

The Discourse on Religious Experience and the De-contextualization: On Friedrich Schleiermacher's *Über die Religion*.

Hidetaka Fukasawa

The concept of de-/re-contextualization can be used as a heuristic means for understanding the history of religion. In this paper I explore the processes of the de-/re-contextualization of religious traditions under modernity in terms of the philosophical ideas of the German thinker, Friedrich Schleiermacher.

The appearance of the universal concept of religion in modern Europe was made possible through de-contextualization of the concept of religion that was embedded in the Christian tradition. Once de-contextualized, this concept served as a central tool for the legitimation of Christianity. Christianity itself was in need of a conceptual tool that would give foundation to it in the era of the ongoing de-christianization of society and culture. The philosophical testimony which reveals this situation most vividly is the early work of Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion* (1899).

Schleiermacher's *Über die Religion* counts as one of the most revolutionary works in the western history of religious ideas. In this work, Schleiermacher separated the idea of the religious experience, which was immersed in the Christian tradition as *cognitio dei experimentalis*, from its Christian context, and treated it as a universal concept. It was not Christianity or the Christian God that mattered in this book, but "religion" as a specific realm of life. We can observe here the process of de-contextualization (de-christianization) of the concept of religion. On the other hand, however, this very procedure of de-contextualization also meant for Schleiermacher a new way of legitimating Christianity. Therefore Schleiermacher's de-contextualization of the ideas of religion and religious experience functioned simultaneously as their re-contextualization into the Christian tradition. In de-contextualizing the concept of Religion, Schleiermacher de-contextualizes Christianity. Furthermore, according to Schleiermacher, Christianity itself possesses the principle of de-contextualization in its "original intuition". In this way, Schleiermacher's *Über die Religion* shows us the dynamics of the complicated processes of the de-/re-contextualization of the religious traditions under modernity.