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'Feeling of absolute dependence' or 'absolute feeling of dependence'? A question revisited

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Abstract: **The translation of Schleiermacher's key phrase 'das schlechthinnige Abhängigkeitsgefühl' is a matter of some contention. It has been suggested that the traditional translation ('feeling of absolute dependence') is in fact inaccurate and that it should be replaced with the accurate 'absolute feeling of dependence'. This change would have serious implications for our understanding of Schleiermacher's theology. This essay examines the case for and against a change of translation. It concedes that the change is demanded if one strictly adheres to the rules of grammar but that there are several reasons for putting those rules to one side and holding firm to the traditional translation.**

In an article published in a previous volume of this journal, Georg Behrens argued that the translation of Schleiermacher's magnum opus, *The Christian Faith*, is in certain respects misleading.[1] He divides his article up into three sections: a classification of technical expressions, an interpretation of these technical expressions, and a discussion of the implications of this interpretation. As a whole, his article argues not only that the translator was at fault but also that Schleiermacher himself is guilty of intellectual dishonesty. Throughout, his argument is a forceful one and deserves close attention. To that end the first section of this essay is an attempt to reproduce, albeit in a more succinct manner, Behrens's analysis and line of argument.

The case against Schleiermacher

The technical expressions

The focus of the argument is the phrase 'das schlechthinnige Abhängigkeitsgefühl' as it appears in §§4–5 of the introduction to the second edition of *The Christian Faith*. In the standard translation this is rendered 'feeling of absolute dependence', but is this an accurate translation?[2]

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In conveying this central idea Schleiermacher uses two grammatically distinguishable types of expression: one verbal and the other nominal. When writing 'that we are conscious of ourselves as absolutely dependent' he uses a verbal expression, while the more familiar phrase 'the feeling of absolute dependence' is nominal. If frequency is any kind of reliable guide then, at least as far as this particular phrase is concerned, Schleiermacher prefers the nominal to the verbal expression. His use of these nominal expressions, however, can be divided into two further grammatically distinguishable types:

> Type 1
> Definite form: 'the feeling (consciousness) of absolute dependence' [das Gefühl (Bewußtsein) schlechthinniger Abhängigkeit].
> Indefinite form: 'a feeling (consciousness) of absolute dependence' [ein Gefühl (Bewußtsein) schlechthinniger Abhängigkeit].
>
> Type 2
> Definite form: 'the absolute feeling (consciousness) of dependence' [das schlechthinnige Abhängigkeitsgefühl (Bewußtsein)].
> Indefinite form: 'an absolute feeling (consciousness) of dependence' [ein schlechthinniges Abhängigkeitsgefühl (Bewußtsein)].[3]

There is a distinct difference between Type 1 and Type 2 expressions. In Type 1 expressions the adjective 'absolute' modifies 'dependence', while in Type 2 it modifies 'feeling'. Schleiermacher uses both types of nominal expression but his clear preference is for those of Type 2.[4] Throughout the English edition, however, the translators have failed to capture that preference, and have extensively employed expressions of Type 1.

Behrens, in making this observation, is careful not to overestimate the implication of his argument; he claims he is not attempting to 'render 100 years of English-language scholarship null and void'. But neither is he willing to underestimate the implication:

> The difference in meaning between Type 1 and Type 2 expressions cannot be dismissed as a vagary of language, and Schleiermacher's alternation between Type 1 and Type 2 expressions cannot be put down to mere sloppiness. Rather, the difference in meaning between the two types of expressions goes to the heart of the substantive issues with which Schleiermacher is wrestling in §4 and following. For that reason at least, the difference must be preserved in the translation.[5]

Interpreting these technical expressions

According to Schleiermacher, every feeling has both an introspectible content and an object. Type 2 expressions identify feelings with respect to their introspectible content while Type 1 expressions identify feelings according to their object.

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The Type 2 expression – 'an absolute feeling of dependence' – provides certain information about religious feeling. According to Schleiermacher, it is possible for the finite subject to introspectively identify a 'feeling of dependence' and a 'feeling of freedom'. Now it would seem that such feelings might occur in three possible combinations: a pure 'feeling of dependence'; a pure 'feeling of freedom'; and a mixed feeling which included both dependence and freedom. Schleiermacher, however, disallows the second of these apparent possibilities: there is no such thing, he insists, as a pure 'feeling of freedom'. The first possibility is, by contrast, a very real possibility and he calls it the 'absolute feeling of dependence', where 'absolute' means 'pure'.

The Type 1 expression – 'a feeling of absolute dependence' – also provides information about religious feeling. It describes 'a feeling whose object is a real relation of absolute dependence'.[6] What does a 'relation of absolute dependence' mean? Essentially this: if X is absolutely dependent on Y then it follows that while X is causally dependent on Y, there is no respect in which Y is dependent on X. The Type 1 expression, therefore, is one which describes a certain kind of relational quality.

As so described, Type 1 and Type 2 expressions are not equivalent. It is possible for a finite subject to have an absolute feeling of dependence, and yet for the relation between that subject and feeling to be something other than one of absolute dependence.

The implications of this interpretation

Two implications, Behrens suggests, follow from this interpretation. The first is that any translation of the two types of nominal expression ought to capture the significance of Schleiermacher's choice of expression. The standard translation of *The Christian Faith* displays no cognizance of the different nominal expressions and is, therefore, not a faithful translation. The second implication gives rise to a puzzle: if the two types of expression are not equivalent, what justification can Schleiermacher have in alternating between them? In answering this puzzle it is necessary to consider the entire context of the introduction to *The Christian Faith*. Behrens proposes that, in this introduction, Schleiermacher attempts, among other things, to provide a proof for the existence of God. It is a proof that can be reconstructed as follows:

(1) I have an absolute feeling of dependence.
(2) My absolute feeling of dependence is a feeling of absolute dependence.
(3) I am absolutely dependent upon God.[7]

Whatever might be said about the first and third of these propositions the discussion so far would seem to indicate a serious weakness in the second. It is not

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clear that this proposition is analytically true, and there appears to be nothing in the text of *The Christian Faith* that would lead one to think otherwise.

Three conclusions can be drawn. First, in his proof for the existence of God, Schleiermacher 'omitted the critical step in the argument and either purposefully or inadvertently covered his tracks by means of a linguistic slight of hand'.[8] Second, the fact that these two expressions each focus on a different aspect of religious feeling, one on content and the other on relation, indicates that Schleiermacher approaches this central concept from two importantly different directions. Third, in choosing to ignore the difference between these two expressions the translators have been guilty of misleading their readers. These conclusions, if true, are damning. The rather mild ambitions set out earlier in the article have taken on a much sharper edge. It is not only the case that there has been a mistranslation, and that repeatedly, but also that Schleiermacher himself has been guilty of intellectual dishonesty.

Schleiermacher's defence

There is little doubt that Behrens's argument has an attractive quality. The grammatical point on which it is based would seem incontrovertible. I want to suggest, however, that there are a number of weaknesses in the argument which, when taken together, give rise to more than a touch of suspicion. I wish to examine two assumptions Behrens appears to make, and then to proceed to an investigation of the grammatical analysis itself. The first assumption is that the problem discussed is specific to English-language scholarship and the second is about that old chestnut, intention.

The problem of translation

Throughout his article, Behrens assumes that the translation problem he observes is a particular difficulty of English-language scholarship, and that that difficulty stems from the standard translation of *The Christian Faith*. It is undoubtedly true that most English-language scholarship has made use of, and followed this standard translation. It follows, therefore, that where inaccuracies occur in the standard translation they have been perpetuated in most subsequent English-language scholarship. There are two points, however, which I believe to have been overlooked in this assumption.

First, the standard translation is not alone in translating 'das schlechthinnige Abhängigkeitsgefühl' as 'the feeling of absolute dependence'. Some seventeen years before the standard translation appeared, Cross, when writing a summary of *The Christian Faith*, repeatedly used exactly this phrase.[9] Furthermore, in an article published in the late nineteenth century Foster apparently not only considered 'the feeling of absolute dependence' to be a reasonable translation, but he also believed it to be equivalent to the supposedly more accurate

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phrase, 'the absolute feeling of dependence'.[10] If the standard translation is inaccurate in these respects, it does not stand alone but rather as part of a longer tradition.

Second, it is not obvious that this problem is unique to English-language scholarship. I refer here, not to translations of *Der christliche Glaube* into other languages, but to translations within the German language itself. The suggestion that interpretations within a given language system might also be called translations is a point made by Schleiermacher himself:

> The fact that speech is translated from one language into another confronts us everywhere, under a wide variety of guises. On the one hand this allows people to establish contact who were originally as far apart from each other as the length of the earth's diameter; products of another language that has been dead for many centuries may be incorporated into a language. On the other hand we do not even have to go outside the domain of one language to encounter the same phenomenon.[11]

It would appear that in this process of 'internal' translation many, if not most, German scholars are content to describe §4 of *Der christliche Glaube* as a treatment of 'das Gefühl schlechthinniger Abhängigkeit'. These authors do so, presumably fully aware that Schleiermacher more often uses the phrase 'das schlechthinnige Abhängigkeitsgefühl'. A good example of this is to be found in the article on Schleiermacher in the most recent edition of the *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*.[12] An example from a more lengthy and specialized work can be found in Junker's contribution to the Schleiermacher-Archiv.[13] It would be a good deal easier, in fact, to list the exceptions to this general practice. Implicit in this practice is the assumption that these two phrases are, as far as Schleiermacher is concerned, equivalent. This is made explicit is an article written by a theologian well versed in Schleiermacher's theology, Gerhard Ebeling:

> Nun bestimmt Schleiermacher in den Paragraphen 3 und 4 der Glaubenslehre den Ort der Frömmigkeit in der Lebenswirklichkeit auf die Weise, daß er das schlechthinnige Abhängigkeitsgefühl als Wesenselement menschlichen Lebens aufweist. Das Gefühl schlechthinniger Abhängigkeit macht 'das sich gleiche Wesen der Frömmigkeit' aus.[14]

This eminent German theologian seemingly considers our contentious phrases equivalent. It is evident, therefore, that at least in one respect Behrens is incorrect: the difficulty of translating these central phrases is not unique to English-language scholarship. Moreover, as discussed above, the translators of the standard translation, whether consciously or not, rendered 'das schlechthinnige Abhängigkeitsgefühl' in an already established idiom; an idiom which also finds representation in modern German Schleiermacher scholarship. This, of course, does not make their translation correct, it simply presents the extent of the problem, if that is what it is.

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The problem of intention

In the subtitle of his article Behrens informs us that he is interested in 'what Schleiermacher really said'. There is no reason to doubt his sincerity, but what does that ambiguous claim mean? Does it mean that Behrens is interested in 'the actual words used by Schleiermacher', or 'what Schleiermacher actually meant when he used these words'? In the first part of his article Behrens would appear to be more interested in the first of these definitions, while in the remainder he concentrates on the second. This progression of interest is perhaps advisable – Schleiermacher himself would probably have approved of it – for it might seem prudent to examine first the general use of a word or a phrase and then to move on to an author's specific use of it.

In providing a general analysis, Behrens provides a distinction between what he calls the Type 1 and Type 2 expressions. By so doing he shows that these expressions are not equivalent, that instead they refer to 'two different ways of identifying the religious state of mind'.[15] In moving to the specific analysis of Schleiermacher's use of these terms, Behrens proposes that, although Schleiermacher knew of the difference between these two expressions, he persisted in using them as though they were equivalent. Why would he have written in this way? Because, Behrens argues, in his introduction he intended to produce an argument for the existence of God, but that argument lacked a critical step and therefore required a 'linguistic sleight of hand' to make it work. There are clearly two propositions here: first that Schleiermacher intended to produce an argument for the existence of God, and second that, in order to fulfil that aim, he used two non-equivalent expressions as equivalent.

The first proposition is puzzling. Undoubtedly, some scholars do think that Schleiermacher intended to produce exactly such an argument, but it is not universally agreed. Moreover, it is important to note that Schleiermacher himself never explicitly states that this is his intention; on the contrary, he repeatedly claims to have kept the contents of his dogmatics free from the influence of philosophy. Yet, his contemporary critics repeatedly accused him of intertwining philosophy with theology. When the first edition of *Der christliche Glaube* was published in 1821, the work received a plethora of critical comment.[16] The introduction came in for especially severe criticism, and although these criticisms were wide-ranging, some scholars considered the work as an attempt to bring theology into line with modern philosophy. One such critic, Karl Bretschneider, stated that Schleiermacher had not 'separated philosophy from Christianity but, on the contrary, turned Christianity completely into a philosophy'.[17] Yet Bretschneider, in making this criticism, does not discuss any apparent attempt to prove the existence of God; his concerns are of a more straightforward theological nature and concentrate on the relationship that exists between philosophy and theology.

Schleiermacher responds to the criticisms made of his first edition, in two open letters to Friedrich Lücke.[18] He defends himself against several different attacks

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but never more vigorously than when he rebuts ideas akin to those held by Bretschneider. He argues that he is 'not at all inclined to philosophize in dogmatics';[19] that 'Christian doctrine must be presented in total independence from any philosophical system';[20] that he has 'looked neither to the right nor to the left for the help of any philosopher';[21] that it is a 'most serious and glaring misunderstanding that detects in my Glaubenslehre a speculative tendency and a speculative foundation';[22] that he would 'follow the rule of not allowing philosophy to influence the content of the Glaubenslehre';[23] that if he were 'to find that the content of even one proposition was speculative' he would 'strike it out'.[24] Repeated protestations do not prove innocence, but the sheer number of protests indicates Schleiermacher's deep frustration with this particular charge.

In the preparation of the second edition, Schleiermacher attempted to refute the accusation by the presentation of a more detailed and clearer introduction. In reorganizing and restructuring the introduction, his aim was 'to establish a principle for determining what is valid in all the modifications of Christian self-consciousness and what is not present except within that consciousness'.[25] In the first edition he had merely stated that pious feeling was the basic element presupposed by the Christian religion, in the second he would give cogent reasons why that should be the case. He also dealt specifically, in section §33.3, with the question of 'theistic proofs'. He disallowed their use: 'Our point simply is that these proofs can never be a component part of the system of doctrine; for that is only for whose who have the inner certainty of God'.[26] Maintaining the same theme, he concludes: 'It is certainly a great gain here, and elsewhere, to banish all material of this kind from the Christian system of doctrine, for only thus is a uniformity of method to be established.'[27] With his second edition his aim was to argue for the irreducibility of piety, not the existence of God.

The view I express here is, of course, no more than a possibility, but it does appear to fit the evidence. To conclude that Schleiermacher produced an argument for the existence of God, especially in the terms Behrens outlines, would seem fantastic. It flies in the face of Schleiermacher's own expressed aims; it takes no account of the revisions made to the first edition; and it results in the ludicrously unfair charge that, in order for his proof to work, Schleiermacher had to perform some sleight of hand. But Behrens himself is aware that, on this point, he stands on uncertain ground. As he draws his conclusions he begins with a cautious 'if': 'if indeed Schleiermacher sought to deliver a proof for the existence of God'. I submit that this 'if' would require a considerable amount of further argument before Behrens's subsequent conclusions were allowed to stand.

This brings us to the second proposition: that Schleiermacher wittingly used two non-equivalent phrases as equivalent. Behrens suggests that the motive behind this action involved a proof for the existence of God; if the introduction contains no such proof then the motive disappears. It might be the case, indeed, that Schleiermacher genuinely considered these two phrases as equivalent.

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He would have known that, in sheer grammatical terms, they are obviously non-equivalent, but is it possible that in the theological discussions of the day they had, in some way, been understood as equivalent? To answer this question I shall have to do a little analysis of my own.

The phrase 'das schlechthinnige Abängigkeitsgefühl'

The means by which we might understand an author – Behrens's professed aim – is a matter very close to Schleiermacher's own heart. It is, after all, the driving force of his theory of hermeneutics, the task of which is 'to understand the text at first as well as and then even better than its author'.[28] Schleiermacher is quite aware of the impossibility of completely grasping an author's meaning, but that does not deter him from giving hermeneutics this exacting and grand aim. Having so defined the purpose of hermeneutics, he goes on to explain how to pursue that aim in practical terms.

There are, as with all Schleiermacher's philosophical theories, two sides to be considered, in this instance the grammatical and the technical. The grammatical side concentrates on language, while the technical side focuses on the text as a presentation of thought. Each side is also broken down into two further components. The grammatical side is divided into what might be called the paradigmatic and syntagmatic methods, where the first examines individual units of meaning and the second is more concerned with context. The technical side relates much more closely to the author, examining, in the first instance, the author's particular style of composition and in the second his particular use of language. Throughout both sides of the theory two methods are in operation, divination and comparison. The first of these is based on intuition or educated guesswork, and aims to comprehend the author as an individual; it is not governed by any specific rules and is, therefore, the main reason why Schleiermacher considers hermeneutics an art. Comparison, on the other hand, considers the author more within a historical context, examining how particular phrases or stylistic traits were employed in other books by the same author, or in works of the same period by other authors. In skeletal form this is the outline of Schleiermacher's theory of hermeneutics.

I intend to use elements of Schleiermacher's own theory to investigate what is meant by the contentious phrase 'das schlechthinnige Abhängigkeitsgefühl'. I shall start with the grammatical side of interpretation for it is here that Behrens's argument appears strongest. The grammatical point from which his argument stems is indisputable: compound nouns have the gender of the last component. This is not an obscure nicety of German grammar but one of the stock rules, appearing early on in any primer for beginners. Moreover, it is also the case that exceptions to this rule are extremely rare.[29] Proceeding from this point, there is a logical progression to the rule that applies to an adjective that modifies a compound noun, namely that the adjective takes the gender, number, and case of

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the last component of the compound.[30] Our compound noun is made up of 'die Abhängigkeit' and 'das Gefühl', and because 'Gefühl' is the last component, the gender of the compound noun is therefore neuter. The adjective 'schlechthinnig', when modifying this compound noun, will consequently take the same endings as for any simple adjective modifying a neuter noun. Moreover, the grammar books clearly state that it is an error to apply an adjective to a compound noun so that it modifies only the first component.[31]

These few grammatical observations would support Behrens's claim that 'das schlechthinnige Abängigkeitsgefühl' ought to be translated as 'the absolute feeling of dependence'. Yet, there is more to be said on this matter. The standard work on the German language, *Duden*, is clear that while all that has been discussed above is normally the case, there are exceptions.[32] In the first place, some exceptions occur through either carelessness or ignorance; 'Das nukleare Brennstoffproblem' is cited as an example. This common phrase is not about a nuclear problem, as might be expected if the rules had been applied, but about the problem of finding sufficient nuclear fuel. Secondly, exceptions are found where the compound noun is considered more as a unit than as a compound. Examples cited include 'die deutsche Sprachwissenschaft' and 'das evangelische Pfarrhaus'. Is it possible, therefore, that when Schleiermacher used the phrase 'das schlechthinnige Abängigkeitsgefühl' he did so either carelessly or in the belief that it could be regarded as a unit?

To approach an answer to this question we need to turn away from the grammatical side of interpretation towards the technical side. Schleiermacher's use of this contentious phrase went through a process of steady development. In 1799 when he wrote *Über die Religion* he made much use of the concept 'Gefühl' but mentioned 'Abhängigkeit' only once.[33] Twenty-two years later, he published not only the first edition of *Der christliche Glaube* but also a third edition of *Über die Religion*. In this, the last edition of his speeches, he provides detailed explanations, arguing that the material in the speeches is consistent with that in his dogmatics. In one of these explanations he writes that there is a 'declaration which goes through the whole ''Glaubenslehre'', that the essence of the religious emotions consists in the feeling of an absolute dependence'.[34] The phrase used here is 'in dem Gefühl einer absoluten Abhängigkeit', and it would seem that Schleiermacher understands it to be pivotal. Our compound noun, however, is nowhere to be seen in these explanations.

This is not all that surprising, given that in the first edition of *Der christliche Glaube* the compound noun 'Abhängigkeitsgefühl' is not used as precisely or deliberately as it is in the second edition. In §§8–9 (the paragraphs reworked in the second edition as §§4–5) it does not appear at all, and in later paragraphs it is never found modified by 'schlechthinnig' but rather by 'ursprünglich' or 'absolut'.[35] The noun 'Abhängigkeit', when it appears by itself, is modified either by 'rein' or 'gänzlich'.[36] The overall impression is that, in this first edition,

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Schleiermacher was less precise than was the case in the more familiar second edition.

It was, of course, this lack of precision that precipitated the series of biting criticisms already referred to. None of these criticisms, however, took issue either with Schleiermacher's use of the compound noun 'Abhängigkeitsgefühl', or with any instances where it was modified by an adjective. The critics were more interested in defending the faith against what they understood as Schleiermacher's pantheism or his devaluation of free will. Yet, it is the case that, in making their arguments, this central term would develop in some interesting ways. To understand something of this development it is necessary to examine the work of some of Schleiermacher's contemporaries, to perform a little comparative analysis.

Rätze seemed perfectly content with the compound 'Abhängigkeitsgefühl', referring to it as Schleiermacher's 'Abhängigkeitsprincip', making it clear that he understood dependence and not feeling as the key term.[37] Röhr, however sparingly, used 'das absolute Abängigkeitsgefühl' and 'dem Gefühle einer absoluten Abhängigkeit' without distinction.[38] And he did so in a discussion of §§ 9–10 of the first edition, where Schleiermacher had neither modified dependence with the adjective 'absolute' nor employed such complex terminology generally. This may well be one of the first instances of this usage of these terms, but in any case it is an obvious and important development. Steudel, by comparison, returned to the terminology used in the thesis of §9, consistently following Schleiermacher's verbal phrase, 'als schlechthin abhängig bewußt sind'.[39] Yet, when he did so, his point of concern was definitely Schleiermacher's notion that we are conscious of being absolutely dependent. With Bretschneider and Braniß, the terminology is more varied and very closely resembles that used by Schleiermacher in the second edition. Bretschneider, like Röhr before him, used both 'das Gefühl absoluter Abhängigkeit' and 'das absolute Abhängigkeitsgefühl' as though they were equivalent.[40] It is his view that feeling is not the foundational element of piety; instead, that place belongs to knowledge, a point he argues on the basis that 'we cannot come to the consciousness of absolute dependence through feeling but only through the reflecting reason'.[41]

Once again, it is clear that at the centre of the dispute there stands the notion of a feeling of absolute dependence. Braniß, although in many respects similar to Bretschneider, realizes that 'Abhängigkeitsgefühl' is a troublesome word but for altogether different reasons to those expressed by Behrens.[42] For him, it is clear that piety is first manifested in the notion of dependence, but he believes we come to this realization not merely through feeling but also through knowing and willing. And finally it is Delbrück, one of Schleiermacher's fiercest critics, who gives his adversary the idea that the adjective 'schlechthinnig' is the most appropriate.[43] It can only be presumed that Schleiermacher followed Delbrück and chose 'schlechthinnig' over and above 'absolut' because the latter had become

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so much a part of philosophical language, and especially part of the Kantian and Hegelian systems.

Taking all of this together, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that the compound noun 'Abhängigkeitsgefühl' had taken on a particular usage for the theological writers of the early nineteenth century. The contexts of their various arguments indicate that they were disputing the role of dependence in the whole realm of religion, and it would seem reasonable to suspect that in the course of this argument the terms 'das Gefühl absoluter Abhängigkeit' and 'das Abhängigkeitsgefühl' gradually came to mean one and the same thing. In other words, the grammatical rules that should usually apply had given way because the phrase had become an exception; it was considered more as a unit than as a compound. It was in this context that Schleiermacher made use of this contentious term when he wrote the second edition of *Der christliche Glaube*. Exactly why he chose the term must remain a matter of speculation, but it must have been due, at least in part, to his desire to defend himself against the charges made by his critics;[44] critics who themselves had used that term or variations of it.

Conclusion

Behrens's case against Schleiermacher rests on assumptions that seem less solid than they might appear at first sight. In fact there is a central assumption – or more accurately, postulation – on which everything else rests, namely that the so-called Type 1 and Type 2 expressions are not equivalent. As explained above, there is no doubt that the grammatical rules of German stoutly defend this observation. Nonetheless, the contemporary usage of the terms would seem to support the notion that these particular Type 1 and Type 2 expressions were regarded as a kind of unit, and in that way were 'above' the usual grammatical conventions.

To add weight to this view, two other points arise from a reading of the early stages of the introduction to the second edition of *The Christian Faith*. First, Schleiermacher uses a parallel term to 'das schlechthinnige Abhängigkeitsgefühl', that is 'das schlechthinnige Freiheitsgefühl', but he does not use another term relating to freedom which would parallel 'das Gefühl schlechthinniger Abhängigkeit'. His 'freedom phrase', equally as ambiguous as his 'dependence phrase', is in all but one instance translated as 'the feeling of absolute freedom'. There are good reasons for suspecting that this is an accurate translation, not least of them being that the term 'schlechthinnige Freiheit' appears alongside the more elusive compound. Schleiermacher's argument is that 'absolute freedom' is an impossibility but 'absolute dependence' is a reality; the terms are intentionally paired, but that comparative possibility would be lost if Behrens's translation is accurate.

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The second point also involves the phrase 'absolute freedom'. Behrens informs us that the phrase 'das schlechthinnige Abhängigkeitsgefühl' appears twenty-three times in §§4–5 of the introduction, but he fails to mention that in the same paragraphs are six appearances of the phrase 'das schlechthinnige Freiheitsgefühl', and five of 'die schlechthinnige Abhängigkeit'. The immediate context of our contentious compound noun contains clear references to 'absolute freedom' and, even more pertinently, to 'absolute dependence'; this is yet one further piece of evidence to support the translators' choice of expression.

Of course, this is not to say that the translators have always made the correct choices or that their translation is beyond improvement. Behrens is quite correct in observing that there are points at which a more faithful translation would have been helpful or at least more accurate. However, in choosing to translate 'das schlechthinnige Abhängigkeitsgefühl' as 'the feeling of absolute dependence' they are neither alone nor wayward. As explained above, this had been done before, and, moreover, current German scholars do the same thing in their own works of commentary and analysis.

The accusation that Schleiermacher lacked a genuine argument and therefore needed to cover his tracks by the use of confusing terminology must surely be thrown out of court. There is simply not enough evidence to support the claim and too much to counter it. Nonetheless, Behrens has raised important questions. Given that the majority of English language scholarship analysing *The Christian Faith* deals exclusively with the opening paragraphs, matters of translation and intention are of no small importance. To have raised the questions, therefore, is quite proper; the answers, however, do not stand up to scrutiny.

Notes

1. Georg Behrens 'Feeling of absolute dependence or absolute feeling of dependence? (What Schleiermacher really said and why it matters)', *Religious Studies*, **34** (1998), 471–481.
2. Friedrich Schleiermacher *The Christian Faith*, H. R. Mackintosh, J. S. Stewart *et al.* (trs) (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928). This is a translation of the 2nd edn. The bibliographic information for the original is as follows: Friedrich Schleiermacher *Der christliche Glaube* (1830), 2 vols, M. Redeker (ed.) (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1960).
3. Behrens 'Feeling of absolute dependence', 473–474. In making this grammatical point Behrens goes on to observe that 'In reading the German expression ''das schlechthinnige Abhängigkeitsgefühl'', it is easy to think that ''schlechthinnige'' modifies ''Abhängigkeits'' – rather than ''Gefühl'', because in the definite form, the ending of the adjective ''schlechthinnige'' does not vary with the gender of the noun it modifies. But to read the expression in this way is to make a grammatical mistake. German grammar requires that ''schlechthinnige'' be read as modifying ''Gefühl''. The easiest way to see that this is the case is to consider the indefinite form of the Type 2 expression: ''ein schlechthinniges Abhängigkeitsgefühl''. Used indefinitely, the adjective ''schlechthinnig'' changes its form depending on the gender of the noun it modifies. If the noun is masculine, it takes the form ''schlechthinniger''; if the noun is feminine, it takes the form ''schlechthinnige''; and if the noun is neuter, it takes the form ''schlechthinniges''. Now ''Abhängigkeit'' is feminine, while ''Gefühl'' is neuter. In the neuter form ''schlechthinniges'', the adjective can only modify ''Gefühl''' (474). The central point at issue is indisputable. It is not, however, clear that it is necessary to draw a distinction between the definite and

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indefinite forms of the expression; the same point could be made equally well in either case. Behrens appears to assume that more grammatical information is conveyed in the indefinite form but this is misleading. In fact, '[t]he more the article tells you about the noun, the less the adjective does'; William Rowlinson *German Grammar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 105.

4. Taking §§4–5 together, the ratio of Type 1 to Type 2 expressions is, according to Behrens, 2:23.
5. Behrens 'Feeling of absolute dependence', 476.
6. *Ibid*., 477.
7. *Ibid*., 478.
8. *Ibid*., 481.
9. G. Cross *The Theology of Schleiermacher: A Condensed Presentation of his Chief Work 'The Christian Faith'* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1911), 119–126.
10. F. H. Foster 'Schleiermacher's "absolute feeling of dependence", and its effects on his doctrine of God', *Bibliotheca Sacra*, **40** (1883), 534–569.
11. Friedrich Schleiermacher 'On the different methods of translating', in A. Lefevere (ed.) *Translating Literature: The German Tradition from Luther to Rosenzweig* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1977), 68.
12. Hermann Fischer 'Schleiermacher', in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. 30 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), 167.
13. Maureen Junker *Das Urbild des Gottesbewußtseins* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 44–46.
14. Gerhard Ebeling 'Schlechthinniges Abhängigkeitsgefühl als Gottesbewußtsein', in *Wort und Glaube III* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr), 117. In order to make the point successfully, it was necessary to present this quotation in the original language. A rough translation might read as follows: 'In paragraphs 3 and 4 of *The Christian Faith*, Schleiermacher defines the position of piety in real life in such a way that he presents the absolute feeling of dependence as a characteristic of human life. The feeling of absolute dependence constitutes "the self-identical essence of piety".'
15. Behrens 'Feeling of absolute dependence', 478.
16. Friedrich Schleiermacher *Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt* (*1821/22*) 2 vols (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1980). These two volumes, edited by H. Peiter, make up vols 1/7.1 and 1/7.2 of Schleiermacher's *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (hereafter referred to as *KGA*). The first volume of the original edition was published in 1821, the second and final volume was published in 1822.
17. Karl Bretschneider 'Ueber das Princip der christlichen Glaubenslehre des Herrn Prof. Dr Schleiermacher', in U. Barth (ed.) *Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt* (*1821/22*)*: Marginalien und Anhang, KGA* 1/7.3 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1983), 383.
18. Friedrich Schleiermacher *Über die Glaubenslehre. Zwei Sendschreiben an Lücke* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 307–394. This edition forms part of H-F. Traulsen (ed.) *KGA* 1/10, *Theologische-dogmatische Abhandlungen und Gelegenheitsschriften*. The standard translation of this work is *On the Glaubenslehre*, J. Duke and F. Fiorenza (trs) (Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1981).
19. Schleiermacher *On the Glaubenslehre*, 45.
20. *Ibid*., 48.
21. *Ibid*., 49.
22. *Ibid*., 58.
23. *Ibid*., 87.
24. *Ibid*., 87.
25. *Ibid*., 78. Furthermore, in the second edition of *The Christian Faith* he explicitly states that proofs for the existence of God have nothing to do with dogmatics (133–137).
26. Schleiermacher *The Christian Faith*, 136.
27. *Ibid.*, 137.
28. Friedrich Schleiermacher *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts* (Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1977), 112.
29. Hanna Rogalla and Willy Rogalla *Grammar Handbook for Reading German Texts* (Berlin: Langenscheidt, 1985), 123. There are some exceptions relating to compounds of 'der Mut', i.e. 'die Anmut', 'die Großmut', 'die Wehmut'.
30. *Duden Band 4: Grammatik* (Mannheim: Dudenverlag, 1984), 288.
31. *Ibid*., 268.

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32. *Duden Band 9: Richtiges und gutes Deutsch* (Mannheim: Dudenverlag, 1997), 435–436.
33. Friedrich Schleiermacher *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern*, R. Otto (ed.) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 86.
34. Friedrich Schleiermacher *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (3rd edn), J. Oman (ed. and tr.) (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), 105–106.
35. In the 1821 edition of *Der christliche Glaube* examples of the first adjective are found in §§37, 39 and the second in §§37, 64, 65 and 72.
36. 'Rein' is the modifier in §9 and 'gänzlich' in §50.
37. Johann Rätze Erläuterungen einiger Hauptpunkte in Dr Fr. Schleiermachers christlichem Glauben nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt', in *KGA* 1/7.3, 459.
38. Johann Röhr 'Rezension von CG', in *KGA* 1/7.3, 517–518.
39. Johann Steudel 'Die Frage über die Ausführbarkeit einer Annäherung zwischen der rationalistischen und supranaturalistischen Ansicht, mit besonderer Rücksicht auf den Standpunkt der Schleiermacherschen', in *KGA* 1/10, 559–69.
40. Bretschneider 'Ueber das Princip', 378.
41. Karl Bretschneider 'Bretschneider's view of the theology of Schleiermacher', *Bibliotheca Sacra*, **10** (1853), 600.
42. Christlieb Braniß 'Über Schleiermachers Glaubenslehre. Ein kritischer Versuch', in *KGA* 1/7.3, 293.
43. Johann Delbrück 'Christenthum. Betrachtungen und Untersuchungen. Dritter Theil. Enthaltend Erörterungen einiger Hauptstücke in Dr Friedrich Schleiermacher's christlicher Glaubenslehre', in *KGA* 1/10, 50 and 64. Schleiermacher acknowledges his indebtedness to Delbrück in a note to the thesis laid down in para. 4 of the 2nd edn of *The Christian Faith*, 12.
44. It has been suggested that his prime motivation is to free himself from the charge of pantheism. See Julia Lamm *The Living God: Schleiermacher's Theological Appropriation of Spinoza* (University Park PA: Penn State University Press, 1996), 110. There is little doubt that this is one of his concerns, but it is one of a number. He is also concerned to defend himself against the charges that his theories rob Christianity of its cognitive content and that they undermine freedom.

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