

Review of Dale M. Schlitt, *German Idealism's Trinitarian Legacy*. Albany, NY: SUNY, 2016. 456 pages

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Preview

In this follow up to several detailed studies of Hegel's philosophy of religion, Dale Schlitt takes a decidedly Schellingian turn. *German Idealism's Trinitarian Legacies* is as much about the Trinitarian thought of the late Schelling as it is about Hegel. In this regard alone, the book stands apart. Where Hegel's philosophy of religion has been well mapped and explored, the late Schelling's alternative remains the most underresearched chapter in the English reception of modern German philosophy. Schlitt shows how Schelling and Hegel are never closer than in their appreciation for the logical, historical, and universal significance of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Precisely because they come so near on this point, the fundamental dispute that divides the two comes into sharp focus in their disagreement about the nature of Trinity. Behind the dispute lies their related conflict concerning the structure of personality, with ramifications that extend to psychology and politics. Schlitt's book is an important contribution to the history of philosophy and theology, and will remain a standard work in the field for years. In the following review essay, I offer some unsystematic reflections as to why I think this book is indispensable both for scholars of German Idealism and twentieth-century theology.

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¹ See Dale Schlitt, *Hegel's Trinitarian Claim* (SUNY, 1984); idem, *Divine Subjectivity: Understanding Hegel's Philosophy of Religion* (University of Scranton Press, 1990); *Experience and Spirit: A Post-Hegelian Philosophical Theology* (Peter Lang, 2007).

² Among the English secondary literature, on Hegel (in addition to Schlitt's work), see the early, seminal study of Emil Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought* (Indiana University Press, 1967). More recently see Slavoj Žižek (with John Milbank), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* ed. Creston Davis (MIT Press, 2009). It is not widely enough recognized that the recently deceased theologian, Thomas Altizer, constructed his once notorious "Death of God theology" on Hegel's philosophy of religion. For a late, summary statement, see Thomas J. Altizer, "Apocalypticism and Modern Thinking" *Journal for Christian Theological Research* 2.2 (1997):

<https://www.religion-online.org/article/apocalypticism-and-modern-thinking/>. On Schelling's late philosophy of religion, see Victor C. Hayes, *Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation. Three of Seven Books Translated and Reduced with General Introduction* (Armidale, Australia: The Australian Association for the Study of Religions, 1995); Tyler Tritten, *Beyond Presence: The Late F.W.J. Schelling's Criticism of Metaphysics* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2012).

essay, I offer some unsystematic reflections as to why I think this book is indispensable both for scholars of German Idealism and twentieth-century theology.

In Schlitt's language, Hegel's Trinity is a "monosubjectival" account of self-actualizing consciousness derived from the logic of the concept, "subjectivity dialectically developing through sublation (*Aufhebung*) of previous moments in an ever richer and more inclusive momentary whole" (101). If Hegel has surpassed the principle of unity of traditional Trinitarianism, the unity of substance, he has done so in the direction of a concept of absolute subjectivity. Hegel's Trinity is many by virtue of its three distinct moments of self-actualization, but one by virtue of the unity of the consciousness that drives the movement through the moments. Schelling's Trinity, by contrast, is constitutively plural. The three are one by virtue of an achieved rather than a necessary unity. Schelling's Trinity is the historical product of a self-constituting, perfect community. The three persons of the Trinity will share in one divinity at the end of history, but the unity will be a free collaboration between three centers of consciousness and agency who could in fact do otherwise. Schelling's Trinity is a *contingent* unity, rather than a *logically* necessary one, and will not be fully realized until the end, when the Spirit shall be as actual as are the Father and the Son.³ Hegel's Trinity, by contrast, consists in the three logically necessary moments of one self-mediating divine consciousness.

In a traditional interpretation of Hegel, which some contemporary Hegel scholars may dispute, Schlitt traces Hegel's Trinity back to Fichte's notion of the self-positing ego: an initial, potentially infinite consciousness is self-negated by positing its other, and recovered through the negation of the negation that restores the unity of its origin, but now, enriched by difference, and renders it actually infinite (containing limit within it). "For Hegel this true infinite took the form of an inclusive movement of subjectivity: love on the level of religion and self-thinking thought in

³ The contingent unity of the historically realized Trinity is (morally) necessary for the sake of the existence of love. See Schelling, F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Inquiries into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 60-61. The key text for Schelling in this regard is 1 Cor. 15: 25-28, which Schelling interprets as the subordination of the Son to the Spirit at the end of time, resulting in God becoming "all in all." See Schelling, *Freedom*, 68. The story of the actualization of the Son in the present age, which begins with the historical incarnation of Christ, to be followed by the actualization of the Spirit in the age to come, holds together Schelling's massive cycle of lectures, the philosophy of mythology and revelation, which preoccupied him from 1827 to his death. They have not yet been translated.

philosophy. For Schelling the infinite was an inclusive movement of three freely willing divine potencies become divine Persons through restoring and then sharing in the fullness of divine being.” (167). Put in the language of past theologies, Hegel inclines toward modalism, Schelling towards subordinationism (although neither can be easily accused of either Sabellianism or Arianism). At work in both models of the Trinity are Hegel’s and Schelling’s conflicting concepts of the person: for Hegel a person is one who recognizes and is recognized by an other; for Schelling a person is one who is primordially free, originally independent of even intersubjective relations, one who *makes oneself* dependent on another— who freely self-differentiates—in love.⁴ A person in the Hegelian line is one who is *constitutively* related to another person, another who is in fact, functionally or actually, a second self. One can see the Hegelian tradition continue in twentieth-century philosophy in Martin Buber’s dialogical philosophy and Gadamer’s hermeneutics. Schelling’s alternative to Hegel maintains that a person can only freely give oneself to another, if he or she is originally free from the other. One can hear a resonance of this model in Levinas’ ethics of non-reciprocal intersubjective relations. Applied to the Trinity, the Hegelian account issues in a God who is personal because he is self-mediated through constitutive relations. The Schellingian account issues in a God who is constituted by three independent centers of agency and personality, which through mutual subordination to one another in the history of creation and redemption, co-produce divine community.

Schlitt demonstrates that the interpretation and elaboration of the Trinitarian conception of God was *the* central theme of German Idealism, from Fichte, through Hegel, to the late Schelling. While German idealists wrote about everything, from the philosophy of nature to politics and economics, Schlitt argues that it is in their appropriation and expansion of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity that their lasting contribution lies. That this thesis will be strange to new scholars working in the field of German Idealism, influenced as many of them are by the flattened idealism of the Pittsburg Hegelians, and in Schelling studies, by the rush of new immanentist readings, for example, Iain Hamilton Grant’s absolutized “naturephilosophy,” or Markus Gabriel’s deflationary interpretation of the late Schelling (Schelling’s God reduced to nothing other than a field of sense), only makes this book all the more of an event. The book will also be of great interest to students of modern theology. Schlitt traces the influence of Hegel’s Trinity through the two giants of

⁴ In the *Dark Ground of Spirit*, I called this the psychology of productive dissociation. See S.J. McGrath, *The Dark Ground of Spirit: Schelling and the Unconscious* (London: Routledge, 2012), 120-178.

twentieth-century theology, Karl Barth and Karl Rahner, who stand on opposite sides of the Catholic-Protestant divide, but who are united in their common debt to Hegel, to lesser known figures such as the American Protestant theologian, Robert Jensen, and the Jesuit process theologian Joseph Bracken. Schelling's quieter influence is tracked through a minor cannon, which include figures such as the Russian sophiologist, Vladimir Soloviev and the German Protestant theologian, Wolfgang Pannenberg.

Schlitt has not treated all major figures involved in the transmission of German Idealist Trinitarianism: several important players only feature in the substantial endnotes. Among the theologians, Moltmann and Balthasar are notably absent. Among the philosophers, very little is said of C.S. Peirce and his influential Schellingian triad of firstness, secondness, and thirdness. One cannot do everything, and a selection has been made, which is destined to seem arbitrary to some. Schlitt, it seems, has taken as his aim a balanced demonstration of the equal significance of Hegel and Schelling to nineteenth and twentieth-century Trinitarian theology. Notwithstanding the selective nature of the survey, the end result is one of the strongest arguments I have seen for the interdependence of modern theology and modern philosophy. The close relationship of philosophy and theology remains something of an embarrassment for both in the Twentieth Century; for theology, insofar as theologians wish to maintain, with the early Barth, Neo-Orthodoxy, Post-Liberalism and, Radical Orthodoxy, theology's exclusive reliance upon revelation; for philosophy, insofar as philosophers continue to protest, with Heidegger, that theology's reliance upon revelation renders it inadmissible into philosophical discourse. However much we try to keep philosophy and theology separate from each other, they are inextricably intertwined. Both Hegel and Schelling endeavored to prove the rationality—the philosophical legitimacy—of the Trinity, and these demonstrations have not always met with enthusiasm from theologians. According to classical Thomists, the Trinity belongs to that class of truths which can only be revealed, by distinction from other religious claims, such as the knowledge that God exists, which can be affirmed on the basis of reason alone.⁵ If the knowledge of the Trinity as such does not depend upon faith—if it is or can become a properly philosophical claim—then the distinction between

⁵ See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1a, q. 13, ad. 1: “Although by the revelation of grace in this life we cannot know of God ‘what He is,’ and thus are united to Him as to one unknown; still we know Him more fully according as many and more excellent of His effects are demonstrated to us, and according as we attribute to Him some things known by divine revelation, to which natural reason cannot reach, as, for instance, that God is Three and One.”

reason and revelation is at best temporary: what has been received on faith is transformed into knowledge in the course of time.⁶ On the other hand, those who have tried to maintain the Thomist line are forced to underplay certain historical facts (or to explain them, with Rahner, as instances of “anonymous” or unconscious Christianity), incontrovertible facts such as the presence of Trinities (or at least triads) in Plato, and in Philo of Alexandria, or in Hinduism.

A certain logic inheres in most orthodox accounts of the Trinity, one that can be explained and understood independently of revelation. It cannot be denied, for example, that the Church Fathers deployed philosophical concepts in the construction of the concept of the Trinity in the Third and Fourth Centuries (the concept as such does not appear in the New Testament). This has compelled the late James Bradley to claim that the Trinity, far from being a confessional and faith-based doctrine alone, is a theory found throughout the philosophical tradition, a perennial explanatory ontology which posits “the fundamental [triadic] structure and principle of the actualisation of all things.”⁷ But if the Trinity is based on

⁶ This is the late Schelling’s view. See F.W.J. Schelling, *The Grounding of the Positive Philosophy* (Albany, SUNY, 2007), 185: “Who could it occur to in this sense to deny the external historical dependency of our entire culture and, to this extent, of philosophy, on Christianity? Through this dependency, even the *content* of our thought, and thus even the content of philosophy, is determined; it would not, however, be the content of philosophy if it remained perpetually in this dependency, that is, if it were only to be accepted on authority. If Christianity is really the content of philosophy, then with this it becomes the content *of our own thought*, it becomes for us our own insight, independent of all authority.” From the context, and from what follows later in the *Philosophy of Revelation*, it is clear that among the revealed truths that are to be converted into philosophical truths stands the doctrine of the Trinity. On this point, Hegel and Schelling are in agreement. See also *ibid.*, 186: “Philosophy would not have known some things without revelation, or at least it would not have discerned them as it has. Yet philosophy can now see these things with its own eyes, since in regard to all truths, even the revealed, it is only *philosophy* to the extent that it transforms them into independent truths known for oneself.”

⁷ James Bradley, “Philosophy and Trinity.” *Symposium* 16, 1 (2012): 155-178, at 155. Cf., F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung erster Theil, Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 13, ed. K. F. A. Schelling (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta, 1861), 312-313: “Wollte man die Idee von der Dreieinigkeit Gottes für eine speciellchristliche halten, so müßte man darunter eine solche verstehen, die durch das Christenthum erst eingesetzt und zu glauben geboten worden sey. Allein wie verkehrt dieß sey, läßt sich auch dem Befangenen einleuchtend machen. *Denn, nicht weil es ein Christenthum gibt, darum existirt jene Idee, sondern umgekehrt vielmehr, weil diese Idee die ursprünglichste von allen ist, darum gibt es ein Christenthum* [It is not because there is Christianity that there is Trinity, but the reverse, only because this idea is the most primordial of all is there Christianity]. Das Christenthum ist ein Erzeugniß, eine Folge dieses ursprünglichen Verhältnisses. Die Idee dieses Verhältnisses selbst ist daher nothwendig älter als das Christenthum, ja, inwiefern

logic, what then is it doing as an account of the events of the New Testament? Are the stories of Jesus, and his “self-emptying” (*kenosis*) before the Father (Phil 2:1-11), which precipitates the sending of the Spirit (Acts 2: 1-13) merely made-up to fit logic? Plainly not: the narrative is far too loose, too historically ad hoc, to be so read. If they were making it up according to an a priori logic, the Gospel writers would have done a better job of it. Indeed the notion of the Trinity is at best inchoate in the New Testament, as has often been pointed out. Or if, on the other side, the Trinity is strictly revealed, why then is it found in non-Christian philosophy and non-Christian religion, and not only in that which post-dates the Christian era? The Trinity is a site where philosophy and theology, logic and mysticism, reason and revelation, prove themselves to be historically and systematically inseparable, even it is also the site where they most resist conflation.

Schlitt does not go into these formal issues, but rather demonstrates the persistence of the problem of the relation of reason to revelation in his account of the impact of Hegel and Schelling on Trinitarian theology (and vice versa). He elaborates the variety of ways that the German Idealists moved beyond ancient substance metaphysics, which determined the Trinitarian formulations of the Church Fathers and the Scholastics, to a modern notion of triadic-subjectivity (self, other, and self-as-other), or triadic community (as in Schelling, the one, the other, and the two together). This move is proven to be largely the cause of the resurgence of interest in Trinity in twentieth-century theology. The enmeshment of philosophy and theology could not be more intractable. In a review, I cannot go into the wealth of material surveyed by Schlitt. Suffice it to flag a few memorable moments in the narrative, moments that are admittedly important to a Schelling scholar, such as myself. A different scholar would no doubt find other things to flag.

1. *The influence of Trinitarian theology on Hegel.* It was not only Hegel who influenced the theologians, the theologians influenced Hegel. Schlitt shows this transpiring primarily through Hegel’s collaboration with his friend at the University of Berlin, the theologian, Philip Marheinecke, who edited Hegel’s 1832 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Hegel’s thought does not in any way develop independently of a deep reflection on the theological doctrine of Trinity. The upshot: any scholar of Hegel who is not also a scholar of theology is skimming over the surface of the dialectic, and very likely distorting things. When theologians such as Isaak

das Christenthum im Laufe der Zeit nicht erscheinen konnte, ohne daß jene Idee schon im Anfang war, so ist diese Idee so alt, ja älter als die Welt selbst.” Italics and translation mine.

August Dorner took up Hegel's dialectic of self-consciousness to elaborate the constitutive relations of Father, Son, and Spirit, they were in a sense, restoring the theological origin of Hegelian logic itself.

2. *The Schellingian lineage of Russian religious thought.* From Soloviev to Dostoevsky and Tolstoy (both of whom attended Soloviev's St Petersburg lectures, "On Divine Humanity," held between 1877 and 1881), to Berdyaev, who claimed that Dostoevsky was his philosophical master, the philosophy of religion of the late Schelling has had a major influence on Russian thought. Soloviev was without question a Schellingian, as Schlitt proves. The critique of Hegelian essentialism, which is passed from Soloviev to Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Berdyaev, is a direct influence of Schelling. While Schelling was hardly read outside of German academic circles in the twentieth century, his influence was nonetheless felt. Anyone who was impressed by the existential Christianity of nineteenth-century and pre-Soviet Russian literature (Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Berdyaev)—and I include myself in this company—picked up Schellingian philosophy unconsciously. I became a Schellingian when I first read *The Brothers Karamazov* at the age of 20, although it would be years before I would read Schelling.

3. *The influence of Hegel on the Trinitarian theology of Karl Barth.* Schlitt makes it clear, as others have argued before, that without Hegel's notion of self-mediated consciousness, Barth's Trinity of "revealer, revelation, and revealedness," would not have been possible. Barth is therefore squarely lodged in the Hegelian monosubjectival account of the Trinity, as his critics, such as Jürgen Moltmann, have pointed out.⁸ Both Hegel and Barth insists on the absolute sovereignty of the divine subject, the one God who maintains lordship and unity in all of his acts, particularly in the begetting of the Son and the sending of the Spirit, which are his revelation. Where in Hegel, the other which mediates God to Godself is creation, for Barth it is Christ. The Spirit poured out in the negation of the negation (the death of Christ) is not indiscriminately distributed throughout humanity, as it is in Hegel, not a general consciousness of humanity come into its own; for Barth, it is the Spirit that animates the Church and sets it apart from the world.

4. *The significance of "Rahner's rule" for twentieth and twenty-first century theology* (*"The 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity"*)

⁸ See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom. The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 139-144. Moltmann critiques the Hegelian Trinitarian lineage as monotheistic and monarchical; a more Biblical Trinitarianism, in his view, breaks both with monotheism and the Roman political theology dependent upon it.

and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic' Trinity' [Rahner cited at 129]). Rahner's claim, that the events recounted in the New Testament reveal the inner nature of God, such that there is, for example, an *essential* connection between the Second Person of the Trinity and the incarnate Christ (no other divine person could have become incarnate in Jesus), is, in Schlitt's reading, a theological transposition of Hegel's account of the historical unfolding of divine consciousness. Hegel describes a God who comes to consciousness of himself through negating himself in creation and finding himself in his negation at Pentecost. I have called this thesis "historical immanentism": it is the assumption that God does not begin conscious, and needs to create the world as his other in order to become conscious.⁹ The thesis is common to all German Idealists at various stages of their career, and has its roots in the German Idealist and Romantic retrieval of the theosophy of Jacob Boehme. Rahner's commitment to the Catholic teaching on the aseity of God forbids his endorsement of historical immanentism. However, Rahner shares with historical immanentists like Hegel and the middle Schelling the assumption that the redemptive events of history are real events in the life of God. From Robert Jensen to Dale Schlitt himself, the importance of Rahner's rule cannot be overestimated. In the place of the traditional distinction between a God who is eternally self-mediated and beyond the world, we have a God who renders Godself vulnerable to creation, to the point of becoming implicated in human history.

5. *The tendency toward modalism among Hegelian Trinitarians.* Both Barth and Rahner speak of three distinct 'ways of being' in the one God, and prefer such language over the traditional language of distinct 'persons' in God, because they subscribe to the Hegelian thesis of the triadic structure of subjectivity: there are not three subjects in God but one subject mediating itself through three moments. In Hegel's account of the Trinity, one divine subject passes through three different modes of being in its achievement of absolute personhood. The Schellingian tradition, taken up by Soloviev and Pannenberg, breaks with this Hegelian model and speaks instead of three subjects in God, three distinct centers of personality and agency in one divinity. The unity of God is, in the Schellingian view, not so the logical unity of a self-mediated subject, but rather the at-oneness of a community: God does not actualize a single subjectivity in the Trinity; he establishes divine fellowship.¹⁰

⁹ See McGrath, *Dark Ground of Spirit*, 6-11.

¹⁰ The term "at-oneness" is Moltmann's, but is, in my view, deeply consonant with Schelling's Trinitarianism and his related political theology. See Moltmann, *Trinity and*

6. *Pannenberg has carried forward the Schellingian Trinitarian tradition into twentieth-century theology.* Pannenberg's Trinity consists in "reciprocally self-distinguishing divine Persons whose unity arises out of their interaction" (148), a "unity of reciprocal self-dedication" (166). Rather than Barth's three divine modes of being, Pannenberg describes three divine centers of action (*selbständiges Akzentrum*). "There is no further subject or hypostasis beyond the three divine Persons. This is, in a way, the error he [Pannenberg] finds in the thought of Barth and Hegel in that they posit a single divine subject. For the divine Persons love one another not in the sense that they love themselves in the other. Rather, more generally speaking, love gives rise to the selfhood of a person" (162). Schlitt cites a passage from Pannenberg that could have been lifted directly out of the late Schelling: "Each receives his or her self afresh from the other, and since the self-giving is mutual there is no one-sided dependence in the sense of belonging to another."¹¹ Schlitt discusses the evidence for the influence of Schelling on Pannenberg, which is barely discernible in the few references to Schelling in Pannenberg's work. Suffice it here to cite Schelling's celebrated definition of love in the *Freedom Essay* (which is crafted in response to the Hegelian dialectic of recognition): "For love is neither in indifference nor where opposites are linked which require linkage for [their] Being, but rather (to repeat a phrase which has already been said) this is the secret of love, that it links such things of which each could exist for itself, yet does not and cannot exist without the other."¹²

7. *The most important American theologian of the Twentieth Century, at least measured in terms of his contribution to Trinitarian theology, is probably Robert Jensen.* Jensen fuses both Hegelian and Schellingian elements into his theology. Like Schelling, Jensen is more concerned with the *meaning* of the New Testament than he is with the logical necessity binding together the three moments of the self-mediated concept. Rather than three logical moments, Jensen opts for a more Schellingian approach and speaks of three temporal tenses of divine activity. The Father is identified with the past, with what God has done; the Son with the present, with what God is doing, "the present possibility of God's reality for us," and the Spirit with the future, with "the outcome of Jesus' work" (Jensen, cited at 211). This is, of course, a variation on

the Kingdom. On the political theology of Schelling, see Satya Brata Das, *The Political Theology of Schelling*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

¹¹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, trans Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 426-27.

¹² Schelling, *Freedom*, 70.

Joachim of Fiore's eschatological Trinity, which differentiates the three persons according to three ages of revelation, and the three levels of human intimacy with the divine possible in them: from slaves under the law of the Father in the Old Testament, we become children under the grace of the Son in the New, and anticipate becoming friends of God under the Spirit in the age to come, the final age of the Church. Schelling himself acknowledged his alignment with Joachim, particularly in his doctrine of the three ages of the Church and the coming of a final age, the Church of St. John, when the distinction between Church and world will no longer be necessary.¹³ Jensen continues in this line and elaborates a Trinity "no longer . . . as Hegel did, according to the logic of the concept, but with one reflecting on the logic of time. He replaces Hegel's conceptual plot with a narrative plot, ultimately describing the Trinity as true temporal infinite with the three divine Identities" (182). But at a crucial point, Jensen swerves towards Hegel: he drops Schelling's notion of a person as a self-actualizing center of freedom in favor of Hegel's person as self-mediator: a person, human or divine, for Jensen is "that which comes to be personal through a relationship with another" (210). While Schelling argues that the divine potencies indeed become persons through their relations with one another, he does not argue that this history is a necessary one, or that only through such relations can a person personalize. Love for Schelling is never necessary, and necessity is never love.¹⁴

Schlitt explains how Hegel's concept of the Trinity as a self-differentiating divine subject, the God who comes to consciousness of himself by emptying himself into his other and finding himself there, becomes the dominant paradigm in twentieth-century theology. The self-othering of the infinite in Hegel is the begetting of the Son, and with that begetting, the creation of the world, the original other of God, which negates the "abstract universality" of the Father, and following this, draws forth the negating of this negation in the death of Christ and the sending of the Spirit, the human achievement of self-mediated knowledge or absolute idealism. The Trinitarian process encompasses the history of being for Hegel, from creation, through fall and redemption, but is in essence a logic. The Biblical narrative of God's othering himself is for Hegel, as is well known, a symbolic expression of the logic of the self-developing concept; the Trinitarian dynamic does not depend on the Scriptural

¹³ See Sean J. McGrath, "The Late Schelling and the End of Christianity." *Schelling Studien* 2 (2014): 63-77.

¹⁴ By necessity here, I mean blind, dysteleological, mechanical necessity. Schelling distinguishes this impersonal notion of necessity (Spinoza's) from "moral necessity," that which is needful so that love might be. See Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 60-61.

account and can be seen at work everywhere and in everything. The late Schelling offered a sharply divergent account of revelation, which had less of an influence, but resurged wherever objections were made to monosubjectival, monarchical, or one-sidedly monotheistic accounts of Trinity. The three divine persons of the Trinity for Schelling are not three logical moments in the self-actualization of one divine subject, but three distinct personalities, who are sundered from one another in creation, and reunited through the death of the Son and the sending of the Spirit. Schelling's Trinity is not a logic of the concept but a revealed history of the interaction of the three persons in God, a *positive* philosophy, a history of God, based on scripture and mythology. The fact that logic is at work here too makes the account no less scriptural for Schelling.

For those post-Christians who wonder what all the fuss over the Trinity is about, we would do well to remember that what is genuinely at stake in the German Idealist Trinitarian debates, and the theological debates that followed them, are contesting visions of the human person and human community. From psychology to political theology, these debates are eminently relevant. For Hegel a person is one who is constitutively related to another (without this relation the person is not), another who is a second self. God considered as Trinity is the paradigm of personhood: one subject, self-mediated through three modes of being. The Father is not in himself a person, but only in relation to the Son. From a Schellingian perspective this conception of personhood (rooted in Hegel's account of the master-slave struggle for recognition) instrumentalizes personal relations, a point also made by Levinas against reciprocity, especially as formulated in Buber's neo-Hegelian conception of the reciprocal I-Thou relation. I need you because without you I cannot be me. Love becomes, in this model, a logically necessary relation. For Schelling, by contrast, a person is one who *can be* freely related to another. The Father, on Schelling's account, is personal from the beginning because he can give (or withhold) himself. He does not need to give himself; freedom rather than necessity underwrites the genuinely personal relation in Schelling.

Schlitt concludes this impressive and indispensable work of historical scholarship with a repetition of what he takes to be the central contribution of German Idealism to theology: to think God as personal, one must think God as Trinity. While this is a solidly Hegelian conclusion, Schlitt himself disagrees with Hegel on several crucial points. First of all, he denies that Trinity is a logic of the concept and as such, a public matter. For Schlitt Trinity is a religious doctrine, not a rational deduction. This is a decisive critique of Hegel, and if it aligns Schlitt with mainstream Catholic

theology, it is nevertheless one which requires a Hegelian response. Underplaying the significance of the Trinity in Hegel, which is by and large the trend in contemporary Hegel scholarship, is not an adequate answer, and is, in my view, textually untenable. Second, Schlitt traces the theological Trinity back to religious experience rather than to the movement of pure, self-mediated thought. The Trinity, according to Schlitt is an “inclusive movement of enriching experience” (287). For Schlitt this means that instead of moving from the infinite to the finite, as Hegel does, Christian theology moves legitimately from the finite to the infinite. This avoids a central problem in Hegelian thought: the assumption of absolute knowledge, which contests the finitude of human reason and experience.

Schlitt finishes by promising more work Schelling. We can only hope he keeps the promise.

Sean J. McGrath