

Russian Philosophy in the Context of European Thinking: The Case of Vladimir Solovyov

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German idealism, especially the teachings of Schelling and Hegel, had a strong impact on Russian philosophers of the 19th and 20th centuries, including Vladimir S. Solovyov, an outstanding 19th century thinker. There is no doubt that Schelling's philosophy, particularly his later teaching on the so-called positive philosophy, played a key part in the formation of Solovyov's views. In his programmatic treatise *Critique of Abstract Principles*, Solovyov by and large reproduces Schelling's later arguments against the so-called 'negative philosophy', seen by him as the acme of Hegel's system. While not rejecting the significance of negative, that is, purely rationalistic, philosophy, Schelling at the same time pointed to its narrowness and the necessity of replenishing it with 'positive philosophy' grounded in religious revelation as specific experience. Schelling carried out this task in his *Philosophy of Mythology* and *Philosophy of Revelation*, the works that exerted the most profound influence on Vladimir Solovyov, who relied on Schelling's positive philosophy in trying to create what he called free theosophy, or integral knowledge, '... Theology in harmony with philosophy and science forms free theosophy or integral knowledge' (Solovyov, 1911–1914, III: 362).

A considerable number of Solovyov's philosophical principles were indeed formulated under the influence of Schelling. For instance, it was from Schelling that Solovyov in the first instance borrowed his basic concept of all-embracing being. Secondly, Solovyov's belief that will is the determining principle of being goes back to Schelling (that conviction became even firmer later through his study of Schopenhauer). Thirdly, it was partly through the influence of Schelling (though certainly not through him alone) that Solovyov came to formulate his cosmogonic theory based on the teaching of the falling away from God of His 'Alter Ego', or His 'prototype'. Finally, Solovyov's conception of the suffering and developing God also goes back to Schelling, which finally determined the character of their historicism.

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The concept of all-embracing being

In a course of lectures delivered in Munich in 1827–1828 entitled *System of the Ages of the World*, Schelling tries to clarify the concept of ‘all-embracing being’ that from the outset played a major part in his teaching but was constantly corrected by him due to the accusations of pantheism leveled against him by his critics, initially by Fichte and later by Jacobi. Schelling (1990: 195) affirms that ‘The idea of all-embracing being is an eternal idea according to which all that exists derives its being from God and, therefore, represents *res extantia* substance existing through God and in God, which is the basic idea of any true religion’. Long before his Munich lectures, in the work *Philosophy and Religion* (1804) Schelling implied that all-embracing being included the whole absolute world with all its gradations of creatures, thus encompassing the universe in its complete and ideal unity. Still earlier, in his ‘identity philosophy’ (*Identitätsphilosophie*), the unity of the universe was presented by Schelling as an ideal and eternal unity of spirit and nature, as a divine work of art. In his dialogue *Bruno* (1802) Schelling (2005 = gw, iv: 307) emphasizes that God should not be perceived as the transcendent Creator of the world, but as an artist immanent in the world, who forms matter from within. ‘Supreme power ... , or the Supreme God is the One outside of whom there is no nature, the same as true nature is the one outside of which there is no God.’ Schelling himself points to the sources of his teaching on all-embracing being as found in the pantheism of Spinoza and Giordano Bruno, with the latter’s doctrine being founded on the concept of God as an all-embracing being going back to Nicholas of Cusa with his principle of coinciding opposites – the universal and the infinite, the minimum and the maximum in the Deity.

Schelling defines his attitude as monotheism. However, his monotheism has its specific features. Rejecting polytheism as the concept of the multiplicity of gods, he nevertheless describes monotheism as a doctrine of God’s multiplicity. According to Schelling, God is the all-embracing being, viewed as universal unity achieved through multiplicity, that is, as a unity of opposites.

Consequently, Schelling is immeasurably closer to Spinoza’s pantheism than to Jacobi’s theism. The difference in his teaching on all-embracing being, that is, monotheism, from Spinoza’s pantheism is seen by Schelling in monotheism being viewed not as substantial pantheism but rather as the pantheism of a higher, supersubstantial, order. In reviewing Spinoza’s philosophy, Schelling thereby makes adjustments to his own philosophy of identity, repositioning it, along with other rationalistic systems, to the type of philosophy now defined by him as ‘negative’, as opposed to the so-called ‘positive philosophy’. The latter hence cannot be a purely rational construct, as postulated in the teachings of Descartes, Spinoza, Fichte, Hegel and the earlier Schelling himself, but should rest on specific experience. Schelling asserts that his system of identity represents a high point in the development of ‘negative’ philosophy; a pinnacle in which were united both Spinoza’s teaching on substance and Fichte’s theory of the subject. Through this synthesis Schelling managed to overcome both the former’s one-sided naturalism and the latter’s one-sided subjectivism.

Let us see how Schelling’s teaching on the all-embracing being was reflected in Solovyov’s works. In the latter’s case, as with Schelling, this concept proves to be of key philosophical significance. Viewing unity as the essential attribute of being,

Solovyov (1911–1914, I: 309) writes: ‘Absolute unity is the first positive attribute of all that exists.’ Once again, following Schelling, the Russian philosopher views true unity as a unity of multiplicity. ‘The absolute prime principle embraces not only *hen* but also *hen kai pan*’ (ἓν καὶ πᾶν) (Solovyov, 1911–1914, I: 309). Insofar as God, in this respect, embraces ‘all in their unity’, Solovyov characterizes his teaching as the philosophy of all-embracing being. ‘The great idea underlying any truth amounts to the recognition that all that exists is in effect united’ (308). Solovyov’s understanding of the Absolute as a unity of opposites constitutes the foundation of his teaching on all-embracing being. For all time, the Absolute has had two poles and two focal points: the first implies the principle of freedom from any form, any specific manifestation and, therefore, from being, whereas the second involves the principle of being, or the generating force of being, that is, multiplicity of form. The first pole is that of Unitedness whereas the second pole is the direct potential of being, or prime matter.

With both Schelling and Solovyov, the concept of all-embracing being as a unity of opposites – in the final analysis, as the unity of God and the world – bears the stamp of pantheism. From the viewpoint of Christian theism, the being of the world is something that exists outside of the essence of God; therefore, God is not all-embracing being. The meaning and substance of this concept will become clearer when we consider the questions posed above. Let us begin with the problem we raised in expounding Schelling’s theosophy based on God’s supersubstantiality.

The supersubstantiality of God: ‘Being is nothing but will’

In his earliest works, following Kant and especially Fichte, Schelling already began to draw a distinction between transcendental and dogmatic philosophy: in contrast to the latter, the point of departure and the main focus of contemplation in transcendental philosophy came to be not the object but the subject, not being but knowledge, not substance but freedom. ‘Insofar as for a transcendental philosopher only the subjective has primary reality, the focus is placed directly only on the subjective aspects in knowledge; its objective aspects will be considered only indirectly, and in contrast to ordinary knowledge where knowledge itself (the act of learning) disappears, being overshadowed by the object, the reverse occurs in transcendental knowledge – the object, as it were, disappears, being overshadowed by the act of learning. Consequently, transcendental knowledge is the science of knowledge to the extent of it being purely subjective’ (Schelling, 2000 = GW, III: 345). Schelling substantiates and deepens Kant’s shift from the metaphysics of being to the metaphysics of freedom, which later was further developed in Fichte’s science of knowledge. Insofar as transcendental idealism is clearly marked by the primacy of practical over theoretical reasoning, it is freedom which is taken as the absolute foundation of knowledge. Schelling (2000 = GW, III: 376) rightly stresses that the ‘alpha and omega of this [transcendental] philosophy is freedom, something absolutely unprovable, bearing its proofs only in itself ... In this respect, being is just derivative freedom. But in a system that regards being as primary and supreme, not only knowledge must copy the primordial being but also any freedom can be necessarily only an illusion ...’

If substance is one of the attributes of being, then, because of its 'absolute unprovability' freedom is a supersubstantial principle. Schelling characterizes its essence as will: wishing, striving, yearning. It is will that underlies the real basis of all that exists. Schelling (followed by Schopenhauer) appears to uphold the tradition of voluntary metaphysics which became quite pronounced as early as the 13th century in the teaching of Duns Scotus and later, in the 14th century, in the treatises of the nominalists William of Ockham, Nicolas d'Autrecourt and others.

The thesis of God's supersubstantiality should be viewed in the light of the teaching on will as the basis of all being. Let us see how Schelling elucidates this thesis. First of all he emphasizes the personal character of God as a living, free entity and identifies in Him the following three potentials, namely: a direct possibility of being, or unconscious will (God the Father); a possibility of real existence, or conscious will (God the Son); and, finally, a third possibility of the Holy Spirit floating between the first and second potentials. In this respect the essential point for Schelling, which he deduced from the mystics, particularly from Jakob Böhme, is the delineation within God of 'God Himself' from something alien to Him, conceived of as an indefinite groundedness that Schelling (following Böhme) calls 'protoground' (*Urgrund*), 'abyss' (*Abgrund*), or 'groundlessness' (*Ungrund*), which is unconscious will, dark, unreasonable longing, primordial craving as 'the incomprehensible basis of real things'.

Schelling's voluntary metaphysics, along with his teaching on an unconscious, dark 'nature' of God that is alien to God Himself, exerted a profound influence on Vladimir Solovyov. Solovyov also views will as the primary attribute of all that exists. 'The first attitude of the existent to the essence or the first attribute of being involves will. But in recognizing the essence as one's alter ego through the exercise of one's own free will, the existent sets it apart not only from the self but also from the self's own will. In order for the existent to strive for this alter ego, it needs to be given in a certain way to every existing thing ..., that is, to be presented to the existent. Therefore, the essence determines the being of the existent not only as will but also as presentation. This presentation is one's self-perception since the presented essence also represents one's own essence ... The essence cannot be the subject-matter of will without being perceived by the existent' (Solovyov, 1911–1914, I: 331–332). In his *Readings on God-Made-Man* Solovyov clarifies his thesis on the primacy of will by identifying the three Hypostases of God, or three subjects of being in their indivisible essence. The first of them is predominantly the subject of will, the second is the subject of perception, and the third is the subject of the senses.

Following Schelling, Solovyov underscores God's multiplicity. He views God as a universal organism embracing a multitude of elements. Solovyov believes that the theistic comprehension of God, which, by denying multiplicity in the Deity conceives of God as the One transcending the world, leads either to a naturalistic pantheism where God is merged with the immanent world, or to an atheism that utterly rejects the existence of God. According to Solovyov, there are three categories of living individual forces, forming three spheres of the divine world: pure spirits, marked by the predominance of will, pure minds, distinguished by the prevalence of perception and finally, pure souls, guided mainly by sensual or aesthetic principles. The spheres of these innumerable spirits, minds and souls are inseparably interlinked by love, constituting the unity of the Divine world.

As Solovyov asserts, there is no impassable gap between the Divine and our sensual world, a thesis which constituted a fundamental part of the Russian thinker's theosophy, and which from the outset determined its character, and revealed the Gnostic constituent in his teaching. According to Solovyov, a human being belongs to both the Divine and the sensual worlds. Therefore, both of these worlds are open to a human person. In particular, this positive, although incomplete, cognition or penetration into the reality of the divine world is intrinsic to poetic art. Here is another aspect which associated Solovyov with Schelling and the Romantics: all of them viewed poetic art as a way of penetrating the mysteries of divine being. It is not accidental that Schelling seeks to unravel these mysteries in his *Philosophy of Mythology*, a work which involves a daring attempt at describing a theocosmic catastrophe, an inner drama of the Divine being through a historical reconstruction of mythological consciousness, beginning with ancient times. With some validity Schelling appraises mythology as the highest product of poetic creativity, but he views this product as the history of God's self-revelation. Both thinkers, Schelling and Solovyov, see their main task in 'an in-depth study of the Absolute'.

A theocosmic catastrophe: The falling away from God of His 'Alter Ego'

One of the cardinal questions in Schelling's theosophy is the genesis of the sensual world, that is, the derivation of matter from the Absolute. Schelling disagrees with the dualistic solution to this question that allows for the existence, along with God, of matter as a self-contained principle. Neither does he accept the teaching that asserts the dependence of matter on God, that is, the Christian dogma of the creation of the world from nothing, since, he assumes, it necessarily implies the recognition that God is culpable for the evil and imperfection of the material world. Schelling also rejects the neoplatonic theory of emanation according to which there exists a continual transition between the transcendental One and the sensual world through several intermediary links, with the degree of their material completeness and perfection diminishing as they move farther and farther from the Prime Source. From this viewpoint, matter as the lowest link is not something positive but simply reveals lack of being, somewhat comparable to darkness thickening as it recedes from the source of light. According to this doctrine, evil is not a self-contained reality but merely something lacking in goodness.

In rejecting all these explanations, Schelling offers his version of the origin of matter and his own understanding of the nature of evil. In his treatise *Philosophy and Religion* (1804; GW, VI: 38) we read: 'There is no continual channel from the Absolute to the reality, for genesis of the sensual world is conceivable only as a complete break with the Absolute (*Abbrechen von der Absolutheit*) by way of a leap ... The Absolute is the only reality whereas finite things, on the contrary, are unreal; their ground-work cannot, therefore, reside in the Absolute giving reality to them or their substratum, since such grounding may lie only in their removal and falling away from the Absolute.'

How then could such catastrophe and such a split occur in the divine being? Let us recall that God, according to Schelling, represents a unity of opposites – the One

and His Alter Ego, His opposite self (*Gegenbild*) reflected as if in a mirror in which He sees Himself. On this point Schelling reproduces Jakob Böhme's teaching on the eternal Divine Wisdom, that is, Sophia, called by him *Sientz* (from *scientia*, meaning knowledge) and in whom Böhme saw the Mother of all the creatures to whom She gives birth. It was Böhme who called Sophia a mirror, God's reflection, identifying her with the Holy Spirit, the feminine principle in God, named by him the Mother Spirit. Böhme's sophiology, stemming not only (and not so much) from the Divine Wisdom as presented in the Old Testament as from the Gnostic and cabbalistic teachings on Sophia, was assimilated and developed by the French theosophist Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, whose treatises were also known to Schelling and highly appreciated by Solovyov. In his special study devoted to the sophiological theme, Schipflinger (1997: 192) points out that 'Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, as well as Böhme, sees man and the whole cosmos in their specific relationship with Sophia, i.e., as Sophia's fiancé (man) and Sophia as a fiancée (wife) of man and the whole cosmos. To describe this matrimonial relationship between the cosmos and Sophia ... he finds captivating words.'

This mystical tradition is evident in Schelling's teaching on God's contemplation of Himself in His 'Alter Ego' as mirrored in His opposite. This reflection itself is also divine and therefore enjoys independence and freedom. It is owing to its divine freedom that the first reflection, or 'Alter Ego of the Absolute' could have fallen away from God, thus giving rise to the sensual world as being beyond God. This falling away was motivated by the willfulness of the reflection, striving for isolation from the supreme principle and the assertion of its own selfness in this separation, that is, the desire to assert itself in breaking off from the One and being without Him. According to Schelling, the principle of specific isolation constitutes the nature of finite being, with its highest potential inherent in the human 'Ego' – selfness, which eventually must be overcome in the future perfect universal unity.

Schelling is convinced that only his explanation of the genesis of the material world makes it possible to release God from the accusations either of His being the source of evil or permitting evil to exist and thereby being responsible for it. Indeed, Schelling's cosmogony in effect reproduces the Gnostic myth about the fall of one of the divine aeons, namely, Sophia-Ahamot – the world soul, from the divine whole – the pleroma, which resulted in the emergence of the sensual world with all the imperfection, evil and suffering that reigns in it. Schelling was able to absorb the ideas of Gnosticism through German mystics, primarily through Jakob Böhme, whose teaching he highly appreciated and often referred to in his works. In his *Philosophical Studies on the Essence of Human Freedom* (1809) where Böhme's influence is most noticeable, Schelling develops some aspects of his teaching on the falling away from God of His 'Alter Ego'. Here, following a similar pattern of thought to Böhme, Schelling makes a distinction between God Himself and something that is detached from Him, projected as God's deep-rooted or 'dark nature', as mentioned above. Schelling points out that theologians and philosophers generally believe that God is rooted in Himself but it has never occurred to anybody that this root in God is not to be identified with God Himself. This 'nature' in God is 'dark', that is, unconscious, representing a wishing or longing, the unconscious will concealing in itself all the interconnected forces. Schelling (1997 = GW, VII: 362) calls this dark

will, which enters into opposition with the universal will of the divine all-embracing being, 'private will or self-will of a creature'. Owing to its self-will this root, striving for isolation and self-assertion and trying to impose its private will to be what it can be only in the unity with God, falls away from the universal will of the all-embracing being, thus giving rise to the material world, a world of passions and sensual desires, egoism, chaos, evil and death, in which man sets himself off against God. Therefore, 'the dark nature' in God is the source of evil in the world and man; it is the cause of human willfulness, self-exaltation, arrogance, in short, self-assertion beyond God and against God.

As a result of such philosophical development of the Gnostic myth about the origin of the material world, Schelling comes to view this world through the optic of Gnosticism as a vale of anguish, evil and suffering. The same Gnostic myth is latent in Solovyov's theocosmogony. Similarly to Schelling, within the Absolute he differentiates two centers, or two interdependent poles: the universal whole, that is, the positive nothing (*en sof*), and the potential of being, or prime matter. Solovyov correspondingly sees in God a unity of opposites. Prime matter is defined by Solovyov as longing, striving, wishing, that is, force or power of being, as the feminine principle in God. As a divine free subject, this prime matter, Sophia or the world soul, performs the act of falling away from God, for she wishes to enjoy complete being on her own, in striving for self-assertion beyond God. As a result, she 'falls away from the all-embracing focus of divine being onto the multiple circumference of creation, losing her own freedom and her power over this creation since she holds such power not on her own but only as a mediator between creation and God from whom she is now separated in her self-assertion' (Solovyov, 1911–1914, iv: 131). Thus the divine all-embracing being disintegrates into a multitude of separate elements, with the universal organism turning into a mechanical aggregate of atoms, passing into the material world of separation, isolation and suffering.

From this perspective, the world arises not as a result of a free divine act, the act of creation, but of necessity, that is, from the divine nature itself, divided in two and subject to catastrophic separation. Hence Solovyov, like Schelling, views the relation between the world and God not as the relation between creation and the Creator but that of emergence and essence: the problem of God's transcendental nature thereby appears to be obviated. Yet, in his later works, as in his book *Russia and the Oecumenical Church*, he tries to smooth over his divergences from the Christian doctrine on creation.

Thus, prime matter, or the divine Sophia, is transformed by Solovyov into the central element of the theocosmic process. This feminine principle within God, the world soul, the Corpus Christi, or the ideal humanity is 'the true cause of creation and its purport ..., the principle (beginning), in which God has created heaven and earth' (Solovyov, 1911: 347). However, upon falling away from God, Sophia acquires demonic features which are transferred to the world that has arisen due to her Fall. As Solovyov emphasizes, 'The false view of the world soul constitutes the very basis of this world' (Solovyov, 1911: 235). Solovyov's view of Sophia is divided into two aspects: she first appears as 'God's Alter Ego', as Divine Wisdom, and then, after her revolt and Fall, as the supreme principle of the natural world. In her fallen state she turns into a culprit and the cause of the world's imperfection and evil. As Trubetskoi

(1995: 376) writes in this respect, 'The contradictions of Solovyov's cosmogony generally arise from the impossibility of combining in an organic synthesis the Christian world outlook with Schelling's pantheistic Gnosticism, which makes in some way or another God or the divine world a subject of the world process and, consequently, guilty of the world's evil.'

In order to remove ambiguity in the interpretation of Sophia, in his treatise *Russia and the Oecumenical Church*, Solovyov makes a distinction between Sophia as a divine principle and as Divine Wisdom on the one hand, and the world soul as the supreme principle of the material world on the other. The world soul is viewed now as the antipode to Wisdom, acting as the cause of evil and chaos, whereas Sophia is perceived as a radiant and divine creature standing apart from the darkness of earthly matter. As for the world soul, though Solovyov calls it 'the mother of extra-divine chaos', he does not identify it completely with this chaos: the meaning of the world process is seen by the philosopher in the struggle of the Divine Word-Logos-Christ with the infernal principle for governing the world soul. This struggle underlies the true substance of the universal drama in which the leading part is assigned to God-made-man.

The teaching on the developing and suffering God

In his earlier period, Schelling credited his philosophy of identity for inculcating the concept of process into the contemporary consciousness by starting to assess nature through the prism of the self-motion and self-development principle. Later, this principle of development so highly valued by Schelling came to serve as a key to the cognition of God's inner life. In his *Stuttgart Private Lectures* (1810) Schelling points out that if God is a living person as professed by Christianity, He should be perceived as life and, therefore, as the process of development and self-revelation. 'God creates Himself all by Himself, and as far as it is taken for certain, it is equally undeniable that He is unlikely to be something ready and available from the very beginning, for otherwise He would have had no need to create Himself' (GW, VII: 432). This train of thought is quite natural when it is taken into consideration that both Schelling and then Solovyov see God's 'Alter Ego' as striving, craving and yearning for existence, that is, the principle which the Greek philosophers used to call potentiality and which means lack, shortage, absence of what this aspiration is directed towards. And insofar as potentiality is always striving for actualization, it serves as an impetus to movement, development, and self-realization or, as Schelling calls it, God's self-creation. The principle of evolution initially introduced as a characteristic of the natural world is now declared to characterize the Divine world as well; as outlined above, with Schelling the difference between these worlds is merely relative.

Schelling's concept of the developing God is closely linked with his teaching on the primordial catastrophe in the Divine life, namely, the falling away of His 'Alter Ego' from God. As Pierre Koslowski (1989: 74–75) justly remarks, 'the concept of God in Gnosticism differs from the Christian attitude to Him in that Gnosticism regards God as the developing and suffering being. In Gnosticism God goes through the Fall and suffers in the process of gaining consciousness. Christianity also recognizes

God's suffering, but in Christianity suffering results not from necessity but from freedom; God willingly takes suffering upon Himself out of compassion [for man].' To cognize the process of God's self-creation, Schelling turns to man because he believes that the formation of human self-awareness provides the key to the understanding of God's inner life. 'Any living creature begins with the unconscious state in which everything appears as yet indivisible to unfold later into separate aspects ... The divine life begins in the same way ... We have characterized this state as inherent indifference of potentials ..., as the absolute identity of the subjective and objective, real and ideal ... The entire process of the world's creation, the still continuing evolution of life in nature and human history, is essentially nothing else but the continual perfection of consciousness, ending with the personalization of God' (Koslowski, 1989: 432–433). It should be noted that the pantheistic world outlook is closely associated with the anthropomorphic interpretation of God's life; this specific feature is visible in Renaissance philosophy and some mystic teachings, but Schelling brings out most clearly this close association of God and man, sometimes making them indistinguishable from one another. In the individual life, as well as in human history, we can observe how 'the unconscious elevates us to the conscious level while the primordial darkness rises to light ... The same occurs in God' (Koslowski, 1989: 433).

God's evolution involves the successive unfolding of divine potentials through stages and levels of existence. The first potential is the blind irrational urge, 'volition perceived as a bare possibility' (Schelling, 1990: 200). We have already discussed this 'dark nature' of God, which signifies a possibility of the future creation or, to be more precise, of the world's 'falling away'. God the Father represents the potential, but not actualized, principle, a possibility of being, 'pure absolute self-identity', or 'the Father's inaccessibility' (Schelling, 1990: 203). This potential must give rise to being, similarly to the way in nature that the base formless substance gives rise first to primitive and then more intricately developed forms of life. Strictly speaking, this is not just an analogy: as the boundary between God and the world is quite obscure, the evolution of nature is in effect identical to the evolution of the divine all-embracing being. To demonstrate how God's first potential gives rise to his second potential, Schelling turns to Fichte's already elaborated dialectics of the absolute 'Ego': as the subject Ego perceives itself on the outside as an object, so it falls into the dialectic of ego and non-ego. In applying it to God, Schelling somewhat modifies this scheme: being originally the absolute identity, God makes Himself non-identical to Himself for to actualize Himself He has to identify Himself with His Alter Ego. Schelling calls God's development into His non-identity 'Divine inflammation': 'This is a free inflammation aimed eventually at creation but immediately at actualising Himself as the Son ...' (Schelling, 1990: 203). According to Schelling, God the Son, identified with the world, epitomizes the principle of different being.

Now we come to an essential point: within the framework of Schelling's theology it is impossible to draw any definite boundary between the Son's birth and the world's creation, meaning that once again it is impossible to detach God's inner life from the life of creatures, as discussed above. This indeed is quite logical: as the divine 'inflammation' entails 'the split in God's Self', the detachment of 'His Alter Ego', it seems to anticipate 'the Fall' from which there arises the finite world. This association of the fact of the Son's birth with the origin of the world is enhanced by a

peculiar merging of Christian dogmas relating on the one hand to the creation of the world through the Word of God, the Logos, and on the other to God's Incarnation: upon His incarnation God the Son thereby integrated within Himself, or in a word, 'mediated', the divine and created world. But such a 'merging' of these two strands of dogma is rather far from the standard Christian doctrine on creation and God's incarnation. As justly pointed out by the Orthodox theologian V. N. Lossky, 'the teaching on Logos as a "mediator" between God and the created world is characteristic of Gnostics denying the different nature of the Creator and creation and looking for an ontological bridge' between God and the world, a connecting link or a chain of links. Patristic thought never regarded the Logos as a 'mediator' between God and the creation but taught that God-made-man has fused in one Person in a non-merging way perfect deity and perfect humanity (Lossky, 1936: 20).

With a view to providing an in-depth substantiation of his thesis on God's all-embracing being, Schelling also revises the distinction generally made in both Christian theology and Greek philosophy between eternity as a characteristic of the immutable and simple divine principle and time as a form of existence of the changeable created world. Rejecting the thesis of Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, John Damascene, Thomas Aquinas and others that time arose at the moment of creation, Schelling introduces time into the life of God by differentiating types of time in accordance with God's specific potentials. 'The first time, which begins immediately with time-setting is the time of the Father's exclusivity and inaccessibility. Then comes the time when He shares being with the Son for He must pass over this being to Him ...' (Schelling, 1990: 206). The traditional concept of God's eternity transforms thereby into the teaching of a qualitative difference in these divine times or, what is the same, of world ages, world aeons. The time of God the Father implies 'relative eternity' as compared with the time of God the Son, which already contains in essence the time of the finite world; that is why Schelling states that the world has arisen in time.

Through the qualitative difference in divine times, Schelling defines God's third potential as a 'third time'. 'In contrast to the absolute time which constituted for itself pre-temporal (*a priori*) time, let us define the present actual time as temporal time. Thus perceived, this second time represents merely the time of transition from the time of absolute inaccessibility to the time of final unfolding, that is post-temporal (*a posteriori*) time, which already contains no specified time and which may be called post-temporal eternity. Hence what human beings know as time lies in between two times, one of which appears as the past and the other, as the future. All must come to this last time, to this last eternity but it has not come as yet' (Schelling, 1990: 210). Here we have the definition of the Divine Persons of the Trinity through different 'times' presented as three world ages: God the Father symbolizing the past, God the Son, the present, and God the Holy Spirit, the future. The first world age, the time of God the Father, is associated with the exclusive ownership of being (as an opposite to freedom); the second age of God the Son involves the overcoming of being ('inert nature'); finally, the third age of final overcoming, leading again to freedom, is the future time, implying the conclusion of time, and this is the time of God the Holy Spirit. Thus, three Gods reign in different time' (Schelling, 1990: 211). God's life consists in this development from the low to the high level, representing the history of development from the potentiality ('inaccessibility') of God the Father to the process

of actualization by God the Son and then to the eventual completion of this actualization, towards the supreme actualization in the Holy Spirit to occur in the future. These three ages are characteristic of both the life of the world and God's life, with no definite boundary between them.

Schelling's conception of three world ages goes back to the teaching professed by Joachim of Fiore in the 12th century, a Calabrian abbot, visionary and prophet, who presented his teaching as a commentary on the Apocalypse. According to Joachim, world history passes through three different 'states': from Creation to the Coming of Christ, the age of God the Father's reign: from God's Incarnation up to the 12th century, the age of God the Son, followed afterwards by the reign of the Holy Spirit, bringing in the Kingdom of God on Earth. In his treatise *Guide to the Apocalypse* Joachim writes: 'The time of law and grace is divided into three states: under law, under grace, under greater grace. The first state is called the age of the Father, the second, the age of the Son, and the third, that of the Holy Spirit; as for the time prior to law, ... it should be regarded as the age of divine all-embracing being, which the human race knew before they were told about the Trinity which is God. That is why the third age of grace, as compared with the time prior to law, should be twice as blessed' (Joachim of Fiore, 1986: 23). Joachim's teaching on the forthcoming Kingdom of God on Earth had the obvious chiliastic underpinnings, which were soon denounced by the Church. However, beginning in the 13th century, numerous mystical and heretical movements revived this teaching, resulting in revolts aimed at bringing nearer the future Kingdom of the Holy Spirit. The German mystics, in particular, Angelus Silesius (1984: 44), advocated the same apocalyptic-chiliastic expectations and the same periodization of world ages as professed by Joachim: 'The Father was, the Son is being, and the Holy Spirit will be on the final day of Glory.' It is not accidental that Schelling concludes his lectures on world ages by citing Joachim of Fiore and Angelus Silesius. As his predecessors did, he cherished the dream of the coming of the third world age, believing in the Kingdom of God on Earth.

Solovyov's works are also permeated with the chiliastic mood corresponding to the character of this Russian thinker's theocosmogony. And though Solovyov sought to coordinate his teaching on God with Christian theology, but in his case through the influence of Gnostic ideas, he also embraced the concept of the developing God and drew a more or less explicit boundary between God and the world. Similarly to Schelling, Solovyov makes a distinction between the Existing Absolute and the Developing Absolute, that is, the Second Absolute. He identifies the Second Absolute, meaning the all-embracing being, with the world soul. Representing, so to speak, part of the Absolute, all-embracing being cannot be dissociated from that Absolute, and therefore the world too, as its vivifying and uniting principle, cannot be set apart from God: the world is more likely to represent God's necessary emergence rather than His free creation. As a result, with both Solovyov and Schelling, development, and thereby time, turn into the attributes of God's being as the boundary between God and the world becomes indistinct.

Undoubtedly, on this point Solovyov could not fail to see the consequent problem. But he found it hard to resolve because the teaching on the developing God placed the focus on man, namely, on God-made-man. According to Solovyov, God-made-man represents the reality of the Absolute, for the all-embracing being by its very

conception is impossible without the many private aspects it unites. In the viewpoint of Schelling and Solovyov, to define God as the all-embracing being means to recognize man and humanity as constituent aspects of God. Both philosophers see in man the personification of the world soul which as an unconscious principle comes to its self-awareness in man. Hence it follows that man is not basically a created being; and in fact Solovyov believes that man is coeternal with God: otherwise, he assumes, it would be impossible to regard man as a free and immortal being. 'Only upon recognizing that each really existing man in his deepest essence is rooted in the eternal divine world, that this human being is not only a visible appearance ..., but an eternal and singular individual, an indispensable and irreplaceable link in the absolute whole, only upon such recognition ... may it be reasonable to assume the two great truths: ... of human freedom and man's immortality' (Solovyov, 1911–1914, iv: 117).

In Christian theology man's created nature inhibits neither his freedom nor his immortality; the dogma that God created man in his own image is designed to stress man's high predestination and that a wise human soul endowed with freedom is immortal. Yet Solovyov believes that the doctrine of man's created nature is too degrading for a human being. And in order to dispel any doubts that man's created nature is incompatible with his divine destination, Solovyov writes: 'It is easily seen that by viewing man as just created from nothing in time and, therefore, as a being created by God at random, since it is presumed that God could exist without man and actually existed before the creation of man, treating ... man as unconditionally depending on God's arbitrariness and, therefore, as unconditionally passive in relation to God, we decidedly leave no room for his freedom' (Solovyov, 1911–1914, iv: 117). Therefore, man is not a product of divine freedom, the same as the world of other creatures, for man is co-natural and coeternal with God.

According to Solovyov, God-made-man as an integral organism, a unique being, represents actually 'the Second God', Sophia as Divine Wisdom, the developing Absolute whose life constitutes the substance of a historical process designed to restore God's integrity and all-embracing essence lost due to the fall of the world soul. Then truth and goodness will come to triumph on Earth, which Solovyov, like Schelling, sometimes calls the age of the Holy Spirit, associating it with a complete transformation of the contemporary life in theocracy as the realization of his youthful dream about the earthly appearance of the Kingdom of God, the dream that inspired this philosopher throughout his life.

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