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# The Spirit of Friendship: Thoughts on Subjectivity and Friendship from Friedrich Schleiermacher

Translated by Matthew R. Robinson

## 1 Friendship: Necessity and Freedom

There is no human life without friendship. Friendship: It is a relationship in which I am “immediately” – directly, right away and without mediation – recognized as myself, beyond all determinations of background or utility. Each person grows up in a *family* in which factors of natural origins and symbolic communications are bound up together and in which mutuality grows out of dependence. We stand in *professional* relationships through which individual purposes are brought into a general framework. These are just two examples of basic ways that an individual’s life is formed by being the subject of claims made upon one. But no one becomes the person he or she is through such a claim alone. A moment of that which is purpose-free must also always be present along with these simultaneously personal and professional claims made upon one – a moment of something fleeting by or overflowing that simply cannot be calculated. And we are talking about just such a thing when we talk about friendship. Friendship is necessary for life.

Friendship cannot be forced. This characteristic is deeply connected to the unique necessity of friendship. Families are required to accept family members, and professional settings have to integrate individuals if they want to be successful. But no one can be externally induced to recognize another person in his or her immediacy. For this reason, there is always an element of contingency in friendship. Every moment of one’s life simply happens to have come about as it did, but once things have turned out the way they have, they cannot be any other way. Of course, it could have been different; any number of things could have gone differently than they in fact did. One might have taken up with other persons than one did, and the outcome would have been different. That things are as they are now is the result of an ineliminable freedom.

Necessity and freedom, both belong together in friendship. And human subjectivity forms itself only in this togetherness. Friendship, in other words, is any-

thing but an epiphenomenon of conscious life. Much more, friendship is etched into the foundations of its realization.

The following essay intends to outline why this is the case and what this observation means for religion, on the basis of some of Friedrich Schleiermacher's most fundamental ideas. In this presentation, Schleiermacher will lead us beyond his own account to indicate to us a path forward for today.<sup>1</sup>

## 2 Feeling and Consciousness

Although Schleiermacher's explicitly given concern in §3 of the *Christian Faith* is to pinpoint the location of piety in the human faculties, the model that he sets up there of the structure of human inner life, imported from his ethics, provides a nice summary of his whole view. In order to determine the location of piety, he subdivides the faculties of consciousness into knowing, doing, and feeling. In so doing, he relocates his argument from the second speech in the *Speeches* concerning the modes of totality (metaphysics, morals, and religion) to the internal modes of operation of consciousness.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless the manner of presentation moves in continuity with his earlier design, for it runs essentially for and through demonstration of the point that the three faculties belong and work together – with specific propositional differences. The operation of knowing works by means of receiving external givens; the external is present in the internal as something “known.” But this already describes an interactive interrelation, namely, accessing the external, which manifests itself as a doing. Knowing and doing are to a certain extent bound together through correlation with one another. Taking something up in receiving presupposes a going outward; that which is taken up requires that this subject take a position in relation to what is known, in other words, requires action. How does it happen, then, that in this back-and-forth movement between the receiving that is oriented toward

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<sup>1</sup> One could follow the development of Schleiermacher's theory historically, proceeding through statements he makes in order of their appearance. Then, in determining differences and interconnections, one would need to distinguish between the early works which overwhelmingly develop pragmatic and communication-theoretic forms of argument (as in the *Speeches* and the *Soliloquies*) and the more strongly transcendental form of argument in the later works (as in the *Dialektik* and the *Christian Faith*). On account of necessary limitations, this approach will not be taken here. I focus primarily on the *Christian Faith*, in its second edition.

<sup>2</sup> See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Der Christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt*, ed. Rolf Schäfer, KGA I/13.1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), §3.1–5; and Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern*, KGA I/12, ed. Günter Meckenstock (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 41–149.

the internal and the acting that moves toward the external a subject nevertheless remains identical with itself? The faculty of feeling is called upon for this. For in feeling, a subject is with and for itself, related to itself – but in the framing and horizon of an other. Feeling, as a faculty, brings the subject – in its concrete way of being in the world – into contact with itself.

This mode of operations, here focused on the subject, is nevertheless related to the discussion in the second speech. Schleiermacher's account there ran through various modes of totality, as given in metaphysics, morals, and religion. The account here is not focused on such representation of totality, but rather on dimensions of subjectivity; still, even here a certain givenness of consciousness is presupposed, that is then integrated in itself. It is no doubt correct that the construction of consciousness in the strict sense of its genetic reproduction cannot be accounted for in this way. Rather, above all – and this will occupy us now going forward – what is to be held onto from this account is that feeling is to be understood as consciousness.

Three points follow from this thesis. First, feeling does not present any kind of “beyond consciousness,” i.e., it is not a-logical. That would in any case be a self-contradictory attempt to maintain the peculiarity or specialness of religion over against rational discourse. Also implied in this view – beyond its significance for religion – is that things that are possibly preconscious or subconscious are not completely without connection to reflection. That is not to say that there is no preconscious or subconscious content in feeling; indeed, there is something to be said for their presence there and reason to think not everything can be made rational. But the contact to what is rational cannot be eliminated either. So for feeling to belong to consciousness means that it itself must be subjected to rational deliberation. If it is an essential characteristic of consciousness to form relationships in order to understand object relations, then feeling must be analyzed with respect to its presuppositions and outcomes. A mere thoughtless receptivity cannot be the whole story when it comes to feeling; it always remains possible to take a position over against one's own feeling. Indeed, without this ability to take a position over against oneself thinking is not even possible. Finally, it is evident here to what extent one actually has to account for the unity of consciousness in diverse modes of operation. Without taking away from the differences between knowing, doing, and feeling, these faculties belong together in that they continuously accompany one another.<sup>3</sup> This is significant as far as feeling is concerned in that it means feeling must accompany all of the other op-

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3 Cf. Schleiermacher, *Der Christliche Glaube*, §3.3.

erations of consciousness. And, from a theological perspective, only in this way can piety and an individual's life exist together.<sup>4</sup>

Yet another special characteristic now comes into play. For the structures of consciousness are not only connected to feeling, feeling underlays the question of its own origins. The broad-reaching thesis concerning feeling as consciousness leads beyond the existence of feeling and raises the question of its “whence.”<sup>5</sup> That is to say, this question is not coincidentally and arbitrarily raised alongside the question of the meaning of feeling, but rather presents itself much more consequentially due to the placement of feeling in the overall structure of consciousness.

It is this question that now makes it necessary to further differentiate the description of the faculty of consciousness. For singularly here one can proceed no further with the description of what is; one is pushed to more far-reaching interpretation.

Schleiermacher himself indicates this step when in §4 of the *Christian Faith* he turns from the previous angle, oriented toward the faculties of consciousness, to a new angle that looks at the relationships within consciousness. When one pays attention to these relational contours in consciousness, then one sees within the faculties of knowing and doing two oppositional movements in continuous use. On the one hand, there is the capability of relating oneself to someone or something else. Only this apparently basic phenomenon already presupposes the ability to register distinctly the relationship itself, i. e., to this or that other.<sup>6</sup> Such can admittedly only happen when the relation to another is categorially a distinct relation, in other words, is not superseded through relations with a second and a third other and so on. And nothing other than the relation of that other to oneself can hold this categorial distinction firmly in view. Only in the simultaneity and opposition of relating to something other and of relating to oneself can one register the operating procedure of consciousness.

If consciousness does so conduct itself, then it follows from such an account that the phenomenon of relating cannot be supported apart from some external occasion or counterpart. For if that were the case, relating would be not be separable from that counterpart to which it owes its very existence – which is to say, the relating could not come to consciousness. Instead one must take as one's point of departure that an internal self-relation precedes the relation to something or someone else. It cannot be constituted through “worldly” externality.

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4 Cf. Schleiermacher, *Der Christliche Glaube*, §3.4–5.

5 Cf. Schleiermacher, *Der Christliche Glaube*, §4.4.

6 Cf. Schleiermacher, *Der Christliche Glaube*, §4.1.

And yet, as deeply anchored in consciousness as it may be, neither can it produce itself from pure spontaneity; for then one would have to include in that ability the ability to have produced the difference to externality in which the self-relation itself stands. Should one wish to accept that, then the relation to another would be only a hidden self-relation, or in other words, not something categorially, actually other. So the only remaining option is to proceed from the existing of the self-relation – to accept it so-to-speak as something set and something one cannot go behind. Or, in Schleiermacher’s famous phrase, “immediate self-consciousness.”<sup>7</sup> In that phrase both aspects come together: the inability to get behind the givenness in all of the activity of consciousness *and* also consciousness’s active construction of the different relationships which constitute it itself. The apparently contradictory nature of the expression “immediate self-consciousness” is thus eliminated when one thinks about this difference of dimensions which exist in a unified way in consciousness. In order for this dimensional difference to exist, however, both levels – i.e., the basic structure and the mode of its realization – have to be conceptually distinguished.

A significant consequence follows from the observation that feeling belongs to consciousness as the place of immediate self-consciousness. For some interpretation must be given of the givenness of the immediate self-consciousness. Should one wish to leave this question be, that would amount simply to asserting the independence of feeling, that is, would amount to an explanation of feeling as something external to consciousness. But the only way to explain rationally the appearance of something as a given is to use the schema of causality. Something comes “from somewhere” or “whence.”<sup>8</sup> Even if one wishes to understand this expression – one which Schleiermacher himself uses similarly – as a *hermeneutical* formula, it is difficult to keep at a distance at least the appearance of causality.

Once this expression of the “whence” is used, however, one cannot neglect to assign some referent instance to it, to which this “whence” refers. And here the expression “God” appears, in a characteristic mixture of hermeneutical interpretation and causal explanation.<sup>9</sup> It goes without saying that such a move does not mean to refer to a simple causal relationship. And yet it does index a kind of heritage, one that is not only responsible for the placement of the immediate self-consciousness, but also for space and time, that is, for the world, in which this consciousness moves and acts. Any relationship to oneself and to

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<sup>7</sup> Schleiermacher, *Der Christliche Glaube*, §3.

<sup>8</sup> Schleiermacher, *Der Christliche Glaube*, KGA I/13.1, §4.4, 39.

<sup>9</sup> Schleiermacher, *Der Christliche Glaube*, KGA I/13.1, §4.4, 39.

others is grounded in God. Since, in this way, the ground of argumentation is used up, Kant's question about the cause of God<sup>10</sup> – a question which he managed to ask just as much ironically as critically – seems rather naïve and must remain unanswered. The causal network, for self-evident reasons, cannot be developed beyond the interpretive framework “God.” Nevertheless, the proximity to a causal way of thinking remains unbroken.

This is the model that stands behind and makes possible the determination of the immediate self-consciousness as a “feeling of absolute dependence.”<sup>11</sup> The contradictory quality of this figure of speech is just as obvious here as we saw with the phrase “immediate self-consciousness.” The moment of dependence, that is, the categorical position of the effect in the model of causation, provides the point of departure, which in turn signals the ineliminable givenness of feeling. And yet, at the same time, the qualifying term “absolute” – in the sense of an absolute position, which as such evades the construction of a causal chain – carries within it a breaking through of the causal schema.

This only serves to raise the question, however, whence this insight into the nature of feeling comes. The way to this insight apparently cannot be traversed via a conceptual style of argumentation; instead a kind of self-insight is required that is different from the familiar mode of inferential reason.

### 3 The Way to Recognition of the Feeling of Absolute Dependence

One can read Schleiermacher's statements in §5 of the *Christian Faith* as a road-map toward the discovery of the feeling of absolute dependence. The conceptually distinguished stages of reflection appear as experience-based stages of an emerging view of the self.<sup>12</sup>

The starting position is that of a relationship between freedom and dependence that characterizes empirical life. There is no denying that a person's life moves in a back and forth between attractive and repellent forces, physical as well as psychological. One takes one's own position in this situation of interwovenness by means of one's own action. These reciprocities reflect the total empirical situation of an individual life. “I am here, I exist, but I do not yet have a grasp

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<sup>10</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* B, 641; Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), 574.

<sup>11</sup> Schleiermacher, *Der Christliche Glaube*, §4.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Schleiermacher, *Der Christliche Glaube*, §5.1–3.

on myself.” One could describe the situation thus. At base, the internal relation to the self – which for human beings is always present – runs into emptiness, remains opaque, uncomprehended. Self-direction is set aside through external influence. This is what Schleiermacher calls the “confused, animal” consciousness.<sup>13</sup> Of course there are internal feedbacks, but these remain concealed; everything that causes movement is attributed to external reasons. In this condition, we exist as elements in the world, and whatever happens in our inner lives is not yet accessible to us.

One can imagine the transition into the stage that follows like a stage of development. What is already present internally is unfolded to an extent. The motivation and material for this development is the experience of an excess found in one’s unique reactions to the world that influences us. We gain independence through the ways that we hold ourselves in the world. These express themselves, for example, through the language one uses to express one’s self-relation through designating that which is external; it can only do so by referring back to the internal from which it springs and which it thereby, so-to-speak, co-represents. And so here the idea of a certain independence from the world appears in the form of the horizon of one’s own, potentially free action – if initially only sporadically and rhapsodically. It is difficult, at first, to carry that difference between self and world through constantly, for, as much as human life concerns itself with differentiating itself from the world, it knows – perhaps more intensively than before – it belongs to it.<sup>14</sup> Language, always bound to the world, can still try to distance itself from the world in its use and orientation and to create for itself more lasting images; it seems that individual independence develops thanks to linguistic formulations that have come about in this way. But the relationship always remains precarious, and in this stage consciousness remains in close contact with the sensible world.

The situation changes for the first time in the next and highest stage. The conscious awareness appears that the intermediate phenomena – phenomena which, already at some distance from the world, are supposed to represent independence – themselves still have to be left behind. The unity of feeling is attributed not to various discrete instances but, in accordance with one’s own unity, to something singular. Even with this deepened insight the relation to the world is not dissolved. It simply falls under a two-fold determination: on the one hand, the world, along with the factual and evidential determinate claims it makes on

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<sup>13</sup> Schleiermacher, KGA I/13.1, §5.1, 43.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. here Schleiermacher’s discussion of the consciousness of finitude in *Der Christliche Glaube*, §8.2.

us, must be held in check; nothing external, not even a symbolic external, can hold as the ground of immediate self-consciousness (i. e., feeling). Here the continuous work of distinguishing and demarcating is necessary. On the other hand, the world reveals itself as capable of being worked on. For precisely at this moment, when the inner cohesion of feeling is guaranteed as independent from the world, can action in the world pursue unified goals, or in other words, permit the inner cohesion of consciousness to be brought about in the free action of consciousness.

It is a credit to Schleiermacher's keenness of insight that he refused to present this succession of stages as the product of chain of reflections. It is much more a historical result of the history of religion. Above all, it is necessary to fix the two higher stages in historical constellations – and this sounds a lot like the fifth speech – as they have been configured and presented by historical subjects.<sup>15</sup> Which is to say: there is no conceptually necessary historical inclination toward monotheism that drives religion and through which the pure form of the feeling of absolute dependence is reached.

And yet one basic determination does remain in Schleiermacher's historically formed succession model, namely, the fact that human consciousness finds itself as itself only in distinction and demarcation from nature. Schleiermacher's dual model of immediate and sensible self-consciousness stems precisely from this problem. One could also formulate this observation on the theory of consciousness sociologically: It is the human being's constant relation to nature. Or, better: It is the human being's economic and technical interactions that provide the framing for its coming to itself. The sensible self-consciousness is simply the expression of unceasing and insurmountable natural dependence, which is not only *not* set aside by absolute dependence – external dependence acquires its stable externality directly from inner independence through the non-worldly "Whence," which, then, makes the world into the field of practical action in mastery over nature.

But here a serious theoretical problem emerges. So far we have seen that Schleiermacher uses, first, a theory of the faculties to describe a differentiation among knowing, doing, and feeling and then makes this more precise by means of a theoretical description of the relationships among these. Out of this operation, insight into the structural uniqueness of the immediate self-consciousness grows, which is to be interpreted as the feeling of absolute dependence. We have seen, further, how Schleiermacher works to limit the consequences of this relational approach as pertains the apparent causality implied therein. He herme-

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15 Cf. Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion*, KGA I/12, 240 – 312.

neutically surrounds the projection of the categorical causality-model, as that model is applied to the external world, thereby redirecting it toward self-analysis rather than attempting to use it as a proof for the existence of God. Third, we have noted that the structural arrangement of consciousness becomes accessible historically, that it becomes perceivable and lived. And yet this hermeneutical-historical path remains detained at the point of departure, namely, that of a life in the world needing to be maintained by one's own action. The historical phenomenon of the feeling of absolute dependence also, all the way through the mediating stages, remains restrained by the originating opposition between inner and outer. This becomes evident in that the feeling of absolute dependence can only maintain itself through either demarcation of itself from the world or exerting mastery over the world. In this way, it is and remains detained in dependence in a secondary – although now also no longer criticizable – way.

How is one to handle this situation? One may be more than ready to follow Schleiermacher on several points. One can readily affirm the phenomenon of the givenness of consciousness, in particular the consciousness of finite freedom. One can even accept the non-worldly grounding of the feeling of absolute dependence as the mode through which this givenness arrives. The question is simply whether there is anywhere in the middle of Schleiermacher's account that he overlooked or takes to be trivial, such that it becomes possible to reconstruct, again and in a different way, the phenomena of self-consciousness he describes along with their theoretical presentation. I would like to make one attempt in this direction by making use of the idea of friendship as constitutive for consciousness. This will proceed, first, through categorical considerations for which there are also indications given by Schleiermacher himself.

## 4 Friendship, Freedom, and Joy

The question that now concerns us is the following: How might it be explained that actually a structure of relationship rules in the pre-givenness of consciousness from which Schleiermacher starts?

The first consideration is a negative point: It would be a dangerous and premature conclusion, should one wish to name the relation to the “whence of the feeling of absolute dependence” as the ground over which the structural relation of the relationship should be construed. For in this way one would be making an analogous mistake to expanding the category of causality to the idea of God. The only difference is that in former case the category of correlation stands where causality stands in the latter. There must be different way forward.

We had stumbled upon the point that it is language in which external relationality and the self-relation always appear together. Whenever a further development of language occurs, a differentiated relational structure exists *de facto*, without previous reflection. The phenomenon of language, however, redirects us to the field of intersubjectivity; for there is famously no such thing as a private language. Intersubjectivity means, in the first place, that speaking and understanding are bound up with one another. That which I speak, I myself understand – and I articulate it in such a way that it can and should be understood. In my own use of language there is a reflexive relation (in my own understanding): precisely that something else is said indicates something external. And in that which is said a relation to an other, an understander, is built, which connects that other to me in understanding and at the same time opens up to that other a self-relation (in the other's own understanding of that which is heard). The orientation of language to external matters, to things that are meant, is, considered in this way, a function of intersubjectivity, though not directly the basis of speech and of language.

Still in this description the necessity for a closer description emerges. For we ought to underline the point that language comes about in the form of address and salutation. The externalization of language is itself the building of a relationship. Insofar as it aims at the linguistic ability of another, that is, at the other's ability to answer and react, the relationship to another that is sought in language is a provocation to the other to answer. To this extent, language is an availing oneself of an other and thus presupposes that that other is its own subject. The spoken language is the medium in which subjectivity unfolds itself. The forms of relationship that we analyze reflectively exist already in the happening of language itself. That means, moreover, that the content, through which any use of language takes place, also becomes important. And here two different, possibly opposed modes of address come under consideration. One mode is address-as-demand. An element of demand is found in every greeting: one communicated to cannot fail to communicate back, one watching this situation might say. The other mode or moment is that of making-possible. Inasmuch as an answer to the greeting is expected, an attribution of a certain independence is therewith also communicated. For the answer should, of course, be the unique answer of the one who is addressed. It follows from this line of thinking that it is wholly possible – and, in fact, this is actually the case – that one mode of address will outweigh the other. The particular moment of obligation to give an answer can outweigh the moment of relationship that arises in the passing back and forth of each one's own answers. Still a firm nudge of imposition and encouragement is necessary in order to get communication successfully in gear.

It thus depends not only on the condition *that* speaking occurs but rather on how it is conducted. And it is at this point that the phenomenon of friendship comes into view. For there are those linguistically formed social relations which are characterized in their conduct of speech by goodwill and recognition. This aspect of friendship is foundational for human sociality. Friendship is, so considered, the center of speaking, where human beings encounter one another. And indeed, friendship must be present, if communication is to be successful; it cannot fall wholly to the side, if human beings are not to be treated as machines.

That is at the same time to say that the dimension of friendship cannot in any way be reduced to one particular social phenomenon placed alongside other social connections. Friendship appears, much more, as that dimension, just described, of recognizing goodwill even in social relations that are thoroughly purpose oriented. In the introduction to the present essay, I spoke of family and profession; here too it is the case that, whether in the relation of men and women, children and parents – as well as in the relation of superiors and co-workers and colleagues – the obligating moment in linguistic communication must be connected with the possibilizing and encouraging moment. The unavoidable inclination toward dependence that pervades the intergenerational relational structure in particular cannot be regarded as the pattern for building relationships generally.<sup>16</sup>

To summarize these thoughts, friendship implements the linguistic development of that form of relationship encountered at the center of subjectivity. The human spirit, self-aware human action, is molded by friendship, could in fact be called “the spirit of friendship.” That which appears as having been given – the point at which Schleiermacher stopped – is in its own way unavoidable, for we are always already grasped and comprehended in linguistic communication. And yet that does not prevent us from asking, as we are presently, about pre-existing structural elements.

To what extent the following thoughts connect with Schleiermacher’s and to what extent they modify his account becomes evident in the next step of the argument. This step is necessary for determining the origins of relationality in subjectivity. For we stand before the phenomenon – still in need of an explanation – that it is intersubjective communication in which the ability to conduct a relationship itself forms. Can we rule out the possibility that subjectivity as such is to be attributed to intersubjectivity? For this the proof of a ground of subjectivity is necessary, and indeed, one that may not be understood simply as the

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<sup>16</sup> This is something Schleiermacher apparently did not rule out. Cf. Schleiermacher, *Der Christliche Glaube*, KGA I/13.1, §5.4, 48.

cause of the form of relationality. Rather, this grounding takes place in a strictly hermeneutical way. It comes into view as a symbolizing that indicates the always already given functioning of communications that open one up to relationships. Put another way: What happens empirically in communication as we have described it possesses unqualified meaning.

It is necessary to recognize two things here. First, the web of intersubjectivity, as mediated communicatively, must be coded as something one cannot get behind. One could put it like this: In the search for the ground of consciousness, one does get back behind consciousness. Even the ground of consciousness has to be conceived on the pattern of consciousness, namely, as relational in form. The fact that the ground of consciousness really refers to the consciousness in its internal relationships is reflected into the determination of its own basic nature. The somewhat indefinite “whence” acquires in this way a relational form. Formulated religiously: God wants the human – and there are already structures in this expression “wants” that require explanation.

The second point has to do with the subject that is provoked in being addressed as self. One’s own spontaneity can lead back to the unconditioned ground. When, in communications on the “horizontal level,” so-to-speak, a reply to some address becomes truly spontaneous this does not depend on some secret, possibly manipulatively implemented power of the one doing the addressing. Rather it is attributable to the relationship to the unconditioned, which is itself imagined relationally. Only at this unconditioned depth does the spontaneity of the subject form itself in the way that it is active on the empirical field of daily communication, as that particular subject.

From these two points, we can see that and how it is possible to confirm anew the ground of relationally-oriented subjectivity. Such a re-confirmation takes place, on the one hand, by means of normal speech, but it is at the same time directed at a thematic intensification, namely, beholding and celebrating the ground of active subjectivity. And in beholding this ground one becomes conscious of the fact that it has nothing to do with identifying some external cause, but rather the perception of a quality that is already present in subjectivity – only, a quality for which one could not construct a mechanical process of emergence. The religious concept of creation takes the givenness of things as accessible to human beings; and the human moves in a self-aware manner and with self-determining action in this given, without linking onto causal origins, let alone those of a transcendental kind. In celebration, the creation’s being as it is, is actively greeted. The celebration includes thanks to the unconditional origin of the world and of one’s own life as well as thankful recognition of one’s own being in distinction from and in relationship with the world. In so doing, recourse is not made to an anonymous ground from which consciousness

seems to have arisen in a mysterious way. Rather, God Godself, as the origin of all things, is to be thought of as personal, in Godself as structured relationally and for that reason also capable of acting toward that which is external to God.

Once one perceives that a relational structure is operative at the center of human subjectivity, and if one holds tightly to this insight in thinking about the origins of our human constitution, then theological reflection on God can become richer than was possible for Schleiermacher – and without having to abandon a hermeneutical approach. The life of God as in relationship is not a conclusion that follows from human life; rather, conscious human life is the form of having been impressed by the perception of God.

And this, in turn, carries consequences for the shape of human salvation. If Schleiermacher's concern was to insist on the independence of human freedom *from* the world as an account of the design of the world, it now becomes clear that human freedom as it comes from God is one of something operating *in* the world simply to rule over the world and that it is relationships existing in the world that are taken up and developed. Engaging things through knowing and doing is impressed through and through with the conscious awareness that these activities are only possible thanks to the intersubjectivity of language that brings human beings together *before* they attempt to sustain themselves in the world. It is, to formulate it sociologically once again, prior social mediation that also steers the economic and technological development with which human beings seek to achieve the preservation of their species in the world. Interaction is the precondition for work – and the relation of both to one another is best understood from the perspective of religion. One could add, pointedly, that human consciousness understood on the model of the kind of divine subjectivity outlined here exists or has standing even before the active engagement in the world via action. Preserving this standing is one of the products of the specific but purposeless form of action expressed in celebration.

This insight highlights one of the more remarkable characteristics of human freedom. Human freedom, on the one hand, is understood as having an unconditional heritage, while on the other hand, it presents itself only in worldly and ethical forms of action. Only an image or figure of freedom that does not define itself by means of demarcation from the world can determine the concept in a complete way. It is not the case that in taking dependence out of the world a wholly receptive dependence upon God takes its place. Rather, with reference to subjectivity itself it is possible to observe how in being addressed by other human beings we are addressed unconditionally by God. This address is distinguished by good will and recognition, or in other words, friendship. As formulated in Johann Sebastian Bach's *Kantate* BWV 139, "Whoever wins even only

God as a friend” remains “well satisfied” – however difficult one’s situation in the world may be.<sup>17</sup>

This deeper concept of freedom points to the phenomenon of joy. Joy is at its center not induced by the enjoyments of the outer world, though it hardly must be kept at a distance from the world. Joy is the most inner of all feelings, in which a human being – unexpectedly and without being able to be forced to it – comes to oneself, as can only happen with luck. The feeling of piety connects external freedom and internal joy – from God.

## 5 Schleiermacher’s Tracks

The foregoing considerations have further developed Schleiermacher’s basic and basically accurate analysis with summary and supplementary remarks on the construction of relationships. From this there followed critical consequences for describing the concepts of God and of human subjectivity. This was done by making the question concerning the capability for relationship more precise – a question that was answered by referring to the reality of language as something always already in use. It is worth noting that in his tripartite schema Schleiermacher acquired a structural model of consciousness. But in so doing he had turned away or, perhaps better, started from the point that consciousness was always already there. That is a classic position and one that it makes sense to supplement with perspectives from the theory of language. Of course, it is not as though this issue were hidden from Schleiermacher – quite the opposite. His hermeneutics in particular take as their point of departure the basic reality of language as a sophisticated and multivalent form of expression. One could also incorporate his lectures on *Dialektik* into this argument, due to the way they develop the structure of thinking out of the structure and execution of language.<sup>18</sup> And it could also be rewarding to look at Schleiermacher’s early work for the roots of these later efforts to locate language in the foreground – above all the *Speeches* and the *Soliloquies*. But that would exceed the scope of the present essay. It must only be said that the attempt made here to further develop Schleiermacher’s line of thinking owes its impulses to his own works.

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<sup>17</sup> Johann Sebastian Bach, *Wohl dem, der sich auf seinen Gott*, Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis 139, ed. Wolfgang Schmieder (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1990).

<sup>18</sup> On this point, see the historical introduction to F. Schleiermacher, *Vorlesungen über die Dialektik*, ed. Andreas Arndt, KGA II/10.1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), VII-LVII.