

Interpretation

A JOURNAL OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Spring 2018

Volume 44 Issue 3

- 359 *Rodrigo Chacón* Philosophy as Awareness of Fundamental Problems, or Leo Strauss's Debt to Heidegger's Aristotle
- 379 *W. Julian Korab-Karpowicz* Why a World State Is Unnecessary: The Continuing Debate on World Government
- 403 *Laurence Lampert* Reading Benardete: A New *Parmenides*
- 425 *Ronald Beiner*
431 *Charles U. Zug* **An Exchange:**
Nietzsche's Final Teaching
by Michael Allen Gillespie
- 439 *Michael Allen Gillespie* On *Nietzsche's Final Teaching*: A Response to My Critics
- 447 *Charles U. Zug* Developing a Nietzschean Account of Musical Form: A Rejoinder to Michael Gillespie's Response
- 451 *José A. Colen* **Review Essay:**
What Is Wrong with Human Rights?
- 471 *Marco Andreacchio* **Book Reviews:**
For Humanism, edited by David Alderson and Robert Spencer
- 475 *Bernard J. Dobski* *Tyrants: A History of Power, Injustice, and Terror*
by Waller R. Newell
- 483 *Jerome C. Foss* *James Madison and Constitutional Imperfection*
by Jeremy D. Bailey
- 487 *Raymond Hain* *The Virtue Ethics of Levi Gersonides*
by Alexander Green
- 493 *Richard Jordan* *Public Intellectuals in the Global Arena: Professors or Pundits?*, edited by Michael C. Desch
- 501 *Mary Mathie* *Fate and Freedom in the Novels of David Adams Richards* by Sara MacDonald and Barry Craig
- 507 *Tyler Tritten* "Philosophie und Religion": Schellings *Politische Philosophie* by Ryan Scheerlinck

Interpretation

A JOURNAL OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Editor-in-Chief Timothy W. Burns, Baylor University

General Editors Charles E. Butterworth • Timothy W. Burns

General Editors (Late) Howard B. White (d. 1974) • Robert Horwitz (d. 1987)
Seth G. Benardete (d. 2001) • Leonard Grey (d. 2009) •
Hilail Gildin (d. 2015)

Consulting Editors Christopher Bruell • David Lowenthal • Harvey C.
Mansfield • Thomas L. Pangle • Ellis Sandoz • Kenneth
W. Thompson

Consulting Editors (Late) Leo Strauss (d. 1973) • Arnaldo Momigliano (d. 1987) •
Michael Oakeshott (d. 1990) • John Hallowell (d. 1992)
• Ernest L. Fortin (d. 2002) • Muhsin Mahdi (d. 2007) •
Joseph Cropsey (d. 2012) • Harry V. Jaffa (d. 2015)

International Editors Terence E. Marshall • Heinrich Meier

Editors Peter Ahrens Dorf • Wayne Ambler • Marco Andreacchio •
Maurice Auerbach • Robert Bartlett • Fred Baumann • Eric
Buzzetti • Susan Collins • Patrick Coby • Erik Dempsey •
Elizabeth C'de Baca Eastman • Edward J. Erler • Maureen
Feder-Marcus • Robert Goldberg • L. Joseph Hebert •
Pamela K. Jensen • Hannes Kerber • Mark J. Lutz • Daniel
Ian Mark • Ken Masugi • Carol L. McNamara • Will
Morrisey • Amy Nendza • Charles T. Rubin • Leslie G.
Rubin • Thomas Schneider • Susan Meld Shell • Geoffrey
T. Sigalet • Nicholas Starr • Devin Stauffer • Bradford P.
Wilson • Cameron Wybrow • Martin D. Yaffe • Catherine
H. Zuckert • Michael P. Zuckert

Copy Editor Les Harris

Designer Sarah Teutschel

Inquiries ***Interpretation, A Journal of Political Philosophy***

Department of Political Science

Baylor University

1 Bear Place, 97276

Waco, TX 76798

email interpretation@baylor.edu

Ryan Scheerlinck, "*Philosophie und Religion*": *Schellings Politische Philosophie*. Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 2017, 454 pp., \$63.58 (paperback).

TYLER TRITTEN
GONZAGA UNIVERSITY
tritten@gonzaga.edu

It is typically thought that Schelling is not a political thinker, a position which stems from the fact that Schelling very rarely discussed political themes. Consequently, readers may find Ryan Scheerlinck's 450-page study of Schelling's Political Philosophy¹ puzzling, especially once one discovers that the theme of politics is seemingly treated explicitly only in the fifth and final chapter. Scheerlinck's book, rather than a systematic treatment of Schelling's political thought, instead *appears* to be but a commentary on Schelling's 60-page *Philosophy and Religion*. The title of Scheerlinck's book thus contains a riddle, especially since the concept announced therein, Political Philosophy, is mentioned only twelve times in his text. Nevertheless, a precise account of Political Philosophy, which is carefully demarcated from political theory, emerges. More pressing than a theory of political issues is the problem of how (not) to communicate certain philosophic truths to the right audience. Accordingly, the problem of *Darstellung*, of the presentation or exhibition of truth, is extensively treated in the first chapter. This problem proves fundamental not only for understanding *Philosophy and Religion*, but, as Scheerlinck demonstrates, for understanding all of Schelling's writings.

¹ Scheerlinck capitalizes "Political Philosophy" as a technical term in order to demarcate it from political philosophy or political theory. While all nouns, e.g., "Philosophie," are capitalized in German, adjectives, e.g., "politische," are not, which shows that Scheerlinck intends "Politische Philosophie" as a technical term.

Political Philosophy, as we will see, consists in the delineation of an *aporia* rather than in the explication of a solution, as solutions to political problems are to be found elsewhere than in politics, specifically, in religion. Political Philosophy's principal object, then, will prove to be the relation between philosophy and religion, as the title of Scheerlinck's book aptly indicates. Thus, in the second chapter, Scheerlinck begins by showing how Schelling's text is a response to Adolph Karl August Eschenmayer's 1803 *Die Philosophie in ihrem Übergang zur Nicht-Philosophie* (Philosophy in its transition to nonphilosophy). By nonphilosophy, Eschenmayer primarily means religion and theology, and by philosophy, epistemology or philosophy within the bounds of reason and the understanding, that is, within Kantian strictures. In Schelling's *Philosophy and Religion*, then, religion occupies the place of nonphilosophy, which means, against Kant, it is not to be conceived within the limits of reason alone. On the side of philosophy, Scheerlinck argues, one finds, as a subdomain of practical philosophy, the political. Accordingly, Scheerlinck notes that Schelling "distinguishes at least three addressees: philosophers...potential philosophers...the organs of the time" (64). Eschenmayer is thought to fall within the second category.

Per Schelling, the proper object of philosophy is "Idea of the Absolute," that is, how to conceive the original unity (*Indifferenz*) between subjectivity and objectivity. The specific object, that is, the charge, of *Philosophy and Religion* is to account for the "departure of finite things from the Absolute" (28). Schelling's short answer to this charge is termed "Fall," though Scheerlinck rightly perceives that the concept this term indicates—the descent of finitude/individuality from the Absolute—is already present in Schelling's *Identitätsphilosophie*, in *Bruno* (1802). What Schelling holds to be original is that "the presentation of his system continues into the field of practical philosophy, since the question of finitude," that is, the account of its emergence from the Absolute, "can find its *complete* solution first and only in this domain" (144). Scheerlinck shows that, for Schelling, the *actuality* of the Fall is accounted for only by an act of ego, hence the recourse to practical philosophy. Scheerlinck patiently explains how this position is not original to Schelling but draws from Fichte's notion of *Thathandlung*, the deed that results in the fact of the unity of consciousness, that is, a preconscious act that does not presuppose conscious identity but produces it. Nevertheless, Scheerlinck also notes that Schelling distances himself from Fichte insofar as "Schelling describes egoity...as 'the universal principle of finitude'" (187). Egoity is a principle of individuation, a principle of self-determination, but it is a *universal* principle. The departure from Fichte is that it is not that only

full-fledged egoity, that is, consciousness, exists, but that everything, even the nonconscious, operates according to a principle of egoity. Nothing is inert; everything, even the nonconscious, contains a principle of self-determination, that is, a subjective principle. Egoity/subjectivity is thus not an exclusive property of consciousness because while everything is subjective, not everything is conscious. Individuality is the condition of consciousness rather than the inverse. In sum, the Fall, "the figurative expression for individuation" (252), is explained not by what egoity *can* do, but by what it *actually* does do. The whole account is thus based in practical philosophy (which, in conjunction with the aforementioned emphasis on presentation [*Darstellung*], gives credence to Scheerlinck's claim that there is a continuity between *Philosophy and Religion* [1804] and Schelling's renowned *Freedom Essay* [1809]).

Given this ontological basis, Scheerlinck, in the fifth and final chapter, is able to make Schelling's notion of Political Philosophy clear. *Philosophy and Religion's* appendix begins with the book's first and only explicit discussion of a political matter: the State. Scheerlinck deftly shows how Schelling here rehearses an argument made in *Neue Deduction des Naturrechts* (*New Deduction of Natural Right*) (1796), Schelling's only text exclusively dedicated to a political theme. Scheerlinck will conclude, "The alleged 'turn' to religion grows out of [Schelling's] critique of the State, since the problem of politics, as Schelling's *New Deduction of Natural Right* argued, does not get solved with political means, but, if at all, only through religion" (340).

Scheerlinck observes that, for Schelling, practical philosophy is divided according to morality (*die Moral*), ethics, and natural right (341). Morality is "self-determination, that is, to act in accord with one's own nature" (342). Ethics and the science of natural right (politics) are both subordinate to morality, which is aimed at the highest good. Ethics is "a system of *duties*," of obligations to others. Ethics, unlike morality, is not about how to achieve *identity* with the Absolute, but how to will in harmony with a "general will," thus harking back not only to Kant's conviction that individual will must be sacrificed to universal will, but, I would add, also to Rousseau's notion of the general will, which cannot will anything against the good of the universal body, the Sovereign. Ethics is thus based on a respect for the other in general, but not, as Kierkegaard might lament, in her singularity. Finally, in the political sphere, "the question as to which rights will has in general arises, independent from whether will is directed through reason" or not "so that will can affirm itself in its mere individuality" (346). Scheerlinck, following Schelling, concludes, "According to this, I also have a right to actions that can

be the object neither of morality nor of ethics” (347). Consequently, political theories concern only the justification of individual, that is, personal, rights, and neither that which is universally good nor the highest good. Political freedom concerns what is permissible by right, but not necessarily what is edifying or good.

Political Philosophy’s task, then, is to expose the *aporia* of political theory, particularly the deduction of natural right. Schelling had derived three rights—the right to moral freedom (without prescribing what would achieve it), the right to formal equality (which does not preclude material inequality) and the right to things and objects, that is, property (347–48)—but these rights are only formal, without material prescription. Moreover, this is not, Scheerlinck informs us, what Schelling regards as “his original achievement,” which is rather the discovery of the *aporia* of politics itself, which stems from the fact that “a right that does not simultaneously have the power to be enforced against others remains an empty assertion and cancels itself” (350). Any person or State is thus “entitled to everything for which it is also capable insofar as it has the means at its disposal to assert itself” (351). No State is more legitimate than any other. In Scheerlinck’s words, “no exclusive, positive ordering of right can any longer be legitimated by natural right” (351), unless the State should prescribe an ethic, but then it would not be protective of *individual* or private freedoms, and rather insist upon the *universal*. It would no longer be politics but ethics. Scheerlinck incisively glosses: “The ‘solution’ is obviously aporetic, since the means (law, compulsion) contradicts the end (the securing of freedom for all). The freedom of all can be secured only by forcing all or by preventing all from the misuse of their freedom, i.e., by robbing freedom of a portion of its rights” (353). This has been, I would insist, already demonstrated by Hobbes, namely, that individual freedoms are secured only at the cost of the same. Scheerlinck is thus right to note that Schelling rejects every form of contractarianism.

It is not just contractarianism, however, that ends in *aporia*, but political theory, the theory of right and State, as such. As Scheerlinck infers, “No form of the State is able to solve the *aporia* of natural law” (362n44), and “the problem, for which natural right was thought as the solution, is not able to be solved with its aid, but is compelled to pass over into another science” (354). Invoking the three possible addressees mentioned in the first chapter (philosophers, potential philosophers, organs of the time), Scheerlinck here remarks that this other “science” should be able to explain how nonphilosophers or “the organs of the time,” who are not even necessarily potential philosophers,

can will in accord with reason and the general body, yet without recourse to ethics and/or morality. This, however, is precisely that of which the State is incapable. Scheerlinck comments, "The merely negative character of the State results from this: it can only prevent the misuse of freedom, but it cannot motivate positive actions" (359). It cannot motivate free rather than unfree action. Even an "ethical" State, so-called, could only prevent unethical actions, but it would not thereby be aimed at the good. Political theories aim only at the preservation of individual, that is, idiosyncratic, actions: one can do what one wants; one can say what one wants, do with one's body as one wishes, act out self-interest, and so forth. This means—as Marx too perceived, in "On the Jewish Question"—that there can be liberal virtues only of private life. This relegation to the private, however, is detrimental to the State, as the corresponding reaction will always incline toward libertarianism or Thoreauianism, the drive for minimal government or for no government.

Schelling's Political Philosophy is a critique of political theory. If politics ends in an *aporia* it cannot solve, then for Schelling it is religion, a "new mythology," that offers escape from this impasse. Only this can bring about noncoerced actions from a nonphilosophical and not properly free populace that correspond to reason without being willed out of reason. Only this could bring about an organic State rather than the machine attacked by Thoreau. If, as Schelling suggested, "the State must cease," it is not in order to be replaced by anarchy or individual reactions against Statism, but because means must yield to ends, yet an end achieved otherwise than by means of the right political form, that is, by means of a theory of right and of the State, an end only religion can introduce. A "new mythology," however, like all mythology, cannot be instituted through conscious human invention; it is produced in consciousness unconsciously. The actual content of Schelling's new mythology thus remains as absent as his political theory. Scheerlinck thus concludes, "What looks like an avoidance and thereby a further indication of failure, must be brought to bear through the insight that mythology, as a naturally occurring product of human consciousness, is not 'made'" (429). Political Philosophy is not about the conscious institution of new conventions. Just as there is no conscious constitution of mythology, only a philosophy of mythology, so there is no institution of a political theory, only a critique of political theory, an exhibition or presentation of its limits, of its aporetic nature. There is "not a solution of the political problem, but a fathoming in thought of the conditions under which it is to be solved" (430), but these conditions point beyond politics to religion and mythology. There is indeed no political theory in Schelling, only Political Philosophy, a critique of politics and the

delimitation of its domain. Schelling is, then, indeed a political philosopher, an insight which, so far as I know, only Sean McGrath (see his forthcoming *The Late Schelling and the End of Christianity* [Edinburgh University Press]) makes as acutely as Scheerlinck.

As a Schelling expert, I can state without hesitation that no better book on Schelling's political philosophy exists, a feat ironically rendered more rather than less impressive by the fact that it is the *only* book currently devoted to this topic. Scheerlinck has overturned the canon, and that in a way that contributes to the traditional thematic of faith and reason in terms of the relation of philosophy to nonphilosophy, Political Philosophy to religion. The main pitfall of Scheerlinck's book is that it was written in German and so will not garner the readership it merits until it is translated.