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SCHELLING AND DORNER ON DIVINE IMMUTABILITY

ROBERT F. BROWN

INTRODUCTION

The German idealists very creatively address the theological doctrine of God's immutability. The philosophies of Schelling and Hegel have important implications, each in its own distinctive way, for reconceiving God's relation to temporal processes, entities, and events, even though that may not be directly evident from the titles or subheadings of their books and essays. These two philosophers are important forerunners of the twentieth-century process positions of Whitehead and Hartshorne. But they differ from the latter in not rejecting wholesale the traditional conviction that God has a transcendent being in some respects self-sufficient apart from the world, even though they envisage God's being as also containing the world within itself. In this respect they represent a creative recasting of the theological tradition, in distinction from modern alternatives that dismiss that tradition out of hand. As philosophers, however, Schelling and Hegel do not carry out the requisite theological reconstruction themselves. Instead they leave it to the professional theologians to extract from their philosophical writings the perspectives available there for completing the task. Unfortunately, not many theologians among their immediate contemporaries and successors took advantage of this opportunity.

One important nineteenth-century German Protestant theologian who grappled with this issue seriously, though perhaps not ultimately successfully, was Isaac August Dorner (1809–1884). At mid-century Dorner published a highly suggestive but little-studied treatise that attempts to recast the immutability doctrine (1856; Welch, 1965). The first two (introductory and historical) parts of Dorner's immutability treatise lay the groundwork for systematic reconstruction in the third, which is the focus of this paper. Dorner's aim is to do away with the ancient notion of divine immutability as a static perfection immune to change from within or to influence from without. Patristic and medieval theologians adopted this notion of divine perfection from Plato and Aristotle and applied it enthusiastically, with as little alteration as possible, to the Christian God; the greatest among them,

Augustine and Aquinas, endorsed and refined it. Dorner, however, does not wish utterly to abandon immutability, as the nineteenth-century proponents of kenotic Christology sought to do, but only to reject a rigid simplicity incompatible with real distinctions within the Trinity and among the divine attributes. His proposed solution would unite immutability and actual livingness (*Lebendigkeit*) under a higher (and more biblical) principle, God's ethical nature as a steadfast, unshakable will for good. This he attempts through a reflection on divine love as "ethical immutability," a concept he thinks eliminates the old theological-philosophical tension of freedom and necessity in God's being (although, as we shall see, the resolution is not as neat as he would have us believe). The end of the treatise sketches the application of this new concept to representative Christian doctrines such as creation, providence, incarnation and justification.

Immediate predecessors exerting the most obvious influence upon Dorner's general theological stance are Hegel and Schleiermacher (Welch, 1972:274). The latter especially is a contributor to his concern with "ethical immutability" (Williams, 1983). One of my aims in this paper is historical, to enlarge this picture of Dorner's major intellectual debts by adding the name of Schelling. I will try to show that Dorner's immutability treatise evidences a substantial influence from Schelling, in this case at least equally as striking as Hegel's influence.¹ In fact, here Dorner isolates and stresses certain themes from Schelling more clearly than they might be apparent to a casual reader of Schelling himself, themes that develop further implications of making immutability a function of God's ethical will rather than a function of God's nature as a given. In this connection I have a second and systematic aim as well. It is to examine critically the particular resources for reconceiving immutability that derive from Schelling. Viewing Schelling through Dorner's eyes, by examining the extent of his agreement and disagreement with the philosopher, will help to clarify the assets and liabilities of Schelling's own stance on immutability. I think the contributions of the German idealists to this issue are as philosophically and theologically viable as the process views that receive so much attention in our own century, and so merit careful consideration alongside them.

I. Dorner on His Idealist Predecessors

Dorner was an erudite historical scholar who worked from detailed knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of his theological predecessors. He knew how to pose systematic issues sharply and was unafraid of openly

¹ Long before his explicit essay on Schelling (Dorner, 1860), Dorner had been thoroughly acquainted with the thought of Schelling, F. C. Oetinger, and Jacob Boehme, on the divine vitality and personality. Dorner's longtime friend and correspondent, the Danish theologian Hans L. Martensen, knew Schelling's thought and wrote quite a good book on Boehme (Dorner, 1839f; Martensen, 1885).

borrowing philosophical concepts potentially fruitful for theology. In his *History of Protestant Theology*, Dorner portrays a modern analogue to ancient philosophy's progression from physics to dialectics to ethics, namely, that Schelling grasped the absolute with physical precision, then Hegel grasped it with logical precision, and finally Schleiermacher grasped it with ethical precision (Dorner, 1867:II, 359ff.).² Dorner credits the early Schelling of the *Naturphilosophie* period (1795–1799) with the conception that the roots of nature and its life lie in God or the absolute itself, with the conception of God's being as dynamic process although, in this early version, one lacking the element of personality. With greater rigor Hegel, in his *Phenomenology* (1807) and *Larger Logic* (1812–1816), treats mind or thinking as the substantial content of the absolute. Despite his admiration for it, however, Dorner does not favor the Hegelian logic for grasping God's self-conscious personality because it "gives only a knowledge of possible knowledge" but not of reality, and "etherealizes into mere notions" nature, ethics, and religion (Dorner, 1867:II, 362). Since logic doesn't suffice for the personal, Dorner again mentions "Schelling, [who was] in his second period [from 1804 on] . . . more and more decidedly tending to mind, will, and a personal God, but did not apply himself in a connected manner to logic . . . and did but little for ethics" (Dorner, 1867:II, 362). The latter defect Dorner finds remedied in Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre* (1821–1822), where God's ethical attributes control the metaphysical attributes. Dorner draws selectively from this trio of predecessors in recasting the conception of God.

In the introduction to the treatise on immutability Dorner introduces three themes that also recall this trio. First, affirmations of God's infinity and personality are mutually incompatible only if we construe infinity *extensively* as sheer unlimitedness, thereby precluding any otherness not immediately identical with it. But self-conscious personality is possible only through a relation back to self, in conscious distinction of oneself from an other not immediately oneself. The true divine infinity is thus *intensive*, an infinite self-determination containing otherness within it (as both related to it and distinguished from it). This is the intensive infinity of God's thinking and willing, of God's personality (Dorner, 1856:193–95). In this conception of a complex deity, expressed in terms of intensive infinity and the logic of self-relation, we see the influence of Hegel. Second, the attributes that express God's extensive greatness—immensity, power, etc.—are secondary to the ethical essence of God as the absolute reality. In this primacy of God's ethical nature over God's

² Cf. Dorner's reference to the same three domains treated as three expressions of God's triune nature (Welch, 1965:122).

ontological attributes we see the influence of Schleiermacher.³ Third, the complex self-relatedness of God's personality is not simply the logical dialectic of self-consciousness. Theology also needs the conception of a nature in God to mediate God's complexity as a living process, not just a cognitive self-consciousness. Because Schelling saw this clearly (as did Boehme, Oetinger and others before him), he reconceived Fichte's not-I as something in God originally, as the not-God within God that is the ground of all possibility and self-conscious life. The later Schelling's conception of God's complex life appeals to Dorner because, despite its ethical defects, Schelling reconceives divine immutability with less modification than does Hegel of the orthodox contention that God's eternal, self-conscious life is self-sufficient and does not require the creation for its own actualization (Dorner, 1856:195–96).

Beginning about 1804, Schelling increasingly focused on the philosophy of religion and particularly on philosophical interpretation of Christian doctrines both for their own sake and in connection with other religions and mythologies. He began a series of essays that overhauled his own ontology in light of new insights on evil and free will and included innovative speculation on God's being as a complex, organic, self-conscious life. The latter theme appeared in fullest form in the unpublished manuscript, *The Ages of the World* (1811–1815),⁴ which presents his most explicit and compact portrait of God's transcendent being as a self-conscious life that is immutable and self-sufficient, although not a simple, static perfection. Subsequently Schelling worked out in detail such a deity's relation to creation as temporal, historical process, specifically to the history of mythology and revelation (culminating in the Christian incarnation). In writing the treatises on immutability and on the potency doctrine, Dorner could not directly have utilized *Ages*, which remained unpublished until 1861. Instead, Dorner evidently drew mainly on the *Naturphilosophie* and on the later lectures on mythology and revelation (where the position of *Ages* reappears in more diffuse form) for his grasp of the Schellingian contribution on

³ (Dorner, 1856:195). Toward the end of the second, or historical, part (pp. 286–99) Dorner discusses Schleiermacher's clear grasp of the primacy of the ethical in God, and also the inadequacy of his position on immutability *per se* (his closer adherence to traditional notions of divine unity, simplicity, and identity of the attributes). Yet he cites features in Schleiermacher pulling in an opposite direction, involving distinctions both within God and in the modes of God's relation to the world. Central to the latter is the affirmation that "God is love," based on the believer's experience of a special self-impartment on God's part, different from God's general causality in relation to the world as a whole (p. 298).

⁴ Schelling wrote several drafts of *Ages* between 1811 and 1815, but set it aside unpublished. His son placed the fullest draft (1815) in the *Werke*. The interpretation of Schelling I give, presented succinctly and without textual citation, is supported in chapters 3–6 of my book (Brown, 1977).

immutability. Nevertheless, I will draw upon *Ages* because of the greater economy and sharper focus of its position. I will also refer at the end to Dorner's treatise on the potency doctrine, which amplifies his views on the relative merits of Schelling and Hegel, and on Schelling's position regarding God's ethical nature.

II. Immutability

The venerable doctrine of divine simplicity, maintained from Augustine through Anselm and Aquinas to the Protestant scholastics, distorts the proper intent of divine immutability. By denying real distinctions within God, it precludes God's having genuinely self-conscious life, i.e., truly knowing and willing, and actually having complex relations with creation. It must be replaced by acknowledgement of elements of both potentiality and actuality in God's eternal life-process. Schelling is the chief architect of this organic or "physical" conception of God's nature. Its sharpest articulation in *Ages* forms the background for all of the later Schelling's philosophy.

The God of *Ages* is bipolar. One pole has at its foundation the "ground" in God, a triad of powers (contraction or inwardness; expansiveness or self-giving; unity or reconciliation). This triad, taken over from Boehme and from Schelling's own *Naturphilosophie*, is the set of powers underlying all being whatsoever. Yet it is inherently unstable, a raging inferno in which the three continually displace one another. Left to its own devices, it would not be actual (as either being, or a being); it is simply the substratum of any actual being that could arise; it is raw power as non-being ($\mu\eta\ \delta\upsilon\nu$). Its triadic character is potentiality for order. Yet something other must subdue it if being is to derive from it. This something other is the second pole in God, a sheer will devoid of content, the "god above God," the highest truth and reality of God as freedom. In the presence of, and as subordinate to, the freedom pole, the three powers of the ground adopt a relation to one another of stable order. This stabilized triad is God's actual being, a trinity of dynamically related modes of being. God's self-constitution occurs eternally (outside of time) and so from our perspective is always completed. It will not (in our future) become different from what it is, though in itself it is not static perfection but dynamic process. The trio of competing powers of the ground is God's "past," eternally present in God as overcome by God's will; as overcome and so stabilized, it is God's threefold being or what God is, the actualization and content that God's will attains for itself. Schelling's God is thus a voluntary duality-in-unity. On the one hand, this God's being is freely willed; the freedom pole need not dominate the trio of powers, and if it does not, there is no actual God. On the other hand, *if* God is, God has to have the structure he does have, for the

triad has only one stable arrangement, not many different possible ones. Hence God freely wills (and does not have to will) *that* he is, but in so willing God does not (in a capricious sense) will *what* he is.

Schelling's God *is* immutable (does not change) and eternally self-sufficient; from our temporal perspective God assuredly (albeit freely) remains so. But Schelling's God *is not* immutable in the sense of having an absolutely simple essence, a mutual identity of attributes, and a non-reciprocal relation to the world. Dorner thinks these traits from medieval or patristic thought are impediments to theology that are best discarded.

Schelling's God freely creates the world, and so does not need the world to augment his own self-sufficient life. The first (prerequisite) stage is eternal: God envisages a possible world with ontological structures replicating, under the finitizing conditions of space and time, his own structures. The second stage is God's freely willing to create such a separate world. God's envisaging a possible world in no way compels creation of an actual world; yet if God does will it, it must have ontological structures replicating (under the limits of finitude) God's own. So God freely wills (does not have to will) *that* the world is, but in so willing does not (in a capricious sense) will *what* general ontological structures the world has.

Schelling's speculative vision of the eternal life of God as dynamic process underlies Dorner's immutability treatise in a thoroughgoing way. In portraying God as interacting modes or powers not simply reducible to one another, one of Schelling's motives is to show in God an actual dialectic of self-consciousness, of self-relatedness, and so to show a ground in God for a similar, and derivative, dialectic in the creation. But due to Schelling's other interests and lesser logical rigor, he is for Dorner dialectically weaker in this respect than is Hegel. Dorner, however, is not mainly looking for a self-conscious God philosophically analyzed in logical categories; it is insufficient just to update Augustine's analogies of God's threefold being with the structures of self-consciousness (in *de Trinitate*) by a modern logic that "moves." Dorner's immutable God has real *Lebendigkeit*, a vitality that is not just conscious self-relation but is itself organic, or at least analogous to, and the ground of, the organic processes of the creation. God's vitality is indeed thinkable, but not as reducible to logical categories, however "dynamic" they might be. Schelling's God is a life and a will ontologically "antecedent" to being a thinker or a rationally comprehensible essence. If Dorner were less interested in this organic (as opposed to purely logical) notion of divine vitality, then he would neither be so critical of the Hegelian categories for offering only "possible knowledge" nor reiterate the importance of Schelling's "physical" contributions for the modern conception of the absolute. To adequately depict the true God's immutable life and personality, one must seek out other (more primordial) roots than the structure of the divine mind itself; Dorner holds that Schelling saw this

important point and Hegel did not. Thus Dorner says that, although the physical is subordinate to the spiritual,

... an analogue from *nature* is to be posited in God himself . . . God is to be conceived as eternally both absolute potentiality and absolute actualization by virtue of the eternally self-rejuvenating divine life-process. This, to be sure, will only be possible, figuratively speaking, in that the life of God constitutes an organism and cycle of life, or logically speaking, in that the eternal and absolute self-actualization of God eternally wills and confirms its own ground, just as the latter cannot be apart from the always absolute actuality of existence. (Welch, 1965:121f.)⁵

But Dorner emphatically warns against taking the divine *Lebendigkeit* in such a way as to threaten immutability in its true sense. This is an error of the pantheism that envisages a single life-process embracing both God and the world. On this pantheistic model, the divine, as distinguishable from the world, is its own perfections only as potentialities and requires the existence and life of the world for their actualization. Such a God is an object of thought, but is not transcendently real. Concomitantly, the life of the world and its creatures is not really their own, is not genuinely independent, but is in fact just God's own life as actualized (Welch, 1965:141f.). Dorner proceeds from these observations to a critique of kenoticism's inadequate notion of the God-world relation as expressed in its handling of the incarnation. In contrast, Dorner recommends a view of God very like Schelling's self-sufficient divine vitality that is timelessly actualized, so that its ontological replication in the world is just that—a replication—and not a requisite to its own actuality or perfection. Even the later lectures on mythology and revelation do not suppose that God is unactualized apart from his life disclosed within the creation by nature and history. In this vein Dorner writes,

... an inner-worldly and an inner-historical life of God and an alteration in this life are to be spoken of only on the basis of the eternally actualized and immutable perfection of God (Welch, 1965:142). The whole historical life of God in the world takes place, not at the expense of the eternal perfection of God himself, but precisely by virtue of this permanent perfection. Only so does his eternal freedom also remain in its place vis-à-vis the never absolutely closed natural order. (Welch, 1965:145)

In place of this crude pantheism, Dorner finds more congenial Schelling's idea of a world existing within God that is nevertheless not identical with, nor exhaustive of, God. Such a (freely created) world is intimately bound up with its ground in God, yet neither sacrifices its own relative autonomy

⁵ This and subsequent quotations from the third part of Dorner's treatise (Welch, 1965) are used with the permission of Oxford University Press.

vis-à-vis God's own eternal being nor is itself simply part of that eternal being. Schelling calls this "the true pantheism" (Schelling, 1810:484); today we might call it "panentheism."

Dorner's attack on pantheism thus illustrates one of the two major ways he tries to prevent modification of classical immutability from overshooting the mark. An actual and complex *Lebendigkeit* is compatible with self-sufficient perfection and so does not automatically, and must not be allowed to, collapse the God-world distinction by confusing God's life with that of the world or by making the life of the world essential to God's own actualization. Schelling's conception helps Dorner to hold this ground. Dorner further discusses the proper construal of the God-world relation in statements wholly or partly derivative from Schelling. I will mention a few of them.

First, time and space are "in God, eternally posited and willed by God" (Welch, 1965:124). There is in God an "ideal intelligible space" and a "logical and ontological prototype" of time. Schelling held that the dynamic interrelations of the potencies in God involve real ontological distinctions, but without actual separation or temporal succession of the constituent moments. God's being is complex yet infinite and harmonious; a finitized replica of it (the creation) is subject to spatial separation and temporal succession of its constituents; a fallen replica has the further feature of disharmonious relations among its finite constituents. Dorner writes:

Thus God's eternity is the constantly surmounted possibility of temporality or temporal succession in the inner divine life, which temporality would immediately enter if God's actuality were to lag behind the divine possibility and necessity. Just so, the separation that we see in the world of empirical space, of separateness, is in God a possibility constantly surmounted by his absolute actuality, and his infinity is no diffusion. In the multiplicity of his actual powers each has and preserves its place, the 'position' appropriate to it. (Welch, 1965:124f.)

Furthermore, that these forms of finitude are in God prototypically, as suppressed possibilities, is the basis for God's ability to know them and to relate to them in the form of their created replicas (Welch, 1965:125).

Second, in initiating and developing the creation, there is not one but a multiplicity of divine creative acts (Welch, 1965:130). The world is not finished at the outset; even nature has a kind of history and undergoes intermittent divine intervention and development (Welch, 1965:166f.). Schelling develops this theme of a rough and violent nature, undergoing periodic refinement, in the speculative cosmology of *Ages* (without benefit of familiarity with evolutionary theory). Although having somewhat different purposes in mind (Dorner stresses keeping the world open to miracles), both agree that a developing world and a God who actively enters into the world go hand-in-hand (Welch, 1965:129).

Third, a creature with free will is the highest sort of revelation because it has the greatest degree of participation in, and likeness to, God (Welch, 1965:128ff.). The free creature seems a limit to God's omnipotence, classically conceived, because: "he can annul man, but he cannot at one and the same time will to preserve man as the free being which he is and annul him as free being. Thus man's great responsibility for the use of the divinely granted freedom which sets him independently over against God" (Welch, 1965:133). The same note is struck forcefully in Schelling's essay, *Of Human Freedom* (1809), as well as in all of his later philosophy. Dorner adds that a free creature would be an actual limit to divine omnipotence only if it were an independent given God did not create but nevertheless had to come to terms with, and not something God freely chose to create.

Thus for the production and preservation of free powers the omnipotent causality of God must have acted, and must act, so powerfully that through God the power of possible resistance to God and his love is also present in these, in order that free devotion to God in self-sacrificing love becomes also a new good, valuable for God himself, which could never be achieved by omnipotence as such. (Welch, 1965:132)

How a free being is good in the ethical sense is the major problem for Dorner's conception of God. At one point (Welch, 1965:146) Dorner rejects the simple-minded correlation of immutability with divine transcendence and of livingness with divine immanence because his revised divine immutability is a transcendent, self-sufficient perfection that includes, rather than precludes, livingness. Later on (Welch, 1965:159) Dorner highlights the (to him) more important aspect of immutability, the ethical aspect, in a correlation of livingness with freedom as the means of actualization of the ethical. How can we be certain that free will will be ethical will, at least in the case of God? Dorner's own certainty underlies the second major way in which he tries to keep his modification of divine immutability within acceptable bounds.

III. God's Ethical Essence

The self-sufficient perfection that is God's own life must be an ethical, not just an ontological, perfection. God's ethical essence is Dorner's modern counterpart to the patristic declaration of divine immutability as the assurance of God's unswerving and undefeatable reliability in the moral governance of the world and the successful execution of the plan of salvation. Whereas the Fathers and Medievals buttressed ethical monotheism with divine immutability interpreted as simplicity, Dorner wants the immutable aspect to be the ethical nature of God itself, and yet to have that ethical nature in some meaningful sense freely willed.

The immutability treatise poses the issue sharply: Is the good good because God wills it, or does God will it because it is good? Dorner sees Duns Scotus as affirming the former alternative (Welch, 1965:152; cf. Dorner, 1856:259ff.), and Thomas Aquinas the latter (Welch, 1965:152f.; also Augustine and Anselm: Dorner, 1856:251ff.). "The good is good because God wills it" means that its status as standard of goodness derives not from its own essence, but from God's will and absolute power, which decree and install it as the good. This gives full value to the conviction that God genuinely is/has free will; it also risks making the good arbitrary in content (for God could have willed something else in its place), but does not necessarily make its status as standard precarious (for there is no danger of the eternally self-actualizing deity changing his mind). In contrast, "God wills the good because it is good" means that God is constrained by its goodness to will as he does. Aquinas held that God wills his own goodness with absolute necessity and wills all other things that he does will in conformity with that goodness (*Summa Theologiae* Ia,Q19,A3). This guarantees the immutability and necessity of the one and only possible standard of goodness, but it also renders hollow statements about God's will by depicting God as unable to be or act differently. Furthermore, by insisting on divine simplicity, and by its way of applying the principle of the ultimate identity of all the divine attributes, this position in effect totally subordinates divine will to divine being and intellect. It rejects any other possible standard of goodness by making God's own necessary being the standard, and it makes God incapable of willing otherwise than (internally) in ratification of what God "already" (indicating ontological priority) is, or (externally) in harmony with what God's own self-knowledge necessarily knows to be good.

Dorner feels the attractive pull of the Scotist alternative. Contributors to its implicit metaphysics of the will include Luther, Boehme, Oetinger, and Schelling, precisely the ones with the richest sense of the divine *Lebendigkeit* that Thomism's stress on simplicity and necessary goodness suppresses. If Dorner finally correlates livingness with freedom, how then can he turn his back on that conception of immutability that gives pride of place to will? How can he invoke the second constraint and declare that the immutable and living God *must* be ethical in nature? He cannot do it without at least a struggle, and certainly not by reverting to Thomism and ceding all the ground gained thus far in the battle. Let us look again at Schelling, to see where his brand of metaphysics of the will leads.

In an ultimate sense, the God of Schelling's *Ages* does not have to will as he does because he does not *have* to be actual at all; he could eternally abstain from giving himself a being. But he can freely actualize himself only in one general way, because only one arrangement of the trio of powers of the ground yields a stable divine being and incidentally

also yields potencies in accord with which a stable creation might (freely) be made. In a derivative sense, therefore, Schelling's God has to be what he is (cannot be actualized as something different), and any world he freely chooses to create must be created in his own general image. Therefore, if there is to be a standard of good at all, it is given in the structure of God's own being and cannot be other than it is. In speaking this way, however, we must remember that this "standard" is primarily ontological and is only derivatively applicable to ethics. Most important, Schelling clearly separates God's will from God's actualized being in a way that does not permit its collapse back into that being. Such a will remains free as to what further things God is able to will with respect to an already existent creation. No ontological constraint prevents such a God from willing evil vis-à-vis a creature already in existence. When not self-actualizing or creating *per se*, such a free will need not emulate the divine essence. Schelling's God doesn't actually will evil in this way, and there is no reason to anticipate that he will; but he really is capable of doing so.

Schelling's position has the virtue of treating God as genuinely free and God's actions as good in the morally praiseworthy sense of "being able to do otherwise." For Dorner, however, it has the unacceptable implication that God is capable of choosing to act in a manner that is not good, even though he does not actually do so. That is why in the end Dorner undercuts his own emphasis on divine will and freedom, concluding the treatise with a philosophical account of ethical immutability that sounds more like Hegelian necessity than Schellingian voluntarism.

Dorner gives primacy to God to ethical necessity. He says:

. . . the ethical in the character of the necessary is rather a necessary mode of being of God, and indeed the primary one. We cannot begin with the divine will as free if God is to be conceived ethically. For had we only the free, without any kind of conditionality and determination by the ethically necessary, so that we never arrived at all at a good in itself, a truly necessary, and at its being willed, than we would be left eternally in capriciousness. . . . (Welch, 1965:155f.)

He does this with a kind of Hegelian Trinity: the Father as ethical necessity, which must be; the Son as the adequate actualization of the ethical, as freedom; the Spirit as the bond of unity between ethical necessity and freedom (Welch, 1965:156ff.). In this triad, freedom (the Son) is derivative from, and can only be as the actualization of, ethical necessity (the Father). This is the Hegelian notion of ontological freedom as uninhibited and complete actualization, and not the Schellingian freedom that can choose among alternatives, or at least can either will or refrain from willing. This Hegelian ontological freedom is not the notion of freedom Dorner needs to make theological talk of God's ethical nature truly convincing. Perhaps the

divine love Dorner presents as the harmony of ethical necessity and ethical freedom (Welch, 1965:159) is not so much a synthesis of Thomas and Scotus, as it is the Hegelian side of Dorner wanting to have his cake and eat it, too. To conclude on this note is not to detract from the importance of Dorner's treatise on immutability, however, for it raises some utterly central questions for philosophical theology even if it doesn't solve them to everybody's satisfaction.

Postscript

In his subsequent essay on Schelling's potency doctrine, Dorner offers an extended, sympathetic, and insightful reading of the later Schelling's ontological categories and theory of will in their application to the history of mythology and revelation. Here he sides more with Schelling than with Hegel. He holds that Schelling correctly begins philosophizing with will and its relation to the becoming of "what is" whereas Hegel, who presupposes the identity of thought and being, mistakenly treats becoming as the necessary development of a universal being that is capable, in and of itself, of attaining a stable actualization (Dorner, 1860:389ff.). Here Dorner sounds less Hegelian than he does in the trinitarian doctrine of the immutability essay. He also sides with Schelling in holding that the divine that undergoes development and self-realization is not the universal *per se*, for God is truly an individual and not the self-development of being as such (Dorner, 1860:422). But there is a curiosity in this essay. Dorner now tries to interpret the later Schelling in general conformity with his own commitment "namely that God, the free one, is ethically determined essentially in himself and primarily and not first through his will, or is one with the primordial good, with the ethically necessary" (Dorner, 1860:425; my translation). I am less confident than Dorner that Schelling admits of this reading. The later Schelling's God is ethically unchanging (because he freely chooses to be) but is not ethically immutable (incapable of changing his will). If only he were the latter, then Schelling might have proved more satisfactory for Dorner's purposes than the Hegelian route he ultimately did adopt for a philosophical reconciliation of freedom, *Lebendigkeit*, and ethical immutability.

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