Idealism and Freedom in Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift*

Michelle Kosch, Cornell University

The 1809 essay *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom and Related Matters* marked a turning point in Schelling's thinking about freedom. In various early works he had endorsed a compatibilist account of free will, arguing that acts could be free in the sense required for morally responsible agency, while still being necessary from a causal and even a metaphysical point of view.[1] In later work he would endorse an incompatiblist conception of freedom as involving radical choice between good and evil and entailing contingency in nature.[2] The *Freiheitsschrift* is a point of transition, in which Schelling has introduced the idea that freedom must involve a radical choice between good and evil, but has not yet concluded that such a requirement is inconsistent with the compatibilism of his early system.

He positions the essay's account of freedom as a supplement to an "idealist" account already on hand, writing that idealism has provided the "first complete concept of formal freedom" (SW2 I,7: 351)[3] but that this is "only the most general concept of freedom and … a merely formal one" and that it lacks an account of the "real and vital concept" of freedom, which is "the capacity for good and evil" (SW2 I,7: 352). While not quite true to Schelling's eventual conclusion, this characterization - the comparison with Kant and Fichte that it invites, and the distinction that it assumes between formal and non-formal concepts of freedom - does give the reader a point of entry into the essay.

To understand the view advanced there, it is in fact helpful to distinguish between two components - call them "formal" and "substantive" - of an account of freedom. The formal component is the account of what is required for morally responsible agency. It will include some psychological characterization of free action that will allow for a distinction between imputable and non-imputable behavior, and will typically also take some stand on the issue of the compatibility of free will and determinism.[4]

What I am calling the "formal" component of an account of freedom is the only topic at issue in the contemporary literature on free will. But for Kant and his followers, a conception of freedom was not exhausted by its formal component. For them, freedom is both the capacity required for morally responsible agency and the source of substantive moral imperatives. So Kant distinguished what he called negative freedom (independence of determination by alien causes) from what he called positive freedom or autonomy (action in accordance with a self-imposed law).[5] And Fichte made a similar distinction, using the terms I have introduced: formal freedom is spontaneous

---

[1] A good example is the account in the *System of Transcendental Idealism* of 1800, in which the actions of empirical individuals, however arbitrary they seem to those individuals, are in fact determined by natural laws. Cf. SW2 I,3: 567-602. Actions are free just in case they follow from the rational nature of the agent performing them, and since natural necessity is itself the product of absolute subjectivity, it is not in conflict with individual freedom.

[2] Cf. e.g. *Grundlegung der positiven Philosophie* (Munich Lectures WS and SS 1832-3) 99-100, 225; SW2 2,4: 332; *Philosophie der Offenbarung* (Paulus Nachschrift) 14-16 *et passim*.

[3] Translations of Schelling are my own.

[4] In a compatibilist picture, the formal component will allow for a distinction between imputable and non-imputable behavior (in terms of identification or reasons-responsiveness, for example) that does not appeal to indeterminism. In an incompatibilist libertarian picture, the formal component is where, e.g., an account of agent-causation, or indeterministic event-causation, will enter.

[5] Ak 4: 442, 446-7; 5: 29ff.

self-determination on the basis of concepts of ends in general;[6] substantive freedom is taking as one's end the real independence of rational agency from non-rational nature.[7]

In writing that idealism has provided the first complete concept of formal freedom, but that this concept is *merely* formal and that idealism lacks an account of the capacity for good and evil, Schelling signals that he means to employ aspects of the accounts of formal freedom provided by Kant and Fichte - and that he means to reject their accounts of substantive freedom. What he has not yet seen at the time of the essay is the degree to which this rejection of the substantive component of their accounts will undermine the philosophical motivation for his own early compatibilism, and that his alternative substantive account will be inconsistent with the very account of formal freedom he endorses here.

1. Formal Freedom

At the most general level of description - formal freedom as spontaneous self-determination on the basis of concepts of ends - the account that Schelling attributes to "idealism" in the essay is in fact common to Kant and Fichte. In its details, however, neither would recognize his own view. Nor would a reader of the early Schelling recognize it. The account takes something from both Kant and Fichte, and something from Schelling's early metaphysics, but is as a whole novel with the essay.

Schelling follows Kant in emphasizing that spontaneous self-determination is attributable not to the self viewed as an empirical item, object of experience and natural scientific explanation, but instead only to an intelligible ground of the empirical self:

> Idealism actually first raised the doctrine of freedom to that very region where it is alone comprehensible. According to idealism, the intelligible being of every thing and especially of man is outside all causal connectedness as it is outside or above all time. Hence, it can never be determined by any sort of prior thing since, rather, it itself precedes all else that is or becomes within it, not so much temporally as conceptually, as an absolute unity that must always already exist fully and complete so that particular action or determination may be possible in it. (SW2 I,7: 383-4)[8]

Schelling's language in this section echoes Kant's very closely, especially the language of *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. He speaks of a "propensity" to evil – Kant's terminology (cf. Ak. 6: 43). He endorses Kant's claim that a good or an evil moral character is something that can be detected in a person from childhood on, and that this does not mean that a person is not the author of his character, only that he has not authored it in time (SW2 I,7: 386-7; *cf. e.g.* Ak. 6: 25). He also echoes Kant in claiming that this explains why an individual can both feel a certain inevitability in his actions and feel responsibility for being the way he is (SW2 I,7: 386-7). In fact Schelling accepts an apparent consequence of the view that Kant himself had denied - that it eliminates the possibility of moral reform - by himself denying the possibility of genuine conversion from evil to good or vice versa (SW2 I,7: 389).

---

[6] FW 4: 35-8, 112, 137, 161-2, 178-80. Compare Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* A534/B562, A802/B830.

[7] FW 4: 60, 143, 149, 153, 209, 211-12, 231, 350.

[8] Another formulation of the same idea occurs a few pages later: "Man is in the initial creation, as shown, an undecided being ... only man himself can decide. But this decision cannot occur within time; it occurs outside of time and, hence, together with the first creation … The act whereby his life is determined in time does not itself belong to time, but rather to eternity: it also does not precede life but goes through time (unhampered by it) as an act which is eternal by nature." (SW2 I,7: 385-6)

Schelling's reason for insisting that spontaneous self-determination is transcendental rather than empirical differs, however, from the one offered by Kant. Schelling's claim seems to rest on a distaste for empirical indeterminism as a matter of moral psychology, rather than a properly Kantian commitment to empirical determinism as fundamental for epistemology. That distaste is discernible in this passage, for instance:

> For the common concept of freedom, according to which freedom is posited as a wholly undetermined capacity to will one or the other of two contradictory opposites, without determining reasons but simply because it is willed, has in fact the original undecidedness of human being as idea in its favor; however, when applied to individual actions it leads to the greatest inconsistencies. To be able to decide for A or ~A without any compelling reasons would be, to tell the truth, only a prerogative to act entirely irrationally… (SW2 I,7: 382)

> [C]ontingency is impossible; it contests reason as well as the necessary unity of the whole; and, if freedom is to be saved by nothing other than the complete contingency of actions, then it is not to be saved at all. (SW2 I,7: 383)

But Schelling's reliance in the essay on this well-worn argument against indeterminism requires him to depart from the Kantian story about intelligible character (offered in the *Critique of Practical Reason* and *Religion within the Limits of reason Alone*), on which empirical character is determined by an atemporal, intelligible, but nevertheless individual and *contingent* act of choice. In the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant seems to accept the well-worn argument, so far as empirical actions go (e.g. at Ak. 5: 95), but he does not extend it to the intelligible act that is the choice of character. Instead, he reasons in *Religion* that if character is not chosen, not the act precisely of an undetermined capacity to will either good or evil, then it is not imputable – and if it is not imputable, then neither are the empirical actions that flow from it (Ak. 6: 44). Such a choice is "inscrutable," but must be posited nevertheless if there is to be moral responsibility. Schelling, by contrast, extends the point about the unhelpfulness of undetermined choice for moral imputation to the intelligible determination of character as well:

> There is … no transition from the absolutely undetermined to the determined. That, for instance, the intelligible being should determine itself out of pure, utter indeterminacy without any reason leads back to the system of the equilibrium of free will discussed above. (SW2 I,7: 384)

Determinism does not threaten at the intelligible level, since intelligible agency is outside of time and natural causation-relations (SW2 I,7: 383). But that does not open the door to indeterminism, at least Schelling claims. What role, one might then wonder, does the appeal to intelligible determination of empirical character play?

In reasoning in this way, Schelling departs from Kant and follows a line of argument that can be found in Fichte's *Sittenlehre*. Fichte argues that what defines the freedom a free agent has is not that its activity is not determined by anything; nor that its activity is determined (at least in part) by its own nature rather than (entirely) by extrinsic forces (he contrasts the will with the action of a steel spring, whose reaction to pressure is determined by its own nature); but instead that its activity is determined by a nature that is, unlike the spring's, of its own making (FW 4: 33-34). What is it for the self's nature to be of its own making? In explicating this idea, Fichte does not appeal to an inscrutable, radical choice of character, as Kant had, but claims instead that it suffices if that nature has its source in concepts rather than in some other being (FW 4: 35-36). Other natures have a natural-causal explanation; the nature of the free agent has its ground in conceptual activity.

Spontaneous self-determination is self-determination on the basis of a concept of an end that is the product of thought.

For Fichte, then, it is an agent's concept of itself that determines the individual essence that, in turn, determines individual actions. No indeterminism is required for there to be such spontaneity. So while maintaining the Kantian language suggesting a distinct atemporal realm of beings determining the phenomenal realm, Schelling takes up this Fichtean revision of the Kantian picture. That, at least, is what he seems to have in mind in this passage:

> In order to be able to determine itself, [the free will] would already have to be determined in itself, admittedly not from outside, which contradicts its nature, also not from inside through some sort of merely contingent or empirical necessity since all this (the psychological as well as the physical) is subordinate to it; but rather it would have to be determined by itself as its essence, that is, as its own nature. This is of course not an undetermined generality, but rather determines the intelligible being of this individual;…But what then is this inner necessity of the being itself? … Were this being a dead sort of being and a merely given one with respect to man, then, because all action resulting from it could do so only with necessity, responsibility and all freedom would be abolished. But precisely this inner necessity is itself freedom; the essence of man is fundamentally *his own act*;… The I, says Fichte, is its own act; consciousness is self-positing… (SW2 I,7: 384-385)

Schelling's idea here can perhaps be got at by distinguishing two classical libertarian criteria for free will: causal ultimacy and alternate possibilities. The self on this view has causal ultimacy in virtue of being self-positing (something whose nature cannot be understood except in terms of its own activity - thinking - and owes nothing to anything beyond itself). But it need not have alternate possibilities, need not be capable of choosing a nature different from the one it in fact has. On this view of the self as radically self-constituting, the intelligible agent does not choose among different options, since that would require pre-existing its own activity of self-constitution, and that is incoherent. But if one cannot make sense of the agent viewed intelligibly standing (conceptually speaking) before its options and choosing one or the other of them, then one need not imagine such an agent standing before the options with nothing to determine its choice one way or the other. In shedding the alternate possibilities requirement, then, one sheds the apparent need to appeal to the repugnant indifference conception at the intelligible level.

That, at least, is one way of reading the conjunction of the appeal to Fichte in the above passage, and the denial that there can be indeterminacy in the choice of intelligible character. Unfortunately it stands in tension with several of Schelling's statements elsewhere in the essay, where he emphasizes the original "undecidedness" of human essence (e.g. at SW2 I,7: 385-6) and describes the intelligible choice of character in terms strongly evocative of the freedom of indifference, e.g.: "Man is placed on a summit where he has in himself the source of self-movement toward good and evil in equal portions… Man stands on the threshold; whatever he chooses, it will be his act: but he cannot remain undecided…" (SW2 I,7: 374). These passages are difficult to reconcile with the denial of indeterminism.[9] And indeed in later works Schelling unequivocally endorses a conception of freedom as involving contingent choice (even, apparently, at the empirical level). I will return to this issue below.

One striking claim in the essay is that formal freedom in the "idealist" sense is attributable to

[9] Fichte's view contains a similar equivocation in that he elsewhere in the Sittenlehre endorses a Reinholdian conception of freedom as arbitrary choice.

all of nature. The essence of each natural item is determined not in time via causal interactions with other things, but instead by its place in an atemporal conceptual order. This is a departure from both Kant and Fichte and is intended by Schelling as a nod to his own philosophy of nature. He writes:

> It will always remain odd … that Kant, after having first distinguished things-in-themselves from appearances only negatively through their independence of time and later treating independence of time and freedom as correlate concepts in the metaphysical discussions of his *Critique of Practical Reason*, did not go further toward the thought of transferring this only possible positive concept of the in-itself also to things. (SW2 I,7: 351-352)

Likewise, Schelling writes, Fichte was right to say that the I is its own act, that consciousness is self-positing, but should have extended this account to all of being, which "is real self-positing, … is a primal and fundamental willing, which makes itself into something and is the ground of all ways of being." (SW2 I,7: 385)

The extension of formal freedom, so construed, to all of nature was Schelling's own innovation. Part of his motivation for it had been to dissolve the free will problem in its classical early-modern form. He thought that if we could see the necessity in nature not as the work of a mindless mechanistic determinism but instead as the self-realization of a fundamentally rational absolute, there should be no problem with seeing human actions as both free and necessary. So the extension to all of nature of what he here calls the "idealist" conception of formal freedom was essential to his early compatibilism.

This makes the complaint that Schelling here raises all the more puzzling. The problem with the "idealist" conception, Schelling claims, is that the extension of the formal component of freedom to all of nature leaves unspecified what is distinctive about human freedom in particular, thereby failing to provide the "real and vital" concept of freedom as freedom for good and evil. This seems unfair, since Kant and Fichte were not at all guilty of attributing formal freedom to all of nature. Nor is the accusation that idealism's account of freedom is "merely formal" at all plausible when directed against them, for both did offer accounts of substantive freedom. We should instead take Schelling's complaint to be that the substantive account that they did offer could not account for freedom as involving a choice between good and evil.

2. Substantive Freedom

Kant and Fichte shared a conception of substantive freedom as the autonomy of the rational will. The distinction between Kant's account and Fichte's is that the former understood substantive self-determination in terms of a *law* that rational agency gives itself, whereas the latter understood it in terms of an *end* that rational agency sets for itself. But the rational will was, for both, not only the source of its actual intentions and actions, but also the source of the moral norms against which those intentions and actions are to be measured - norms which are not arbitrarily chosen but objectively valid, valid for all rational beings. The account of autonomy was supposed both to account for the content of moral requirements (to form the foundation for normative ethics) and to account for the categorical bindingness of morality (for the interest the will takes in moral demands). In providing the former, it should provide an account of the *content* of good and evil; and in providing the latter, it should provide an account of how good and evil are possible *objects of choice*.

There are variations, both in the primary texts and in the interpretive literature, of the story about how negative or formal freedom gives rise to a law or end constitutive of it and why that law

or end gives rise to binding moral obligations.[10] But the problem that occupies Schelling in the *Freiheitsschrift* persists on any interpretation of the details of the account: how, on such a picture, is a fully formally free choice of moral evil possible? If the moral law (for Kant) or end (for Fichte) is partially constitutive of moral agency, the free will is less than fully free when it thwarts that law or ignores that end. Moral evil is possible only as a failure of the will to be fully free.[11]

Although theodicy might seem to have pride of place in the *Freiheitsschrift*, it is in fact this problem of evil - the moral psychological one - that is Schelling's main concern. It is what he is referring to when, for instance, he writes that contemporary philosophy "pushes its philanthropism to the brink of denying evil" (SW2 I,7: 371):

> According to these notions, the sole ground of evil lies in sensuality or animality, or in the earthly principle, as they do not oppose heaven with hell, as is fitting, but with the earth. This notion is a natural consequence of the doctrine according to which freedom consists in the mere rule of the intelligent principle over sensual desires and tendencies, and the good comes from pure reason; accordingly, it is understandable that there is no freedom for evil (in so far as sensual tendencies predominate) - to speak more correctly, however, evil is completely abolished. For the weakness or ineffectualness of the principle of understanding can indeed be a ground for the lack of good and virtuous actions, yet it cannot be a ground of positively evil ones and those adverse to virtue. (SW2 I,7: 371)

Schelling objects to this excessive "philanthropism" by pointing out that it is false to moral experience, since it makes evil incomprehensible from a practical perspective: no one who embraces this sort of view can see him or herself as capable of evil. This is what he means, I take it, when he writes that evil can have no "subjective meaning" on such a view:

> But on the supposition that sensuality or a passive attitude to external impressions may bring forth evil actions with a sort of necessity, then man himself would surely only be passive in these actions; that is, evil viewed in relation to his own actions, thus subjectively, would have no meaning; and since that which follows from a determination of nature also cannot be objectively evil, evil would have no meaning at all. (SW2 I,7: 371-72)

Schelling links this "philanthropism" to the autonomism of Kantian and Fichtean moral theory, which makes comprehensible only one determination of the will - will to the good: "there is hence only one will … not a dual one …" (SW2 I,7: 372).

Schelling goes on to argue that there are only two ways in which one might try to explain evil given these assumptions, neither of which is acceptable. The first, that the sensuous inclinations

---

[10] A number of quite distinct interpretations of this thought in Kant have been proposed, ranging from constructivist readings, on which rational beings create the laws that govern their activity by engaging in that very activity (Rawls, Korsgaard, O'Neill), to realist readings, on which rational beings apprehend laws of reason that exist independently of their activity (Ameriks, Wood), to combined readings on which the authority of such laws is explained by the assent of the rational being to be bound by it, but their content is explained by considerations independent of the fact that the agent has consented to be bound by it (Reath). All of these have some basis in the text. Fichte's account is also multiply ambiguous - Neuhouser (1990) distinguishes between an "individualist" and a "universalist" construal, on the first of which finding out what one is supposed to do is a matter of finding and acting on the norms that are most truly expressive of oneself as an individual agent, and on the second of which it is a matter of finding out the universal end of subjectivity *per se*, which will then be one's moral end as an individual.

[11] I have argued this point at greater length in the case of Kant in Kosch 2006a, and in the case of Fichte in Kosch 2006b.

simply overcome the intellectual principle, leads to the result that evil is pure passivity. This is something like the path taken by Fichte, for whom moral evil is the result of laziness, the human manifestation of a general natural principle of inertia (FW 4: 199). Laziness leads to immorality not by directly inclining us to avoid doing our duty in those cases in which we have clearly grasped what it is - in fact, Fichte thought we cannot be fully conscious of our duty and fail to will it - but rather by inclining us to stop prematurely the process of practical reflection that allows us to correctly determine what our duty is. Fichte calls laziness "the radical evil in human nature" (FW 4: 202), and it is indeed an optimistic view of human nature on which this is as close as we get to radical evil. Schelling is pointing to this aspect of Fichte's view when he remarks that Fichte "fell prey … to the philanthropism prevalent in his moral theory and wanted to find this evil that precedes all empirical action in the lethargy of human nature." (SW2 I,7: 389)

The second way of accounting for evil that Schelling suggests, that the intellectual principle permits the sensuous impulses to take precedence, has the result that evil is unintelligible, "For why does the rational principle then not exercise its power?" (SW2 I,7: 372). This is of course the conclusion Kant reached in his effort to deal with the problem of evil in *Religion*. Kant was convinced that in order for the empirical actions that flow from it to be imputable, the intelligible choice of fundamental disposition must be a contingent choice.[12] But he was also convinced that it is impossible to conceive of a lawless cause. This second commitment had been the basis of the argument from negative to positive freedom in the *Groundwork* (at Ak. 4: 446-7) - the basis of the link between formal and substantive freedom - and he reiterated it in *Religion*.[13] The apparent conflict caused Kant to concede, in *Religion*, that moral evil is incomprehensible.[14]

The problem of the "real and vital" component of the account of freedom, then, is that of how a positive conception of moral evil is possible. What, then, is Schelling's alternative account of the content of good and evil and of how they are possible determinations of the human will?

3. Schelling's Alternative

If the source of the problem with moral evil that concerns Schelling lies in accounts of morality as substantive freedom, accounts on which one's own constitution as an agent provides an answer to the question of what one ought to do and why one ought to do it, then it is clear from the outset that Schelling's own account must be one on which both morality and immorality are manifestations of substantive freedom - on which both can be seen to follow on full exercises of freedom in the formal sense. So it seems Schelling must be committed to providing, on the one hand, a new account of the causality of finite agents' wills coupled with a new account of moral (and immoral) motivation, and, on the other hand, a new moral metaphysics and epistemology. In fact only the first pair of issues are addressed in the essay, as he is not yet (in 1809) prepared to address the second pair.

---

[12] See e.g. Ak. 6: 32, where Kant writes that evil maxims must be viewed as "accidental," and Ak. 6: 40, where he equates "freedom" and "contingency" of the moral disposition.

[13] See e.g. Ak 6: 35: "To think of oneself as a freely acting being, yet as exempted from the one law commensurate to such a being (the moral law), would amount to the thought of a cause operating without any law at all (for the determination according to natural law is abolished on account of freedom): and this is a contradiction."

[14] See e.g. Ak. 6: 43: "the original predisposition (which none other than the human being himself could have corrupted, if this corruption is to be imputed to him) is a predisposition to good; there is no conceivable ground for us, therefore, from which moral evil could first have come in us." See also Ak. 6: 43: "The rational origin … of this disharmony in our power of choice with respect to the way it incorporates lower incentives in its maxims and makes them supreme, i.e. this propensity to evil, remains inexplicable to us …"

He begins by offering an account of the constitution of things (including persons) as products of the operation of two fundamental principles portrayed in terms of various oppositions in the course of the essay (e.g. gravity/light, chaos/order, non-understanding/understanding, creaturely self-will/universal will). He generally refers to the first principle as the "ground." The second has no fixed appellation - he calls it light, understanding, the universal will, and sometimes God (although this last is problematic: elsewhere in the essay Schelling claims that God, like finite personalities, is instead a synthesis of the two principles). Each principle is an instantiation of will, now the basic ontological category (the "positive content of the in-itself"), but the wills of the two principles are distinguished both according to content and according to character. In terms of content, the will of the ground is a sort of egoism, while the will of the understanding is a sort of universalism, willing the subordination of egoistic self-will within a larger order (SW2 I,7: 381). The will of the ground is unconscious or semi-conscious, "blind craving and desire" (SW2 I,7: 372), while that of the second principle is fully conscious.

Personality, like other natural products, is the synthesis of these two principles in some concrete unity. Consciousness is always characterized by some form of understanding (the universal principle), while individuality requires separateness (the principle of the ground). Two sorts of synthesis are possible, one in which the will of the ground is subordinated to the will of the understanding, and one in which the understanding is subordinated to the ground. (These will be good and evil, respectively.)

As conscious, human willing always has in view the totality of the cosmos and its place there. But sometimes it wills to place itself (its particular needs or desires) at the center of things, to elevate the ground (its being-as-distinct) to the status of an end in itself, subordinating the universal to the status of a means.

> [T]hat precisely this elevation of self-will is evil is clarified by the following. The will that steps out from its being beyond nature, in order as general will to make itself at once particular and creaturely, strives to reverse the [proper] relation of the principles, to elevate the ground… (SW2 I,7: 365)

The good will on this picture is recognizably moral in that it wills to maintain its own place in a larger order, the evil will recognizably immoral in that it treats itself differently from, privileges itself over, other similarly placed finite wills. This is the possibility that Schelling aims to leave room for in his conception of freedom:

> The general possibility of evil consists … in the fact that man, instead of making his selfhood into the basis, the instrument, can strive to elevate it into the ruling and total will and, conversely, to make the spiritual within himself into a means. (SW2 I,7: 389)

Schelling's criticism of the Kantian/Fichtean account had been that on it, the will does not exercise its power in evil. He believes he has here pointed to an account on which the will does exercise its power in evil, by organizing itself around that principle within it that makes its existence as an individual will possible. This link of the possibility of independent personality with the principle of the ground leads to an interpretation of evil as defiance of or rebellion against the individual's place in a larger cosmic order.

What is the cosmic order at issue, and what would respecting one's place in it amount to? Schelling does not answer this question in the essay, and this absence of a substantive normative ethics in *Freiheitsschrift* is a direct result of the meta-ethics Schelling there advances. Its most

characteristic claim is that in order to be free for good and evil, human beings must find the source of the norms to which they are subject outside themselves. The center, the moral absolute, is not immanent to the will of the creature. Agents cannot look to their reason or to some other aspect of their intrinsic nature as a source of norms; nor do they create norms themselves through their own activity, rational or otherwise. The deed that is the basis of the fundamental moral disposition of an individual is one of orienting itself towards or away from some source of norms that is outside of it.

That alone does not suffice to explain the absence of even a gesture at a normative ethics in the *Freiheitsschrift*. But it does suffice when coupled with the fact that the model of moral philosophical knowledge that Schelling began with - the Kantian and post-Kantian one, now of course unusable - has not yet been replaced with a philosophical account of the sort of broadly empirical enquiry that would be required in this religious form of moral realism. A defense of that sort of inquiry is what he goes on to produce in his later works, under the title "positive philosophy," where he advances a form of theological voluntarism coupled with an empirical inquiry into the history of religious consciousness.[15] Schelling does not yet have that account in 1809, and so it cannot figure in the essay. Instead, all that he offers is an account on which the nature of the divine will (and not the nature of the free will in general) is what makes the good good, and he takes that to be all he needs for his purposes there. Most of the new work done in the essay is aimed at drawing the required distinction between the divine will and a non-divine free will.

That is why it looks as though the main concern of the essay is with theodicy, with accounting for how evil can somehow not be "in" God when everything is in God. Schelling does believe he has a solution to that other problem of evil as well, and the solution takes the general form of a free-will defense. It is novel in that it does not, like the traditional free-will defense, rest simply on the non-determination of the human will. Instead it rests in part on the substantive conception of human freedom advanced in the essay: Anything existing must incorporate the principle of the ground. Only an omnipotent being could fully subordinate the ground to the understanding. If there are to be free creatures, they must be such that the will of the ground is active in them. This is a condition of their being independent of God (of their being free creatures to begin with). But being an independent particular is itself a temptation, a temptation to put oneself at the center - elevating the particular over the universal - in one's conscious willing.

As a contribution to theodicy the picture here seems no better than the free-will defense in its traditional form. For someone tempted to ask why God would not have done better by creating a nature without any finite spirits in it, given how those spirits would need to be, there are no convincing answers here. Schelling himself often seems to have this misgiving. A reply one could retrieve from his earlier work - from the writings on philosophy of nature and the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, for instance - is that the system of nature would be incomplete without finite spirits. In the *Freiheitsschrift* Schelling claims instead that God would not be *known* (or: "revealed") without them. Perhaps that is an interesting addition to the traditional free-will defense.

But despite the fact that theodicy occupies so many pages, it is clear that Schelling's chief concern in the essay is the moral psychological problem of evil and the need to develop a conception of human freedom that avoids it. And while it is clear that he has succeeded in gesturing toward a substantive component of an account of human freedom that is distinct, and distinct in the

[15] This argument is made in the *Grundlegung der positiven Philosophie* and in the lectures on mythology and revelation (SW2 2/1-4). For his defense of theological voluntarism in ethics see e.g. SW2 1/8: 168; SW2 1/10: 58; *Grundlegung der positiven Philosophie* 241, 286, 298. For statements of his epistemology of religion see e.g. *Grundlegung der positiven Philosophie* 115, 240-275 *passim*, SW2 2/3: 113, 131-3, 249 *et passim*.

right way, from the account characteristic of Kant and Fichte, there is a problem with that account which Schelling does not acknowledge in the essay. The problem is that it is not, in the end, consistent with the formal component he had started with.

Schelling's modification does not entail any lawbreaking capacities of empirical individuals or the complete lawlessness of nature as it is experienced. Still, if intelligible character is expressed in empirical action, the choice to elevate the ground must result in limitations of the efficacy of the intelligible principle in the empirical world. There would be no need for theodicy were that not the case. And in fact we do find Schelling explaining, in the context of a discussion of the cosmological place of evil, that we can see the effects of evil not only in human conduct, but also in a certain accidentalness in the determination of nature. "There are accidental determinations in nature which are only explicable by appeal to an excitement of the irrational or dark principle of the creature - activated selfhood - in the first creation." (SW2 I,7: 376) This accidentalness is not evil *per se*, but instead its natural result. The irrational and accidental are "bound" to the necessary in the sense of being *mixed* with the necessary in the world as it is experienced.

> The irrational and the accidental, which shows itself to be bound to the necessary in the formation of beings, especially organic ones, proves that it is not a mere geometrical necessity that was at work here, but instead that freedom, spirit and self-will were in play. (SW2 I,7: 376)
>
> [N]owhere does it appear as though order and form are original, instead it seems as if something originally ruleless had been brought to order. This is the ungraspable basis of reality in things, the indivisible remainder, that which cannot be analyzed by the understanding even with the greatest exertion… (SW2 I,7: 359-60)

The idea that the exercise of human freedom is actually responsible for the introduction of chaos into the order of things, prefigured in *Philosophie und Religion* (1804), is a staple of Schelling's late philosophy. But this view becomes dominant only with the *Weltalter* drafts, and coexists in the *Freiheitsschrift* alongside remnants of Schelling's earlier view. Also characteristic of the later Schelling is the view that full freedom requires indeterminism, and indeed indifference.[16] So the view of freedom in Schelling's *Frieheitsschrift* is a transitional one in which he posits a radical freedom for good and evil alongside remnants of the compatibilism of his own early works.

[16] Schelling's embrace of this conception occurs in the context of a discussion of divine freedom, but far from limiting the point to the divine case he presents it as a general truth. See e.g. *Grundlegung der positiven Philosophie* 212, where he claims that full freedom is present only "when it is *wholly indifferent* to me which of two opposites I do or do not do" Compare *Grundlegung der positiven Philosophie* 214: "But we attribute perfect freedom only to that cause for which the action is *wholly indifferent* relative to itself. See Kosch 2006a, Chapter 4, for a fuller discussion.

Works Cited

Fichte, J. G. 1971. *Fichtes Werke*. Ed. I. H. Fichte. Berlin. (=FW)

Kant, Immanuel. 1968. *Werke*. ed. Königlich Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Berlin: Akademie Verlag. (=Ak.)

Kosch, M. 2006a: *Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling, and Kierkegaard*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kosch, M. 2006b. 'Kierkegaard's Ethicist: Fichte's Role in Kierkegaard's Construction of the Ethical Standpoint'. *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 88. 261-95.

Neuhouser, F. 1990. *Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity*. Cambridge University Press.

Schelling, F. W. J. 1972. *Grundlegung der Positiven Philosophie: Münchener Vorlesung WS 1832/33 und SS 1833*. H. Fuhrmans, Ed. Turin, Bottega D'Erasmo.

Schelling, F. W. J. 1977. *Philosophie der Offenbarung*. M. Frank, ed. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.

Schelling, F. W. J. 1856-61. *Sämmtliche Werke*. K. F. A. Schelling, ed. 14 Vols. Stuttgart: Cotta. (=SW2)