

No cover
image
available

Schleiermacher on Religion and the Natural Order

Andrew C. Dole

<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195341171.001.0001>

Published: 05 November 2009

Online ISBN: 9780199866908

Print ISBN: 9780195341171

Search in this book

CHAPTER

2 2 Religion in Outline

Andrew C. Dole

<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195341171.003.0003> Pages 71–100

Published: November 2009

Abstract

This chapter focuses on the general structure of Schleiermacher's account of religion. Beginning with an examination of the *Speeches on Religion*, the chapter argues that Schleiermacher's various usages of the term *religion* can be separated into three distinct types. In the first type, "religion" refers to the essence of religion; in the second, to ideal religion; and in the third, actual religion. Following a discussion of Schleiermacher's meaning of the term *essence*, the chapter argues that a unified sense of "religion" can be reconstructed by regarding both ideal and actual religion as defined by a relationship to the essence of religion. Taken as a whole, "religion" refers not just to "inward" states of mind or consciousness but also to acts of discourse, material practices, artifacts, and institutions. It then argues that "religion" in *The Christian Faith* has the same structure.

Keywords: [structure](#), [essentialism](#), [essence](#), [ideal religion](#), [actual religion](#)

Subject: [Christian Theology](#), [Theology](#), [Natural Theology](#)

Collection: [Oxford Scholarship Online](#)

Do not disregard how religion everywhere bears in itself the traces of the culture of every age, of the history of every human type...do not overlook how it has often been stunted in its growth because one did not allow it room to exercise its powers, how it has often lamentably perished in the first days of childhood, owing to bad treatment and apathy.

—Schleiermacher, *On Religion*

My reconstruction begins, properly speaking, with an examination of the *structure* of "religion" as Schleiermacher understood it. As mentioned in the introduction, I intend my reconstruction as a challenge to the "standard interpretation," according to which religion for Schleiermacher can be summarized by phrases such as "a sense and taste for the infinite," "intuition of the universe," and a "feeling of absolute dependence." One of my aims in this chapter is to return these phrases to their proper theoretical context by making it clear

that, as Schleiermacher used the term, “religion” is more than simply an “essence,” and thus that, rather than sufficing as definitions of religion, these phrases pertain to one component of its definition.

p. 72 In this chapter I focus on Schleiermacher’s canonical texts, the *Speeches on Religion*, and the second edition of *The Christian Faith* (concentrating, as is now standard practice, on the first edition of the former and the second edition of the latter). In restricting myself largely to these texts I make two points. The first is that while a full understanding of Schleiermacher’s account of religion requires ↪ reference to his lesser-known works at certain points (for example, in connection with the question of determinism), all that is required to reveal the inadequacy of the standard interpretation is careful attention to the very texts to which that interpretation typically refers (bearing in mind the significant change wrought on the interpretive landscape, for readers of English, by the appearance of Crouter’s translation of the first edition of the *Speeches* in 1988). The second point is that, while there are significant differences between the discussions of religion in Schleiermacher’s early and late work, the general structure of the phenomenon remains unchanged, and thus it is legitimate to speak of “Schleiermacher’s account of religion” in the singular in spite of the fact that that account witnessed significant development over the course of his lifetime.

2.1 The “Religion” of the *Speeches on Religion*

2.1.1 The Varieties and Unity of “Religion”

The first obstacle any attempt to extract a “theory of religion” from the *Speeches* encounters is the fact that in this text Schleiermacher attached the terms “religion” and “religious” to a bewildering variety of phenomena. As Siefert noted, “religiosity, belief, piety, religious life, religious consciousness, the religious person, the religious precinct of *humanitas* as well as the religious realm of the spiritual world and the appearance of religion in history (‘positive religion’)—all these the speaker names with one and the same term: Religion. One must keep this unique circumstance in view if one wants to pursue the question of what ‘religion’ means in the *Speeches*.”¹ Adopting the standard interpretation is one strategy for coping with this state of affairs, for this interpretation focuses on that part of the text wherein claims that contain the phrase “religion is” appear with the greatest frequency (the second speech).² A remark from Terrence Tice constitutes the most incisive commentary on this practice that I have encountered: In expositing Schleiermacher on the subject of religion “it has usually been thought sufficient to refer to his convincingly carving out a special domain for religion. . . . [A]n astoundingly large proportion of the extensive literature on his conception of religion virtually ignores the final three chapters” of the *Speeches*.³

p. 73 Schleiermacher’s profligate use of the term can, however, be treated not as a problem but as an indication of the territory covered by his broadest conception of religion. My procedure involves imposing an initial measure of order on the text by sorting Schleiermacher’s various usages of “religion” and “religious” into a finite number of categories and then discussing the relationships among these. In what follows I identify three broad senses in which the term *religion* and its cognates are used, arranged in order of increasing breadth.⁴ I then argue that these three senses stand in well-defined relationships to each other and ↪ that the conception that incorporates them in their interconnection deserves to be understood as the account of religion presented in the *Speeches*.

In its *first* sense, “religion” refers to religion’s “essence,” a term that I leave undefined for the moment. Compare the following passages from the second speech:

Religion’s essence is neither thinking nor acting, but intuition and feeling.

Thus religion maintains its own sphere and its own character only by completely removing itself from the sphere and character of speculation as well as from that of praxis.

Intuition is and always remains something individual, set apart, the immediate perception, nothing more. . . . The same is true of religion: it stops with the immediate experiences of the existence and action of the universe, with the individual intuitions and feelings . . . it knows nothing about derivation and connection, for among all things religion can encounter, that is what its nature most opposes.⁵

The first of these passages is a straightforward claim about religion's essence: In the first edition of the *Speeches*, this essence is a matter of "intuitions of the universe" and the feelings that accompany them. The other two passages identify as "religion" essentially the same territory: a territory separated from "speculation and praxis" (i.e., metaphysics and morals) and unconcerned with any kind of development (reflective or otherwise) of that which constitutes religion's essence. The first type of usage of "religion" thus restricts its range to the point where it extends no further than the boundaries of religion's essence. As mentioned earlier, the standard interpretation of Schleiermacher is typically grounded in passages of this sort,⁶ and indeed, taken at face value, the passages cited earlier state that religion can never extend into the domain of speculation or activity and that, once one goes beyond immediate experience, one has thereby left religion behind.

In its *second* sense "religion" refers to something broader than "intuitions and feelings," and "religious" can be predicated of activities, artifacts, or states of affairs. Consider, for example, the following passages:

Thus it was religion when the ancients, annihilating the limitations of time and space, regarded every unique type of life throughout the whole world as the work and reign of an omnipotent being. They had intuited a unique mode of acting of the universe in its unity and had designated this intuition accordingly. It was religion when, for every helpful event whereby the eternal laws of the world were illuminatingly revealed through contingency, they gave the god to whom it belonged his own name and built its own temple to it. . . . But when they keep a wondrous chronicle of the descent of these gods or when a later faith trotted out for us a long series of emanations and procreations, that is empty mythology.

Once there is religion, it must necessarily also be social. That not only lies in human nature but also is preeminently in that of religion.

You can imagine, therefore, how much holier still must be the moment for [religious people] in which this infinite intuition was first established in the world as foundation and focal point of a unique religion since the whole development of this religion in all generations and individuals is just as historically tied to this moment. Yet this whole of religion and the religious culture of a great mass of humanity is something infinitely greater than their own religious life and the small fragment of this religion they personally exhibit.⁷

Each of these passages speaks, in a different way, of religion as something that extends beyond religion's essence. The first passage, from the second speech, designates activities such as the association of natural events with superhuman agency, the naming of gods, and the building of temples as part of religion. The second, from the fourth speech, asserts that it is in accordance with the nature of religion that it be a social affair—indeed, that religion is *necessarily* social. The third, from the final speech, is part of Schleiermacher's description of "positive religions" as phenomena that are not simply identical with one or any number of religious intuitions but are "founded in and focused on" a particular religious intuition and are extended across time and between persons.

The *third* sense of "religion" is the broadest. In this sense religion also encompasses things like doctrines, activities, and social organizations. However, unlike religion in the second sense, Schleiermacher does not

necessarily consider this type of religion to be praiseworthy. Rather, he tends to portray religion in this sense as an imperfect phenomenon, one in which the pure and the impure are mixed. The paradigmatic occurrences of this usage are found, appropriately enough, in the fifth speech, where Schleiermacher turns to a discussion of positive religion and discusses particular religious traditions. Here are some examples:

But now I have a new business to carry out and a new opposition to vanquish. . . . I want to show you religion as it has divested itself of its infinity and appeared, often in paltry form, among human beings; in the religions, you are to discover religion; in what stands before you as earthly and impure, you are to seek out the individual features of the same heavenly beauty whose form I have tried to reproduce.

↳ Where have I seen all these forms? In the actual realm of religion (*Gebiet der Religion*), in its particular forms, in the positive religions that you decry as merely negative, among the heroes and martyrs of a specific faith, among the enthusiasts of specific feelings, among the worshipers of a specific light and individual revelations; there I shall show them to you at all times and among all peoples.

Do not disregard how religion everywhere bears in itself the traces of the culture of every age, of the history of every human type. . . . do not overlook how it has often been stunted in its growth because one did not allow it room to exercise its powers, how it has often lamentably perished in the first days of childhood, owing to bad treatment and apathy.⁸

In using “religion” in this third way Schleiermacher appears to be approximating the initial understanding of his audience: This sense encompasses the actually existing complex of beliefs, practices, and artifacts that make up “what is usually called religion.” The determinate, historically specific religious traditions discussed in the fifth speech are examples of this type.

Observing a distinction between these three senses of the term “religion” illuminates the structure of Schleiermacher’s extended argument with religion’s “cultured despisers,” which extends across all five of the speeches. After presenting his conception of religion’s essence and discussing the way religion develops individually and socially, in the fifth speech Schleiermacher returned to a discussion of religion as it actually exists and can be observed by the religious and the nonreligious alike. In this final speech the notion that religion has multiple senses is put to strategic use: Schleiermacher’s intention was to change the way his audience regarded the actual, historical examples of religion with which they were familiar. In writing “in the religions, you are to discover religion,” Schleiermacher was not playing games with words. Rather, this passage moves from the third to the second senses of the religion and argues that the critical eye should be able to discern “within” actually existing religion traces of a purer and better form of religion.

Schleiermacher’s talk of one type of religion existing within another brings us to the next step of my argument. If there were no robust connection between the three senses of religion described earlier, then much could be said in favor of isolating one of Schleiermacher’s categories for examination—say, religion as it applies to religion’s essence—and setting the other two aside as peripheral. However, in fact, a pattern extends across the three categories and describes the relationship of each sense of religion to the other. It turns out that Schleiermacher’s conception of religion in the *Speeches* has a concentric structure in two distinct senses. The key for understanding both types of concentricity ↳ governing the account of religion in the *Speeches* lies with the notion of religion’s essence.

2.1.2 Essence

In discussing the notion of an essence as it figures in Schleiermacher's work, we need to distinguish the question of the content or constitution of religion's essence from the functional or structural role it plays within his overall account of religion. It is the second of these topics that is of primary importance at present. For not only has the notion of an essence almost entirely vanished from the literature on the methodology of the study of religion—even from works that acknowledge the importance of a grasp of the field's history—but such mentions of the term that do occur in the literature frequently display a truncated understanding, at best, of the role this term actually played in the nineteenth-century literature.⁹ Contemporary criticisms of the project of identifying the essence of religion frequently reflect familiarity with only a very general notion of essentialism and thus miss the specificity of the notion in the historical literature.¹⁰

There is a respect in which talk of essentialism as a general, undifferentiated phenomenon makes sense. Recent research in cognitive development by Susan Gelman suggests that the common scholarly practice of discussing essentialism as a more or less intuitive notion may be a reflection of the naturalness of essentialist thinking.¹¹ Gelman argues that an essentialism with three basic components—"a belief that certain categories are natural kinds, a belief that some unobservable property causes observable similarities shared by members of a category, and a belief that everyday words reflect the real-world structure of categories"¹²—represents an early cognitive bias among human beings in the sense that these beliefs come to inform the noetic activities of young children as a result of normal patterns of development. Essentialism in Gelman's view is not a result of enculturation and thus is not a historical accident; rather, the convergence of several distinct cognitive capacities yields the habit of mind that treats natural kinds and social kinds (but not artifacts) as categories defined by essences.¹³ Gelman's hypothesis makes sense of the frequent association found in the literature between essentialism and the commonsense view of natural and social kinds; if she is correct, essentialism in this generic sense is a human universal, if a defeasible one.¹⁴ If this is indeed the case, then it seems reasonable to me to regard this generic essentialism as the operative notion in literature that uses the term without elaboration.

p. 77 However, where essentialism has been taken seriously as a strategy for picking out the identities of things, more specific claims about the natures of essences and their role in the determination of identity have emerged. Discussions of essentialism in analytic philosophy, for example (where this notion is often considered viable or at least interesting), observe several different kinds of distinctions among essentialist positions. Historically, the essentialism of Aristotle constitutes a tradition distinct from that of Locke, with the former describing essences as complex properties of things that serve both an explanatory and a classificatory role and the latter distinguishing *real* essences, understood as "the very being of any thing, whereby it is, what it is" from *nominal* essences, understood as sortal ideas (ideas, that is, by virtue of which we sort things into groups).¹⁵ Contemporary literature adds to these historical descriptions the proposals that essences be understood as the collection of those properties that a thing of a particular kind cannot possibly exist without, as well as homeostatic cluster theories, which regard natural kinds as defined by properties that the members of a kind possess in a statistically high proportion but which need not be exemplified by every member of that kind.

If it is initially coherent to speak of essentialism as a monolithic phenomenon, then, in practice there is not one essentialism but many. It follows from this, I suggest, that no serious engagement with a specific essentialist proposal can take place entirely at the highest level of generality.

To understand the role that the notion of an essence plays in Schleiermacher's account of religion, we must distinguish his use of this idea from both the generic essentialism described by Gelman and the essentialisms of analytic philosophy. What unifies these various ways of talking about essences is the fact that all of them are concerned with *objects*—whether these be material objects in general, living material objects in their natural kinds, or human beings in their socially constructed kinds (race, gender, class, and so on). These forms of

essentialism thus speak most naturally about essences as *properties* or collections of properties and understand the question of whether an individual thing belongs to a natural or social kind as settled by the properties that thing exemplifies or possesses.¹⁶ It is for this reason that a statement of the components of the essence of a kind can be considered equivalent to a *definition* of that kind.

p. 78

Schleiermacher's talk of essences is best understood, I suggest, as the transposition of the basic habit of mind that characterizes essentialism from the domain of objects to the domain of history. His investigations concerned not a collection of objects but a temporally extended and historically variable phenomenon containing not only objects but also practices, beliefs, attitudes, and artifacts. The most important ramification of this difference has to do with understanding the role that the notion of an essence plays in identifying the extension of the term "religion." It cannot be said that for Schleiermacher religion's essence consists of one or more properties the possession of which determines, even only probabilistically, the membership of particular cases within the category "religion"; for where the question concerns not objects but practices or attitudes, the model of property possession is inapposite. In effect, the notion that a phenomenon like religion might have an essence required a novel account of the notion of essence itself and also of the mode of its presence ↵ within the phenomenon whose identity it secures, and it is this aspect of Schleiermacher's writings on religion that in my judgment is of greatest interest for understanding his account in historical perspective.

The question of how an essence could play a role in relation to a phenomenon like religion analogous to the role that notion plays in relation to natural and social phenomena was one of the issues that animated critical reflection on the methodology of the study of religion during the early decades of its development.¹⁷ A crucial treatise on the topic from the first decades of the twentieth century—Ernst Troeltsch's "What Does the 'Essence of Christianity' Mean?"—focused on precisely this problem and pointed to a central feature that distinguishes the notion of essence as Schleiermacher used it from essentialism about objects.¹⁸

After a century of mixed fortunes, the notion of an essence of religion had recently been prominently on display in Adolf von Harnack's wildly popular *Das Wesen des Christentums*, and while Harnack represented Troeltsch's proximate partner in conversation, it is clear from the essay that he regarded the prominence of the notion in the study of religion to be a component of Schleiermacher's legacy. Troeltsch classified the search for the essence of a religion as a component of the historical study of religion, and a fundamental problem of the essay has to do with the method by which claims about the essence of a religion are to be derived. Troeltsch described the essence of a religion as in the first instance an *abstraction* from the observed particulars of religion: To identify the essence of a religion is "[t]o grasp the decisive and driving religious idea and power out of this complex whole,"¹⁹ to distill out of a mass of historical data that which accounts for the unity of the phenomenon in question:

The "essence" of such a complex is the abstract idea, the abstraction peculiar to history, by means of which the whole known and precisely researched context of related formations is understood in terms of the basic driving and developing idea. The essence can be found in *a broad view over the totality of all the manifestations which are related to this idea*, and its discovery demands the exercise of historical abstraction, *the art of seeing the whole, both the details and the fullness of the various methodically studied materials, with a synoptic vision.*²⁰

p. 79

The problem, in short, is that identifying the essence, the idea that represents the driving force, of a phenomenon as massively multiform as Christianity depends on an ability to see "within" the variety of the observed instances a principle of unity that at the same time is responsive to the entire sweep of the phenomenon. That there is more art than science to this endeavor was one of Troeltsch's first points. The sheer mass of the relevant data is one difficulty. However, more important—indeed, crucially important for my purposes—is ↵ Troeltsch's observation that it cannot be assumed that this essence is in fact represented in all instances of the religion in question:

Reality nowhere displays the essence as the absolutely clear, complete and convincing result of the process. It displays instead great, divided churches, in none of which the essence can be perceived to be realized, and which do not even realize the essence all together. It displays moreover all kinds of sects and groups and also completely individual conceptions of Christianity. In all these is to be found not merely the imperfection of an essence which is not yet fully clear about itself, but at the same time, sometimes more and sometimes less, a variety of positive perversions and distortions of the essence.²¹

Troeltsch here attributed to the nineteenth-century tradition the position that the essence of Christianity may not in fact be in evidence in all instances of the Christian religion: There may be instances where in place of this essence there is only a “perversion or distortion” of it. It might seem paradoxical to claim as the essence of a phenomenon something that, in the end, not all instances of that phenomenon possess, but I take Troeltsch to be entirely correct in this attribution. What distinguishes nineteenth-century essentialism about religion from a generic essentialism about objects—and thus a point that is crucial for my reconstruction—flows directly from this observation. “With respect to all of these the conception of the essence is at the same time a criticism. It is *not merely an abstraction from the manifestations, but at the same time a criticism of the manifestations*, and this criticism is *not merely an evaluation of that which is not yet complete in terms of the driving ideal, but a discrimination between that which corresponds to the essence and that which is contrary to it.*”²²

The essence of a religion, in other words, is not simply a description of those characteristics that all and only examples of the phenomenon possess. It is from the first a principle of criticism, a criterion relative to which claims can be advanced about what the religion in question *should* be. As Troeltsch puts it, “a comprehensive view of the essence is only sought at all in order to make possible an evaluation of what is essential, on the basis of which the inessential can be ignored and that which is contrary to the essence can be condemned.”²³

2.1.2.1 Essence And The Identification Of Religion.

Troeltsch’s observation that the essence of religion is not merely a descriptive principle but also a critical one provides the key for understanding the relationship among the three senses of religion outlined earlier and so for deriving a unified sketch of an account of religion from Schleiermacher’s *Speeches*.

In brief, “religion” in both the second and third senses of the term is defined by a relationship to “religion” in the first sense—by a relationship, in other words, to religion’s essence. However, the relationship in question is not a matter of the exemplification of properties; rather, the relationship that ↵ examples of religion bear to the essence of religion is a matter of *location along a developmental path*. “Religion” in its second sense is defined by what falls along an *appropriate developmental path* out of this essence and thus stands in a *fitting* relationship to religion’s essence. The third sense of “religion” extends to elements that stand in what can be described as a *distorted* or *degenerate* relationship to religion’s essence in the sense that they represent a *departure* from the appropriate developmental path that defines “religion” in its second sense.

In what follows, I use the terms *essence of religion*, *ideal religion*, and *actual religion* as labels for the three senses of “religion” I have distinguished within the *Speeches*. Thus, if the essence of religion is a matter of intuitions and feelings of the universe, “ideal religion” refers to that collection of activities and artifacts that are related in a fitting way to this essence, and “actual religion” refers to the forms of religion observable within history, which for Schleiermacher represented a mixture of elements that have resulted from an appropriate developmental path out of religion’s essence with elements that represent a departure from that path. I take Schleiermacher’s occasional references to “the realm of religion” (*die Gebiet der Religion*) to be coextensive with what I call “actual religion”: The “realm of religion” is thus not restricted to an ideal conception but contains “diseased” or degenerate conditions of religion as well.

The unity of the category of “religion,” then, lies in the fact that for each of the senses enumerated above, religion’s essence is the criterion on the basis of which religion is identified—not in the sense that all examples of religion possess some or all of those properties that constitute religion’s essence but in the sense that in order to qualify as part of religion, a phenomenon must be *connected to* religion’s essence as either an appropriate development or a degeneration.²⁴ It is in virtue of the twofold relationship in which religion’s essence stands to ideal and actual religion that a description of a religion’s essence represents not a definition but only the beginnings of one. Schleiermacher grounded his discussion of religion on the conviction that it should be possible, once one understands what the essence of religion is, to discern what flows appropriately or naturally from this essence and also to identify cases where this natural path of development has been curtailed or corrupted. What defines religion, in other words, is ultimately not a list of properties but a “formula” or principle according to which particular phenomena can be classified as part of religion: “I entreat you to become familiar with this concept: intuition of the universe. It is the hinge of my whole speech; it is the highest and most universal formula on the basis of which you should be able to find every place in religion, from which you may determine its essence and its limits (*Gränzen*).”²⁵

I understand the formula to which this passage refers roughly as follows: Whatever is related to “intuition of the universe” (that is, to religion’s essence) in the proper way is part of “ideal religion”; whatever constitutes a deformation or distortion of this essence still belongs to the “realm of religion”; whatever is not at all related to this essence is not at all part of religion.

p. 81 As we move to a closer examination of “religion” in the second and third senses, the terms I use to characterize the various kinds of relationship to its essence are in some cases deliberately vague. Some clarity can be drawn from specific examples that Schleiermacher used to illustrate the distinction between healthy and degenerate forms of religion. However, for the most part he seems to have thought that he could count on his readers to discern more or less intuitively what follows appropriately from or corresponds appropriately to religion’s essence.

2.1.3 Ideal Religion

A central concern of the *Speeches* is to describe what religion *should* be or, to put it differently, what religion *would* be if it were to faithfully reflect the character of its essence. By using the term “ideal religion” to indicate this material, I mean to signal the fact that while in some places Schleiermacher appeared to have historical examples (or at least historical types) in mind, for the most part his examples of ideal religion are something like thought experiments or counterfactual constructions whose characteristics are deduced from his claims about religion’s essence rather than from instances of actual religion.

How, then, are these examples of ideal religion constructed? I have suggested that the formula for ideal religion is “whatever stands in the right sort of relationship to or follows the appropriate developmental path from religion’s essence,” but what sorts of relationships are the right ones, and what is the appropriate developmental path? Here, as was the case with Schleiermacher’s various uses of “religion,” the best way to proceed is to try to identify patterns among the examples Schleiermacher offered of what religion looks like when it is related to its essence in the correct way.

The broadest division we can mark in these examples is between *interior* and *exterior* religion. Some of the things that are related appropriately to religion’s essence are, for lack of a better term, mental activities or states; others are interpersonal relationships, activities, or artifacts. Discerning what makes for *interior* ideal religion involves a fair amount of reconstructive guesswork, and it is difficult in the end to advance a single principle that accounts for all of the examples Schleiermacher offered. However, the principle that explains what makes for *exterior* ideal religion is one of the most clearly delineated in the whole of the *Speeches* and in

fact is probably the most important structural feature of Schleiermacher's understanding of religion across all of his texts.

2.1.3.1 Interior Ideal Religion.

Consider the following passages:

p. 82

[T]o accept everything individual as part of the whole and everything limited as a representation of the infinite is religion. But whatever would go beyond that and penetrate deeper into the nature and substance of the whole is no longer religion, and will, if it still wants to be regarded as such, inevitably sink back into empty mythology.

To love the world spirit and joyfully observe its work is the goal of our religion, and in love there is no fear.

It is irreligious to hold that humanity's genius prepares vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor; you must consider nothing individually, but rejoice over each in the place where it stands.

Humanity is only a middle term between the individual and the One, a resting place on the way to the infinite. . . . All religion strives after such an intimation (*Ahndung*) of something outside and above humanity in order to be seized by the common and higher elements in both.²⁶

Here Schleiermacher described some interior, mental activities as part of religion: activities such as *viewing* the world in particular ways, *loving* certain aspects of the world, or *striving* after certain experiences. How these activities flow naturally from religion's essence is not stated explicitly, but in some cases context makes the connection fairly clear.

In the first edition of the *Speeches* Schleiermacher's description of the content of religion's essence is grounded in the notion of an "intuition of the universe." This is a view or an impression of some overarching, structural feature of the world as a whole or of all that exists; to have an intuition of the universe is to have a sense of its overall character.²⁷ The activities described in the passages just cited are related in a variety of more or less intuitive ways to this notion. The idea of "accepting everything individual as part of the whole and everything limited as a representation of the infinite" suggests either a kind of apperceptive *habitus* that provides fertile ground for the having of intuitions of the universe or an awareness of the relatedness of all things that is stimulated by the impact of one or more such intuitions. Either way, there is a kind of natural fit between the notion of an intuition of the universe and a general disposition to see all individual things as part of a larger whole, which disposition comes to expression repeatedly throughout the second speech. The person who has "intuitions of the universe" (and, plausibly, who is reflectively aware of these) will see everything as "holy and valuable" by virtue of its connection to the greater whole; will welcome the discovery of the laws governing the workings of the universe, as this contributes to the sense that the universe is ultimately an ordered totality; and will particularly value interpersonal relationships and knowledge of humanity as resources for understanding the overall character of the universe.²⁸ Such a person will also come to take a dim view of valorizations of human individuality and autonomy and may even feel an affinity for the doctrine of necessity. "See how attraction and repulsion determine everything and are uninterruptedly active everywhere, how all diversity and all opposition are only apparent and relative, and all individuality is merely an empty name," Schleiermacher admonished his readers, advocating an attitude that extends even to the self: "[S]trive here already to annihilate your individuality and to live in the one and all."²⁹ What it is to be religious in this ideal and interior sense, then, is a matter of allowing one's view of the world and its contents to be informed by a sense of the interrelatedness of all things and colored by the particular intuitions of the universe with which one is familiar.

p. 83

In the first edition of the *Speeches* Schleiermacher linked intuition with feeling (*Gefühl*) in such a way that the feelings that attach to particular religious intuitions are also plausibly part of religion's essence.³⁰ However, some of the feelings that he described have a different character: They seem to represent the results of the interaction of religion's essence with a person's particular circumstances. If this is the case, then interior ideal religion will also encompass feelings that are not properly speaking part of religion's essence but rather represent a development of that essence within the life of the individual.

The most prominent examples of feelings that fall into this category are attitudes toward one's fellow human beings. For example, because intuitions of the universe are susceptible of an infinite variety of juxtapositions and subordinations, those who understand religion properly will feel a marked tolerance for someone who entertains different intuitions and arranges them differently; these people will naturally feel "reverence in the face of the eternal and invisible" and will embrace their fellow human beings "with heartfelt love and affection without any distinction of disposition and spiritual power."³¹ They will also feel a profound compassion for the sufferings of others and "remorse over everything in us that is hostile to the genius of humanity."³² The first edition's definition of *piety*, a crucial term in later editions and in *The Christian Faith*, follows on these remarks. "All these feelings are religion," Schleiermacher stated, "and likewise all others in which the universe is one pole and your own self is somehow the other pole between which consciousness hovers. The ancients knew this. They called all these feelings 'piety' and referred them immediately to religion, considering them its noblest part."³³

There are also suggestions in the second speech that interior ideal religion is not a purely passive affair but that "religious intuitions and feelings" properly motivate activities. Early on in his discussion of religious feeling, Schleiermacher remarked, "This is how far the realm of religion concerns us in this respect: its feelings are supposed to possess us, and we should *express, maintain, and portray* them" (emphasis added).³⁴ Each of these three terms refers not simply to the possessing of pious feelings but also to an action that the person who possesses them is supposed to perform. While "expressing" and "portraying" (*aussprechen* and *darstellen*) belong to the realm of exterior activity and so will be discussed in the next section, "maintaining" (*festhalten*) pious feelings can plausibly be thought of as an interior affair.

p. 84 All in all, then, interior ideal religion seems to involve, at its core, the possession of religious intuitions and feelings and, surrounding this, a penumbra of other mental states and activities that stem in certain appropriate sorts of ways from this essence and in which its content is involved.

2.1.3.2 Exterior Ideal Religion.

In contrast to the ambiguity of what constitutes interior ideal religion, the principle that accounts for Schleiermacher's understanding of exterior ideal religion is readily identifiable. What makes certain kinds of activities and states of affairs outside the realm of the human mind religious is that they are part of the process whereby *religion's essence and the "interior religion" that develops out of this is transmitted between persons*. As Rendtorff noted, the idea of "religious communication" is central to Schleiermacher's thinking concerning what it is to be religious in a concrete sense; it forms the basis of his claim in the fourth speech that religion is "necessarily social" and also grounds the continuity of particular religious traditions (a theme emphasized more in Schleiermacher's later writings). The double-sided nature of communication in general (for example, of speaking and hearing) is reflected in the two needs that Schleiermacher described in his discussions of distinctively religious communication: The person who has interior religion needs to *express* it and also needs to receive the *impression* of the religion of others.

In unpacking his claim that religion is necessarily social at the beginning of the fourth speech, Schleiermacher offered the following:

You must admit that it is highly unnatural for a person to want to lock up in himself what he has created and worked out. In the continuous reciprocity, which is not only practical but intellectual, in which he stands with the rest of his species, he is supposed to express and communicate all that is within him. The more passionately something moves him, and the more intimately it penetrates his being, the stronger is the urge also to glimpse its power outside himself in others, in order to prove to himself that he has encountered nothing other than what is human. . . . Therefore, we see that even from childhood on, man is primarily concerned to communicate these intuitions and feelings.³⁵

Here Schleiermacher advanced a general claim about the sociable nature of human beings: that we naturally desire to reflect upon those experiences that move us strongly by comparing our experiences with those of others. We come to understand ourselves and our humanity, in other words, not only through pure introspection but also through communication. Interior religion's need to find expression is grounded in this claim: In the realm of religion, the sharing of intuitions and feelings is aimed at saving ourselves from submission to ↵ "alien and unworthy powers."³⁶ Religious communication, then, is a natural result of the possession of interior religion.

However, on the other side, "[i]f, therefore, urged by his nature, religious man necessarily speaks, it is this very nature that also finds hearers for him."³⁷ It is also natural for individuals to be on the receiving end of religious communication. Such communication has the potential to accomplish two things, both of which can fairly obviously be classified as appropriately related to religion's essence. Proximally, such communication can accomplish the *transmission* of religious intuitions and feelings from one person to another, and ultimately such communication can "awaken" within the hearer the capacity to produce new religious intuitions and feelings.

Late in the second speech Schleiermacher offered a reinterpretation of the notion of religious *inspiration* as "merely the religious name for freedom. . . . [E]very expression of a religious feeling that really communicates itself so that the intuition of the universe is transferred to others (*so daß auch auf andre das Anschauung des Universums übergeht*) took place upon inspiration."³⁸ The basic function of religious communication, then, is to make religious intuitions and feelings the object of interpersonal awareness in the interest of transmitting them from person to person. In his imaginative portrayal of the "city of God" (a notion to be explored further in the next chapter), Schleiermacher described how religious communication is supposed to proceed. The individual who is moved to speak "steps forth to present his own intuition as an object for the rest, to lead them into the region of religion where he is at home and to implant his holy feelings in them; he expresses the universe, and the community follows his inspired speech in holy silence. . . . Then the audible confession of the accord of his view with what is in them answers him."³⁹

In other words, the constituent elements of the essence of religion—religious intuitions and feelings—are, if not a common *possession* (because, for the young Schleiermacher, the ideal religious community does not necessarily contain only one form of religion), at least commonly *available* for reflection and appropriation through the common discourse.

In this early text, an important goal of religious communication is the "awakening" of the ability to produce one's own religious intuitions and feelings. In the *Speeches* Schleiermacher distinguished sharply between those who have such an ability and those who do not. Recall that he had claimed that religion "arises of itself in every better soul": The paradigmatic example of the religious person is the "virtuoso of religion," who needs no interpersonal stimulation in order to come into possession of religious intuitions and feelings. In fact, it was his position that religious virtuosity is a rare trait and that the majority of persons come to religion through participation in religious communication. "Except for a few chosen ones," he argued in the second speech, "every person surely needs a mediator, a leader who awakens his sense for religion ↵ from its first slumber and gives him an initial direction."⁴⁰ In the third speech this principle develops into the relationship of "master and disciple" within the realm of religion, which ideally is a provisional arrangement. "He who, by expressing his own religion, has aroused it in others, no longer has it in his power to keep them for himself; their religion

is also free as soon as it lives and goes its own way.”⁴¹ Part of the claim that religion is necessarily social, then, stems from the fact that for all but a “chosen few,” religion (even as regards its essence) is acquired socially, and this in a double sense: Religious communication not only awakens the ability to produce religious intuitions but also transmits the content of specific religious intuitions between one person and the next. Schleiermacher’s understanding of religious tradition, to be explored more fully in the next chapter, is predicated on this second dynamic.

Thus far, the characteristic elements of ideal exterior religion have been presented in a fairly abstract manner as *acts of communication* and *religious community*. It is possible to say a bit more about the particular *material vehicles* of religious communication and particular *social forms* that conduce to this activity, although in the *Speeches* Schleiermacher’s remarks on the second of these are more fully developed than those on the first.

The *Speeches* discuss the material vehicles of religious communication in considerably less detail than his later writings. In the second speech Schleiermacher characterized *religious concepts* as expressions of religion’s essence—sometimes “free” expressions and sometimes more reflectively derived “abstract” expressions—and included under this heading a number of familiar terms from Christian theology (miracle, revelation, inspiration, divinity, and immortality). Fairly clearly, the point of this identification is that the distinctive stock of phrases and ideas of a particular religious tradition are to be understood as elements of the process of religious communication: They are vehicles by means of which religious intuitions and feelings are transmitted between persons. Schleiermacher also presented a few examples of nondiscursive religious activity as part of the process whereby religious intuitions are expressed. One is music, which he described as “speech without words” or a means of communicating “that which definite speech cannot comprehend”;⁴² he also mentioned baptism, confirmation, and marriage together with some remarks on their religious significance.⁴³ It also seems to me that it would be reasonable to include the activities of the construction of temples and their dedication to particular gods, which we encountered above, as activities whose religious character lies in their functions as vehicles for the communication of religious intuitions or interior religion more generally.

p. 87

In general, then, the *Speeches* explains the traditional stock of religious activities and artifacts as the material elements of the communicative process that constitutes exterior religion. What makes these distinctively religious is a relationship to the essence of religion—specifically, the fact that they represent faithful or appropriate developments of this essence, in the sense that they serve as vehicles for the transmission of interior religion between persons. I think it is also reasonable to attribute to Schleiermacher the position that *whatever* materials are used to express and thus transmit interior religion in this way would thereby be made religious—that *any* activity or artifact that serves to transmit and develop interior religion thereby becomes part of exterior religion.

Finally, in the fourth speech Schleiermacher offered a set of reflections about the way an ideal religious community is structured. Although I examine these reflections in greater detail in the next chapter, for the present a few points are directly relevant. Not all forms of community are equally conducive to religious communication. The form of religious community that corresponds most faithfully to a proper understanding of the essence of religion, Schleiermacher thought, is radically *egalitarian*. In the ideal religious community there is no distinction between clergy and laity; all are equal contributors to the process of religious communication and formation.⁴⁴ Such a community is also religiously *diverse* and religiously *tolerant*: Membership in the community is not predicated on a similarity of religious sensibility, and in fact a diversity of religious intuitions is to be welcomed as enriching the communal pool of religious resources.⁴⁵

I suggest, then, that ideal religion in both its interior and exterior forms is a category constructed by the application of a rough formula: Whatever results appropriately or “naturally” from the essence of religion, whether in the realm of the spirit or in the interpersonal realm, is included under this heading. Two major points should be made clear at the end of this discussion. First, it is not the case that exterior religion is only an expression of interior religion: It is also the means by which interior religion is formed.⁴⁶ The relationship of

exterior to interior religion is thus not one of “husk and kernel,” to cite a metaphor that is sometimes taken to represent the basic thrust of religious essentialism; exterior religion is not an occlusion of interior religion but rather the means of its perpetuation and development. Second, it should be clear that there are definite limits to this category: Elements that do not flow naturally from religion’s essence or that stand in some kind of distorted relationship to it will not be part of ideal religion. Consideration of this characteristic leads to our next topic.

2.1.4 Actual Religion

p. 88 As stated earlier, I understand Schleiermacher’s phrase “the realm of religion” to cover the entire range of that which is observable respecting religion and thus to point to a sense of “religion” distinct from the ideal forms we have examined up to this point. This category thus includes all of “what is usually thought of as religion”—and, crucially, everything on the basis of which Schleiermacher takes his “cultured despisers” to have formed their opinions about religion. In what follows I use the phrase “actual religion” to describe the ↵ contents of the “realm of religion” as Schleiermacher understood it. As my discussion in the introduction should have made clear, it is toward understanding Schleiermacher’s account of actual religion that a contemporary reconstruction of his account of religion should work.

In expositing the category of ideal religion, I argue that Schleiermacher believed it was possible to imagine how certain phenomena could flow naturally or appropriately from the essence of religion. Not everything in the realm of religion has this character: Religion as it actually exists contains not only ideal religion but also what might be called *degenerate religion*, the result of the natural or ideal developmental process of religion going astray. In the *Speeches* Schleiermacher discussed two ways in which religion’s natural development could be diverted or perverted: *contamination* and *dissolution*.

When an “alien element” enters and influences the religious developmental process, religion is “contaminated.” Schleiermacher introduced the possibility of the contamination of religion at the beginning of the second speech in distinguishing religion’s essence from metaphysics and morals; the idea recurs in the fourth speech, where the relation of religion and politics is discussed. We can see both of these cases as variations on the theme of the contamination of religion: contamination “from within” and “from without” respectively.

Recall Schleiermacher’s distinction between religion and mythology in the second speech, which he based on the distinctness of religion’s essence from metaphysics. “To present all events in the world as the actions of a god is religion; it expresses its connection to an infinite totality, but while brooding over the existence of this god before the world and outside the world may be good and necessary in metaphysics, in religion even that becomes only empty mythology, a further development of that which is only the means of portrayal as if it were the essential itself, a complete departure from its characteristic ground.”⁴⁷

“Empty mythology” represents a contamination of ideal religion by a “metaphysical interest”—an interest, that is, in knowledge about the world and about what lies behind the world.⁴⁸ What makes this a contamination “from within” is that metaphysics distorts religion’s natural path of development: Intuitions of the universe are taken to be resources for drawing conclusions about the natures of things, which contributes a new trajectory to the developmental process that these elements motivate. The result is a state of affairs in which that which is religious in the ideal sense and what is recognizably a distortion of religion are intertwined. Schleiermacher diagnosed the development of religious dogmas into fixed and unchangeable forms, which is one focus of the ire of the “cultured despisers,” as a result of a “contamination” of this sort by metaphysics.⁴⁹

p. 89 This can be contrasted with contamination of religion “from without,” a primary example of which is the entry of broadly political factors into religion. The narrative that Schleiermacher presented in the fourth speech portrays ↵ agents of the state taking an interest in already established religious communities and convincing them to take on responsibility for civic functions in exchange for granting them privileged status. The problem

this poses for religion is that “as recompense for the services it demands, the state now robs the church of its freedom”.⁵⁰ The state begins exerting a determining influence on the activities of the religious community, such that these are no longer purely religious (i.e., no longer oriented solely toward the communication of interior religion). The ecclesiastical circumstance that Schleiermacher intended this story to explain was state control of religious offices: As a result of this political contamination the state acquires a civic interest in the affairs of religion and eventually comes to install as religious leaders state functionaries who cannot express their own religious intuitions and feelings (since they possess none) but can only repeat the expressions of others. This is contamination from without in the sense that it takes the form of interference in the *social dynamics* or *social form* of religion, which obstructs the natural processes of religious communication. The consequences of this interference subsequently extend into the interior dimension both by choking off the religious development of those within the community and by alienating the potentially religious. “Now there is nothing in all its manifestations that would be directed to religion alone or in which religion by itself would be the main affair; in sacred speech and teachings as well as in secret and symbolic actions, everything is full of moral and political references, everything is diverted from its original purpose and concept.”⁵¹

If *contamination* represents the intrusion into the natural process of religious development of alien factors, *dissolution* represents an attenuation of the connection between religious phenomena and the essence of religion. Like cases of contamination, cases of dissolution result in recognizably distorted or degenerate forms of religion, but unlike cases of contamination, the primary factor in this distortion appears to be not the strength of a principle at odds with ideal religion but the weakness of the religious elements that are already ingredients in the developmental and communicative process.

Some of Schleiermacher's passing references to religions that have simply lost their vitality over time can be included in this category. A primary symptom of such a loss of vitality is a kind of discursive sclerosis: Expressions of religious intuitions and feelings harden into inflexible formulas that are repeated out of little more than historical habit, and new forms of expression cease to arise. The understanding of Judaism presented in the *Speeches* is predicated on this notion. Schleiermacher, who borrowed this understanding from his assimilated Jewish friends in Berlin, believed that the discerning eye could still see the traces of Judaism's original sources of vitality within its texts but little more than this. Judaism, he claimed, “died when its holy books were closed; then the conversation of Jehovah with his people was viewed as ended.”⁵²

p. 90 It should be possible at this point to appreciate the importance of the category of degenerate religion for the apologetic aims of the *Speeches*. The account of religion presented in the *Speeches* was intended to convince a skeptical audience that religion as it actually exists is not religion as it should and could be, and the method by which Schleiermacher attempted to accomplish this involved describing actual religion as the result of a developmental process unfolding under less than ideal conditions. His ultimate goal was to enlist his readers for the cause of religious reform by convincing them that traces of ideal religion remain within actual religion and that it might be possible for actual religion to come to resemble ideal religion more closely.⁵³ Schleiermacher's apologetic aims, then, required him to sketch an explanation of the actual condition of religion.

With this survey of the *Speeches* in mind, we turn now to Schleiermacher's mature work of dogmatics, *The Christian Faith*.

2.2 The Christian Faith

The task of exegeting *The Christian Faith* on the topic of “religion” is made considerably easier by the fact that the term has almost no presence in this text. In fact, Schleiermacher discusses religion most substantively in the section of the prolegomena where he lays out his reasons for *avoiding* the term.

A principal failing of the extant English translation of *The Christian Faith* is the fact that it does not respect Schleiermacher's distinction between *religion* (*Religion*) and *piety* (*Frömmigkeit*), treating the terms as synonymous. The rationale that the translators offered is that Schleiermacher himself remarked that his preference was to speak exclusively of piety and to use the term *religion* "only for the sake of variety."⁵⁴

However, this is beside the point, as in the same section in which he advanced this remark Schleiermacher offered a comprehensive overview of the sense of the term *religion* in relation to his project, one that allows for a clear understanding of the difference between religion and piety. The conflation of religion and piety in many commentaries on Schleiermacher in English is due in large part, it seems to me, to this single decision on the part of the translators of *The Christian Faith*; and it should be obvious that this conflation offers support to the standard interpretation of Schleiermacher, as it suggests that for him the term "religion" refers to a mental or spiritual condition, a form of consciousness, or even just a feeling.⁵⁵

p. 91 Schleiermacher introduced the term "religion" at a decisive point in the opening sections of the *Glaubenslehre*. After the purpose of the introduction is laid out in §1, §2 is concerned with the notion of the Christian church as the proper locus of the dogmatic enterprise. Section 3 introduces the term "piety" as that which forms "the basis for all ecclesiastical communions"; §§4–5 describe the "feeling of absolute dependence" as the essence of piety and ↵ introduce the terms "pious self-consciousness" and "God-consciousness"; and in §6 Schleiermacher claimed that the development of the pious self-consciousness leads naturally to communication and community. It is at the conclusion of §6 that the term "religion" is introduced; Schleiermacher's reason for discussing religion at this point, I suggest, is that it is only once the topic of religious community had been introduced that the entire extent of the territory that the term covers is finally in view.

Schleiermacher's remarks at the end of §6 took the form of spelling out how his talk of "pious self-consciousness" and of Christianity as a "community related to piety" might be recast in terms of "religion." A *particular religion* (*eine bestimmte Religion*), for example, would be the collection of pious states of mind (*Gemütszustände*) around which a "determinate church" is formed (thus corresponding to the "positive religion" of the *Speeches*). The term *religiosity* (*Religiosität*) would refer to "the individual's susceptibility ... to the influence of fellowship or communion, as also his influence upon the latter, and thus his participation in the circulation and propagation of the pious emotions," and *religion in general* (*Religion schlechthin*, or in the first edition, *Religion überhaupt*), a term that Schleiermacher disparages in accordance with his preference for positive religion, can for him mean only "the movement of the human spirit in general toward the production of pious emotions, though always understood together with their expressions and therefore with the drive towards community" (here I understand the point to be that when the contingent features of "particular religion" are stripped away, all that is left is a general set of human propensities toward religion).⁵⁶

Of particular interest for the present purposes are Schleiermacher's definitions of the final two pairs of terms:

Now insofar as the constitution of pious states of mind of the individual is not entirely coextensive with that which is recognized as uniform in the community, one usually calls this purely personal element, in regard to its content, *subjective religion*, but that which is common [is called] the *objective*. ... Finally, in the pious emotions (*Erregungen*) themselves, although they properly belong together, the inner determination of self-consciousness and the manner of its expression can indeed be distinguished: so one usually calls the structuring of the communicative expressions of piety within a community *outward religion*, while the total content of the pious emotions, as they actually occur in the individuals, is called *inward religion*.⁵⁷

p. 92 The similarity between this description and the structure of religion in the *Speeches* should be evident. Religion as Schleiermacher presents it here comprises both inward and outward elements, with the defining element of the outward being that it serves the purpose of communicating the inward. Here, ↵ religion's inward elements can be divided into two classes: those that are peculiar to discrete individuals, on the one hand, and those that

are the common possession of all of the members of a particular community (*subjective* and *objective* respectively). As in the *Speeches*, it is a relationship to the more inward or central elements of religion that makes particular outward acts distinctively religious, and as in the *Speeches*, religious communication fosters the “transmission” of inward religion from person to person, with the end result that multiple individuals come to possess *the same* inward religion (i.e., the same structure of “pious states of mind”).

Thus, in both the *Speeches* and *The Christian Faith*, “religion” has a structure in which inward elements stand in a closer relationship to the core of religion than outward elements. There are two primary differences between the early and the late accounts of religion, one structural and one stylistic. The structural difference has to do with Schleiermacher’s claims about what comprises the core of religion, and the stylistic has to do with the fact that in the *Glaubenslehre* the bulk of attention rests on one particular sector of the overall phenomenon of religion, “piety.”

2.2.1 Essence in the *Glaubenslehre*

Schleiermacher introduced the central terms of his discussion of piety in §4: “That which is common to all expressions of piety, however diverse . . . [and] therefore the self-identical essence of piety is this, that we are conscious of ourselves as absolutely dependent, or as in relation to God, which amounts to the same thing (was *dasselbe sagen will*).”⁵⁸

The “feeling of absolute dependence” has been more or less thoroughly digested in the secondary literature, and I have little new to say about it. Briefly, this feeling is a matter of having an immediate (i.e., nonreflective) consciousness of not merely oneself but also the entire world as absolutely dependent.⁵⁹ Schleiermacher unpacked the notion of absolute dependence using the language of causality: Absolute dependence is a matter of being incapable of exercising an influence upon a thing that influences one. The feeling of absolute dependence thus represents us to ourselves—indeed, represents all “finite being” to us—as *neither self-creating nor self-sustaining beings* but rather as such that “our entire self-activity comes from elsewhere.”⁶⁰ Konrad Cramer’s description concerning the content of the feeling of absolute dependence seems to me to be broadly correct: This feeling is “the feeling of my irreducible finitude and therewith the feeling of the contingency of the world in which I find myself, of such a kind that the ‘whence’ of myself and the world is capable of no objective (*gegenständlich*) interpretation.”⁶¹

p. 93 In both editions of the *Glaubenslehre* Schleiermacher claimed an intimate link between the feeling of absolute dependence and the feeling of being dependent on God. However, he was also careful to state that at this point in the text ↪ “God” is given a purely formal definition as the “other party” in the relation of absolute dependence: “[T]his is to be understood so that the *whence* (*Woher*) of our receptive and self-active existence co-positd (*mitgesetzt*) in this self-consciousness should be characterized by the expression ‘God,’ and this is for us the truly original meaning of the term.”⁶² The identification of “God” as the other party in the relationship to which the feeling of absolute dependence testifies, then, is a stipulative one, and what Schleiermacher calls “God-consciousness” is not identical with the feeling of absolute dependence but (as we will see shortly) represents a first step in the development of “piety” out of this feeling.⁶³

2.2.2 Piety

As in the *Speeches*, in the *Glaubenslehre* Schleiermacher presented religion as something that develops out of its central core or essence. The term “piety” in this text refers to the innermost circle of religion’s development. “Pious states of mind” are in his understanding states of “immediate self-consciousness” strongly influenced by the feeling of absolute dependence. Pious states of mind thus have a composite structure: They result from the combination of the feeling of absolute dependence with moments of “sensibly determined self-consciousness.”⁶⁴

As Schleiermacher used the term, *sensible self-consciousness* refers to awareness of the condition of the self as the self exists at a particular time and within particular circumstances. This self-consciousness comprises “all determinations of self-consciousness which develop out of our relations to nature and to human beings... we understand the expression ‘sensible’ to include social and ethical no less than selfish feelings.”⁶⁵ The sensible self-consciousness, in other words, contains everything that the individual’s circumstances contribute to self-understanding. Piety is a matter of the combination or integration of states of consciousness whose content is drawn from a person’s contingent circumstances with the feeling of absolute dependence. This combination Schleiermacher describes as the “consummating point (*Vollendungspunkt*) of self-consciousness,”⁶⁶ and the measure of a person’s piety is the extent to which this “consummation” occurs: “[T]he more the subject, with his partial freedom and partial dependence, posits himself in each moment of sensible self-consciousness as at the same time absolutely dependent, the more pious he is.”⁶⁷

p. 94

It is important at this point to note how substantive the contribution of the “sensible self-consciousness” to piety is. Schleiermacher took pains to state explicitly that the feeling of absolute dependence, although it can be named and reflected upon in isolation from other feelings, in fact occurs only as a concomitant of people’s awareness of their particular circumstances: Only “as already determined, within the realm of the antithesis, for this moment and in a particular way is [a person] conscious of his absolute dependence.”⁶⁸ ↪ One corollary of this arrangement is that, without exception, the source of all *variations* of pious feeling are the circumstances of the individual. Schleiermacher made this point most clearly in the first edition: “The feeling of absolute dependence regarded in itself is entirely simple, and even the concept of the same provides no ground for heterogeneity. But since pious emotion is always a real self-consciousness only in the unification of that feeling with a sensible feeling, and the sensible must be regarded as infinitely diverse, so the latter provides the ground for the heterogeneity in which pious feelings form themselves.”⁶⁹

The implication is that all of the features that distinguish religions from each other—in fact, everything about piety other than the bare feeling of absolute dependence—will be contingent, a product of the environment within which religion develops.

This point applies even to “God-consciousness,” which “as nothing other than the expression of the feeling of absolute dependence, is the most immediate reflection upon the same.”⁷⁰ Because God-consciousness is a product of reflection, and thus always arises within historically and culturally specific circumstances, Schleiermacher argued that the sensible self-consciousness is always implicated in its development. In fact, only the involvement of the sensible self-consciousness makes it possible for the God-consciousness to contain a richer content than that yielded by the stipulative identification of the unknown “whence” as God. The contribution of the sensible self-consciousness is thus “the source of all anthropomorphism which in this realm is unavoidable in expressions concerning God, and which forms so great a point of dispute in the ever recurring strife between those who accept this fundamental presupposition and those who deny it.”⁷¹

So God-consciousness as Schleiermacher understood it is never a “pure” reflection of the feeling of absolute dependence but always incorporates elements drawn from the life of the individual in question. The contribution of the sensible self-consciousness accounted, in his view, for the diversity of conceptions of the nature of the divine, from “fetishism” to polytheism to monotheism and pantheism.⁷² Thus, piety is marked by a contingency that extends to its most inward component, conceptions of the nature of the “whence” of absolute dependence. These generic characteristics of piety as described by Schleiermacher thus represent a skeleton to be fleshed out by history: What actually constitutes the inward dimension of particular religions is not a set of abstract reflections on absolute dependence but particular, historically determined forms of piety.

2.2.3 Religion beyond Piety

p. 95 As we have seen, Schleiermacher identified “outward religion” by means of a familiar criterion: Acts become part of religion in virtue of being related to ↪ religion’s center in the appropriate manner (specifically, by being expressions of the pious self-consciousness). Having called attention to this device, we can see that Schleiermacher used it elsewhere and not only in connection with outward religion. In particular, early on Schleiermacher used this idea to structure his presentation of the relationship of piety to *knowing* and *doing*. Although considered in itself, piety is a matter of feeling or immediate self-consciousness,⁷³ Schleiermacher was careful to state that there is a religiously significant connection between piety and both knowledge and action:

If, in general, immediate self-consciousness mediates the transition between moments wherein knowing and moments when doing predominate, such that for example out of the same knowing a different doing proceeds in one [person] than in another inasmuch as a different determination of self-consciousness enters it: so it will befit piety to stimulate knowing and doing, and every moment in which piety emerges as preponderant will contain both, or one of the two, within itself in germ. . . . For were it otherwise, the pious moments could not combine with others into a single life, but rather piety would be something existing only for itself, without all influence on other spiritual life-processes.⁷⁴

Thus, “there is knowing and doing which belong to piety (*zur Frömmigkeit gehörig*), but neither of the two constitutes its essence.”⁷⁵ Schleiermacher did not say that knowing and doing that are suitably informed by pious feeling are thereby part of religion; these passages occur prior to his introduction of that term. However, certainly, the relationship between piety and these forms of knowing and doing would seem to be precisely that which is required, if my arguments are correct, for the latter to be “religious.”

The final topic to be discussed here concerns religious doctrines or “faith statements” (*Glaubenssätze*), which Schleiermacher described as “conceptions (*Auffassungen*) of Christian pious states of mind presented in speech.”⁷⁶ Schleiermacher’s account of religious doctrines is grounded in his understanding of religious communication, which had undergone significant development since 1799. For the present, what needs to be established is that this area of outward religion is identified by the same device that (I have been arguing) structures Schleiermacher’s understanding of religion in general.

p. 96 As in the *Speeches*, here Schleiermacher argued that the communication of pious feelings is grounded in a natural tendency for states of mind that attain a certain degree of affective power to seek outward expression —“by means of facial expression, gesture, tones, and mediately through the word”—and ultimately to stimulate the formation of dedicated social circles as loci of religious communication.⁷⁷ Although he considered direct expression (i.e., expression unmediated by thought) to be a bare possibility, this was not how religion ordinarily develops in his view: ↪

[W]e can hardly imagine so low a point of development of the human spirit . . . that each person, according to the stage of reflection at which he stands, should not at the same time become an object to himself in his various circumstances, in order to grasp these as representations and retain them in the form of thought. Now this endeavor has from time immemorial been oriented in particular towards pious emotions, and this, regarded in and for itself in its inwardness, is what the phrase “conception of pious states of mind” comprehends.⁷⁸

In other words, the expression of inward religion in language presupposes (in all but “defective” cultures) significant reflective development and is mediated by the structures of thought: “Only a development of this procedure which has continued so far that it can present itself outwardly in definite speech produces a genuine faith-statement.”⁷⁹ Religious doctrines, then, are acts of communication that are related to pious self-

consciousness in that they express its content in a manner mediated by reflection. The purpose of such communication is “to promote the living circulation of the religious consciousness”: In other words, just as in the *Speeches*, inward religion is transmitted from person to person and developed communally through specific forms of discourse.⁸⁰

Schleiermacher's discussion of the contamination of the developmental processes that produce religious doctrines constitutes another element of continuity between the *Speeches* and *The Christian Faith*. In the later text Schleiermacher argued that religion becomes contaminated when elements whose aim is other than to “promote the living circulation of the religious consciousness” enter the process of reflection and communication of pious feeling, and the primary agent of contamination in his discussion of the development of religious doctrines is “speculation.” Although he does not define the term precisely, I think we can understand by this term an *autonomous interest in truth*: that is, an interest in the truth, for its own sake, about either mundane or transcendent realities.⁸¹ To resist “speculation” is to resist mining expressions of piety for their truth content (i.e., using them as premises from which conclusions about the world or God can be drawn). Schleiermacher described such resistance as a defining feature of the Protestant theological tradition:

The Evangelical church in particular contains in itself the unanimous consciousness that the distinctive form of its dogmatic propositions does not depend on any form or school of philosophy, nor has it proceeded at all from a speculative interest, but simply from that of satisfying the immediate self-consciousness solely through the means ordained by Christ, in their genuine and uncorrupted form; thus it can consistently recognize only such propositions which can display this same lineage as dogmatic propositions belonging to it.⁸²

p. 97 In speaking of the satisfaction (*Befriedigung*) of pious self-consciousness, I take Schleiermacher to have been indicating that the character of that self-consciousness motivates certain forms of behavior (i.e., behavior that aims at the communication of piety). Here this notion is used as a critical principle: Only claims that can plausibly be understood as motivated solely by this communicative drive can be admitted as “uncorrupted” dogmatic propositions.⁸³ As received, the Christian doctrinal tradition combines elements that have developed in this manner with elements stemming from an “alien origin”, and Schleiermacher's ambition was to “purify” these doctrines by stripping them down to their functional core, that part of their content that serves to express pious feelings and thereby communicate piety.

2.3 Summary and Conclusions

From this all-too-brief investigation I conclude that the descriptions of “religion” in both the *Speeches on Religion* and in *The Christian Faith* follow the same basic pattern. In both texts religion is composed of a “core” out of which further phenomena develop along lines determined partly by the content of the core and partly by circumstances, and within the resulting collection of states of affairs and activities a distinction can be drawn between elements that correspond in the appropriate manner to the character of religion's core and elements that do not. The elements that constitute religion can be inward or outward; it is difficult to isolate a single principle that renders particular inward states religious, but outward phenomena become part of religion to the extent that they serve to *express* or *communicate* inward religion or, more generally, to promote its circulation.

We are now in a position to appreciate the fact that religion as Schleiermacher understood it has a concentric structure in a double sense. One sense has to do with the distinction between religion's inward and outward components: the essence of religion represents the center or core of the phenomenon, and around this exists an “inner ring” of mental states and activities and an “outer ring” of discourses, practices, and material productions. The other sense has to do with the relationship between ideal and actual religion: If ideal religion represents the imagined result of an optimal developmental trajectory and actual religion the product of

p. 98

various deformations and diversions of such a trajectory, then we can understand Schleiermacher's claim that one should be able to see "within" actually existing religion traces of something higher as equivalent to the claim that one can evaluate actually existing religion against an image of how the same *could have* and *should have* developed. So far as I can see, it is not possible to reduce these two types of concentricity to one; inward religion can become contaminated, in Schleiermacher's view, in precisely the same sense as outward religion, and outward religion is not, in virtue of being ↪ outward, less ideal than inward. The twofold concentricity of religion thus entails that there be two distinct scales according to which the distance, so to speak, of a particular example of religion from religion's essence can be assessed.

There is, however, one significant difference between the accounts of religion in the early and late texts in relation to ideal religion. In the *Speeches* Schleiermacher took pains to describe what religion would look like if it were free to develop without outside interference; the circumstances of actual religion were for the most part presented as at best a dilution of this ideal and at worst a positive corruption. In contrast, the *Glaubenslehre* presents religion as incorporating elements drawn from history from its very beginnings, in the emergence of God-consciousness. Furthermore, the involvement of these elements is regarded not as a contamination but rather as simply one of the factors that bear on the development of actual, historical religion. The critical function of the notion of religion's essence is the same in *The Christian Faith* as in the *Speeches*, but in the later text Schleiermacher did not devote space to sketching a counterfactual developmental history of an ideal Christianity. This difference between the earlier and later texts is also reflected in the disappearance of Schleiermacher's occasional charge in the *Speeches* that what are recognizable examples of "degenerate" religion are in fact not religion at all, as represented, for instance, in his claim that "whatever would go beyond [accepting everything individual as part of the whole] and penetrate deeper into the nature and substance of the whole is no longer religion, and will, if it still wants to be regarded as such, inevitably sink into empty mythology."⁸⁴ This is a recognizable example of the contamination of religion by a speculative interest, and any suggestion that such contamination destroys altogether the religious character of the activities that it affects is missing from *The Christian Faith*.

It does not seem to me that these differences reflect an alteration in the way Schleiermacher understood either the general structure of religion or the processes whereby it develops historically. The basic idea of a distinction between appropriate and wayward development is clearly present in both texts, and the differences between the claims produced by the application of this idea in his early and late writings seem to me to be primarily rhetorical. There is, however, at least one salient difference in the methods Schleiermacher followed in pursuing the immanent criticism of actual religion in the two texts. In the *Speeches* the criticism proceeds as it were wholesale, by way of a vivid portrayal of a sharply delineated and yet historically abstract ideal religion and then the comparison of actually existing religion taken as a whole with this imaginative construction. *The Christian Faith*, in contrast, proceeds piecemeal, through the evaluation of individual examples of religion (specifically, of particular religious doctrines) in light not of a overarching depiction of ideal Christianity but rather of an understanding of the relationship to religion's essence which would be required for the example in question to be truly ideal.

p. 99

I conclude this chapter with consideration of the utility of my reconstruction of the structure of religion as Schleiermacher understood it for identifying that which is uniquely religious. Briefly put, if "religion" in these texts by Schleiermacher is as I have described it, then what is its extent? Where do the boundaries between the religious and the nonreligious lie?

The question is of significance partly because, according to the standard interpretation, religion has fixed and stringent boundaries. On this view Schleiermacher's writings on religion amount to a "limitation of religion to feeling"; that is, one leaves religion behind as soon as one moves away from the stage of feeling to that of knowledge or action or into the realm of the interpersonal. I have been arguing that religion as Schleiermacher understood it does not come to an end either at the boundary between the inward and the outward or at the boundary between the ideal and the degenerate, but if these claims are correct, what are its limits? If the realm

of religion contains a host of phenomena whose religious character grows increasingly attenuated the greater their remove from religion's essence, at what point does one exit this realm and enter that of the nonreligious?

I do not think it is possible to locate a clear outward boundary of the phenomenon of religion on Schleiermacher's understanding. Rather, if religion is defined by a relation to its core or center, then it is something that "trails off" rather than ending abruptly. While there will be paradigmatic examples of religion and paradigmatic examples of nonreligion, there will also be substantial gray areas.⁸⁵ If we restrict ourselves for a moment to outward religion, paradigmatic examples of religion will be activities or artifacts that constitute the process whereby a particular form of pious self-consciousness circulates within a particular community. Certain speech acts will fit this description, but so will artifacts like church buildings or religious works of art when these are utilized for the purpose of religious communication. Paradigmatic examples of "not-religion" would be any activities or artifacts that lack any significant connection to religion's essence—affairs of a secular state and purely economic activities are possible examples.

But how firm does the connection to religion's essence have to be in order for a phenomenon to stand within the realm of religion? How much contamination can the activities of an ostensibly religious community—say, by the affairs of state—stand before religion ceases? How directly must activities relate to the communication of piety in order to be truly religious—would activities geared toward the maintenance of religious buildings or the performance of the musical works of a "dead religion" count? What about activities that are intended to communicate piety but in fact fail to do so?

p. 100 So far as I can see, Schleiermacher's account provides no answers to questions of this sort; it does not tell us at what point in the twofold drift away from religion's essence the designation "religious" no longer applies. But it is not clear to me that such vagueness should count as a defect of his account, and on the interpretation I have been presenting not terribly much hangs on the question of religion's boundaries. It is possible to say something about the extent to which each of these cases presents religion by discussing how each is related to the process of the communication of religion's essence; to ask, in addition to this, for a summary judgment on whether the case *is or is not* "religion" is to demand more precision, I think, than this form of religious essentialism can provide.

Notes

1. Seifert, *Theologie*, 88.
2. As Christian Albrecht puts it, the hermeneutical difficulty of the *Speeches* is such that the path that concentrates on the "principal theses" of religion's "original independence" and autonomy offers a relatively manageable project. See Albrecht, *Frömmigkeit*, 105ff. A different kind of response that has surfaced from time to time in the literature is to deny that a theory of religion can be distilled from this early text; see Grove, *Deutungen*, 254ff., for a brief survey of various responses to the problem of identifying such a theory in the *Speeches*.
3. Terence Tice, "Schleiermacher and the Study of Religion," in Richardson, *Friedrich Schleiermacher*, 66f. It is worth noting that the Oman translation of the *Speeches* greatly abetted the practice of disregarding all but the second speech by rendering its title, "Das Wesen der Religion," as "The Nature of Religion."
4. This procedure is far from novel. In 1901 Eugen Huber observed that in the *Glaubenslehre*, as well as in the *Speeches*, Schleiermacher vacillated between speaking of religion in a "narrow sense" and in a "broad sense," with the "narrow sense" referring roughly to religion's essence and the "broad sense" to actual, historical religion (Huber, *Die Entwicklung des Religionsbegriff*, 292). More recently Christian Albrecht has also distinguished three senses of religion in the *Speeches*, although his characterizations differ from mine: first, "the individual inclination of subjective consciousness (in the sense of 'religiosity')"; second, "the different empirically observable formations of religious community (*Gemeinschaftsbildungen*) (in the sense of 'positive religions')"; and third, "[religion] occasionally serves, in an overarching sense, to describe a supra-individual, spiritual-cultural phenomenon (in the sense of the 'generally religious')." Albrecht, *Frömmigkeit*, 12. To reiterate a point from my introduction, my focus is on the second of these three senses of "religion."
5. *On Religion*, 22, 23, 26.
6. Indeed, the conflation between religion and religion's essence sometimes extends to the point that the grammatical

specificity of the first passage cited here is overridden. A good example is found in Grove, who presents this passage (“religion’s essence... is intuition and feeling”) as “the famous definition of religion (*Religionsdefinition*) of the *Speeches*,” claiming that here Schleiermacher lays out a “characterization (*Bestimmung*) of religion as intuition and feeling” (Grove, *Deutungen*, 273). Thus, Grove reads this passage, which is grammatically about religion’s essence, as a claim about religion as such. In a sense my interpretation is a mirror image of Grove’s: I read this passage according to its plain sense, as a claim about religion’s essence, but read the other cited passages, which are grammatically about religion, as advancing claims about religion’s essence.

7. *On Religion*, 25, 73, 112.
8. *Ibid.*, 96, 108, 111.
9. This state of affairs is clearly visible even in W. C. Smith’s *Meaning and End of Religion*, a text known for its opposition to essentialism in the study of religion. Smith’s criticisms of essentialism are, so far as I can see, encapsulated in his remark that “essences do not have a history. Essences do not change. Yet it is an observable and important fact that what have been called the religions do, in history, change” (Smith, *Meaning and End of Religion*, 143f.). Smith seems to regard the content of the notion of essence as self-evident; at least he says nothing about what sort of thing an essence was supposed to be according to the theorists who worked with the notion, nor about how the term functioned in their work. More recently, although Walter Capps titled the first chapter of his *Religious Studies: The Making of a Discipline* “The Essence of Religion,” he never discussed the term “essence” in his text—not even in his discussion of Schleiermacher—and the term does not appear in his index. He did discuss what he terms the “first principle” of religion (also referred to as a *sine qua non* or religious *a priori*) as “*that without which religion would not be what it truly is*” (xviii). None of three recent, relatively high-profile collaborative reference works on the methodology of the study of religion (*Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, *Guide to the Study of Religion*, or *Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*) consider “essence” to be a topic worthy of independent treatment, the historical importance of this notion for the field notwithstanding. Such mentions that are to be found in these works suggest roughly the same degree of familiarity with the notion as displayed by Smith.
10. For example, in the *Guide to the Study of Religion*, Gregory Alles opines that “it is doubtful that religion has an essence, that is, a common defining character that is everywhere the same” (“Exchange,” in Braun and McCutcheon’s *Guide to the Study of Religion*, 114). Talal Asad’s brief references, in the first chapter of *Genealogies of Religion*, to “religion’s essence,” while they do reflect at least some of what was at stake for Schleiermacher (specifically, the question of religion’s distinctness from politics), display the same brevity: “[T]he insistence that religion has an autonomous essence—not to be confused with the essence of science, or of politics, or of common sense—invites us to define religion (like any essence) as a transhistorical and transcultural phenomenon” (*Genealogies of Religion*, 28). Tomoko Masuzawa, in *The Invention of World Religions*, unpacks her phrase “unreconstituted religious essentialists” simply as referring to those who take “religion” to name “a category *sui generis*,” an identification that brings no clarity to either locution (*Invention of World Religions*, 7) [10.7208/chicago/9780226922621.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226922621.001.0001).
11. Gelman, *Essential Child*.
12. *Ibid.*, 277 [10.7208/chicago/9780226922621.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226922621.001.0001).
13. *Ibid.*, 6 [10.7208/chicago/9780226922621.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226922621.001.0001). Gelman’s discussion is not restricted to this generic form of essentialism: In fact, the introduction to her book provides one of the clearest and most useful discussions of the varieties of essentialism that I have encountered. Later in the book she hypothesizes that “essentialism is a species-general, universal, inevitable mode of thought—but that the form that it takes varies specifically according to the culture at hand, with the basic notion of essentialism becoming elaborated in each culture’s complex theories of nature and society” (283).
14. For an example of a discussion that both reflects the association of essentialism with common sense and displays a marked lack of clarity concerning just what essentialism commits one to, see Stephan Fuchs, *Against Essentialism*, in particular 12ff. Gelman explicitly distinguishes the question of essentialism as a “habit of mind” from that of essentialism as a metaphysical doctrine and advances no claims about whether any form of essentialism is reflective of the structure of reality (Gelman, *Essential Child*, 10).
15. Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 417. My discussion of the diversity of discussions of essentialism in analytic philosophy is based on Mike Rea’s treatment in *World without Design*, 99–104.
16. So, for example, Diana Fuss defines essentialism as “a belief in the real, true essences of things, the invariable and fixed properties which define the ‘whatness’ of a given entity,” a position that suggests “the idea that men and women, for example, are identified as such on the basis of transhistorical, eternal, immutable essences.” Fuss, *Essentially Speaking*, xi. For a helpful survey of controversies surrounding the notion of “essence” within feminism and feminist theology, see Armour, *Deconstruction*, 16–22. A recent article on Edward Said by Irfan Khawaja focuses usefully on essentialism concerning *doctrines*. A subcategory of essentialism in general, essentialism about doctrines, according to Khawaja, involves claims in five areas: definitional identity, synchronic identity, diachronic identity, explanatory power, and logical implication (i.e., questions of what embracing a doctrine entails, regardless of whether those who embrace the doctrine

- realize it or not). Both Islam and Orientalism count as doctrines in Khawaja's sense of the term, and where Said's *Orientalism* was dedicated to a criticism of essentialism about Islam, Khawaja points out that Said explicitly embraced essentialism about Orientalism itself. Khawaja, "Essentialism, Consistency, and Islam."
17. My familiarity with the literature on the notion of essence suggests that it is primarily the legacy of Ernst Troeltsch that has kept interest in the subject alive in English. For discussions that are well informed and critical without being dismissive see Stephen Sykes, "Ernst Troeltsch and Christianity's Essence"; also Sykes, *Identity of Christianity*. Lori Pearson's *Beyond Essence* is a significant contribution to this literature. In German the best recent study of the notion of "essence" in Schleiermacher's work is Schröder, *Die kritische Identität*.
 18. "What Does the 'Essence of Christianity' Mean?" was initially published in 1903 in *Die christliche Welt*, and Troeltsch substantively revised it in 1913 for republication among his collected works. A translation of the revised version by Michael Pye appears in Troeltsch, *Writings on Theology and Religion*, 124–79.
 19. Troeltsch, *Writings on Theology and Religion*, 124, 129.
 20. *Ibid.*, 130, emphasis in the original.
 21. *Ibid.*, 141.
 22. *Ibid.*, 141, emphasis in the original.
 23. *Ibid.*, 144.
 24. On this point see Huber, *Entwicklung*, 15ff.
 25. *On Religion*, 24.
 26. *Ibid.*, 25, 34, 38f., 44.
 27. For a useful discussion of the notion of "religious intuition" in the first edition of the *Speeches* see Grove, *Deutungen*, 290–306. Grove emphasizes that a religious intuition for Schleiermacher has the character of an *interpretation* of ordinary experience; it is not intuition pure and simple but "*intuition of something as something*, namely intuition of an individual thing as a depiction of the universe" (295); emphasis in the original.
 28. *On Religion*, 29, 35, 37f.
 29. *Ibid.*, 36, 54.
 30. *Ibid.*, 28.
 31. *Ibid.*, 45.
 32. *Ibid.*, 46.
 33. *Ibid.*
 34. *Ibid.*, 29.
 35. *Ibid.*, 73.
 36. *Ibid.*
 37. *Ibid.*
 38. *Ibid.*, 48. Cf. also 96: "[W]hy should the inner, true church be one? It is so that each person may intuit and let the religion of another be imparted to him that he cannot intuit as his own and that was thought to be wholly different from it."
 39. *Ibid.*, 75.
 40. *Ibid.*, 50. In the early part of the third speech, Schleiermacher argues that religion, in the specific sense of a capacity to produce "intuitions of the universe," cannot be "taught." It should be clear, on the basis of the passages presented above, that this does not amount to the claim that religion cannot be communicated. I take his point to be that the communicative activities by which the ability to intuit is "awakened" cannot be *formalized or routinized* but requires the kind of flexibility and personal attention that only intimate fellowship can provide.
 41. *Ibid.*, 58.
 42. *Ibid.*, 75.
 43. *Ibid.*, 87.
 44. *Ibid.*, 75f.
 45. *Ibid.*, 76f.
 46. In his introductory essay to Schleiermacher's lectures on ethics, Braun remarks that it was only around 1800 that Schleiermacher began to develop a sense of the necessity of community for the development of true individuality. Although this clearly emerges as a prominent theme in the ethics lectures in a way it does not in the *Speeches*, it seems clear to me that the *Speeches* clearly express the view that participation in religious community is required for religious formation or enculturation. See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Schleiermachers Werke*, vol. 2, xff. Bernd Oberdorfer's *Geselligkeit und Realisierung von Sittlichkeit* further demonstrates that the social dimension of human life in general was critically important to Schleiermacher prior to his composition of the *Speeches* and has an important point of origin in Schleiermacher's exploration of Aristotle on the topic of friendship. Ted Vial also notes that the "formative" aspect of worship is a frequently overlooked aspect of Schleiermacher's thought; see Vial, "Friedrich Schleiermacher on the Central Place of Worship," 64f.

47. *On Religion*, 25f.
48. Metaphysics as Schleiermacher described it “classifies the universe and divides it into this being and that, seeks out the reasons for what exists, and deduces the necessity of what is real while spinning the reality of the world and its laws out of itself.” *Ibid.*, 20.
49. *Ibid.*, 27f.
50. *Ibid.*, 86.
51. *Ibid.*, 87. In his response to Sack’s criticisms of the *Speeches* Schleiermacher expressed the same point in milder terms: “I have said clearly enough that I consider our church as presently constituted to be a double institution, dedicated in part to religion and in part to morality” (Blackwell, “The Antagonistic Correspondence,” 119).
52. *On Religion*, 115. At greater length: “Judaism is long since a dead religion, and those who at present still bear its colors are actually sitting and mourning beside the undying mummy and weeping over its demise and sad legacy. . . . [Judaism] died when its holy books were closed; then the conversation with Jehovah with his people was viewed as ended; the political association that was linked to it dragged on in an ailing existence, and its external parts were preserved even longer still, the unpleasant appearance of a mechanical movement after the life and spirit had long since departed” (*ibid.*). For a discussion of Schleiermacher’s conception of Judaism and its sources, see Joseph Pickle, “Schleiermacher on Judaism.”
53. See especially *On Religion*, 70f.
54. CG2 §6 Zusatz; KGA I.13, 1 58 (29). See also the translators’ footnote appended to this passage in the English edition. In fact, Schleiermacher’s usage of the term in the first ten sections of the second edition does not entirely fit this description. There are indeed places where Schleiermacher appears to substitute “*religiös*” for his usual “*fromm*” for the sake of variety, as when he speaks of “*religiöse Erregungen*” and “*religiöse Gemeinschaft*” in §6. Some of the uses of “*Religion*” that do not clearly fit this description are formal terms (*Religionsphilosophie*, *Religionsgeschichte*); the consistent pattern of the remainder of his usage suggests that he found the term useful primarily in its broadest sense, as encompassing not only phenomena with a relatively immediate relationship to piety but also those that stand at some remove or in fact phenomena whose relationship to piety is not immediately evident. It is in this sense that he used the terminology “*religiöses Gebiet*,” “*religiöse Sätze*” (§3), “*religiöses Leben*” (§6) and speaks of a particular “*Religionsform*” (§7–8), of “*Religion*” and “*Religionen*” (§7–10), of “*religiösen Symbolen*” (§8), and of “*religiösen Mysterien*” (§10).
55. Even otherwise careful readers sometimes present his account in this light. Richard Niebuhr puts the point thus: “Piety or religion is the name of the level of self-consciousness that is the most decisive of all.” Niebuhr, *Schleiermacher on Christ and Religion*, 184. Throughout the book Niebuhr speaks of religion according to Schleiermacher as “a mode of self-consciousness.” Both the conflation of religion and piety and attempts to maintain the distinction between them are in evidence in the German literature as well. Huber, for instance, presented this distinction as a corrective to D. F. Strauss’s criticisms of Schleiermacher. According to Huber, Strauss missed the specific intentions of the *Glaubenslehre*, which “wanted not at all to define objective religion, but only subjective piety. Visible actions, cults, and organizations were not at all of interest. It defined only a spiritual fact in the life of the individual, not a communal fact.” Huber, *Entwicklung*, 236. I think Huber overstated the case somewhat; while it is true that piety was a major locus of interest for Schleiermacher in the *Glaubenslehre*, the entire project is oriented toward engagement with one aspect of outward religion, religious doctrine.
56. CG2 §6 Zusatz; KGA I.13, 1 58f. (29f.). Compare the first-edition version of this discussion in CG1 §12.3, KGA I.7, 1 42f.
57. CG2 §6 Zusatz; KGA I.13, 1 59 (30).
58. CG2 §4; KGA I.13, 1 32 (12).
59. The topic of “immediacy” in Schleiermacher’s thought has been a topic of a great deal of discussion in the literature; useful treatments are found in Albrecht, *Schleiermachers Theorie*, 236ff., and Grove, *Deutungen*, 481–530 and 595ff. For my purposes the only pressing question in connection with Schleiermacher’s appeal to “immediacy” is whether this appeal amounts to a claim of self-authentication or direct awareness of reality in general or God in particular. I discuss this topic in chapter 4, pp. 168ff.
60. CG2 §4.3; KGA I.13, 1 38 (16).
61. Cramer, “Die eine Frömmigkeit und die vielen Frommen,” 333f.
62. CG2 §4.4; KGA I.13, 1 38f. (16).
63. I discuss the relationship between the content of the feeling of absolute dependence and the state of affairs of being in relation to God further in chapter 4, pp. 166–73.
64. CG2 §5.4; KGA I.13, 1 48 (22f.)
65. CG2 §5.1; KGA I.13, 1 42f. (19).
66. CG2 §5.3; KGA I.13, 1 46 (21).
67. CG2 §5.3; KGA I.13, 1 47 (22).
68. CG2 §5.3; KGA I.13, 1 46 (21). Compare the wording of the first edition: “no-one will be able to become conscious of an absolutely general feeling of dependence upon God, but rather always one referred to a particular condition.” CG1 §10.5;

- KGA I.7, 1 37.
69. CG1 §16.1; KGA I.7, 1 55.
 70. CG2 §4.4; KGA I.13, 1 39 (17).
 71. CG2 §5 Zusatz; KGA I.13, 1 52 (25).
 72. See §8 in the second edition, especially §8.2.
 73. Schleiermacher seems not to be entirely consistent on this point. God-consciousness, for example, would seem to be a component of piety and indeed a fundamental component since (as Schleiermacher stated) it is only through the development of the God-consciousness that individuals become aware of their absolute dependence. But because God-consciousness makes reference to something other than the self, it does not accord with Schleiermacher's technical definition of "feeling." Thus, if God-consciousness is a component of piety, then piety is not entirely a matter of feeling. A remark by Schröder addresses this tension between the character of God-consciousness and its identification as an element of piety: "Since God-consciousness, as the intentional composition (*Fassung*) of religious feeling, emerges from reflection on pious feeling, it must be the 'most immediate reflection,' that is to say the 'most original representation' of religious consciousness, which must be defined as a kind of referentiality in which as yet no object is predicated." Schröder, *Die kritische Identität*, 33. In support of this reading Schröder cites two marginal notes that Schleiermacher appended to his discussion of the concept of God in the first edition of *The Christian Faith*: "God only my reflection—but certainly the innermost within everything and most original," and "the religious doctrine of God is only an analysis of subjectivity" (KGA I.7, 3 22, 33). For my purposes the question of Schleiermacher's consistency on this point is relatively unimportant, as is the question of precisely where the boundaries of piety lie.
 74. CG2 §3.4; KGA I.13, 1 26f. (8f.).
 75. CG2 §3.4; KGA I.13, 1 29 (10).
 76. CG2 §15; KGA I.13, 1 127 (76).
 77. CG2 §6.2; KGA I.13, 1 55 (27).
 78. CG2 §15.1; KGA I.13, 1 128 (77).
 79. CG2 §15.1; KGA I.13, 1 128 (77).
 80. CG2 §18.3; KGA I.13, 1 142 (87).
 81. I have discussed this topic further in "Schleiermacher's Theological Anti-Realism."
 82. CG2 §16 Zusatz; KGA I.13, 1 135 (82f.).
 83. Indeed, Schleiermacher defended his identification of statements about the self as the "fundamental form" of Christian doctrines on precisely these grounds: "[I]t is clear that descriptions of human states of mind with this content can only be taken from the realm of inner experience, and that therefore in this form nothing alien can creep into the Christian doctrine of faith (*Glaubenslehre*), while expressions of qualities of the world can indeed be natural-scientific, and conceptions of divine modes of action purely metaphysical" (CG2 §30.2; KGA I.13, 1 194 [126]).
 84. *On Religion*, 25.
 85. Ulrich Barth's comments on the methodology of the *Speeches* are relevant here. Barth characterizes Schleiermacher's approach as a "diagnosis of the times" (*Zeitdiagnose*), highlighting Schleiermacher's appropriation from the field of medicine of concepts such as "healthy" or "unhealthy." It is because it has this character that Schleiermacher's discussion "is in no way capable of attaining the level of plausibility of pure conceptual knowledge, let alone the exactitude of nomological cognition." Barth, *Aufgeklärter Protestantismus*, 269.