

The Limits of Rational Philosophy²⁹

A. The Self (= rational will) as divine and anti-divine

When Schelling moves from the physical aspect of the Soul (the domain of the Soul in general) to the hyper-physical or supra-material aspect of the Soul, he finds something completely new: a Will which is "its own act" (V:602). Aristotle called it *Nous*, not the "passive reason" of the noetic Soul, found among animals as well as men, but the distinctively human *Nous*, a *ετερον γενος ψυχης*, which has nothing in common with matter or with the four principles. Schelling calls it *Spirit* (*Geist*), and what Spirit wills is not something outside itself (e.g., the perishable world) but *itself*, i.e., it wills its own will. It is active, self-acting and the creator of Science. Admittedly, Aristotle sometimes calls it "the understanding of the Soul" and refers to it as theoretical reason, but basically he distinguishes it from the Soul:

It has no organic connection at all with the other parts of the soul, and all that one can say of it is that it comes to and enters the soul *from outside*, as something foreign to the soul ... Now the other predicates follow naturally: that the *Nous* alone possesses a separable existence, an eternal and imperishable nature (whereas the passive reason is perishable), that it is unmixed, since it alone exists only for itself and belongs to no genre, that it is without suffering, because it is in its

essence *Actus* ... and that it alone is divine (V:638).

This Spirit or Nous cannot be part of the intelligible world (the realm of Ideas), and yet it is within the competence of Rational Science to consider it inasmuch as it is something which is not *not* to be thought.

But with this advance, the character of science is changed, since outside of that which pure thought discovers as being in the state of possibility, there exists a reality external to thought, a reality which evolves from now on parallel to the latter and which serves as its proof and verification ... It is to be predicted that this Spirit - which is opposed to the Idea and accidental, i.e., independent with respect to it - will be in the future the only subject to interest us (V:603, 602).

When Schelling considers this Aristotelian notion of the sublimity of the Nous, he finds himself confronting a break in the logical progression and perceives we are at the limit of ancient philosophy.

It is clear that Aristotle, with his theory of active intelligence, has reached a limit beyond which he ought not to pass. Ascending from the material, he arrives at the same abyss (*Kluft*) before which Plato had found himself when he wanted to *descend* from the world of Ideas to the sensible world, and which he had not been able to cross. This astonishing *co*-incidence shows us that we are here at the limit of the possibilities of ancient philosophy ... (V:643).

If, however, the possibilities of ancient philosophy are exhausted with Plato and Aristotle (all further efforts being "digressions and diversions"), Schelling himself feels sure he can move beyond Aristotle in specifying the essence of Nous, or Spirit, as *Will*. True, Aristotle saw that the *energeia*, wherein he perceived the essence of the Nous, excludes everything potential, hylic and general, and that, as what is most personal in us, the Nous is divine and like God. But he did not see that the human spirit as *its own act* rises at the same time against God and sets itself over against him. He did not see, so to speak, the Fall of the Spirit. Schelling, however, insists: "being divine without being God, the Geist is at the same time designated as the anti-divine ... and the anti-divine is whatever is capable of taking the place of God" (V:642).

(i) What does it mean to call the spirit "Will"? Schelling does not have in mind a will that wills something, but simply "the will which wills to preserve the freedom of its will instead of taking it prisoner and positing it as mere potency", or "the will of the soul aspiring to breadth and freedom." He claims, furthermore, that a full and profound psychological analysis can show how, from this original will, one ends up with the Aristotelian intelligence (V:643ff).

In clarification, Schelling distinguishes "the will which wills only itself" and the will which is thus willed; in other words, the *original will* and the *willed will*. It is the latter which is truly *Spirit*, self-consciousness (or self-knowledge), the "I am". But the original Will, the Act whose consequence it is, "detaches itself from it and assumes in relation to it the character of a fateful and inscrutable Will."

This is the Spirit which no longer wills in an isolated and ephemeral way, but in an eternal and permanent fashion and forms the inner, indestructible *ground* of all free will. For what the first will willed to preserve in the conscious Spirit is freedom and will, and it is in the conscious Spirit that there resides the will which is the sole reason for its being (V:644).

The Spirit seeks understanding so that it can suppress all opposition to its willing - an opposition which is a consequence of the primal Will. Hence the Spirit *is* not understanding, but *becomes* understanding (V:645).

The Will, concludes Schelling, simply *is*. As "the beginning of a totally other world posited outside the Idea", one cannot say it is necessary but just that it *is*. It is the original accident (*Urzufall*), since "it has no cause outside itself" and since it is that "from which everything else that is accidental derives." Thus with this first accidentally actual Soul (i.e., with this birth of individuality) all other souls become possible:

This Soul in which the Will has arisen, is now no longer equal to the Soul in the Idea. It becomes, because of that Will, the individual soul, for it is precisely this will that constitutes its individual element. But with this first accidentally actual soul, there is posited an infinite possibility of other souls on an equality with the first: individual souls, each of which occupies, according to a preestablished order, the place which comes to it in the series of wills, i.e., the series of acts through

which each posits itself, and with itself, the world outside the Idea (V:646).

From the foregoing devolves this truth: "that the I of each one is such ... that the unfathomable act by which this I expresses itself is at the same time the act by which this world - the world outside the Idea - is posited for it (V:646). This result can be called *Subjective Idealism* inasmuch as it presupposes the world in the Idea, but it is not subjective in the Fichtean sense, for inasmuch as Schelling has restored the immanent reason which indwells things and found again the intelligible connections among things, his Idealism may be called *Objective*: "it deals with real ideas (ideas of things) and not with abstract concepts" (V:647f).

Since antiquity, the philosophical spirit has made no conquest comparable to that of Idealism as Kant first introduced it. To characterize it, however, one could do no better than cite these words of Fichte: "That whose essence and being consist purely in the fact that it posits itself, is the Ego; such as it is it posits itself, and such as it posits itself it is (V:648).

This identification of Schelling's *Geist* with the Aristotelian *Nous* and the Fichtean *Ego* - where each term is taken to refer to the same most personal and authentic individuality, the same active, self-conscious reason, the same principle of self-hood - reflects a view which affirms the personal continuance of the human spirit (not "the immortality of the soul") after death, although in Aristotle's case the completely worldly orientation of his philosophy seems to have prevented his closer examination of this question (V:650-657).

(ii) Schelling also moves beyond Aristotle in recognizing the anti-divine character of the Spirit. Aristotle missed this because the *Nous*, for him, had significance only relative to the soul and not to the world. But the divine and the anti-divine in the Spirit cannot be separated, as is revealed by the appearance of *Prometheus* in Greek mythology and the presentation of his tragic fate in Aeschylus (V:663-8).

Prometheus incarnates (*ist*) from one side only the principle of Zeus himself, i.e., the divine in relation to man, a divine principle which is the cause of his intelligence (*Verstand*), a principle by which he is endowed with something he lacked in the previous world order, just

as, according to Aristotle, the human *Nous* was not foreseen in any of the previous stages but came to man from outside. But over against the divine. Prometheus is *Will*, invincible Will, immortal in relation to Zeus and, therefore, capable of resisting God (V:663)

Prometheus is not a human invention. He is one of those original thoughts which force themselves into existence and develop according to a strict logic when they find, as Prometheus found in Aeschylus, a profound spirit, a favorable soil (in which to take root). Prometheus is the thought in which the human race, after it had brought forth from within it the whole World of the Gods (*Götterwelt*), returned to itself and became conscious of itself and of its own fate (having taken account of what is baleful and fatal in the belief in the gods (V:664).

Prometheus is thus that principle of humanity Schelling has called *Spirit*. He gave understanding and consciousness to the soul. He defied God by stealing the heavenly fire and bringing it to man. This fire is the free - because rationally ordered - will through which man is saved from blind will. And man, his will thus transformed by reason, is able to develop his literature, arts and sciences (V:665f).

The most enigmatic aspect of the story, in Schelling's view, lies in the attitude of Zeus. When the world attained the epoch of Zeus, the latter found himself in the presence of a human race born independently of him, and considered replacing it with a new race. But his intentions were anticipated by Prometheus' act. Therefore "his condemnation of the deed of Prometheus was not absolute and something in him prevented him from opposing it absolutely." Zeus himself had conquered the blind cosmic forces only by the power of his spirit, and it is with the help of Prometheus that he organized his new empire. "But this doesn't stop Zeus from reacting with violence and giving free course to his unmerciful anger!" (V:665f).

In his sufferings, Prometheus is "the sublime prototype of the human self." *Prometheus Bound* contemplates without hope the irreparable and irreversible rupture caused by his act and its consequences. And Schelling, at this point, recalls Kant's doctrine of "a radical evil inherent in human nature" (V:665). Prometheus, however, was in the right. He *could not not do* what he did. He was under a moral necessity. And herein lies "his tragic dignity". For "the truly tragic misfortune is not that which results from a voluntary act, but that to which we are driven by a moral necessity." Prometheus was

therefore "in his right", although this did not prevent Zeus from inflicting continuing tortures upon him. But Zeus was "in his right" also, for only thus could he safeguard his independence and freedom. "We cannot resolve this contradiction," concludes Schelling, "we must simply try to express it adequately" (V:667).

Thus, the destiny or fate of the world and of mankind is, *by nature*, a tragic one. The act to which we trace back all suffering did not happen once, but happens always, eternally. Aeschylus was the first to grasp this tragic element at its source. He could not help but show Prometheus in his inflexible arrogance and open hostility, not did he hesitate to show Prometheus overwhelmed and crushed with all griefs and sufferings by Zeus. If Aeschylus had played down the punishment, he would have offended his people and lessened the fear with which God inspired them. He believed that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom; and, for that matter, that fear of the State would keep man just (V:668). Prometheus would not be what he is if all had happened in accordance with his will. The consequences for him are those which devolve upon all irreducible opposition to God. And the cruelty of Zeus has its reasons in the unfathomable right of Zeus to original Being, for he is the last-come of the Gods, the inheritor of those who preceded him. As *blind* being, He is prior to, and therefore beyond, all reason and without knowledge of good and evil. Hence, in relation to the reason which comes later, He is just force and violence (Kratos and Bia) (V:668).

B. Toward Existential Despair and the God Who Acts

We now stand at the first of two great turning points in Schelling's presentation of pure Rational Philosophy, for he has now conceived the Self - the "ungrounded act of egoity", the active rational will - as excluding itself, by its own act, from the world of Ideas and setting itself over against God. *It is therefore the Self which now becomes the principle of all further development.* As *will willing itself*, the self is outside the world (*Ausserweltlichkeit*) and anti-divine (*Gegengöttlichkeit*), and how to deal with it, how to reconcile it and subordinate it to God, is the last problem for negative philosophy to consider. We now do so, remembering the *final goal* of Rational Philosophy, namely, "to envisage the Principle" not only as free of all attachment with the Existent but as "*triumphant and victorious over all*" (V:671).³⁰

Happiness for man, says Schelling, is to be found in the conquest

of the spirit's basic character of self-will (V:650-657). The spirit can choose to give itself freely to God or draw the world to itself. If the latter, it is absorbed by the world; it doubts, fears, hates what is hidden from it (but apprehended by reason and clarified by philosophy): it becomes the soul in p̄rdition, anguished, lost in a state of ceaseless death. But those who love detached from earthly life, free of all relation with the extra-divine and oriented toward the divine, will become with all the riches of acquired consciousness, pure potency in relation to God. Such are the truly happy ones. In fact, Schelling explains the word *makar* as consisting of the negative particle *ma* and the syllable *κηρ* (*κεαρ*) meaning "heart", i.e., the seat of will and desire, the proper self. Thus the spirit which turns toward God and again becomes soul, is rightly called blessed (*makar* or *makarios*), "for in him the *kear*, this eternally craving will, this fire which never dies, is again brought to rest" (V:656).

After a further discussion of his epistemology (emphasizing that "the part of the soul turned toward the world" has as its sole object not God but the Existent) (V:698-711; Lecture 22). Schelling considers the theory of knowledge in the *Practical Philosophy* and discusses the Moral Law (V:712ff, 735-739) and the State (V:715, 716-734) in relation to the individual.

The Moral Law is independent of God (and may be compared with the *Δικη* of the ancients), for Schelling holds that an ethical reason indwells the potencies of the world and that it may be regarded as independent of divine revelation and of all authority grounded thereon. This ethical world-reason stamped on the community of men in the form of its constitution, in the legal order of sovereignty and subordination, is the *State*.

This outward rational order, equipped with coercive power, is the *State* which, taken materially, is a pure fact and has only a factual existence but one sanctified by the law living in it, a law which is not of this world, nor of man, but *derives directly from the intelligible world*. The Law which has become actual power is the answer to that act by which man posited himself outside reason: this is the reason in history (V:715).

Here Schelling enters the area of Practical Philosophy in which the self is no longer in its own power but is compassed by Law, i.e., by a power strange to it. Law arouses an aversion for itself among men, and

provokes hostilities among them. It is thanks to the State that conflicting opinions are kept in check and the possibility of any Hobbesian "*bellum omnium contra omnes*" negated (V:718-721).

Throughout history, State and society have entered into a variety of reciprocal relations, thus giving rise to different forms of the State (V:723-730). But it is enough for us to note Schelling's conclusions. The State, he says, is not history's goal, and it is not the product of freedom. It is, however, the first condition of freedom and the means to an end. It is thanks to Christianity that the State becomes a means not an end: and the individual has the task not of abolishing the State but of inwardly transcending it.

The State is not the final purpose. Hence the establishment of the most perfect State is not by any means the goal of history ... A perfect State in this world is as impossible to obtain as a perfect man, and to hope for such a thing is apocalyptic and chimerical The task of the State is rather to provide for the individual the greatest possible freedom (*autarkie*), a freedom which is exercised above and beyond the State (so to speak), but does not react upon the State and is not exercised within or against the State (V:732-34).

The individual can come to terms with the State and relate to it quite passively, for "no one is obliged to obey the State." But when it comes to the Moral Law, the situation is very different: "the moral law demands an absolute obedience" (V:735). Hence Schelling begins the last "lecture" (Lecture 24) of his *Philosophical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* with a consideration of the Moral Law (V:735-739), and its relation to the Individual who "goes beyond the State" and "in whom the factor of progress and development resides." The Law of even the most powerful State is limited to dispensing "external justice, i.e., positive justice limited to the facts." The Moral Law, however, is inward, inscribed on the hearts of men, and will make its presence felt even if the State completely disintegrates. In fact, the Law of the State is only "the consequence of that inner constraint", so we may set it aside (V:736).

We must note, first of all, that the Moral Law is a power distinct from God and that it hides him. To be sure, Ethics and Jurisprudence are rational enterprises and, in an ultimate sense, owe their existence, as does reason itself, to God. But what Schelling is saying is that "it is wrong to represent the Moral Law as divine and to mix God in with

natural right." We cannot reduce all morality to theology. To subordinate everything to religion would make any rational moral doctrine or legal science impossible. The truth is that "God is hidden by the Law, "which must be so if the Law is to perform its work of education, rectification and correction" (V:736n).

But now it becomes clear what is in store for the individual who eludes God. "Separated from God, he is taken captive by the Law, as by a power distinct from God." For the Law is woven into his will, it is embedded there, so that he cannot escape it or rise above it. His natural feeling toward the Law is therefore one of aversion and hostility (V:736).

For its part, the Law is general and impersonal and therefore imperfect. As a rational force it ignores personality. It shows no mercy for our weakness or gratitude for our obedience, and "this impersonality is the root of the *imperfection which is in the Law itself.*" Kant did not take this imperfection into account; and men generally have sought to deny it by claiming that the Law is willed by God. But the imperfection is there, and may be asserted on three counts: (i) "The Law cares only for the community and nothing for the individual; it speaks to the individual only in order to act on the community." (ii) "It does not tell the individual what he is to do, and is therefore purely negative." (iii) It prescribes a morality without purpose, so that when I have fulfilled the Law I have gained nothing. We must conclude, then, that the Law is secondary and subordinate. Its end lies in something else and "when this something else is present, the Law ceases to exist in this imperfect form (the *telos* of the Law is Christ; Rom 10:4)" (V:736n).

Clearly, thinks Schelling, it is the "form" of the Law rather than the content which arouses man's dislike. "Being ordered around would not be so irritating to the individual if the orders issued from a person; but when they come from an impersonal source, the self finds this insufferable." "The self wants to be absolutely free" (V:736, 737). Some persons may find an intellectual delight in discerning the rational character of the Law, and yet that very act will disclose in the Law "the threat of death." For man sees not only that he is incapable of fulfilling the Law, but that "the Law is powerless to give him what he lacks, namely, a right inner attitude (*Gesinnung*)" (V:737).

The Law is powerless to give man a heart which is equal to the Law.
(But no one possesses such a heart, for it is the Spirit of God which

makes man *equal* to the Law and causes him to accept the Law with a joyous heart: Luther). On the contrary, it reinforces the tendency to evil (*der Sünde Kraft*) and instead of doing away with the inequality between itself and man, it emphasizes it ever more strongly ... so that in the end *all* moral action seems reprehensible and the whole of life seems full of flaws. Of course, spontaneous virtues embellish and ennoble life, but at bottom the seriousness of the Law remains and deprives man of all *joie de vivre* (V:737 and 737n).

The Law thus becomes a curse, and man, completely discouraged, begins to feel the nullity (*Nichts*), the non-worth (*Unwerth*) of his whole existence. "But precisely here where the purpose of the Law - the negation of the individual self - is as good as attained", the self discerns a new possibility. Perhaps it can escape by ceasing to be an active person, by withdrawing into itself and surrendering its own self-hood to God!

In doing this, its only intention is to escape the unfortunate consequences of action and the pressures of the Law by fleeing for refuge into the contemplative life ... But in passing thus from the active (practical) life, the self *steps over to God's side*. Without knowing anything about God, it seeks a divine life in this Godless (*ungöttliche*) world. And since this search occurs in the renunciation of that selfhood by which the self had cut itself off from God, it succeeds in coming again into touch with the divine. In other words, the spirit which draws itself back into itself, frees the soul and gives it space in which to move. But the soul, by its very nature, is that which God is able to touch. It is the truly *θεϊον* element in its nature which here manifests itself, though this occurs not in the species but *only in the individual* ... for only the individual has a direct relation to God, only the individual can *seek* him and receive him when he reveals himself (V:738 & 738n).

Even in the fallen state, man retains the capacity for returning to God. Schelling calls it "a potency inherent in the spirit" which "awaits only a favorable moment to actualize itself." The essence of a^o manifests itself when everything accidental in it (everything which denies God) has been destroyed. "By entering into the contemplative life, the self finds God again. God once more becomes objective for him but of course, as we shall see, only as Idea" (V:739).

This rediscovery of God has different stages which Schelling views as so many stations on the return path to God. These stages are Mystical Piety, Art and Contemplative Science.

In the first stage the self seeks to accomplish the act of self-forgetting, abnegation of itself. It is represented by that mystical piety whose meaning we find most clearly expressed in Fenelon and which consists in man seeking to negate but not to annihilate (*zu vernichtigen, nicht zu vernichten*) himself and everything that is purely accidental about his existence ... In his *Demonstration of the Existence of God*, Fenelon speaks of this suppression of selfhood as an 'abandoning of the will', and says of this mystical piety: '... The one thing that is truly yours is your will. It is this of which God is jealous. For he has given it to us, not in order for us to preserve it and dwell in it as sole owner, but in order that we should give it back to Him completely, just as we have received it, keeping nothing back ... else we would commit a larceny against God.'

The second stage is represented by the *art* by which the self makes itself like (*ομοιωσις*) the divine, by creating a divine personality, and thus seeks to penetrate through to the latter; the art which creates sources of ecstasy and rapture, when the spirit becomes soul (in completely self-less production) - which happens only to those who create the highest art, not that they know or understand it, but by virtue of the true determination of their nature.

The third stage is represented by *Contemplative Science*, in which the self rises above practical and purely natural (dianoetic) science and enters into contact with that which exists for its own sake. The spirit, withdrawing into itself, renouncing the practical, attains here the pure *thea* in which it is in direct contact with the Intelligible, and hence the Nous establishes the same relations with the *Intelligible* as the sense has with the Sensible ... It is to be noted that [Schelling's] Rational Philosophy, like Contemplative Science, itself enters here as a moment of the development (V:739f).

In these passages Schelling has described what the individual can attain "who seeks to abandon this unhappy life and make himself happy *in his own world*." Just as Art and Science are here negative stages on the way to happiness, so "Poetry (Homer) and the Plastic Arts (Phidias) were considered by the Greeks as means of liberation

from the legal State and legal religion" (V:740). But the problem is that these ways lead to a purely *ideal* relation with God. "Contemplative Science leads not to the real, actual God but to the ideal, essential God," to the concept of A° in its pure self-being. "This is the point at which the old philosophy ended: God as the final cause", the Unmoved Mover, *νοησεως νοησις*, God as the infinite act of thought, God who thinks himself with no limiting object outside him. And such a God is of no help to man.

Even if Aristotle had attributed to God an existence, it would have been *as if He existed not*, for He can do nothing, initiate nothing. It seems inconceivable that the negative aspect of this definition in Aristotle as well as in modern philosophy has escaped notice. It deals with a Spirit according to its essence, an ideal Spirit, a Spirit which possesses itself without being able to be absent from itself; but it is a misuse of language to call this Spirit Absolute Spirit (V:741).

Basically, then, these "ways to God" fail to speak authentically to man's existential despair. The individual needs a God who Acts freely and graciously on his behalf.

The self can be content with this purely ideal God only if it is able to remain in the contemplative life. But this is impossible. The renunciation of action cannot be final and irrevocable, for the self *must* act. But as soon as one reenters the active life, reality begins to affirm its rights, the ideal (passive) God can no longer be reached, and the earlier despair reappears, for the conflict has not been removed. Accordingly, the question is: what is any longer possible for the self, and where shall it turn?" (V:742).

C. God (the *essentia Actus*) as *κρειττον του λογου* and the Transition to Positive Philosophy

In the remainder of Lecture 24, Schelling reflects upon the accomplishment and limitation of Rational Philosophy, the nature and task of Positive Philosophy and the transition thereto, and the whole new meaning given to the question of the demonstration of God's existence.

It is clear that the goal of Rational Philosophy has been attained. Its task was to isolate the Principle (A°) as such, supreme, and free of the

Existent. We witnessed the *separation* when "the ego, in affirming itself, became the point of departure for an extra-divine world which excludes God." But now we have seen "the self declare itself a non-principle and subordinate itself to God", i.e., we have seen A° emerge as unique, separate and *triumphant over all* (V:742f). Hence, it can be said, Rational Philosophy has reached its goal and limit. It has "put the Principle in evidence, displayed it; but it cannot actualize it." Hence we call it *Negative Philosophy*, says Schelling (V:744).

Important and indispensable though it is, it can know nothing of what alone is worthy of being known or of what can be derived from the latter. It posits the Principle only through *elimination*, hence in a negative way. Of course, it deals with the Principle as the only reality, but it has it only in *concept*, as mere Idea. And since, in seeking the Principle, it investigates only the possibility of a philosophy, it has a *critical* character (as in Kant).

... Everything it knows, it knows as independent of and outside of all existence, and as subsisting merely in pure thought. To be sure, one deduces existing things in this science (otherwise it would not be a rational, i.e., a *prioristic*, science, for there is no *a priori* without an *a posteriori*), but what one deduces is *not that things exist* (V:744, 745).

Clearly, then, in tearing the Principle from its potentiality (where it was first discovered in pure thought) Schelling has *not left* the realm of thought. He did not give the Principle existential status outside the Idea, but did reveal or confirm that the *nature* of the Principle is "the *necessary nature (natura necessaria)*, that which is in essence Actuality (*essentia Actus*)."

God is now outside the Absolute idea in which He was lost, and is in *his own idea*, but still in the Idea, still merely in concept and not in actual Being ... For everything is enclosed in reason in this science; even God is so enclosed, even though He is now conceived as that which is not included in reason (i.e., in the eternal Ideas). And even though, as Kant said, every existential proposition is a synthetic proposition, i.e., one by which I go beyond the concept, the fact remains that this has no application to the pure *That* [does not apply to pure existence], free of everything general, which is the final outcome of rational science, for the pure abstract *That* [the proposition which enunciates pure, abstract existence] is not a synthetic one (V:745).

In moving from Negative to Positive Philosophy, then, two things must happen. First, the Principle is posited as pure act or being in an existential sense, i.e., it is "*expelled from the Idea*," freed from the Idea in which Negative Philosophy enclosed it. And secondly, the relation between the Principle and the Existent is *reversed* or inverted, so that A° can become a true beginning, the Prius of the Existent (V:746f). As Schelling puts it:

We call (this) other science *Positive* because it sets out from Existence (*der Existenz*), i.e., from Existence as actual actuality (*actu Actus-Sein*) [not merely conceptual actuality] ... What is *essentia Actus* is posited out of its concept, so that it is the Existent not merely *essentia* or *natura* but *actually* ... It is posited truly, literally, as beginning ... (Positive Philosophy) knew it first only as a pure *That*, from which one proceeds to the concept, to the *What* (i.e., to the Existent), in order to lead that which exists in that way to the point where it *reveals* itself as real (existent) Lord of Being (i.e., Lord of the World), as real and personal God ... All other being, as far as its *existence* is concerned, is explained as having its source in that first *That*; hence there is established a positive system, one which explains reality (*Wirklichkeit*) (V:746, 745).

Whereas "Idealism explains not reality but the mode of reality," Positive Philosophy begins with this supreme existential act, passes to the concept or nature of God, and shows that He is not merely an essence or an impersonal Idea but a creative personal Being, the actually existing "Lord of Being (i.e., Lord of the World)." Positive Philosophy is thus connected with the notion of God as a personal Being. Negative and Positive Philosophy are thus "separate and distinct" and yet they form a unity, for "Philosophy is one."

It is philosophy which both *seeks* its object and possesses its object and brings it to knowledge. Strictly speaking, positive (Philosophy) is implied in the Negative (Philosophy); it is in it, not yet as real but just as seeking itself - as this whole exposition, which now comes to its end, has shown.

The struggle between Negative and Positive Philosophy fills the whole history of philosophy ... and the discussion of this opposition would require a whole new series of lectures (V:746).³¹

How, specifically, is the transition - the *expulsion* and the *reversal* - effected? Granted their opposition in unity, how do we move from negative to positive philosophy? Not by thinking, for this is concerned with essences and necessary logical deductions. Our need is for "something outside necessity, something *willed*."

Rational Science actually leads beyond itself and urges this inversion. But this latter cannot arise from thought; a practical impulse is required.

It must be a *will* which is the cause of A's expulsion from reason, an expulsion which is the *last crisis of rational science* ... The first crisis had consisted of the elimination of the self from the Idea which, of course, modified the character of rational science but did not destroy it. The last great crisis, the true crisis, consists in the fact that God, finally discovered, is expelled from the Idea - an act which meant the abandonment of Rational Science (V:747f).

To sum up: *Negative Philosophy* ends "with the destruction of the Idea", just as Kant's *Critique* ends "in the humiliation of reason." The final word of *Negative Philosophy* is that "what truly exists is that which is outside the Idea; the truly Existing is not the Idea but what is more than the Idea, *κρείττον του λογου*" (V:748). The *Transition* to *Positive Philosophy* is effected by "a *will* which demands with inner necessity that God should not be a mere idea" (V:747). And *Positive Philosophy* begins with an initial affirmation of the divine existence, based on an act of faith demanded by the will.

But does not this bring us right into the realm of religion as such? To be sure it does, explains Schelling. As we saw, the self seeks liberation from the futility of existence by following the "ways to God" already discussed. But sooner or later the failure of moral action and disillusionment with the contemplative life reduce the self to final despair, "for only now does it recognize the abyss which separates it from God, and see how *all* moral action rests on the Fall from God." Conscious of his fallen condition, longing for peace and healing, the *self sees that his alienation from God can be overcome only by God's personal activity*.

This is why the self henceforth longs for God himself. It wants to possess Him, Him, the God who acts, the God who is Providence, the

God who, as *himself* a positive, factual Being, *can oppose the fact of the Fall*, the God who is Lord of Being (not transmundane only, as is the God who is final cause, but supramundane). In this God alone does the self henceforth see the *real* supreme Good ... The God who is above and beyond reason can do what reason cannot do; He can make the self equal to the Law, i.e., free the self from the Law (V:749).

"Person seeks person," declares Schelling, and the faith which lies at the base of his Positive Philosophy is faith in a personal creative and redeeming God, not the ideal moral order of Fichte or the absolute Idea of Hegel. "The self, itself a personality, requires and demands a personality, a person - one who is outside the world and above the general - who will understand him and possess a heart like his own" (V:751).

Does all this mean that God exists just because we, in despair, declare him to exist? That this is *not* Schelling's view will be clear when we see what he means by "religion" and by the statement that "God exists".

On the one hand, our willing of God is not arbitrary, but arises from a thoroughly practical need. "It is a willing of the spirit which, by virtue of an inner necessity and a yearning for its own liberation cannot remain with a God enclosed in thought" (V:751). But on the other hand, "the self cannot itself lay claim to the power to win this God. God must *come to meet* the self with his aid."

The self can *will* Him and hope to participate in a happiness which, since neither moral action nor the contemplative life have been able to eliminate the abyss, will not be a *merited* beatitude, nor even a proportionate one (as Kant wants), but an unmerited and therefore incalculable, superabundant happiness. ... If happiness were always proportionate, this would be a source of eternal discontent. Hence all we can do (and no philosophical pride can or should keep us from doing this) is gratefully to accept that which comes to us undeservedly and (as a gift of) grace, and which we cannot attain otherwise (V:749).

Thus, for Schelling, "religion" presupposes three things: (a) man's longing for the true God and for salvation, (b) the existence of an active personal God (not an object of contemplation) who comes to meet the individual person, and (c) a reconciliation of the individual to

God and a *real relation between the two* in which the self discovers the joyousness of existence as the free gift of divine grace (V:750). If this is Positive Philosophy's concern, then it is no mere repetition of Kant's theory of moral or practical faith.³² Schelling has moved beyond the limits of pure reason with its exclusion of genuine religion:

At the end of the Negative Philosophy, I have only a possible religion, not a real religion. I have only 'religion within the limits of pure reason'. Those who perceive a rational *religion* at the end of rational science, deceive themselves. Reason does not lead to religion, just as Kant's theoretical result shows that there can be no rational religion. That we *know* nothing of God, is the inevitable conclusion of every authentic rationalism, every rationalism which understands itself (V:750).

Religious need and desire ... cannot be postulates of practical reason, for it is not the general in man which aspires to happiness, but the individual. When a man (obeying his moral conscience or his practical reason) governs his relations with other individuals in accordance with what they are in the world of Ideas, he will find that only the general, the reason, in him is satisfied (V:751).

To enter into Positive Philosophy is thus to enter the distinctive sphere of religion and the religions. And that means, says Schelling, that we can expect to witness "the birth of Philosophical Religion which was the object of this whole exposition" (V:750). For Positive Philosophy, unlike Negative Philosophy, is truly *religious* and can assimilate the religious consciousness and its demands. Hence we can arrive at that Philosophical Religion which is both Philosophy *and* Religion.

Without Philosophical Religion it is impossible to comprehend the real religions - Mythological and Revealed - or to interpret and give an account of them. By interpreting these two religions in the light of Philosophical religion, one can best perceive that what we call Philosophical Religion has nothing in common with rational religion (V:750).

The question of the demonstration of the existence of God takes on a whole new meaning in this context and in the light of the whole

argument of the Rational Philosophy. God is not one existent among many. And the transformation of Negative to Positive Philosophy by the addition of a rational or natural Theology is clearly an impossibility for Schelling's view. But what Schelling feels he can and must do is give an "empirical" proof of the rationality of the will's act in positing a real personal God. In fact, Schelling's proof of God, it seems, may be stated thus: First, beginning with the idea of God as the pure That, the Prius, we must ask how it is *possible* that the world derives from him. How can $-A+A\pm A$ be a consequence of A° ? "How is it possible that, when A° is Prius, the Existent which is capable of the highest rational necessity, is cocomposed?" Then we must show that He reveals Himself as Lord of actual empirical existence. If God is the immanent cause not only of the Existent in the Idea but of extra-ideal existence, then He must "reveal his activity independently of the Idea and even after the negation of the latter, and reveal Himself as true Lord of Being" (V:752f). But thirdly, if He is truly Lord of all Being, it follows that the full demonstration of God's existence will be the whole history of the human race! - past, present and future - and in *this* sense, Positive Philosophy can be called "historical".

This demonstration (of the existence of the personal God) is not something which simply moves to a certain point - the world which is the object of our experience - and stops there. On the contrary, just as I am not satisfied, in the case of individuals who are important to me, to know that they exist, but demand continuing proof of their existence, so here: we demand that the divinity draw ever closer to the consciousness of mankind; we require that it be an object of consciousness not merely in its effects but in itself. But this too is to be attained only by stages, especially since it is demanded that the divinity penetrate not only into the consciousness of individuals but into the consciousness of mankind.

So we can see that the demonstration [the definitive proof] we call for can be furnished only by reality in its totality and by the whole human race in the totality of its duration. The proof of God, in other words, will never be complete, but will stretch back into the past and on into the future of our race ... (V:753).

This is the task bequeathed to Positive Philosophy (in its widest sense): the proof of God's existence, where this existence is to be found

in the whole history of man but *supremely* in the history of man's religion - his demand for God and God's active response. Mythology and Revelation - the historical development of man's religious consciousness - reveal God's active self-revelation and gracious redemptive work. To exhibit this divine activity is the fundamental purpose of Schelling's monumental study of Mythology and Revelation.

