

## Novelty and System in Schleiermacher's Thought

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On the stage of contemporary theology, specifically systematic theology, experience has emerged as both a significant source and a crucial norm for reflection. Although "experience" is often used in an uncritical and epistemologically naïve sense, it remains the hallmark of the postmodern privileging of local narrative that is coupled with an implied criticism of a eurocentric, universal, onto-theological narrative imposed onto conceptually resistant experiential data. This privileging does justice, on the one hand, to a dimension of the gospel that is alleged to be lost in Western theoretical thought: the liberation in reality of those groups marginalized and oppressed by the dominant culture, gender, and socio-economic class. What challenges the totalizing effect of the concept is precisely that which Hegel attempted to explain: the necessity of the particular that is, in an un-Hegelian dialectic, to be liberated from the dominance of the universal.

The highlighting of particular experience as the stuff of contemporary theology is, on the other hand, plagued by a few methodological questions. Even if local consensus agrees that a representation of local experience is more or less accurate, the nagging question remains in view of the individual. It is individual experience that ultimately resists subsumption into a larger whole; it is the individual who continues to upset consensus by virtue of its novelty. Every conceptualization of local experience is a model, and as a model, it has by epistemological necessity abstracted from the individual in order to make transindividual claims. A second question accompanying the first is actually its converse. In order to make a claim to knowledge regarding the individual, the epistemological move of locating that individual within the whole is required. The allocation of an individual to a distinct site within the whole presupposes knowledge of the whole structuring and structured by all its constitutive parts.<sup>1</sup> Hence knowledge of the indi-

<sup>1</sup> According to Schleiermacher, a requirement of knowledge consists in allocating the

vidual requires knowledge of the system. Finally, the third question thematized by contemporary theology concerns theology's communication to those addressees beyond respective regional boundaries. By whatever differentiating criteria particular regions are bounded, such as race, class, gender, communicability beyond the local presupposes a hermeneutical unity connecting speakers and hearers. The actuality of communication and its converse, understanding, are made possible by unifying conditions without which transdiscursivity, and by implication, the communication of the mandate for liberation, is not possible.

What might possibly be a solution—at least an attempt at a solution—could be what I propose as a transdiscursive theology, a theology that relates various regional discourses with each other. Such a transdiscursive theology would rehabilitate system as a goal of theological thinking, while decisively concentrating on the individual perspective as the site of building a system in dialogue with others.<sup>2</sup> As such, a transdiscursive theology would account for the individual as a principle of novelty; system is, after all, articulated from an individual perspective. Yet the individual is also located within a larger whole; systematic interconnections, whether epistemological or dialogical, make possible the dialogical building of system by appealing to common structures of reason and presupposing a common horizon of understanding. By virtue of transdiscursive permeability, an individual articulation of system would be, in principle, open to revision, but would also be constituted by relatively stable features, such as elementary concepts and hermeneutical bridges. In this paper, I will take a close look at three basic issues in a proposed transdiscursive theology. And in so doing, I will address the theme of this collection of essays by showing how, on the basis of Schleiermacher's thought, the individual articulation of a system relates novelty to transdiscursive features of individuality that are

individual to a site within the whole. In *Der christliche Glaube*: "um so durch eine Einteilung des ganzen Gebietes die Örtter zu bestimmen, in welche die individuellen Gestaltungen, sobald sie geschichtlich aufgefunden sind, eingestellt werden könnten" (CG § 2,2 [I, 13]). (Page numbers given in parentheses.)

<sup>2</sup> In her political philosophy, Iris Marion Young makes a similar move. She proposes a model for inclusion of the individual in the democratic dialogical process in order to overcome what she diagnoses to be a political impasse related to special interest groups. By including the individual through various discursive strategies (i.e., greeting, narrative), the individual influences the outcome of decision-making that she will subsequently experience. See IRIS MARION YOUNG, *Inclusion and Democracy*, Oxford Political Theory (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 52–120.

inherently systematic.<sup>3</sup> First, and from Schleiermacher's perspective, I will look at individuality as the ontologically basic element of system, and show how it is the individual alone who introduces novelty into the system. Second, I will appeal to Schleiermacher's dialectic to show how knowledge of the individual requires system, and conversely, I will make use of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics to show how knowledge of individual novelty is acquired. Third, I will discuss the theological implications of the preceding philosophical discussion. The articulation of a system of systematic theology privileges the novelty introduced by individual experience, while also presupposing specific identity across various systems that makes transdiscursive communication and understanding possible.

### I. INDIVIDUAL AND IDENTITY

If the individual is to be known as an individual in relation to the whole, then it must be related to structures of identity, or universality.<sup>4</sup> In both his philosophical ethics and dialectic, Schleiermacher isolates particular structures of identity of which the individual is a particular manifestation. In this section, I locate the novelty introduced into identity by analyzing Schleiermacher's conception of the individual in terms of the Kantian distinction between absolute positing and relative positing. This discussion clears the way to the epistemological question of knowing the individual that is the theme of the next section.

It was perhaps his intense love for Eleonore von Grunow that motivated Schleiermacher to think about the individual in relation to identity in a way

<sup>3</sup> I have chosen novelty as a key mark of the individual in Schleiermacher's thought because it facilitates a comparison with Whitehead's metaphysics in which novelty plays a significant role. In Whitehead's account of concrescence, the lure to novelty is one of many possible aims presented to each actual occasion. The source of this particular lure is God, specifically originating in the primordial nature. As constitutive of the initial aim, the lure to novelty is envisaged by God in order to metaphysically maximize cosmological beauty. Whether this lure is adopted into a subjective aim, however, depends on the freedom of the actual occasion. See PR 343–9. John Cobb has adopted Whitehead's insights on novelty in his Christology. For Cobb, the "Logos" is God's primordial and ordered plan for the world. This plan is diffused throughout creation by lures to novelty, which, when integrated into concrescence, are evidence of "creative transformation." See JOHN B. COBB, JR., *Christ in a Pluralist Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975).

<sup>4</sup> I use the term "identity" as the English translation of *Identität*, Schleiermacher's term for features common to all individuals, yet constituting them in different combinations.

radically differing from Kant. In his text *Soliloquies (Monologen)*, and in which the references to love's uniting effect suggest the spiritual presence of Eleonore in its composition, Schleiermacher laments the flattening of individuality under the weight of Kant's categorical imperative.<sup>5</sup> An appreciation for the individuality of each individual is nonetheless linked to an understanding of the individual's constituent features that are resistant to change. In order to account for the I's continuity through time, Schleiermacher looks into that place that he would take up at the center of his life's work. Introspection leads to the inner I, which does not change in spite of its outer exposure to life's ebb and flow.<sup>6</sup> Yet the secret of individual stability is itself understood as a distinct mixture of features identical in each individual. According to Schleiermacher, the individual is idiosyncratically constituted by antitheses common to all individuals.<sup>7</sup> Flexibility and stability, youth and age, are all opposites, shaping each individual who embodies them according to his or her own peculiar proportion. By this same elementary composition appearing differently in individual shapes, the principle of identity, meaning the identical elements constituting each individual, is connected to the principle of individuality. This insight will later become the metaphysical cornerstone of Schleiermacher's *Philosophische Ethik* and *Dialektik*, works explaining the relation of the individual to system.

Even in the immature version of the *Dialektik* from 1811, Schleiermacher envisions a metaphysical system relating the individual to the totality of reality.<sup>8</sup> In a manner similar to Plato's *Sophist*, Schleiermacher conceptualizes this system from its highest to its lowest points as the progressive disjunction of the concept into its two constitutive opposing concepts. The totality

<sup>5</sup> FRIEDRICH SCHLEIERMACHER, *Monologen. Neujaahrspredigt von 1792. Über den Wert des Lebens*, ed. Friedrich Michael Schiele, expanded and corrected by Hermann Mulert, 3rd ed., Philosophische Bibliothek, no. 84 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1978). See ch. 4 (74-7) for explicit references to love that implicitly refer to Eleonore.

<sup>6</sup> The psychological argument must be read together with the sermon Schleiermacher preached on New Year's Day, 1792, that is included in the German Meiner edition of the *Soliloquies*. The inner and self-same I that Schleiermacher addresses in these early works will later be explicated in the CG as immediate self-consciousness.

<sup>7</sup> For a similar discussion of the identity of opposites that is combined differently in each individual, see *On Religion*, 5 (speech one).

<sup>8</sup> The 1811 edition of the *Dialektik* is the only version to be as yet translated into English (see *Dialectic(1811)*); for research purposes, however, this version is less than useful. Schleiermacher based all his *Dialektik* lectures after 1814 on the foundational text of 1814/15.

of reality is constructed as the progressive bifurcation from higher to lower concepts that Schleiermacher calls "hovering" concepts.<sup>9</sup> At each level of bifurcation, the hovering concept is seen, together with its opposing concept, from the proximate higher concept as one of two concepts divided by the proximate concept. From the perspective of the higher, unified concept, the lower concept is one into which the higher concept bifurcates. On the other side, when a hovering concept is seen from the lower angle of bifurcation, that concept unites those two disjunct opposing concepts below it, and is thus deemed the essence of the two concepts that it unites. The concept hovers between its proximate genus and the lower opposites for which it itself functions as a proximate genus. In Schleiermacher's thought, the definition of a thing, the genus together with its specific difference, is metaphysically conceived in the context of the whole system of hovering concepts.

The complete system of concepts has its correspondence in reality by virtue of the identity transcending the two highest concepts of thought. The highest disjunction of thought is the antithesis between ethics, according to Schleiermacher the science of the principles of history, and physics, the science of nature.<sup>10</sup> The two concepts, ethics and physics, refer to two spheres of reality, the sphere of human spirit and the sphere of physical

<sup>9</sup> Schleiermacher's German terminology is the following: "[D]er Begriff ist an sich immer eine schwebende Einheit" (*DialKGA* II, 497 [*Kolleg* 1822; 32nd lecture]). (Italics in original.)

<sup>10</sup> The question in Schleiermacher research has been whether Schleiermacher conceives his dialectic as the science of the *Ur-wissen* uniting ethics and physics in a way transcending the bounds of reason, or as a technical-critical discipline that mediates between speculative and empirical knowledge. In his groundbreaking work on Schleiermacher's philosophical ethics, Birkner understands Schleiermacher's dialectic to be the science of the *Ur-wissen*. See HANS-JOACHIM BIRKNER, *Schleiermachers christliche Sittenlehre im Zusammenhang seines philosophisch-theologischen Systems*, Theologische Bibliothek Töpelmann, no. 8 (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1964), 36. The debate between Fichte, Schelling, Steffens, and Schleiermacher, preceding the foundation of the University of Berlin in 1809, focused on the conceptualization of the relationship between an *Ur-Wissen* and its bifurcation into the two foundational academic spheres of study, ethics and physics. For a transcript of their essays, see ERNST ANRICH, ed., *Die Idee der deutschen Universität: Die fünf Grundschriften aus der Zeit ihrer Neugründung durch klassischen Idealismus und romantischen Realismus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1956). By distinguishing his dialectic between the transcendental and the formal parts, Schleiermacher aims to account for both the dialectic as the science of the identity between the ideal and real, and as the science describing the process of thinking "in the pure sense," or thinking that is oriented to knowing.

process. Yet because they are transcendently (or transcendentally<sup>11</sup>) united in an identity transcending thought, these two spheres are found in reality, not as independent spheres of actuality, but as mutually interrelated with each other. In the existence of an individual, the ethical and the physical are both present in a unique mixture. Ethics and physics are extended on a minimum/maximum continuum; even the slightest maximum of matter contains a minimum of reason, and conversely, the maximum of reason contains a slightest minimum of matter. The possibility for all mixtures in existence is given with the transcendental (or transcendent) unity that Schleiermacher understands together with the Absolute Idealists as the identity between reason and matter.<sup>12</sup> The identity is the transcendental (or transcendent) guarantee for the correspondence between thought and reality.

By virtue of the transcendent/transcendental identity of the ideal and the real, Schleiermacher's system of hovering concepts corresponds to the totality of reality as the sphere of ethics and as the sphere of physics. The Leibnizian distinction between power (*Kraft*) and appearance (*Erscheinung*) plays a crucial role in Schleiermacher's post-Kantian conceptualization of a system corresponding to reality; in fact, Manfred Frank describes the move of the post-Kantian search for a foundational philosophy (in Reinhold's and Fichte's case: *Grundsatzphilosophie*) or the Romantic longing for system (in Schlegel's and Schleiermacher's case) as a re-Leibnizianization of Kant's critical philosophy.<sup>13</sup> In Schleiermacher's system, the distinction in reality between powers and appearances corresponds to the distinction in thought between concepts that unify their lower opposing concepts and the bifurcated concepts; the unifying concept corresponds

<sup>11</sup> Schleiermacher research has yet to determine the equivalence between these two terms that are, at least in terms of the definitions Kant assigns to them, distinguished in Kant's philosophy.

<sup>12</sup> The principle of identity characterizing both Schleiermacher's and the Absolute Idealists' conception of system is the point of indifference (to use Schelling's term) that is not a logical but an ontological identity of two opposites. The point of indifference is the ontological site at which one pole merges with its opposite. At this point, the transition from nature to spirit and conversely, from spirit to nature, takes place. For an analysis of the principle of identity in Gottfried Wilhelm Freiherr von Leibniz, through Gottfried Plonquet, and finally in the Idealists, see MANFRED FRANK, "Identität, Korrespondenz und Urteil: Fragen an Schleiermachers *Dialektik*," in *Schleiermachers Dialektik: Die Liebe zum Wissen in Philosophie und Theologie*, ed. Christine Helmer, Christiane Kranich, and Birgit Rehme-Iffert, Religion in Philosophy and Theology, no. 6 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 3–22.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

to the power holding together its distinctive appearances and the bifurcated concepts correspond to the appearances of their respective underlying powers.<sup>14</sup> Like the concepts, powers also "hover." Each power is an essential unity holding together its appearances. Yet each power also functions as the appearance of a higher power when viewed from the perspective of that higher unity.

The *Dialektik* discusses both the ontological conditions that must be presupposed if correspondence between thought and reality is to be obtained within the limits of finite thinking, and the epistemological features of "pure thought"<sup>15</sup> producing knowledge. What the *Dialektik* does not thematize, but presupposes is the way in which the knowledge of reality is at all possible given a particular relation between the ideal and the real. It is in his *Philosophische Ethik* that Schleiermacher undertakes the task of showing how the relation between reason and nature in reality structures the possibility of knowing the world of physical and socio-cultural organisms. The dialectical correspondence between thought and reality is already given in reality by the discrete ways in which reason has imbued nature with rationality. According to Schleiermacher, ethics is the activity of reason in the ways that it organizes nature, and physics is nature that exhibits the rational structures resulting from ethics' activity.<sup>16</sup> Reason structures nature in such a way as to render reason transparent in nature to the possibility of knowing.

Ethics is further determined by two fundamental directions describing the way reason acts upon nature. In one activity, its "organizing" activity, reason acts in order that nature in general, and human nature in particular, becomes reason's "organ" (*Organ*) or tool.<sup>17</sup> Nature is organized in such a way as to give definite physical or socio-cultural shape to reason's activity. By virtue of reason's activity, these shapes, whether they are physical organisms or socio-cultural institutions, such as the political sphere, can be known by humans. In the second of its activities, the "symbolizing" activ-

<sup>14</sup> DialKGA II, 528 (*Kolleg* 1822; 40th lecture).

<sup>15</sup> Schleiermacher distinguishes between three types of thought: thought that aims at activity (*geschäftliches Denken*), artistic thought (*künstlerisches Denken*), and pure thought (*reines Denken*). Only the latter aims at knowledge. See the 1833 Introduction to the *Dialektik* in DialKGA I, 393 (*Einleitung* 1833, § 1,1).

<sup>16</sup> See FRIEDRICH SCHLEIERMACHER, *Ethik* (1812/13), on the basis of Otto Braun's ed., ed. and intro. Hans-Joachim Birkner, Philosophische Bibliothek, no. 335 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1981), 8.

<sup>17</sup> BIRKNER, *Schleiermachers christliche Sittenlehre*, 38–41.

ity, reason represents itself in a system of signs and symbols.<sup>18</sup> Through this representational activity, nature can be recognized and known by reason. Reason's twofold activity transforms nature into an entire system exhibiting reason's structuring properties and thereby facilitating knowledge of nature in the first place.

Another area of the *Dialektik* that is complemented by Schleiermacher's *Philosophische Ethik* is his description of socio-cultural organization in nature. Where the *Dialektik* concentrates primarily on physical entities, the *Ethik* focuses on the more complex ethical entities qualifying human life.<sup>19</sup> For Schleiermacher, the highest socio-cultural entities given in his whole system of powers are identified by the distinction between reason's organization and symbolization activity that itself is divided through the two principles of individuality and identity.<sup>20</sup> Individuality and identity are the two features of reason as it qualifies, on the one hand, the uniqueness of an entity that is irreplaceable by another, and on the other hand, the features of that unique individual that are also common to all members of its class. From this double division, four distinct areas result (that are nevertheless not entirely separate from each other). These are Schleiermacher's four socio-cultural shapes that are the four appearances of reason's power in human history.<sup>21</sup> The site of identical organization is allocated to the state, or the arena of public transaction characterized by exchange of property. Individual organization, such as *freie Geselligkeit* and friendship, is characterized by the organization of individual property as well as its exchange in more intimate spheres of human relations. The academy, the arena of knowledge, occupies the site of identical symbolization because it both symbolizes inner thought in external speech and stipulates requirements for the sameness of thinking in all.<sup>22</sup> Finally the site of individual

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>19</sup> Schleiermacher addresses the relation between nature and human history in DialKGA II, 392 (Kolleg 1818/19).

<sup>20</sup> SCHLEIERMACHER, *Ethik* (1812/13), 23-35. See also BIRKNER's discussion in *Schleiermachers christliche Sittenlehre*, 38-41.

<sup>21</sup> Schleiermacher also refers to three of these four shapes (religion, academy, state) in his CG § 3,1 (I, 15-16). Herms focuses on the relation of ethics to knowledge in view of the relation between immediate and sensible self-consciousness in EILERT HERMS, "Philosophie und Theologie im Horizont des reflektierten Selbstbewusstseins," in *Schleiermachers Dialektik: Die Liebe zum Wissen in Philosophie und Theologie*, ed. Christine Helmer, Christiane Kranich, and Birgit Rehme-Iffert, Religion in Philosophy and Theology, no. 6 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 23-52.

<sup>22</sup> For Schleiermacher, there are two requirements for knowledge: correspondence between thought and reality, and an intersubjective identity concerning the pathway of

symbolization is occupied by religion and art, two spheres of human activity that represent the immediacy of self-consciousness in symbols. By the mutual interplay between reason and nature as well as the division of this interplay into individuality and identity, Schleiermacher explains how the plural ways of reason's activity in nature can be known.

The site at which knowledge of reason in nature is accessible in nature is the human individual. For Schleiermacher, as for the Absolute Idealists, the human individual represents the location in creation at which reason and nature coincide; for Schleiermacher, in contrast to the Absolute Idealists, however, this place of co-occurrence is not represented in reason but in immediate self-consciousness. In immediate self-consciousness, or feeling, the individual has access to the transcendent/transcendental identity of reason and nature. This identity is felt, rather than known, because in Schleiermacher's conception, the immediate ground of the self cannot be mediated through and exhausted by reason. The specific content of this feeling is a relative identity; a relative identity between the real and the ideal is felt as the ground of individuality that itself is ontologically connected to the absolute identity transcending it. What is intriguing about this insight, first articulated in the 1820 edition of *The Christian Faith* and later explicated in the 1822 lectures on *Dialektik*,<sup>23</sup> is that this connection between absolute and relative identity is felt precisely as the lack of being. As Christiane Kranich has shown in a detailed essay on the subject of "Selbstbewusstsein—Nähe zu und Mangel an Sein," the identity constituting the individual is a relative, not an absolute identity.<sup>24</sup> Its relative identity is given precisely in immediate self-consciousness that signals not

arriving at knowledge. The latter condition eliminates fantasy or fluke from knowledge. See DialKGA I, 408-12 (*Einleitung* 1833, § 3) as well as the essay by Rehme-Iffert in which she describes in detail these two requirements in view of the idea of knowledge: BIRGIT REHME-IFFERT, "Wahrheit und Wissen in der *Dialektik* Schleiermachers," in *Schleiermachers Dialektik: Die Liebe zum Wissen in Philosophie und Theologie*, ed. Christine Helmer, Christiane Kranich, and Birgit Rehme-Iffert, Religion in Philosophy and Theology, no. 6 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 294-308.

<sup>23</sup> Although it is Odebrecht's own prose compilation of Schleiermacher's lecture notes and student transcripts, his edition of the *Dialektik* is of scholarly value for precisely the following reason: the 1822 *Dialektik* places the discussion of immediate self-consciousness, the pillar of CG 1820/21, at the end of the first or transcendental part as the answer to the question concerning access to the absolute identity.

<sup>24</sup> CHRISTIANE KRANICH, "Selbstbewusstsein—Nähe zu und Mangel an Sein," in *Schleiermachers Dialektik: Die Liebe zum Wissen in Philosophie und Theologie*, ed. Christine Helmer, Christiane Kranich, and Birgit Rehme-Iffert, Religion in Philosophy and Theology, no. 6 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 275-93.

the possession, but the "lack of being" (*Mangel an Sein*).<sup>25</sup> The individual's constitution as a relative identity of reason and nature is itself characterized by a feeling that the ground of its own existence fundamentally eludes the self's grasp.

It is precisely in the individual's lack of being that the condition for novelty resides. Novelty is introduced into being from the individual's constitution as an ontological lack. This occurs at two dimensions of the individual's existence. Firstly, according to Schleiermacher's general theory of a historical series—that can also be applied to individual biography—novelty first enters into the series by an absolute positing (*absolute Setzung*) of an entity at an original point. Although the terminology of absolute positing is Kant's and not Schleiermacher's, it helps to describe what Schleiermacher means by the sheer fact of an origin to a historical series.<sup>26</sup> It is furthermore Kant's sense of absolute positing as the existence of an entity, its *Dasein*, or its actuality—Kant uses these three terms interchangeably—that Schleiermacher probably has in mind. According to Kant, existence is not a real predicate but the sheer ascription of actuality to an entity.<sup>27</sup> For Kant, existence does not fall under the category of quality that determines the reality of an object as its "whatness." Rather, existence falls under the category of modality, which means that the existence of an entity is acknowledged by perceiving it.<sup>28</sup> If Schleiermacher's account of the positing of the individual as a lack of being can be read from the perspective of Kant's terminology, then it seems that the absolute positing of the human individual

<sup>25</sup> The term used by Frank, "Mangel an Sein" (MANFRED FRANK, *Der unendliche Mangel an Sein: Schellings Hegelkritik und die Anfänge der Marxschen Dialektik*, 2nd expanded and rev. ed. [Munich: Fink, 1992]), is the philosophical specification that is given a religious determination in CG § 4,3 (I, 28) as "ein Bewußtsein schlechthiniger Abhängigkeit."

<sup>26</sup> The distinction between absolute and relative positing is given in the early Kant's demonstration for the existence of God. IMMANUEL KANT, *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes* (1763), in *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, vol. 2 (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1900 ff.), 70–81.

<sup>27</sup> IMMANUEL KANT, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, newly ed. Raymond Schmidt, Philosophische Bibliothek, no. 372 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1956), A598–9/B626–7. For a discussion of these warrants in Kant, see MANFRED FRANK, "Unendliche Annäherung": *Die Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik*, 6th ed., Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft, no. 1328 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1998), 83–4; also more recently: IDEM, *Selbstgefühl: Eine historisch-systematische Erkundung*, Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft, no. 1611 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2002), 44–51.

<sup>28</sup> KANT, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A598–9/B626–7.

is given with its original "creation" as an inseparable unity of spirit (=reason). This existence of this unity is felt—not perceived in Kant's narrow sense of sense perception—as the relative identity of reason and nature that is ontologically grounded in an absolute identity external to it. In immediate self-consciousness, the individual's relative identity is felt as an act of absolute positing. As such, its individuality is unique, and not reproduced by another absolute positing of any other individual. Novelty, not identity, is the result of absolute positing.

Secondly, novelty is the contribution to being that is a function of the individual's development through time. An absolute positing instantiates an individual existence that is then born by the unique history of its individual unfolding. In Kant's terminology, an entity's relative positing (*relative Setzung*) is a function of the predicates characterizing that entity's "reality" or whatness.<sup>29</sup> For Kant, it is relative, not absolute positing, that determines the predicates qualifying individual uniqueness. If Kant's term can be used to interpret Schleiermacher's understanding of the human individual, then, for Schleiermacher, existence that is posited as a sheer fact is unfolded through a historical-biographical sequence as the relative positing of individual novelty. Predicates of individuality are nurtured and acquired through interaction, in relative freedom and dependence, with one's environment.<sup>30</sup> Contours, textures, and colors to the self are fleshed out in action upon and influence from the world. To borrow a metaphor from Schleiermacher's Christology, the foundational "act of union" is unfolded through the biography of the "state of union" through influences from and actions upon the external world.<sup>31</sup> In the conception of the *Dialektik*, it is the organic pole, not the intellectual pole, that accounts for plurality and change.<sup>32</sup> Through the organic pole, the external world engages the individual in the mutual reciprocity of sense perception and categoriza-

<sup>29</sup> Reality (*realitas* in Latin; *Sachheit* in German, according to Kant) or whatness is located in the table of categories under quality, indicating the entity's way of being. See KANT, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A243/B182 and A597–602/B625–30.

<sup>30</sup> For a detailed description of individuality in relation to relative freedom and dependence, see KRISTA DUTTENHAVER's essay, "Relative Freedoms: The Influence of Spinoza on the Systems of Whitehead and Schleiermacher," section II (on Schleiermacher and Spinoza) in this volume.

<sup>31</sup> At this point, I am interpreting Schleiermacher's philosophical anthropology from the perspective given in his Christology in the CG; the act and state of union are christological terms Schleiermacher borrows from Protestant orthodoxy to indicate the absolute and relative positing of Jesus's person. See CG § 97 (II, 58–76).

<sup>32</sup> DialKGA II, 460–1 (*Kolleg* 1822; 21st lecture).

tion, thereby introducing the novelty of individual sense perception into the schematization of reality. Whereas absolute positing preserves the continuity of the I through time, relative positing accounts for the changes of the individual who lives in the world of temporal flow.

Within the parameters established by absolute positing, the individual's relative positing takes place through commerce with the environment. As a work in progress, an individual's self-unfolding within the realm of relative freedom and relative dependence introduces novelty into the series of her own existence. The fundamental openness to the future of the trajectory invites novel ways of negotiating unique combinations of freedom and dependence. Given different situations, an individual will determine herself in different ways. Yet historical contingency does not preclude individual predictability by virtue of absolute positing. In the *Life of Jesus*, Schleiermacher identifies his intention to determine an original "calculus" to Jesus's individuality that would predict Jesus's individual stamp on any situation.<sup>33</sup> The absolute positing of Jesus's individuality is the goal of hermeneutical divination that aims to predict all cases of individual relative positing in the historical events of his life.

Novelty is introduced into the world as a function of the individual in an absolute anthropological sense with the creation of the individual per se and in a relative sense with the individual's reciprocal and temporally unfolding relations to its environment. For Schleiermacher, individual novelty is never absolute in the cosmological sense. Apart from the absolute positing of the world in the cosmological sense—which is not to be confused with a *creatio ex nihilo* that Schleiermacher rejects both in the *Dialektik* and in *The Christian Faith*<sup>34</sup>—all historical series, whether as distinct religions or as human individuals, posit the new in relation to the old. The ethical principle of "connecting to the preceding" (*Anknüpfung*) characterizes all world-immanent historical novelty.<sup>35</sup> The relation of the new to the preceding moments of a series is given for all historical processes, including the history of a religion that has an identity of its inner characteristic features through time. In the psychological terms of the human individual, immediate and sensible self-consciousness are the two dimensions of the soul that establish the identity of the individual with all human individuals; an individual instantiates the relation between immediate self-

<sup>33</sup> LJ 9–10 (2nd lecture).

<sup>34</sup> DialKGA II, 551–2 (*Kolleg* 1822; 46th lecture); CG § 41 (I, 198–204).

<sup>35</sup> BO § 203 (103). (Page numbers given in parentheses.)

consciousness and her particular sensible self-consciousness in view of both the sheer existence of that individual and her development through time. In this way, an absolute positing of an individual distinguishes that individual from all others by actualizing some of the features already qualifying that series in the first place; a human individual is, by the necessity of human nature, absolutely posited as a unique mixture of immediate and sensible self-consciousness. The new is always related to the old as its modification. It is this identity amid diversity, the absolute in the relative positing, that embeds the individual in the system of the ideal and the real, the ethical and the physical. By identifying systematic structures of identity, knowledge of individual novelty is made possible. It is the more precise epistemological question of knowledge of the individual that I address in the following section.

## II. INDIVIDUAL AND SYSTEMATICITY

The aim of scientific inquiry is, according to Schleiermacher, knowledge of the essence of an individual. By definition, by conceptual analysis, and by empirical-historical study, the predicates of an individual are determined in relation to each other as well as to the whole, thereby yielding the "complete concept" of the individual. It is nevertheless knowledge of an individual qua individual that presents the epistemological problem. For to know an individual qua individual, it is necessary to know the individual as it is determined by all its marks, and to know these marks as they are themselves exhaustively determined.<sup>36</sup> At least according to this Leibnizian understanding, knowledge of an individual is integrally related to the knowledge of the totality of reality, or in other words, to the world as an analytic judgment. It is this knowledge of the whole that conceptually situates the systematic issue raised by knowledge of the individual. In this section I show how, for Schleiermacher, the method for reaching knowledge of the individual is characterized by both a dialectical and a hermeneutical pro-

<sup>36</sup> On Leibniz's determination of the complete concept see both HANS-PETER GROSSEANS, "Denken und Wirklichkeit: Zu den ontologischen Bedingungen von Begriff und Urteil in theologischer Perspektive," in *Schleiermachers Dialektik: Die Liebe zum Wissen in Philosophie und Theologie*, ed. Christine Helmer, Christiane Kranich, and Birgit Rehme-Iffert, *Religion in Philosophy and Theology*, no. 6 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 162–78; and JACQUELINE MARIÑA's article, "Schleiermacher Between Kant and Leibniz: Predication and Ontology," in this volume.

cedure. Both methods aim to tease out individual novelty as it is situated within a systematic context, respectively an epistemological and a grammatical context. Knowledge of individual novelty presupposes structures of systematicity.

The first question posed is the epistemological one. How is knowledge of the individual possible? It was Kant who problematized this question by his transcendental analytic that raised the question concerning how categories could be concepts of objects of possible experience. Kant's intention was to show how universally valid and necessary judgments could be made concerning objects of possible experience. The categories functioned to determine an object only as an object as such, not as a concrete irreplaceable and completely determined individual entity, as Manfred Frank has argued.<sup>37</sup> By formally determining the possible object through the categories,<sup>38</sup> the problem of knowledge concerning materially contingent attributes, obtained by empirical study, arises.<sup>39</sup> The problematic distinction between categorical knowledge and a determination of concrete individuality remained the task of Kant's posterity to solve.

As it is his intention in his theology to determine the essence of the Christian religion, Schleiermacher is confronted with the question of knowing an individual essence. It is primarily the methodological question regarding knowledge of Christianity's individual essence that is the subject matter of the Introduction (§§ 1–31) to *The Christian Faith*. In CF § 2,2, Schleiermacher asks if knowledge of the individual can be attained either categorically or empirically. Categorically, he judges that "no science can by means of mere ideas reach and elicit what is individual, but must always stop short with what is general."<sup>40</sup> Conversely, an empirical study of the object would yield only an average concerning all observable entities of the same species, but would not result in knowledge that requires more. Schleiermacher writes, "[a]nd the purely empirical method, on the other hand, has neither standard nor formula for distinguishing the essen-

<sup>37</sup> FRANK has pointed this out in detail in his *Unendliche Annäherung*, 52.

<sup>38</sup> For Kant, possibility does not mean an entity that does not exist, such as a unicorn. Rather, possibility is always the real possibility that an entity might exist. On this meaning of possibility, see FRANK, *Selbstgefühl*, 46–7.

<sup>39</sup> Manfred Frank has shown that Kant appropriated the distinction made by the Wolffian school between the *natura formaliter* that determined an object's formal characteristics through the categories and the *natura materialiter considerata* (or *spectata*) that determined an object through its materially contingent characteristics. FRANK, *Unendliche Annäherung*, 52.

<sup>40</sup> CF § 2,2 (3–4).

tial and permanent from the changeable and contingent."<sup>41</sup> Like Leibniz, however, Schleiermacher does accept individual concepts, which are more than just the materially underdetermined indexical references of pointing because each has a minimum of one predicate.<sup>42</sup> Hence the Introduction to *The Christian Faith* is constructed as a set of epistemological steps determining the conceptual location for the individual essence of Christianity.<sup>43</sup> First the general sphere of ethics, as the activities of human *Geist* providing the rules for historical agency, claims necessity for the appearances of religious communities as the manifestations of a common essence of piety (§§ 3–6). Next, the sphere of philosophy of religion classifies the various manifestations of the essence of religion as the positive religions according to kind and type (§§ 7–10). Finally, the field of apologetics minimally fixes the concept of the essence of Christianity as the "redemption fully accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth" (§ 11).<sup>44</sup> On the conceptual basis achieved by the Introduction, the dogmatic-theological part, or main body of *The Christian Faith*, fills in the historical predicates of the Christian religion as they reflect the situation of the contemporary Christian church.<sup>45</sup> If the *Brief Outline* is borrowed at this point to complement *The Christian Faith*, then exegetical theology and church history fill in the remaining historical predicates of Christianity's essence, respectively the predicates constituting the origin and the historical development of the church.<sup>46</sup> Schleiermacher's theological method aims to know the individual by an oscillation between conceptual and empirical determination.

It is in the *Dialektik* that Schleiermacher works out the method of scientific investigation as one of oscillation between conceptual and empirical study. The method is an interweaving between concept and judgment formation, which are the two fundamental types of thinking. A concept is

<sup>41</sup> CF § 2,2 (4).

<sup>42</sup> Schleiermacher's example of indexical reference is, "Something shines" ("Etwas glänzt," DialKGA II, 504 [Kolleg 1822; 34th lecture]) where "to shine" is the one predicate required for a subject concept.

<sup>43</sup> See footnote 1.

<sup>44</sup> In CG, apologetics (§§ 11–14) belongs to the Introduction. In the *Brief Outline*, apologetics is ordered to philosophical theology as one of two constitutive elements (the other being polemics). See BO §§ 45–53 (26–32).

<sup>45</sup> Schleiermacher's famous definition of dogmatic theology is: "the knowledge of doctrine that now has currency in the evangelical Church" (BO § 195 [97]); see also CG § 19, proposition (1, 119).

<sup>46</sup> See BO § 26 (26); §§ 82–90 (47–52).



formed when a judgment predicates one concept of another concept.<sup>47</sup> An authentic judgment (*eigentliches Urteil*) predicates a concept gleaned from experience of the subject, while an inauthentic judgment (*uneigentliches Urteil*) merely predicates a concept of the subject that is already contained in the subject concept.<sup>48</sup> By taking up predicates from experience through judgment formation, Schleiermacher advocates the correspondence to and basis for all concepts in reality. Although errors can be made in schematizing those predicates, these errors do not preclude the wedge held in reality by experience.<sup>49</sup>

The correspondence between concept and judgment formation on the one hand, and reality on the other hand, gives both the epistemological rationale and the ontological basis for seeking to know an individual within the context of the whole. Schleiermacher's theory of knowing the individual presupposes an entire system of thought, on the one hand, that corresponds to the system of reality, on the other hand. In the *Dialektik*, Schleiermacher describes the system of thought as the system of hovering concepts. Corresponding to the concepts of essences (or in other words, the system of ideas) in thought is the system of powers in reality; and corresponding to the system of causality in thought is the system of appearances in reality.<sup>50</sup> According to the system of causality, each predicate is linked to all others by virtue of the causal relations between them. Furthermore, these predicates are predicated of categorically derived concepts that themselves correspond to the powers serving as the principle of unity for their respective appearances. From the epistemological perspective, predication results from the modeling of predicates derived from experience into the system of categorical knowledge; judgment formation predicates a concept of another concept as either an authentic or inauthentic judgment. On the basis of judgment formation, the subject concept is formed. The epistemological procedure of oscillation between empirical judgment formation and categorical concept formation corresponds to reality because it itself presupposes the ontological interconnection between the system of pow-

<sup>47</sup> A judgment is composed of joining a concept (predicate) with another concept (subject). DialKGA II, 493-4 (*Kolleg* 1822; 31st lecture). Schleiermacher can define judgment in this way because he accepts individual concepts (whereas Kant does not). See footnote 42.

<sup>48</sup> DialKGA II, 503 (*Kolleg* 1822; 33rd lecture).

<sup>49</sup> See DialKGA II, 593-600 (*Kolleg* 1822; 57th-59th lecture), and *ibid.*, 637-40 (*Kolleg* 1822; 69th lecture), in the formal part that discusses the possibility of error in detail.

<sup>50</sup> DialKGA II, 541 (*Kolleg* 1822; 43rd lecture).

ers and the system of appearances. Thus, Schleiermacher argues, that he has united idealism with realism.<sup>51</sup> He has connected knowledge of the system with knowledge of the individual in such a way as to account for the predicates arising from the river of life within their conceptual embeddedness. Whether as inauthentic or as authentic judgments, experience is the source of knowledge.

Schleiermacher's procedure regulating the drive to knowledge of the individual represents a unique position in the history of philosophy. With his method of oscillation, Schleiermacher moves within the bounds stipulated by Kant's critical philosophy, yet he goes beyond Kant by addressing the empirical source of knowledge in a way Kant could not, given the two-source theory of knowledge and the transcendental idealist parameters of the latter's system. For Schleiermacher, the empirical determination of the concept by judgment formation is ordered by an intensional logic.<sup>52</sup> With a logic of concept containment, Schleiermacher, like Leibniz, can advocate individual concepts, which have a minimum of one predicate, and thereby their place within the system. Once one predicate fixes the subject concept, the concept is open to further, and infinite, determination through judgments. An individual's conceptual determination is opened by the flow of life running through the particular individual's existence. Even if the concept is fully saturated with all possible predicates, as is the case with the inauthentic judgment, life still offers an extra predicate: movement can still be predicated of the subject.<sup>53</sup>

On the basis of this method of knowing the individual, Schleiermacher spells out the systematic implications of Kant's critical philosophy in an open-ended way, thereby providing an alternative to the monological and totalizing systems of his Absolute Idealist colleagues. For Schleiermacher, the maximal determination of an individual concept presupposes the maximal determination of the entire system of reality. An individual concept reaches maximal determination only when the totality of reality has also been determined in all of its aspects. For finite knowers, maximal determination remains a regulative idea; all knowledge is a process of infinite approximation to the idea of the world (*die Idee der Welt*).<sup>54</sup> Only for God

<sup>51</sup> DialKGA II, 521 (*Kolleg* 1822; 38th lecture).

<sup>52</sup> MANFRED FRANK argues for Schleiermacher's intensional logic in "Identität, Korrespondenz und Urteil," 14-15.

<sup>53</sup> DialKGA II, 503 (*Kolleg* 1822; 33rd lecture).

<sup>54</sup> DialKGA II, 580-1 (*Kolleg* 1822; 54th lecture).

is the world completely determined in an analytic judgment.<sup>55</sup> Together with the non-reducibility of life to a dead concept, infinite approximation informs Schleiermacher's critical philosophical insight into the fundamental inexhaustibility of knowledge of the individual, while at the same time, presupposing system as the condition for the possibility of knowing at all.

The systematic presupposition of Schleiermacher's dialectical procedure secures an ontological guarantee that regulates the finite search for knowledge. Other than allocating to system its function as a regulative idea, Schleiermacher orients his own decisive interest elsewhere. His focus is on a procedure for thinking that aims towards systematic knowledge, yet he keeps this method open by a fundamental stance of conceptual fallibility.<sup>56</sup> The search for the knowledge of system is guided by the regulative idea of a *terminus ad quem*, the idea of the world,<sup>57</sup> yet its location in finite thinking raises systematic openness as a function of possible errors introduced by the categorization of sense perception as well as by the linguistic articulation of those concepts. It is Schleiermacher's doctrine of schematism, located in the second or formal part of the *Dialektik*, that serves as the key to his consensus theory of truth.<sup>58</sup> The important aspect to the schema is

<sup>55</sup> Schleiermacher borrows the idea of the *conceptus complexus* from Leibniz for whom the world is an analytic judgment in God's eyes.

<sup>56</sup> The argument of conceptual fallibility, however, is difficult to resolve with another argument Schleiermacher puts forth in the transcendental part of the *Dialektik* on the innate concepts (DialKGA II, 524 [Kolleg 1822; 39th lecture]). He uses the argument of innate concepts to show that predication is not arbitrary, and that it makes advances in truth and knowledge. How the relation between conceptual fallibility and the innate ideas might be harmonized is beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>57</sup> DialKGA II, 580 (Kolleg 1522; 54th lecture). In an article, "Systematic Theology: Beautifully True," I use Kant's distinction between a regulative and a constitutive idea to conceive Schleiermacher's system as an "open system." See CHRISTINE HELMER, "Systematic Theology: Beautifully True," in *Truth: Interdisciplinary Dialogues in a Pluralist Age*, ed. Christine Helmer and Kristin De Troyer, with Katie Goetz, *Studies in Philosophical Theology*, no. 22 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 27-46.

<sup>58</sup> The schematism is the doctrine of moveable images (*verschiebbare Bilder*) that relates predicates to their corresponding concepts. The schematism also accounts for the error in categorizing reality due to organic misinformation or to the difficulty in relating sense perception to concept, and leaves open future predications that might result in the creation of a new concept or genus. DialKGA II, 626-32 (Kolleg 1822; 66th-67th lecture). The schematism is developed by KANT in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A137-47 / B176-87 as the explanation for relating the content of intuition to the corresponding concept. According to B180: "Diese Vorstellung nun von einem allgemeinen Verfahren der Einbildungskraft, einem Begriff sein Bild zu verschaffen, nenne ich das Schema zu diesem Begriff." In his *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* (1800) (*Philosophische Bibliothek*, no. 254 [Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1957], 176-9), FRIEDRICH WILHELM

the connection they establish between thought and language.<sup>59</sup> For Schleiermacher, all predication is bound to thought and hence to language as its conscious expression.<sup>60</sup> Given Schleiermacher's position concerning the "irrationality"<sup>61</sup> of language, truth is not pre-established, open for discovery and linguistically captured by instrumental means. Rather, predication occurs by virtue of consensus regarding the linguistic articulation of the concepts' terms at all. In order for predication to take place in intersubjective discussion, it must presuppose hermeneutical consensus regarding terms and their translatability into other languages.

It is with the discursive inevitability of predication that the intersubjective dimension to thinking becomes significant. Because consensus yields the concepts, 'hermeneutics, not the dialectic, is the science that studies the fundamental communicability and understandability of terms from one discourse to another. In a key paragraph to his *Hermeneutics and Criticism*, Schleiermacher points out that hermeneutics, which is related to rhetoric as the linguistic dimension, is dependent on the dialectic.<sup>62</sup> As two technical-critical disciplines, the dialectic and the hermeneutics are synchronized to each other in order to produce knowledge of the individual by virtue of the individual's thought that is expressed in language. If knowledge is the product of intersubjective consensus, hermeneutics plays a role in understanding the communication of another individual.

Like knowledge of an individual that presupposes its embeddedness in the system of the totality-of-reality, knowledge of the linguistic articulation of a human individual presupposes its embeddedness within a grammar, language usage, and linguistic structure shared by users of the same

JOSEPH VON SCHELLING also explains the schematism. I am grateful to Manfred Frank for pointing out these sources as the backdrop to Schleiermacher's thought.

<sup>59</sup> A detailed description of the doctrine of the schematism is beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>60</sup> For Schleiermacher, language and thought are related to each other on a continuum; thought attains its completion in speech (*Rede*): "This leads to the unity of speech and thought; language is the manner in which thought is real." *Hermeneutics*, 8.

<sup>61</sup> By "irrationality," Schleiermacher means the impossibility of translating one term from one language into another without translating its entire semantic field together with the term. See BO § 126 (67-8).

<sup>62</sup> *Hermeneutics*, 7-8. On the relation between the dialectic and the hermeneutics as they inform exegetical theology, see CHRISTINE HELMER, "Schleiermachers exegetische Theologie: Urteilsbildung und Korrespondenz in der neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft," in *Schleiermachers Dialektik: Die Liebe zum Wissen in Philosophie und Theologie*, ed. Christine Helmer, Christiane Kranich, and Birgit Rehme-Iffert, *Religion in Philosophy and Theology*, no. 6 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 55-77.

language. In Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, grammatical interpretation is absolutely essential because it gives the possibility for understanding the meaning of an author's speech (or text) in the first place.<sup>63</sup> By grammatical analysis, a common linguistic bed is worked out that is shared between an author and her literary environment. On the basis of linguistic commonality, the novelty of an individual expression or work can be determined. The new is grasped in view of what is shared by other speakers of the same language.<sup>64</sup> Not only by psychological interpretation—which includes divination and its twin, comparison—is knowledge of the individual approximated, but together with grammatical interpretation can an authorial intention be grasped from its linguistic articulation.<sup>65</sup> By using hermeneutical tools designed to tease out individuality from identity, the thought of an individual is accessed.

In this section, I have argued that Schleiermacher solves, at least in one way, the problem left by Kant of knowing the individual. Knowledge of the individual presupposes system, both the system of thought that corresponds with the system of the totality of reality, and the system of language that accounts for the possibility of intersubjective communication and understanding. Without these features of system, the possibility of acknowledging the novelty introduced by the individual into the system could not even be communicated to others. By looking at the relationship between the individual and system, I have also pointed out that system can be constructed in such a way as to be truly open to novelty, while providing the stability required for novelty to be what it is.

### III. INDIVIDUAL NOVELTY AND SYSTEM IN CHRISTIAN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

The final question addressed in this paper concerns the relation of individual novelty to the system of Christian systematic theology. In this section, I discuss the question of systematicity in view of the individual perspective focusing any systematic theology, and then show how, in spite of novelty, there are specific systematic features that remain relatively stable across var-

<sup>63</sup> *Hermeneutics*, 8-9, 30-1.

<sup>64</sup> *Hermeneutics*, 32.

<sup>65</sup> The important division of SCHLEIERMACHER's *Hermeneutics and Criticism* into two parts, the grammatical and the psychological parts, gives the interpretative clue that both must be read together as contributing to the same goal.

ious systematic theologies. By describing how individuality and system fund the building of a systematic theology, I also argue for the possibility of transdiscursive features of system that make the communicability of theological insights beyond one's individuality or group identity possible.

In § 196 of his *Brief Outline*, Schleiermacher describes a key element for a dogmatic—and in his own case he means Christian, theology. The proposition reads, "A dogmatic treatment of doctrine is not possible without personal conviction."<sup>66</sup> The theologian who articulates a systematic theology is not to be divorced from her work. Her discursive expressions are stamped by the idiosyncrasy of her individuality, and as such, her individuality is determined by that which constitutes it at its inmost core of integrity. For Schleiermacher, that core is the absolute positing of the individual in an original relation between immediate and sensible self-consciousness, and a relative positing in the individual's biography. When this psychologically determined anthropology is viewed from a theological perspective, the positing is conceived according to the two pillars of Christian experience: sin and redemption. Because sensible self-consciousness is itself a part of the matrix of sinful corporate existence, relative positing introduces sin into individual existence.<sup>67</sup> A sinful structure of consciousness is counteracted by the transformative impact of Jesus's perfect God-consciousness.<sup>68</sup> The result of an encounter with Christ is that the intentional side of self-consciousness, sensible self-consciousness, becomes more and more saturated with the feeling of absolute dependence. The theologian's personal and immediate conviction of Christianity's truth as faith in Jesus Christ<sup>69</sup> is expressed in her thinking and doing. By virtue of the unity of consciousness, individual faith places its mark on engagement in and with the world. For Schleiermacher then, the personal conviction of the Christian theologian is the conviction that overlays the individual's relative positing with the redemptive potential of a transformed relation between the two sides of self-consciousness.

By reading Schleiermacher's theological anthropology from a soteriological perspective, the coherence of a system of theology can be explained. As a result of rebirth, the positing of an individual is re-oriented to the redeemed relation between immediate and sensible self-consciousness. Al-

<sup>66</sup> BO § 196 (99).

<sup>67</sup> CG § 68, proposition (I, 362-1).

<sup>68</sup> CG § 100, proposition (II, 90).

<sup>69</sup> CG § 141 (I, 94-6), and § 14, postscript (I, 98-105).

though this redeemed state is imperfect in its temporal extension—sin continues to struggle with redemption—, its original positing begins to be expressed in the activities of sensible self-consciousness. Although temporal expression might bear the conflict between immediate and sensible self-consciousness, the intentionality of expression, in general, exhibits the stamp of an immediate self-consciousness that has been transformed by an encounter with Christ.<sup>70</sup> In his *Hermeneutics and Criticism*, Schleiermacher makes this point in view of the New Testament authors. The works of these authors reflect an underlying unity that is a function of Christ's redemptive effect.<sup>71</sup> Coherence pervades—or should pervade in the ideal case—intentional expressions of sensible consciousness by virtue of redemptive positing in self-consciousness. The coherence of a consciousness constituted by a sensible consciousness that is permeated with immediate self-consciousness affects the whole, the expressions of thinking and doing.

As a function of self-consciousness, coherence is also related to the way in which the individual engages reality. In the *Brief Outline*, Schleiermacher refers to the individual grasp of the "dominant principle of the period" that,<sup>72</sup> together with "personal conviction," is used to structure the grasp of doctrine as a whole. The signs of the times are perceived through the individual's personal conviction of her redemption. As such, coherence includes the dimension of self-consciousness together with the intentional dimension of the whole of reality. A successful articulation of doctrine requires a comprehension of the contemporary world; as currently valid in the church, doctrines must adequately express the currency of their content in living religion. Furthermore, as informed by an inner self-consciousness and an intentional dimension, individual principles of coherence explain the prevalence of plural expressions of doctrine.<sup>73</sup> The beauty of systematic theology is its individual novelty that does not preclude other novel expressions.

If authorial individuality is the principle of coherence funding a theological system, then it must be related to structures of identity if it is to be communicated to others. Communicability presupposes identity; if a theologian selects a language to intentionally express his novel principle of coherence that is not part of shared discourse, then he has isolated himself

<sup>70</sup> I explain the relation between redemption and the soul's coherence in HELMER, "Systematic Theology: Beautifully True," 37–9.

<sup>71</sup> *Hermeneutics*, 54.

<sup>72</sup> BO § 200 (201).

<sup>73</sup> BO § 200 (201–2).

from the intersubjective pursuit of knowledge. This was Schleiermacher's contention in the 1833 Introduction to the *Dialektik* against the monological model of implied colleagues, Fichte and Hegel.<sup>74</sup> For monological novel-ists, Schleiermacher contends that scientific language and questions emerge from the common language and the reality of experience.<sup>75</sup> The living connection with ordinary language and with questions arising from lived reality does not entail a reduction in the complexity of scientific answers, but is established for the hermeneutical purpose of communicability. For Schleiermacher, the crucial first step in pursuing knowledge is the communicability of thought in language because it is only through communication that intersubjective progress in science can be made at all. From this starting-point then, the transdiscursive features of knowledge can be established as the condition for the possibility of knowledge. Furthermore, the rules governing the intersubjective pursuit of knowledge and truth can be derived from precisely those transcendent conditions.

Schleiermacher's dialectical-dialogical procedure of identical symbolization has implications for the transdiscursive possibilities of theological systems. The question concerns how the principle of coherence is enacted on an intentional subject matter in a way that has been relatively stable in Western Christian theology since Anselm of Canterbury first constructed a system of theological thought in the eleventh century. The relative stability has firstly to do with Christianity as a religious worldview. As such, it schematizes an understanding of self, world, and God through a christological lens as its soteriological and in some cases (i. e., Karl Barth) epistemological principle. Secondly, Western theology has shown remarkable consensus in the stability of a meta-narrative extension of doctrines from God to eschatology. The meta-narrative tends to begin with the metaphysical attributes of God and the doctrine of the immanent Trinity, and then moves to the historical, economic relation between God and humans, from creation to redemption to sanctification. Only in recent times with the advances of the historical-critical method has this relatively stable structure been re-oriented to an empirical Christology "from below," that nevertheless presupposes some speculative knowledge of a Trinity "from above."<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup> DialKGA I, 412–22 (*Einleitung* 1833, § 4).

<sup>75</sup> This is especially significant in the 1833 Introduction to the DialKGA. See *ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> For an example of a narratively derived Trinity that presupposes some speculative content, see ROBERT JENSON, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, *The Triune God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), ch. 4–5.

Although on the surface it might appear that doctrinal concepts are fixed for all time, this is, on Schleiermacher's grounds, not the hard and fast rule. Rather, for Schleiermacher, concepts are necessary as they minimally fix the parameters of the subject matter for subsequent material determination by experience. Concepts provide the basis for their subsequent predication, yet their relative stability throughout the history of doctrine is not due to some property inherent in the concepts themselves. Rather, they are the results of consensus regarding the schematizing of the Christian worldview. As the products of a transhistorical consensus, they are open to modification by those whose Christian schematizing of reality might add new experiential dimensions and additions to the concepts. For example, the co-authors of the recently published book, *A Native American Theology*, suggest the categories of land and trickster as additions to the conceptual theological repertoire.<sup>77</sup> It of course remains to be seen if these categories truly add a new dimension that is not accounted for by an already established category, and if transcultural consensus will vouch for the validity of these additions.

The discussion of theological categories takes place at the intersection between the individual and system. The relation between orthodoxy and heterodoxy in Schleiermacher's sense of those terms concerns the novelty arising from a shared cultural context. For Schleiermacher, heterodoxy exhibits the novelty required for any theological proposal that truly is concerned with its contemporary location, while orthodoxy represents the ethical dimension of the way in which the new is communicable by virtue of its attachment (*Anknüpfung*) to the old.<sup>78</sup> Any development of human spirit is only novel to the extent that it can be communicated and can be exhibited to be in continuity with the parameters established by the preceding sequence. The question concerning the viability of the categories for future systematic theology rests with heterodox novelty on the one hand, and the degree to which novelty can be related to the whole on the other hand.

For the genre of systematic theology to have a viable future, it must be healed of its current state of fragmentation into regionally located theologies that have, until now, adopted few tools for communicability and un-

<sup>77</sup> CLARA SUE KIDWELL, HOMER NOLEY, and GEORGE "TINK" TINKER, *A Native American Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001), ch. 8-9. See my review of this book: CHRISTINE HELMER, "Review of *A Native American Theology*," *Pro Ecclesia* 12, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 240-2.

<sup>78</sup> BO § 203 (103).

derstandability across their respective boundaries. What I have proposed in this paper is a transdiscursive theology that establishes identity for the sake of the communicability and understandability of individual systems of theology. This identity must be minimally fixed, such as the theological categories, in order to maximize the plural potential of fixing by individuals. And by this maximization, novelty would provide the excitement of any theology as a living system. Theology would not be a stagnant backward looking enterprise, but a vehicle for change, inviting the participation of the heterodox and allowing its proposals to be scrutinized by the wider community that must establish valid rules for all academic pursuit of knowledge and truth. In all their perspectival manifestations, individual systems would be related to common transdiscursive features and through these relations, they could be on the one hand, deployed to promote a religious community's health and on the other hand, used to communicate theology's unique subject matter to other disciplines of the academy. Only in this way can the contributions of the parts be heard for the liberation of the whole. Transdiscursive theology does not mean an insular meta-level of discourse divorced from reality and coolly located above the fray. Rather, it aims to know the individual in the context of embeddedness within identity so that communication beyond its sphere might be possible, and by being understood, thereby introduce change into the system.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In this paper I have looked at two features, the individual and system, in an effort to conceive of a transdiscursive theology as a possibility of overcoming the communicative and methodological impasses associated with the fragmentation of theology into various theologies. For the longevity of systematic theology into the twenty-first century, a new concept of system is required that looks at experience at the level of the individual in order to understand the privileging of the individual as the site of theological reflection and articulation. Yet the individual is metaphysically and epistemologically related to elements of identity and system that allow for the possibility of transdiscursive communication and understanding. I attempted in this essay to point out specific formal structures of system in such a way as to open up system to take into account the novelty represented by each individual participant in the discussion. Although these structures of identity are the product of consensus and are still open for their falsification, they remain an inevitable requirement for the possibility of discussing a com-

mon topic at all. System itself must be open to change, yet it is necessary at some level if knowledge of the individual is to be obtained in the first place. The degree to which this happens is the degree to which systematic theology remains a viable genre for the writing of theology, and for service to the health of religion, the academy, and the world.