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Reviews of *The Construction of the History of Religion in Schelling's Positive Philosophy and Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development* by Paul Tillich

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Book Reviews of *The Construction of the History of Religion in Schelling's Positive Philosophy, and Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development*, translated by Victor Nuovo

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Paul Tillich, *The Construction of the History of Religion in Schelling's Positive Philosophy*, tr. Victor Nuovo (Bucknell University Press, 1974), 184 pp. and *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development*, tr. Victor Nuovo (Bucknell, 1974), 155 pp.

The famed author of *Systematic Theology*, the vast synthesis of philosophy of culture and existentialist anthropology, of the history of religions and of the Christian Churches' dogmatics, often acknowledged his debt to the philosophy of F. W. J. Schelling. With the

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translation of these his Schelling dissertations, his philosophy thesis at Breslau in 1910 and his theology thesis at Halle in 1912 respectively, the American scholar will be able to better assess Tillich's rehabilitation of the post-Kantian idealists' notion of 'philosophical religion.' In these early works, one sees Tillich formulating notions that will remain central to his thought, viz. revelation as an historical process, mediated through mythology and the history of religions; being and revelation as a progression of stages or 'potencies'; and the concept of human spirituality as a dialectic of freedom and being, in which freedom is meant to definitively win out over the unfreedom of nature and take command over being.

The first dissertation is a more scholarly and historical-textual study than the second, and makes a welcome addition to the slender corpus of Schelling literature in English. It is particularly welcome since it undertakes, and for its brevity, tolerably succeeds in, the task of clarifying the tortuous course of Schelling's development. It emphasizes three major ideas which are basic factors or continuants in Schelling's philosophy, and argues for the coherence of the theology which emerges from the 'positive philosophy.' First, it throws light upon one of Schelling's central metaphysical ideas, the doctrine of potencies: Being is pre-articulated or specified into different, though complementary powers. As reason comprehends it, being exists under varying exponents — the natural, the ideal or conceptual, and their synthesis, the spiritual. As being unfolds into actuality, the potencies effect a temporal arrangement and intensification. They become principles governing history and the meaning of history, the revelation of the Absolute. In the theistic stance of the positive philosophy, the potencies become the persons of the Christian Trinity. Secondly, Tillich points up the transition from a Kantian notion of freedom as self-determination (which he curiously calls "material freedom") to an irrationalist and voluntarist notion of freedom as the power of contradiction or of opposition of being ("formal freedom") as the decisive act in Schelling's development. It is this change in the understanding of freedom which divides the system of reason or 'negative philosophy' off from the system of actuality or 'positive philosophy;' it is on the basis of this distinction that a living and personal God which is pure act emerges from the metaphysico-logical identity of the system of reason and moves the center of philosophy

from logic to history. Thirdly, and solidly from the stance of the theistic positive philosophy, Tillich discerns in Schelling a model of human consciousness as essentially God-positing. The religious relation is seen as central to all consciousness, though historically manifested and enculturated in various forms. Tillich notes with approval the kind of philosophical theology that emerges from Schelling's late philosophy, for, departing from the orthodox tradition's depiction of creation and redemption as unmotivated and inexplicable, Schelling makes the whole scenario follow from an ontological decision of God, a change in his complex form of self-relation, the transition, namely, from the pure indeterminate freedom of his being to the limited being of personal will. The religious relation stems from God's decision to be personal. Says Tillich,

The religious relationship is real, because it is a communion of that which is — recapitulated in man, its central idea — with him who is that which is. The religious relationship is essentially a relationship of God with himself, as nature Because being, which has become itself in man, is the being of God, man is absolutely bound to God. Thus he is God-positing before all knowing and willing . . . (p. 125).

The second dissertation, on mysticism and guilt-consciousness, is a speculative venture in theology. It interprets a constant preoccupation of Schelling's metaphysics, namely the contrast between identity (the character of the Absolute) and radical otherness inconsistent with reason (the character of phenomenal individuals) in a wholly religious perspective, as the contrast of mystic identification with consciousness of sin. While the study is interesting theology a fascinating definition of religious consciousness in terms of fixed and polar extremes - - it is not a totally accurate reading of Schelling's development. Tillich simply ignores the part that the quest for *Wissenschaft* plays in Schelling's thought. He acknowledges, however, that he is reading religious significance into Schelling's thought before it explicitly turned theistic and speculative, so the careful reader will not be misled.

The translator, Victor Nuovo, has worked hard to provide in notes the textual keys and transitions Tillich left indefinite, and he contributed a lucid and useful introduction to *Construction*. Tillich's

studies are short, his style compact, his meaning often unclear, his textual basis unspecified, so these dissertations will not form very useful introductions to Schelling. To someone already familiar with the Schelling corpus, however, Tillich's presentation will be enlightening and thought-provoking. They do not communicate Schelling very well — the reader longingly searches out quotations for clarity and stable reference — but they provide an interesting perspective on Schelling's career, one that emphasizes the essential moves in his development.