MATTHEW RYAN ROBINSON

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Religion in Philosophy and Theology
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Free Sociability and the Completion of Humanity in the Thought of Friedrich Schleiermacher

Mohr Siebeck

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From and for Christine, Wesley, and Zola

Foreword

This book on the ways personal relationships form individuals' senses and tastes of ultimate reality is itself the product of many relationships, of which I can highlight only a few. In my immediate, institutional circle, I am deeply grateful to my doctoral advisor, Christine Helmer, for challenging me to view the relationship between theology and religious studies as mutually enriching. I also want to thank Cristina Traina, a model friend, colleague, and mentor; I am deeply grateful to her for her extensive, detailed, and insightful feedback. And I thank the Theology Colloquium at Northwestern University – Stephanie, Benjamin, Aaron, Teddy, Candace, and Joel – for the opportunity to present drafts of portions of the book and for their truly excellent reading and feedback. All of these folks exhibit a kind of concern for and interest in the work of others that I sincerely hope I emulate in my own collegial relationships.

Over the years, I have been deeply grateful for relationships formed through travel and professional networks, of which, again, I can only single out but a handful: It was Kevin Hector who first introduced me to Schleiermacher and supervised my M. Div thesis on the latter; his influence is still detectable in chapter seven. Wilhelm Gräb was my host as a DAAD research scholar at Humboldt University (Berlin) and has become a valued friend and intellectual influence; when I think of the personal friendliness, scholarly production, and pastoral concern of Schleiermacher, I usually think of Wilhelm. And I thank the DAAD for funding my stay in Berlin 2012–2013 for initial research on this project.

Andreas Arndt, Sarah Schmidt, and Simon Gerber, editors of the Schleiermacher KGA at the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, were consistently generous in conversation, classes, and conferences at several points along the way. My reading of Schleiermacher is certainly marked by their interpretations. Dietrich Korsch generously offered to devote a small weekend seminar in Austria to the *Monologen;* my reading of this text was born in that intimate setting. Our periodic engagements over the past several years have always prompted fresh theological insights.

I owe sincere thanks to the *Schleiermacher Gesellschaft* for its generous support, for the opportunity to present my work in progress over the years, and for the always detailed and precise feedback from the expert readers of Schleiermacher who attend its annual colloquium. The Schleiermacher group of the AAR provided a valuable opportunity to present an early chapter draft.

I thank the Columbia Council for European Studies for funding my pre-dissertation research that helped me initially to identify the constellation of concepts and questions here developed as a potential dissertation project.

Jesper Svartnik and the Swedish Theological Institute in Jerusalem offered hospitality and space to write and reflect as I worked on my first draft of the whole work; Jesper´s warm invitation to attend an interfaith theology conference in Jerusalem has proved a turning point for me in my thinking on a theology of friendship, which I hope will grow out of the present study.

Finally, friends provide just vital forms of insight, critique, and encouragement, and their presences fill the dissertation. Kyle was my "spiritual director" for things academic and non- at crucial moments. Time spent with my dear friend Jonas always presents the most stimulating conversations on religion, Schleiermacher, Romanticism, music and arts, and European history, politics, and culture more broadly. Without Joel and Candace, finishing this work would have been impossible. And Andrew, well, you're the muse of redemptive friendship.

My sincere thanks go to the editors at Mohr Siebeck, Henning Ziebritzki and Klaus Hermannstädter. And special thanks are due to Maria Rothmund for her careful copy-editing. This book is a revision of my dissertation thesis, written at Northwestern University in the Department of Religious Studies. Revised parts of chapter four first appeared in *Der Mensch und seine Seele* (de Gruyter, 2017).[1]

Bonn, June 2017 Matthew Ryan Robinson

[1] Matthew Ryan Robinson, "Vollendet: The Completion of Humanity, the Gospel of John, and the Intersubjective Soul of Schleiermacher's Monologen," pages 405–420 in Arnulf Scheliha / Jörg Dierken, ed., *Der Mensch und seine Seele. Bildung – Frömmigkeit – Ästhetik. Akten des Internationalen Kongresses der Schleiermacher-Gesellschaft in Münster, September 2015*, Schleiermacher-Archiv 26 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017).

Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction: Religion, Relationships, and the Completion of Humanity

1.1 Religion, Sociability, and the Completion of Humanity

In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle maintained that "a human being is by nature a socio-political (Greek, *politikon*) being." He used this dictum in two places in that work. In the first book, it occurs in the context of a broad examination of the nature of the good in relation to happiness. Aristotle argues that the human is most happy, not with one among many goods, potentially chosen for a variety of reasons, but with that which is chosen for its own sake, and that which is chosen for its own sake is complete without qualification. It is in this connection that Aristotle further claims that this complete good "is thought to be self-sufficient."[1] The human being is not self-sufficient on its own but rather approaches the completion of the good as a part of a vast network of relationships embracing the whole of the social.

In the ninth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, however, when Aristotle repeats the mantra, the context is different, or more specifically, narrower. At a fundamental level, of course, the guiding question still concerns the nature and practice of the good. But now Aristotle is discussing the role of friendship in particular. The connection to the question of "completion" remains, but it is focused on the relation to the friend. "A friend, since he is another self, provides what a person cannot provide by himself,"[2] and this not only in a material way but through a relationship of mutual self-formation of character and virtue. So he says again, "a human is a socio-political being and his nature is to live in the company of others."[3] Importantly, here the question of the role of relationships in pursuit of the good is not merely a matter of an individual person's being part of a society but is more specifically a matter of personal relationships. "So this will be the case with the happy person as well, because he possesses the natural goods, and it is clearly better to spend his days with friends and good people than with strangers or anybody he happens to bump into. So the happy person does need friends."[4] Friendship, a personal relationship of virtue with particular others, is seen as inseparable from the pursuit of human completion entailed in what Aristotle calls the good.

But what is the relationship between these "two levels," so-to-speak, of human relationality – namely, between the relationality of the individual to its "completion"

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[1] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. and ed. Roger Crisp, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 11.

[2] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 177.

[3] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 177.

[4] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 177.

and the relationality of individuals with one another? How are the personal relationships of the latter influenced and determined by understandings of the former and vice versa?

These are questions Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) began working through at an early age and which eventually became determinative for the construction of his ethical and theological thought. The earliest extant writings by Schleiermacher, aside from personal correspondence, are notes and translations he made in 1788–89 of books eight and nine of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. In this work one finds him reflecting on the conditions of happiness and individual development, like Aristotle, in relation to friendship.[5] In this work, Schleiermacher reflects on the concept of *Geselligkeit*, or "sociability," as an unavoidable tendency based in human experience and as a form of action that orients persons in understandings and practices of completing the human good. The interrelations of these two concepts – sociability and the completion of humanity – form the central focus of the following study.

Aristotle had posed the question of the value of beneficence in book eight. Schleiermacher interprets the question as an inquiry concerning the possibilities for satisfying "deficiencies of the human condition," and he argues that the *Geselligkeit* of friendship is uniquely capable of filling up what the individual lacks. Indeed, he places the emphasis not on friendship *per se* but on the *sociable content* of friendship: Sociability is a reciprocal sharing of thoughts and feelings among equals "for their optimal benefit." Picking up on an aesthetic tradition inaugurated by Baumgarten and developed further in Kant's critique of judgment and Schiller's letters on the aesthetic education of humanity, Schleiermacher writes that the "play" *(Spiel)* of sociability gives one new perspectives on oneself and yields, for the individuals involved, corporately, experiences that are "completely new" for all of them.[6]

In this way, sociability in the relationship with a friend forms the foundation of human freedom, as Schleiermacher understood the idea. Schleiermacher already intimates this more fundamental and comprehensive ethical view of the potential of sociability in his notes on Aristotle when he writes that people "soon long for connection with like-minded beings, in order through their shared powers to open a wider field for moral action, and in order better to confront the hindrances inevitably encountered on the road of moral activity."[7] In another early essay, written roughly contemporaneously with the notes on Aristotle, Schleiermacher illustrates this point by referring to the jump from individual hunting to shared agricultural labor.[8] This

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[5] Friedrich Schleiermacher, "Anmerkungen zu Aristoteles: Nikomachische Ethik 8–9 (1788)," pages 1–44 in Günter Meckenstock, ed., *Jugendschriften 1787–1796*, Volume I/1 of Kritische Gesamtausgabe (KGA) (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011). English translation of pages 3–7 of the *Anmerkungen* as found in the KGA: Friedrich Schleiermacher, "Notes on Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics 8–9," trans. John Hoffmeyer, *Theology Today* 56, no. 2 (1999): 164–168.

[6] Schleiermacher, "Anmerkungen zu Aristoteles," KGA I/1, 5 = "Notes on Aristotle," 167. Compare also Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Ästhetik. Teil 1: §§ 1–613*, trans. and ed. by Dagmar Mirbach (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2007).

[7] Schleiermacher, "Anmerkungen zu Aristoteles," KGA I/1, 6 = "Notes on Aristotle," 168.

[8] Friedrich Schleiermacher, "Über das höchste Gut (1789)," pages 83–125 in Günter Meckenstock, ed., *Jugendschriften 1787–1796*, KGA I/1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011). H. Victor Froese has produced an English Translation: Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On the Highest Good*, trans. and with a

reflects the way that sociability for Schleiermacher *just is* a communal pursuit of the realization and completion of human freedom in nature as part of nature, on the individual and species-universal level: In sociability, individuals and groups identify needs, desires, and incapacities for satisfying them; in sociability, they develop strategies and resources for satisfying those needs and desires; and through sociability they construct visions of what a full realization of the potential for freedom in nature might mean and look like. Thus is sociability inherently a pursuit of the realization of human freedom in nature. When one allows the ideas of others to "mix with one's own,"[9] new vistas of individual and communal possibility open, and the future approaches the present.

Schleiermacher's notes on Aristotle thus hint at a fundamental importance of sociability for the complete realization of what it means to be a human being, individually, socially, and civilizationally. In the chapters that follow, I explore the concept of sociability in Schleiermacher's thought. In particular, I examine the conjunction of sociability with the idea of "the completion of humanity" and the potential significance of this conjunction for understanding the role of close personal relationships in religious formation. This entails consideration of three questions. First, how is sociability to be placed in Schleiermacher, both contextually in his intellectual environment and systematically in his own thought? Answering this question will include a reconstruction of the relevant development of the concept of *Geselligkeit* and Schleiermacher's reception of that concept and analysis of the way Schleiermacher used his own theorization of *Geselligkeit* to organize his ethics, which provide his comprehensive account of the completion of humanity. Second, Schleiermacher also understood sociability to be vitally important for religion and vice-versa, declaring in his fourth speech on religion that religion is "the most complete result of human sociability."[10] Thus the second question is, what is the relationship between sociability and religion generally, and, more specifically, how do close personal relationships facilitate religious formation in individuals and communities? Answering this question in Schleiermacher will require an integrated theoretical analysis, on the one hand, of religious experience and individual religious development with, on the other hand, the ethical terminology of intersubjectivity such as physical need, equality, mutuality, voluntarity, and freedom of expression. Third, because my project, rooted in the theories and methodologies of religious studies, is nevertheless also a project in theology, I want to ask, what happens when religious persons become self-aware of and intentional about making a sociable approach to religion? What kind of doctrine does sociability yield, what are its vulnerabilities for the human persons involved, and what resources does it offer for protections against those vulnerabilities?

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scholarly postscript by H. Victor Froese, Schleiermacher Studies and Translations 10 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992).

[9] Schleiermacher, "Anmerkungen zu Aristoteles," KGA I/1, 5 = "Notes on Aristotle," 167.

[10] Friedrich Schleiermacher, "Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern (1799)," pages 185–326 in Günter Meckenstock, ed., *Schriften aus der Berliner Zeit 1796–1799*, KGA I/2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 270; Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, ed. and trans. by Richard Crouter, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 75.

1.2 The Relational Religious Subject: The Completion of Humanity and the Contemporary Study of Religion

The disciplines of religious studies and theology, I believe, stand to benefit from a deepened understanding of the dynamic role sociability plays in the production and governance of religious and theological ideals. Schleiermacher was a founding ancestor for both disciplines in their modern forms, and thinking about sociability and completion with Schleiermacher sheds insight into religious aspects of sociability and the relational nature of theological notions of the human.

Scholarly study of religion over the past few decades has placed a strong emphasis on the role of objects and bodies in religion. This has brought about a corresponding emphasis on modes of relation that characterize the conjunction of objects and bodies, in particular, discipline, ritual, practice, and discourse. The methodological approaches deemed most effective for understanding that these kinds of relations have often been genealogical and historicist. Such methods have drawn our attention to the pervasiveness of powers and social construction in governing religious belonging by asking what authorities produce and regulate religious subjects and what historical conditions explain the appearance both of the authorities and of subjects. I affirm, with scholars like Robert A. Orsi and those working in conversation with Orsi, like Constance M. Furey, and Brenna Moore, that these have been positive developments. Furey notes that these developments have pushed the study of religion past "the Protestant-style tendency to equate religion with interiority and belief,"[11] and Moore makes it a priority in her writing that "emphases on the power a *society* exerts would not go by the wayside."[12]

Still, as Furey writes, "attention to practice, performance, authorizing discourse, and subjectifying power has focused attention on the subject in relation to society but not on the relational subject, formed and enacted through sustained affiliations and intense encounters."[13] In the face of long traditions of discipline and comprehensive social institutions of authorizing discourse – both so impersonal in nature – the idea that one's intimate *personal* relationships might play a significant role in the formation of the religious subject seems old-fashioned and possibly even a bit naïve. Both Furey and Moore identify the "occlusion" and "loss" of the individual in this move, referring to Robert Orsi's analysis of what has happened in the study of religious subjects. Moore points to Orsi's diagnosis that "by ignoring the web of relationships in which the subject comes to be and always exists, the individual as a living multi-dimensional reality disappears as well into the mass … the individual becomes a cypher of discourse, discipline, and power in much writing on religion."[14] Furey

[11] Constance Furey analyzes these developments in the study of religion along with its consequences in "Body, Society, and Subjectivity in Religious Studies," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, no. 1 (2012): 7–33 (here page 9).

[12] Brenna Moore, "Friendship and the Cultivation of Religious Sensibilities," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 83, no. 2 (2015): 437–463 (here page 444; emphasis in original).

[13] Furey, "Body, Society, and Subjectivity in Religious Studies," 9.

[14] Moore, "Friendship and the Cultivation of Religious Sensibilities," 439; quoting Robert A. Orsi, "What are our Academic Assumptions about Religion?" pages 9–10 in Philipp Goff and

accordingly echoes Orsi's summons "to study not just 'sacred rituals, practices, symbols, prayers, and faith of the people,' but also 'the totality of their ultimate values, their most deeply held ethical convictions, their efforts to order their reality, their cosmology.'"[15]

So a new conversation is emerging in contemporary religious studies, giving new attention to the interrelation of close personal relationships and human beings' efforts to construct and organize completed relationships to reality. Orsi, Furey, Moore, and a few others are synthesizing theories and methods drawn from studies in related fields such as cultural studies, political theory, cultural anthropology, and critical theory to forge a new path in religious studies that "brings relationality back into play" and indeed thinks of "religion as relationship."[16]

Moore's recent article in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* develops this impulse in an insightful way that traces the interdependence of "religious sensibilities" and intimate personal bonds in her research on the French Catholic revival of the early twentieth-century. Moore's basic claim is that the "religious sensibilities" of many of the individuals she studies formed through shared experiences of life in community with close friends. She supports this thesis with an examination of personal correspondence documenting the religious development of Jacques and Raïssa Maritain and friends. They refer to the "experience of God" in the voice of a friend, the ways that the ordinariness of life became "more real" through shared company, realizations of "joy" and "love" with one another generating "a real inner experience," and so on. Poignantly getting at the content and mechanics of the ways these relationships were instrumental for religious experience, Moore relates Jacque Maritain's reception of letters from a friend as "graces from God" and his reply in which he writes "you are Friendship itself, you are Love itself." The point, for Moore, is that these experiences "were made possible only through sustained, relational encounters," that these relationships did not simply teach one another "'about' God, but that their relationship creates experiences of God." "Whether it was 'finding faith,' 'knowing a spiritual experience,' or endowing life with a new 'richness' and 'glory,' these kinds of experiences were made possible in and through close, personal exchanges."[17] These examples illustrate the significance of relationships for developing the "religious sensibilities" and forming "the religious sensorium."

The special challenge is to explain both theoretically and practically what those terms mean[18] and how close relationships with others do this. What is specifically *re-*

Rebecca Vasko, eds., *Proceedings: Second Biennial Conference on Religion and American Culture* (Indianapolis: Indiana University – Purdue University, 2011), 9.

[15] Furey, "Body, Society, and Subjectivity in Religious Studies," 15; quoting Robert A. Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880–1950* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), xvii.

[16] Furey, "Body, Society, and Subjectivity in Religious Studies," 10; here Furey is referring to Orsi's proposed paradigm shift in Robert A. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), e. g. 2–6.

[17] Moore, "Friendship and the Cultivation of Religious Sensibilities," 450.

[18] Moore, "Friendship and the Cultivation of Religious Sensibilities," 440, n. 3 mentions she is following Talal Asad's understanding of "sensibilities" from Talal Asad, "Thinking about Religion,

ligious about this interiority and the exterior intersubjectivity that forms it? What can be said about the essentially relational and interpersonal quality of religion through a thick description of the contents of those intimate bonds (in relation, e. g., to pain, need, pleasure and freedom), the subjects they lift up (i. e., persons determined by their empirically given circumstances), and their transformative power (to liberate persons for the pursuit of individual and shared flourishing in their organizations of reality)? Moore's intervention introduces these ideas and invites others to continue the project outlined by Orsi. In particular, we might radicalize the insight of Orsi's approach to "religion as relationship"[19] – in the mathematical sense of following it all the way down to the "roots" – by examining the ways that human relationships, and in particular the sociability that animates those relationships, constitute religion. In this way, too, we can gain a clearer view of what at first appeared to be – and may or may not actually be – "off from the everyday."

1.3 Religion's "More" as a Space of Intersubjectivity

Orsi has invited scholars of religion to re-examine the reality of this "off from the everyday," or what he has also described as "the more" in religion.[20] In his essay "The Problem of the Holy," Orsi presents the long-existent tension in religious studies between, on the one hand, "modern ways of thinking" in which "there is no 'out of' history and culture, no place antecedent to or outside of" one's socio-historical situatedness and, on the other hand, the "experience of the holy, the really real, or the 2+2=5."[21] All too often, scientific respectability has required strict adherence to the former position, leaving the latter – pejoratively – stuff for "believers." The religious subject and his or her experience, actions and relations, then, have little to contribute to scholarly understandings; the religious person is rendered sufficiently legible through her or his emplotment in a framework of textual, ritual, and disciplinary traditions. But in consequence, the empirical individual – the one actually acting with intention, out of physical necessity, existential freedom, moved by desire, and inspired by hope – vanishes, and with her or him, a large quantity of the empirical subject matter of religious studies.[22] More importantly, "the more" and "really real" of the individual's religious experience is, with this move, permanently defined as undefinable and, therefore, as inadmissible in scientific inquiry. Orsi thus shows that the "scientific" restriction of analyzable religious content to social forces – a restriction ostensibly based on a commitment to the limits of history and culture – yields a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Belief, and Politics," pages 36–57 in Robert A. Orsi, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Religious Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[19] Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 3.

[20] Robert A. Orsi, "The Problem of the Holy," pages 84–106 in Robert A. Orsi, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Religious Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 101.

[21] Orsi, "The Problem of the Holy," 97, 104.

[22] Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 6.

So what does Orsi mean in using terminology like "the really real" and "the more"? Is he calling scholars of religion to newly theorize, even themselves experience, something wholly Other from history and culture? The place to look for an answer to these questions is an "in-between" kind of space that Orsi has advocated across his work, from *Thank You, St. Jude*[23] to *Between Heaven and Earth* to his notion of "Abundant History."[24] And this in-between space is precisely a space of personal relationships with others – family, friends, mentors and other guides, living and dead.[25] He concludes "The Problem of the Holy" by saying, "The experience of the holy blurs certain boundaries of the real … between here and there, for instance, the past and the present, or between one person and another."[26] Tyler Roberts has begun to develop the implications of Orsi's orientation to this in-between space by drawing attention to the inter-subjective contents of this space of "the more" where individuals encounter the "really real."

Roberts begins with a basic critique of historicism, distinguishing between methodological and metaphysical historicism. The latter violates the historicist impulse by ontologizing historicism, but the former is ultimately unable to account for its presuppositions about reality. Roberts concludes that – whatever else we might think is real on historicist-empiricist grounds – we must accept the reality of this "impossible" situation, "ontologizing, that is, our inability to ontologize."[27] Human reality, whatever else may be true of it, is at least also a condition of being unable to give a final account of the really real. Wanting to be clear that he intends more than a restatement of a tired skepticism, Roberts then builds out this ontological "reality" positively as a space of active, abiding difference. He argues "the Real" space of the limits of finite knowing is a space of "multiple perspectival inconsistencies between phenomena" and "the gap between different 'finite determinations.'"[28]

Orsi and Roberts outline the "really real" in a way that allows us now to see and draw out its intersubjective character. What is really real is that human persons find themselves drawn up short in their ability to account for the totality of reality and their place in it. They also find themselves inextricably woven into intersubjective relationships of interdependence; these relationships discretely fill-up certain individual incompletenesses but only by expanding persons' awareness of the vastness of reality, and thereby intensifying and deepening the overall sense of incompleteness. What is real is a sense of individual and corporate incompleteness, intersubjectively rendered, and existing before the vastness of all things.[29]

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[23] Robert A. Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996).

[24] Robert A. Orsi, "Abundant History: Marian Apparitions as Alternative Modernity," *Historically Speaking* 9, no. 7 (2008): 12–16.

[25] Cf. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, especially page 13 and following where he discusses in an intentionally self-reflective way the role of such relationships in his own life and work as a scholar.

[26] Orsi, "The Problem of the Holy," 104.

[27] Tyler Roberts, "Between the Lines: Exceeding Historicism in the Study of Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74, no. 3 (2006): 697–719 (here page 705).

[28] Roberts, "Between the Lines," 706.

[29] I use the terminology of "vastness" throughout the present work. Although I am not following or engaging Michael Fishbane directly in this project, I owe my reception of "vastness" to him. His sense for and articulation of the vastness of all things in seminars and in his book *Sacred Attunement*

The "really real" here (and I am layering Orsi's terminology onto Roberts) is not simply missing information between the gaps. It is, rather, experienced as "a sign that reality itself is 'incomplete,' open, an actualization of the underlying virtual process of becoming."[30] In spaces in-between phenomena – in-between subjects and objects and, especially between subjects and subjects – a process of living, exploring, and forming identities through exchange, comparison, and evaluation of difference takes place. Symbols, traditions, and institutions quickly begin to take shape to help stabilize those identities, but we should guard against viewing such stabilizers as the form of the real itself. Too often, they smooth the wrinkles, cover the gaps, deny difference.

But a different objective presents itself: namely, to incorporate and continuously synthesize the realities of one's incomplete, diverse, and intersubjective embeddedness in the vastness of all things into one's self-relation. A structure of active dynamics of interaction among incomplete subjects forms the base, while the seeming inexhaustibility of the vastness of reality forms the ceiling. This event-like structure, as a structure of ever-becoming, is always a structure of something different and other, something new, "something *more*" than one is[31] – indeterminable, unpredictable, but ever presenting new possibilities for relating to oneself and others in healthy, life-promoting ways. This "real more" is not merely "external" to subjects but is an aspect of the reality of individual and corporate subjectivity itself. The process of becoming oneself is a process of developing a self-relation that is harmonious with the totality of things through dynamic exchange and collaboration with others different than oneself, all of whom are involved in the same process.

In short, we might approach the nature of religion's "really real," the "more," and even "the holy" as a fundamental human striving for a completed and perfected self-relation, individually and universally, in the face of the vastness of all things, and see this self-relation as rooted in the rich, if fragile environment of personal relationships and sociability. By viewing the "excessive" in human experience through the conceptuality of sociability, we discover an inherently religious quality in interpersonal relationships and, simultaneously, recover for the study of religion the uniqueness and dignity of every individual's experience.

1.4 Schleiermacher on Religion: Human Sociability Aimed at Completion

Friedrich Schleiermacher's notion of sociability, *Geselligkeit*, most clearly and consequentially articulated in the period up through his first lectures on ethics and the writing of his Christmas Eve dialogue, proves a helpful resource for a radical analy-

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have made a lasting impression on me. See Michael Fishbane, *Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

[30] Roberts, "Between the Lines," 705; quoting Regina Schwartz, "Introduction," pages vii–xii in Regina Schwartz, ed., *Transcendence. Philosophy, Literature and Theology Approach the Beyond* (London: Routledge, 2004), ix.

[31] Roberts, "Between the Lines," 709.

sis of intersubjectivity and its religious dimensions. In language typical of his early Romantic context, Schleiermacher understood sociability as an ever-in-process *being* of individuals and communities that takes place through an inter-subjective *becoming*, in infinite striving toward completion. That is to say, Schleiermacher's understanding of sociability is very much like religion's "more" and "really real" as I summarized it from Orsi and Roberts above.

Romantic language (and its Idealist back- and foregrounds) notwithstanding, the empirical nature of sociability should not be lost: Schleiermacher at least took himself to be outlining a theory of basic human interrelationality based strictly on description of human experiences. Every subject or person experiences life under conditions of his or her own incompleteness, in its various forms – from inabilities to provide for one's needs to inadequate explanations of one's experience, and so on. In response, persons form relationships and communities with one another, in which each one's uniqueness in relation to others can potentially fill out what others lack; personal forms of incompleteness can be mutually completed in relationships with others.

In these exchanges, ethical dynamics like voluntariness, mutuality, equality, tolerance, perseverance, and freedom come immediately into play. But these qualities are not only natural dynamics of human sociability broadly, for Schleiermacher; they also play a crucial role in his theory of religion where the integration of these ethical dynamics forms what Schleiermacher regards as the purest (in the sense of "most basic") form of religious community. Experiences of success and failure in filling up one's (or one's group's) experiences of incompleteness – whether in an explicitly "religious" context or not – generate evolving senses for what is good, true, and, ultimately, real. And this is religious territory for Schleiermacher. In more Schleiermacherian language, all sociable relationships cultivate understandings (for individuals and groups) of self, of the nature of experience, of world, and some concept of totality – comprehensive, integrated understandings of self and one's fit in the vastness of all things.

This interesting, if tense, co-incidence of actual (being) and speculative (becoming) makes Schleiermacher helpful for thinking about religious formation and personal relationships. As already indicated, on the one hand, he understands sociability very experientially. Sociability is *just* practical, experiential exchange of resources among individuals that negotiates individual and social development; as such, it is also wholly historical. On the other hand, the "values" that sociability requires inevitably orient persons toward what he regarded as essentially religious wonder and longing, namely, contemplation of the infinite and the relationship of humanity to it. When sociability is conducted voluntarily, with mutuality, and in perseverance it demands commitment further to freedom and equality of participation by all. It also demands appreciative tolerance for others based in recognition of one's incompleteness and need for others. And this opens one to the infinite: While discrete aims or projects may be "completed," the structure of sociability itself is one of inexhaustible incompleteness stemming from essential openness to ever-new possibilities of understanding and embodying human life. In this way, Schleiermacher's theory invites scholars to consider afresh the nature of religion itself and ways in which personal relationships might be inherently religious.