

Retrospect

"Under Fichte, the self was all, and then for Schelling all reality had the nature of a self".

- O'Meara (1982:13)

"Just as man ... is the world on a small scale, so the processes of human life from the utmost depths to its highest consummation must agree with the processes of universal life. It is certain that whoever could write the history of his own life from its very ground, would thereby have grasped in a brief conspectus the history of the universe".

- Bolman (1942:93f),
cf. Hayner (1967:106ff)

Schelling's Contribution to the Philosophy of Religion¹

To journey through Schelling's Last Philosophy (or even through the summary version presented in this volume) is surely to experience the excitement of confronting numerous suggestive, provocative insights, and to end up with a respectful appreciation of the audacious, persistent, impressive nature of his total achievement. Here is no sharp break with the philosophy of his youth, but a flowering of tendencies Schelling showed as early as 1795. His essentially monistic point of view persists to the very end.

Our task in these few pages will be to review leading features of Schelling's Philosophy of Religion.

A. A "Complete" Philosophy of Religion

Emil Fackenheim (1952:2) observes that Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation is "the only significant anti-idealist philosophy of religion which has grown out of the crisis of idealism itself." And Schelling himself believes that his lonely attempt at reconstruction has produced a "complete philosophy of religion", i.e., one which does not confine itself to the so-called religion of reason but seeks to comprehend religion in its historical reality, tracing the course of its development from the natural, blind, unfree religion of

mythology to the free spiritual religion of revelation. In Schelling's judgment, a Philosophy of Religion which ignores that original captivity of man and the subsequent emancipation would be quite pointless and unhistorical. "Philosophical Religion" is the gradual product of these two historical stages, standing above their antithesis in history and affording knowledge of the universal nature of religion. It therefore transcends both abstract supernaturalism and unhistorical rationalism.

As far as Schelling's Philosophy of Revelation is concerned, there are principles set forth there which are surely of the greatest importance. For example (and following Pfleiderer's discussion), the views that (a) religion is a *real* relation to God brought about in human consciousness (hence, not merely a *thought* but an *experience*), (b) that a complete Philosophy of Religion should go to work *genetically*, tracing the historical development of religion and letting the philosophical knowledge of religion arise as a result, (c) that the ideal aspect of religion should not be considered in abstraction but in its unity with history where it becomes a reality for consciousness, (d) that ideal factors are, in fact, operative everywhere and always in the history of religion, and (e) that *will* has a crucial role in the process of realizing the religious relation (Pfleiderer, 1887:16f).

A crucial question, however, and one which must preoccupy us in these pages, is whether Schelling worked all this out satisfactorily or whether he was prevented from doing so by his "idealism".

B. The Charges of Gnosticism and Docetism

There are numerous critics who feel that Schelling was too much entangled in an idealistic *a priori* style of thought to be able to satisfy his own demands for psychological and historical reality. Pfleiderer (1887:17f) is typical of those who charge Schelling with being scornful of ordinary experience and ending up in Gnosticism and Docetism. He writes:

This romantic contempt for simple experience, where alone it might be thought reality was to be found, makes Schelling's genetic construction turn out nothing but an ideal logical movement from one notion to another, quite after the manner of Hegel's dialectical development of notions. But as Schelling desires to give something more than a mere genesis of notions - feeling, as he does, that this will

not lead him to reality - he converts the logical steps of the notion into realities of a higher power, dramatises their extra-temporal relations as temporal processes of a theogony and cosmogony, and clothes the abstractions of the dialectic of notions in the pseudo-real masks of a god-and-world dramatic process, i.e., *mythologises* them ... he desires to take account not only of notions but of realities, but as he will not look for reality in experience he makes up for himself out of notions a *higher reality* above the actual one, that is to say, he constructs a *world of shades at once sensuous and supersensuous*, and the plays of shadows he produces in it he gives out as the real processes of growth of the Deity and the world's history ... The Schellingians were right in their rejection of the empty formalism of the notional dialectic; the Hegelians were right in their ridicule of the mythological pseudo-realities of the 'positive philosophy'.²

One could reply, however, that Schelling's Positive Philosophy is no mere mythologizing of the notional dialectic. It is, in fact, a metaphysical system whose unity is at crucial points shattered by acts of freedom (i.e., acts having no *a priori* necessity but known *a posteriori*). Furthermore, Pfleiderer (1887:9) has his own definition of Philosophy of Religion. For him it is "a science of the nature and development of the human *consciousness* of God." In other words, he sees it as "the philosophy of religious experience" and wants to turn it into a purely empirical study. Schelling, therefore, would hardly bother to reply to the attack cited above, but would instead attack the presuppositions of the attacker. What, after all, is a "Philosophy" of "Religion"?

C. Types of Philosophy of Religion

Fackenheim (1952:16f) has noted, with justification, that the philosophic concern with the divine is "in sore straits" in our day.³ On the one hand there are those who would turn Philosophy of Religion into the philosophy of religious experience (a branch of Psychology!) while at the other extreme there are those who would speak only of God and his supernatural revelation (the dogmatic theologians).

(a) Schelling clearly rejects the first alternative, because he sees man as *fallen*. To be sure, because of his divine descent, man seeks God. But because man is fallen, his god-seeking and god-finding is a mere unconscious god-*positing*. Posited gods, however, are not true

gods. Hence mythological religion (the religion of fallen man) is idolatry. It follows that if the Philosophy of Religion is the philosophy of religious experience, it can be nothing but the systematization of mere products of the imagination and can never find God himself *in* experience.

Since Kant, however, philosophy has been unable to find God *outside* experience either! Reason, as Schelling has shown in The Second Book (above), can reach only the *idea* of the Absolute (i.e., God as the necessarily existent). But this idea, as Fackenheim (1952:9f cf. 1954:572) points out, is one whose form and content are in inevitable contradiction. "Its *content* is necessary existence, but *qua idea* it is non-existent. If there is a God, he is incommensurable with reason." Reason is necessarily driven to seek what it necessarily fails to find. "For the first time since Parmenides, God has become radically inaccessible to the speculative philosopher" (Fackenheim, 1952:9 cf. 14). Hence, for Schelling, Philosophy of Religion as rational theology (or as the idealistic philosophy of religion of his youth) is impossible.

This crisis of reason brings home to the philosopher the "abyss" between man and God and becomes for Schelling *a crisis of personal existence*, revealing the limits of the autonomous life. The reason for this lies in a fact stressed by existentialists in general, namely, that one philosophizes never in a vacuum but always out of an existential setting. Thought, perhaps, can be left in suspense, but life cannot be so left. Hence, "the crisis must end in a leap" (cf. Fackenheim, 1952:11; 1954:572). But how *leap* to a God who is unknowable and unthinkable, radically outside human reason, feeling and will? The problem can be solved only by God. "He can become accessible only if He reveals Himself." "The philosopher cannot ascend to God. But he can find Him if He is descended" (Fackenheim, 1952:12). Hence, as Fackenheim concludes, the philosophy of religious experiences collapses and the Philosophy of Revelation takes its place.

(b) Schelling, however, also rejects the second extreme alternative mentioned above. That is, he has no patience with a theological orthodoxy which, convinced of Reason's impotence, combines with a radical philosophical scepticism. Here, too, Fackenheim's observations are surely correct. Such scepticism, he points out, destroys theology along with philosophy. If theology is explication of a divine revelation, it needs categories of explication, e.g., the category of "revelation", which must be rationally intelligible even if the revelation is not. Without such categories, theology cannot add a single word of

interpretation to the revealed document itself. "The philosopher may be correct in lifting revelation above the reach of philosophy. But if he wholly repudiates the philosophic concern with the divine, then he refutes himself" (Fackenheim, 1952:16).

Now Schelling does not *thus* repudiate reason. For him, Philosophy of Revelation is neither a contradiction nor an impossibility. Its task, as Fackenheim (1952:12) puts it, is "to explain the world, using reason wherever possible, but emphasizing not what reason includes but what it is forced to omit." "All those factors which escape rational necessity are explained in terms of cosmic acts of will" - for example, the creation (an act of cosmic will accounting for the element of rationality and order in the world), the Fall (an act of wilful rebellion on the part of original man, accounting for the irrational and chaotic elements, externality and evil), and redemption (a free and gracious divine act). History itself is the arena of freedom, i.e., of a theogonic process in which a gracious God overcomes estrangement through love.

D. The only possible "Philosophy" of "Religion"

Schelling's Philosophy of Religion is, then, in his view, truly *philosophy*, and its content is truly *religion*. That is to say, its essential *content* is that divine-human history which is seen both in "mythology" - where the succession of gods are the struggles of God as he really intervenes to relieve and modify the pressures of the cosmic power upon the human consciousness - and in "revelation", the true content of which is Christ Himself, the Logos of God. (For if God is more than reason - *κρειττον του λογου* - he can be known only if He has revealed Himself.) Yet Philosophy of Religion is also *philosophy* for, "because of its dialectical relation to the divine, reason can by itself understand the need for revelation and its meaning when it takes place" (Fackenheim, 1952:15).

This point of view has much to commend it as an approach to Philosophy of Religion. It avoids (i) any unjustifiable assumption (to have found the true God) on the part of rational theology, (ii) the philosophical scepticism of theological orthodoxy, and (iii) the reduction of Philosophy of Religion to mere psychology (for the purely empirical study of religious experience, unable to find a criterion of religious truth, fails to justify the concept of religious truth itself). Fackenheim's (1952:17) appreciative comment is well-deserved:

The philosophic concern with the divine is in sore straits in our time. For in one of the two dominant camps the divine has vanished, and in the other, philosophy ... If man's concern with the divine is perennial, and if it is at least in part rational, then what is needed in our time is renewal and rejuvenation. Those concerned with such a renewal would do well to take note of Schelling who first struggled with a crisis that still casts its shadow over us.

Let us, however, pursue a little further the question of the contributions and weaknesses of Schelling's Philosophy of Religion.

E. God and Evil

One of Schelling's most daring and important speculations concerned the question of the origin and nature of evil. Already by 1809 Schelling was convinced that the system of Identity was incompatible with belief in the reality of *freedom* and *evil* (Fackenheim, 1952:5 cf. Gutmann, 1936:26). He therefore dared to place evil as well as freedom in God - the only alternative to denying them. But to save the concept of an all-perfect Being, he came to hold that in God there is only the *possibility* of evil which, in Him, is never actualized.

Evil, in Schelling's view, is not mere absence of good or merely a means to a higher good. It is a positive force (the "demonic"), and its terrible reality shatters the identity of the Absolute. And yet, Schelling rejects Dualism! Hence this desperate problem: "there is only one Absolute, yet every act of freedom is a new Absolute. The Absolute is total harmony, yet evil is a terrible necessity" (Fackenheim, 1952:6).

To explain the origin and fact of evil in the world, Schelling does two things. (i) He develops - under Boehme's influence - a theory of divine personality. (ii) He resorts to the doctrine of a cosmic Fall from absolute identity, through an original act of finite freedom. Personality, for Schelling, is always a unity but never a simple unity. As Fackenheim puts it: "it is a perpetual actualization of selfhood, the conscious and purposive control of irrational underlying potentialities", always involving "a dark ground which is the source of uncontrolled vitality and a self which unites, controls and directs this ground." God is "the Absolute Self, holding in command and control his own dark ground" which "slumbers in the still night of potentiality, as the negative source of divine vitality. Its function is not to be but to be potential." Hence,

it may be called the demonic in God since in itself it is dynamic power without order or control. Schelling can therefore say the daring words: 'The Deity reigns over a world of horrors' (Fackenheim, 1952:7f).

Then *man* appears, free over against God, and the moment comes when he chooses to make himself like God. Man is the infinitely tragic Prometheus, at once divine and anti-divine, at once right and wrong, his God-given autonomy involving him in guilt against the divine. But man fails to make himself absolute, fails to control the divine ground, and "succeeds only in tearing the latter out of the divine harmony and giving it demonic *actuality*." The world and man with it fall under the destructive power of evil (B). Thus the source of evil remains *in the Deity*, but "in such a way that this source is not evil in the Deity. It becomes evil only when torn out of the divine identity" (Fackenheim, 1952:8).

Because of this understanding of evil, Schelling rejects the ontological argument since it assumes a Most Perfect Being whose nature it is to exist and who is then invoked to "explain away" all the world's imperfection and evil. Instead, Schelling's God is eternal contrariety alienating himself from himself; not a system but a life, a dynamic process.

F. History and the New Evolutionary Metaphysic

Schelling's insistence that God or Reality is dynamic process, a living, growing, unfolding actualization of possibilities, embracing Unreason as well as Reason, meant a final and emphatic rejection of traditional static metaphysics. The original dynamism of Schelling's earlier thought - derived in part from Fichte and paralleled in Hegel - becomes, especially after 1809, a thoroughly evolutionary metaphysics or theology. Reason can explore possibilities but cannot know *a priori* what an evolving God will actually choose to do. Reason must proceed descriptively not deductively if it is to grasp reality as a gradually evolving process.

It would appear that this aspect of Schelling's thought provides "a more adequate ontology for the understanding of human history" - as Paul Hayner (1967:166-169) claims it does. In fact, Hayner shows convincingly how Schelling's "evolutionary ontology" develops from its earliest and relatively ahistorical expression in the *System of*

Transcendental Idealism (where Nature and History are respectively the real and ideal sides of the one Absolute Ego) to its mature expression after 1809. Now Schelling can do greater justice to "the complexity and uniqueness of human history in general and of religious history in particular" than any static metaphysics had been able to achieve. Since history does not repeat itself, Schelling thinks its movement must be conceived teleologically. If history is to have meaning, he thinks it must be set within the context of universal history.

It is reality's history, then, not just its structure, which the Positive Philosophy sets forth. But does this knowledge of the meaning of history imply historical and metaphysical determinism?

G. Freedom

Consistently, Schelling insists on the freedom both of God and man. There are, however, certain difficulties in his discussion.

With respect to the freedom of God, Schelling holds that the Creation, for example, was a perfectly free act of the divine will. Yet he also suggests a number of "reasons" for it. For one thing, Schelling says it was *fitting* or becoming for the deity "not to remain for ever in that *actus purissimus*, which we might also call an eternal theogony." For another, he declares that the Deity, being incapable of envy (as Plato said), felt the *need* to become another so as to be known by another. He even suggests that Creation offered the Deity the *only* relief from the original theogonic movement which was rotatory and amounted to *unblessedness*. Such "reasons" for the creation certainly make it difficult to see how creation was a perfectly free act of will in which God willed an end which to himself was accidental (Pfleiderer, 1887:20).

Human freedom, too, seems to be questionable as it conflicts with historical determinism. Hayner (1967:171) underscores the point that after 1809 "Schelling conceives of man's life as a part of the life of God; and since God Himself lives in the autonomous life of man, there is nothing outside man's will - or so it would seem - which can limit its freedom of expression. But still the outcome of history is never in doubt." Hayner continues: "the principles of the theogonic process describe a determined course in the actions and reactions of historical movement. Hence the philosopher *can* deduce in advance the pattern which history will follow" - if, we must add, God decides there is to be history at all! Hayner sees this as "a remnant of rationalism" in

Schelling which later evolutionary metaphysicians such as Bergson succeeded in eliminating. For Schelling, of course, such an "elimination" would be unthinkable. Perhaps two things should be said. First, the obvious point that some freedom of choice is not logically or psychologically incompatible with historical determinism or predestination. Secondly, how are we to understand (rational) self-determination? Is "self-determinism" (whether in God or man) an instance of *freedom* or of *determinism*? Or is it not rather the (existential) fusion of both! Schelling, it would seem, has not perpetrated a contradiction but perceived a paradox. Freedom is "possibility".

H. On the Essence of Christianity

In Schelling's discussion of Christianity, there are numerous insights and emphases that are provocative and controversial. To illustrate, I will draw attention to his views on New Testament miracles, on Christianity and morality, and on the essence of Christianity.

The New Testament miracles, for Schelling, are neither *proofs* of Christ's divinity nor mere tales for an "enlightened" age to *rationalize away*. Instead, they are to be understood *mythically* (as Schelling later understood them). To be sure, on the one hand Schelling can regard them as Jewish fables, framed on the suggestions of the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. But as in The Seventh Book, Ch. 3 (B) above, Christ's miracles are such "only in relation to the common order of things. In the higher order to which Christ belongs they are merely natural." For the New Testament, Christ's "miracles" are *signs* of the will of God at work in the world - as not a few New Testament scholars would today concede.

Turning to the question of the ethical aspect of Christianity, one must acknowledge the charge that Schelling tends to overlook it. Perhaps here he exemplified the characteristic (earlier) Romantic preoccupation with aesthetic and intellectual aspects of religion. On the other hand, he is surely correct in insisting that "morality is not *speciallly* distinctive of Christianity, which could never have lived in the world by a few moral maxims, e.g., love of one's neighbor" (Pfleiderer, 1887:8).

Finally, it is clear that for Schelling Christianity is older than Creation. The Idea of Christianity is an eternal and necessary one. God foresaw the Fall of man and preplanned the remedy. There is a suprahistorical history to which belong the free acts which begin and

which will end empirical history. The Christian Revelation could not be accepted by Schelling as an authoritative source of knowledge of suprahistory, for he wanted to *ground* not build a Christian Theology. Revelation is an historical fact, *a result requiring a context* which it does not immediately present to experience. Its content is suprahistorical and this can be grasped by reason (although reason cannot grasp the contingent, finite history of empirical existence.)

The incarnation is not to be understood as, exclusively, a single event in time. "Christ's coming" was felt in Paganism and in Judaism. Judaism, in fact, is seen as the link between the mythological process and revelation. The boundary between positive Christianity and what is pre-Christian or extra-Christian is not impenetrable but porous. At the same time, Schelling can still understand the genesis of Christianity as a specific historical event and the personality of Jesus (the high point of the incarnation from eternity) as a historical phenomenon. When still a very young man, Schelling could write: the biography of Jesus was actually lived but it was written before his birth!

The New Testament books, he says, "are monuments necessary to history but not to faith." The Christian Idea is independent of them and not to be sought in them. Their value depends solely on the adequacy with which they express the Idea.

Naturally, Schelling has been charged with Docetism. Pfeleiderer (1887:29) declares: "Schelling makes the ideal contents of the biblical history, which as such is of course not history over again, but idea, and nothing more, eternal determination of the divine will or eternal truth, itself another history behind the actual." Vampire-like, continues Pfeleiderer (1887:29), this history, destitute of reality, sucks the reality from actual history. The result is that Docetism which is the natural and ubiquitous consequence of Gnostic mythology. "Its essence consists just in this, that it makes of the ideal contents of history another history behind the actual."

In defence of Schelling, one must refer to his explicit repudiation of Docetism. Christ was no *Scheinkörper* (see The Seventh Book, Ch. 3, B, above). Nor is it correct to say that for Schelling the historical is a mere accident of the doctrine. It is, indeed, the doctrine itself. "The principle content of Christianity is Christ himself; not what he said, but what *he is* and did." The difficulty of understanding how Jesus is at once divine and human is, of course, notorious. On Schelling's behalf, and in the light of his discussion in The Seventh Book above, one must say

again that our philosopher does not resolve a contradiction (by opting for a "liberal" Jesus or a docetic Christ) but preserves a paradox (as does both the New Testament and Christian Orthodoxy).

I. Can "Existence" and "Idea" be synthesized?

The General Introduction noted that with respect to the question whether Schelling was an Essentialist or an Existentialist, his reply would be (as Tillich's was) "fifty-fifty".⁴ Just so, Schelling long ago felt the need for an existentialist ontology, or an ontological existentialism. "It was just *man*," he said, "who drove me to the final desperate question, Why anything?" The question of human existence drove him to the ontological question of the wider being which is the context of his life and apart from which human existence is but an abstraction.⁵

Schelling, clearly perceived that the insight *that* a thing is, gives me more than the mere *concept* of the thing, and that while "a concept is possible without a real discerning (Erkennen), a discerning is not possible without the concept" (W, 6:57f cf. Bolman, 1942:54).

Hence we can understand Schelling's decision that to account for the *existence* of the world *and* for its *intelligibility* two sciences are necessary. One must comprehend the Idea, the essence of things, the content of being; the other must explain the actual existence of things. As we have seen, these two sciences are but two aspects of one science. Reason (in the first or Negative Science) discerns the noetic structure of being and finds, in Idea, that God is essentially actuality. But it fails to grasp existence. Hence it becomes *ecstatic* and posits existence as Prius (and itself as Posterius), i.e., it affirms by a free act that God is actually actuality.

After such an act of faith in the immediacy of existence, reason proceeded deductively (in the second or Positive Science) and essence was made subject to existence (Bolman, 1942:55, 63f). As Bolman (1942:55f) puts it: the task of the second science is "to demonstrate that the logical structure of conceptuality applies to factual existence only when the previous relationship of logic and actuality is inverted." What before was exemplary (*vorbildlich*) now becomes actual (*wirklich*). And the Last Philosophy outlines empirical history (at least, the history of the religious consciousness) to provide a *posteriori* demonstration that the realm of eternal truth, the suprahistorical, actually underlies our empirical history. The suprahistorical, as Bolman (1942:64) insists, "is the principle of the intelligibility of

empirical history." Hence Schelling is convinced that in his *Spätphilosophie* he has found "the unity of reason and existence behind the epistemological division of subjectivity and objectivity."

In thus declaring the eternity of the Logos (with its Noemata eternally dialectically interrelated and thus representing God's necessity) while yet insisting on the blind, impulsive, creative character behind the Logos (i.e., God's Freedom, pure actuality free of all noetic determinations), Schelling was "following the ancients". In doing so, however, Schelling broke definitely with the Gnostics, as Bolman (1942:64) rightly points out; for he treated "the factual history of mankind as the return to the knowledge of God as Lord of Being." Christ's coming reveals not only that Nature and History are the life of God but that God's ultimate sovereignty is to be restored. The counter-essential Fall represents the *Iliad* of human consciousness, while human history represents the *Odyssey* of man's gradual *return* to God as sole Lord of Being. In God's transcendent reality, Schelling believed, being and thought, essence and existence, subject and object, freedom and necessity and all other dualities, can be brought to a final unity.

All this, as Fackenheim (1954:568) has noted, represents a tremendous effort to escape the dilemma posed by Hegel and the Hegelians. "Hegel confronted his age with a choice: either an all-inclusive dialectical system or the salvation of the particular brought about by the surrender of all system." Schelling's response, as we have seen, was to try to *combine* a dialectic of essence and necessity with an undialectical doctrine of existence and freedom. He insisted on recognizing both "the *a priori* meaningful" and "the *a priori* meaningless" as real characters of the real world, and took as his problem that of showing *how* their togetherness in the same world could be understood. Fackenheim, however, wonders whether the Positive Philosophy really *does* explain both essence and existence, necessity and freedom, meaning and meaninglessness. In a word, Can "existence" and "idea" really be synthesized?

Schelling's answer, as Fackenheim puts it, is that "existence" and "idea" can never be synthesized in *thought* but only in *will*. Fackenheim's critique of this solution reduces to an examination of how Schelling's speculation enables him to answer his three ultimate metaphysical questions.

The first question is: Why is there anything? Why not nothing? And Schelling answers: because an Absolute Existent has freely *willed* it (i.e., willed to set the potencies in tension).

The second question is: Why is what exists in discrepancy with what ought to be? How are externality, absurdity and evil possible in a creation which, as such, has none of these? Why is the world questionable? Here Schelling answers: because original man, the third potency - who alone is free to will or not to will, and in whom the other two potencies are synthesized - *freely willed* to tear himself loose from the Absolute Existent thus causing the Fall of the entire creation. If we ask Schelling how he knows that God willed a world and that man fell, he simply points at the "facts". And "empirical facts", as Fackenheim (1954:580 cf. W, 8:129f) notes, are simply those which, according to the *a priori* principles of the Positive Philosophy, "can be explained only by a novel act of cosmic will."

The third question is: Why is there reason? Why not unreason? How can rationality be grounded? To this question, however, Schelling fails, in Fackenheim's view, to arrive at a convincing answer. Fackenheim agrees with Schelling that the first principle cannot be a Universal Reason, for while this would justify rationality it could not explain either the world's irrationality or its own existential ground. Schelling says that the universal essence exists only if there is an absolute Individual (V:768). The first principle, therefore, must be an Individual Existent. But "reason cannot flow necessarily from the essence of the Absolute Existent, for the latter has no essence," says Fackenheim (1954:581). "Nor can it be the product of an arbitrary will, for this would make rationality itself an accident, and destroy the *a priori*." Hence Schelling concludes that reason is a "necessary accident" of the Absolute Existent - a conclusion which, for Fackenheim (1954:589 cf. V:496, 513), is "surely a mere admission of failure".⁶

If the Absolute Essence is in any sense necessary to the Absolute Existent, this necessity encompasses the Absolute Existent and we have returned to the system of reason; but if the absolute Existent is really beyond reason, the absolute Essence is not a necessary accident, but accident pure and simple ... The transition from the individual Will which is absolute to the universal category of free will cannot be made. Schelling himself appears to admit this when he remarks: 'Here is the last limit which cannot be transcended' (1954:581).

If the dialectical principle is true that there can be only one absolute, but if at the same time this absolute cannot be reason itself, how is reason to be grounded? Rationality must be justified in some way;

without such a justification speculative metaphysics, at least, is impossible. Schelling's Positive Philosophy clearly understands this problem. It fails to solve it.⁷

Fackenheim's ultimate criticism, then, is that Schelling's Philosophy of Religion fails to ground the world's rationality. If Reason is a "mere accident" (as Fackenheim puts it); then the Negative Philosophy collapses, robbed of its ontological foundation, and the Absolute Existent, in turn, ceases to be of use as the principle of a cosmic system. If Reason is not metaphysically ultimate, its presence in the universe cannot be explained!

The problem, however, may be seen to be just the opposite. For Paul Hayner (1967:169), for example, reality must be more than rational - God must be *κρειττον του λογου* - if reason itself is to be explained metaphysically! The fact is that the later Schelling came to see that his own earlier rational idealism - Reason as ultimate reality making itself its own object - could not account for the existence of reason itself. Hence Schelling's decision that Will, not Reason, is original being. And hence the insight of the Positive Philosophy that reason is something that has evolved.

It is important to note that as early as 1812 Schelling understood that God's beginning can be neither intelligent nor unintelligent. In his *Reply to Jacobi* (Bolman, 1942:28), he wrote: "What is the beginning of an intelligence (in itself) cannot again be intelligent, since otherwise there would be no differentiation. Yet it cannot be utterly unintelligent, because it is the possibility of an intelligence." Hence, he concluded, it must be "something in between", "a native, instinctive, blind, not yet conscious wisdom."

God, then, must have a beginning of himself in himself which is different from his existence as potentiality is different from actuality. "Every beginning," as Schelling says, "lies in deficiency". And the beginning of becoming lies in -A, "the non-existent with its hunger after being" (V:475f; see The Second Book, Ch. 2, B). After 1801, Schelling designated God's beginning as the *Urgrund* or *Ungrund* (the primal ground or Unground), or, again, as the "abysmal, eternal nought" of the Plotinian-Dionysian-Eckhardtian tradition and of Jacob Boehme. For only against the ungrounded can the ground arise, since nothing can become evident without resistance.

Now, to find the root of existence in God as "nothing" means two things. As the "Existent" (+A-A±A), He is the formless omnipossibility

(*gestaltlose Allmöglichkeit*), hence "nothing" in the sense of $\mu\eta\ \sigma\upsilon\kappa\ \sigma\upsilon\kappa$. But as the Principle (A°), that which is the Existent, He is "nothing" in the sense of that which is beyond all essence and potency, *potenzlose*, Freedom, Will (will willing itself). Therefore, Freedom, Possibility, Antithesis and a Primordial Willing belong to the beginning. Of course, there is no ultimate Dualism for, as we have seen, what Schelling calls the "Absolutely Absolute" is the ultimate Indifference of both reason and will, *theos* and *cosmos*, A° and +A-A±A. Since God is "eternal contrariety", able to alienate himself from himself, the procession of things from God is God's self-revelation (in Nature and History). Self-revelation must mean estrangement, for "every nature can be revealed only in its opposite."

God's primordial action thus expresses the union of absolute freedom and absolute necessity. Schelling allows the world-process to create with *free necessity*, unconsciously at first, in the manner of an artist. (Art, in Schelling's view, is the perfect union of freedom and necessity). In the beginning, as the myth of creation has it, is the unity of essence and existence, an intelligible existential world. And in the end, the unity is reestablished as man becomes reunited (absorbed?) with the absolute self, his personality expanded into the infinite, free from necessity, contingency, consciousness and personality. God is all in all.

Essence thus comes to have existence (=rationality has come to be) through a movement from involution to evolution by means of contradiction. As Schelling put it in *The Ages of the World*: "Activity or life is such only by the sequential process of an evolution of its own contradictory nature toward a state of immobility, stability, will-less will, which lies beyond inert matter" (Bolman, 1942:76).

Existence and Idea "must always be in tension", writes H. J. Blackham.⁸ And Schelling would agree that this tension will always characterize *history*. The *unity* of existence and idea and of all other dualities is present now only *ideally*, but one day *really*. That is to say, before History and after it, in pretemporal and post-temporal eternity, primordially and eschatologically (so to speak), "essence" and "existence" are one. Originally they were not yet differentiated, finally they will be reconciled. The non-being of pretemporal eternity is the same and not the same as that of post-temporal eternity. Since God's existence (as Cosmos) is an "accident" "necessary" to his own completeness, it would appear that for Schelling *existence alters essence* (in God as it does in man).

J. The Root Metaphor

Perhaps the way to see the point of Schelling's solution is to keep in mind the root metaphor of his metaphysics. He thinks of the universe not as a machine or as a mind or even as an organism (although this latter is at times the case) but as an emerging self, evolving selfhood, overcoming blind drives. The development of the "life" of reality itself is the macrocosm of which the development of human life is the microcosm. As early as *Die Weltalter*, Schelling wrote:

Just as man, according to the old and nearly threadbare saying, is the world on a small scale, so the processes of human life from the utmost depths to its highest consummation must agree with the processes of universal life. It is certain that whoever could write the history of his own life from its very ground, would thereby have grasped in a brief conspectus the history of the universe (Bolman, 1942:93f cf. Hayner, 1967:106ff).

Note carefully: If one could only "write the history of his own life from the ground up" he would have grasped in brief the history of the universe! In Schelling, as later in Heidegger, we must learn of Being through human being (*Dasein*) - and each remains a *mystery* until it acts. Press the analogy! Is there a reason for my existence? Am I not a *necessary accident*? That my parents gave rise to me is an accident, but that they gave birth to a human child is no accident! That a child should never grow into an adult is a nonessential accident, but if a child does grow into an adult that is a *necessary accident* (for he *could* not grow into a horse or an oak tree). Furthermore, if I am rational - and *that* I am can only be known *a posteriori* - this may be seen as a *necessary accident*, for only human babes are such as *can* become rational. To be sure, I may also be irrational, and sportive and benevolent and much else. But *if* I am, these are brute actualities except inasmuch as some may reveal rationality, in which case they too are necessary accidents!

Just so, there is no *rational necessity* why God should actually exist (i.e., no necessary reason why he should exist as a world, i.e., no *reason* why there should *be* anything), but *if* he does exist, rationality will be a necessary accident of his existence. We should remember that for Schelling the whole history of creation is the cumulating *proof* of God's

existence. As in the human individual, so in the universe, there was in the beginning only potentiality, freedom, and blind, instinctive will. Then came the actualization of potentialities. (Or, as we might also put it: once the world was matter or nature, then matter and life, then matter and life and mind.) "Reason is something that has evolved" says Schelling. It is not the cause of Spirit, but exists only because perfect spirit exists. It is a tool, says William Barrett, a tool that spirit has forged. The original human situation is an indifference of reason and unreason. What Fackenheim says of the Absolute is also true of the individual, to wit, "it might express its will in an indefinite number of ways, rationality being but one of them." Nevertheless, Fackenheim (1954:574) concedes that the leap of faith, brought about by a search for God which is at once rational and existential, "is not merely arbitrary, since it arises out of the human predicament, *the human situation in which rationality is rooted.*"

Why should God (reality) be regarded as, in part, rational? "An unpredictable, absolute will," says Fackenheim (1954), "on the evidence of the 'facts', reveals itself now as a God, now as a devil, now as an omnipotent jester, explaining no more than that nothing can be explained." That God is divine, demonic, sportive, magnanimous, Schelling would not for a moment deny. He would simply repeat what has been demonstrated in the Pure Rational Philosophy, viz., that if God becomes at all His becoming will reveal the actualization of rational structures. But *that* he becomes, and that He is *more* than rational, is known *a posteriori* by what he does (Creation, Redemption). For God "to be" means to enter into the objective theogonic process with *free necessity*.

When he was but twenty years old, Schelling wrote: "the main function of all philosophy is the solution of the problem of the existence (*Dasein*) of the world" (Bolman, 1942:12). And since all theology and metaphysics is an attempt to express the inexpressible, the task of philosophizing called forth from Schelling sixty years of prodigious effort. No wonder he expresses himself in oracular utterances half-way between poetry and metaphysics - speaking, for example, of God and the world having as common ground "the incomprehensible basis of reality", or of "existence as self-affirmation" or of God as "the infinite affirmation of himself" or of the objective world as the unconscious poetry of the spirit creating himself.⁹

For Schelling also wrote, when he was twenty years old, "the moment a thinker believed he had completed his system he would become intolerable to himself" (Fackenheim, 1952:5).

