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THE JACOBI ESSAYS OF FRIEDRICH SCHLEGEL

AMONGST the philosophical writings of Friedrich Schlegel recently collected and published by Josef Körner¹ there are two interesting essays upon Jacobi and his doctrine of revelation which are not without relevance to modern discussions. The first (pp. 263f.) is a review of Jacobi's work, *Von den göttlichen Dingen und ihrer Offenbarung*, and is dated 1811; the second (pp. 278f.) consists of observations upon a review of the whole work of Jacobi by an unknown writer in *Hermes* and belongs to the period 1812-1820. It will be seen that these writings both fall in the second and in general the less important era of Schlegel's life, when he had moved from his earlier historico-philosophical studies of Classical literature and theoretical writings upon the literature of the modern age, which had won for him a place as the virtual founder of the first German Romantic Movement,² to a more exclusive preoccupation with philosophy and theology, which he now viewed from the standpoint of Roman Catholicism, embraced by him in 1808 in the endeavour to unite the emotional pantheism of Romantism with orthodox Christianity.³ Theologically speaking these two essays have, however, their own interest and importance, quite apart from the light which they shed upon the development of Schlegel's own thought, since in them all the main problems in connection with the knowledge of God are, if not fully discussed, at any rate indicated. It is with these intrinsic questions rather than with problems of the historico-critical background that the present exposition of these pieces is concerned.

The central problem with which Schlegel is occupied in the review, as he pursues the line of thought taken by the philosopher Jacobi, is the ever-recurrent one: How may God

¹ Friedrich Schlegel, *Neue Philosophische Schriften* (Frankfurt a. M., 1935).

² This movement consisted in the main of Friedrich and his brother August Wilhelm, the poet Novalis, Tieck, Schelling the philosopher and the theologian Schleiermacher (the Schleiermacher of the *Reden*). Fichte was also closely associated for a time in the first stages.

³ For an excellent short study of the movement of Schlegel towards Roman Catholicism see Körner's short account of his life and career in the introduction.

be known by man? In his earlier works Jacobi had shown—and Schlegel points out how closely parallel his thought was in this respect to that of Kant (p. 264)—that the speculative reason cannot yield any true knowledge of the living God, but that at best it leads only to an atheistic or pantheistic system of necessity after the manner of Spinoza, and at worst to a barren scepticism (pp. 263-4).¹ Even the egoistic systems of Idealism (the systems of Fichte and Schelling) were no more than inverted systems of pantheistic necessity, thus falling under the same condemnation—Kant's construction of the practical reason was included in this category. As Schlegel recalls this primary thesis of Jacobi he has for it nothing but praise, regarding it as by far the strongest and the most impressive part of his philosophical activity. But Jacobi, having pulled down the systems of others, found it necessary himself to erect in their place something which would lead to a true knowledge of God, and it was to enunciate his positive views upon this matter that the work under review was undertaken. Jacobi had in previous writings, Schlegel points out, hinted that the God whom reason cannot fathom and of whom it cannot even conceive, may and can only be known by revelation, but now in this work under review he was for the first time aiming to make clear what it was that he meant by the term revelation and in what the revelation consisted. At this point Schlegel makes the important assertion—the basis of the later portion of the review—that he for his part regards the antithesis between reason and revelation as the most important and the decisive antithesis in all philosophy—indeed the starting point of true philosophy. Scepticism, he declares, is the prerequisite of all true philosophy (p. 265).²

Before proceeding to the examination of Jacobi's own theory of revelation, Schlegel seizes the opportunity at this point of setting forth the three categories of revelation generally acknowledged. The first type of revelation is general revelation, by which is understood the self-glorification of God in creation and in all creatures. This is a revelation common in some degree to all men.³ Schlegel sees its influence in Platonic and in the

¹ It will be seen that this is roughly the philosophical statement of the truth, recently so strongly revived by Barth, that the rational thought of man about God leads of itself only to idolatry.

² This same point, it will be remembered, was made by Barth in his earlier work (especially with regard to Feuerbach), and is implied in all evangelical theology.

³ The basis of all natural theology, whether of Roman Catholicism or Protestantism. The Barth-Brunner quarrel centres around this question.

better Oriental philosophy¹ as well as in Christianity: but at the same time he is careful to point out that wherever reason comes to predominate the idea of the Word and of the Trinity essential to this revelation is destroyed.² If the Word and the Trinity are to be acknowledged, i.e. if there is to be knowledge of the Living God, there is need of some creative agent beyond natural reason, a supernatural source of knowledge, whether it be true inspiration or such substitutes as Platonic memory, poetic inspiration or intuitive perception.³ It will be seen that relics of Schlegel's earlier religious ideas of the Romantic period, derived very largely from the young Schleiermacher and Novalis, still cling to his thought at this point, manifesting themselves most clearly in the classifying of artistic inspiration and spiritual perception with true inspiration, but the main and significant point which Schlegel seeks to make is that there is need of something beyond reason and that this need is felt in all the greater philosophies.

The second type of revelation is what Schlegel describes as inward or moral revelation, the revelation of conscience or of inward feeling. This is the revelation which inspires those who do love true religion and recognise God, but who as worshippers wish to remain outside the bounds of religious creeds and forms⁴, deriving their faith from the emotional stirrings of the individual heart (p. 266). This revelation Schlegel asserted to be the basis of many of the better religions, especially in his own day, and it is quite evident that he had in mind here the many varieties of Pietistic and poetical faith, and especially the religion of his own former colleagues, Schleiermacher and Novalis, who, drinking deeply of both the Pietistic and the poetic traditions, had come to identify the Christian faith almost exclusively with subjective emotional states. From his recognition of this revelation it is clear that even in his surrender to the authority of Rome Schlegel had not completely freed himself from that Romantic subjectivising which reduced the Word of the Living God to an emotional impression of the individual heart, and that although he himself now sought, and was convinced that he had found something more positive

¹ Schlegel was one of the first ardent Oriental scholars.

² Schlegel emphatically rejects the possibility of a knowledge of God by reason alone, even a rudimentary knowledge.

³ It is not quite clear whether Schlegel means that these are genuine, or merely attempted substitutes. The stress is on the need for *something* beyond reason.

⁴ The allusion here is obviously to the Romantic circle, especially Schleiermacher.

in Catholic thought, he did not wish to denounce or condemn those who had shared his first poetically religious ideas. The identification of conscience with inward feeling is one which Schlegel did not attempt to justify, and which does not seem to be quite obvious in itself.

Finally the third type of revelation, revelation in the true and full sense, is the positive revelation afforded by the Christian faith; identified by Schlegel with that which was imparted by Christ, as it was proclaimed by the Apostles under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and as it has been preserved and broadened by the Church. For Schlegel the distinctive feature of this revelation is the fact that it is historical. It rests neither upon theory nor upon emotion, but upon the Divine redemption as an historical act,¹ an act which is indeed the central act in history and which gives to all other acts not only a beginning and an end, but also unity and meaning.² It is only in and through this positive revelation, Schlegel contends, that the subjective metaphysical and inward revelations acquire stability and significance.³ These latter do stand in their own right, but alone they are half-truths, without any firm or solid foundation. Positive or objective revelation provides both basis and meaning for them.

Returning now to the work of Jacobi, Schlegel points out that although Jacobi censures the inward or moral revelation, yet he is not himself willing to embrace the positive revelation of Christianity, not indeed rejecting it, not even criticising it, but letting it be understood that the positive element is a necessary evil, a disagreeable accessory, justified only because it is the container or the form in which the pure content of truth must be carried (p. 267).⁴ Schlegel acutely observes that Jacobi, having destroyed the rational systems, was here returning to one of the first theological principles of rationalism, the principle that the historical religions are only so many different forms which the one universal faith must assume, each form being in a measure good and true, each in a measure evil and

¹ The objective and historical grounding of Christianity, attacked by the *Aufklärung*, e.g. Lessing, has always been stressed in evangelical theology. Cf. the work of the Neo-Calvinists, as also of the Reformers.

² This is an old theme, recently much developed by Brunner.

³ Brunner makes this same point in his natural theology (cf. *Natur und Gnade*) and it seems to be also a theme of Calvin, on any interpretation.

⁴ An approach to historical religions common both to the Rationalists (Lessing's *Nathan*, or Kant's *Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*) and the Romantics (Schleiermacher's *Reden*).

false, none absolutely wrong, none absolutely right.¹ One point, however, Schlegel notes with unqualified approval, that Jacobi cannot and will not rest content with any but a personal God, and with this as a starting-point he goes on to a treatment of the theory of inward revelation as it is advanced by Jacobi (p. 268).

First, Schlegel has it against Jacobi that he does not plainly and consistently distinguish between what he calls inward revelation and reason, between the voice of conscience and the voice of understanding. The two, he says, are separated one moment, but later are again fused the one with the other, and Jacobi even comes to speak of the "revelation of reason". Schlegel is willing to concede that innate in reason there is the concept of a First Cause, but he is not ready to apply to this the term revelation, as Jacobi himself seems to do (p. 269). In itself, says Schlegel, the concept of a First Cause is indeterminate. It is not itself a knowledge of the Living God. If developed by reason alone, it becomes no more than the abstract and dead Absolute, the cosmic necessity of the philosophical systems. Only as it is illumined by faith and love does it kindle to a perception of the true and personal God. The weakness of Jacobi is that at this important fork in the road of philosophical thinking he stands hesitant, wanting to follow the way of revelation, which alone can bring to a knowledge of the personal God, and yet reluctant to abandon the path of reason, and attempting then to fuse, or rather to confuse the two in an uneasy compromise.²

Schlegel makes it perfectly plain that according to his own thinking there can be no compromise between revelation and reason. If it is in fact the voice of reason which is heard in conscience, then reason, not faith and love, is the highest thing, and Jacobi ought not to attempt to bring it under the category of revelation, but ought rather to speak of it clearly as the source of being and of knowledge. For Schlegel reason is no more revelation than is Stoic morality Christian virtue, the Fate of the Ancients the true and Living God, the empty knowledge of forms and formulae a perception of God (p. 270).

¹ Cf. especially Lessing's *Nathan*. Many, e.g. Schleiermacher, were ready to ascribe to Christianity a superiority of degree. Fichte and Hegel identified its inward kernel with rational truth.

² The attempt of the whole Liberal theology of the nineteenth century, and of much of the theology of the modern age.

With great perspicacity Schlegel sees that this question as to the right relationship of reason and revelation is the fundamental question not only in the philosophy of Jacobi but in the whole thought of the age, and Schlegel characterises the period as one of halting between two opinions rather than of clearcut decision either for the one or for the other. The aim of all contemporary thinkers was, he asserted, to serve two gods at the same time by the conjoining of these two incompatibles according to this or that formula, and in the baser minds by an inverting of the true order, and the subjecting of revelation and the things of God to reason and the things of this world.

Schlegel proceeds to state the issue in the clearest terms and to call for definite decision. If it is reason that is the source of knowledge, then philosophy is merely a science, and the philosopher cannot hope ever to attain to a knowledge of the true God. Reason can lead to the Absolute of the systems, whether it is the lifeless It of rationalism or the constantly reasserted I of idealism, but it cannot of itself lead to the true Thou, of which love is the prerequisite, least of all to the highest Thou which is love. Yet it is only as this loving Thou is known that the lifeless It is swallowed up in the Living God, and the I lifted up out of itself and united with that awful He (pp. 271f.).¹

It is not possible to know God by reason alone, as Jacobi, contradicting his own earlier teaching, had rashly asserted. Reason of itself knows only an empty void. It can indeed construct a form of Godhead, in accord with that which is known divinely and by revelation, but it cannot know the Being of God, which may only be known by revelation, in faith and in the spirit of love.² Without this revealed knowledge of the Being the rational knowledge of the form is an empty and dead manipulation of meaningless formulae (p. 273). Schlegel stresses that it is only as the philosopher sets Revelation in the foremost place, subjecting reason to it, that he can go forward firmly and confidently, having a knowledge of the

¹ This language has a very modern ring, since much is made in modern theology of the distinction between the I, the It and the Thou, between Object and Subject. Schlegel here has seized upon a very important distinction between rational theology and the revealed knowledge of God.

² Schlegel here draws the very important distinction between rational thought upon revelation, and the revelation itself, which is only to the mind of faith in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is a true distinction which Barth in particular has lately re-emphasised.

Living God. The main charge levelled against Jacobi is that at no point does he tread this road without hesitation and doubt.

It can hardly be said of Schlegel that he had thought out with any clarity or in any detail the precise relationship between reason and revelation. He did not seem to have a very clear conception of revelation itself as a unique act of God, nor did he seem to have any but the most general views upon the place of reason within revelation. But it may plainly be seen that he was in the name of the Christian faith raising a standard against the proud philosophical rationalism of the age; and in so doing he enunciated the two truths which are fundamental to any protest against rationalist systems: first, that the unaided reason, reflecting upon God and constructing God in accordance with its own thought, cannot but lead to idolatry—that the god of reason is a god which exists only in the rational mind, as an abstraction of thought without any true meaning or substance; second, that the true and the Living God, if He is to be known, must reveal Himself, because He is an autonomous and indeed the only autonomous Subject, not an It but One who stands over against us, a He or a Thou. The more detailed questions of theology, whether or not, or to what extent, revelation works through reason, whether or not there is a rational basis for revelation, to what extent revelation is general and to what extent particular, these questions Schlegel does not answer, except in so far as the loose classification of revelation earlier in the review may be regarded as an answer, but he does magnificently set forth the claims of the faith which is by revelation over against the rational systems, striking those key-notes which always ring out so strongly when this protest is made and which have come more recently to dominate again the theological work of the present age.

The remainder of this review (pp. 273–278) consists of an interesting and not unimportant enquiry into the origin of error, in which Schlegel again touches upon the primary problems of theology, and incidentally does go some distance towards fixing a little more precisely the relationship between reason and revelation. Jacobi had been ready to grant that there can be and is error in the field of speculation, but he was not willing to concede that error is due to the incapacity of man for a know-

ledge of the things of God, the contention of Schlegel.¹ According to Jacobi man was endowed with organs which fitted him for this higher knowledge, and error was due only to a failure to use them. It was then purely negative, a non-thinking.² Schlegel asks the pertinent question, however: How could this lack arise? Man was made in the image of God: upon this Jacobi and Schlegel, Rationalist and Christian, all were agreed. But if man is in God's image, then erroneous thinking, empty, negative thinking, is not natural to him as created by God. How then was it possible for man to drift into this non-thinking, to wander away in thought from God and from the things of God? As the mind of man was created by God it was filled with the one thought of the Eternal Word, to the exclusion of all evil. How then could and did other thoughts gain access, or how could and did this thought fade?³

Schlegel himself was able to suggest a solution to this problem, but only along lines which Jacobi could not or would not follow. According to Schlegel it was when the heart of man, his free affection, turned wilfully from God that the understanding also was opened up to corrupting influences and given over as a prey to vanity and error. The fact is urged by Schlegel that there is a correspondence between evil in the general sense and error. The understanding of man, like his whole being, is no longer in its natural state, its present state being one of distortion, corruption and degeneracy, the state of sin.

As against this doctrine of the Fall and of sin Jacobi tries to show that error and contradiction arise in consequence of the gulf which there is between God and nature.⁴ Some men, following natural reason, or common sense, put God at the centre of things, and the result is a Theistic system: others, following scientific reason, put nature at the centre, and the result is a naturalistic system.⁵ Each system is right, Jacobi

¹ The recent controversy between Barth and Brunner, and the whole Protestant-Roman Catholic debate hinges around this and kindred anthropological questions.

² This was the common Rationalistic and Idealistic interpretation both of error and of evil, being in line with that of Greek thought.

³ The rejection of the Fall, and of Original Perfectness, and the adoption of Evolutionary theories made it possible to evade, if not to solve, this problem.

⁴ It will be remembered that in his earlier writings Barth tended to confuse this very real distinction Creator-creature with the disruptive distinction God-sinner. Sin and error are not, as Jacobi seemed to think, implied in man's being as creature, but they spring, as Schlegel rightly observed, from his being as sinner.

⁵ There is, of course, a large element of truth in this distinction between systems based on God and systems based on nature, but the use which Jacobi makes of this distinction in his attempted explanation of error is obviously strained.

argues, in so far as it is applied to that which is its centre, but—and it is here that error enters in—each is empty and erroneous in so far as it is applied to its opposite. Moving in different worlds, the two systems are incompatible, each being justified in its own world, each erroneous in the other. Schlegel is willing to grant that there are two worlds, and that man is a citizen both of the material and also of the spiritual world,¹ and he agrees, as every Christian must, that there is every need to distinguish carefully between the Creator and creation, but he argues against Jacobi that it is quite impossible to conceive of a nature, the creation of God, which exists outside of and apart from God, which is completely “non-divine”, which may be studied and known without reference to the things of God—the necessary presupposition of Jacobi’s theory. Schlegel concludes his criticism with the acute final observation that Jacobi’s theory is but another proof that even natural reason, the common sense so enthusiastically advocated by Jacobi, is no more able to lead to the knowledge of God than is scientific reason, leading rather to theories which are incomprehensible because of the inner contradictions which lie within them.

In the second part of his work Jacobi had (quite illogically, as Schlegel points out) attempted to win through to a knowledge of God by means of this natural reason or common sense, as opposed to scientific reason, but Schlegel rightly and forcefully urges against this view that the common sense of man has been no less corrupted by sin and removed from its original state than has the scientific reason. Its pronouncements upon God and upon the things of God are thus equally null and void. The understanding—Schlegel makes here a protest against the debased use of this word in post-Kantian philosophy and would have it used only of that place in the human faculty in which a higher illumination may take place—must be cured of its original infirmity before there can be any knowledge of God. Schlegel followed the general tendency of the age in making a distinction between the understanding (*Verstand*) and reason (*Vernunft*), but for him the understanding was not practical as opposed to analytical or scientific reason, but something higher than and prior to reason, reason itself being the understanding as debased and reduced to futility by sin. The under-

¹ A concept common to the Romantic and indeed to almost all philosophies of history, e.g. Leibniz, Herder, Fichte, Schelling, etc.

standing according to Schlegel is the rational faculty of man in its original state of purity, before the Fall, whereas reason is the understanding in the state of sin. If God is again to be known there must first be a destruction of reason and a rebirth of the understanding, which can only take place in faith. That understanding of which Jacobi spoke, practical reason or common sense, or the understanding of the philosophers, an admixture of reason with sensualism or experience, being itself no more than another form of reason, was for Schlegel of no more value for the knowledge of God than the artificial reason of science, since it was not true understanding at all.

In effect Schlegel was denying that there can be any real knowledge of God apart from that which is revealed. Understanding in his view is the faculty by which God is spiritually perceived, but this faculty has been so deranged and distorted—Schlegel would not say obliterated—by sin that man falls inevitably into error in his thinking upon the things of God. The task of philosophy is to restore the understanding to its original state but Schlegel insists that this task can only be fulfilled, not by imaginative flights, not by a so-called intellectual perception, but by an acknowledgment of error, the beginning of all true philosophy, and by a complete transformation of the whole man through revelation and in faith. This is not, however, something which the philosopher can do at will, when the vanity of his earlier strivings has become apparent to him.¹ Philosophy at its deepest level is not science, not art, but virtue. Unfortunately Schlegel does not develop this interesting and important theme more fully, and in relation to the working of the Holy Spirit, since his own position with regard to the capacity of fallen man for the revelation of God is not at all clear, but at the same time his main contention, that reason alone is of no avail, that the understanding is darkened, and that there is need of the repentance and reformation which can only come through positive revelation, is one which cannot be too much stressed in this as in his own and in every age.

So much for the review. The second article, which bears the title "Observations on a Review of Jacobi's Work", is a far more general examination of the writings of Jacobi seen as

¹ It is at this point that all attempts to erect an apologetic upon philosophical scepticism—the temptation of those who follow Barth (although not at the present time of Barth himself) and of the whole modern age—must break down. The gulf between scepticism and repentance, which carries with it faith, is one which no man, but only the Holy Spirit can bridge.

a whole, with remarks upon the interpretative suggestions of the anonymous reviewer. As Schlegel makes clear at the outset (pp. 278f.), it centres around the doctrine of a personal and a self-revealed God. Both Jacobi and the reviewer held to the doctrine of the personality of God. With Schlegel himself they are, however, willing to allow that it is the high conception of the inconceivability and the immutability of God which has led some men of high moral character and spiritual worth, such as Spinoza and Fichte, to deny this article. The difficulty raised by Schelling, that the fact of personality seems necessarily and inevitably to carry with it limitation, is one which engages Jacobi and to which he devotes much attention. Schlegel deplores that while the philosopher posits in general the uselessness of reason alone and the need for a leap of faith, he does not in his resolving of this difficulty make use of the source of positive revelation. The reason which Schlegel advances in explanation of this fact is that Jacobi, as has already appeared in the previous review, never had any clear idea of what revelation is, and tended always to substitute a revelation exclusively inward for that positive revelation which contains the inward and which is alone of any avail (p. 280).

As far as Schlegel himself is concerned, this positive revelation is the true answer to the charge of Schelling. At its very heart Christianity introduces us to, leads us to know, the Living God, revealed as a God of condescension and mercy. But this means that God is a God who voluntarily submits to self-limitation. His condescension is, in the terms of metaphysics, a restraint of Almightyness. It is just at this point that every Christian heart lays hold of the true and the Living God, in some measure, not as a God who because He condescends and is merciful is limited and unworthy, but as a God who is known in His full stature and dignity because He is, and because He loves—the true God being distinguished in just this respect from those exalted abstractions, the Absolute or Fate, which are no more than figments and phantoms of the human reason. When God is presented in this way, then a positive knowledge is attained, which is not the case with the negative argumentation of Jacobi. Schelling, he points out, had already himself admitted that God may only be known by means of a direct relationship to Him, in the inner life, and if Jacobi had built upon this and sought to lead Schelling to the source of that

inner knowledge, the positive revelation in Christ, instead of engaging in a battle of words against his metaphysical errors, Schlegel feels that the abstractions of his system might easily have been dispelled (p. 281).¹

Why was it, Schlegel goes on to ask, that in his struggles to maintain the personality of God Jacobi was always negative, polemical, even unjust? How was it that he could not see that Fichte, impelled by fine feelings of conscience and honour, could never bring himself to adopt an atheistical system with a full and rigorous logical consistency? Why did he never appreciate the extent to which he himself was like Kant, even to the point of substituting a new practical reason, objective in Kant, subjective in Jacobi, for the speculative reason which both had dethroned? The answer to these questions is, says Schlegel, that Jacobi himself belonged to the same age and laboured under the same yoke as his fellow-philosophers. The fundamental error, common to all, was that quite arbitrarily they presupposed an absolute antithesis between faith and knowledge,² without stopping to consider that there are in fact two kinds of knowledge, the one logical or mathematical, the agreement of reason with itself, into which faith does not enter, the other free and personal, of which faith is the first foundation and the final end.³ The close interdependence and interconnection of this second type of knowledge with faith is stressed by Schlegel, and in his eyes it is this free higher knowledge which is the content of philosophy and which gives meaning to the knowledge of logic and science, which apart from it lacks any true significance, and degenerates into a useless and baseless dialectical game (pp. 282f.).

Pursuing this distinction, to which he attaches great importance and which is accordingly developed in some detail, Schlegel points out that the knowledge with which philosophy has to do is a knowledge which is not merely formal, abstract, objective and dead, but concrete, personal, subjective and organic, a knowledge which is positive, given. False philosophy is the attempt to attain to this knowledge in the form of mathe-

¹ The necessity of opposing to the abstract speculations of philosophers not metaphysical arguments but a positive statement of faith is something which Barth has again magnificently brought out and stressed in our own day. Cf. his Gifford Lectures, *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God*.

² Not to be confused with the antithesis Revelation-reason, stressed by Schlegel.

³ Brunner draws a similar distinction between the two types of truth, the general and timeless truths of logic, and the revealed truth of God, free, personal, once for all, in the little book, *The Word and the World*.

matical certainty, and it is philosophy of this type which Jacobi and Kant have in mind when they despair of knowledge and take refuge in a necessarily demonstrated faith of their own manufacture, not true and living faith. At this point Schlegel criticises Lamennais for falling into the same error, i.e. for attempting to build up faith upon the destruction of rational certainty, although he allows that in this particular case, even if there is a crooked bias, yet there does result true and positive faith instead of that self-made substitute which, as in Kant and Jacobi, can never be fully consistent or satisfactory (p. 283f.).

The even sharper distinction between faith and knowledge made by the reviewer, according to whom faith has to do solely with the things of God and philosophy with the things of man, is one which Schlegel cannot allow, since he points out, cogently, that there can in fact be no knowledge of man, or of the self, without a prior knowledge of God.¹ Man cannot be understood except as a creature made in the image of God. There can then be no philosophy of man which is not also and first a philosophy of God—in the true sense of the word a “theosophy”. If faith and knowledge are separated in this way, the only possible result is an abandonment of knowledge without the compensating possibility of achieving faith.

Focusing his attention for the moment upon Schelling and Fichte, the fellow-philosophers of Jacobi and Kant, Schlegel discerns in their works the recognition of a knowledge of the Highest, but he cannot accept the process by which they fuse this knowledge with abstract and dead knowledge in a so-called higher synthesis, thus destroying it. The systems of the four philosophers, viewed as a whole, exhaust the whole field of the abstract consciousness—the critical understanding, the moral will, ideal reason and dynamic thought—but although it could be urged in favour of Schelling’s nature philosophy that it is supported by scientific discovery, as far as the inner life is concerned all are equally vain, since all bear upon them the imprint of the abstract and dead consciousness. The four systems, which together form as it were a cycle, conflict inevitably as a result of this primary positing of a dead consciousness. The true goal of philosophy can only be attained, Schlegel asserts, when a living consciousness, the inner life in God, is both posited

¹ The error of Humanism and humanistic theology is that it reverses this process, attempting to base the knowledge of God upon the knowledge of man.

and restored. The rebirth of this consciousness is the first and the most difficult step towards a true philosophy, carrying with it in fact the solution of the main problem of philosophy, the scientific construction of the inner life. This step is made possible by Christianity alone: thus philosophy is only possible in so far as it is Christian, i.e. in so far as it is in harmony, not necessarily with the individual dogmas of the Christian faith, but with the spirit, the content and the aim of the whole. Schlegel is at pains to make clear that he would not hereby exclude all pre-Christian philosophers, since Christianity may be used in a three-fold sense: first, metaphysically, as the revelation of the Eternal Word and the doctrine of that revelation—in this sense Christianity is as old as the world itself;¹ second, historically, as the actual work of Christ—this included the preparatory work of the prophets and of the teachers of antiquity; third, morally, in that which has relation to the inner life, as the rebirth of consciousness—Christianity being at this point one with revelation.

Schlegel concludes his observations (pp. 288f.) with an estimate of the historical position of Kant, Jacobi, Fichte and Schelling in the movement of thought, seeing in them the leaders in the transition to a truly Christian philosophy. The tentative, half-Christian philosophy put forward by them belongs already to a past age, but it does mark the first emergence from that abyss of unbelief and materialism of the eighteenth century. Attempts to develop the type of philosophy represented by them Schlegel regards as futile, leading only to a new aberration, as with Hegel's working out of the system of Fichte to its logical conclusion, which serves only to furnish yet another and quite unnecessary example, side by side with the crowning example of Spinoza, of the folly of sheer abstraction. As far as Schelling's nature philosophy is concerned, the one thing of lasting value in it is the positive study of nature bound up with it, but this dynamic thought too shows signs of lacking any real guiding star. The hard abstract conception of the Absolute must first be broken through if the nature philosophy is to be brought into harmony with and subjected to the Christian philosophy of God.

¹ The identification of the core of Christianity with the primal and true religion of mankind was common to Rationalism, Idealism and Romanticism. Unless by this primary religion is understood the original revelation in creation, or the relics of it, rather than religion as a human faculty, it is evidently a very dangerous doctrine, opening up the way to all kinds of liberal and rational constructions.

The latter sections of this second essay betray signs of that lack of clarity and of that discursiveness which mark all the more purely philosophical works of Schlegel, as may be seen especially from the notes of the philosophical lectures delivered by him. As a detailed criticism of the work of Jacobi and his fellow-philosophers, or even as an estimate of their general importance in philosophy, the work is obviously of little value. Yet the main contentions of Schlegel are relevant and important. He sees that philosophy is, apart from the positive revelation in Christ, a futile quest. Jacobi and Kant had both reached very much the same conclusion, except that they did not know where to seek the positive revelation, taking refuge in such inner revelations as practical reason and the like. Secondly Schlegel sees that in the philosophical or rational mind there must be a destruction of the dead and abstract consciousness and a restoration, a rebirth of the living consciousness by the Holy Spirit, if God is to be known, not as the Absolute of a logical system, but as the Living God. Schlegel himself does not think out in any detail the implications of these assertions, and it may clearly be seen that traces of the rational systems and of semi-Christian theologies cling to his writings. But in making these assertions he makes the age-long challenge and answer of evangelical truth to those philosophers who would construct God in accordance with their own reason rather than know the Living God who reveals Himself in Jesus Christ. It is here that the interest and the importance of the Jacobi-essays lies.

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