



Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling

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Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt offer a fresh translation of Schelling's enigmatic and influential masterpiece, widely recognized as an indispensable work of German Idealism. The text is an embarrassment of riches both wildly adventurous and somberly prescient. Martin Heidegger claimed that it was "one of the deepest works of German and thus also of Western philosophy" and that it utterly undermined Hegel's monumental Science of Logic before the latter had even appeared in print. Schelling carefully investigates the problem of evil by building on Kant's notion of radical evil, while also developing an astonishingly original conception of freedom and personality that exerted an enormous (if subterranean) influence on the later course of European philosophy from Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard through Heidegger to important contemporary theorists like Slavoj Žižek.

Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom Details

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Mike says

Must be read in order to fully grasp German thought

Antonio Wolf says

This essay is, if you're not steeped in Schelling's philosophical background, near unintelligible in the first half of it, not just because he uses new terms or anything, but because Schelling is quite happy to make almost no arguments at all through the first half of the work.

The first 1/5th is a very interesting section arguing for Schelling's rejection of Spinoza's pantheism, but at the same time arguing for the absolute necessity for any philosophy to be pantheistic in a way that does not destroy difference and individuality. From there Schelling launches into the problem of evil, meanders for the next 30 pages on mostly theological considerations using Böhmean speculative terms, and continues on to speculate a cosmogony/logy that rests upon an understanding of his mysticism. Most of the theological concerns are not simply dense, they are nearly unintelligible without putting one's effort on gaining the background knowledge necessary. This one really requires a commentary for those sections.

That said, Schelling's thoughts on pantheism, freedom, and the nature of evil are quite interesting, especially when one moves away from his christian theosophical points towards their true philosophical speculative importance and forms.

Tinytim Timea says

Având în vedere c? pentru mine idealismul german e în general cel mult o abera?ie poetic?, Schelling a fost de-a dreptul simpatic... El cel pu?in nu arunc? cu pietre în Spinoza :D

Erick says

This is the second book I've read by Schelling and the premise is a perennial favorite among philosophers. This book borrows quite a bit from Leibniz and Boehme, and to some degree, starts where they left off -not that it recapitulates every viewpoint of those writers; Schelling does have his own views and his approach is often unique. Whether he solved all of the problems regarding the notion of freewill is open to debate, but he does present some excellent points. One almost has to be acquainted with Boehme and Leibniz to be able to follow his train of thought though. Boehme's notion of the ungrund plays such a significant role, that from what I can tell, Schelling's work centers on it to a large degree. I've read both Leibniz and Boehme and thought their ideas were interesting, while also not always agreeing with them wholly. It is hard to deny the latter's profound influence on the Romantics and the Idealists. His influence is ubiquitous. This book is often held as being Schelling's best. The book is very good, but I actually liked his Philosophy

of Mythology more. The ideas in it were a little more unique and thought-provoking in my opinion.

Tijmen Lansdaal says

Ungrund, cutting through your Enlightenment like a double edged knife that has no handle.

Leonardo says

Schelling plantea que Dios antes de la creación era un dominio de puras potencialidades. Esta potencialidad, obstaculizada por la naturaleza, vuelva a explotar en el pensamiento humano, es el "postulado como tal".

Visión de Paralaje Pág.114

Michael Ledezma says

For all its hangups and contortionism-as-justification, the argument was pretty powerful. There can be no freedom without the freedom to do evil, just as there is no good, without there being a principle of evil to turn itself away from the good. Evil exists as the pure potentiality of the turn away from the light in keeping with the yearning of the ground. The light is god himself and the ground is necessarily subordinated to god. The ground as such is not evil. It is pure pre-symbolic drive fueled by desire to manifest itself materially. God cannot rid himself of this ground as source of potential evil, however, because he would cancel himself out. Evil has to arise from that aspect of god in which he is not He Himself, as light principle ie dark principle of ground. In the act of turning away from the universal will of light and love, toward the ground, in striving for particularization of self, and to subordinate the universal to the particular, humans actualize evil. This turning is not itself a manifestation of freedom, because it gives into the desire and yearning of the ground in a somewhat Kantian way, but without this capacity to willfully and necessarily uphold universality, being in the good would not itself be indicative of freedom. Since god is a life, however, and has created himself in order to bring forth spirit, he is not in Being, but in becoming. Therefore, the necessity of god's creating himself is completely undermined. God's coming into being is absolutely arbitrary. As per Heidegger, freedom and system are absolutely incompatible. interesting... Best read with Zizek and Heidegger side by side.

Stephen says

Mind blowing penumbral metaphysics: the God begotten God reveals to the begetting God his innermost essence, and it can't be done without human freedom to choose between good and evil.

?tefan Bolea says

I confess I am interested in Schelling as Kierkegaard's educator. I understand "The Concept of Anxiety"

much better after reading Schelling's fabulous account of originary evil. It's clear to me now why Bakunin and Engels attended Schelling's classes -- he was dangerously close to nihilism. One can say about him what another author wrote about Schopenhauer in a different context: his own philosophy and Nihilism are divided by a thin wall. I wonder: how would Schelling write in a non-theological context, so to say, after the death of God? I think he would be even more radical than the fiercest Nietzscheans. Although a metaphysics of the will is clearly documented ("Wollen ist Ursein"), I believe that Heidegger is being dishonest and falls prey to a common prejudice in suggesting that Schopenhauer's main principle is unoriginal.

Tomas Kristofory says

I was neatly surprised by the book being hugely in accord with christian view of creation. His (dialectical) analysis of the problem of compatibility of God's providence with man's freedom is thus less prone to criticisms from christian theologians than Hegel's. The reason why is that, is that Schelling says (in the Conclusion) that cultural evolutionist kind of master-slave dialectics is useless, since we have better possibilities in exploring nature (Naturphilosophie), especially man's nature. Such research is possible since 'man has always been fully developed'. There is no cultural evolution. Hegelian master-slave dialectics is thus not only useless, but also inappropriate result of philosopher's pretentious imagination. Schelling analyses human nature also with the help of Bible's citations. Here we see Schelling's parting ways with Hegel, and his siding with christian theology. For me personally, Schelling's explanation of compatibility of God's providence with human freedom was more clear than Hegel's, and I finally understood the difference between Spinoza and christian theology - only The Son emanates from God the Father in christian theology, while in Spinoza also creation emanates from God.

Rui Coelho says

Discussing the place of free will in a pantheistic philosophical system, Schelling introduces key concepts of pantheist philosophy like identity, individualization and evil.

Joe says

09/15/2004

The Beginning of the End of the Dialectical

This book is important for several reasons. I mention only a few here. Schelling, a great dialectical (in the modern 'German Idealist' sense) thinker/philosopher in these pages makes a crucial admission of the impossibility of overcoming (ancient) esotericism. (Hegel makes a similar admission in the great preface of the Phenomenology.) For the sake of this short note let us think of the esoteric as the unchanging. Schelling here admits that there is an unmediated 'basis' that accompanies us through all our dialectical adventures. This 'origin' is subsumed in God but it is not 'overcome' or surpassed. Indeed, this 'basis' rages through (at least!) all things capable (like humans) of spirit. Schelling goes so far as to say that "To separate from God they [all creatures] would have to carry on this becoming on a basis different from Him. But since there can be nothing outside God, this contradiction can only be solved by things having their basis in that within God which is not God Himself, i.e. in that which is the basis of His existence." It is this unmediated basis (within

God but forever separate from him, unmastered even by Him!) that accompanies all things through their dialectical adventures. In fact, this unmediated 'pole' (if you will) threatens to drag us down (back! ...A genuine horror for all dialectical thought!) towards it. "All evil strives back towards chaos" Schelling says. [Digressing for a moment I would like to point out that this eerily prefigures Nietzsche's remark that "Everywhere, the way to the beginnings leads to barbarism."] By this Schelling indicates (or at least seems to) that every dialectical step 'forward' can never outrun the shadow of chaos, the negative, the unmediated, the unreasonable. ...Is this the dawn of the postmodern? I would also point out that Schelling, in his later [post 1809] speculations, found something that genuinely caused him unease in this way of thinking. After writing this essay (1809) he publishes next to nothing, though he lives to 1854. Did he foresee the dialectical being swallowed up by the unchanging basis? "Nothing at all in creation can remain ambiguous" - he bravely says. But the uncreated, unknowable, unmediated and unmastered Basis remains in God - and in us all!

Andrea says

Testo estremamente raffinato e complesso, le *Ricerche filosofiche sull'essenza della libertà umana e sugli oggetti che vi sono connessi* sono il tentativo di Schelling di giustificare il "Deus sive Natura" spinoziano nell'ottica dell'Idealismo tedesco di inizio Ottocento.

Oggetto principale dei vari testi è la libertà, sacrificata nella filosofia di Spinoza, garantita in quella di Leibniz senza risolvere il problema del dissidio tra bene e male: Schelling tenta di risolvere tali problematiche ricorrendo ad un Assoluto che sia identità indifferenziata, ovvero unità di poli opposti e contrastanti, un Uno che è al contempo Molteplice, raggiungendo vertici di speculazione estremamente elevati per un lettore non assiduo al confronto con testi filosofici.

Dietro le righe, come poi accadrà nell'ultima fase del suo pensiero, Schelling riconduce il suo principio ad un Dio il cui operato nel mondo attraverso l'Amore segue la scia di quello cristiano. Interessante l'interpretazione che il filosofo dà del concetto di male: esso è visto come l'inversione degli usuali rapporti che intercorrono tra principio luminoso e principio oscuro nell'Identità, ed è solo grazie alla potenza dell'Amore (che troverà senso solo nella Creazione) che esso può ricongiungersi ad esso facendosi bene. La libertà, in modo estremamente semplificato, diventa possibile al solo di prezzo di non poter rinunciare a quell'elemento irrazionale che si nasconde nella molteplicità della Natura: per tale ragione, la struttura geometrica dedotta da Spinoza non può realizzarsi nella sua interezza, a meno di risultare contraddittoria con se stessa.

Un vertice del pensiero di Schelling. I temi ivi espressi con lucidità sono una delle sue più significative eredità accanto al binomio filosofia positiva/negativa e meritano di essere considerati e confrontati: non a caso Heidegger, profondo ammiratore di Schelling, vi ha dedicato un intero saggio, scritto tra l'altro durante gli ultimi anni della sua vita.

Jimena T says

Schelling's treaty on freedom is at first difficult to comprehend. He is a bit poetic and writes incredibly long sentences. Anyway, by the time I was getting to the end, I started to get a sense about what he was trying to say. I suppose the difficulties I had reading this book were due to my lack of expertise in Philosophy and in reading philosophical works. Nevertheless, this is a very good source for anyone writing a paper about

freedom and its relationship with evil and God. Don't let the tricky language stop you from reading this book.
