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TRACES OF LOVE INSCRIBED BY DEEDS

The Question of Immortality and Schelling's Ethics

Frank Schalow

ABSTRACT

The work of Schelling is not without problems, most notably his pantheism; nonetheless, because his philosophical presuppositions differ from those of Critical Philosophy, his work after 1800 (especially *Of Human Freedom* and "Stuttgart Seminars") provides an oddly "postmodern" alternative to subject-centered rationalism and the disenchanting secular culture it brought to birth. By counterpointing Schelling against Kant and by displaying the internal logic of Schelling's distinctive philosophy of identity, the author explores Schelling's conception of eternal life and analyzes its relevance for ethics.

KEY WORDS: *Schelling, Kant, Tillich, immortality, eternity, love, postmodernism, the demonic*

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF GABRIEL MARCEL (1951), existentialists have spurned any concern for the immortality of the soul. Yet when we examine the roots of existentialism in figures like F. W. J. von Schelling (1775–1854) and Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855)—each of whom addresses the phenomenon of "anxiety" (see Fackenheim 1952, 15–19)—we discover a much different story. Indeed, Schelling not only upholds the prospect of the soul's immortality, he maintains that it is after death that the self attains what is most distinct or "authentic" about its existence. The struggle of human existence does not deliver the individual over to authenticity, but, on the contrary, it is deliverance from this struggle that leads to authentic selfhood. On the surface, this claim suggests a paradox, which contradicts the explicit emphasis on the inevitability of death endorsed by the most celebrated existentialists (for example, Friedrich Nietzsche and Jean-Paul Sartre) and their ontological counterparts (for example, Martin Heidegger).¹ In the following, I

¹ See Nietzsche's discussion of "free death" or affirming one's life by facing mortality (1881/1954, 183–86). Also see Heidegger's existential analysis of death (1927/1962, 304–11).

wish to unravel this paradox and to re-open the issue of immortality in light of Schelling's speculative philosophy.

Given Schelling's dialectical approach, we must first consider what he does *not* mean by "immortality." For René Descartes, immortality implies the self's continuity after death, a constancy that proceeds from the self's character as a substance divorced from nature. By contrast, Schelling formulates a philosophy of identity, which seeks the organic unity of all knowledge through the interdependence of nature and spirit. According to him, the self does not exist as a static oneness, but instead attains its unity through a process of growth and transformation. Insofar as the self's dynamism stems from freedom, it exercises its choices in order to make the profoundest ethical commitments. Even in its potential for transcendence, the self's identity remains rooted in its ethical life. Through an ethic of love, Schelling emphasizes that identity constitutes a *relation* to which the self belongs, rather than a property it possesses. As we will discover, he exchanges an abstract sense of self-identity as a separate ego with a concrete sense of the self as wedded to community. This communitarian form of identity stands at the heart of the self's ethical life. Indeed, the self is an identity forged in partnership with what is other, and this double sense of identity will provide the clue to redefining the prospect of immortality.

I will begin by marking the intersection between two parallel inquiries which Schelling undertakes, a religious and an ethical approach as outlined in his "Stuttgart Seminars," delivered between February and July 1810 but only assembled posthumously. In contrast to Immanuel Kant, Schelling develops a new topography, which joins these two inquiries and elicits the ethical relevance of immortality. For Schelling, the juncture between the ethical and the religious includes the double meaning of the *logos* as expressing the Divine: (1) as the power of the word, that is, "communication" and (2) and as the consummate action, that is, "love" (*agape*). The unity of language and deed equals "community" or the haven of spirit. As Schelling emphasizes, it is through love that "the Word is pronounced" and "God first makes himself personal" (Schelling 1809/1936, 74).

1. The Question of Eternal Life

Despite his mystical leanings, Schelling belongs to a rationalist tradition. No matter how inscrutable religious concerns may at first appear, they are not antithetical to reason. On the contrary, the principles of reason, of the unconditioned, display the intelligibility governing "revelation" and faith, for example, the spirit of the Gospels. In this regard, Schelling strives to overcome the split between reason and faith which

Kant reinstated. Kant, as he himself famously expressed it, “denied *knowledge* in order to make room for *faith*” (Kant 1787/1965, 29). For Schelling, on the other hand, reason is not confined within the limits of human comprehension. Instead, reason reflects an order whose ideal has a Divine source. God expresses the unconditioned, the perfect identity (that is, the ideal) into which all reality must be resolved. Insofar as religious beliefs pay homage to God, their truth must reside in the identity which governs reason. By the same token, a philosophy of identity becomes complete only insofar as it encompasses the ultimate and highest concerns pertaining to God, that is, the Absolute. As a case in point, the Gospels not only illustrate the exemplary life of Christ but also testify to humanity’s participation in a Divine plan and to a Divine identity that encompasses us through the figure of the Son (that is, the incarnation).

What is the simplest message of the Gospels? It is to love God with all your heart and to love your neighbor *as yourself*. As is evident from these sayings, the experience of love includes a threefold reference that extends to the self only by taking a detour through the other, and, ultimately, through God. This double expressivity of love prevents its distortion into the self-serving, “pathological” love that Kant believes undermines ethical conduct (Kant 1785/1957, 16–19). Yet, Schelling does not preclude the possibility of loving oneself. In grammatical terms, it is the locus of the reference, the reflexive pronoun—the “one-self”—that proves decisive in understanding the individual’s capacity to love. Once again, it is a question of identity ($A = A$), of who the self *is*. Is the self merely a set of personal characteristics, which no one else can share (as is the case with G. W. Leibniz’s identity of indiscernibles)? Or is it the case that the self’s identity is not unilaterally restricted to any list of features, but instead encompasses its relation to God, its ancestry with the Divine? As we will discover, Schelling proceeds along this second path in developing a logic of identity.

Christianity implies a conception of human nature, but a corresponding “anthropology,” a term which Kant popularized, does not take the form of a secular investigation divorced from theology. Instead, any such anthropology is only a “moment” in expanding the inquiry into identity in order to include the necessary counterpart to the Divine, that is, the self or “soul.” Thus, human beings become the recipients of that power most closely aligned with the Divine essence, namely, freedom. When embodied in a human form, freedom can be deployed just as easily to mark humanity’s descent into degradation as its ascent to sublimity. Yet because humanity can encompass these extremes of darkness and light, of evil and good, human freedom becomes central in fulfilling God’s plan. Even though human beings flirt with the destructive

powers of malice, they can also provide the locus for receiving the redemptive power of love.

In the "Stuttgart Seminars," Schelling summarizes the unique cosmic position assumed by human beings by remarking: "In man, the two utmost extremes have been connected. Hence God holds man in higher esteem than the angels" (1810/1994, 243). In recalling the third figure of the Trinity, Schelling employs the nomenclature "spirit" to describe what is unique to our humanity. Spirit is that which gives the breath of life, where life infuses us with a potential for choice. Spirit and freedom complement each other, for the primary activity of life is choosing in the direction of an end, that is, *entelechy*.

Due to their spiritual ancestry, human beings already possess the capacity to participate in the Divine plan, to adhere to a higher law. However, this capacity requires cultivation and hence also includes the contrary impulse of defiance, disobedience, and rebelliousness. Because human beings occupy this middle ground or space "between," we require principles to guide our conduct. These principles are not independent of God's will, but must instead transcribe the order implied in it or facilitate its articulation. The ethical expression of the good is an essential development of the Absolute, for the element of identity requires its unfolding, conveyance, and restoration within the widest expanse of diversity. The vehicle for this double moment of disseminating and gathering is that element that is both the archetype of order and the birth of reason/speech in human beings, that is, the *logos*.

The *logos* is the Son, but it is also the *transmission* of the Divine order in a form that human beings can experience, imitate, and follow as the *predicate* of their own actions. The *logos* determines the meaning of human action, insofar as it transforms the pure indeterminacy of human choice into a freedom that participates in the identity of the Absolute (that is, the Divine plan). As Schelling emphasizes, one of the primary challenges of human freedom is to overcome its "indecisiveness" in order to reclaim the spiritual (and hence divine) origin that spawns it (Schelling 1809/1936, 50). "Man's spirit is necessarily the [product of a] decision [*ein Entschiedenes*] (more or less decided, to be sure, since indecisiveness is itself a kind of decision, namely, to will the good only in a conditional sense)" (1810/1994, 236). In this way, human freedom comes to fruition in fulfilling the Divine plan yet qualifies as the unique conduit to *communicate* a higher message whose *reality* remains most in doubt. Human beings bear the tension between the real and ideal, and their inevitable *suffering* becomes the occasion for spawning a completely new language, the language of *love*.

Whether explicitly taking a cue from the Trinity or implicitly from Plato, Schelling attributes a tripartite structure to human being (though he actually specifies only two of the three aspects):

The human spirit, too, is once again composed of three such powers or aspects. The first one has man face the real world from which he was unable to free himself. This aspect is opposed by the ideal one, the aspect of man's highest transfiguration [*Verklärung*] and of his supreme spirituality. The second, medial aspect lets man place himself in the middle between the Ideal and the Real, thus granting him the freedom either of re-establishing the bond between these two worlds or of penetrating their division.

In general, these . . . aspects or powers of the spirit are most appropriately expressed by the German language as temperament [*Gemüth*], spirit, and soul [1810/1994, 229–30].

Human identity is not a given, yet it is not simply created *ex nihilo* in a Sartrean sense. Rather, personal identity is prefigured, insofar as the self anticipates its transformation via-à-vis its divine ancestry.

If spirit equals life, then the annulling of life in death must be prefigured by the possibility of the transformation or rebirth of the self from a more primeval origin. The earthly origin of the self, its place on earth, does not necessarily disappear. Instead, that earthly origin recedes in order to admit a conjoint spiritual origin—that is, human being's descent from the Divine. In his pantheism, Schelling avoids making these two origins mutually exclusive by insisting that spirit can be revealed through nature and that nature can house the secret of spirit. "The world of spirit is God's poetry, and nature is His sculpture" (1810/1994, 240). Spirit and nature are joined in a mode of "communication" in which the former conveys itself (as Ideal) to the latter (as Real). "[The] other world contains everything that we find in this world, only in a poetic, that is, spiritual form, and hence it can be communicated in a much more perfect, and that means also in a spiritual, manner . . ." (Schelling 1810/1994, 240; see also Marx 1984, 85; Schalow 1994, 224–29). Analogously, the self's identity cannot be univocally located in a separate spiritual or natural realm, but must remain *open to a question* in terms of a metamorphosis where life equals a rebirth after death, or immortality.

Schelling does not seek to "prove" the immortality of the soul by, for example, ascribing to it the character of substance in the way that Kant rejects in his "paralogisms." Nor is Schelling concerned, as Kant is, with pointing to the soul's immortality as an offshoot of its demand to achieve moral perfection, if not in this life, then in the next. Rather, the issue of immortality re-emerges as an issue adjacent to the larger *prob-*

lem of identity; hence, for Schelling it is the *question* of immortality that governs his analysis of the soul. Herein lies the distinctiveness of his deliberations on the immortality of the soul. Given this contrast, let us examine the specifics in Schelling's avowal of the soul's immortality.

2. The Logic of Identity

Traditionally, life and death are construed as opposites. But are they mutually exclusive, or do they instead pertain to an identity forged through the tension of the dialectic? For Schelling, the self's identity cannot be captured simply by its reaction to circumstances, but must encompass the ideal which reserves a place for freedom. Indeed, it is because choice can align itself with the ideal, and rise above the chain of instrumental causes (of expediency), that a human being can undertake heroic actions such as risking one's life to save another's. Such a sacrificial act shifts the boundaries between life and death. For example, those who sacrifice themselves for the sake of liberty, as in the case of the French Revolution, suggest by their actions that there is a good that exceeds life itself; hence, life's opposite, death, is not an absolute. Such actions become gestures that express the glory of the spirit.

Schelling's pantheism, however, precludes his endorsing a "gnosticism" of the soul, which diminishes the importance of body and nature. Indeed, nature unfolds, insofar as it reveals the limitations of spirit, its potential for transformation. Far from being incidental, temptation and desire mark the limits in our experience of freedom; these limits must, in turn, be redistributed in order to give way to a more encompassing and differentiated unfolding of spirit. As Schelling repeatedly emphasizes, we know things through their opposites—"love in hatred, unity in strife" (1809/1936, 50). By the same token, death points to the limit of our spiritual existence, its transitoriness, while simultaneously extending to a periphery that reserves a place for its counterpart, that is, eternity.

Thus, Schelling construes "everlasting life" as a shifting of the fulcrum of identity, a transposition in which our confinement to the claim of desire recedes in favor of a rebirth from the pinnacle of our spiritual natures. To quote Schelling:

... man can never appear in this life as he *is* in his entirety, namely, according to his spirit, and there obtains a distinction between the outer and inner man, between his *appearance* and his *being*. Man in his being is determined by his spirit, whereas the appearing man wanders about cloaked by the involuntary inevitable conflict [between good and evil]. The good inside him is shrouded by evil that adheres to him by way of nature, cloaking his inner evil and yet tempered by the involuntary good that he pos-

esses from nature. Yet at one point man must attain his true Being [*Esse*] and must be freed from his relative non-being. This happens when he is transposed entirely into his own A2 [essential self], a step that does not separate him from physical life in general but from *this* life, in short, through his transition into the world of spirit [1810/1994, 237].

In his approach to immortality, Schelling defines death in a way that diverges from Plato's definition found in the *Phaedo*, that is, as "separation of the soul from the body." ". . . [D]eath marks not an absolute separation of the spirit from the body but only a separation from that corporeal element which inherently contradicts the spirit, that is, a separation of good from evil and vice versa" (1810/1994, 237). For Schelling, death is a "*reductio ad essentiam*," a yielding to what is more concrete and determinate in the human essence. That which is immortal transcends death, insofar as the individuality proper to each of us becomes a tribute to the Divine. Indeed, the immortal dimension is individuality insofar as it stands for or signifies the spark of divinity. Immortality, then, becomes a monument to the forms of expression in which the Divine can reveal itself in its inexhaustible plurality.

The self is, then, immortal insofar as it stands out in its individuality, is "ex-centric" or even "demonic." For Schelling, the "demonic" constitutes the self's encounter with darkness (with the indecisiveness of its own choice), only to be illuminated by and delivered over to a higher fate (that is, love). The demonic is, then, the human soul having undergone baptism by fire (that is, having endured the conflict between good and evil), only to testify to the victory of one opposite over the other. Without this struggle that suspends the self within the abyss, there can be no verdict of the triumph of good over evil, light over darkness, and, hence, no occasion for immortality.

This demonic aspect thus constitutes a [most actual] essence, indeed it is far more actual than man in this life; it is what in the language of the common man (and here we may legitimately say *vox populi vox Dei*) is called—not *spirit*—but *a spirit*; such that when it is claimed that a spirit has appeared to someone we must understand such a spirit to be precisely this most authentic, essentiated being [1810/1994, 237–38].

In appealing to the self's "authentic being," Schelling anticipates Karl Barth's emphasis on the disciple who "exists eccentrically" in union with Christ—"Christ in me, and I in Christ" (Barth 1961, 259).²

Schelling employs the active, verbal form to describe the self's identity, its "essentializing" way "to be." This grammar supplies an impor-

² Both Barth and Schelling emphasize the self's potential for rebirth in terms of its kinship with the Divine.

tant clue as to the soul's immortality, to its fate as prefiguring its "life" on this earth. The priority given to action implies that we are *known* through our deeds. An individual's "essential being" does not correspond to a unique set of characteristics or a "substance." Instead, the "to be" pertains to the distillation of all of the self's acts of goodness, the retrieval of a harmony masked within the conflict and suffering of "life." Seen from the individual's perspective, immortality is not a stasis annulling the tension of life, but instead is the harmony that resolves the strife of nature. The turn from indecision to decisiveness, the challenge of ethical life, sets the stage for enacting the drama of life/death, of immortality. Hence, the immortal soul is already the protagonist who stars in this drama, the "hero"/"heroine" who plumbs the depth of human suffering.

For Schelling, the self's larger fate, its possibility of eternal life, contributes to the *telos* of ethical life. For Kant, on the other hand, this *telos* constitutes a promissory note, which arises from our belief in God as a power granting happiness in proportion to virtue (that is, the "highest good"). Thus, Kant bases immortality on a division between the noumenal and phenomenal realms. In the afterlife, the soul strives after the moral perfection lacking in this life, and receives happiness in a proportional degree (Kant 1788/1956, 126–28). By contrast, Schelling considers the soul's immortality as a moment in the overall attempt to reunite spirit with nature, a pivotal concern in his logic of identity. For him, suffering not only distinguishes human finitude, but also testifies to the *pathos* of God's incarnation in human form and, hence, to the redemptive power of love, for example, "Christ in me, I in Christ." While it may be true that immortality delivers the self from the vicissitudes of life, this possibility becomes concrete only through the individual's resolve to endure suffering. The concern for eternal life arises insofar as we address the appropriation of human freedom as a key component in a larger eschatology. The self appropriates its freedom by recovering its authentic being, which spans the gulf between the eternal law of the spirit and the quandaries of life. Thus, immortality spawns a question within a wider problematic.

We have now outlined the crucial elements in Schelling's approach to immortality. But if no definitive answer can be given to the question whether the personality persists after the body dies, has he succeeded in suggesting an alternative vision of the "soul" in contrast to the secular view of the self shrouded in the inevitability of death? Or does Schelling succumb to the assumptions of "onto-theo-logy," of a metaphysics of presence, which commits the error of reifying God or construing the Divine as an abstract entity that postmodern thinkers

like Heidegger and Jacques Derrida reject? Let us turn a critical eye to Schelling's analysis of immortality.

3. Ethics and the Legacy of Love

Within our secular age, any discussion of immortality appears problematic at best. Yet the secular age is itself an outgrowth of "modernity," which postmodern thinkers from Derrida to Mark Taylor have, in turn, problematized and called into question (see Taylor 1987, 17–25). A critique of Schelling's thought, then, may be used not only to expose the limits of his pantheism but also to provide another demarcation that reveals the one-sidedness of a "this-worldly" approach. As Rudolf Bultmann recognized, to "de-mythologize" a religious view is to recover those motifs that return the scientific attitude to its proper boundaries (1958, 11–20). Schelling's thought may not accomplish a "de-centering" of the subject in the way that is so much in vogue today, but his insights into love as an emissary of the Divine (that is, the *Logos*) may revive the "spirit" in a way not confined to the limits of the Cartesian subject.

For Schelling, however, identity does not entail a perfect symmetry of terms, but instead constitutes a relation in its own right. Conversely, he holds that the self cannot constitute its identity through a reflective act ($I = I$), as Descartes suggests. Rather, who the self *is* arises from deeds which thrust it beyond its solitary sphere into proximity with others. Hence, an individual's identity arises insofar as he/she faces those factors that threaten to undermine it, the temptation of evil (non-being). The self's identity then emerges along a wider arc as it replaces the particularity of its desires (that is, the darkness of the "ground") with the universality of the law (that is, the light of "existence"). In ethical terms, the transposing of this identity-relation means that the individual discovers him/herself through cooperation with others, that is, via gestures of love. Love ceases to be merely a feeling and instead yields the context for all exchange among human beings who share the *same* spiritual ancestry. Upon appropriating Schelling's thought, Paul Tillich would later describe *agape* as "the will to self-surrender for the sake of the other being," a form of love that must be joined with *eros* (Tillich 1957, 114).³ Through such sacrifice, the self's identity is determined by its *place* within community (for example, the "community of faith"), which becomes the cultural medium for transmitting the good.

³ Tillich wrote two dissertations on Schelling, considering the topics of guilt and myth (O'Meara 1982, 195).

As is well known, deconstructionists point to the trace of difference inscribed within language. As the language of love, identity also exhibits its own unique grammar. This grammar becomes evident as a double valence, which conveys love both as the ingredient in action (the *Logos* as Son) and as the predicate of human exchange (that is, the *Logos* as the gathering of community). In love resounds the simplicity of the “Word,” but the Word is also the efficacy of the deeds that foster brotherhood/sisterhood among all human beings (Bultmann 1958, 78–82). We can describe this “grammar” as that of “middle-voice.” The middle-voice marks the median between activity and passivity, saying and hearing, responding and choosing. In theological terms, we allude to the intermediary as the incarnate Word, but in pondering the identity-relation that such an intermediary *embodies*, we can point to God’s transmission of his power (grace) to those who can both heed that call (as speakers) and act upon it (as agents). Conversely, the emergence of love in human acts then becomes a *transcript* for diverse “declensions” of the Divine essence or modalities of its expression (O’Regan 1994, 204–11). These declensions include the *pathos* of the Son, the exaltation of the Holy Spirit, and the compassion of Mary.

The grammar of love resides in its special economy. Love proves to be the most economic of all powers, insofar as the more it is transmitted, the more it is preserved. Indeed, love is not a commodity that can be stored and dispensed at will. Nor can any momentary feeling capture its essence. Rather, love includes the tension between the depth of human suffering and its ultimate resolution. In order to love, the self must exhibit the strength of conviction and the resiliency of compassion (median of middle-voice as the balance between activity and passivity). An individual’s life can then serve as a chronicle of this transformation, of the self’s ascent toward God. In this way, Schelling’s philosophy of the spirit intersects with an ethic whose purest gifts are the fruits of love (*agape*). The self’s actions supply the elements to convey the glory of the Word, the legacy of love. In this legacy resides the spark of the soul, the seed of immortality. Analogously, Rainer Maria Rilke suggests that the “immortal side” of the self lies in accomplishing the transformation of the “visible” into the “invisible” realm of the heart (see the Ninth Elegy in Rilke’s *Duino Elegies*; see also Heidegger 1971/1975, 134).

Given these observations, can we pinpoint where Schelling stands on the Reformation controversy as to whether grace or good deeds harbor the seeds of redemption? Ironically, he later influences both Protestant and Catholic thinkers (Tillich 1957, 115–17; see O’Meara 1987, 198–99; O’Meara 1982, 11–25). For Schelling, however, the answer is not so much “either-or”; while God bestows grace, grace is a power that works

through love and vice versa. The individuals who are disposed toward love are those who are most *receptive* to the gift of grace. Rather than serving as bargaining chips, actions are the medium to *convey* the glory that God has already offered us through Christ. Thus, immortality does not provide a further incentive to act morally, as Kant believes, but instead exemplifies the self's ethical commitment, its devotion to the Christian message of love.

The ethical response of love has a deeper ontological root in our kinship with the Divine, such that even our most fleeting gestures of compassion offer a glimpse of eternity. As Tillich recognizes, our affinity with the eternal ground of Being awakens in us the power to love, to express charity toward others. "Love is the power in the ground of everything that is, driving it beyond itself toward reunion with the other one and ultimately with the ground itself from which it is separated" (Tillich 1957, 114). Through this dynamic movement of reunion, the self's immortality becomes a tribute to Christ's mission of love. Among twentieth-century theologians, Tillich recovers God's immanence as the precondition of love, but in a way that does not rely as heavily as does Schelling on pantheistic premises. By emphasizing the self's relation to the ground of Being, Tillich explains the possibility of Divine immanence without equating God with nature, as Schelling does.

To appreciate Schelling's speculations on immortality is not to affirm a dogmatic belief in life after death. Kant challenges this dogma when he argues that immortality can only serve as a "regulative idea," which prevents us from accepting an overly materialist vision of the self (1783/1959, 85). To be sure, Schelling does not embrace the limits of Critical Philosophy. While not claiming that eternal life constitutes an object of knowledge, he does depict it as a piece in the puzzle comprising the logic of identity. This logic grasps the reciprocity of spirit and nature, while reaffirming God's immanence in harmony with its transcendence. Given his pantheistic bent, Schelling transposes the locus of the "beyond" into the worldly domain of suffering and sacrifice, and he thereby upholds an *ethos* of love. Rather than providing an escape to an otherworldly bliss, the search for immortality points to the "in-dwelling" of Christ's love in us and to our readiness for sacrifice.

Yet pantheism is only one step along the way in reformulating the question of immortality, not the ultimate destination. Pantheism must give way to a more radical understanding of the human being as endowed with the potential for self-transcendence, that is, with the ability to base human existence on a "ground" higher than itself. In Tillich's case, the "ultimate concern" for existence disposes us to love others even while we are immersed in the most mundane of daily pursuits. Insofar

as Schelling addresses the possibility of eternal life, it is the enduring message of God's love that provides the cornerstone for the self's immortality.⁴

4. Conclusion

The more we witness the development of Schelling's thought in his successors, the more we can benefit from his insights into the soul's immortality. Indeed, to follow his line of thinking is to re-open the *question* of immortality in a novel way. Even Heidegger maintained that his ontological investigation into human mortality could not pass judgment on what transpires after death (1927/1962, 292). From the epoch of Gilgamesh to Heidegger, the concern for one's mortality and that of others remains a shroud of darkness masking the light of human existence. For Schelling, the illumination of that darkness becomes possible as we address the intersection of time and eternity and reaffirm the mysterious depths of life. In the end, what merits preservation beyond life is the essential being of the self, which comprises the traces of love that our deeds inscribe in the face of eternity.

Schelling makes an important philosophical advance by redefining ethics as a discourse that includes the vocabulary of love. In one respect, his philosophy grapples with such "modern" problems as the dichotomy between spirit and nature, transcendence and immanence. In another respect, his insights into the grammar of love and the relational sense of identity anticipate a "postmodern" view of the self. By observing the limits of Schelling's pantheism, we can re-open the question of immortality in a postmodern context and rekindle a spark of religious belief lacking in everyday life. In a society immersed in mundane concerns, it becomes increasingly important to develop an ethic of love which acknowledges a *mystery* hidden beyond the veil of life. By determining the link between immortality and love, Schelling testifies to this mystery, to the space of self-transcendence in which the "in-dwelling" spirit of the Divine finds its home.

⁴ The text of Schelling's "Stuttgart Seminars" concludes with the line: "Then God is in all actuality everything, and pantheism will have become true" (1810/1994, 243).

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