

'Drive' and the beyond

Schelling's ideas on drives as metaphysical-psychological powers

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The notion of "drive" oscillates between, and thus can mediate between, the realm of nature and that of the spirit. Sometimes, drives can have a reductionist-naturalist connotation, sometimes they can capture the Romantic striving for some ideal that remains forever beyond our reach; they can denote a psychological category, or a property of organic matter, or a bodily instinct. Schelling develops a highly intricate conceptual framework for dealing with the notion of, and the reality of, drives, and he is particularly interested in their potential for overcoming traditional demarcations: He acknowledges a "drive towards essentification/spiritualization", discusses the notion of natural drives and of drives in nature at length, and relates the notion of "drive" to that of "will", to "instinct", to "inclinations", and to many concrete psychological experiences (such as "hunger" or "addiction") and many more. Throughout, it is the boundary-transcending potential of this notion that he is interested in: This concept can mediate between the natural realm and the most profound metaphysical dimensions, between naturalist psychology and metaphysical experience. At the same time, this concept is fragile in its intermediary function.

This paper will present Schelling's conceptual topology for the notion of "drive", and will explore how he employs this concept as a means to go beyond traditional metaphysical boundaries, and beyond traditional epistemological/psychological attitudes. No core text will be used; the paper will discuss various texts and topical constellations in Schelling's oeuvre.