**The Schelling of Religious Existentialism**

This is an essay about the persistence of a certain image of F.W.J. Schelling, an image that came to prominence not for the first time, but in a particularly decisive manner, during the 1950s and has lingered on as an ideological template into which a number of contemporary Schelling-interpretations are still fitted. It is not false, but has contributed to a serious neglect of his philosophies of nature and system of identity, to an overemphasis on his relevance to theology at the expense of naturalism, and occasionally to a reluctance to contextualise his mature work within the minutiae of post-Kantian debates. It is an image, I will argue, that crystallised in the Schelling-interpretations offered by three existentialists in the mid-1950s: Karl Jaspers, Gabriel Marcel and Paul Tillich.

There are a number of structural features to this reading of Schelling that can be resumed in the following schema:

1. Schelling exemplifies a thinking that manages to have it all, i.e. unlike most philosophers in late modernity, he deploys a non-dualistic ‘both… and…’ logic that captures:
   1. both freedom and system;
   2. both subjectivity and objectivity;
   3. both existence and essence;
   4. both lived experience and abstract truth, etc.
2. Schelling’s philosophy is historically singular—that is, it is:
   1. timely (as existentialist);
   2. untimely (because it flouts the norms of academic philosophy);
   3. universal (as it exceeds its own historical context).
3. Schelling’s positive philosophy:
   1. is the dialectical culmination of his trajectory (it breaks with the weaknesses of his earlier philosophy, as the same time as serving as its fulfilment);
   2. provides resources for a non-reductive understanding of religion;
   3. ultimately fails (because it relapses back into traditional and dogmatic forms of metaphysics);
   4. requires completion by non-philosophical thinking, e.g. a renewed theology.

Many readers of Schelling have found solace in these claims; they contain much truth and, like those of any good reading, are both powerful and problematic. My aim in this essay is merely the following: first, to identify and scrutinise their common features—the structural invariants, as it were, shared by Jaspers, Marcel and Tillich’s readings, notwithstanding strong differences in their interpretations and the divergent ends to which they were put; secondly, to investigate how this reading took on its final, influential form in the mid-1950s when all three began to retrospectively consider Schelling’s place in the history of existentialist thought. Such an investigation is evidently a limited one: it is limited just to the Schelling-interpretations offered by Jaspers, Marcel and Tillich in the 1950s and thus ignores both other neo-Schellingianisms of the period (e.g. Merleau-Ponty’s lectures at the Collège de France during the same decade) and Jaspers, Marcel and Tillich’s own earlier engagements with Schelling at the beginning of the century.[[1]](#footnote-1) Many other ‘Schellings’ were scattered through both their works and those of others during these years, many of which are irreducible to the reading I describe below. There were, indeed, other ‘religious existentialists’ (e.g. Berdiaev)[[2]](#footnote-2) who refused to read Schelling as an ally at all. My aim is limited merely to identifying those features—amidst this great diversity—that became determinative for some later Schelling scholarship.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The Schelling Centenary

1954 marked the centenary of Schelling’s death. Between 22 and 25 September, the *Schweizerische Philosophische Gesellschaft* organised a conference in the spa town where Schelling died, Bad Ragaz; and the very day the Swiss event finished, the *Allgemeine Gesellschaft für Philosophie in Deutschland* held a workshop in Stuttgart, intentionally close to Schelling’s birthplace.[[4]](#footnote-4) As well as the participation of Government officials, Schelling’s descendants[[5]](#footnote-5), the most prominent Schelling scholars of the day (Ernst Benz, Horst Fuhrmanns, Manfred Schröter, Walter Schulz, Hermann Zeltner) and other celebrated historians of philosophy (Martial Gueroult, Raymond Savioz), these events included keynote lectures from those who, while they had engaged in Schelling scholarship, could not easily be classed as mere Schelling scholars in any straight-forward sense: Tillich spoke at the Stuttgart event, and the keynotes lined up for Bad Ragaz included Jaspers, Marcel and Emil Staiger. Tillich was also invited to the latter event, but—unfortunately for posterity—felt unable to make it from Bad Ragaz to Stuttgart in time, and, in fact, Marcel pulled out at the last minute too due to ill-health.[[6]](#footnote-6)

What makes the lack of high-speed travel connections in 1950s Switzerland—as well as an untimely bout of ill-health—so galling is the fact that Tillich, Marcel and Jaspers were all beginning to consider Schelling from a similar vantage point—that is, all three had begun to reflect on his influence on later philosophies of existence.[[7]](#footnote-7) Jaspers, Marcel and Tillich all had long-standing interests in Schelling: Tillich and Marcel had written their theses on Schelling between 1908 and 1912, before relatively neglecting his work during the 20s and 30s, only to return to it in a very different context around the time of the Schelling centenary. For instance, during the late 1940s and into the 1950s—over thirty years since his original theses on Schelling—Tillich wrote a number of essays on existential philosophy, in which he attempts to provide a counter-genealogy to its atheist variant. Schelling plays a crucial role in this resistance to the ‘Sartreanisation’ of the existential programme—and this is nowhere brought to the fore more than in Tillich’s contribution to the 1954 Stuttgart conference, entitled ‘Schelling und die Anfänge des existentialistischen Protestes’.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Jaspers’ interest in Schelling was equally long-standing. Indeed, the last words of his Bad-Ragaz speech make this particularly clear:

My remarks today are born from an attraction to Schelling, experienced over decades—but decades during which I have endlessly quarrelled with it. That Schelling is a great philosopher and indispensable for us—this fact unites us on this day. I hope I have convinced you how much I respect him while I still struggle with him. No one is in possession of the truth, the unlimited, complete, pure truth. It is enough if in Schelling there is something of it that reaches us in reflection as a beautiful moving image.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Indeed, Jaspers’ ‘struggle’ with Schelling is evidenced thirty years earlier: it was his letters to Heidegger in 1926 that provided at least part of the impetus for the latter’s turn to the *Freiheitsschrift*.[[10]](#footnote-10) Jaspers’ own interest only belatedly came to fruition in the monograph, *Schelling: Größe und Verhängnis*, published in 1955, and the speech Jaspers gave in Bad Ragaz has the same basic title as the book and summarises its contents.

Marcel’s undelivered speech to the Bad Ragaz celebrations took up the title of his 1909 doctoral thesis, *Coleridge et Schelling*. However, it is noticeable that, three years after he was to have given the speech[[11]](#footnote-11), Marcel writes,

I must avow that when I tried to reread [my early work on Coleridge and Schelling] a few years ago, I found there nothing belonging to my own thought… And what is more, it seems to me today that I had at this period an imprecise conception of how Schelling understands the relation between negative and positive philosophy.[[12]](#footnote-12)

This passage is striking for all sorts of reasons; for now, of most interest is the implicit claim that rereading his doctoral work on Coleridge and Schelling in 1954 provided a catalyst for Marcel to re-evaluate Schelling’s thought from a new perspective. Indeed, on the recommendation of Heidegger[[13]](#footnote-13), Marcel went on to read Walter Schulz’ newly-published *Die Vollendung der deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings* in painstaking detail, as well as Jaspers’ *Größe und Verhängnis*. The result of this renewed interest was Marcel’s 1957 article, the very title of which indicates its proximity to Tillich’s speech: ‘Schelling fut-il un précurseur de la philosophie de l’existence?’

Was Schelling a Precursor of the Philosophy of Existence?

Jaspers is relatively uninterested in the question of the specific influences Schelling had on the history of philosophies of existence.[[14]](#footnote-14) Instead, he decontextualizes Schelling completely as a timeless ‘great thinker’ to be classed with Plato and Kant insofar as he asks the perennial existentialist question, ‘How does one get from endless reflection to what matters most? From thought to reality? From philosophy to existence?’[[15]](#footnote-15) That is, for Jaspers, Schelling’s philosophy is evidently—even if problematically—a variant of philosophy of existence, because it sets itself ‘the task of justifying thought in its existential significance’.[[16]](#footnote-16)

On the other hand, both Marcel and Tillich are fascinated by the genealogical question, and their essays operate by means of a hermeneutics of anticipation: in Tillich’s words, ‘Schelling anticipated in the wisdom of his old age the problem of our time.’[[17]](#footnote-17) Hence, in Tillich’s ‘Schelling und die Anfänge des existentialistischen Protestes’, Schelling’s late philosophy engulfs and devours the thinkers that follow him: Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Buber, for instance, are seen as repetitions of the same. More specifically, Tillich finds in Schelling’s late positive philosophy, in particular, a prophetic description of ‘existential experience’, ‘the protest against systematic form’ and a refusal to understand philosophy as ‘the tool of the objectification which characterises the industrial age in all of its domains’.[[18]](#footnote-18) In general, Tillich claims that these features of the philosophy of existence ‘broke through in a revolutionary way during the nineteenth century in the struggle of the precursors of contemporary existentialism against Hegel’—and that Schelling did it first.[[19]](#footnote-19) In particular, the Berlin *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Offenbarung* are to be understood as ‘an original document of existential philosophy’.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Marcel, on the other hand, is more circumspect, subjecting the hermeneutics of anticipation to intense scrutiny in ‘Schelling fut-il un précurseur de la philosophie de l’existence?’. His essay thus forms a sceptical contrast to Tillich’s. Explicitly, Marcel is interested in challenging the increasing number of voices who had, like Tillich, dogmatically asserted Schelling’s influence over the existentialist movement (he cites Léo Gabriel, Hinrich Knittermeyer and Erwin Reisner). On this point, Marcel is avowedly indebted to Walter Schulz’ *Die Vollendung der deutschen Idealismus*[[21]](#footnote-21)—that is, Marcel employs Schulz’ comments on Schelling’s legacy as a touchstone by which to test Schelling’s supposed existentialisation of philosophy. For example, after quoting at length from the *Historisch-kritische Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie*, Marcel continues,

It can indeed be tempting to interpret a text like this in terms of existential philosophy. But Walter Schulz is certainly right to recommend prudence here. It seems entirely true to say that Schelling is not at all worried about describing the existential experience of the I considered in itself, but rather about attaining a particular end from this description—that is, taking rational science, in his terms, in the direction of the genuine absolute.[[22]](#footnote-22)

A distinction is here established between an existentialist interest in the existing I considered in itself and a more metaphysical interest in providing an account of it for the purposes of an all-encompassing ‘rational science’. One must be circumspect about Schelling’s relation to existentialism, according to Marcel, precisely because his interest in ‘the existential experience of the I’ is not an end in itself. It is for this reason Marcel is quick to discount any substantial influence of Schelling on Kierkegaard. He states bluntly,

There is no doubt that Kierkegaard’s basic existential experience is alien to Schelling; it is only at its very limit that there is any relation of anticipation at all. Any accord between the two is a matter, here and there, of recognising and surpassing the finite character of subjectivity. But their paths are completely different and rapprochement is illusory.[[23]](#footnote-23)

On the other hand, Heidegger’s closeness to Schelling is affirmed by Marcel: ‘Among contemporary thinkers, it is Heidegger and probably him alone who appears authentically connected to Schelling.’ Both Schelling and Heidegger are ‘post-idealist’ philosophers, a category that is intended to convey their ‘common intuition’ that the systematic impulse of German Idealism needs to be taken to its limit, such that it ‘turns’ into something very different.[[24]](#footnote-24)

At any rate, it is clear that, despite his ‘prudence’, the hermeneutics of anticipation is still partially at work in Marcel’s essay, as indeed it must be in any retrospective attempt to co-opt Schelling into an existentialist genealogy. Such a hermeneutics—ultimately shared by Marcel and Tillich—illuminates some of the motivation behind the religious existentialist reading of Schelling. All readings in the history of ideas are so motivated; what is significant—and what I hope to demonstrate in the following—are the ways in which this specific motivation matters.

Schelling as Outsider

All three of the essays under consideration share a basic attitude that underlies the more specific assertions they make. By the mid-1950s, Jaspers, Marcel and Tillich had all developed their own body of philosophical and theological work in the context of which Schelling became not just a dead object of study, but a living dialogue partner. To use recurrent terms from their essays, Schelling was a competing voice to be encountered, to enter into conversation with and to struggle against. As the final words of Marcel’s essay rhapsodise,

If, for a form of thought that aims at rigour before anything else, Schelling cannot be either a master or an example; for thought that, on the contrary, regards philosophy as a heroic adventure entailing risks and skirting abysses, he will always remain an exhilarating companion, and, perhaps even, an inspiration.[[25]](#footnote-25)

It is this ‘wild’ Schelling that appeals to Jaspers, Marcel and Tillich—the untamed Schelling who could be encountered outside the constraining norms of academic scholarship. There are important differences, I am suggesting, between the generation of post-war Schelling scholars like Schulz and Fuhrmanns who approached Schelling’s writings from an academic perspective and the earlier generation of Jaspers, Marcel and Tillich who considered him ‘an exhilarating companion’. The 1954 conferences symbolise a changing of the guard—the last clarion call of the dying breed of non-scholarly Schellingians.

To put it another way: if the mid- to late nineteenth century consisted in a long process of institutionalising thinking within scientific norms, then much of the impetus behind early twentieth-century philosophies of existence can be read as a rebellion against such institutionalisation. Thought felt driven outside the academy, in the name of categories such as freedom and life: thinking was to be lived, not studied—in this vein, Jaspers paraphrases the last words of Schelling’s 1804 *System*, ‘Philosophy should step into life.’[[26]](#footnote-26) Indeed, for Jaspers’ Schelling, academic research—anything ‘scientific’—is utterly incompatible with genuine philosophical thinking:

What Schelling demands must never be neglected nor forgotten: when it comes to measuring [philosophy] by the standards of scientific research, by the understanding—that field bound to objects—it is nothing… If one were to use such a scientific measure, philosophy would become a mass of absurdities.[[27]](#footnote-27)

Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky are the most often cited as inspirations for this kind of revolt (as exemplary ‘outsiders’), but part of what is occurring in Jaspers, Marcel and Tillich’s essays, I am arguing, is a retrospective insertion of Schelling into that list. They argue for Schelling’s importance in attaining a non-scholarly, vital thinking. Marcel’s attack on the figure of ‘the pure scholar’ in *Homo Viator* is instructive in this regard. Marcel takes great pains to distinguish his own method from that of the scholar: ‘There is nothing in my case which can be at all compared with that of a scholar whose researches follow a fixed line, who has drawn up a programme and is conscious of having reached a definite point in it.’[[28]](#footnote-28) As such, the very truth-claims to be encountered in Marcel’s philosophy are thereby meant to be distinct from those produced by the supposedly objective research of scholarship: ‘We should point out very distinctly that the truth with which we are concerned here has nothing in common with the truths which it is given to the scholar to bring to light as a result of his patient investigations.’[[29]](#footnote-29)

Tillich clearly uses the relation between Schelling-as-person and Schellingian philosophy to make similar claims about the need to *live* thought as an outsider—that is, Schelling’s example justifies Tillich’s own comportment:

[For Schelling,] as with the other rebelling existentialists of the nineteenth century (Kierkegaard, the younger Marx, Nietzsche), the existential was discovered existentially… [It was Schelling’s] own—only partially tamed—demonic nature which made it possible for him (above all in his ostensibly very abstract and artificial doctrine of the potencies) to continually stress the demonic *Untergrund* of existence.[[30]](#footnote-30)

For Tillich, it is not only that ‘the demonic in Schelling himself’ can never be forgotten when reading Schellingian texts, but more significantly that any text purporting to be worthwhile can only be produced or consumed demonically or existentially. A pure scholarly relation to the text, in which one abstracts from existential conditions, stultifies, even falsifies truth.[[31]](#footnote-31)

And yet the above passage also explicitly concedes the fact that Schelling’s texts retain ‘abstract and artificial doctrine’ in line with standard scientific norms of generalisation. His break with academic abstraction is never more than partial. And this too is key to seeing where Jaspers, Marcel and Tillich are positioning Schelling: he is a figure of revolt, but one with a foot very much in the academy. His relation to it is double, synecdochical even—both inside and outside—and, indeed, this doubled relation of ‘both… and…’ is, I am going to argue, central to the religious existentialist reading of Schelling in general. Rather than a straight-out opposition to scholarly appropriation, Schelling is used by the religious existentialists to justify a *more-than*-scholarly approach to him. Thus, Schelling stands as an ideal: the ideal of a ‘more-than-scholar’. And it is precisely such a Schellingian ideal that retroactively justifies the careers of the religious existentialists themselves.

Both… And… Logic

When it comes to identifying the structural invariants in this existentialist reading, a list of two items is usually given: system and freedom (to put it in the language of Heidegger’s 1936 course on the *Freiheitsschrift*[[32]](#footnote-32)). Marcel writes, for example, that a thinking ‘that is more and more on its guard against the encroachments of juridical categories on the one hand and against the Hegelian temptation on the other is probably led to an encounter with Schelling.’[[33]](#footnote-33) That is, recourse to Schelling is premised on the rejection of a choice between neo-Kantian legalism and Hegelian metaphysics, between philosophy limited to the subject and speculation that ignores it. Returning to Schelling is precisely for those who want both. In general, then, the religious existentialists follow Schelling to the extent they eschew the exclusive choice between attending to human freedoms and speculating on metaphysics. While Marcel celebrates this, it is something that worries Jaspers: for Jaspers’ Schelling, ‘The individual attains freedom only because his world attains freedom’—and this is due to the fact that Schelling both holds fast to the ‘true insight’ that willing is fundamental[[34]](#footnote-34) and also falls prey to the ‘delusion’ that being as such is a subject that can be ascribed freedom.[[35]](#footnote-35) Whether for good or ill, Schelling philosophises both the existential experience of the I and the nature of the cosmos, having his philosophical cake and eating it.

Crucial here is how this move beyond the human—while retaining the experience of the existential I as a central feature—provides the religious existentialists (Tillich most explicitly) with the means to counter the dominance of Sartrean existentialism, for which ‘existence comes before essence—or, if you will… we must begin from the subjective.’[[36]](#footnote-36) Sartre is prone to equate the priority of existence with the priority of the subject: only man comes into the world without a preconceived essence, ‘man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world—and defines himself afterwards.’[[37]](#footnote-37) This leads immediately to a radical separation of I and world, and it is very noticeable that some commentators[[38]](#footnote-38) take this dualism of self and world to be a basic principle of existentialism *as such*. However, the religious existentialists’ engagement with Schelling illuminates the possibility of a non-dualistic existentialism. That is, Schelling still ‘completes the philosophy of freedom’[[39]](#footnote-39), in Jaspers’ phrase, but he does so by conceiving *all* of reality as free. The claim that existence comes before essence can thus be made in an unqualified manner, not just for the human individual. All of reality first of all exists and is only defined afterwards.[[40]](#footnote-40)

The Historical Singular

The second invariant of a religious existentialist reading of Schelling concerns the evacuation of historical context. The religious existentialist refuses to see Schelling either as part of the four-term series of German Idealists (Kant, then Fichte, then Schelling, then Hegel) or embedded in any more sophisticated intellectual networks. Instead, Schelling is transformed into a unique, isolated figure in the history of modern philosophy: Schelling is the perennial *alternative*. The point is not that this is false, but that it plays a crucial role in legitimating ‘outsider Schellingianism’.

I have already rehearsed the strong ahistoricity of Jaspers’ reading of Schelling above. Tillich likewise is forthright on this issue:

Schelling must not be construed as the third step in a series which leads from Kant to Hegel. The very fact of Schelling’s last period makes this chronologically impossible… Right from the beginning the motifs of Schelling’s philosophy were different from those of Fichte’s and Hegel’s.[[41]](#footnote-41)

Marcel, on the other hand, is more nuanced. He admits that in his doctoral thesis he had insisted that Schelling’s positive philosophy ‘corresponded to the movement by which thought is liberated from idealism’, but that now, following Schulz and Heidegger, he is committed to the more circumspect claim that it ‘leads idealism to its extreme limit’.[[42]](#footnote-42) Nevertheless, Marcel is also adamant that what Schelling achieves is exceptional and stands outside the philosophical tradition:

In carrying idealism to its limits and adventuring even into the hazardous conditions beyond those limits, Schelling—in a completely different and less direct way than Kierkegaard—prepared the terrain… for a renaissance of ontology on non-traditional foundations.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Schelling is different: he escapes traditional metaphysics and instantiates something singular—a Schellingian alternative that figures him as outsider.

The temporalities at work in such a reading deserve comment. On the one hand, Schelling’s philosophy is prophetic, anticipating as it does central themes in existentialism. It has become *timely*. On the other hand, both Marcel and Tillich are insistent that Schelling resists the philosophical fashions of the twentieth century. For Tillich, ‘The spirit of Anglo-Saxon theology and philosophy is not favourable to an understanding of Schelling’, and, as evidence, he points to the rise of analytic philosophy as ‘the dominant philosophy of the universities’, as well as the popularity of Barthian theologies of revelation and their mistrust of philosophical concepts.[[44]](#footnote-44) Schelling’s philosophy is therefore *untimely*, as well as timely. This doubled structure is made clear in Marcel’s comments on the contemporary situation:

It is evident that, in an era when the major preoccupation of philosophers has been to restore continuity between philosophy and science, a body of thought such as Schelling’s, so foreign to any understanding of authentic science, can only be completely discredited… But it is self-evident that the appearance of existential philosophy has led to, on this point as on others, a change in emphasis.[[45]](#footnote-45)

There is, moreover, a third element to the temporality of this reading: Schelling is the outsider; he does not merely stand outside recent trends and fashions in philosophical history, but *all* trends. His thought stands outside the flow of philosophical development altogether. To this end, Tillich explicitly speaks of his own interpretation as ‘an attempt to lift Schelling out of the limitations of his time and space and to show his fundamental significance for the problems of the entire Western world… *to deprovincialise him and his achievement*.’[[46]](#footnote-46)

The Glory of the Positive Philosophy

Religious existentialist readings of Schelling celebrate the positive philosophy as a self-contained and crowning achievement of Schelling’s development. More specifically, the 1841-2 Berlin lectures on philosophy of revelation mark the text in which submerged existentialist elements come to the fore and ‘break through’, in Tillich’s phrase. In Jaspers’ *Größe und Verhängnis*,the positive philosophy alone is framed as the culmination of Schelling’s ongoing attempts to think reality; indeed, the book’s chapter on Schellingian method is divided in two: Schelling’s early unsuccessful experiments with intellectual intuition, followed by his later more promising formulation of the positive philosophy.[[47]](#footnote-47)

Two preparatory operations are needed to make such interpretations plausible. First, for these existentialist elements to both have been submerged in Schelling’s earlier thought and to be fully expressed in what comes later, Schelling’s development needs to be seen in terms of dialectical discontinuity—in terms, that is, of both continuity and break. According to Marcel, for instance, Schelling’s ‘direction remains constant’ throughout his writings—‘a continuity is kept despite it all’—yet at the same time there is a visible ‘break’ between the *Weltalter* project and that of the philosophy of revelation.[[48]](#footnote-48) Tillich is explicitly dialectical in interpreting Schelling’s development: on the one hand, ‘the motifs which lead to the existential turn in Schelling’s late philosophy are from the outset already there’, but on the other hand, ‘after the *Freiheitsschrift* in 1809, the existential elements of his earlier periods break through the essential framework in which they had been held’.[[49]](#footnote-49) Tillich’s reading is therefore unashamedly teleological: the early work has a ‘preparatory function for the later existentialism’.[[50]](#footnote-50)

Secondly, for such interpretations to be plausible, the positive philosophy needs to be understood as an independent whole, distinct from the negative philosophy that Schelling constructed alongside it. This is perhaps the most risky move found in the religious existentialist reading, for, notwithstanding the complexities of the relation between the positive and negative philosophies in Schelling’s work of the 1830s and 1840s, it is difficult to see there anything but two correlative sciences that mutually demand each other for their own completion. For Jaspers and Marcel, however, such completion is a one-way process: negative or purely rational philosophy requires completion by a turn towards reality in the positive philosophy. Jaspers is most explicit on this in his Bad Ragaz speech,

All philosophy has an Achilles’ heel. It is incomplete. In order to become whole, it needs supplementation… Schelling looked for this supplement in a second, more productive philosophy—one that would grasp positive reality itself and so finally overcome reflection and the negative of philosophising. Indeed, philosophy does require its supplement in reality, in the reality of man, in his possible existence made actual in history, but never in an object of knowledge. The answer to the question of the supplement of philosophy is not attained by knowledge, but by reality. Schelling [then] became dissatisfied with philosophical reflection… He tried to save himself from reflection…He experienced the negativity of all rational philosophy. What reason knows is ‘what is’, the possible, not ‘that there is’, the actual. In order to reach the latter, he invented positive philosophy. This positive philosophy is the final form.[[51]](#footnote-51)

As the last words of the above makes clear, the result of these two preparatory operations is that the positive philosophy alone becomes the *fulfilment* of Schelling’s philosophical trajectory. The positive philosophy is figured by all three of Marcel, Tillich and Jaspers as the purest, ‘most Schellingian’ moment of Schelling’s philosophy, his greatest achievement.

Schelling’s Religiosity

Along with the figure of the positive philosophy as fulfilment comes an emphasis on the concepts of revelation and religion in general. Marcel’s essay is most explicit. He speaks of Schelling’s ‘fundamental philosophical question’ as ‘the problem of transcendence’[[52]](#footnote-52), continuing that Schelling’s central motivation throughout his career was the guaranteeing of transcendence, and his entire epistemology, including its master-concept, intellectual intuition, is intended to achieve this. Marcel spells this out as follows,

Schelling is neither a poet to whom it is granted to enter into intimate relation with the unity of the all, nor a philosopher in the Hegelian sense who reabsorbs transcendence into philosophy. He attempts to safeguard transcendence in philosophy, for this will to safeguard is the active moment in that tendency towards the unconditioned which finds expression in his own personal way of conceiving intellectual intuition.[[53]](#footnote-53)

In this passage, Marcel spells out three possible intellectual relations to transcendence. First, the poetic relation in which one unites entirely with what is outside the order of the known at the expense of conceptual thinking, an uncritical embrace of the unthought through aesthetic figuration. Secondly, there is the traditional philosophical relation to transcendence, exemplified here by Hegel, in which such transcendence is reabsorbed back into the immanent dialectic of thought. Transcendence is cancelled under the hegemonic authorities of thought and critique. Thirdly, according to Marcel, Schelling attempts to negotiate ‘a *via media*’[[54]](#footnote-54) that safeguards transcendence *within* philosophy. In other words, the transcendent is not to be located outside the immanent, but *as* the immanent, as an irreducible moment of thought—‘the transcendence of thought itself’. Hence, Marcel takes over the ecstatic dynamics of Schelling’s late ‘higher empiricism’ to describe this third way: there is ‘a change in the orientation of reason itself’, such that ‘thought transcends itself’—or, as Marcel also puts it, ‘auto-determination’ becomes ‘extra-determination’.[[55]](#footnote-55) As well as following Schelling’s descriptions of ecstatic experience from the 1820s to 1840s, such an account also evidently owes much to phenomenological conceptions of consciousness as ‘consciousness of’. Transcendence becomes the proper name for the very movement of thought.

For Marcel, this Schellingio-phenomenological account of the transcendence of thought is a response to the ‘insecurity’ plaguing philosophy’s relation to religion. Philosophy loses ‘confidence’ in its ability to talk about religion rationally when it accepts that the content of religion ‘passes into the unthinkable sphere of transcendence’.[[56]](#footnote-56) However, the recognition that the movement of transcendence *is* thought provides a means of restoring that confidence, thus transforming ‘religion[s] of pure transcendence’ into ‘the mythology of reason’.[[57]](#footnote-57) Now, such a transformation is evidently problematic; it motivates, for instance, Jaspers’ critique of Schelling’s ‘alienation from actual religion’.[[58]](#footnote-58) Nevertheless, Marcel contends that—despite such dangers—the transformation of religion into a mythology of reason is positive: such a middle position between philosophy and religion allows for a sui generis discourse, untroubled by the dangers of unscientific religiosity, on the one hand, and rationalist reductionism, on the other.

For Marcel’s Schelling, therefore, religious transcendence forms a sui generis form of thought: religious phenomena appear within thought in a way distinct from secular rationality, but still rationally; they appear within their own distinct space of reasons. And the task of the Schellingian philosopher, according to Marcel, is thus to ‘safeguard’ or ‘guarantee’ the integrity of this sui generis space of religious reasons—to ensure it is evacuated neither of rationality nor of religiosity. Jaspers’ 1954 Bad-Ragaz speech furthers this conception of the space of religious reasons. Jaspers quickly identifies the central aim of Schelling’s philosophy as the establishment of a ‘space’ for speculation, ‘the place from which we think philosophically’. In this ‘field of construction’, ‘what is is close to us, present in us… It is the place where what genuinely is shows itself in originary experience’.[[59]](#footnote-59) Moreover, what is significant about Jaspers’ account is that the first half of his essay is devoted to identifying the types of intellectual ‘preparations’ necessary to generate this space—that is, he specifies those Schellingian practices needed to properly shield and safeguard thoughtful transcendence. To put it slightly differently, Jaspers focuses on the acts of freedom that bring about such a space of reasons. The first words of his speech mimic the opening to Schelling’s 1797 *Ideen*: ‘What is philosophy? Schelling answers: philosophy is “throughout a work of freedom”. From outside it cannot be grasped. One must enter into it.’ Thus, ‘the place from which we think philosophically’ is also ‘the space of human possibilities’.[[60]](#footnote-60)

And what then is the primary free act that, according to Jaspers’ Schelling, safeguards such a space? What prepares the philosopher? The answer is *Gelassenheit*: the philosophical subject is ‘a subject who passes through everything and remains in nothing’, and so the appropriate ‘preparatory operations of thought’ are those that involve the relinquishment of finite objects, beings, the self and even God.[[61]](#footnote-61) Drawing on the language of Schelling’s Erlangen lectures, Jaspers writes,

Even God himself must be relinquished by the person who wishes to place himself at the beginning of true, free philosophy. Only he who has relinquished everything has attained the ground of himself and has known the whole depths of life.[[62]](#footnote-62)

Jaspers thus identifies the Schellingian creation of a free space for philosophising with total *Gelassenheit*, with the very abandonment of God. This, for Jaspers at least, is the quasi-religious completion that Schelling’s positive philosophy seemingly results in: a thinking through of the death of God.

The Failure of the Positive Philosophy

Nevertheless, despite all the potential, all the glory that Jaspers, Marcel and Tillich unearth in the positive philosophy, all three are equally insistent that it ultimately disappoints. Even though the recourse to positive philosophy might be Schelling’s greatest success, it is still ultimately a failure. Existential elements might come to the fore here, but in the end Schelling’s descriptions of them still collapse back into the worst excesses of the philosophical tradition.[[63]](#footnote-63)

Jaspers is most vocal on this point. He locates in Schelling’s ‘series of sketches of a conceptually-rich world of being, of the history of being and mankind’ a renunciation of the very impulse that made the positive philosophy so appealing in the first place. The encounter with actuality falls back into metaphysical categories: ‘From the sovereignty of philosophical inquiry into the ultimate and from the illuminating power of standing on the limit, Schelling turns back into narrow abodes—that is, into an intuition of the being of eternal freedom and its entry into the world-process.’[[64]](#footnote-64) This leads, for Jaspers, to ‘the objectification of freedom’ and the ‘fixing of transcendence’.[[65]](#footnote-65) Jaspers rails against Schelling’s ‘theosophical intuitions’ and ‘gnosis’ as ‘untrue for philosophical knowledge and bad for existence.’ He concludes, ‘Catastrophe is the consequence of such thinking.’[[66]](#footnote-66)

In ‘Schelling fut-il un précurseur de la philosophie de l’existence?’, Marcel approvingly paraphrases Jaspers’ position as follows,

If he gives us wings when he treats of principles, [Schelling] deceives us when he passes to concrete explanations. Schelling is right to say that philosophy can truly illuminate our existence by transcendence… But this affirmation becomes false when God is thought as a reality that it is given to us to know and from which one can deduce what is.[[67]](#footnote-67)

The final words of Tillich’s speech are also couched in the language of ‘failure’ and ‘obsolete materials’.[[68]](#footnote-68)

In order to overcome the above disappointments, Jaspers, Marcel and Tillich all suggest a new—or, at least, renewed—form of thinking that will avoid repeating Schelling’s mistakes. For Jaspers, this is a practice of non-knowing that stands on the limit, questioning without requiring an answer.[[69]](#footnote-69) On the other hand, Marcel passes the buck onto Tillich and other theologians to exemplify the kinds of thinking that would complete Schellingian philosophy:

I would add this: it would be desirable for a theologian such as Paul Tillich to help us discriminate in the philosophy of revelation between the void elements by which it remains derivative of a superseded science—and a certain fundamental project which perhaps retains some worth.[[70]](#footnote-70)

Tillich, unsurprisingly, agrees:

It is the task of the theologian to respond to the questions of human existence… However, he can do this only on the basis of revelation, revelation of the power of being, which overcomes the conflict between essence and existence, and which must be encountered in history. Schelling knew this; but he was too immersed in the legacy of the idealist tradition to draw out its consequences. He forgot the character of encounter in revelation, for which he himself had called.[[71]](#footnote-71)

The disappointment felt on Schelling’s reversion to traditional metaphysical categories can be overcome, it is claimed. It can be overcome by taking seriously the need for a renewed type of thinking, whether theological or otherwise. It is here that the religious existentialists hope to succeed where Schelling failed.

The Eclipse of Philosophy of Nature

As Tillich had lamented at the beginning of his first dissertation on Schelling in 1908, no book-length study of the late Schelling was then available for him to consult.[[72]](#footnote-72) Schelling scholarship began late and it was, in many ways, the very non-scholarly readings of early twentieth-century philosophers of existence that inaugurated it. If it is now so very natural to interpret Schelling’s texts according to the schema described in this essay, this is partly because Jaspers, Marcel and Tillich had a hand in inventing our image of Schelling. This is one reason why so many features of the above reading have now become second-nature to Schelling scholars. Of course, such features inform merely one *tendency* in subsequent scholarship: there are scholars who reject many of the above positions and others who hold them for reasons utterly independent of the justifications rehearsed above; nevertheless, much Schelling scholarship has—both explicitly and implicitly—*tended* towards the valorisation of ‘outsider Schellingianism’.

A full defence of this thesis would require much more than the following comments; nonetheless, to conclude, one aspect of Jaspers, Marcel and Tillich’s readings, as well as those of many subsequent Schelling-interpreters, is worthy of note, not least because it touches on much of the material rehearsed earlier in the essay. This is the neglect of Schelling as a philosopher of nature. Marcel explicitly owns up to this neglect:

From Schelling’s immense work I had to make a selection: I completely left out the philosophy of nature, not only because it treated subjects that were foreign to me, but also because I believed that it was scientifically outdated.[[73]](#footnote-73)

Such a choice flags up the contingency in Marcel’s image of Schelling, and, indeed, there are at least three reasons why the specific interpretative features chosen by the religious existentialists, as outlined above, all lead to the same, otherwise-avoidable erasure of philosophy of nature from Schellingian philosophy.

First, the focus on the religious stakes of Schelling’s late philosophy, as detailed above, obscures other significant discourses in his work—particularly, that of naturalism. That ‘Schellingianism *is* naturephilosophy throughout’[[74]](#footnote-74) is certainly a controversial thesis, but, nevertheless, the fact that this thesis has only just begun to be seriously debated in Schelling scholarship is evidence of the extent to which his philosophy has been framed in a non-naturalistic context. Evidently, the biggest casualties are those writings in which Schelling explicitly expounds a philosophy of nature—and Marcel’s admission is revealing in this regard—but similar reproaches could be made concerning much of Schelling’s oeuvre: the doctrine of God presented in the *Freiheitsschrift*, for example, is often taken as Schelling’s most significant contribution to theology, but it is equally Schelling’s most audacious attempt to understand reality naturalistically. Readings that obscure this merely fall back into the ‘common deficiency’ Schelling famously laments in modern philosophy—‘that nature does not exist for it and that it lacks a living basis.’[[75]](#footnote-75)

Similarly, the elevation of the positive philosophy as the fulfilment of Schellingianism leads to a teleological reading of his development that insists that earlier phases are to be read merely as steps (or missteps) on the way to the positive philosophy. Reading Schelling teleologically is still common: the claims of the 1830s and 1840s are treated as normative and the earlier work evaluated as successful or aberrant insofar as it conforms, or not, to such a norm. Bowie, for example, can raid the earlier philosophy in the name of ‘the beginnings of arguments that re-emerge in the later critiques of Hegel and form the basis of his significance for subsequent philosophy’.[[76]](#footnote-76) Likewise, White also reads Schelling backwards, treating the philosophy of nature only insofar as problems therein ‘determine the further course of Schelling’s development.’[[77]](#footnote-77) The basic teleological structure of the religious existentialist reading is implicitly maintained and, once more, many of Schelling’s more significant texts on philosophy of nature—written, as they were, in the 1790s and 1800s—consequently suffer, reframed in hindsight as something deficient.

These strands come together in Jaspers’ grounding claim that Schelling ‘completes the philosophy of freedom’[[78]](#footnote-78), that he is a philosopher of freedom rather than a philosopher of nature. It is noticeably only since Iain Grant’s 2006 *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling* that this prioritisation of freedom over nature has come to be contested. Grant writes,

Jaspers here provides the basic type of the frequently reiterated and erroneous proposition that naturephilosophy amounts to [a philosophy of freedom]… [Such a] critical reduction of naturephilosophy fatally obscures the transformation Schelling undertook… and leaves the naturephilosophy prey to subsumption under the general clichés surrounding Idealism.[[79]](#footnote-79)

For the religious existentialists, nature becomes merely ‘the residuum of freedom’, whereas, for Grant’s Schelling, what matter is not ‘how freedom can give rise to nature’, but ‘how nature can give rise to freedom.’[[80]](#footnote-80)

The point is not that Grant’s reading is necessarily better or more faithful; it too surely does something odd to Schelling’s texts. Rather, what is significant is that it is only in the last decade that there has arisen any concerted dissatisfaction with the image of Schelling first invented by the existentialists. Grant’s recent labours are a reminder of the tenacity of such an image, of the extent to which we are all still recovering from the existentialist reading of Schelling.

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1. For a more general account of Marcel’s Schelling-interpretations, see Tilliette, ‘Schelling et Gabriel Marcel’; on Tillich’s earlier readings of Schelling, see Danz’s contribution to this special issue and the literature cited therein. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. On the term ‘religious existentialism’, see Pattison, *Anxious Angels*. While this awkward label is certainly not perfect (particularly as applied to Jaspers), it provides a convenient shorthand for my purposes—one, moreover, with a foothold in the scholarship and which serves in what follows merely to designate Jaspers, Marcel and Tillich’s work in the 1950s. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The extent to which Jaspers, Marcel and Tillich ‘invented’ our image of Schelling can, if nothing else, be gleaned from Tillich’s comments in 1908 that his work on Schelling occurred in a vacuum: there was no scholarship on the late Schelling to consult, no pre-existing images of Schelling to draw on (*The Construction of the History of Religion*, 39). Schelling was to be invented anew—and it is Jaspers, Marcel and Tillich’s later scrutiny of this invention that is the topic of this essay. I return to this point at the end of the essay. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. On the Bad-Ragaz Tagung: see volume XIV of *Studia Philosophica*, the Society’s journal, which is devoted to ‘Verhandlungen der Schelling-Tagung’ and thus includes all the proceedings. Martial Gueroult (‘Congrès Schelling’) provided a detailed conference-report for *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger*. On the Stuttgart event: see volume 9.2 of the *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* which contains the proceedings (particularly Wenzl, ‘Vorwort’, 161-2). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See Roesle, ‘Eröffnungsansprache’, 4-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. On Tillich’s invitation to Bad Ragaz: see the editors’ note to Tillich, ‘Anfänge’, 391 and Pauck, *Tillich*, 250. On Marcel’s ill-health: see Roesle, ‘Eröffnungsansprache’, 7 and Gueroult, ‘Congrès Schelling’, 357. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. It is worth mentioning in passing another figure, who although not invited to speak at the events in Bad Ragaz or Stuttgart, did publish in 1956 a long note on Schelling’s significance in precisely this regard—this is Karl Löwith who added a substantial reflection on Schelling to the second edition of *Nietzsches Philosophie der ewigen Wiederkehr des Gleichen* (153-6). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. For another potent example of this rereading of the history of existentialism, see Tillich, ‘Existential Philosophy’. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Jaspers, ‘Größe [1954]’, 37-8. All translations, unless otherwise cited, are my own. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See Dahlstrom, ‘Heidegger and German Idealism’, 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. He had, nevertheless, already given a similar paper in Zürich in Spring 1954. See Roesle, ‘Eröffnungsansprache’, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Marcel, ‘Schelling fut-il’, 74. Marcel makes a similar claim when publishing his 1909 thesis in 1971, drawing attention to the ‘malentendus’ in his understanding of the relation between positive and negative philosophy (*Coleridge et Schelling*, 9-10). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. See Marcel, ‘Schelling fut-il’, 74. Heidegger’s recommendation of Schulz’s monograph occurred on the occasion of a seminar he gave at Cerisy-la-Salle in August and September 1955 at the request of Jean Beaufret. At the seminar, Marcel pushed Heidegger on his interest in Schelling, but received an unsatisfactory answer, because, Marcel presumes, Heidegger was unwilling to ad-lib his complex and dense reflections on Schelling (‘Schelling fut-il’, 81). The importance of this exchange for the renewal of interest in Schelling in France should not be underestimated. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. In the Bad-Ragaz speech, Jaspers does make one remark on the radical difference separating Schelling from Kierkegaard, Marx and Nietzsche (‘Größe [1954]’, 32-3). Even in the 1955 monograph, there are only a couple of paragraphs on Schelling’s influence on Kierkegaard (*Größe* [1955], 327). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Jaspers, ‘Größe [1954]’, 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Jaspers, ‘Größe [1954]’, 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Tillich, ‘Anfänge’, 401. Rockhill provides a helpful general account of the attractions and dangers of the hermeneutics of anticipation (*La Logique de l’histoire*, 104-15). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Tillich, ‘Anfänge’, 399-400. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Tillich, ‘Anfänge’, 393. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Tillich, Anfänge’, 394. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Schulz’s importance in propagating a version of the Schelling-interpretation I am outlining in this essay should not be forgotten; indeed, as Marcel’s essay makes clear, Schulz’s work was immediately influential, even on more established figures. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Marcel, ‘Schelling fut-il’, 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Marcel, ‘Schelling fut-il’, 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Marcel, ‘Schelling fut-il’, 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Marcel, ‘Schelling fut-il’, 87. Marcel’s words here draw very close to a similar passage that closes Jaspers’ book on the need to encounter Schelling as an alternative (*Größe* [1955], 333). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Jaspers, ‘Größe [1954]’, 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Jaspers, ‘Größe [1954]’, 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 139. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Tillich, ‘Anfänge’, 395. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Even Tillich’s autobiographical ‘myth’ of discovering Schelling through a chance purchase in a second-hand bookshop on his way to Berlin (*Perspectives*, 142) cements this idea of Schelling as outsider, as external to the norms of the academy. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Heidegger, *Schelling’s Treatise*, 15-35. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Marcel, ‘Schelling fut-il’, 86. The source of Marcel’s claim is probably a similar passage in Jaspers’ book (*Größe* [1955], 338). Elsewhere, Marcel similarly figures Schelling as the alternative between Fichtean moralising and Hegelian speculation (‘Autobiography’, 105-6). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. See ‘Größe [1954]’, 21; see also *Größe* [1955], 66-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. See ‘Größe [1954]’, 18-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. See, for example, Solomon, ‘Introduction’, xii. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Jaspers, *Größe* [1955], 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. For a more detailed account of this ‘both…and…’ logic in Tillich’s Schelling-interpretation, see Whistler, ‘The Critical Project’. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Tillich, ‘Anfänge’, 393. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Marcel, ‘Schelling fut-il’, 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Marcel, ‘Schelling fut-il’, 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Tillich, ‘Anfänge’, 392. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Marcel, ‘Schelling fut-il’, 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Tillich, ‘Anfänge’, 392; my emphasis. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Jaspers, *Größe* [1955], 96-109 [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Marcel, ‘Schelling fut-il’, 75-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Tillich, ‘Anfänge’, 394. The 1910 thesis, *Mystik und Schuldbewußtsein in Schellings philosophischer Entwicklung*, definitively sets out Tillich’s position here, tracing the ‘dialectical’ relation between ‘Schelling I’ and ‘Schelling II’ (*Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness*, 24). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Tillich, ‘Anfänge’, 395. For Jaspers’ more sophisticated consideration of the periodisation of Schelling’s works, see *Größe* [1955], 50-60. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Jaspers, ‘Größe [1954]’, 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Marcel, ‘Schelling fut-il’, 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Marcel, ‘Schelling fut-il’, 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Marcel, ‘Schelling fut-il’, 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Marcel, ‘Schelling fut-il’, 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Marcel, ‘Schelling fut-il’, 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Marcel, ‘Schelling fut-il’, 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. In his Bad-Ragaz speech, Jaspers argues, ‘Schelling misconceives the characteristics of religion as cult, rites, laws, community, sacred places, sacred times, as authority sanctioned by God. Schelling knows that in all of this there is no mere sociological or psychological error. However, he takes philosophy as something superior that must penetrate religion, lead it further and ground it anew… Schelling wants to take religion philosophically in hand and tell theologians how to think. Hence, Schelling—who appears to take so seriously the historical reality of myth and revelation—ends up blind to the reality of religion.’ (‘Größe [1954]’, 33-4) [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Jaspers, ‘Größe [1954]’, 14-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Jaspers, ‘Größe [1954]’, 12. This is, Jaspers elaborates, ‘a thought-experience of the ultimate, the place where what is must show itself’, and it is ‘not to be reached by means of a conceptual claim. It is necessarily an act of freedom involving the whole essence of the thinking being. It must not only be thought, but performed internally.’ (‘Größe [1954]’, 17) [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. ‘Größe [1954]’, 17-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Jaspers, ‘Größe [1954]’, 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. In other words, all three—and Jaspers almost precisely—repeat the Kierkegaardian gesture on attending the 1841-2 Berlin lectures: initial hope at the promise of actuality (‘The embryonic child of thought leapt for joy within me, as in Elizabeth, when he mentioned the word actuality… Now I have put all my hope in Schelling’ [Quoted in *Concept of Irony*,xxi-xxii]), followed by disappointment at the return of metaphysics (‘I am too old to attend lectures, just as Schelling is too old to give them. His whole doctrine of the potencies betrays the highest degree of impotence’ [*Letters*, 141]). [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Jaspers, ‘Größe [1954]’, 20. Elsewhere in his speech, Jaspers elaborates as follows, ‘He attempts to make the leap to what matters most by means of philosophy, by means of the thinking of an object, unprethinkable reality, such that what results can again become a form of thought.’ (‘Größe [1954]’, 29) [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Jaspers, ‘Größe [1954]’, 19-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Jaspers, ‘Größe [1954]’, 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Marcel, ‘Schelling fut-il’, 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Tillich, ‘Anfänge’, 401. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Jaspers thus asks, ‘Is it not possible to stand on the limit, questioning without answer, but without despondency, without losing oneself in the abyssal nothing? Is this not possible when what really matters is at stake, when we are shocked philosophically by an answered question, when, in this space of not-knowing, life is grasped in relation to transcendence and illuminated fleetingly by a world of possible ciphers?’ (Jaspers, ‘Größe [1954]’, 21) [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Marcel, ‘Schelling fut-il’, 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Tillich, ‘Anfänge’, 401. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Tillich, *The Construction of the History of Religion*, 39 [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Marcel, *Coleridge et Schelling*, 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Schelling, *Inquiries*, 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Bowie, *Schelling*, 56-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. White, *Schelling*, 74. To repeat: what is at stake is not whether such readings are *correct*, but whether scholars are so busy telling stories about Schelling’s development, they neglect other equally important tasks. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Jaspers, *Größe* [1955], 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 14-6. Similarly, Grant quotes Heidegger (‘What Schelling calls ‘‘philosophy of nature,’’ does not merely and not primarily mean the treatment of a special area ‘‘nature,’’ but means the understanding of nature in terms of the principle of Idealism, that is, in terms of freedom’ [Heidegger, *Schelling’s Treatise*, 94]), and continues, ‘Heidegger’s claim that ‘‘freedom’’ is the ‘‘principle of Idealism’’ remains, then, true only of our false idealism. Accordingly it blazes the trail that practically all post-Heideggerian Schellingian interpretations will follow, from Jaspers to Habermas to, most recently, Wirth. What makes Heidegger’s accomplishment all the more perverse is that it achieves this primatisation of the practical as the only ‘‘possible’’ philosophical approach to nature. A naturalistic *Naturphilosophie*, speculative physics as such—the mere mention of such obviously metaphorical conceits brings peristaltically immediate reactions… Likewise, when contemporary philosophers turn—uncharacteristically—to the subject of nature, and of *Naturphilosophie*’s naturalism, they repeat Heidegger’s transmutation of *physis* into freedom.’ (‘Eternal Bond’, 45) [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Grant, ‘Eternal Bond’, 46. For a more detailed consideration of the significance of Grant’s reading, see Whistler, ‘The New Literalism’. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)