

LOGICAL RECONSTRUCTIVISM AS A METAPHILOSOPHICAL METHOD OF INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

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In this article we will discuss a certain method of interpreting philosophical authors. It belongs to metaphilosophy in that it is not the purpose of this method to give rules for understanding an author; neither does it try to solve the question definitively as to whether certain statements of the philosopher to be interpreted are true or not. It tries, however, to make a discussion of these statements most fair and profitable. Our method, which might be labelled *logical reconstructivism*, concentrates on the arguments and conclusions of a certain author. In order to have a fair discussion with him, logical reconstructivism tries to make his standpoint as strong as possible. It tries to improve his arguments, if necessary. Of course, besides this method of logical reconstructivism other methods, e.g. historical investigations, remain valid and useful. But I think that for a fair discussion we should not try to make use of some incidental weak points in the argument of our discussion-partner. An easy victory is then not very convincing and does not contribute to progress in a philosophical discussion. We will first sketch the general scheme of our method and illustrate it with two authors with whom modern philosophers might easily disagree.

Suppose a philosopher draws a conclusion C from a number of premises $p_1 \dots p_n$. Now the following cases are possible :

I. The conclusion C follows from the premises. We accept the premises and therefore also the conclusion.

II. The conclusion C follows from the premises, but we do not accept one or more premises.

III. The conclusion C does not follow from the premises. Here a subdivision is possible :

1. The conclusion C is inconsistent with one or more of the premises; in other words : the contradiction of C (non- C) can be

inferred from the premises.

2. The conclusion is not inconsistent with one or more of the premises, or in other words : neither C nor its contradiction (non-C) can be inferred from the premises.

Case (I) does not yield any difficulty, but the other cases demand our attention. The second case under (III) (III.2) is the basic one, because the other cases can be reduced to it. In case (II) we can simply delete the premises with which we do not agree, so that case (III.2) arises. The same holds true for case (III.1) : we can simply delete those premises from which the contradiction of C can be inferred. By doing so we create again case (III.2). Let us now look at this case more closely.

As given, the premises $p_1 \dots p_n$ do not yield the conclusion C. Now we can always add one or more premises to the number of premises $p_1 \dots p_n$, so that the conclusion C can be inferred (now from the premises $p_1 \dots p_{n+1}$ or $p_1 \dots p_{n+m}$). In doing this we must obey the usual 'principle of economy' in that we must try to be as strict as possible.

That means that :

1. The number of premises added must be as small as possible.
2. The premises added must say as little as possible, for the less premises say, the less they presuppose and the more chance they have to be accepted. Suppose a statement p_i says less than a statement p_j , i.e. p_i refers to fewer supposed facts than p_j ; then p_i can be more easily inferred from other premises. Therefore, if the addition of both p_i and p_j can make a certain argument correct, p_i is to be preferred to p_j . Of course, what 'fewer facts' and 'saying less' in a concrete case mean cannot always be decided unambiguously, but we need not go into this question now.

Instead of adding new premises we can also add new and stronger rules of inference, i.e. we can make our logical system stronger (i.e. less strict). But here too the 'principle of economy' requires that :

3. Our logical system should be as strict as possible.

Since a rule of inference, however, can very often be transformed into a logical theorem, there is usually no fundamental difference between adding a new rule of inference or adding a new premise. We can see however below in the discussion of Kierkegaard's argument that it is important which logical system we use. But there too it would make no difference whether we would use a stronger logical system or would add a new premise (hypothesis). It is self-evident that the premises added must have a maximum of plausibility. This is already implied by what has been said sub 2.

The advantage of this method of logical reconstructivism is that

now a better discussion is possible. It does not, of course, mean that we will accept the premises or the conclusion beforehand. On the contrary ! But at least we have made our discussion-partner as strong as possible. The discussion itself is, of course, a philosophical one, but this method of logical reconstructivism is of a metaphilosophical nature. Just as a metalanguage is a language about another language and gives rules for it, so in our terminology metaphilosophy is a philosophy about philosophy. In our case it studies philosophical interpretation and argument and gives rules for improving them in order to make philosophical discussion more relevant and fruitful. Another advantage of our method is that it might reveal the 'hidden presuppositions' of a certain author. If a conclusion C does not follow from an indicated set of premises and we have to add some premises, it might mean that for our author these added premises are so self-evident that he did not deem it necessary to mention them. Of course, they need no longer be self-evident to us. As we shall see our method is not only useful in the studying of a certain argument, but also of a certain method.

In the following we shall first discuss Kierkegaard's argument in the first chapter of his *Philosophiske Smuler (Philosophical Fragments)*. In this intriguing argument Kierkegaard deduces the main truths of the Christian doctrine in a philosophical way from, as he pretends, only one (not-religious) presupposition, viz. that the moment in time has a decisive significance (*afgjørende Betydning*). Whatever one may think about it, nobody will deny that the way Kierkegaard presents his argument is very impressive. But is it correct ? And if not, how can we make it correct, thus showing its 'hidden presuppositions' ?

An exposition of a standpoint with which Kierkegaard disagrees, precedes the argument we want to discuss. He introduces this standpoint as the Socratic one. Kierkegaard has a great admiration for Socrates. He sees himself as a kind of 'Christian Socrates', because he too wants to make people think and especially re-think their so-called 'Christian' presuppositions. Socrates did not construct a system and therefore Kierkegaard prefers him to Plato, Hegel and other system-thinkers. That he introduces the standpoint that he wants to contradict as the Socratic one, shows that he does not want to refute it in a cheap way. He chooses the strongest opponent as it were. But in this chapter Kierkegaard does not make a difference between Plato, Hegel on the one hand and Socrates on the other. But still his criticism of Socrates seemed to be aimed even more at German idealistic philosophy. Under A he gives Socrates' point of view (= that of German Idealism) and under B he gives his own

opinion. These symbols A and B return in Kierkegaard's later work. Thus we find in his *Afsluttende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift. Andet halvbind (Concluding Unscientific Postscript. Second Part)* the concepts religion A and religion B which correspond approximately to the two points of view that are treated here under A and B. Religion A is natural religion as it is discovered by man by looking into himself and by reflecting on the foundations of one's own existence. Religion B on the other hand is the religion that is given by God in his ineffable grace. Kierkegaard wants to show the difference between the two forms of religion, to which different views of God, Christ, liberation, etc. belong. In Kierkegaard's day these differences were blurred by the then dominant theology, because this was strongly influenced by German Idealism. This did not deny the existence of God, but the infinite qualitative difference between God and man was no longer accepted. This had its implications for the doctrine of sin, atonement, liberation, etc. Man was no longer in need of the grace of God, but could free himself, although with God's help.

When I said that Kierkegaard gives his own view under B in opposition to Socrates, I have to modify this statement. Kierkegaard writes his work *Philosophical Fragments* under the pseudonym of 'Johannes Climacus'. This 'person' writes in a philosophical way on the truth of the Christian doctrine. According to Kierkegaard such an approach does not do full justice to the Christian fait. Hence he writes his work under a pseudonym. As a matter of fact all the works of Kierkegaard, except his sermons, were written under various pseudonyms, which were chosen deliberately and not at random. What 'Johannes Climacus' says is thus in a way Kierkegaard's view, but in an abstract philosophical form. Kierkegaard's intention in this first chapter — just as in the whole book — is to show that there is a fundamental difference between a religion that is founded on a timeless eternal truth (given under A) and a religion in which God gives his truth in time. However, Kierkegaard presents this in the form of a project of thought (*Tanke-Projekt*). He reasons as a philosopher: Suppose, by way of hypothesis, that the moment in time had a decisive significance.... He does not say that this is so, although he is apparently convinced of its truth, but he reasons here only *ex hypothesi*. If ...

But first he gives the 'Socratic' point of view, which is the point of view of both German Idealism and of Danish theology at that time. Kierkegaard starts with the question "In how far can the truth be learned (taught)" ? (Danish *laere* can like Dutch *leren* mean both to teach and to learn) (203) (The page-numbers put in brackets here

and later on refer to : S. Kierkegaard, *Samlede Vaerker*, 2.Udg.Bind IV). "Here the difficulty arises to which Socrates calls attention in the *Meno* (§ 80, the end) as to a 'pugnacious proposition', viz. a man cannot possibly search for what he knows and equally he cannot possibly search for what he does not know" (203). In the first case he does not need to search for the truth and to learn it and in the second case he cannot go on his way to seek and find the truth. Socrates solves the problem by stating that all learning and searching is only a kind of remembering. Socrates as a teacher need only act as a *Gjordemoder* (midwife, literally : earth-mother) in order to make man conscious of the truth he has always carried with him in his inner depth. Man does not always know this truth, i.e. he was not always conscious of it. But he had the truth already unconsciously in his heart and soul. The teacher need only awaken him. "In the Socratic view each man is his own centre, and the whole world centers only in him, because his self-knowledge is a knowledge of God" (205). For the learning of this truth the person of the teacher is unimportant. It may be Socrates, or Prodicus or a maid servant; all this is only of historical interest. And time ? "The temporal point of departure means nothing [*er et Intet* = lit. is a nothing]; for at the same moment that I discover that I have known the truth from eternity without being aware of it, at that same instant [*Nu* = lit. now] this moment [of occasion] is hidden in the eternal and so incorporated in it that I cannot even find it so to speak, even if I thought it, because in the eternal there is neither here nor there, but only an *ubique et nusquam* [everywhere and nowhere]" (207). The moment in time is a *nunc aeternum* (an eternal 'now'); it was always present, only we have not yet discovered it.

And then Kierkegaard continues by expounding another point of view, which he sets forth by way of hypothesis. Suppose the moment in time *has* decisive significance ... This is as such not a religious or theological presupposition, but if one accepts it, one has to accept some fundamental conceptions of the Christian faith too, viz. that we cannot know the truth from ourselves, but that God has to give it in his grace; that the person of the teacher is of decisive significance, who cannot be replaced by another, etc.

Kierkegaard starts with expounding the preceding state of man (*den ferudgaaende Tilstand*). In Socrates man is from the beginning in the possession of truth. If the moment, however, should become more than only an occasion, if I shall not be able to forget this moment in time and eternity, then at this moment a decisive change must take place. To use a formulation of my own : then the situation S(a) before the moment must be completely different from the

situation S(b) after it. Then in this situation S(a) I cannot be in the hidden possession of truth, indeed I cannot even be searching for it (207). So far, I think, Kierkegaard's argument is, given his presupposition, unimpeachable. But then he suddenly says that not only is man not on his way towards truth, but is even moving away from it. According to me this latter point does not follow from the preceding exposition. The moment of finding (receiving) the truth, would also be of decisive significance, if man remains, so to speak, 'statical' with respect to truth in that he does not approach it, but also does not move away from it. But in the following argument that the truth must be given to man by God, Kierkegaard does not make use of this statement that 'natural' man is moving away from truth. Only later on he uses it, but that ought not to bother us here. The validity of his main thesis that God gives the truth and that therefore the person of the teacher has a unique and decisive significance is independent of this new hypothesis, which was introduced surreptitiously.

So we see that by our method of logical reconstructivism we can also discover redundant premises. They do not bother us very long; we simply skip them. We do this here and also with two following parts of Kierkegaard's argument. In the first part he gives an exposition (in a concealed, 'philosophical' way) of the Lutheran doctrine of the dialectical relation of law and gospel. In the second part Kierkegaard tries to give a foundation of the doctrine of the *testimonium spiritus sancti internum* (the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit) (again in a concealed, 'philosophical' way). Although both parts are interesting in themselves they do not refer to the main part of Kierkegaard's argument, which is built up independently. So we will omit them and concentrate on Kierkegaard's exposition of the teacher: "Now if the learner is to acquire the truth, the teacher must bring it to him; and not only so, but he must also give him the condition to understand it. For if the learner were in his own person the condition for understanding the truth, he need only remember it" (208). "But he, who gives the learner not only the truth, but also the condition [for understanding it], is not [only] a teacher" (208). A teacher can only stimulate the possibilities that are already present in the learner, but he, who gives the truth that nobody can discover by himself and who, in addition, gives the condition to understand it, changes the learner. No man, but only God is able to do this: "But this is something that no human being can do; if it is to be done it must be done by the God himself" (208). In passing we draw attention to the fact that Kierkegaard in this chapter always uses the definite article in combination with God: 'Guden' (in Danish the

definite article is a suffix placed behind the substantive). Kierkegaard does so, because he wants to speak philosophically about God.

If the moment in time is so important in Kierkegaard's radical sense, then the person of the teacher is important too, because we are dependent on him. We will never forget him. So from these presuppositions God must give the truth and also the bringer of that truth, Jesus Christ, must be in some sense God himself.

Let us now look more closely into Kierkegaard's argument. Kierkegaard evidently emphasizes the word 'decisive' in the expression "decisive significance" (*afgjørend*; modern Danish: *afgørend*; *gøre* = to do, to make; the prefix *af-* corresponds to the Dutch *af-* and the Latin *per-*; *af-gøre* = Dutch *af-doen*; Latin *per-ficere* = to finish, to complete something). The situation S(a) before the decisive moment is *totaliter aliter* (completely different) from the situation S(b) after that moment. There is evidently no continuous change from S(a) to S(b). We have to do with a sudden complete change. Now, if 'decisive' must have this strong meaning, we must concede to Kierkegaard that man is not able to complete such a radical change and that only God can do it. Of course, this is a new hypothesis. But if change has such a radical character, as Kierkegaard presumably presupposes, viz. that something completely new must come into existence, then, I think, this hypothesis might have some plausibility. 'God' has in this connection at first no other meaning than that of a being that is able to produce such radical changes as Kierkegaard presupposes. If, however, a continuous change is meant so that there is a continuous connection from a situation S(a) to a situation S(b), such a moment could not exist. Other philosophers, Hegelians, Marxists, etc. also speak of decisive changes, but here the situation S(a) includes negative elements so that there is an inner antagonism in this situation. Therefore the situation S(a) develops gradually towards its own elimination (*Aufhebung*). The final stage in this process of elimination might be of a radical character: The change might develop from a quantitative gradual change into a qualitative radical change. But here situation S(b) is still in a complicated way related to situation S(a). The laws and rules that govern this relation are those of dialectical logic, whereas Kierkegaard applies ordinary classical logic here. We cannot go into the very interesting problems of dialectical logic and its relation to classical logic here. As far as I can see, it is not necessary for Kierkegaard to state that situation S(b) is different from S(a) in every respect; that would of course be impossible. Every change presupposes at least some elements that remain the same. But for his point of view it is essential that some facets of situation S(b) should

be completely new with respect to situation $S(a)$. Or, to formulate it more sharply : Let $S(a)$ be considered as a set of elementary facts $(P_1 \dots P_n)$ and $S(b)$ as a set of elementary facts $(Q_1 \dots Q_m)$ then in Kierkegaard's radical change some $Q_i \dots Q_k$ have no connection (relation) with any member of the set $(P_1 \dots P_n)$, although some members of the set $(Q_1 \dots Q_m)$ are also members of the set $(P_1 \dots P_n)$, i.e. as we saw above some 'facets' remain unchanged. In dialectical change, however, all the elementary facts of the new situation $S(b)$ have some relation with the old ones. Some are the same and the others are the (dialectical) negation of their counterparts in $S(a)$. Or, in a set-theoretical formulation : there must be a function of the set $S(a)$ *onto* the set $S(b)$. A function between two sets that is *onto* relates all the members of one set — in our case $S(a)$ — to all the members of another set — in our case $S(b)$ —, so that each member of the first set ($S(a)$) is correlated with at most one member of the other set ($S(b)$) and that no member of this other set remains unrelated. In a dialectical change this function might be very complicated, for as far as I know dialectical logic is not yet formalized; it perhaps resists definite formalization.

Whether there is such a radical change as Kierkegaard presupposes in which situation $S(b)$ is something completely new with respect to situation $S(a)$ and not grown out of it in accordance with certain (dialectical) laws, is of course another matter. The changes we usually observe have a continuous or 'dialectical' form. I cannot, however, exclude beforehand the possibility of such a radical change as Kierkegaard meant. It lies, however, outside the scope of this article to enter into a discussion on this subject here, but I think that our method has shown Kierkegaard's presuppositions in a fair way and has given the startingpoint where a discussion should begin, viz. the question whether such a radical change is possible.

Let us give a summary and logical reconstruction of Kierkegaard's argument : He himself only supposes that there is a moment in time with a decisive significance. In the light of what is said above we should modify this as follows :

1. There is a moment in time that has decisive significance. The word 'decisive' must be taken in its most radical sense so that the situation $S(b)$ that comes after that moment is radically different from the situation $S(a)$ that precedes it in that some elementary facts of the new situation $S(b)$ have no connection with elementary facts in the old situation $S(a)$. Or in another formulation : Let $S(a)$ be the set of elementary facts $(P_1 \dots P_n)$ and $S(b)$ the set of elementary facts $Q_1 \dots Q_m$ then some $Q_i \dots Q_k$ have no relation with any member of the set $(P_1 \dots P_n)$ (or in set-theoretical formulation : there is no

function of S(a) onto S(b)) (hypothesis 1).

2. No empirically observable being (including man) can produce radical changes from S(a) to S(b) as mentioned sub 1 (hypothesis 2).

3. Every change (including a radical change) must be produced by some being (hypothesis 3).

Conclusion : From hypothesis 1, 2, and 3 (and by means of some steps (4–7) that will be given presently) we can infer that there must be a being that cannot be empirically observed and that produces the radical change from S(a) to S(b). Such a being we call 'God'. The steps by which this conclusion is reached are the following steps 4–7. As is usual in logic we continue the numbering that we already started by introducing the hypotheses; and at the end of each step we give a logical justification for this step.

4. There is a radical change from S(a) to S(b) (analytically deduced from hypothesis 1).

5. There must be a being that produces the radical change from S(a) to S(b) (step 4 and hypothesis 3 by means of *modus ponendo ponens*).

6. The being that produces the radical change from S(a) to S(b) must either be an empirically observable being or not be an empirically observable being (a law of classical logic, viz. the law of excluded middle).

7. The being that produces the radical change from S(a) to S(b) cannot be an empirically observable being (steps 5 and 6 and hypothesis 2 by means of *modus tollendo ponens*; for according to hypothesis 2 the being that produces the radical change from S(a) to S(b) cannot be an empirically observable being) (this step 7 is at the same time the *conclusion* indicated above). That we have to introduce the law of excluded middle shows that Kierkegaard's argument is only valid if we apply classical logic. In intuitionistic logic, as is well-known, this law is not valid.

Of course, we could have built up quite a different argument by introducing a fourth hypothesis (and by not considering step 7 the conclusion of the argument) :

8. There are no beings that cannot be empirically observed (hypothesis 4).

Now step 8 is inconsistent with step 7. That means that from our four hypotheses we have inferred a contradiction and so by means of *reductio ad absurdum* we are obliged to give up one hypothesis. But hypothesis 3 is plausible and so is hypothesis 2, because in some way a *sort of creatio ex nihilo* is required for the producing of such a radical change from S(a) to S(b), for something completely new is to be produced without any relation to the preceding situation. So our

reductio ad absurdum leads to the dilemma of either giving up hypothesis 1 or hypothesis 4. This is the preliminary result of our analysis by means of logical reconstructivism. To settle this discussion definitely — if this is ever possible — is not a matter of metaphilosophy alone.

Of course our analysis is also relevant for the theory of meaning. If a person speaks of a 'decisive' change, the meaning of the word 'decisive' is then dependent on the question as to whether he is willing to accept the conclusion of our argument (step 7) or not.

Kierkegaard's argument goes further, but if one accepts his conclusion (our step 7) the next steps of his argument are more or less evident. As they are more of a theological than a philosophical character, we will not consider them here, although they contain many interesting details. We should not forget, however, that Kierkegaard does not want to give a 'proof' of the truth of the Christian faith. He is well aware of the hypothetical character of his argument. He only gives, in his own words, a project of thought, a *Tanke-Projekt*.

As a second example of our approach we will now consider Schleiermacher's method in his book *Ueber die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (Berlin 1799) (*On Religion. Lectures to the educated among its despisers*). Here we do not consider certain conclusions, while looking for their best premises in a logical reconstruction of the author's argument. We will now consider Schleiermacher's *method*, while trying to give it the best possible foundations. This does not mean that we accept Schleiermacher's method; on the contrary! But here too we will try to be as fair as possible. We will ask: under what conditions would Schleiermacher's method be correct: Or, in another formulation: what must be accepted as true in order that Schleiermacher's method might be correct? Here too we shall be as strict as possible. Again we will look for those premises that say as little as possible. This time not in order to infer a conclusion, but to found a method.

Schleiermacher's method has proved to be very important. It has influenced many scientists of religion up to the present day, especially in the so-called phenomenological school (e.g. G. van der Leeuw, R. Otto and others). With the downfall of this school Schleiermacher's method too fell into discredit. The following is not an attempt to restore its reputation. We will only show its presuppositions so that the discussion might be as fair as possible. Schleiermacher's method no longer appeals to modern scientists of religion, because of its anti-empirical character. In his lectures Schleiermacher looked for the essence of religion, *das Wesen der*

Religion. He found this in a certain attitude, not in a certain set of dogmas: "Its essence is neither thinking (*Denken*) nor activity (*Handeln*), but intuition (*Anschauung*) and feeling (*Gefühl*)" (5) (the page-numbers put in brackets here and later on refer to the first German edition of Schleiermacher's book). Schleiermacher also looks for the essence of each individual religion. Modern scientists of religion are, however, very suspicious of such an essentialistic approach. But still it is, of course, useful to ask for a proper definition of religion. Now, very vaguely formulated, an adequate method to find such a definition could be summarized by the following steps:

1. First indicate what phenomena are to be classified as religious and what not.
2. Look for the characteristics of both the religious and the non-religious phenomena.
3. Look whether these religious phenomena have some characteristics in common ($a_1 \dots a_n$) that do not occur in the non-religious phenomena.
4. If some characteristics ($a_1 \dots a_j$) imply the other characteristics ($a_k \dots a_n$), define religion with the help of these 'basic' characteristics ($a_1 \dots a_j$).

It has turned out that it is very difficult to define religion adequately, but it is beyond the scope of this article to enter into this discussion here. Probably some disjunctive definition ($(a_1 \dots a_j) \vee (a_k \dots a_n) \vee \dots$) would be the best one. The difficulty is that such an obvious characteristic as e.g. 'the belief in gods (superhuman beings)' is not sufficient, because not all religions include this belief. On the other hand a belief in some transcendent superhuman reality is indeed a characteristic of all religions, but also of many metaphysical systems! So this would be too broad a definition. Therefore, some disjunctive definition will probably be necessary.

Also an individual religion can be characterized with the same method. First we indicate the religious phenomena of that religion, i.e. the common beliefs and practices. Many modern scientists of religion see a certain religion as a distinguished belief-, value- and action-system. Then we look for those characteristics that distinguish this religion from the other religions and then again we try to find the 'basic' characteristics.

But whatever merit this method may have, Schleiermacher opposes this approach. According to him we do not grasp the 'essence' of (an individual) religion with the help of such an empirical method. According to Schleiermacher many people indeed think that what is common to the adherents of a certain religion constitutes its essence.

“They thought that as so many people belong to the same religion, they should have the same religious ideas (*Ansichten*) and feelings, the same opinions and beliefs and that precisely these ideas, feelings, etc. should be the essence of their religion” (250). But according to Schleiermacher all these opinions and ideas constitute only the elements of religion, not its essence (251). We are not to deduce the ‘spirit of a religion’ (= approximately a synonym of ‘essence of a religion’) from what is common to the adherents of a certain religion (281). The reason for this is that there is no fully developed religion : “.. you should remember that no religion has been completely realized and that you will not know this religion before ... you will be able to make additions to it and to determine, how this or that phenomenon ought to have become, if the circle of view (*Gesichtskreis*) of that religion had been large enough” (281). The investigator of a certain religion should enter into the thoughts and ideas of that religion in order to grasp its essence. For this creative phantasy and empathy (*Einfühlung*) are needed : “ ... in spiritual matters you cannot reach the original in any other way than by an original creative act in yourselves” (48).

Now all this looks very bad in the eyes of any modern empirical philosopher and scientist. If the investigator can only reach the essence of a certain religion by a creative act in himself, then there is no objective way to find this essence. Men differ very much among each other in imagination and creative acts. If Schleiermacher was right, then there was no possibility to study religion in a scientific way. Every investigator may create a different essence of each religion and there is no authority to decide who is right. I think that from a modern scientific point of view Schleiermacher’s method is dated and fundamentally wrong. Still here too we will not abandon it just like that. We will continue the discussion and ask : Under what conditions would Schleiermacher’s method be correct ? As Schleiermacher’s method serves to find the essence of (a certain) religion, we should ask : What ought to be characteristic for an essence of a religion so that Schleiermacher is right. Or in other words : what should be the relation between the essence of a religion and its non-essential elements ? I think that Schleiermacher’s non-empirical method would be correct, if the essence of religion is its real in contradistinction to its seeming phenomena or/and if it is its original in contradistinction to its later and decadent phenomena Or/and if it is its normative in contradistinction to its deduced phenomena. If the essence of religion were something like that, Schleiermacher’s method would be correct. For then the empirical method mentioned above would probably lead us astray. The

phenomena we discover might then be the seeming instead of the real ones; they might not correspond to the norm that is valid in the religion in question. We might discover the decadent features instead of the vigorous original ones. Then it would be clear that our task would be to construct out of the scattered data a beautiful whole. In this connection it is not important that our constructed whole should correspond to the actual religion in question, but only that it should represent a beautiful instantiation of that religion and that it might inspire some of its adherents and those who study it. For in that case it is our task to find the real, original and normative essence of a certain religion. The criterion for deciding which construction is correct, is an esthetic one (possibly also an ethical one, but Schleiermacher himself would not agree with that, because, as we have seen above, religion and ethics are according to him two different things). That construction would then be the best that corresponds most to certain esthetic (and perhaps ethical) standards. How these standards might be found is beyond the scope of this article.

As science of religion is concerned with actual religions and not with their ideal types, I do not think that there is any use for Schleiermacher's method in this field. But things are different in philosophy of religion. In passing : science of religion is a descriptive science. It describes (and explains) the relevant phenomena in the various religions. It neither asks for the truth of religious dogmas nor for the ethical or esthetic value of certain religious attitudes and actions. Philosophy of religion on the other hand *does* put these questions. One could perhaps convey philosophy of religion in the following formula :

'Philosophy of religion = science of religion + the asking for truth and validity'

So, although Schleiermacher's method is indeed inadequate in science of religion, it might be correct in philosophy of religion. For in this field ethical and esthetic questions and criteria play a role and here, perhaps, Schleiermacher might still be a competent and inspiring guide. I myself would not be willing to accept Schleiermacher's method in philosophy of religion either, but I admit that the refutation of Schleiermacher here is a difficult matter and certainly not so obvious as in the field of science of religion. It would be beyond the scope of this article on metaphilosophy to continue the discussion with Schleiermacher, but the usefulness of our logical reconstructivism might be clear. It makes Schleiermacher's method as strong as possible in a field, where it might be of some value. Besides it shows the points, where the discussion should start : the question

of a possible essence of (a certain) religion and its relation to its so-called non-essential phenomena.