*) and, on the other, as productivity (*natura naturans*). Nature, thus, is the unity of productivity and its products in productivity itself, which, thus, is immanent in its products. From the point of view of products, productivity manifests itself in the continuous alternation of forms or even in what he calls infinite metamorphosis. The Spinozism of Schelling’s Philosophy-of-Nature approaches, from this, as some commentators indicate, the study of organic development carried out, mainly, by Goethe in relation to plants. The analogy between the organism and the totality of Nature becomes even more evident in his book “On the World Soul”, where we can recognize, because of its development, the affirmation of our author as one of the predecessors of the picture of the biological sciences as autonomous sciences and even of the evolutionary theory that emerged in the 19th century, as R. Richards declares in his book “The romantic conception of life”.

Cecilia Saez (Universidad Complutense de Madrid): ‘Nature as *désouvement*: Defending Nature’s creative force from Schlegel’s concept of *romantische Poesie*’

Schlegel’s philosophy provides a rich terrain in which new metaphysical conceptions of Nature can take root. As Beiser (2003) argues, Schlegel’s concept of *romantische Poesie* is not limited to the realm of literature. Rather than referring to something in particular, the *Poesie* has to do with a creative force. Hence his defense of the process of ‘becoming’ as being the most essential characteristic of the romantic work.

Since romantic poetry is defined by its incompleteness, by its perpetual being a ‘work in progress’, the Romantic work is never finished. Consequently, I’ll employ the concept of romantic poetry to approach an idea of Nature that cannot be reduced to a set of lifeless components. A defense of Nature understood as a romantic work implies a conception of nature as something that cannot be fixed. Nature cannot be understood as a ‘thing’, for materiality is also imbued with the power of romantic poetry.

Finally, I’ll argue that a ‘Schlegelian’ Nature would better be understood from Blanchot’s concept of *désœuvrement*. For Blanchot, poetry is not subject to determination. Against traditional aesthetic conceptions, where the poem is seen as a laboratory object to be dissected –as if the meaning of the poem could be determined scientifically–, this idea of poetry breaks with any interpretation that aims to determine a fixed and unambiguous meaning.

In the end, the idea of Nature as *Poesie* and *désœuvrement* speaks about a Nature that remains irreducible to a fixed, stable meaning and therefore urges us to question the legitimacy of the imposition of our understanding of the world.

Georgios Sagriotis (Patras): ‘Friedrich Schlegel’s Deduction of the Earth and the Anthropocene’

Although the influence of Fichte’s philosophy on the formation of Early Romantic thought is unquestionable, both Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis soon expressed their skepticism about the Fichtean account of transcendental idealism. Not unlike Schelling, they were deeply concerned about the inferior status of nature in Fichte’s Science of Knowledge. As early as in 1798, Schlegel, who until then was primarily interested in the theory and praxis of literary criticism, flung himself into physics and philosophy of nature, as it is well-documented in his so-called “Philosophical Apprenticeship”. However, Schlegel was equally concerned about the danger of abandoning the core of critical idealism by unreservedly embracing Spinoza’s metaphysics of substance. Thus, in the Cologne-Lectures of 1804/5, the only non-fragmentary account of his philosophy of nature, he partially returned to Fichte, by attempting once again to ground philosophy on the concept of the I. Nevertheless, he rejected Fichte’s conception of a Promethean self-positing I, and proposed instead the concept of a self-finding I. This ‘passivist’ turn allowed Schlegel, on the one hand, to dispense with the notion of the non-I and, on the other, to transfer the notion of the I to corporeal nature. He conceived the Earth as the necessary product of the longing for endless fullness which characterized the “World-I”, and as endowed with latent conscience. Certainly, the suspension of the mutual exclusivity between subjectivity and nature is a characteristic of idealistic and romantic philosophy in general. Specifically interesting seems to be Schlegel’s rejection of the absolute contrast between organicism and mechanism, and, accordingly, between philosophical psychology and geology. In my paper, I want to demonstrate how Schlegel’s account in philosophy of nature, with its emphasis on historicity of nature, could gain topicality in contemporary discourses aroused by the introduction of the concept of the Anthropocene.

Lucas Scott Wright (LMU): The Ecological Politics of *Indifferenz*: Immanence and Transcendence in Schelling’s Philosophy of Nature and the Philosophy of Liberation

One of the most important concepts in Schelling’s *œuvre* is the concept of the *Indifferenzpunkt* or the point of indifference. Generally speaking, this concept names a point that one may reach by way of speculative reason that cuts behind the scission between both subjectivity and objectivity, and the scission between the pure nature and the sphere of validity (*Geltungsbereich*) in which the

subject and object are more or less correlated. For Schelling, in the *Freibeitsschrift* and in his lectures on plastic art, this concept becomes the basis by which to posit both the immanence proper to the *Grund* of all, an immanence that nonetheless supports a notion of an analogic, or vertical, relation between God as creator and human beings as creatures. Pure nature, being synonymous with the deep chaos of indifference itself, would thus be akin to the immanent ground of all; nature is a referent, a necessary presupposition, that exceeds, anchors, and thus is concealed within the parameters of the subject-object correlation.

In my paper, I examine these concepts in Schelling's middle and late work with reference to a thinker who has attempted to draw out the political implications of Schelling's thinking regarding transcendence and immanence, the Argentine-Mexican philosopher and historian Enrique Dussel. Dussel finds in Schelling's philosophy a concept that is capable of anchoring a non-historicist and non-subjectivist politics (i.e. a *política de la liberación*). Yet, where Dussel draws attention to the role of Schelling's concept of revelation (*Offenbarung*), I attempt to contribute to the philosophy of liberation by thinking with Schelling's notion of nature and indifference. I adopt Dussel's materialist principle of the ethical and political, and I illustrate how Dussel's reading of Schelling offers needed clarity for how we ought to think the nature of the relations between political, the ecological and the philosophical.

Michele Vadilonga Gattermayer (San Rafael): ‘“*La natur est mort, vive la nature!*” The hybrid nature of the Anthropocene’

With the rise of environmentalism and its growing concern for the destruction and pollution of habitats and ecosystems, mass extinction of species, and climate change, many scholars declared the “end of Nature”. Since McKibben's influential 1989 book, the idea that human influences on the planetary system had ultimately destroyed any kind of pristine and uncontaminated nature, which held its primary moral value in its “virginity”, spread out. The assessment of the existence of the Anthropocene, a new geological epoch and condition marked by the irreparable and totalizing interference of the actions of the human species on the Earth, reinforced the narrative of the end of Nature, leaving behind the feeling of the irreparable loss of a world of natural value which will never be back. Against this narrative, new ways of rethinking and framing the concept of nature have emerged: one of these is the concept of hybrid nature. The phenomenological conception of nature as an always-already entanglement of human and non-human elements and histories, which sees in the Anthropocene its peak, has driven many philosophers to the construction of new ecological narratives attentive to the complex status of natural entities and their inescapable tie with human forms of life. In discussing this concept of “hybrid nature” typical of the Anthropocene I will present some critical points (social constructivism, ontological monism, prometheism, and the negation of the “non-identity of nature”), and possible fruitful perspectives on the “return” of the human/nature dialectic, drawing mainly from the tradition of critical theory and eco-marxism.

Tansy Watts (Canterbury Christ Church): ‘Froebelian Pedagogy as Everyday Activism in Support of a Sustainability Agenda’

Friedrich Froebel has been influential on the historical development of early education through the establishment of a kindergarten in rural Germany in 1837. Froebel's holistic education is

associated with the Romantic movement and ideas of Pestalozzi, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and Krause (Brehony, 2013, Roseman, 1969, Provenzo, 2009, Reese, 2001). An underpinning ‘Philosophy of Unity’ shaped a pedagogy attendant to the natural world with mutual support for development in shared experiences between adult and child. Froebel expressed this unique approach to pedagogical relations in a call to “live with our children” and that it is through this that we might learn “to grow wise, to be wise.” (Froebel, 1887, p. 89). The contemporary contribution of this philosophy has been explored in research in which a preschool has organised family trips to local natural environments. A sensory ethnography (Pink, 2009) approach has framed use of child-worn video cameras on trips and this footage has formed the basis for a reflective interview with parents. Analysis draws inspiration from Chawla (2002) in drawing on the theory of the evolution of consciousness (Gebser, 1949) as a vocabulary of holistic relations. This lens draws attention and gives equal value to the relational qualities led by adult and child. Findings illuminate experiential depths in fleeting moments of daily lives and these have been considered in relation to a contemporary suggested need for exploring “lines of flight” into the new (Ingold, 2008). My exploration of a holistic perspective suggests that such ‘lines of flight’ might lie within the fabric of our given conditions and that adults might be prompted to re-engage with these through sharing in children’s ‘everyday adventures and ordinary magic’ (Gill, 2012).

Çiçek Yavuz (De Paul): ‘Bettina von Arnim as a Romantic Philosopher of Nature’

In the context of 19th century German philosophy, the term “philosophy of nature” is thought to demand a particular form of writing from the philosopher: she is to take up nature as her sole object of study, and rid her language of explicit human perspective. By extension, the German Romantics of the time, who turned away from this demand by focusing on natural reality through its *aesthetic* forms, are oftentimes not considered to have written philosophies of nature at all. According to this view, which is still present in contemporary debates, natural forms do not inherently have aesthetic value, and accordingly, the aesthetic, which contains the human perspective, ultimately anthropomorphizes nature. While this approach to reading nature-philosophical texts has an analytical value, I find it important to discuss whether it can encompass the scope of philosophical insights the Romantics embedded in their conception of nature as aesthetic. In my project, I focus on the German Romantic philosopher Bettina von Arnim, who, in her letter exchanges with Karoline von Günderrode, contends that nature inherently holds a harmony akin to the harmony in musical forms. Closely reading these letters, I show that for Arnim, an aesthetic vision of nature is not a human-centered appropriation of nature, but its very inverse: the ability for natural forms to have aesthetic value does not belong to or originate in human beings to begin with; rather, forms are aesthetic *inherently*. For Arnim, nature houses these aesthetic forms not for the sake of “attracting” the human gaze (such as, one could say, flowers attract bees), but rather, nature holds aesthetic principles as a marker of its unmediated comprehension of the divine. For Arnim, what is distinctly human is not the aesthetic as such, but artistic production: art marks the human drive to close their distance from divinity by enabling humans to comprehend and articulate the aesthetic forms in nature. Seen as a Romantic philosopher of nature, Bettina von Arnim raises important questions for contemporary discussions on ecology by enabling us to revisit our presuppositions of what belongs to humanity and what belongs to nature.