

The more I think about it, the more Schleiermacher's understanding of religion as "feeling" (specifically, "the feeling of absolute dependence") strikes me as inadequate.

It seems inadequate to me because, on what I should accept as an adequate epistemology or cognitional theory, "feeling" is so far from being a "third" alongside thinking and acting as to be the original, primal moment in both, and thus in science and morality as well as in metaphysics and religion. Feeling is to be understood, following Whitehead, as simply the experience in the pure mode of causal efficacy lying at the base of all our experience and cognition as such. In less technical terms, feeling is our primal sense of worth—of existence and value—differentiating itself, as Whitehead says, into the threefold sense of ourselves, others, and the whole. Furthermore, if Hegel's quip that, on Schleiermacher's understanding, a dog must be the best Christian really is beside the point, this can only be because religion, properly so-called, is, in its own way, or at its own level, a matter of understanding, and not simply of feeling—again, properly so-called. Of course, "feeling" can be used broadly enough to include understanding. But, then, the question becomes, What distinguishes the understanding included in piety or religious feeling from the understanding(s) included in the presumably different modes of feeling underlying thinking and acting, science and morality, and so on?

One answer, obviously, is that religious feeling has a different object: it is the understanding feeling of the infinite and all-encompassing whole and of ourselves and others as all parts thereof—something very like this being what is evidently packed into Schleiermacher's concept of "the feeling of absolute dependence." But, then, arguably, thinking in the form of metaphysics, as distinct from science, also has this same whole and its parts as its object, and so the question remains as to the difference between the understanding involved in religion and the metaphysical form of thinking.

My contention is that, when all is said and done, the only convincing answer to this question is that the understanding feeling of the whole distinctive of piety or religion differs from that distinctive of metaphysics because of the different basic *questions* constitutive of them as respectively

religion and metaphysics. Although both arise out of feeling of the whole and of ourselves and others as its parts, and have precisely this as their object, religion's concern with this object leads to the question of its meaning for us, for our understanding of ourselves, and thus for our entire life-praxis, whereas metaphysics' concern with the whole gives rise to the question of its structure in itself, in complete abstraction from its meaning for us.

But if this answer involves a significantly different understanding of religion from Schleiermacher's, there is one point, certainly, where it is strikingly similar—namely, in its analysis of the properly religious, or, more generally, existential *question* as "a necessary and indispensable third" alongside the proper questions of metaphysics (as well as science), on the one hand, and of morality, on the other. Although the question constituting religion is also closely related to those constituting metaphysics and morality respectively—answers to either having necessary implications for answers to the other—it is at the same time different from both of these other questions, with the result that religion, as Schleiermacher contends, is neither metaphysics nor morality but precisely a "third." This it is, however, not because it is "feeling," as distinct from both "thinking" and "acting," but because it arises out of a different human concern and asks a correspondingly different question from those pursued, in their different ways, by metaphysics and morality.

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