

General Introduction

"I am so utterly convinced that Schelling's 'positive philosophy' rests on a mistake, that I have not bothered to read it."

- Harris, H. S. 1989. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 26:1 (August) 62.

Getting Oriented

This volume is for those who are ready to give Schelling a hearing but would like some help. It offers a reader-friendly text for English-speaking readers who wish to acquaint themselves with Schelling's rather infamous so-called "Last Philosophy" (*Spätphilosophie*), his Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation.

The task is daunting and that for a number of reasons. In the first place there is the massive scope of the work - who would want to publish a 2,100 page English translation of the text as it stands? Secondly, the idealism-talk is an unknown tongue to many whose philosophic home is in, say, the Positivist or Analytic traditions. Thirdly, Schelling's way of doing theology and Biblical exegesis (or eisegesis), along with his use of a form of argument which blends history, legend and logic, can seem arbitrary and disconcerting.

In addition, there are problems of content. Some lectures reflect the limited knowledge available to Schelling, e.g., in the new field of *Religionsgeschichte* (although he was well acquainted with the major Studies in Mythology in his day).¹

Finally, there are matters of style and format. Schelling's work is enshrined in unvarying blocks of print with long sentences within paragraphs that run on for two or three pages. And it is characteristic of him to present his hearers with numerous exhausting

recapitulations, digressions and protracted delays.

Unkind critics see in this last feature the sign of Schelling's old age. Kindlier students attribute much of it to the exigencies of the lecture-form of Schelling's presentations. Schelling himself, however, warns us that it is unavoidable:

It is not possible for this investigation to avoid becoming involved in numerous digressions and secondary discussions which could easily cause you to lose sight of the main line of development and the coherence of the whole (VI:12).

All these "problems" and difficulties explain why I say the task of making Schelling accessible is "daunting". But first let us ask who Schelling was, and consider how best briefly to identify and describe him. Perhaps the following phrases and labels will help.

A. Meet the Philosopher

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, 1775-1854, was a precocious boy, a youth endowed with singular powers of imagination and intellect, a Prince of the Romantics, a classical thinker, a young prodigy producing eleven major volumes before the age of thirty, the founder of Absolute Idealism and its greatest critic, a precursor of Existentialism, the mentor of German Catholic intellectuals for three decades in the early nineteenth century, an aging brooding philosopher of humankind's religious experience, a thinker who made bold to write the history of God and Universe, a builder of massive systems in an age of massive system builders. Through it all Schelling has received both adulation and condemnation (as we shall see).

Kierkegaard has preserved a cameo moment from the time when he audited Schelling's 1841 Berlin Lecture series on the Last Philosophy. SK writes, "Schelling has commenced amidst so much noise and bustle, whistling, and knocking on the windows by those who cannot get in the door that one is almost tempted to give up listening to him" (in Hong, 1989:xx).

Many notables were in attendance, including Swiss cultural historian Jacob Burkhardt, Karl Marx's collaborator Friedrich Engels, and Russian philosopher Michael Bakunin. "Schelling is lecturing to an extraordinary audience", wrote Kierkegaard. But of Schelling himself Kierkegaard observed "[he is] a most insignificant man to look at; he looks like a tax collector" (in Hong, 1989:xx-xxi).

Since everyone knows what a tax collector looks like, we can compare our image with the photos of Schelling which form the Frontispieces to Volume VI and Supplementary Volume 1 of the Schröter Edition of his Works. In one of these photos, Schelling is an old man. He looks grim and resolute, the veritable "brooding philosopher". In the other he is a curly-haired, confident, intense, even swashbuckling young man, a "Prince of the Romantics" indeed. In each photo one looks in vain for the "tax collector"! For an account of Schelling's life see Tilliette (1970) - in French but the major source - or O'Meara (1982).

B. The Last Philosophy : Background and Vision

Schelling's *Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation*, developed at Munich after 1827 and Berlin after 1841, was the mature though incomplete product of a long life of ceaseless reflection, a work at once mysterious, profound, misunderstood, praised, maligned and (for English readers) virtually inaccessible. It grew out of Schelling's three-fold enchantment with *Philosophy* (the metaphysical quest), *Mythology* (the non-Christian religions) and *Revelation* (a Christian Philosophy whose content was Christ and Trinity).

Indeed this three-fold concern of The Last Philosophy was prefigured half a century earlier in the first works of Schelling's youth - as witness (a) his "Dissertation on the third chapter of Genesis" (1792)² at the age of 17, (b) his "Essay on Myths" (1793)³ at the age of 18, and (c) his paper on "The Possibility of a Form of Philosophy in General" (1794)⁴ at the age of 19.

Even earlier, however, in the spiritual environment which gave the young Schelling nurture, one may discern the presence of these three influences. For Schelling was born into the home of a learned German Lutheran pastor in the last quarter of the 18th Century, and, as Paul Tillich reminds us, it was the Protestant minister of that time who bore the higher culture of classical antiquity in "the rather barbaric countries of Northern Europe" (1967:80). So it is not unintelligible that Myth, Reason and Revelation should enter into creative, inner dialogue in the brilliant son of such a parsonage.

Schelling's work is an original and profound attempt at a reconciliation of Philosophy and Religion, of Intellect and Will, of Reason and Faith. In the impressive vision contained therein, God *himself becomes* in His world and especially in the world's religions.

MYTHOLOGY is the product of a necessary theogonic process in which God has pluralized himself and is creating Himself step by step as the true God. The "birth of the gods" actually and historically takes place. From the unconscious depths of reality in which human beings have their roots, powers emerge to grasp them, and the theogonic process unfolds in human consciousness as its source or *subjectum agens*. God's completeness and perfection lie at the end of the process, not at the beginning. He cannot be the object of rational proofs, for the "proof" of God's existence is literally the whole history of humankind. We discern history's meaning when we see it as the age-long process by which the divine, through the instrument of human freedom and through an eternal mediation, overcomes estrangement through love. Such an evolutionary and dynamic theology makes possible a new understanding of Good and Evil, of Creation and History, of Church and Culture. Religion cannot be dismissed as the merely subjective or imaginary creation of human beings, for it has objective and universal meaning.

Mythology or Paganism (i.e., the non-Christian religions) form a vast background against which Christianity appears as their truth and fulfilment and end. In the Christian REVELATION God acts freely and graciously in Christ so as to overcome the effect of the Fall and to negate the principle of His own Wrath. Revelation is an act of God which discloses His Will. We *know* what God *wills* because of what he *does* in both Creation and Redemption. His will could never be known *a priori* - it is "beyond reason", *κρειττον του λογου* - but it is not therefore unintelligible!

REASON can make intelligible the divine decision and act, producing Philosophical Religion, that religion of the Spirit which transforms "blind" faith into understanding and free affirmation. Both Mythological and Revealed religions will find in free Philosophical Religion that faith of the future - that 'courage to be' (Tillich) - in which all humankind will one day be united. In that day the structures of self-will, of estrangement and destruction, shall be finally done away. In that day, Christian and non-Christian, faithful and cultured, church and world, will come together in the unity and truth of a free "religionless" religion of all humankind - not a revealed truth, but a human truth into which we shall be led by the Holy Spirit.

Thus, for Schelling, the Philosophy of Revelation (i.e., the Philosophy of Christianity) is the key to the Philosophy of Religion, and the latter, as free Philosophical Religion, illuminates the significance of human life and of the whole cosmic process.

C. Defining Our Task

The present work is based on the Schröter Jubilee edition of Schelling's Works which represents a reordering of the material in the earlier Cotta Edition. There are now four Editions of Schelling's Collected Works. The latest, being slowly published at the present time, will extend to 80 volumes! (See Bibliography).⁵

The Schröter edition is made up of twelve volumes averaging about 650 pages per volume. With the Nachlass Band, it stretches to some 8,000 pages.

Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation represents a full 25% of this total. It runs to 2,100 pages (ninety lectures). The material is arranged into seven "books", structured as set out in the accompanying Table. The six Principal volumes in the Jubilee edition are numbered throughout with Roman numerals (I-VI), and the Supplementary volumes with Arabic numerals (1-6 or S1-S6).

I noted earlier that our project - to make Schelling's Last Philosophy accessible - was a daunting one; and it would be daunting indeed if we felt it necessary to present this voluminous material (2100 pages) in full translation. Such a move, however, is neither practical nor desirable. So three "Books" were selected which would exhibit Schelling's concerns and methods and show him at work as historian, philosopher, theologian. As a kind of shorthand I have named these three books **The First Book**, **The Second Book** and **The Seventh Book**. These numbers have nothing to do with the repetitive numbering of the seven Books on the Table. Each of our three books is shown in bold type.

The First Book is *The Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* - ten lectures, 254 pages in Schröter.

The Second Book is *The Philosophical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* - 14 lectures, 323 pages.

The Seventh Book is *The Philosophy of Revelation Part II* - 14 lectures, 337 pages.

But these three books still ran to 914 pages (38 lectures), so the material was further reduced to 350 pages (equal to 290 pages in the present volume). This reduction was achieved by familiar procedures: (a) the elimination of repetitions and digressions; and (b) condensations or summaries.

D. The Organization of Material in the Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation*

1856-61 Edition	The Seven Books	Lecture Numbers	1927-1946 Jubilee Ed
<u>Part I</u>	<u>(I) Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology</u>		
Volume 1 (or Vol 11)	Book 1 <i>The Historical-Critical Introduction</i>	1 - 10	VI:1-254
	Book 2 <i>The Philosophical Introduction</i> (i.e., Negative or Pure Rational Philosophy)	11 - 24	V:431-754
<u>Part II</u>	<u>(II) The Philosophy of Mythology</u>		
Volume 2 (or Vol 12)	Book 1 <i>Monotheism</i>	1 - 6	VI
	Book 2 <i>Mythology</i>	7 - 29	S5
<u>Part III</u>	<u>(III) The Philosophy of Revelation</u>		
Vols 3 & 4 (Vols 13 & 14)	Book 1 <i>Introduction</i>	1 - 8	S6
	Book 2 <i>Philosophy of Revelation (Part I)</i>	9 - 23	S6
	Book 3 <i>Philosophy of Revelation (Part II)</i>	24 - 37	VI:389-726

*The chief volumes are numbered with Roman numerals (I-VI), and the supplementary volumes with an "S" and Arabic numerals (S1-S6).

A generous amount of key material (150 pages) remains in full translation, and is indented so as to stand out clearly. In all this work with Schelling, the constant aim has been to be clear, orderly, succinct and readable while attempting to remain completely faithful to the original material. Chapters, chapter headings and sub-headings have been supplied in an attempt further to reveal the structure of Schelling's thought and render it more reader-friendly and accessible.

These three Books form a base for launching into Schelling Studies, especially into studies of the Last Philosophy; and the First Book, since it is historical and pre-systematic, is an easy first step.

E. A Summary of the Contents of the Seven Books of Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation

These ninety lectures comprise more than two thousand pages and are divided into seven "books". The first, second and seventh of these "books" have been translated and reduced for inclusion in this volume. Here, however, summaries of all seven books are given (with reference to Schelling's own Table of Contents) so as to indicate the whole range and content of what is called Schelling's Last Philosophy.

I INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF MYTHOLOGY

Book 1 *The Historical-Critical Introduction*

The ten lectures in this Introduction are presented as The First Book in the present volume. The central question is, How is mythology to be explained?

The first four lectures explore the adequacy of "all actual and possible" explanations of mythology. This involves a critique of non-religious interpretations (those which see myth as poetry, allegory or philosophy, and as individual or community inventions) as well as religious ones (which view myth as a development out of "primitive religion", or as a creation of man's "religious instinct", or as a disintegration of an original "rational theism", or as a development out of an original revelation, or as a fragmented monotheism).

Lectures Five through Seven discourse on the origin of peoples and languages as well as gods. Result: A nation, its language and its mythology all come to birth at the same time as a result of a common "crisis". "Successive" polytheism (=mythology) is distinguished from "simultaneous" polytheism, the "relative" monotheism of pre-history from absolute monotheism, and the reflection of the mythological process in Old Testament history (Genesis) is described.

Lectures Eight and Nine, after distinguishing four stages in man's religious development, finally explain mythology as a "*theogonic process*" with objective and universal meaning, and understand man as the being who necessarily seeks for and posits God. Lectures Nine and Ten then define the true *Philosophy* of Mythology and specify its relation to History, Art and Religion. The task of a Philosophy of Mythology is to understand this theogonic process: How is it both possible and necessary? The question is taken up in the next Introduction.

Book 2 The Philosophical Introduction

(Or, Presentation of Negative, i.e., Pure Rational Philosophy)

The fourteen lectures in this Introduction are presented as The Second Book of the present volume. The central question is, How is mythology - as a necessary theogonic process - *possible*? How is it rationally intelligible?

In these lectures, Schelling first surveys Reason's successive liberation from the "authorities" represented by Paganism, paganized Christianity, medieval metaphysics and authoritative revelation, and traces the emerging autonomy of reason in modern philosophy from Bacon and Descartes through Kant. He then develops a speculative metaphysics in which an autonomous reason seeks - through a form of induction or rational dialectic - to find the structure of (noetic) reality and its first or ultimate principle. Result: If there is an historical succession of gods (i.e., a mythological process) it will be determined by the logical succession of the moments or potencies of being itself. (These lectures represent the "negative" aspect of Schelling's overall task, this task being namely, the development of "philosophical religion").

II THE PHILOSOPHY OF MYTHOLOGY**Book 1 Monotheism**

Here, in six lectures, Schelling analyses the true nature of Monotheism which he sees as compatible with the Trinity-idea, but which he carefully distinguishes from Theism, Dualism and Pantheism.

Essentially, his analysis is in two parts: (i) the *conceptual* being of God (God is the one who is able to be in three forms or moments - as power-to-be, as the pure existent, and as Spirit, i.e., the power of being to posit and possess itself as such) and (ii) the *actual* being of God, in which the divine will separates the potencies, placing them in tension, thus giving rise to a theogonic process which is also a process of creation (the potencies of being become the causes of becoming). The end of creation (i.e., of the theogonic process) is "God-positing human consciousness" - a conclusion identical with the conclusion reached in *The Historical-Critical Introduction* above.

Book 2 Mythology

The twenty-three lectures in this book are a sketch of the history of the

mythological process from its beginning in the Fall (Lectures Seven and Eight), through its various moments (Lectures Nine through Sixteen), till it flowers in the polytheisms of Egypt (Lectures Seventeen through Nineteen), India (Lectures Twenty through Twenty-two), and Greece (Lectures Twenty-five through Twenty-nine). There is a discussion of the special case of China in Lectures Twenty-three and Twenty-four.

This whole account is presented more concisely in six lectures that now form the conclusion of Part I of the Philosophy of Revelation.

III THE PHILOSOPHY OF REVELATION

Book 1 *Introduction to the Philosophy of Revelation*
(Or, Grounding of Positive Philosophy)

Eight lectures on Philosophy, Negative Philosophy and Positive Philosophy omitted from this volume.

On Philosophy in general. Lecture One offers general remarks concerning Philosophy : it is "the most desirable science," it is "not to be replaced by poetry", but it is nonetheless "forbidding" because of the diversity, clash and rapid turnover of philosophic systems. Lecture Two offers suggestions on how to listen to philosophic lectures and how to deliver them clearly, and concludes with general comments on the academic life.

On Negative and Positive Philosophy (including historical retrospect). Lectures Three through Eight discuss the nature of Negative and Positive Philosophy - the distinction and the relationship between them. As usual, this involves Schelling in historical retrospect. Schelling writes: "I have usually prefixed to all my other lectures on philosophy a genetic development of philosophical systems from Descartes up until the most recent time"(16). In these lectures, however, he ("limits" himself and) begins with Kant (actually with pre-Kantian metaphysics) in order to show how philosophy has developed into "positive" and "negative" aspects, and how the union of these two will bring philosophy to a satisfying conclusion.

In Lecture Three, therefore, Schelling describes pre-Kantian metaphysics, its foundation, its collapse even before Kant, and its "material inadequacy" (since it arrived at purely syllogistic knowledge). He then presents Kant's leading ideas, criticizes Kantian epistemology and discusses the importance of Fichte. In Lecture Four he proceeds to explain the extent to which Kant and Fichte prepared

the way for "the pure science of reason" (Identity System). In Negative Philosophy (pure rational science) which deals only with concepts (*what* things are, not whether they are), reason becomes its own object (which means it deals with the actual but not with actuality). The relation of this science to experience is then discussed, as is the ambiguity in the immediate-content of reason (which content = "infinite potency of being"). Hence reason seeks a way from this arbitrariness to the truly Existent, the Existent itself, which it nevertheless possesses only in a negative concept. Lecture Five, in answering certain objections, distinguishes once again between Negative and Positive Philosophy, and points out how philosophers after Kant and Fichte (especially Hegel and the Hegelians) failed to recognize the logical character of Positive Philosophy.

Lecture Six offers proof "that both tendencies - negative (rational) and positive - existed in philosophy from time immemorial": in Greek philosophy before Aristotle ("the rational side was represented by the Ionian physicists, especially Heraclitus", and the counter-balance is seen in Socrates), in Aristotle himself, and in Scholastic Metaphysics. As a result of the disintegration of the latter, pure rationalism and pure empiricism separated from one another. How Positive Philosophy is related to empiricism: the concept of Philosophical Empiricism. Lecture Seven deals with the method and proof of Positive Philosophy, its relation to revelation and religion in general, and explains the expression "Historical Philosophy". Lecture Eight attempts to show that the "succession" of Negative and Positive Philosophy gives the "complete science of philosophy", and then discusses the beginning of Positive Philosophy (the pure Existent), its relation to the ontological argument, its separation from the end of Negative Philosophy, and its relation to the concept of transcendental knowledge. There follows a "transition to the Philosophy of Revelation, the general-philosophical content of which coincides with that of Positive Philosophy."

Book 2 *The Philosophy of Revelation, Part I*

There are fifteen lectures in this Book. They are not translated or paraphrased in this volume. The first nine lectures (Nine through Seventeen) discuss the nature of the Philosophy of Revelation, and the meaning of Spirit, Creation, Trinity, man and the mythological process. The last six lectures (Eighteen through Twenty-Three) give a shortened version of the Philosophy of Mythology.

Three Kinds of Religion. Lecture Nine discusses the significance of a Philosophy of Revelation and the extent to which it presupposes the Philosophy of Mythology. It distinguishes Natural, Revealed and Philosophical Religion, noting that the latter is mediated by the first two and (hence) arises out of a "literal" (*eigentlich, wörtliche*) explanation of Christianity which refuses to separate doctrine and history.

The Notion of Spirit. Lectures Ten and Eleven develop the concept of perfect (absolute) spirit by positing three "determinations" of being, i.e., they are prior to (*vor, über*) being. These are (a) the unmediated power to be, (b) the pure existent, and (c) the power to be posited as such. The latter is neither pure subject nor pure object but both at once, the Subject-Object which remains by itself (*des bei-sich-Bleibenden*). That which comes to be (the supra-existent, *überseiende*) equals all three which, since they are not materially outside one another, are conceivable only in one Spirit (as determinations of one Spirit). Lecture Twelve declares the task of philosophy is first to ascertain the principles of being (which are not mere categories). Positive Philosophy then proves the perfect Spirit *a posteriori*. Hence there follows the positive presentation of the absolute Spirit. Its three forms are (a) the spirit existing in itself, (b) the spirit existing for itself, (c) the spirit existing by itself (= *der im an-sich-Sein für sich seiende*). The Absolute Spirit is bound to no single one of these forms. It is the all-one (All = *einigen*).

Creation. Lecture Thirteen shows "how there is given in the perfect spirit the possibility of another being different from its own eternal being", and stresses "the complete freedom of God in the acceptance of that being which is distinct from himself." "How far this being can become actual through the *mere* divine will." The creation process results when God freely wills to place the potencies in tension. "The real motive for the creation is the creature." "The system of monotheism = a system of free creation." Lecture Fourteen discourses largely on the meaning and importance of the concept of free creation, but includes comments on (a) the essence of understanding, (b) the relation between understanding and will, (c) the distinction between imbecility and madness, and (d) time.

The Trinity. Lecture Fifteen is a discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity (or *Dreieinheitsidee*) - its relation to historical Christianity, traces of it in ancient religion, the attempt to comprehend it philosophically (Leibniz), the way Positive Philosophy expresses it, and the

Christological determinations contained in it. The Lecture ends by discussing some relevant New Testament passages, and the relation of the three personalities in the godhead. Lecture Sixteen pursues the relation of the Trinity doctrine to monotheism and to the creation, including the relation of the three personalities in the creation (Exegesis of Rom 11:36).

Man and the Mythological Process. Lecture Sixteen also begins the discussion of man - his freedom, his godlikeness, his fall and its consequences (man has posited the world as outside of God). Lecture Seventeen explores the significance of man in the creation, his deed - the Fall - as explicable *a posteriori* though not *a priori*, his efforts to regain the lost unity, and his relation to God and to the potencies (now become extra-divine) as a result of the newly posited tension of the latter. The process arising by virtue of this tension is mythological. The role of the second potency in this process and an explanation of the phrase "Son of Man." How and why God (the Father) allows the world to persist despite the catastrophe (the *οργη θεου*). The various aeons (world-times). Transition to the brief presentation of the Philosophy of Mythology (Lectures Eighteen through Twenty-three).

Book 3 *The Philosophy of Revelation, Part II*

These fourteen lectures are presented as The Seventh Book in this volume. They deal with the nature of Revelation and discuss the presuppositions, purpose and content of the Philosophy of Revelation.

Since the content of Revelation is "Christ" (the potency A²), Schelling lectures on Christ's pre-existence, his influence in the non-Christian religions (including Old Testament Judaism), his incarnation (the person, death, resurrection and exaltation of Christ), his "enemy" (Satan) and the world of spirits, and his relation to the coming of the Holy Spirit. The last two lectures deal with the history of the Christian Church and end by projecting a vision of the religion-less religion of the future.

The Historical Fortunes of the Last Philosophy

A. Early Rejection and Neglect

A number of reasons may be suggested to account for the neglect of Schelling's Last Philosophy. In the first place, the material did not appear in print officially until Karl Schelling edited and published his father's Collected Works in 1856-61. Meanwhile, the Berlin lectures (1841-2), as Paul Tillich has pointed out, "were prematurely published by an enemy of Schelling and, of course, poorly published, which made him many critics, some of them contemptuous of his work" (1967:150).⁶ Furthermore, it seems clear that the judgments of Schelling's contemporaries or near contemporaries were prejudiced. His critics, as Emil Fackenheim has noted, were either theologians, positivists or Hegelians, and what Schelling had to say pleased none of them.

If they were theologians, they looked to Schelling for an apologetic which they did not get, nor were meant to get. If they were positivists, they had even less sympathy with Schelling than with Hegel. And if they were Hegelians (as most of them were), they saw the most important criterion of judgment in systematic completeness, the very point in which Schelling was weakest; further, they were bound to regard his development after 1804 as an aberration or an outright betrayal (1954:564).

Numerous harsh and even contemptuous comments may be found among those who bothered to take note of the appearance of the *Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation*. Michelet, the Hegelian, declared it "a shameful apostasy such as has never been committed in the history of philosophy."⁷ Ferdinand Christian Baur⁸ decided the lectures were "balderdash" and wondered how anyone could build so much on so little. In the same mood, Rosenkranz chided: "It appears that some attach the adjective 'Christian' to a thought, like a fig-leaf, as if they had to be ashamed of it in its nakedness."⁹ And Edward Zeller concluded that the whole system was "a verbose, muddled, abstruse Scholasticism; a disagreeable mixture of speculation, ... cloudy theosophy, arbitrary Biblical exegesis and ecclesiastical dogma."¹⁰

Earlier in the century, Idealist philosophy, as Zeltner observes, had been "an essential factor in the formation of the new world-view of the German middle class" (1954:4). It had claimed scientific character and at the same time largely assumed the function of poetry and even religion. Its identification with the German middle class, however, meant that Idealism "was to experience with peculiar intensity the attacks of the anti-bourgeois thinkers which arose after the mid-century against this world-view - in particular, the opposition of Kierkegaard, Marx and Nietzsche." Schelling, of course, had moved radically beyond his own earlier Idealism, but the truth is he never *repudiated* its insights - "how should I give up that philosophy which I myself founded earlier, the discovery of my youth" (VI:758). He was adjudged guilty by association. It is true that Schelling had been useful to the critics of Hegel (it was to do battle with the Hegelian Philosophy of Religion that the sixty-six year old, semi-retired Schelling had been called to Berlin in 1841), but this usefulness ceased when Hegel's system was no longer a central issue in the fields of metaphysics, religion and politics.¹¹

The dominant fact is that when Schelling's Last Philosophy finally appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century, times had passed it by! No longer was there climate or audience for his thought. A new day was dawning - a new era of practical politics ("the politics of money and steel"); new found faiths in materialism and economic man; and a renewed natural science which, like the science of history and its associated disciplines, was "struggling out of the embrace of idealist philosophy" and moving toward a non-speculative

Positivism.¹² Even in the area of theology and religion, both Schelling and his ecclesiastical adversaries were left behind by distinct shifts in the focus of theological attention (away, for example, from the mid-century concern with Christology). Together, such new interests seem to have made it inevitable that Schelling's mature thought would have been largely misunderstood and dismissed.

B. Three Persistent Legends¹³

As a result of combined prejudice, neglect, and ignorance of the Last Philosophy, a stereotyped estimate of Schelling gained currency and persists to this day. There appear to be three "legends" about this philosopher (two of which I will dwell upon here): (i) that his real significance is as a link between Fichte and Hegel, (ii) that his philosophizing lacks continuity, and (iii) that the late Schelling degenerated into obscurantism and obfuscation. Aspects of this stereotyped-Schelling are well described by Emil Fackenheim:

When Schelling died ... his contemporaries' opinion of him might be summarized as follows. A precocious thinker, Schelling made a great contribution to philosophy around the year 1800, when he was still in his twenties. But he lacked system and thoroughness, and his contribution was soon assimilated and superseded by the system of Hegel. Moreover, he lacked stability. While Hegel spent his whole life working out his system, Schelling changed his standpoint so often as to drive his interpreters to despair. Finally, at least from 1804 on (when Schelling was not yet thirty) these changes were for the worse, for he moved more and more toward mysticism and obscurantism.

This appraisal became conventional opinion, and has remained conventional opinion until this day. In practically any history which bothers with Schelling at all one can find this threefold condemnation of his work: that it consists of a number of more or less disconnected systems; that none of these is properly worked out; and that from 1804 on, they get worse and worse (1954:563).

Bertrand Russell, in his *History of Western Philosophy*, perfectly typifies the indifferent, for he dismisses the *whole* of Schelling's thought - twelve 600-page volumes - with just three cursory sentences bearing the partial image of the stereotype:

Fichte's immediate successor, Schelling was more amiable but not less subjective. He is closely associated with the German Romantics; philosophically, though famous in his day, he is not important. The important development from Kant's philosophy was that of Hegel.¹⁴

C. Merely the link between Fichte and Hegel?

Undoubtedly it was John Watson who did much to spread the first myth among English speaking philosophers. In Watson's view, Schelling's only significance is as a link in the supposed genealogical series Kant-Fichte-Schelling-Hegel. Schelling is "only Hegel in germ and Hegel with much that is most valuable in him left out" (1882:3, 193, 251).¹⁵

A number of Schelling students have attacked this facile dismissal of Schelling. Croce mentions Leo Tolstoy's warning against "supposed genealogical series" (e.g., that of Balzac-Flaubert-Zola) and insists that "every genius begins again from the beginning, and is born only of himself." "The problems of Fichte," Croce continues, "are not those of Kant, nor the problems of Schelling those of Fichte, and so on, and if the later seem to arise out of the earlier it is because the later thought is richer and contains the earlier" (1941:328). Our usual view of German Idealism, as Walter Schulz points out, is derived from this notion that there are three steps which lead from the early Fichte through the early Schelling to the consummation of German Idealism in Hegel. But it is precisely this notion, Schulz insists, that requires revision, "since it overlooks the fact that both the late Fichte and the late Schelling conceived ways of putting the philosophical question which were not and could not be approached by Hegel" (1955:Fwd). Hermann Zeltner concurs: these three great philosophers of German Idealism are "so individualistic that it is scarcely possible to bring them to a common denominator." In fact, he adds,

there is serious opposition among them which is by no means merely personal. Certainly Schelling and Hegel stand closer to one another than either does to Fichte, and Dilthey's attempt at classification - one which contrasts Fichte's Idealism of Freedom with the Objective Idealism of Schelling and Hegel - surely touches on something essential. But later there arise between Schelling and Hegel oppositions which, if it be possible, are even more violent and insuperable.(1954:1).

Already in 1890 the distortion involved in viewing Schelling only in terms of this genealogical series had been noted and refuted by Lucien Herr,¹⁶ but the myth dies hard. In 1927 T. L. Haering can declare:

In no other case has the history of philosophy been so roughly treated in its psychological and historical relations of dependence as with the pretended line of descent: Kant-Fichte-Schelling-Hegel. In no other case have the relative originality and the independent development of personality been so sacrificed to a scheme of logical construction apparently simple and luminous (in Croce, 1941:328).

Finally, in describing this supposed line of descent as "a misreading of the history of modern philosophy", James Gutmann suggests an entirely different perspective.

It is to a philosophic tradition that has often passed as theology that Schelling might be linked, if one were mindful of the resemblance between the problems and preoccupations of Schelling's thought and those of Neo-Platonic Christianity in Patristic writings, in the Lutheran Reformation and in traditional Protestant mysticism (1936:Lii).

D. One Philosophy or Many?

The second legend about Schelling stressed the discontinuity in his thought. A mere glance down the lengthy list of Schelling's works is enough to make one wonder: Is this "philosophy" merely a loose series of very different philosophies? Or are there systematic connections, threads hidden perhaps beneath the surface, which provide continuity and coherence? C. M. Schröder¹⁷ believes this question of the inner unity of Schelling's philosophy might be regarded as the central question in Schelling-studies, and has drawn attention to some of the varied and opposed estimates.

There are those for whom disunity, discontinuity and continual transformation are the chief features of Schelling's philosophic development. O. Braun¹⁸ considered Schelling's thought to have undergone major recastings, and discerned "several completely different concepts of God". Jaganath Das Choudhury¹⁹ doubted that Schelling was even aware of the breaks between the various periods of

his development. For Windelband there were five chief divisions in this development, and when Schelling insisted that all his writings were just "pieces of a whole", Windelband decided that we could do the philosopher no greater injustice than to "take him at his word" (1878-80:239). Typical of those historians of philosophy who lightheartedly perpetuate this notion is R. A. Tsanoff²⁰ who assures us: "in his speculative voyages [Schelling] sailed through four or five systems of thought". Finally, we may cite an early view, that of J. E. Erdmann²¹ who considered the Identity System (with its "Naturalism enthusiastic for antiquity") and the Later Philosophy (with its "Theosophy reminiscent of the Middle Ages") to be unbridgeable opposites, the inner agreement of which Schelling nowhere demonstrates.

Schelling's philosophical reflection is a restless process, and it is possible to point to a succession of phases, interests and influences: the early period under the influence of Fichte's Ego-Philosophy (1794-1797); the Romantic Philosophy of Nature (1797-1800) which attempted to show the indwelling of the potential spirit in all natural objects and its coming to fulfilment in man; the Identity-system (1801-1804) which developed to the extreme the Spinozistic principle of the ontological unity of everything in the one eternal Substance, viz., the Absolute which is beyond all antitheses, beyond subject and object, spirit and matter, ideal and real; the Philosophy of Art (1802-1803) in which art became a religion-substitute, and artistic intuition the way to see God; the Philosophy of Freedom (1804 or 1806-1854); and the final philosophy of Mythology and Revelation (1827-1854) which became a form of speculative theism.

Despite these transformations, however, there have always been those who saw no definite breaks in the development of Schelling's thought. Hubert Beckers,²² for example, considered Schelling's whole philosophy to be just a continuance of the principle of Freedom - "the freedom and independence of the spirit" is its underlying theme. Eduard von Hartmann²³ sought to establish an underlying unity, although he thought this could be done only by ignoring the "romantic-reactionary" features of the Late-Philosophy. E. Schertel,²⁴ however, regarded Schelling's system as "an organic structure" in which the beginning resides in the end and the end in the beginning. For P. Genth's²⁵ the problems of Schellingian philosophy formed, by and large, the constants, while their solutions provided the variables. In 1923, Kuno Fischer distinguished three or four epochs and yet

insisted that "nowhere is there an affirmative, definite break" in Schelling's developing thought (1923:690). And E. Stamm²⁶ was convinced that the later philosophy offered a synthesis of all the earlier periods.

With this last opinion Paul Tillich is in agreement. Tillich's early work on Schelling (1912) understood the antinomies in Schelling's thought as having their reconciliation and synthesis in the Last Philosophy, especially that primary and most profound antinomy between mysticism (the feeling of unity with the Absolute) and the consciousness of guilt. The Last Philosophy is but a completion of the beginnings, the over-arching unity of opposites and periods. In similar vein, Walter Schulz (1955) expressed the conviction that Schelling remained an idealist to the end, carrying idealism to its extreme limit. And Gabriel Marcel, in supporting Schulz' thesis, observes: "the importance of this (thesis) was stressed for us by Heidegger" (1957:74).

An event with an important bearing on this dispute was the publication of the text discovered in 1913 by Franz Rosenzweig, viz., "*Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus*". This publication encouraged the conviction that there was a great deal less discontinuity in Schelling's thought than some had previously imagined. As Marcel (1957:74f) points out, this text, which dates from 1796 when Schelling was only 21, does not bear the author's name and is written in the hand of Hegel. The intriguing question of authorship has been explored in detail (in French) by Tilliette (1987:41) who adroitly concludes that he has seen the hand of Esau (Hegel) and at the same time heard the voice of Jacob (Schelling) (Gen 27:22).

Rosenzweig, Schulz, Jaspers and others are convinced the text is Schelling's and find in it a program which corresponds in advance to the complete development of a philosophy whose direction has in reality remained constant. Here, for example, we hear the call for a Mythology of Reason, a mythology in the service of the idea. Philosophy must become mythological!²⁷

Father Copleston, who also discerns a visible continuity in Schelling's thought - the whole "is linked together by the theme of the relation between the finite and the infinite" - cites this System-program in evidence. He summarizes as follows:

The projected system would proceed from the idea of the ego or self as an absolutely free being by way of the positing of the non-ego to the sphere of speculative physics. It would then proceed to the sphere of

the human spirit. The principles of historical development would have to be laid down, and the ideas of a moral world, of God and of the freedom of all spiritual beings would have to be developed. Further, the central importance of the idea of beauty would have to be shown, and the aesthetic character of the highest act of reason. Finally, there would have to be a new mythology, uniting philosophy and religion (1965:126).

Then, commenting on this projected program of the young Schelling, Copleston succinctly observes:

This program is illuminating. On the one hand it illustrates the element of discontinuity in Schelling's thought. For the fact that he proposes to start from the ego reveals the influence of Fichte, an influence which grew progressively less as time went on. On the other hand, the program illustrates the element of continuity in Schelling's philosophizing. For it envisages the development of a philosophy of Nature, a philosophy of History, a philosophy of art, a philosophy of freedom and a philosophy of religion and mythology, themes which were to occupy his attention in turn. In other words, though Schelling at first gave the impression of being a disciple of Fichte, his interests and bent of mind were already apparent at the beginning of his career (1965:126).

Today, then, one may feel assured that Schelling's philosophy is no succession of discrete systems, but a continuous reflection, each solution raising further problems requiring new solutions. "The modern student who fails to perceive a connection," writes Fackenheim, "does well to suspect that the fault lies, not with Schelling, but with himself" (1954:565). We may even speak of a planned continuity in which, in a sense, the beginning and the end of Schelling's philosophizing coincide.

This conclusion, however, simply raises a new question. If Schelling remained an idealist to the end, as some have insisted, how can he be regarded as an authentic precursor of Existentialism, as many others hold?

E. Was Schelling an Existentialist?

This, according to Marcel (1957:73), is the most important question we can ask ourselves about Schelling.

In relatively recent years, a number of scholars and students of Nineteenth Century thought have declared Schelling deserving of the title "existentialist" or "philosopher of existence" or "precursor of modern existentialism." Their number includes Karl Löwith, Paul Tillich, Walter Kaufman, William Barrett and Emil Fackenheim. Others, like Gabriel Marcel, Frederick Copleston and Vincent McCarthy have not been too sure. First, we consider the affirmative claims.

Paul Tillich calls Schelling "the first great critic of essentialist thinking since Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) who was in a way the predecessor of all existentialists" (1967:141). While still in his twenties, Schelling had initiated the romantic Philosophy of Nature and kept pace with its changing periods until what Tillich calls "the decisive turning point" when "in Schelling the second phase of Romanticism became Existentialism." This emphasis dominated Schelling's later period, hence, in Tillich's judgment, the last or "Positive" philosophy represents the philosophically decisive break with Hegel and the beginnings of modern Existentialism (1967:142).²⁸ Walter Kaufman²⁹ agrees that Schelling is not only the leading philosopher among the German Romanticists but a precursor of the Existentialists. And Marcel (1957:73) mentions thinkers, especially in Germany - he cites Reisner and Knittermeyer³⁰ - who see in Schelling a precursor of the philosophy of existence.

In wider perspective, Tillich understands the revolt of Schelling, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Feuerbach against Hegel as giving rise to existential elements in their thought which makes them all "sources of present day Existentialism" (1967:243). William Barrett concurs: "Existentialism is the counter-Enlightenment come at last to philosophic expression" (1962:275).³¹ And Karl Löwith (1941) can say of Schelling's Berlin lectures (the 1841 lectures on the Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation): "with this last event in the history of classic German philosophy begins the 'philosophy of existence' which Marx and Kierkegaard developed in opposition to Hegel, the one externally, the other internally" (1967:113).³²

These Berlin lectures launched the Positive Philosophy. They began in an atmosphere of great expectancy - "the tension is unbelievable" (Plitt, 1870:63). Schelling attacked Hegel's ontology as merely "negative", i.e., capable of grasping only potential not real being, and proposed a "positive" philosophy that would deal with real existence.³³

Now it is a striking fact that Kierkegaard, the acknowledged "father of Modern Existentialism", actually attended 42 of Schelling's Berlin lectures on the Philosophy of Revelation (from November 15, 1841 to February 4, 1842). Kierkegaard left us his lecture Notes (Hong and Hong, 335-412) and some comments in his letters. But he certainly did not find in Schelling a kindred spirit. Well before the semester was ended Kierkegaard's opinion of Schelling underwent a radical reversal.

During the second lecture Kierkegaard wrote, "I am so happy to have heard Schelling's lecture - indescribably" (xxi) "I have put all my hopes in Schelling" (xxii). But by January 16, 1842, he reported, "I have completely given up on Schelling. I merely listen to him, write nothing down either here or at home" (xxii). Again, "Schelling talks the most insufferable nonsense" and Kierkegaard refers to "the insolence in which no philosopher has outdone Schelling". Warily Kierkegaard concludes, "I am too old to attend lectures, just as Schelling is too old to give them. His whole doctrine of potencies betrays the highest degree of impotence" (xxiii). "He talks endless nonsense" (xxiv).

So the Honges conclude that, *at least for Kierkegaard*, "there was scarcely the seed of existentialism sometimes claimed for the Berlin lectures". Kierkegaard's disillusionment with the lectures "was due to Schelling's virtual abandonment of his initial distinction between *quid sit* (what it is) and *quod sit* (that it is). The lectures simply "culminated in a historical philosophy of mythology and religion" (xxiii).

Nevertheless, both Schelling and Kierkegaard would *agree* that existence is too rich, too dense, too concrete to be reduced to essence or grasped in a *a priori* fashion or caught in the nets of logic. Schelling "pointed to freedom and existence as facts which no possible dialectical system could absorb; the step from rational system to existence was a *metabasis eis allo genos*" (Fackenheim 1954:567). It is because Schelling's Positive Philosophy deals with the actual situation in time and space, that Tillich (and others) insists: "the term 'Positive philosophy' expresses the same thing that we call Existentialism today" (1967:150 cf. Marcel, 1957:73).

There is, however, another side to all this, as we said. Father Copleston is characteristically cautious. Referring to the tendency to see in Schelling's Positive Philosophy, and in his emphasis on existence and freedom, "an anticipation of some themes of Existentialism", Copleston warns us that "the desire to find anticipations of later ideas in illustrious minds of the past should not

blind us to the great differences between the idealist and existentialist movements." Nevertheless, he concedes, the tendency "has some limited justification" (1965:181f).

We can explain the positive sense in which Schelling was an existentialist by "defining" Existentialism as a certain *posture* or stance and as a concern with certain characteristic *themes*. If "existentialist" indicates that posture assumed "whenever men have insisted on the limits of reason, declaring that logic alone cannot account for the guilt, dread, anxiety, alienation and latent meaninglessness of life",³⁴ then Schelling was an Existentialist. If *Existentialism* tries to produce a *total* picture of human reality and therefore feels compelled to include the absurd, the irrational, the subterranean Furies within us, even granting them a central place in the total human economy, then Schelling was an Existentialist. If an *Existentialist* is one who speaks of alienation and estrangement, of sin and death, of the basic fragility and contingency of life, of the impotence of reason confronted by the depth of existence, of the Abyss that separates essence and existence, and of man who must always exist in untruth as well as truth, then Schelling was an Existentialist. Tillich (1967:150) can well observe: "there is hardly one category in twentieth century existentialist poetry, literature, philosophy and indirectly the visual arts which you cannot find in these lectures" (i.e., the Last Philosophy).

Some, like McCarthy (1986) feel there is "an existential ring to Schelling's speculative theism", and that later existentialist formulae, like Sartre's "existence precedes essence", can be superimposed upon the God concept, thus pressing the claim that Schelling is an Existentialist.

For example: 'while Schelling would hold that God is perfect from all eternity, God's historical becoming is held to be part of his essence, and thus it would not be incorrect to paraphrase Sartre and to say that god's existence precedes his (historical) essence.' (1966:192) (This point is noted by Marti, 1982:225).

We might best conclude, however, that Schelling is *both* essentialist *and* existentialist at the same time in his Last Philosophy. He brings German Idealism to its completion, its limit, and in that very moment he heralds the philosophy of existence. Reason becomes "ecstatic", "mythological", and Mythology becomes "rational."

Schelling never cast away the philosophy of essence which he and

Hegel had worked out in their youth. He simply completed it with the philosophy of existence. The latter needs the former, and the former at its limit demands the latter. Positive and Negative Philosophy together make up the whole of Philosophy. Concludes Tillich,

Therefore there is an essentialist framework in his mind. Existentialism is possible only as an element in a larger whole, as an element in a vision of the structure of being in its created goodness, and then as a description of man's existence within that framework. The conflicts between his essential goodness and his existential estrangement cannot be seen at all without keeping essentialism and existentialism together. Theology must see both sides, man's essential nature, wonderfully and symbolically expressed in the Paradise story, and man's existential condition under sin, guilt and death (as portrayed in the myth of the Fall) (1967:245).

For Schelling, as for Tillich, pure Essentialism and pure Existentialism were equally impossible. Pure Essentialism is impossible, says Tillich (1967:245), if one is personally in the human situation; it becomes metaphysical arrogance (as in Hegel). And pure Existentialism is impossible because man "can and must express his encounter with the world in terms of language", hence, of universals. Thus, when we ask, from our vantage point and in our terminology, "Was Schelling an Existentialist?" we can suppose him answering as Tillich later did: "I say, fifty-fifty" (1967:245).

F. Schelling as Philosopher of Intellect and Will

Another way of grasping Schelling's thought is to see it as a profound attempt to resolve the tension between intellect and will.

In Paul Tillich's view, it is precisely the creative tension between intellect and will that fills all Western philosophy with life and movement. On the one hand, the rationalist tradition insists on the metaphysical primacy of intellect, and its protagonists go back to Aristotle and include Thomas Aquinas and the Dominicans, medieval nominalists, British empiricists, German classical philosophers and modern linguistic analysts. On the other hand, Voluntarism, the philosophy in which the element of "will" is decisive, has a lineage that stretches from Augustine through St. Francis and the Franciscans, Bonaventura (with his doctrine of the primacy of will as love), Duns

Scotus, the German mystics and Luther, to Schelling and modern Voluntarism (1967:191-197). There is, however, a breakthrough of the element of will in the writings of Kant (for example, in the priority he gave to practical reason), Fichte and Schelling. And from Schelling the line runs through Schopenhauer to Freud and modern depth psychology, and through Schopenhauer and Nietzsche to such thinkers as Bergson, Heidegger, Sartre, Whitehead and Hartshorne.

It is this *tension* between intellect and will, or reason and unreason, which we find at the heart of Schelling's philosophizing. Especially as a result of his acquaintance with Jacob Boehme and F. C. Oetinger (as early as 1803)³⁵ Schelling came to see in the divine life, as in human life, an ultimate conflict between the Logos - the creative principle of light, wisdom and truth - and that contradictory element of will, the dark, demonic, destructive principle in God. As Tillich notes: "This tension makes the divine life not simply a sheer actuality (*actus purus*), as in Aristotle, but a dynamic process with the potentiality for conflict. In God this inner conflict is always victoriously overcome, but in creatures it breaks out destructively as well as creatively" (1967:194).

Before Schelling produced his Philosophy of Nature, he was a philosopher of will. Now in his late philosophy (beginning clearly in his *On Human Freedom*, 1809), he again comes to understand Will as original being. In his *Philosophical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, he writes:

The old proposition is here once again in place: the original being is will, and will is not merely the beginning but also the *content* of the first emergent being (V:570).

Thus, Will is understood not merely as a psychological phenomenon but as "the universal driving dynamics of all life processes."³⁶ It is present in the physical realm as natural forces like gravitation, in plants as the life urge, in animals (including man) as instincts and drives, and in man as both conscious and unconscious will.

This dynamic element in all reality - in God and man - has both destructive and creative aspects. When the two aspects are united, we have creative spirit. As Marcel (1957:78) puts it, it is the joining together (*enchainement*) of knowledge (*savoir*) and freedom (*liberté*), i.e., will, which becomes the central motif of the Last Philosophy. As we shall see, the ultimate form of religion is, for Schelling, "philosophical

religion", and by this he means that free religion of the Spirit in which intellect (reason) and free will (or conscious affirmation) come together and are one.

G. The New Interest in Schelling and his Works

Schelling's Last Philosophy, largely neglected or rejected by the theological and philosophical interests of the nineteenth century, has been the object of appreciative interest in the twentieth. This interest has been steadily growing since mid-century and now, at century's end, is flourishing richly, even among English-speaking scholars.

The growth of the literature may be sketched in this way. First, the standard Schneeberger Bibliography (1954) lists over 1,000 items for the 150 years up to 1953. Then Sandkuhler's bibliography adds 324 items from 1954 to 1969. (*F. W. J. Schelling*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1970:24-41). Thomas O'Meara's Bibliographical Essay (1977f) surveys the major books and articles from the period c. 1955-1975. O'Meara notes, correctly, that the period 1965-1975 saw little new interest in the English-speaking world.

In the years 1970-1995, however, the growth of the literature has been vigorous and is showing up in works in English. The select bibliography at the end of this volume lists some two dozen books and articles in English on Schelling, his works and his situation in European thought. All are from the period 1970-1995. Finally, the eighty volume Bavarian *Ausgabe* now appearing (described in Bibliography below) will provide material, much of it new, to spark Schelling Scholarship well into the twenty-first century. The total Schelling literature now deserves to be called massive.

Historically, one reason (it was my own reason) for this new interest in Schelling was and is the simple desire on the part of some to explore the sources of inspiration of those important philosophers of our time who mention Schelling in order to express admiration or indebtedness - thinkers like Tillich, Jaspers, Cassirer and Heidegger from earlier in this century. Tillich may be the most familiar case in point. He ranked Schelling with the world's greatest philosophers - Plato, Origen, Kant³⁷ - and frequently acknowledged his indebtedness to Schelling's Last Philosophy. For example:

I recall the unforgettable moment when by chance I came into possession of the very rare first edition of the collected works of

Schelling in a book shop on my way to the University of Berlin. I had no money, but I bought it anyway ... what I learned from Schelling became determinative of my own philosophical and theological development.

A second historical reason for a new interest in Schelling is found in the appearance of Existentialist philosophy in the twentieth century. The widespread concern with existential themes (first emerging after World War I) and the great interest in many quarters in the philosophy of existence, are not unrelated to the fact that in this century a whole succession of world-experiences and threats of catastrophic proportions have made us (and continue to make us) thoroughly and fully problematic to ourselves. The belief that the roots of modern Existentialism were to be found in the post-idealist (post-Hegelian) philosophers like Schelling (and Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche) increased curiosity about his Last Philosophy.

Although the Last Philosophy has its own intrinsic worth, depth, power and fascination, it can, like all philosophies, fall in and out of favour. O'Meara (1977-78) has wisely suggested that "Schelling's fortune is joined to the shifting tides of Western culture". Writing of the mid-sixties, he notes:

It is at least possible that ten years ago in the United States a new appreciation of the themes of romanticism began. Process, freedom, the future, the desire to join science, mysticism and art with ontology - these may surface as motifs giving a truer impression of the idealist than a picture of Schelling as the intellectual comrade of Nietzsche and Jaspers (1977-1978:284).

Finally, Schelling has been found useful to scholars of various traditions today - philosophers, theologians and others. Here are three instances from theology.

(i) Robert Brown (1990) has an article titled "Resources in Schelling for New Directions in Theology". Brown repeats the view that Schelling (like Leibniz) is a philosopher's philosopher and claims him as

a source of potentially fruitful ideas for other philosophers and theologians to employ in their own ways. His forte is a type of fundamental thinking that challenges others, who would be systematic themselves, to probe certain issues more deeply than they otherwise might do. In this regard Schelling's ultimate niche in the

history of philosophy may well prove to be less like Hegel's and more like Heidegger's (1990:2).

And again,

In their relative neglect of Schelling (and Hegel) some of what today's process theologians do looks a bit like a needless reinventing of the wheel ... Schelling's concern with a complex and living God long antedates the process theologies of our own century. It is an enduring contribution ... (1990:7).

(ii) In his article on "Christ in Schelling's Philosophy of Religion", O'Meara mentions three of today's theologians who have direct links with Schelling- Walter Kasper, Jurgen Moltmann and E. Jüngel, all of Tübingen. Kasper gives a representative positive assessment:

The historical recollection of one of the last great plans in Christology should be grasped as a pointer towards our own reflection on Christology. Clearly, working with a philosopher of the stature of Schelling will serve as an introduction to the basic and fundamental problems of every Christology (Kasper, 1973, in O'Meara, 1986:276).

(iii) In an apologia for a new theology, Fritz Marti (1982:217ff) confidently describes Schelling as a "Theologian for the Coming Century".

(iv) As a last example of the new mood, I note that quite a number of scholars today are identifying aspects of Schelling's thought which relate to Modern and Post-modern philosophy, and Schelling is being acclaimed as Precursor of all manner of things. For example Bowie (1933) writes:

Schelling uses a notion of the unconscious in ways that point to Freud; his cosmological speculations lead him to notions that sound like the 'big bang'; his Naturphilosophie echoes contemporary ecological concerns; the way he analyses the question of being points to Heidegger and Derrida; his conception of language points to Jacques Lacan. These links are not fortuitous; one can trace historical patterns of influence in all these examples (1993:6).

There is a new mood and a new interest in Schelling today, making possible a revised, less prejudiced and more appreciative evaluation of his work.

Schelling and the Christian Tradition

A. Schelling and Theological Orthodoxy

In his *Philosophy of Revelation* (The Seventh Book below) Schelling repeatedly insists that his purpose is to “explain” Christianity but that in attempting to do so he has not the slightest interest in whether he happens to be in agreement or disagreement with “Orthodoxy”.

For me there is no question of having to agree with any Church doctrine. I have no interest in being orthodox, as it is called, as I would not find it difficult to be the opposite. For me Christianity is simply an appearance I am trying to *explain*(VI:593).

And again,

Perhaps the *Philosophy of Revelation* shall be reproached with being ‘orthodox’ (for this is usually regarded as a reproach). But it is not a matter of orthodoxy - I reject this because it would give *Philosophy of Revelation* an entirely false standpoint. In fact, the ‘Dogmatic’ which is set up or affirmed is of no concern to me whatsoever. It is not *my* task, it is not the task of the *philosopher*, to agree with anyone. My concern is to understand Christianity in all its characteristic distinctiveness. Of

course, *we* are, through our philosophical ideas, in the position to understand Christianity a good deal more truly and at the same time more rationally than many a half-orthodox view, and even than the so-called pure rational views which resolve the *real* aspect of Christianity into nothing (VI:472).

This explanation of Christianity must be given, Schelling believes, in terms of a "higher history", for he is convinced that history is ruled by "higher causes". Behind all phenomena lie "higher laws" which are expressions of the divine will.

Those who recognize nothing higher and nothing divine in history might even derive an event like the Reformation from the most unworthy causes. This reveals a beggarly self-interest. Once we commit ourselves to search for such causes, there will be scarcely a subject for which causes just as purely arbitrary and worthless cannot be found. But human affairs are not ruled by such arbitrary causes, and whatever instrumental and purely nominal causes might have contributed - indeed, with respect to the first foundation of Christianity, they are not to be excluded - the real causes lie not in this but in higher laws in terms of which the divine will prescribes every development (VI:706).

B. Schelling and the Scriptures

Now this "explanation" of Christianity necessarily entails a true understanding of the New Testament. "The real meaning and significance of Christianity," says Schelling, "must be judged according to the authentic sources of Christianity" (VI:593).³⁸ And these authentic sources, the New Testament writings, have a special status since they are the products of the Apostolic Age.

The point to note here is that for Schelling the Apostolic or first century Church belongs to an age which is "before or outside of history." This first century church was "pre-historical" and represents "an age of innocence and potentiality", a state of "merely negative unity from which the church was bound to issue forth." (In Schelling's time this point of view had been forcefully set forth by J. A. W. Neander, 1789-1850).³⁹ Since Apostolic Church was a supra-natural event, the canons of modern critical historiography cannot be applied to it.

It follows, for Schelling, that the Apostolic writings are also supra-historical, with a content that completely escapes what we today would call Higher Criticism and Form Criticism. The historical-critical approach to the Scriptures tends to explain them away in empirical terms. Fundamentalist literalism, on the other hand, doesn't *explain* them at all! The way out is to adopt what Schelling calls "tautegorical" interpretation. Christianity, like every other significant phenomenon, *contains in itself the key to its own comprehension*. Hence the exegesis of Revelation, as of Mythology, is to be carried out in the most literal fashion, but in the context and terminology of pure rational philosophy which succeeds in bringing out the true meaning, "the hidden system". We must abide by "the perfectly literal meaning (*vollkommene Eigentlichkeit*) of the New Testament expressions", declares Schelling, and then we will have "explained Christianity purely in its own terms, just as we explained Mythology in its own terms" (VI:616, 626).⁴⁰

Just as I have taught you through the Philosophy of Mythology to see truth in mythology understood literally or strictly (i.e., not taken allegorically), so I want to place you, through the Philosophy of Revelation, in a position to understand all expressions of Revelation in the most literal way, even more literally than is the case with many views that are regarded as orthodox, not to mention those that are half or fully rationalistic (VI:472f).

If you really want to explain something, you must not begin by falsifying that which is to be explained in order to make the job easier (VI:593).

It would be a sad misunderstanding of Schelling's position if we supposed him to be simply ignorant of the aims, methods and achievements of the historical-critical scholars. At many points we can notice incidentally his awareness of the results of criticism.⁴¹ And, of course, he himself had engaged in critical exercises - as witness his Master's Dissertation (already mentioned), written at age seventeen, which chose the Garden of Eden story (Genesis 3) as a concrete illustration of how a *myth* is born and how it becomes a common inheritance; or the fact that long before the advent of D. F. Strauss' *Life of Jesus*, Schelling had considered the "hypothesis of mythical interpretations of the life of Jesus".⁴² The *reason* that Schelling, in his

1841 lectures, virtually ignores all the turbulent critical work of the years 1835-1841 - the work of men like F. C. Baur, W. Vatkes, D. F. Strauss, Ludwig Feuerbach - is simply that he was convinced it misses the point: it does not "explain" Christianity!

On one occasion, however, Schelling did reply to the charge that he consistently makes use of the "canonical" scriptures "without critical-historical distinction" (VI:710-712). He explains that he regards the New Testament scriptures "first and foremost as sources whose authors were filled with the Spirit of Christianity and in which are to be recognized inspirations of the Christian Spirit." *Who* the author was, is of no consequence. *What* he wrote as inspired is what matters. Hence, when "critics" point out the uncertain authenticity of a New Testament book (e.g., II Peter) or even of *all* New Testament books, Schelling can indicate the irrelevance of this consideration for his view in the following way:

This certainty about authorship has importance only for that dogmatic method which does not regard the chief theses of Christian teaching as true for its own sake, but which looks upon these teachings as true merely because and insofar as they are in books which have come to be looked upon as apostolic and inspired by God. We have never - at least, never explicitly - dealt with the question of the *theopneustia* (divine inspiration) of the New Testament books, for we do not regard a particular doctrine as true because it occurs in those writings but, quite the reverse, as true because we recognize it as true, i.e., as necessary, in that great context in terms of which Christianity is to be comprehended. This is the reason we regard those books as authentic and inspired by the Spirit of Christianity, and only in this sense have we appealed to them (VI:710).

It is therefore the *content* of a given writing, and not its external witnesses, that makes it Christian and, in particular, apostolic. "A true critique of the New Testament means, therefore, something more than mere external erudition and a facile play with unhistorical possibilities." The "greatest proof of the authenticity" of the Apostolic writings is precisely the "great contrast" between them and the first *post*-Apostolic writings. For *whoever* wrote these Canonical books - even if a post-apostolic man were responsible! - it makes "no difference at all from *our* standpoint", for in the nature of the case "criticism" or "critical questions" will never "establish that

understanding which is capable of giving us a true clue to a right criticism and a reliable, positive foundation" (VI:711). The all-important thing is to understand the inner (higher) meaning of the scriptures.

Kuno Fischer fulminates against Schelling's view, believing him to be completely undone by the results of historical criticism (1923:710-715). He believes that Schelling, who in his *Philosophy of Art* was critical enough to say: "Christ is a historical person whose biography was written before his birth", is now, in his Berlin period, quite inconsistent in ignoring the historical-critical approach in favor of an allegorical-mystical interpretation of Scripture. But Schelling's view of Revelation as *knowledge* given to the apostles under special circumstances - a knowledge which must be distinguished from that truth into which the Holy Spirit will lead us, and which is not Revelation at all but truly *human* knowledge - may well represent an important insight into the function of the New Testament in Christianity as a living religion. In any case, when Schelling says the Scriptures were "inspired", he means precisely that there were "higher causes" at work, and concedes the possibility that the scripture-authors did not *necessarily* understand their own work. For example, in discussing the meaning of Mt 1:20, Schelling can say:

I will not contend that the author of the gospel intended the expression to mean exactly what we understand it to mean. This is quite unnecessary. In many cases we see the evangelists innocently writing down something without seeing all the implications or personally taking in the whole meaning. It partly resembles the situation in Mythology where consciousness gave expression to things whose meaning it did not take in or control. The concept of Inspiration is to be held on to especially in this sense (VI:569).⁴³

Finally, Schelling is ready to admit the presence of "epic embroidery", "mythological elaboration", "subjective interpretation", and "historical conditioning" in the Scriptures. But he insists that the *Subject* of Revelation is not endangered thereby.

Everywhere and at all times in the New Testament, one must distinguish the Subject (*die Sache*) and the way of understanding the same (*Auffassungsweise*). The latter is determined by the time as well as by the interpreting concepts. *The Subject is older than any presentation of*

it. The former remains objective even though one concedes something subjective in the latter (VI:570).

To see *how* Schelling executes this tautegorical exegesis of Scripture, one should consult most of The Seventh Book below. Admittedly, there are numerous occasions when one wonders if exegesis has ceased and eisegesis taken over,⁴⁴ but Schelling does not himself think he is *imposing* a system on the scriptures. He believes he is eliciting, making explicit, that hidden "system" which is "everywhere presupposed but nowhere completely expressed" in the New Testament (VI:425).

C. Reality as Theogony: the Potencies and the Life of God

Although for some it will appear as a *hybris* worse than Hegel's, the fact is that Schelling is actually attempting to write a Life of God. God is not a system but a life. He is born; He comes to be. Reality does not simply have a structure, it has a history; it is not an object but an event; it is not static but dynamic; it is not immobility but process. The history of God is the history of being itself. World, man, Father, Son, Devil, Spirit - all are ultimately moments in the divine life. But Schelling is not a pantheist! He is categorically opposed to all pantheistic or emanationist interpretations of God. At the same time he wished to validate pantheism and polytheism as phases in the history of religion that are part of the restoration of monotheism (McCarthy, 1986:193). "God is already Lord of the world before the world, i.e., when it is up to him to posit himself or not." "God is not God by virtue of his real relation to the world but by virtue of his possible relation." (Marcel, 1957:79)

Schelling is a Monotheist who can posit plurality in the Godhead. Ueberweg has a neat summary:

Schelling distinguishes in God (a) blindly necessary or unpremeditating being; (b) the three potencies of the divine essence: unconscious will, the *causa materialis* of creation; conscious, considering will, the *causa efficiens*; and the union of the both, or the *causa finalis, secundum quam omnia fiunt*; and (c) the three persons who proceed from the three potencies. These persons are the Father, as the absolute possibility of overcoming; the Son, as the overcoming power;

and the Spirit, as completion of the overcoming. In Nature work only potencies; in man, personalities (1873:225).

Schelling has an analysis of the true meaning of Monotheism in his book of that name (Book I of *The Philosophy of Mythology*, VI:255-357 - not included in the present volume). His analysis is in two parts: (i) the *Conceptual* Being of God, which sees God as the One who is able to be in three forms or moments (as Power to be, as pure Being, and as Spirit or "the power of Being to posit itself as such"); (ii) the *Actual* Being of God, in which the divine Will separates the potencies, placing them in tension, thus giving rise to a Theogonic process which is also a Process of Creation (the Potencies being Causes). The End of Creation (i.e., of the Theogonic process) is *God-positing human consciousness*, a conclusion identical with the conclusion reached in the Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology (The First Book below).

The relations between the persons in the Godhead is dealt with in detail in The Seventh Book (below). It is enough to note here that in the Creation, "the Son is not outside the Father, not a personality acting independently," but in Salvation He *is* outside the Father, and *does* act independently - "even though in other respects *He is the Father himself*, the Father posited outside himself in a second personality ('He who sees me, sees the Father')." Hence Paul can say: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19) (VI:479).

In the phrase "God *reconciled* the world to Himself through Christ", the word "through" has much greater mediative significance than it has in the phrase "God *created* the world through the Son."

You see how the relation returns here greatly enhanced, by virtue of which the Father emerged in the creation directly as B, but His true will lay in the Son, and through the latter he overcame the same being which he as Father posited and affirmed. *The same God* who, as merely Father of the world (i.e., of the being which was faithless to him) was absolutely irreconcilable, now, as Son, reconciled this very being, and *in* this mediation is restored the highest unity of God with Himself - a unity which was destroyed by the perfidy of man.

It requires a certain courage of the mind to hold fast this relation with one's whole strength, just as it requires a confidence of the heart to appropriate it (VI:479).

And again,

The Subject reveals Himself as the *true Son, hence as the Father*, only in the Incarnation ... This is the remarkable end of that history of the beginning of things, indeed of Being itself ... To all who received him, he gave power to become children of God ... *Now the divine birth, broken by the Fall, is restored in those who believe* (VI:509f).

For a fuller discussion of the Potencies and the Life of God see The Second Book below, McCarthy (1986:194f) and Beach (1994).

D. Schelling's Christology

Schelling, reflecting the interests of his time, sees Christology, i.e., the doctrine of the *Person* rather than the *Work* of Christ, as crucial for Christian Theology. Christ and Satan are neither created nor are they eternal principles. They are potencies of being "posited *from* eternity". They are aspects of the divine economy, necessary to the divine life and to the process of creation.

"The New Testament view," says Schelling, "is that Christ pre-existed" (VI:427). It might be objected that in a number of places (including the Synoptic Gospels) the New Testament seems to think otherwise. Schelling, however, does not recognize any diversity of New Testament Christologies. He treats even those passages that seem to some to support Adoptionist views as consistent with his Incarnationism.⁴⁵ His discussion is in terms of Pauline Kenoticism and Johannine Logos Christology.

In Germany in the mid-third of the Nineteenth Century, writes Claude Welch, the Christological question was examined in a metaphysical or "objective" way. Welch describes the three major types of theology at that time and points to their common problem, namely, "the being of God in Christ, or more explicitly, the doctrine of the incarnation in relation to the concept of God" (1965:4). Among these speculative Christologies", adds O'Meara, "Schelling's holds a privileged, if neglected, position" (1986:285).

But times were changing. Kenoticism was being superseded. Speculation was out of favor. Other ways of posing the question of Christ were emerging. Welch writes:

Albrecht Ritschl was the new representative man, the one who tried to

accomplish what the new theology most deeply wanted accomplished, viz., a cutting loose from the spirit of 'speculation', and even from the metaphysical in theology, and a turning to the 'practical' as a new foundation and form for theology. All the mid-nineteenth century's powerful systems for uniting the dogmatic and the philosophical were to be left behind. Thus also the Christological question as an 'objective' or 'metaphysical' matter was to be given up in favor of other modes of posing the question of Christ, restricted to 'historical' or 'value' or 'existential' judgments.

Whether in this, or in the larger turn away from the 'objective', the new theology was an advance or a retreat, whether it more fruitfully met or merely evaded the questions put to theology in the nineteenth century, is another kind of question ... (1965:17f).

E. Sources of Schelling's Christology

In describing the Christology of Schelling's final system, O'Meara notes that it is "fashioned out of idealism, romanticism, new natural sciences, mythologies and Christianity" (1986:275f). Here, however, I want to speak in terms of Schelling's indebtedness to the traditions of German Mysticism, Swabian theosophy and pietism, and Christian eschatology and note the parallel between Schelling's work and the evolutionary thinking of Teilhard de Chardin.

(i) Benz (1955) has argued that German Idealism may be viewed as a speculative revival of the Philosophy of Religion and Philosophy of Nature of German Mysticism, (e.g., Eckhart and Boehme). Schelling's understanding of Christ is profoundly influenced by Jacob Boehme, the father of Protestant Mysticism, and Robert Brown (1977) has given the relationship careful study. Boehme's *Way to Christ* (1624) was translated by J. J. Stoudt (1947) who reminds us that it is really "the search for the logos of being that lies deeply embedded in the life of faith". It is a quest which man must attempt freely and alone, and one to which he is driven by the threat of meaninglessness and "the terrible abyss of human despair". Benz (1955:8) quotes Franz Pfeiffer (1845):

The German mystics are the patriarchs of German speculation. In them lie the beginnings of an independent German philosophy; indeed, the fundamental principles on which, centuries later, famous

systems were built, are found therein not merely in germ but to some extent already well articulated.

(ii) Idealistic philosophy is rooted also in Swabian Pietism. Schelling can claim a spiritual heritage that includes the great Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752), Philipp Matthäus Hahn and Hofäcker Friedrich Christoph Oetinger. Here is the same speculative impulse, says Benz, the same striving toward a religious total-view and a higher unity of Reason and Revelation, the same desire to make faith visible (1955:8-10).

(iii) There is also, however, a new and thoroughly unmystical element which comes out of the theological heritage to assume a directive role in German Idealism. It is what Benz describes as "a peculiar eschatological bias, a characteristic orientation toward History, the attempt to unravel the meaning of Being by way of an understanding of History" (1955:31).

This understanding of History, however, does not restrict itself to an interpretation of the past and the present, but has a prophetic *endzeitlichen* drive. It revolves around the idea of the fulfilment of time, the end of History; and Schelling, as well as Hegel and Franz von Baader, make no effort to hide the theological context behind this way of putting the question. On the contrary, they use in their metaphysics of history the vocabulary of the Christian expectation of the end-time since they speak of the 'Kingdom of God', 'the fulfilment of time', the 'judgment of the world', and the 'end-time' (1955:31).

(iv) Ernst Benz's *Evolution and Christian Hope*, ties Schelling into a tradition that stretches back to Christian beginnings, and may be traced through the 12th century abbot, Joachim of Fiore, and the 17th and 18th century Theosophists; through Schelling and Franz von Baader; and on into late nineteenth and twentieth century thinkers such as Karl Beth, Edgar Dacqué, Leopold Ziegler and Teilhard de Chardin.⁴⁶

Joachim of Fiore (1132-1202), for example, created the expectation of Johannine Christianity as the last and highest form of Christianity in the history of salvation, and joined the ideas of progress and development with the prophecy of the imminent fulfilment of the history of salvation to create "the model for the religious, social, political and philosophical utopias of modern times" (Benz, 1966:35-

48). F. C. Oetinger, in his *Theologia ex idea vitae deducta* (1765), sketched the history of salvation as a history of the total development of life through all its stages, and saw the goal and terminal point in the development of the universe as its transformation into human shape, namely, that of Christ.⁴⁷ Jacob Boehme, from whom Oetinger drew his real inspiration, "expressed the basic idea of Christian anthropology more clearly than Teilhard de Chardin, the idea of 'man being struck by the image of Christ.' When Adam turned away from God, he was 'struck' by the image of Christ in the very moment of his estrangement" (Boehme cited Eph. 1:4).

Adam is never left to himself. The image of Christ was given to him as a model which accompanied him through all the phases of the development of human consciousness, as the aim into which he should be molded and transformed. This aim was at first promise. But then, after its fulfilment through Jesus Christ, it became a force of transformation, an 'inauguration' of a new form of existence, an element of the progressive incorporation of pious humanity into the body of Christ, the beginning of a progressive permeation of humanity with resurrection as the new form of existence, a transformation of humanity and thereby of the universe into the corporeal form of the Spirit (Benz, 1966:170).

That Schelling stands in this line of development is abundantly clear in The Seventh Book below. Furthermore, as Benz notes, Schelling sought, as early as *The Ages of the World*, "a combination of scientific knowledge of the physical world with that of the spiritual world." This search, along with his "evolutionism" places Schelling in a tradition that may be traced straight to Teilhard de Chardin in our own day (1966:172).

Teilhard de Chardin's works have revived interest in this whole tradition. Although Teilhard stands completely outside the traditions of German philosophical and spiritual history (its works were unknown to him), there are similarities of theme and purpose. Writes Benz:

Teilhard de Chardin's ideas are reminiscent of many ideas and terms of seventeenth and eighteenth century Christian theosophy and of the Christian religious philosophy of Schelling and Franz von Baader (1966:168).

Both Schelling and Teilhard de Chardin attempted a theology which would integrate the understanding of the history of salvation into the total movement of evolution, and like Schelling, but unlike Hegel, Teilhard develops a philosophy which "flows into a philosophy of Freedom" (1966:228).

In his criticism of Teilhard, Benz raises an important issue that might well be kept in mind in considering Schelling's view of time and history. He writes:

Under the influence of the stretching into periods of aeons, the original spiritual and moral impulse of the Christian expectation of the end of time fades out. The idea that all lines of evolution converge in point Omega, leads, without fail, to the idea of *Universal Redemption*. *Humanity thus absorbs the Church*, and the final judgment becomes identical with the selection process of evolution in which much is sacrificed and eliminated. For its creator this theology may still be filled with ethical impulses. But its popularization cannot avoid a danger to which the supporters of universal redemption were exposed since the days of Origen: the dangerous feeling of security and the consciousness of being well taken care of in that stream of convergence which runs irresistibly toward its Omega (1966:229f).

F. Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions

Schelling takes what today is called a pluralist position vis-a-vis the world's religions. He stresses the uniqueness of Christianity, of course, but at the same time he insists on the fact of its continuity with all other religions. Jesus Christ is unique, and Christianity is the highest religion, and yet Christianity is the same kind of thing as all other religions (see Introduction to the Second Book below). Christ was present - though not *as* Christ - in "Paganism," i.e., the pre-Christian religions, and Paganism is the vast background for Christianity, finding its final truth and fulfilment there.

There is no question about the fact that Schelling holds Christ to be active in Paganism *before* the Incarnation in Jesus. He calls Christ "the pagan light," "the true potency of Paganism." But it is not clear that Christ continues to be active in Paganism, i.e., in the world's religions, after his earthly incarnation. On the one hand, Schelling can say: "in his death Christ died as this cosmic potency" (VI:473f), and can declare present-day "Paganism" to be dead and withered. On the other hand,

he declares that Christ is *eternally* the Mediator and Reconciler: "He took on himself all our sins and *in this way* became eternal reconciler." (VI:468, 473). To be sure, the *death* of Christ means His death as a "natural potency" and at the same time his transformation into a free personality. But He is present as free personality only in Christianity.

Has Schelling here made Christ the *victim* of a temporal succession? Should he have stressed explicitly that these functions of the divine - "natural potency" and "free reconciling personality" - have no temporal order in the Godhead and are both eternal, so that God as Mediative and Reconciling could be openly acknowledged as present *both* naturally *and* freely in all the world's religions, including Christianity? Does Schelling's theology reflect a nineteenth century Christian imperialism for which we must make appropriate allowance? See also O'Meara (1982) *Christianity as the Future of Paganism*.

A Last Word to Those Who Would Read Schelling

"Who should read Schelling?" and "How should Schelling be read?" have seemed to me to be questions not without some point; for Schelling is trying to make Mythology and Revelation intelligible in *religious* terms. He is after an explanation of Christianity in terms of a "higher history". He is after "a theory of everything" and the fortunes of his search may have genuine appeal only to those who, like Schelling himself, have been smitten with "ontological wonder-sickness" - Why anything? Why not Nothing? Why Reason? Why not Unreason? - and who possess an urge to intellectual adventure that is not easily turned aside.

The reader who plunges too cheerfully into the "labyrinth" (Zeltner) or the impenetrable "jungle" (Pfleiderer, Marcel) of Schelling's philosophical investigations, may be prepared one way or the other by our philosopher's frank admonition:

This is a long road which lies ahead of us, and I say this deliberately so that those who are minded to follow us may arm themselves ahead of time with the necessary strength and endurance, and so that those who are unwilling or unable to follow us may remain right where they are. For as in life, so in Science, there are cowardly decisions as well as valorous ones. And in any difficult climb, those who are lacking in breath and courage stop exhausted half-way (V:451).

This road is not for everyone. Schelling recognizes, of course, that there are many who do not want any "explanation" of this kind. There are, for example, those who say: "one should simply be satisfied with the grace of Christ, profit by it, and for the rest, inquire no further (VI:626). Well and good. If they are "satisfied with such a subjective Christianity", says Schelling, "no one has a right to say anything against them.⁴⁸ But surely, he hopes, such persons will, in their turn, concede freedom of inquiry to those who are "so constituted that for them knowledge and understanding go beyond everything," and who have "no heart for an uncomprehended grace." Such "scientific understanding", insists Schelling, is what will eventually unite even the most differently constituted of men (VI:626).

The three-part presentation of Schelling's work that now follows, abounds in curious, interesting and original ideas. For some who read it, Father Copleston's mature and genial counsel will seem appropriate. He identified the mood of much Schelling study at the end of the twentieth century when he earlier wrote:

It is not so much a question of looking to Schelling for solutions to problems as of finding stimulus and inspiration in his thought, points of departure for independent reflection. And possibly this is a characteristic of Schelling's philosophizing as a whole. Its value may be primarily suggestive and stimulative. But it can, of course, exercise this function only for those who have a certain initial sympathy with his mentality and an appreciation of the problems which he raised. In the absence of this sympathy and appreciation there is a natural tendency to write him off as a poet who chose the wrong medium for the expression of his vision of the world.⁴⁹

Past philosophic systems, insists Bolman, are "more than outmoded curios." They are, in fact, "fundamental ways in which man recurrently tries to establish the intelligibility of the world of nature and history in which he lives" (1942:8).