

EXPERIENCE OF THE SACRED

Readings in the Phenomenology of Religion



Sumner B. Twiss and Walter H. Conser, Jr.

EDITORS

UNIVERSITY PRESS OF NEW ENGLAND

Hanover & London



Introduction

The phenomenology of religion is a method of investigation in the academic study of religion, that broad humanistic exploration of religion which has emerged so forcefully in American colleges and universities. As the academic study of religion (or religious studies as it is often called) has consolidated its position within the curricular offerings of American institutions of higher education, two important developments have become clear.¹ First, the academic study of religion has clearly established its independence from the theological study of religion. As more and more departments and programs of religious studies have appeared in state universities and private colleges, they have repeatedly demonstrated their distance from the presuppositions and assumptions associated with seminaries and divinity schools. Second, as the field of religious studies has matured, its course offerings and institutional profile have increasingly become that of a multidisciplinary and humanistic field in the academy. Religious studies has grown from its origins in textual criticism and philological investigation to incorporate the scholarship from historical, literary, philosophical, and social scientific fields of inquiry.

The phenomenological study of religion has contributed to both of these developments. For, as these introductory remarks will more amply demonstrate, phenomenology typically brackets or lays aside metaphysical questions of the real existence of the sacred or the divine. In this way it, too, distances itself from traditional theological inquiry and demonstrates the fruitfulness of an academic approach to the study of religion. Beyond that, as the tradition of the phenomenological analysis of religion has developed, it likewise has incorporated many of the insights and creatively responded to the challenges contained in the findings of other fields of research into religion.

The history of the phenomenology of religion is a complex one. It might be compared to a musical composition that contains three sepa-

rate but related voices—the essential, the historical-typological, and the existential-hermeneutical phenomenology of religion. Schematically, the first voice begins with the publication of Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*, which establishes the direction and overall tone of the composition.² Subsequently, in the work of Gerardus van der Leeuw and others, the second voice appears, embellishing upon the first voice yet clearly projecting its own distinctive sound.³ Though receding somewhat into the background, the first voice continues to be heard, and in fact enriches the composition through its interplay with the now dominant second voice. Finally, the third voice, that of the existential phenomenology of religion, enters, and new elements as well as established themes are audible.⁴ In this way the three voices interact with one another, shaping the overall melody and contrapuntally contributing their parts to the resonance and power of the composition as a whole. This phenomenological composition has a certain unfinished character to it. For it not only continues in the present, it also influences such established traditions outside itself as philosophy, history, and psychology as well as such fresh new postmodern modes of criticism as deconstruction and the hermeneutics of gender.

As the musical image suggests, there has been both unity and creativity in the history of the phenomenology of religion. The first use of the phrase "phenomenology of religion" occurred in the 1887 edition of the *Manual of the Science of Religion* by the Dutch scholar, P. D. Chantepie de la Saussaye (1848–1920).⁵ However, Chantepie de la Saussaye conceived of phenomenological analysis as little more than a cataloging of the forms of religion, and his views had little impact on the later development of phenomenology of religion; indeed, the whole section on phenomenology was dropped from the next edition of the *Manual*.

Far more influential for the subsequent history of the phenomenological analysis of religion has been the work of Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) and Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911). While there were significant differences between the two, particularly in terms of philosophical style and approach, these German philosophers developed methodological and conceptual insights that reverberated throughout the history of the phenomenological study of religion.

Edmund Husserl's proposals for a philosophical phenomenology amounted to a call for a fresh start in philosophy.⁶ In what has become a motto for the phenomenological movement, Husserl called for a "return to the things themselves." By this phrase Husserl sought to free philosophy from prior dogmatic claims about the nature of knowledge, the world, and ourselves, claims that he felt lacked any ultimate philosophi-

cal justification. Suspicious of theoretical preconceptions that shape and form the experience we are trying to describe before that description has even begun, Husserl sought to develop a philosophy without presuppositions. For example, regarding epistemological inquiry he emphasized that phenomenology must not initially take over informal metaphors, such as "stream of consciousness," nor adopt explicit theoretical constructs, such as the rigid distinction between mind and body, for both of these distort our attempt to describe the experience. Instead, phenomenology must limit itself to descriptions and analyses of experience, inquiries that are open to further revision and improvements.

In his writings, Husserl expanded this insight into a distinctive procedure for examining the nature of human experience. This procedure divides into roughly four major phases: (1) bracketing commonsense beliefs, (2) focusing reflectively on the phenomena of experience, (3) analyzing the traits of these phenomena and their implications, and (4) reporting the results to others for further confirmation or disconfirmation. These phases constituted the core of Husserl's phenomenology, yet they would seem to raise an immediate question: is it not disingenuous of Husserl to decry previous theory builders, only to devise one of his own? At one level, the answer is yes, and Husserl stands in a long line of distinguished thinkers who argue that their predecessors erred and we have to start over again. Yet, at another level, this criticism misunderstands an important point of Husserl's project. For while the characteristics of his procedure do distinguish phenomenology from other philosophical approaches, Husserl contends that phenomenology is not a conceptual imposition upon experience and further that the importance of the procedure is attested by the accuracy and fruitfulness of the method itself. As Robert Solomon has pointed out, for Husserl there is no distinction between method and result in phenomenology.⁷ And as Husserl himself demonstrates in his own work, this procedure does not remain privileged and unchallenged, but rather constitutes methods continuously questioned and sharpened in the doing of phenomenology.

The first phase of bracketing (also called by Husserl *epoché* and the phenomenological reduction) involved suspending all commonsense beliefs and judgments about the existence, value, or truth of the objects encountered in experience. Such a step is so thoroughgoing as to include suspending belief in, and philosophical concern with, the existence of the external world. Here again, we find Husserl's concern to see our experience without the presupposition of theory, interpretation, or assumption imposing upon and shaping what we see. The forest we see from the window of our study, for example, is not an interdependent ecosystem of

flora and fauna in competition for survival and threatened by pollution. Rather, it is a vista of variegated colors, shapes, sounds, and scents. Phenomenological analysis does not contradict either the existence of the object or the scientific analysis of the world, but it does bracket them so that we can directly describe what we see.

The first step positions the inquirer for the next which involves viewing the experience reflectively, and seeing how in his experience he is conscious of or related to the objects of his experience. In this second step, for example, the inquirer sees himself (reflectively) in his own act of seeing an object (perceptually); that is, he focuses in a second-order reflective way on his first-order conscious act of perceiving an object. The image is: looking at himself looking at some object; the "looking at object" is ordinary perception, while the "looking at self" is an intellectual act of reflection (discernment, intuition). As Husserl would say, the inquirer becomes the "disinterested spectator" of himself and his conscious experience. This step in turn positions the inquirer to reflect on the intrinsic features of conscious experience, its phenomena and acts.

Husserl always maintained that phenomenology was concerned with the essence and not simply the incidental aspects of experience. For him this third phase of essential examination (he also called it eidetic reduction) sought to analyze the basic traits and types of objects, to figure out the implications and possible interconnections of the experiences under review. Phenomenologists often call this technique "free imaginative variation." It seeks to peel away the extraneous attributes, to lay bare the object that is before one. Thus phenomenological analysis of the experience of friendship, of solving a mathematical theorem, or of the holy produces the essential qualities of that experience. Establishing the relation between the circumference and radius of a circle, for example, tells us something significant about the necessary aspects of all possible circles. We can distinguish between our experience of the circle and all other types of geometric figures. We can reflect imaginatively about other properties and relations pertaining to a circle. When we have completed our analysis of the circle, we know something about the essence of all possible circles. Husserl insists that these qualities are not essential merely because we happen to believe that they are essential. Nor are they essential but only in some confined sphere correlated to our position in an economic class or cultural setting. Rather, Husserl insists that phenomenological analysis produces apodictic knowledge, knowledge not relative to time and place.

The final phase or step involves communicating phenomenological discoveries to a broader audience so that the findings may be verified or

disconfirmed. Husserl called himself a "perpetual beginner" and in this characterization he again signalled his opposition to dogmatic philosophizing. One must always be willing to go back to the beginning, back to the experience itself, to see more directly and analyze more completely. Beyond that, Husserl believed that phenomenological findings, like all scientific claims, must be subject to independent testing and verification. Yet such verification was more than simply checking for syllogistic fallacies or misplaced premises. Indeed, as the phenomenologist, Max Scheler, cautioned, "one must read a phenomenological book with a completely *different attitude*."⁸ For Scheler notes that phenomenological discussions often appear indirect and roundabout. They possess these qualities precisely because they are designed to report discoveries in an active rather than inert manner, attempting to lead others to see and verify for themselves what phenomenologists claim to discern. Phenomenological discussions are expressly designed to engage the reader's active intellect; they are complex communicative acts designed to position readers to see the essential nature of phenomena for themselves.

One final observation is appropriate at this point. Husserl maintained that the phenomenological method demonstrated the intentionality of human consciousness. By this phrase Husserl meant that consciousness is always consciousness of something, it always has an object. My experience of anger, of faith, of love always has an object toward which it is directed. This object, Husserl points out, can be a real or material object, such as another person, or it can be an unreal or ideal object such as the Fountain of Youth or a geometric proof. Beyond this, Husserl argues that analysis of the intentional nature of consciousness points to the distinction between the *act* of consciousness (noesis), for example, doubting, worshipping, loving, and the intentional *object* of consciousness (noema). The act of consciousness is clearly related to the intentional object of consciousness; however, they are analytically separable. Thus, on Husserl's account, the phenomenological description of our experience investigates either the act of consciousness, the intentional object of consciousness, or both. This object may or may not exist; however, following the phenomenological reduction, the question of the metaphysical existence of the intentional object of experience, apart from my experiencing of it, is bracketed.

Sometimes called a philosopher of life or a philosopher of the human studies, Wilhelm Dilthey spent his scholarly career exploring the distinctive nature of human experience.⁹ Four themes in Dilthey's work were influential in the later development of the phenomenological analysis of religion. First, much like Husserl, Dilthey emphasized the need to focus

upon human experience and to analyze it without preconceived ideas, reductionist theories, or philosophical commitments. Moreover, though he did not use the specific vocabulary of intentionality, Dilthey joined Husserl in underscoring the purposive nature of human consciousness and experience. Where Husserl noted that consciousness always has an object toward which it is directed, Dilthey made the related observation that the expressions of human consciousness always point beyond themselves to something else.

Second, Dilthey repeatedly emphasized that recognition of the purposive dimensions of human experience entailed that such expressions are meaningful in some fundamental sense. In making a gesture or travelling to a foreign university as a guest professor, it is not the physiology of the gesture nor the task of making travel arrangements that is important for comprehending the experience. Rather it is the tacit significations of the gesture, the ensemble of anticipated opportunities contained in the offer of a new professional circumstance that need to be comprehended. In this way, Dilthey emphasized that there was an inner life to human experience, one that found expression in any number of areas, such as religion and the arts, but also in nonlinguistic and nonverbal aspects of everyday life. Any adequate examination of human experience must account for and make intelligible these dimensions as well.

Third, the methodology appropriate to discern human meanings was what Dilthey called the process of understanding (*Verstehen*). To understand something, whether it be a linguistic text, the performance of a ritual, or the affirmation of a set of doctrinal beliefs, is to interpret it. The process of interpretation, or hermeneutics as it is often called, involves placing the item to be interpreted in an appropriate context of known past references, present lived experiences, and possible future expectations. Thus, for Dilthey, the process of understanding involved the challenge of correctly discerning the meaning of human experience. It involved grasping what people meant in speech and action, discerning the significance of the complex symbolic dimensions of human expression, and finally, entering into the minds of human agents in ways ranging from appreciating their intentions to identifying with and even incorporating their meanings into one's own experience.

Finally, Dilthey often called for the use of typologies in the human studies and is well known for his own typology of human worldviews. In making this point about the usefulness of typologies, Dilthey reminded his readers that such typologies are always generalizations of historically determined human experiences, comparisons, in other words, of concrete social historical reality. Dilthey recognized the epistemological and sci-

entific value of comparative analysis. In the process of gaining knowledge and understanding of our world, we are always engaged in implicit and explicit comparisons. We recognize the color blue in part by comparing it with a spectrum of other colors, and we assess the greetings of a friend as enthusiastic or cool by provisionally comparing them with other such greetings.

Moreover, in scientific inquiry, typologies, comparisons, and generalizations play an important role. For while the results of a specific scientific experiment or historical event can be important, their true significance is established by comparing them with other experiments and events, by placing them within a larger context of similar and dissimilar items. In stressing the utility of comparative typologies, Dilthey insisted that they were primarily heuristic aids, which always needed to be scrupulously checked against the specific data of empirical evidence and historical case study. Typological comparisons, then, were not lifeless apparitions existing apart from the real world. Rather, they reflected something larger and provided a basis for classificatory assessments of similarity and difference.

Any further orientation to the phenomenology of religion requires explicit delineation of its three principal voices. So let us now turn to these, beginning with that earliest voice which so decisively shaped the direction and contours of the field as a whole.

First Voice: Essential Phenomenology of Religion

The first voice in the phenomenology of religion is what we call, following Max Scheler, the essential phenomenology of religion.¹⁰ "Essential" here means a basic concern with the essence or true nature of the religious consciousness of the believing soul—the defining traits of his or her religious apprehensions, emotional states, and motivations for religious activities (what, in a nicely turned phrase, Rudolph Otto calls the distinctively religious "states of the soul").¹¹ This voice in phenomenology of religion is well represented by the researches of Rudolph Otto and Max Scheler, who are often regarded as the founding fathers of this voice, as well as the writing of others, such as Louis Dupré and William Earle, who follow in their path. The thinkers who represent this voice possess both distinctive aims and a reasonably unified method of inquiry, though, of course, as with all scholars, they differ in emphasis and nuance about some issues.

Aims

The aim shared by all essential phenomenologists of religion is to describe and analyze those experiences and concepts uniquely characteristic of religious consciousness. That is, all scholars working within this voice want to clarify for themselves as well as others those apprehensions, emotions, motivations, and activities distinctive to the believing soul who claims to live his or her life in full recognition of a transcendent or sacred dimension of human experience. What, asks the essentialist, defines the consciousness of this sort of person (or community of persons)? In what way does this consciousness differ from nonreligious perspectives on the world? How does the believing soul think, feel, and act, and what does he or she "see" that nonreligious others do not? Questions such as these shape the researches of those working within the essential voice, and they suggest immediately the propriety of employing a method of inquiry that is able to explore sensitively and without bias the committed subjectivity of faithful believers. Before, however, turning to the details of that method, we should ask whether our essentialists share any other aims or goals.

Digging a little deeper into this matter reveals a surprising result. All of our researchers do in fact have other aims, but many of these are not shared. With respect to the essentialists represented in this book, for example, one can discern a number of discrete aims. Otto is interested finally in putting his description of numinous consciousness in service of the broader theological aim of showing that knowledge of the Christian God can be advanced by careful attention to religious experience. Scheler seeks the less theological aim of grounding in a rigorous way a new science of religions. Earle wants to show that at least one type of distinctive religious experience—mystical experience—is continuous with ordinary self-awareness, thus demonstrating to contemporary philosophers that the apparently "irrational" claims of religion have something to contribute to the rational researches into the philosophy of the self. Sekida offers his phenomenology of samadhi as a way of communicating Eastern religious consciousness to the broader audience of the Western world. Christ is concerned to recover the true nature of women's religious consciousness in order to advance the cause of a feminist critique of male-dominated theology and religious thought. And Dupré wants to use essential phenomenology of religion to debunk a myopic vision of philosophy of religion as answerable only to autonomous norms of rationality. So, as it turns out, many essentialists have deeper (and somewhat hidden) agenda governed by normative aims of one sort or another. Being aware of these

deeper aims is important, for it puts us in a position to ask whether they have any bearing on the shared aim of the elucidation of religious consciousness.

What we need to do at this point is to draw a distinction between the phenomenological aim of scholars working within the essential voice, and their broader normative aims since after completing their phenomenological investigations they often go on to use their results in other non-phenomenological programs of inquiry—whether theological, philosophical, or social-cultural. Drawing this distinction has two advantages. It permits us to see the relatively unified integrity of essential phenomenological research (in its descriptive aim and method) and it alerts us to a potential problem in this research—namely, that its descriptive aim and method might at times be affected by a researcher's larger project. Being thus alerted, we are in a better position to assess critically whether a particular piece of phenomenological research is true to its intrinsic phenomenological aim. Let us now turn to the question of what method unifies our essential phenomenologists.

Method

Besides sharing the descriptive and analytical aim suggested above, researchers within the essential voice also share a relatively unified method of inquiry. This method follows (with some variations) the Husserlian program of adopting the "phenomenological attitude" as a way of gaining insight (intuition) into what makes religious consciousness what it is. Thus, with Husserl, all of our researchers hold that religious consciousness, in its various states and manifestations, is consciousness of something and is structured in a bipolar way involving the correlation of an active "subject" pole (noesis) and an "object" pole (noema). They agree on the importance and propriety of adopting the phenomenological attitude (or epoché) toward their subject-matter—the phenomena or states of religious consciousness—bracketing or suspending judgment about whether religion is true or valuable, about whether the objects of religious experience are real or not, about whether religious consciousness can be explained in some sort of causal way by the human sciences, and so on. They also agree on the utility of employing "sympathy" or "empathy" in gaining access to the content of religious consciousness—temporarily reenacting or reexperiencing within their methodical or tutored consciousness the intentions, experiences, beliefs of the believing soul and then intuitively "observing" and reflectively probing these contents to see what makes them tick, so to speak. They agree that in order to do justice to these contents in conveying them to others, it is

crucially important to provide evocative or "warm" descriptions that aim ultimately at getting others to appreciate (or even reexperience in a sympathetic way for themselves) the "moments" of religious consciousness.¹² And they agree that in order to properly elucidate or clarify the consciousness of the believing soul, it is necessary to identify its essential or defining traits (what makes it distinctively religious).

In gaining further understanding of this method, it may be useful to see it in operation, and this is precisely what is supplied by the authors in the first section of the book. Let us glance at a few of these to see how they understand their method. Since Otto, Scheler, and Earle are especially self-conscious about their method of inquiry, they furnish a particularly perspicuous "lens" on the methodological underpinnings of the essential voice. Each seems adept in clarifying one or another aspect of their shared method, and taken together they provide a rather comprehensive picture of the method in action.

Otto is particularly clear in identifying the basic aim of the essential phenomenology of religion. At the very outset of his inquiry, for example, he indicates that he is concerned to probe and analyze the religious "states of the soul," paying attention to "what is unique in them rather than to what they have in common with other similar states." As he so illuminatingly puts it, "to be rapt in worship is one thing; to be morally uplifted by the contemplation of a good deed is another; and it is not to their common features, but to those elements of emotional content peculiar to the first that we would have attention directed as precisely as possible." This states clearly that Otto's aim is to identify, describe, and analyze the essence of religious consciousness, and he goes on to do just that in his famous characterization of the "most fundamental element in all strong and sincerely felt religious emotion" as "mysterium tremendum et fascinans" (i.e., being simultaneously daunted and fascinated by an awe-inspiring, majestic, and overpowering mystery encountered within religious experience).

Both Scheler and Earle, together with all others working within this voice, clearly agree with this aim. Scheler, for his part, claims that the method of his inquiry into the nature of revelation (understood as divine self-disclosure) involves "the phenomenological scrutiny of essence" of revelation. And Earle, for his part in his study of mystical experience (a particular type of religious consciousness), states his aim as the analysis of his "essence of mystical experience" understood as the "experience of the identity of myself with Absolute Reality." Within this agreed upon aim, our three essentialists then go on to speak of the method necessary for describing and analyzing the various aspects of the consciousness of the believing soul.

Earle is straightforward about the fact that this method is fundamentally Husserlian in orientation, though it must also be noted that both Otto and Scheler were fully aware of the relevance of Husserl's researches for their inquiries. (Husserl, by the way, in a letter to Otto, explicitly approved of Otto's work, praising his *Idea of the Holy* as an original contribution to and a "first beginning" in the essential phenomenology of religion.)¹³ Earle characterizes the method in the following way:

... the attempt to reflect radically upon experience as that experience presents itself to the experienter. It will be then mind reflecting upon itself, without presupposition, in an effort to discern explicitly what the structure and content of that experience is. This reflection from first to last will try to confine itself to experience as it offers itself without presupposing from the start what reality "must" be, what the ego experiencing "must" be, notions drawn from sources external to that experience itself. In a word, that phenomenological reflection does not begin with any logical, biological, physical or philosophical presuppositions. All of that must be put in brackets; the effort will be to reflect upon the experience itself, to see once again what it is rather than to attempt a critique from supposed truths drawn from elsewhere. Phenomenology thus understood is nothing but an attempt to make clear to oneself the phenomenon of any experience whatsoever just as it offers itself to the mind reflecting.

What seems clear from this characterization is that Earle sees the method as involving the adoption of the "phenomenological attitude," implying that the investigator brackets all distorting assumptions about the truth, value, or reality of religion and focuses precisely on the phenomena of religious consciousness as they appear in that consciousness. Furthermore, Earle evidently adopts the technique of imaginative or sympathetic reenactment within his own consciousness of the experience of the believing soul (in his case, the mystic) precisely in order to gain a purchase on "the structure and content of that experience." Thus does Earle link his method—and the method of essential phenomenology of religion more generally—to those features of Husserlian phenomenology that we earlier identified as "focus on religious phenomena as they appear," "bracketing or epoché," and "sympathetic reexperiencing of phenomena," followed by "intuitive observation of and reflection on reenacted content."

Otto and Scheler, for their part, appear to be entirely in accord with these facets of the phenomenological method. Thus, Otto, for example, though he does not use Husserlian terminology, seeks to describe the elements of the numinous consciousness (another term for "mysterium tremendum et fascinans") as they appear within that consciousness, and he explicitly speaks of the investigator's using "every effort of sympathy and imaginative intuition" and "precise introspection" in so doing. Scheler speaks of the investigator's analyzing the "primal datum" of the

religious consciousness understood as consisting of "natural religious acts" that must be respected as they appear in order to be understood properly by the investigator. His acceptance of the method—in its bracketed focus on the contents of religious consciousness as phenomena to be respected as they appear—is evident in his criticism of the psychologist William Wundt, where against Wundt, Scheler contends that the phenomenological method involves "a dialectical intention to redirect the mind's attention to the all-important object . . . to look here and now upon the supraconceptual datum which can only be beheld, to gaze directly upon its pure self-given state."¹⁴ This somewhat hyperbolic way of emphasizing the phenomenological attitude seems clear enough. Though in the present selection Scheler says little about the methodical step of sympathetic reexperiencing, it is apparent from his other phenomenological researches that he embraces an empathetic method. Indeed, this may be inferred even from the present selection in his positive appraisal of Otto's phenomenological method, where he quotes approvingly the following from Otto: "There is only one way to help another to an understanding of it [the category of experienced Holiness]. He must be guided and led on by consideration and discussion of the matter through the ways of his own mind, until he reaches the point at which the numinous in him perforce begins to stir, to start into life and into consciousness." This quotation surely shows Scheler's commitment to the method of sympathetic reenactment.

Both Otto and Scheler—and to a lesser extent Earle—are also clearly committed to those steps of the phenomenological method which we have labeled as "evocative description" and "reflective elucidation" of essential, defining features of the religious consciousness. Otto is particularly vivid in his articulation of the step of evocative description when he writes, "we must once again endeavor, by choosing feelings akin to them for the purpose of analogy or contrast, and by the use of metaphors and symbolic expressions, to make the states of mind we are investigating ring out, as it were of themselves." And his manner of exemplifying this step by getting his reader to reflect upon commonly accessible analogues (e.g., dread of the uncanny, awe before a majestic power) as well as the meaning of metaphoric descriptions (e.g., "Wrath of Yahweh," "feeling like dust and ashes," "The Wholly Other or Alien," and "dizzy intoxication") is a compelling illustration of evocative description within a phenomenological study of religious consciousness. Indeed, Otto has few peers in his ability to evoke within his reader an appreciation for the peculiarities of religious experience—this is precisely why he is so often admired and quoted by other religious scholars (to great effect, we might add). Scheler

too shows enormous appreciation for Otto's evocative descriptions of numinous consciousness, but he does more than just admire, for he goes to the trouble of explaining the rationale for this phenomenological practice.

According to Scheler (and here we venture to suggest that Otto would agree), this sort of description constitutes a "negative method of successively peeling away the correlates and contraries that . . . offer progressive indications to the *phenomenon demonstrandum* [the phenomenon to be demonstrated] with the consequent laying bare of the phenomenon and its presence to the inspecting mind." Thus, suggests Scheler, when Otto attempts to bring before his reader's "notice all that can be found in the other regions of the mind, already known and familiar, or again to afford some special contrast to the particular experience" and then adds "this X of ours is not precisely this experience, but akin to this one and the opposite of that other . . . cannot you now realize for yourself what it is?," he is attempting to both point to *and* awaken in the reader's consciousness his or her own sympathetic reexperiencing of the religious phenomenon. Thus the phenomenologist's evocative description turns out to be a type of performative language intimately tied to his method of inquiry: the phenomenologist uses language in a quasi-causal way to evoke or prompt the reader's own empathetic response and appreciation of aspects of religious consciousness. This performative use of language to describe evocatively is indicative of the phenomenologist's respect for showing the phenomenon as it appears in religious consciousness as well as his methodological commitment to experiential understanding of the structures of human consciousness.

Scheler not only agrees with Otto on this step of evocative description but also displays in his own work an ability to employ such performative description to considerable effect. Thus can we appreciate the way he attempts to analogize the revelations (divine self-disclosures) experienced by the believing soul when contemplating the beauty of the natural world or certain sacred objects, places, or events, to such commonly accessible phenomena as a window becoming conspicuous in a series of windows (on the side of a building) when we see someone inside looking out, or the way a mirror reflects to another the image of a person, or the way that an artist's spirit is present in and shows through his work. Suggests Scheler, the divine revelation is like the conspicuous window but not quite, like a reflective mirror but not quite, like an artist's presence but not quite, and so on—all in an attempt to get us to appreciate how divine revelation appears to the believing soul. For his part, Earle too follows in the footsteps of these past masters of evocative description (though he

may be somewhat less successful) when, for example he encourages his readers to examine their own self-reflexive awareness, perceptual activity, temporal awareness, and the like, in order to appreciate the mystical religious consciousness's wonder at the ego as well as its expressive claims like "I am God." Whether or not Earle is finally convincing here, the point is that he too attempts to use evocative description to prompt his reader to see and appreciate aspects of mystical consciousness and experience.

Of course, all of this performatively oriented evocative description serves a purpose, and that purpose is contained within the final step of the essential phenomenologist's method—namely, the reflective elucidation of the essential or defining traits of religious consciousness. This final step fulfills the intrinsic aim of the essentialist's enterprise. All phenomenologists working within this voice not only say they are interested in such an aim but also do their utmost to satisfy this aim by indicating what they regard—after due reenactment and reflection—as the essential traits that make religious phenomena what they are. Thus, for example, Otto proposes that the essential traits of religious consciousness are identified by the formula "mysterium tremendum et fascinans" and then goes on to elaborate in precise ways the component of each element of this formula—the "tremendum" is analyzed into sub-traits of awefulness, overpowering majesty, and vital energy; the "mysterium" is analyzed in terms of the wholly other mystery incommensurable with all the known world; and "fascinans" is analyzed as potently charming Dionysiac captivation and intoxication. In this way, Otto hopes to have identified, made comprehensible, and analyzed the necessary and sufficient conditions for recognizing and defining the numinous consciousness—without one or another of these traits, we may have a phenomenon very like the numinous religious consciousness but not that consciousness in all of its essential uniqueness and purity. But we must be careful here, for in offering us this discussion of the "mysterium tremendum et fascinans," Otto does both more and less than articulate a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for the numinous consciousness. He does more and less in the sense that his description and analysis is not simply intended as a definitive analysis of its traits but also designed as a set of pointers or signposts for us (his readers) to come to see or intuit those essential features for ourselves—that is the point of using language in an evocative manner. Otto wants to bring us with him in sympathetically reexamining and then reflectively observing or intuiting the essential features of numinous consciousness—in this way, we are to see for ourselves what the essential traits are.

Similarly, Scheler also tries to identify what he calls the "essential attributes" of the divine in its self-disclosure, identifying such features as "absolute being" and "holiness" and then further analyzing these as constitutively composed of "utterly active," "almighty," "self-subsistent," "pure," "sublime," "ground of all that is," and so on. And though Scheler is perfectly willing to say that the revealed divine "invariably possesses these attributes," it is clear from his discussion that he too means to guide us (his readers) and redirect our attention to behold the datum for ourselves and to intuit for ourselves its essential features. In effect, his discussion (like Otto's) is designed to lay "bare . . . the phenomenon and its presence to the inspecting mind," making possible our own scrutiny of its essence. Earle too is clearly attempting to specify the essential traits of mystical consciousness which he proposes in one traditional formulation as "the experience of the identity of the soul and God" but then in the interests of phenomenologically neutral retranslation rephrases as "the experience of the identity of myself with Absolute Reality." The performative (evocative) function of this retranslation should not go unnoticed, for with it Earle attempts to guide us into a self-aware recognition that we as transcendental egos are able (at least in sympathetic reenactment) to realize how and why the mystical consciousness identifies itself with the absolute. His whole discussion and analysis is structured with this goal in mind—to enable us to see for ourselves what this mystical identification involves in an essential way. Earle's wager is that if we can come to see ourselves as transcendental egos with essential traits of non-spatiality, nontemporality, and absolute freedom, then we will be in a position to appreciate sympathetically as well the mystic's claim that his or her self has "exactly the same structure as the Absolute Reality itself," expressed in the typical formulation of unitary mysticism as "I am God" (meaning I have the same structure as, or am identical with, the divine). Again, our point is, whether or not he is correct in his characterization of mystical consciousness, Earle clearly means to lead us to see for ourselves what he regards as the essential traits of this consciousness.

Issues

Thus far, we have attempted to clarify the aim and method of the essential phenomenology of religion through the eyes or "lens" of representative practitioners. It remains to take this clarification one step farther to gain a more critical purchase on this voice. We need to become aware of some of the problems and issues raised, for in this way we may be better able to understand why other voices have been developed in the phenomenology of religion. This is not to say that the essentialist voice

has been superseded—indeed it continues to this day—but rather that other voices which have developed have done so in part because the essentialist voice, while having certain strengths, may also have certain limitations. And it is wise to be aware of these limitations (or at least controversy about them) before proceeding further.

Six possible problems can be cited in connection with the essentialist voice. The first has already been mentioned—namely, the concern over whether hidden agenda (or normative aims) somehow bias or distort the descriptive and analytic aim and results of essential phenomenology of religion. A second problem is whether the phenomenological attitude itself—in its apparent neutrality about truth and value—is able to do justice to religious phenomena of ultimate commitment (faith), which are quite the contrary of neutrality and suspended judgment. A third problem is whether the phenomenological attitude naively assumes the transparency of consciousness to itself—that is, whether it is or can be sufficiently suspicious of and critical about the factors constituting and governing religious intentions and motivations (might not some of these be below the threshold of consciousness?). The fourth problem concerns the status of the process of sympathetic or empathetic reenactment. It is claimed that the exact nature and epistemic value of this process remains somewhat obscure in many phenomenological discussions. The fifth problem concerns a possible anti-historical bias in the emphasis on static “essences” of religious consciousness. The sixth and final problem is whether the essential voice subscribes to an inadequate theory of human experience that fails to acknowledge the embodied nature of human consciousness as well as its radically intersubjective context. Each of these problems may indicate a limitation on the value and legitimacy of the essentialist voice, and though we cannot here fully analyze, much less decisively resolve, these issues, we can try to clarify their significance and indicate how they might prompt and support the development of other approaches both within and outside the phenomenology of religion.

With respect to the first problem—the biasing effects of essentialists’ hidden agenda and normative aims—it must be candidly conceded that much work done within this voice tends to be normatively “loaded” toward identifying religious consciousness with the consciousness of a classical Christian theistic believer. This does not necessarily invalidate the adequacy of the phenomenological studies *as studies of a certain kind of theistic religious consciousness*, but it does question whether these studies accurately capture other forms of theistic consciousness (where, for example, the divine is not experienced as a “wholly other” alien power) much less nontheistic forms of religious consciousness (e.g., certain types

of Asian religious experience). This is, in part, why we include in our selections and bibliography phenomenological studies of diverse forms of religious consciousness (e.g., Zen Buddhism, women’s nontraditional religious experience, Shinto, Native American traditions, etc.). By seeing these other studies we are able both to correct for any theistic bias of some of our investigators and at the same time show that the essentialist voice can be used to clarify other forms of religious experience or consciousness. The student should be especially alert to how both Otto and Scheler, two founding fathers of the essentialist approach, tend to load their work with a theistic emphasis or orientation. Again, this may not invalidate their work as adequate for certain forms of religious consciousness, but it does suggest significant limitations on their broader adequacy. And, of course, one can still appreciate how their method may be usefully applied in studying other forms of religious consciousness that they did not study themselves.

The second problem, however, concerning the possible biasing effect of the phenomenological attitude’s detachment, raises a deeper issue regarding possible limitations on the method itself.¹⁵ It needs to be understood from the outset that the phenomenological attitude does not appraise religious consciousness negatively (dismissing its value or truth), but rather suspends all judgment or appraisals (pro or con). Thus, the phenomenological attitude cannot be interpreted as antithetical or hostile to religion. So this issue is not one of hostility to religion, but is rather more subtle. The concern is whether an attitude of detachment (or suspension of judgment about truth and value) can do justice to the depth of commitment (ultimate concern) embedded in the totally committed subjectivity of the believing soul. Can, in a word, detachment understand and represent deep commitment? It is not clear that it cannot, for the phenomenological method while “suspending judgment” also involves “empathetic reenactment” of the religious consciousness, thus enabling it (the method) to understand at a distance, so to speak. Indeed, the suspension of judgment can enhance this empathy because epoché puts “out of play” the investigator’s own distorting prejudices and biases, thus enabling him or her to be empathetic to and resonant with the believing soul’s experiences from its own standpoint. This contention, though, is subject to the stipulation that empathetic reenactment makes sense and can be defended as a valuable tool of inquiry (more on this below).

The third problem, concerning a possible insufficiency of suspicion on the part of the phenomenologist who may assume the self-transparency of consciousness, raises a much discussed problem that naturally occurs to all in our culture who are aware of the “schools of suspicion” associ-

ated with Freud, Marx, Foucault as well as other post-modern deconstructionists.¹⁶ In a nutshell the criticism comes down to this: inasmuch as essentialists by virtue of their method focus principally on the avowed intentions and motivations of the believing soul, do they not blind themselves to what may really be going on in and behind religious consciousness—for example, unconscious factors in the personality, social forces of one sort or another, and so on? Are not their descriptions and analyses relatively superficial, since they have incapacitated themselves from getting at the heart of the matter? These sorts of objections betray a deep misunderstanding of what essential phenomenology is all about as well as a deep misunderstanding of the significance of the phenomenological task. Among the selections in this book, Dupré indicates the proper response to these objections when he writes with reference to psychology and the Freudian school of suspicion:

Any claim of psychology to a full understanding of the religious experience, therefore, assumes that the religious act can be explained entirely as a subjective experience. Indeed, empirical psychology deals exclusively with the reality of the experience (i.e., its subjective, empirical aspect) and does not consider its intentional, ideal aspect. . . . If psychology ignores this limitation . . . it will interpret the religious experience entirely by its genetic process or by the partial elements of which the experience is composed. But to do this is to overlook the fact that the experience is determined by its objective intentionality. A psychological explanation may be instructive as regards to building material . . . of the religious consciousness, but it never comes to grips with the religious consciousness as consciousness, i.e., as a subject ideally related to an object without ever coinciding with it. To explain the entire religious experience psychologically is to assume that religion is not more than the sum of some other, simpler experiences. Religion is then reduced to the non-religious: it is an experience of fear, a projection of the individual's feeling of inferiority with respect to the totality of the human race, or a sublimation of man's sexual drive. . . . The psychoanalytic interpretation . . . is more sophisticated in that it explains the religious experience by means of elements of a different nature (subconscious) rather than subordinating one conscious experience to another. Yet, even here the fact remains that wherever psychoanalysis pretends to possess a full understanding of man's religious activity, it dogmatically assumes that this activity can be explained through the real elements of the experience (which are different from the experience itself rather than through its own ideal intentionality). We should not be surprised to learn that with this approach religion turns out to be an illusion.

Dupré's point is a relatively easy one to grasp. The psychoanalytic approach has its place in the study of religious consciousness, but its operation depends crucially on the prior constitution of religious consciousness as a religious form of consciousness—in effect the phenomenologist supplies his or her descriptive analysis to other schools of inquiry such as psychoanalysis, and in order to do this he or she must respect the

conscious intentions and motivations of the believing soul, precisely because doing so constitutes the object of investigation as religious consciousness in the first place. And in order to do this—to reconstruct, as it were, the phenomena and essential traits of religious consciousness—the phenomenologist must bracket (suspend judgment) about the applicability and validity of all theoretical approaches precisely in order to appreciate in an unbiased way the standpoint of the consciousness of the believing soul from that soul's own vantage point. Thus does essential phenomenology provide a distinctively religious subject-matter, which other disciplines may, from their various vantage points, investigate and possibly explain in terms of nonreligious factors. This is the tremendous value and significance of the phenomenological approach: its goal and method must be first in the order of inquiry. Consequently, we suggest that the problem of insufficiency of suspicion is, for phenomenology, a pseudo-problem.

The fourth problem—that of the obscurity of the procedure of sympathetic reenactment—intends to cast doubt on the legitimacy of a crucial step in the phenomenological method. Perhaps the most effective rebuttal of this criticism is to invite the critic to attempt individual sympathetic reenactment to see whether it is both possible and useful; that is, actual practice may be the most effective way to shortcut this objection. However, some may find this sort of rebuttal question-begging, and so we need to say more about this step.¹⁷ Two phenomenologists in particular, Merold Westphal and Ninian Smart, have done a very creditable job in undercutting this objection—by finding analogues to sympathetic reenactment in a variety of humanistic disciplines and arguing that if the process is unproblematic in these areas, then it should be no more problematic in phenomenology.

Westphal identified three such analogues—the detached perception or contemplative regard employed in aesthetic appreciation and understanding in the visual arts (where the viewer suspends prejudgments in order to grasp and then reflect on the meaning of a particular piece of art); the actor's reenactment in sympathetic imagination of the motivations and intentions of a character in a play (where the actor tries to see and feel and display through acting how a given character approaches the world); the good listening engaged in by a psychotherapist in dealing with a client (where the therapist is fully present to the client and listens for what is both said and not said by that client).¹⁸ Westphal suggests that these three activities taken together provide a comprehensive model for the phenomenological step of sympathetic reenactment (or reexperiencing), for the phenomenologist has a detached (bracketed) contemplative

regard for the believing soul; he or she reenacts in sympathetic imagination the motivations and intentions of the believing soul, and also is "present to" the conscious avowals of the believing soul and listens for what is expressed (and not expressed) using a technique of gentle probing to ascertain the essential traits of the consciousness that thus expresses itself. Furthermore, Westphal suggests at least implicitly that inasmuch as we can understand and accept the analogues we have identified, then we can, by parity of reasoning, understand and accept as well the phenomenological step of sympathetic reenactment. This is not an implausible claim.

Ninian Smart cites one of the analogues adduced by Westphal—playacting—and offers others in addition—reading and interpreting a novel, and the participant-observation of the social anthropologist in his or her fieldwork.¹⁹ With regard to playacting, Smart is particularly suggestive when he points out that the actor imaginatively rehearses the feelings and beliefs of a given character, while simultaneously bracketing issues of truth, value, and commitment—the actor, after all, does not actually become a character except imaginatively in a kind of *epoché* (unless, of course, the actor is suffering from some sort of pathological condition). So too the phenomenologist: he or she imaginatively "rehearses" the feelings and beliefs of the believing soul, while simultaneously bracketing questions of truth, value, and commitment. Smart further suggests that, in reading and assimilating a novel, the reader enters into another social world (displayed by the novel) imaginatively without actually accepting the presuppositions of that world—this implies that it is possible for the reader to hold simultaneously mutually conflicting attitudes empathetically understood, precisely because he or she does not actually commit to the truth of the attitudes but only imaginatively entertains them in an empathetic way. So too the phenomenologist is able to enter into the world of a believing soul empathetically and imaginatively without thereby accepting the presuppositions and values of that world. And, for his final analogue, Smart proposes that of participant-observation of the social anthropologist, who in doing fieldwork needs to empathetically understand and appreciate how the native tribe, for example, feels, thinks, acts, and sees the world. Smart perceptively points out that the anthropologist's procedure is not just a process of sympathetic imagination but also involves learning a new language and conceptuality in an effort at transcultural understanding. So too the phenomenologist who, in being empathetic, nonetheless also has to learn how the religious consciousness perceives the world, how that consciousness thinks and acts in a distinctively religious manner.

The point of citing these analogues must by now be apparent: far from being an obscure and unusual procedure, the process of sympathetic reenactment is quite clear and replete in a variety of contexts and disciplines. The onus, then, is on the objector to show cause why he or she regards it as especially problematic for either phenomenology or any of the other contexts and disciplines mentioned. It seems to be a well-accepted procedure for many types of inquiry.

The fifth problem we must consider is the charge that essential phenomenology of religion is insufficiently historical, that is, fails to acknowledge the important fact that all religious consciousness is embedded in and shaped by the historicity intrinsic to human consciousness and activity. Before considering this objection, we need to clarify what exactly it means. It seems to suggest that essential phenomenology is more concerned with timeless essences rather than historical development and is therefore blind to the fact that all religious consciousness develops over time. Further, it seems to suggest as well that essential phenomenology is relatively oblivious that different forms of religious consciousness exist and can be correlated with different social and historical contexts—for example, the consciousness of an early Christian may be different from that of a modern Christian; the consciousness of a Christian may be different from that of a Buddhist whether or not they live in the same historical period; and so on. There is something right about these criticisms and something misleading as well.

What is right about them is this—essential phenomenologists have in fact often ignored the consideration that different forms of religious consciousness may be correlated with different historical and social-cultural contexts. Furthermore, there is considerable truth in the contention that some have ignored the process of development of a given form of religious consciousness. But there are exceptions here, and both Otto and Scheler are two such exceptions. Otto quite clearly recognizes the fact that religious consciousness develops over time—this is why he so freely speaks of the development of numinous consciousness from primitive to more developed (and pure) forms. Scheler, for his part, acknowledges both such developments of theistic forms of religious consciousness and the fact that different forms of religious consciousness arise in different societies and cultures.²⁰ So the charge cites at best only a tendency of essential phenomenology of religion to be anti- or more accurately non-historical. At least some phenomenologists appear to escape this charge.

Moreover, in speaking of timeless essences, the charge betrays a serious misunderstanding of what phenomenologists mean by the term "essence" (or "essential traits"). They do not mean "essence" in some pla-

tonic sense—timeless essences or forms existing in a perfect and changeless ontological realm. Rather they use “essence” to refer to the characteristic and constitutive traits of a given phenomenon—if this phenomenon happens to change (for whatever reason), then the new or successor phenomenon will have its own constitutive defining traits which may be different from the previous phenomenon. Phenomenology accepts (at least in principle) the possibility of such change, and this means that phenomenologists are not discussing timeless essences in the platonic sense. So in this respect the charge is woefully misguided. Absolutely nothing prevents the essential phenomenologist from using his or her method of inquiry to investigate in a successive way states of religious consciousness as they change and develop over time—in an apt image of this possible use of the method, Ninian Smart speaks, for example, of phenomenology’s ability to produce a “moving picture” of successive phases of the development of a given type of religious consciousness (we will return to this point in connection with historical-typological phenomenology of religion).²¹ Such a possibility shows that essential phenomenology of religion need not be anti-historical.

The sixth and final problem we need to consider is whether essential phenomenology of religion subscribes to a theory of experience or consciousness that implicitly values mental as contrasted with corporeal phenomena. At first blush, this may seem to be a most implausible problem given that Husserlian phenomenology was originally designed to avoid just such dualisms and valences, and in fact Husserl’s thought itself seems to escape this sort of problem inasmuch as it appears to recognize that human consciousness is embodied.²² Nonetheless, the essential phenomenologists of religion are not Husserl, though they may be influenced by his ideas, and evidence that there may be a real problem here is supplied by one of our representative essentialists—William Earle—when he writes in the context of his study of mystical consciousness that “each now need consider nothing but himself as a thinking self. My own body, other persons, and the physical world of nature are not ingredient in the very essence of that thinking self. The I as it is for myself is only *accidentally* related to its body, to the physical world, to other persons. It may turn its thinking attention to them, but it is not they, or even like them.”

This sort of claim seems very problematic from the viewpoint of many non-essentialist phenomenologists and philosophers who would contend that our experience shows itself to be incarnate (bodily) as well as intersubjective. In the words, for example, of Gabriel Marcel, “we are incarnated,” and this sort of claim is intimately related to the phenomenological datum that we (or all I’s) are irreducibly situated in a world of other

embodied consciousnesses.²³ For these thinkers, we do not find consciousness only “accidentally related” to body, world, and other persons, but necessarily so related: we cannot escape our corporeality and other persons, for both are integrally involved in our consciousness. Interestingly, the careful reader will find many essentialists agreeing with this point, inasmuch as they identify “creaturehood” (sense of being a finite creature) as part of religious consciousness. Otto and Scheler are two such essentialists who identify creaturehood as an essential trait of numinous consciousness and the human apprehension of divine self-disclosure.

Nevertheless, even acknowledging such a possible recognition of embodied consciousness, there is a tendency on the part of essentialists to downplay or ignore or—in Earle’s case—explicitly deny this feature of human consciousness. And this, in turn, suggests that they may be unconsciously biased against such a datum because they are still unduly influenced by the tenet of Cartesian philosophy that posits a dualism of mind and body and a valence favoring the mind over the body. That the issue is a real one—and that the essential phenomenology of religion is problematic in this respect—is clearly suggested by the fact that another voice—existential phenomenology of religion—defines itself precisely around the clear acknowledgment that we are indissolubly our bodies and are indissolubly bound within an intersubjective world of conscious (and unconscious) relations. And so we have to admit candidly that this failure on the part of at least some essentialists openly and consistently to acknowledge this feature of our consciousness (and of religious consciousness in particular) may well constitute a significant limitation of their approach.

In reviewing these six problems or concerns about the essentialist voice in phenomenology of religion, we have cited some of its strengths and weaknesses. Though we have tended to rebut these concerns—save for the last—we should also be aware that continuing perceptions of these as real and inescapable tensions within the method have had no small role in helping to generate or at least strengthen the resolve of other voices in the field. Thus, for example, the issues of “detached objectivity” and “an inadequate theory of consciousness” have tended to support the development of the voice of existential phenomenology of religion, while the issues of “normative loading” and “anti-historical bias” have tended to support the development of the voice of historical-typological phenomenology of religion. Furthermore, the issue of “transparency of consciousness” has played into the hands of those who would like to supplant phenomenological inquiry with other, more hermeneutical, schools

of suspicion. Nonetheless, none of these voices—either inside or outside phenomenology of religion—deny that the essentialist voice has had and continues to play an important and vital role in the study of religious phenomena.

Second Voice: Historical-Typological Phenomenology of Religion

The second voice in the phenomenology of religion is what we call, following Ninian Smart, the “historical-typological phenomenology of religion.”²⁴ The label is particularly apt since this type of inquiry is undertaken primarily by historians of religions interested both in the distinctive ethos and worldviews of particular religious traditions and in persistent or recurrent patterns shared by those traditions. How, in other words, do the participants of a given religious tradition “intend” the world? How do they understand, respond to, feel about, and act in the world from their distinctive standpoint? And further, how does this way of intending the world compare with those ways of being represented by other religious traditions? The pursuit of these questions is bound up with a distinctive set of aims and, once again, a reasonably unified method of inquiry, constituting a distinctive voice in the phenomenology of religion. These aims and method are ably represented by the researches of Arthur, Kristensen, Kitagawa, and Eliade (in this book), in addition to such influential figures as Gerardus van der Leeuw and Smart. Let us examine in some detail these aims and method as well as issues or problems they may pose.

Aims

One aim shared by all historical-typological phenomenologists of religion is to understand in a qualitative manner the particular forms of life within a religious tradition and thereby to recover a picture and a sense of what these elements (e.g., doctrinal beliefs, ritual practices, codes of conduct) *mean* from the viewpoint of the adherents of particular religious traditions. The aim is to see what the “external” facts of a tradition add up to when understood and viewed as expressions of distinctive worldviews and existentially experienced standpoints of life and the world. Following the lead of Wilhelm Dilthey, historical-typologists contend that recovering how religious participants see the world—what life means for them in relation to their transcendent focus (e.g., a god or sacred realm)—helps to animate, so to speak, otherwise “inert” knowl-

edge, thereby permitting the scholar to more truly understand the mass of data acquired about religions by other more quantitatively oriented scholarly methods. As Arthur puts it, “what now seems to block understanding in many areas is a glut of information and a methodological insistence on distancing neutrality . . . we cannot dispense with the facts, but it seems that once we have acquainted ourselves with them to a certain level, a further step needs to be taken if our understanding is to advance.” Furthermore, historical-typologists are convinced that their more qualitative understanding of participants’ intentions and beliefs enables the scholar to draw distinctions between more important and less important religious phenomena—from the participants’ standpoint—thereby enhancing appreciation of what may be truly distinctive in a given tradition’s approach to the world.

A second aim shared by all historical-typologists is an historically contextualized understanding of a particular tradition’s ethos and worldview. Thus, unlike the essentialists, these phenomenologists aim to recover a dynamic picture of how an ethos and worldview develops over time, not simply how these appear at a given time. In the image posed by Ninian Smart, historical-typologists expressly seek a “moving” phenomenological picture of the central religious elements of a particular tradition.²⁵ In acquiring this moving picture, they may well take static “snapshots” or “frames” of a particular tradition at particular times, but then they put these “frames” together in a more comprehensive picture of the tradition’s developmental flow. Thus they seek a qualitative understanding of a tradition’s forms of life in a temporally structured manner that reveals the changes that may occur in the participants’ own self-understanding of what their tradition is about. It is important to note that this diachronic qualitative understanding is focused primarily on a given tradition’s own internal development, for all historical-typologists are wary of the distortions introduced by grand speculative attempts to postulate “ideal” patterns of development between traditions. Unlike internal developmental histories, “ideal” developmental histories are evolutionary visions on a wide scale, often positing that some religious traditions not only precede others temporally but also valuationally so that some traditions are conceived as being more “primitive” and less developed than other “more advanced” and “higher” traditions. From the historical-typologists’ perspective, this evolutionary view of religious traditions is quite objectionable because it is often based on scant historical evidence, is a type of reductive analysis, and tends to be “loaded” or governed by covert normative opinions about what is the best and purest form of religion (often taken to be Christianity). This tack, according to

our phenomenologists, can only lead to distortion of those traditions considered to be the "lower stages" on a speculative ladder leading to the "ideal" religion.

Though historical-typologists are skeptical of grand synoptic perspectives on the evolution of religious traditions, they nonetheless do engage in carefully controlled comparative inquiry of a certain sort, and this activity represents yet a third aim that they all share: the systematic comparison of the standpoint of one tradition with the standpoints of other traditions. Indeed, though he is careful to "object to [the] kind of classification" involved in evolutionary views of religions, Kristensen, for example, goes so far as to claim that: "phenomenology of religion is the comparative study of the history of religions." Though not all historical-typologists would subscribe to the way that Kristensen chooses to highlight his own interest in comparison, they all would nonetheless concur in his more temperate statement that "phenomenology makes use of comparison only in order to gain a deeper insight into the self-subsistent . . . meaning of each of the historical data . . . to understand the conception of believers themselves, who always ascribe an absolute value to their faith." Here Kristensen signals how historical-typologists share with many non-phenomenological scholars the view that by comparing traditions, they can gain a better understanding of any one tradition. Indeed, many of these researchers have suggested that an inquiry focusing on only one tradition—eschewing any and all comparison whatsoever with others—is severely hampered in its ability to see and appreciate what may be truly distinctive to the tradition under scrutiny, precisely because that inquiry lacks a comparative reference. How can one identify what is truly distinctive to one tradition without knowing (by comparison) where and how it differs from others? Inquiry without a comparative reference is essentially myopic or blind, and so historical-typologists contend that comparison between religions will help them to understand and appreciate the true uniqueness of any one tradition.

Related to this comparative aim—and accounting for the other half of the name of this sort of phenomenological inquiry—is yet a fourth aim on the part of scholars working within this voice: to identify "universal" or at least "recurrent" features common to particular religious traditions—that is, *types* of phenomena shared by traditions. This interest in typology is two-fold. On the one hand, delineating universal features or recurrent patterns of religious forms of life assists that comparison necessary to understanding the worldviews of particular traditions—in this sense, the typological aim is subsumed under the comparative aim. On the other hand, identifying such features or patterns also represents an aim in its own right, since such factors may teach us things about the

religious nature of humankind (*homo religiosus*) or the general religious dimension of human existence in the world.

The first aspect of the typological aim—patterns in the service of comparison—is well represented by Kristensen in his contention that "phenomenology has set itself the task of so grouping phenomena [in his case, the phenomena of prayer] that they shed light on one another and lead to a deeper insight into the essence of a whole group of similar phenomena" [again in his case—the case of prayer—"the basic attitude is one of surrender to and trust in the leading of the Spirit, who created and governs man and cosmos"]. Kristensen is careful to indicate that this typology of prayer(s) as a recurrent religious form of life develops a comparison in order to gain a deeper understanding of particular traditions from their (internal) points of view; and so he later states "we must always try in our study to put ourselves in the position of the believer, because it is there alone that the religious reality is to be found which we wish to understand." Kitagawa agrees with this restrained typological aim when he writes:

To be sure, it is the task of the historian of religions to delineate universal structures out of the multitude and variable religious data and to telescope long and complex histories of religions by depicting certain significant events and their persistent characteristics. Yet, his conceptions and abstractions must be constantly re-examined in the light of the integrity and unique cluster of meanings of particular religious systems or phenomena.

And with reference to the subject matter of religious pilgrimage, Kitagawa exemplifies this restraint once again when he writes, "notwithstanding these 'universal' features, which are shared by the pilgrimages of various traditions, each one tends to show a unique ethos of its own, which can be understood only within its religious and cultural contexts."

The second aspect of the typological aim—identifying universal types of phenomena in order to explore the general religiosity of humankind—is most vividly represented by the phenomenological researches of Eliade. In the selection included in this book, he argues that the way religious people organize their houses, villages, and cities constitutes a "universal" feature shared by religious traditions, a feature he calls "sacred space":

Indeed, for a religious man, space is not homogeneous; some parts of space are qualitatively different. There is a sacred and hence a strong, significant space; and there are other spaces that are not sacred and so are without structure, form, or meaning. Nor is this all. For a religious man, this spatial nonhomogeneity finds expression in the experience of an opposition between space that is sacred—the only *real* and *really* existing space—and all other spaces, a foremost expanse surrounding it. The religious experience of the nonhomogeneity of space is a

primordial experience, comparable to the forming of the world. . . . So it is clear to what a great degree the discovery—that is, the revelation—of a sacred space possesses existential value for a religious man; for nothing can begin, nothing can be *done* without a previous orientation—but any orientation implies acquiring a fixed point. It is for this reason that religious man has always sought to fix his abode at the “center of the world.” If the world is to be *lived in* it must be *founded*—and no world can be born in the chaos of the homogeneity and relativity of profane space.

And so, for Eliade, “sacred space” is a universal category or form of religious experience that reveals a general structure of the religious dimension of human existence in the world, and he is able to conclude:

What is relevant for our theme is that we find everywhere the same fundamental conception of the necessity to live in an intelligible and meaningful world, and we find that this conception emerges ultimately from the experience of a sacred space. Now one can ask in what sense such experiences of the sacred space of houses, cities, and lands are still significant for modern desacralized man. Certainly, we know that man has never lived in the space conceived by mathematicians and physicists as being isotropic, that is, space having the same properties in all directions. The space experienced by man is *oriented* and thus anisotropic, for each dimension and direction has a specific value; for instance, along the vertical axis “up” does not have the same value as “down”; along the historical axis, left and right may be differentiated in value. The question is whether the experience of oriented space and other comparable experiences of intentionally structured spaces (for example, the different spaces of art and architecture) have something in common with the sacred space known by *Homo religiosus*.

Though he concludes with a question, it is reasonably clear from the context that the question is rhetorical and intended to suggest that “sacred space” is not only a universal feature of all religious traditions but indeed a universal feature of all human experience in the world—even secular moderns have their “sacred spaces”—whether these be national memorials or sports stadiums.

The historical-typological phenomenology of religion has a nexus of rather distinctive aims (qualitative understanding, historical sensitivity, comparison between traditions, and typology), though it also seems clear that the first two can be construed as the more dominant aims while the second two can be conceived as more subsidiary. It remains to be asked whether historical-typologists, individually or collectively, have more normative aims or agenda comparable to those we discerned for the essentialists. Do they, like the essentialists, put their research into the service of other more ultimate aims, and, if so, are these ultimate aims consonant with their more historically oriented concerns?

Many historical-typologists do, in fact, have more ultimate agenda. One of these is closely connected with the second aspect of the typologi-

cal aim of identifying universal structures or patterns of religion in order to learn something about the general religiosity of humankind. Those who pursue this aim in a self-conscious way—sometimes making it the dominant aim of their historical-typological research—often have an interest in recovering and making explicit these structures in order to countervail modern tendencies toward secularization which they see as dangerous and debilitating for humankind’s self-understanding. So their deeper concern is to call moderns back to a more authentic understanding of themselves as “spiritual” (not just natural) creatures. There is nothing illegitimate or unworthy about this more ultimate aim, but we need to be aware that it has the potential to encourage such researchers to find “universal” structures of religion even if they might not be there in the phenomenological data—because the more universal and dominant the religious structures, the easier it is to make the case for humankind’s spiritual nature. Another deeper project pursued by some historical-typologists involves advancing the cause of their own religious commitment to a particular tradition. This theological agenda can have the effect of viewing their own tradition as somehow superior to others they may be investigating, and this, in turn, may have the effect of their highlighting or discounting certain features of a tradition under scrutiny without doing full justice to its ethos and worldview. They might, for example, tend to “read” Christianity into another tradition and thereby highlight certain features of that tradition as being important for that reason (apart from whether the tradition itself considers that feature important). Or they might, for example, tend to discount or devalue a feature of a tradition under scrutiny because that feature is in some sort of tension with an aspect of their personal religious commitments.

Thus one should not overlook the possibility that other non-phenomenological undertakings can distort the data studied by historical-typologists. Yet, on the other hand, it seems important to recognize also that many historical-typologists are interested in clarifying the religiousness of others in order (ultimately) to clarify their own or, say, the religiousness of the western world—and that this sort of deeper aim need not necessarily distort alien traditions being studied. In fact, this aim is predicated on gaining as accurate a view as possible of alien traditions, for without such accuracy there can be no genuine clarification of one’s own tradition. This aim is the other side of the coin of using comparison with traditions other than the one under scrutiny, for in using one’s own tradition (or, e.g., those of the West) for comparative reference, the researcher gains a deeper understanding of not only his research object but also the comparative reference itself. And so, as Arthur observes in the

conclusion to his selection in this volume, this sort of work can "be seen as purposeful in terms of exploring and defining our own religiousness, through a process of exploring the religiousness of others."

Method

The four integrally connected aims of the historical-typological phenomenology of religion significantly inform this voice's conception of an appropriate method of inquiry. That is, the four aims can be correlated with the distinctive steps or facets of this enterprise's phenomenological procedure. The aim of qualitative understanding of the forms of life of a religious tradition from that tradition's standpoint suggests immediately the propriety of empathetic understanding (imaginative experiencing and introspection), epoché (with respect to questions of truth, value, and theoretic-explanatory commitments), and evocative description (conveying a sense of how particular holistic worldviews experience and see life in the world). The aim of historical sensitivity and contextualization suggests the propriety of temporally structuring this qualitative understanding and evocative description so as to chart the chronological development of a particular tradition's ethos and worldview. The comparative aim, in turn, suggests the step of controlled elucidative comparison of a particular holistic worldview with other worlds of religious meaning, and the first aspect of the typological aim suggests that this controlled comparison relies on the use of constantly refined typological categories (ideal types) of religious phenomena. Finally, the second aspect of the typological aim suggests the step of elucidative interrogation of the standpoints of particular holistic traditions so that we may identify and clarify distinctly religious objectives and intentions that may constitute "universal" or "recurrent" features of all religious traditions.

These six facets of the historical-typological phenomenological method—qualitative understanding, epoché, evocative description, diachronic understanding, elucidative comparison, and elucidative interrogation—share some similarities with the method of the essentialists. By the same token, however, there are important differences as well. The similarities involve the use of tutored empathy, epoché, evocative description, and a concern with "universal" or "recurrent" features (or essences). The differences appear focused on matters of diachronic understanding and elucidative comparison of particular worldviews. The essentialist method appears more "static" and less interested in systematic comparison of data, while the historical-typological method appears to be more oriented to temporal change and the comparison of historical-

empirical data. Let us now examine the similarities and differences by clarifying briefly each of these six methodological steps or facets.

The first step—empathetic understanding—is already familiar to us from our discussion of this notion in connection with the essential phenomenology of religion. Similar to the essentialists, the historical-typologists construe this step as involving both imaginative reexperiencing and systematic introspection of the contents thus imaginatively experienced. The difference from the essentialists' articulation of this step is associated with the intrinsic concern of the historical-typologists to understand a particular religious ethos and worldview. Thus, the historical-typologists focus their sympathetic reexperiencing and introspection on the data made available by other historical and social-scientific inquiry. Their empathetic inquiry into the meaning of this data is therefore controlled, shaped by, and in constant conversation with the work of other disciplines to a greater extent than that of the essentialists. In other words, the historical-typologists' use of empathetic understanding is self-consciously focused on the qualitative elucidation of empirical data, while that of the essentialists is more oriented toward the general philosophical elucidation of religious (versus nonreligious) consciousness.

This difference in the use of empathetic understanding is captured quite well in Kristensen's claim with regard to his study of prayer that:

We want to know the spiritual factors which are active in all prayer, but faced with such extensive material, we must also have the courage, relying on a certain amount of intuition, to separate what is important from what is not. Then we must give our attention exclusively to the data which can reasonably well be approached and understood, and which therefore hold our promise of yielding positive results.

Kristensen's interest in empathetically understanding empirical data—involving both sympathetic reexperiencing as well as intuitive observation of religious contents—is representative of how historical-typologists conceive of this methodological step. Arthur's representation of this step is particularly vivid and illuminating, when he writes:

... phenomenology of religion so conceived provides a means of effectively "passing over" into the religious situation which one wants to investigate and "coming back" with a clearer understanding of it. It is a means of passing over to someone else's religious world so that we may try to see how things appear when viewed through that perspective. ... Phenomenology of religion viewed as such seeks to offer to its sufficiently competent practitioner as non-secondhand an insight as it is possible to achieve into what animate the different vitalities and movements of meaning within any particular religious outlook. Its basic motivating idea is quite

straightforward: to try to apprehend someone else's religion *as it appears to them*, rather than focusing attention on how their religion appears to us from a non-phenomenological viewpoint.

The second methodological step—epoché or bracketing of evaluative and theoretic commitments—is also already reasonably familiar to us from our discussion of the essentialist method. To see the world accurately from the standpoint of a given tradition—in order to see as that tradition sees—it is clearly necessary to put aside any and all distorting “lenses” that might be associated with opinions about the truth or falsity or illusory quality of religion, about the supposed superiority of some religions over others, and about how various theories might explain religions in terms of psychological or sociological mechanisms. As Arthur puts it, “to achieve this [phenomenological] perspective it is necessary to maintain a deliberate open-mindedness, which postpones making any evaluative judgments, and to let oneself be moved, if only temporarily, by the same currents of significance as stir the believer [or tradition] under study.” And, as he observes with reference to William Golding's *The Inheritors*—Arthur's case-example of the historical-typologist at work—“he [Golding] had, in other words, to sustain a disciplined empathy and open-mindedness throughout the book. He had to observe a holding back or bracketing out, familiar in the phenomenological vocabulary which disallowed the intrusion of analyses, explanations, value-judgments or clarifying comments from his own twentieth century point of view.” Kristensen vigorously concurs when he objects to evolutionary evaluative theories of “higher” and “lower” types of prayer, saying “we must object to this kind of classification . . . evaluative comparison does not come with its [phenomenology of religion's] domain,” and when he rejects Ludwig Feuerbach's classical projectionist theory of religion as applied to prayer:

Feuerbach tried to give a psychological answer to the question of how prayer originated and how it can be explained. His basic thesis is that man's desire, need, and hope are what have created the gods . . . God is a projection of the human mind; God is created in the image of man and not vice-versa; theology is anthropology. The gods are “wish beings” . . . prayer is an act by means of which man tries to fulfill his wish but the fulfillment of a wish, as long as there remains a wish is an illusion. Religion, therefore, which is the objectivizing of man's own essence, “is worthless illusion.” . . . This is indeed a remarkable sample of a psychological explanation which is extraordinarily unpsychological and in conflict with the experience of all ages. . . .²⁶

Kristensen's objections here are fully consonant with, and representative of, the phenomenological epoché employed by all historical-typologists in their study of religious traditions.

A third methodological step shared by both essentialists and historical-typologists is that of evocative description of the religious phenomena being studied. Again, this step is reasonably familiar to us, but it is nonetheless important to see how crucial historical-typologists regard this step for attaining their goal of qualitative understanding of particular religious traditions. Arthur indicates the close connection between qualitative understanding and evocative description when he writes that empathetic understanding “is an attempt to place us, so far as this is possible, in the other person's shoes, so that we might stand with them and walk with them, observing and feeling what occurs with a closeness which would be impossible for a ‘external’ descriptive study.” And he further adumbrates this point with reference to Golding's *The Inheritors*: “in beginning his imagination from the inside and working out, in leading the reader around to discovering things for himself, rather than merely describing them, in building up a situation in which we can know imaginatively what it might be like to look through other eyes, to live in a different world of religious meaning, Golding does not rely on the fabrication of erroneous details.” These features of “observing and feeling . . . with a closeness” and “discovering things for [one]self rather than merely describing them” are reminiscent of the performative factors of evocative description discussed in connection with the essentialists. For Arthur, evocative description is absolutely crucial to the attainment of truly qualitative understanding. This, for Arthur—and other historical-typologists as well—represents an important cognitive challenge and achievement of this enterprise, for through evocative description one is able to learn something about another religious tradition attainable in no other way: true understanding of the lived experience of participants from within that tradition. In short, evocative description performatively prompts existential understanding of the religious other that is otherwise impossible for the nonparticipant in that tradition. And historical-typologists further wager that such existential understanding may well be important to achieving further knowledge of a tradition under scrutiny—for example, by suggesting hypotheses to be explored by other disciplines, by suggesting insights into the “universals” of religion or about the spiritual nature of humankind, and so on.

Though Arthur is the most articulate of our authors in identifying and discussing this step of evocative description, we should also be aware that our other authors, while not discussing it, do in fact exemplify it in their work. Thus, for example, Kristensen actively seeks to evoke his reader's sympathetic appreciation and existential understanding of the prayerful activity of religious traditions rather far removed from our cultural world

by quoting (e.g.) Algonquin, Incan, Christian, Babylonian, Hindu, and other prayer texts and then directing the reader's attention to the "spirit of these prayers." Eliade, for his part, goes to extraordinary lengths to pull his readers into the "existential meaning of 'living in one's own world'" and then to show how this existential meaning can be used to sympathize imaginatively with the "sacred space" of archaic religious traditions. In both cases, as well as others throughout the book, we can see (or rather experience) evocative description at work.

The fourth step of the historical-typological phenomenological method is diachronic understanding—temporally structured elucidation of a particular tradition's ethos and worldview and recording changes in that ethos and worldview. This is a step distinctive to the historical-typological voice and method, not shared in any self-conscious way by the essentialist voice and method. Of the authors included in this book, Kitagawa is one of the most articulate about this step. He begins his inquiry into types of pilgrimage in Japanese religions by noting the need to indicate universal structures, to highlight especially pertinent and illustrative events, to be sensitive to change over time, and always to check typological structures against the historical materials. The result is that Kitagawa delineates the distinctive ethos of each of three types of pilgrimage—pilgrimage to sacred mountains, pilgrimage based on faith in divinities, and pilgrimage based on faith in charismatic persons—in a diachronic manner, tracing changes in the characteristic patterns of religious meaning associated with each type. In this manner he achieves diachronically qualitative understanding of each sort of pilgrimage in its internal developmental self-understanding over time. It seems clear that Kitagawa's effort hopes to produce what Smart refers to as a "moving" phenomenological picture of an element of a religious tradition as that tradition itself changes its own self-understanding of that element. Thus, unlike essential phenomenology of religion, the historical-typological enterprise is quite self-consciously non-static or dynamic in attempting to understand in a qualitative way the standpoint of particular religious traditions.

In its fifth step of controlled elucidative comparison, historical-typological phenomenology also seems distinctive from the essentialist voice, for although in this step the two voices share a concern with universal or recurrent structures or patterns, they do so for quite different reasons. One should recall that the essentialist voice is predominantly interested in identifying and characterizing the essential or defining traits of religious consciousness in general. By contrast, the historical-typological voice is predominantly interested in elucidating the internal perspective of a particular tradition by way of comparing it with other traditions,

and for this purpose it employs typological categories as a way of assisting this comparison. Thus, for historical-typologists the notion of universal features (or "essences" as the essentialists would say) helps in the comparative elucidation of a particular tradition—and the universal features or patterns (or types) are used just so long as they genuinely assist in understanding a particular ethos. Should, however, a given universal feature turn out to be inapplicable or unhelpful, the historical-typologist will either refine the category or possibly drop it altogether as potentially distorting what may really be going on in a particular ethos or worldview. Thus, unlike the essentialists, the historical-typologists sit rather lightly on their typological categories or universal features, ever alert to the dangers of possible distortion of the particular phenomena in which they are particularly interested.

This attitude toward universal structures explains why both Kitagawa and Kristensen are prone to say things like "his conceptions and abstractions must be constantly re-examined in light of the integrity and the unique cluster of meanings of particular religious systems" (Kitagawa), "notwithstanding these universal features, which are shared by the pilgrimages of various traditions, each one tends to show a unique ethos of its own" (Kitagawa), "phenomenology makes use of comparison only to gain a deeper insight into the self-subsistent . . . meaning of each of the historical data" (Kristensen), "we can come to see the absolute character of particular religious data in an approximate way, but never more than approximately . . . the absolute character of the data offers resistance to the constitution of an 'ideal history' of prayer" (Kristensen). These are warnings to other historical-typologists—and to us as well—that, though universal features and recurrent types may often be useful to gaining comparative insight into the significance of a particular religious ethos, one must beware of imposing or forcing them where they do not fit.

What exactly does comparative elucidation involve? What does it look like? How is it done? These questions now beg for some clear answers. Perhaps the best way to answer them is to focus on a couple of clear exercises that highlight this methodological step. One such exercise is supplied by Kristensen's study of prayer. Kristensen is quite adept in using "comparison . . . to gain a deeper insight into the self-subsistent . . . meaning" of prayer. For example, he begins his study by comparing the Algonquin prayer to the Great Spirit to "cause that the water shall remain smooth," to the Christian prayer "give us bread for today," to the Incan prayer "to watch over them that they may live in health and peace," to the Zulu prayer to their ancestors "people of our house . . . you know what is good for us, give it to us," in order to display a basic attitude of

"surrender to and trust in the leading of the Spirit, who created and governs man and cosmos." In another example he compares a Babylonian "magical prayer" to Shamash to "break the sorcerer's spell," to Luther's comment of religious assurance "God could do nothing else; the path was cut off for Him" in order to clarify the way in which a certain type of prayer exerts a certain compulsion on the gods. Now what is interesting about all this is the way in which, through identification of both similarities and differences among the prayers from different traditions, Kristensen is able to illuminate each prayer as well as reach some more general conclusions about the fundamental recurrent types of attitudes and actions represented in them all. Thus he is able to see the unique ethos associated with each prayer, use the ethos of one to clarify the ethos of another, and reach a tentative conclusion about some apparently universal features. This is the process of comparative elucidation at work, and it is quite evidently a rather powerful tool in the historical-typologist's method of inquiry.

Eliade's inquiry into "the world, the city, the house" represents another instance of elucidative comparison, this time focused on the study of "sacred space." Beginning with the way the historian Theodore Mommsen "lived in" the world of the Greeks and Romans as not simply history, but rather as a fundamental, though imaginative, orientation to the world, Eliade goes on to exploit this familiar comparative reference in order to illuminate "the cosmicized and . . . 'sacred' world" of archaic religious traditions, such as those of the Achilpas (an Australian tribe) and the Bororos of Brazil, who established their world by structuring their villages and territories around a central point representing a vertical axis open to the transcendent making possible their orientation in a now sacred world. Eliade continues by comparing the history of Rome's founding to those associated with the founding of cities in Iran, Southeast Asia, and China in order to illustrate the similarities of religious symbolism shared by these histories. The point is surely to compare such orientations to sacred space so as to clarify each as well as to suggest that a category of sacred space may well represent a universal structure of religious traditions. Again, we see the process of elucidative comparison at work as well as gain an appreciation for how it might deepen our understanding of particular traditions as well as possible universal structures of religion.

We need now to examine the sixth and final step of the historical-typological method—elucidative interrogation of the standpoints of particular religious traditions in order to identify distinctively religious objectives and intentions. This interrogation involves two aspects that may

in some cases overlap or blend into one another. One aspect concerns distinguishing the distinctively religious objectives, intentions, and motivations operative in a given tradition from other nonreligious motivations that may also be operative in that tradition's ambient culture and may interact with the religious motivations. This sort of interrogation is aimed at clarifying the "mixed motives" (so to speak) that may lie behind some religious phenomena in a given tradition—it is clearly focused on gaining an understanding of the complexities that may be involved in a given tradition's ethos and worldview. The other aspect of this step involves further clarification of distinctively religious motivations for the purpose of identifying and illuminating structures and phenomena apparently universal to all religious traditions. The first more modest aspect of elucidative interrogation is well represented by Kitagawa's work. The second more ambitious aspect is ably exemplified by Eliade's inquiry. Let us examine each of these examples briefly in order to clarify the function and logic of this final step of the historical-typological method.

In representing the first aspect of this step, Kitagawa quite straightforwardly points out that "in every religious tradition, the pilgrimage combines . . . diverse and often contradictory features, which are both spiritual and mundane." He further writes:

Usually, pilgrims are motivated by religious objectives, such as adoration of the deities or saints who are enshrined at various sacred places, gaining merit for one's salvation, paying penance for annulment of the sin, or praying for the repose of the spirits of the deceased, but these religious motives are often mixed with the desire to acquire healing, good fortune, easy child-birth, prosperity, and other this-worldly benefits. Even the ascetic practices, which are usually imposed on the pilgrims, notably sexual abstinence and fasting or dietary restrictions, are interpreted as necessary investments for the expected rewards. Besides, the pilgrimage provides welcome relief from the routine of the dull everyday life of the people. Furthermore, seen from a broader perspective, the pilgrimage, which cements the solidarity of religious groups, also stimulates trade and commerce, dissemination of ideas, and intercultural exchange.

Thus, with respect to pilgrimage, Kitagawa notices that "spiritual," celebratory, worshipful motives are often intermixed with "mundane," instrumental, even materialistic motives. The first type of motive can only be achieved by distinctively religious activities, for these motives and activities are internally related—each needs the other and cannot be what it is without the other. The second type of motive, however, is only contingently and externally related to religious activity, since mundane ends can be achieved by many sorts of activities (e.g., medicine, commerce, and all the rest). Part of Kitagawa's task, therefore, is to distinguish between the distinctively religious motives and objectives intrinsically in-

volved in religious activities of pilgrimage, on the one hand, and the more adventitious mundane motives and objectives only contingently related to such activities, on the other. In this way, he seeks to interrogate the phenomena in order to clarify their characteristic intrinsic religious traits.

In representing the second aspect of the step of elucidative interrogation, Eliade also evinces concern with the intrinsic religious objectives and motives involved in "founding the world," but he goes far beyond this concern to also try to identify what he regards as a universal structure of all religions—the notion of sacred space. Thus, as we noted earlier, he concludes his study with the bold claim that "what is relevant for our theme is that we find everywhere the same fundamental conception of the necessity to live in an intelligible and meaningful world, and we find that this conception emerges ultimately from the experience of a sacred space . . . of houses, cities, and lands." And he further suggests that this experience of sacred space is universal to "homo religiosus" (i.e., all religious persons and communities). In effect, Eliade interrogates religious phenomena in order (finally) to identify and characterize what he regards as a universal structure of all religions.

Issues

Thus far we have attempted to clarify the aims and method of the historical-typological phenomenology of religion by focusing on the work of some of its representative practitioners. We need now to go one step farther to gain a more critical perspective on this voice, by identifying and discussing some of the typical problems and issues raised by this voice. In this way we can become more aware of certain of its strengths as well as its limitations. Our work is eased somewhat by the fact that many of the same criticisms made of the essentialist voice are also levied against the historical-typological enterprise. Interestingly, however, a number of these criticisms can be more easily and decisively rebutted in the historical-typological case. In addition to these shared criticisms, there are also a few charges that appear to be more forcefully, if not uniquely, raised against the phenomenological method of the historical-typologists. We begin with a brief discussion of the criticisms that carry over from the essentialist enterprise.

Five criticisms in particular appear to be shared by both the essentialist and historical-typological voices. The first has been already identified—namely, the concern over whether hidden normative agenda somehow distort the descriptive and comparative results of the historical-typological enterprise. A second problem is whether the phenomenological attitude of the historical-typologists—in its apparent detached objectivity—is

able to do justice to religious phenomena of ultimate commitment associated with the "absolute" value-standpoints of particular religious traditions. A third problem is whether the phenomenological attitude of the historical-typologists is sufficiently "suspicious" of, and critical about, the factors involved in religious motivations, intentions, and activities. Yet a fourth problem concerns the seemingly "subjective" and therefore epistemically suspect status of empathetic understanding based on sympathetic reexperiencing. And a final problem—which may appear somewhat surprising, given our characterization of historical-typological method—concerns a perceived synchronic and anti-historical bias built into the method's use of typological categories and its concern with universal or recurrent structures of religion. Let us consider each of these criticisms with particular reference to the historical-typological voice.

The first criticism—the bias associated with normative agenda—clearly presents a genuine problem for those historical-typological researches that are governed by either theological or philosophical "missionary" (e.g., spiritual nature of man) aims. We have already admitted and discussed this problem. Such agenda can in fact constitute distorting "lenses" on historical data. But we need also to emphasize that the historical-typological method also builds in some checks against such biases—in the form of *epoché* or bracketing as well as comparative elucidation based on typological categories. Thus the danger of distortion is countervailed by the method itself, and so what is a possible risk is not an inevitable eventuality.

The second problem—deeper biasing effects of detached objectivity associated with the phenomenological attitude (or *epoché*)—has been effectively addressed in our earlier discussion of this criticism in connection with the essentialists. As we pointed out earlier, this criticism simply overlooks or discounts the fact that *epoché* is integrally bound up with and enhances the step of empathetic understanding based on sympathetic reenactment or reexperiencing. As Arthur very effectively puts it, "it is necessary to maintain a deliberate open-mindedness, which postpones making any value judgments, and to let oneself be moved . . . by the same currents of significance as stirred the believer under study." Thus, from his point of view, *epoché* and empathy are interactive and mutually reinforcing, resulting in "the idea of seeing another world meaning as it appears to its own inhabitants—whilst still maintaining the status of observer." That is, "detached objectivity" is not incompatible with empathetic understanding, as this second line of criticism appears to suggest or presuppose.

The third criticism—that the phenomenological attitude appears in-

sufficiently suspicious of hidden nonreligious motives and factors influencing religious forms of life—has also been addressed in our earlier discussion of this problem. The point we made there is that phenomenologists, by focusing on consciously religious motives and intentions, constitute religious “objects” of inquiry that may subsequently be investigated by other psycho-social disciplines interested in developing deeper explanatory and theoretic accounts of religious phenomena. We might furthermore add that historical-typologists—as represented by the work of Kitagawa, for example—appear clearly cognizant of the fact that mixed motives are at work in many religious phenomena. Such a perspective can hardly be charged with naïveté if it then proceeds to try to separate out what appear to be intrinsically religious motives and intentions constituting the distinctively religious dimensions of such phenomena.

The fourth problem—concerning the epistemic status of empathetic understanding—has also been addressed in our earlier discussion. There we made the point—with reference to the work of Westphal and Smart—that the step of sympathetic reexperiencing is uncontroversially at work in other disciplines and that therefore the phenomenological method does not suffer from any epistemic difficulty peculiar to it. Furthermore, we suggested that in all these disciplines the process of empathetic understanding clearly yields incontrovertibly significant and intersubjectively verifiable results, shifting the burden of proof (so to speak) back on the critics of this methodological procedure. Adding to our earlier discussion, Arthur tries to locate one of the important factors lying behind the critics’ position: “the problem is, of course, how an approach which claims to be non-factual, personal and holistic can possibly offer us any insight into religion at all. For, on first hearing at least, such terms sound anything but reassuring about the provision of any legitimate means of knowing.” And his answer to this problem involves exploiting a discussion by contemporary philosopher Renford Bambrough on how writing and reading stories and novels can in fact assist our comprehension of facts precisely through the process of sympathetic reexperiencing:

Renford Bambrough has drawn attention to occasions when “we can achieve and convey knowledge and understanding by seeing and showing a pattern of relationships in between a set of items in which each separate item is already available for inspection.” Imaginative re-experiencing is, or seeks to be, such an occasion, when an advancement in learning takes place without our acquiring any increase in itemizable bits of information which were not available to us before. . . . As Bambrough went on to show, in reading a story we may learn something which is quite “disproportionate to the number of new facts we learn” or to whether we learn any new facts at all. Indeed, many works of literature can be said to teach

us about things we might already claim to know about. . . . Imaginative re-experiencing does not advocate an *abandonment* of information in favor of some kind of factually unfounded exercise in speculation. Rather, it sees being well informed as a pre-requisite for its imaginative endeavor. The information is seen as the raw material for that endeavor, it is not however, accepted as the final product which is sought. . . . There would seem to be no immediate reason, then, for rejecting a methodology which is non-factual, personal and holistic . . . simply on the grounds that it could not provide any legitimate means of knowing. It might not be easy to specify precisely what we *do* learn from such an approach, since the nature of the knowledge it offers resists any process of itemization, but it seems clear that it can teach us some things—perhaps a great deal—even in those areas where we may feel fully informed already . . .

One of Arthur’s points here is that imaginative reexperiencing of another’s worldview can lead us to see significant and meaningful patterns and relationships among facts and, further, that identifying and elucidating these patterns and relationships constitutes a cognitive achievement enhancing our knowledge of a particular religious tradition. There is, we submit, nothing murky or mysterious about either this achievement or the process leading up to it.

The fifth problem of anti-historical bias may at first blush appear to be a very improbable line of criticism against an enterprise explicitly concerned with features of historical context and development. Though, as we conceded earlier, this criticism may have some bite with respect to some research done within the essentialist voice, it is less obviously applicable to the historical-typological enterprise. Nevertheless, the charge is often made, and we must consider carefully its rationale and merit. The criticism focuses most directly on the steps of comparative elucidation and interrogation, which employ as well as forge typological categories for the purposes of gaining a deeper understanding into the nature of particular religious traditions as well as religions in general. The claim is that typological categories (e.g., prayer, sacred space, pilgrimage, sacred persons, sacred communities) are static, unduly reifying, and, when applied to complex and ever-changing historical data, ultimately skew that data. For example (and this is only hypothetical), it might be charged that applying Kristensen’s category of “magical prayer” (ritually exerting compulsion on the gods) to Christian materials might result in a radical misunderstanding of the phenomenon of petitionary prayer in that tradition (which some argue is more expressive of surrender to God’s will whatever His will might be). If this were done, then distortion of Christian petitionary prayer would result. Or, for another example (again, hypothetical), some might argue that in proposing the category of sacred space as a religious universal, researchers might be led to overlook or discount aspects of those traditions (e.g., Theravada Buddhism) that deny

a transcendent referent and thus the sensibility of a spatial orientation to a god or gods. Again, the result might be a significant distortion in understanding a religious tradition from its own internal standpoint.

While there may be real dangers associated with the insensitive use of such typological categories, it does appear that this line of criticism overlooks significant checks against such dangers built into the historical-typological method. We have, for example, pointed out that practitioners of this method are ever alert to refining and adjusting (or even rejecting) their typological categories when they are dealing with subtle and nuanced data that either stretch or do not fit the categories. For historical-typologists focused on the qualitative understanding of particular religious traditions, typological categories are heuristic devices or guides to uncovering nonobvious features of the data under scrutiny—assisted by comparison to the data of other traditions that might fall within those categories. Heuristic devices are used only so long as they assist the primary investigation, and are modified or dropped if they are found to be not doing their job. The point is that historical-typologists work dialectically back and forth between their comparative types and the particular data, constantly revising their understanding of each—types and data—until they reach a satisfactory and defensible (to a community of scholars) understanding of a particular tradition.

While possibly conceding the presence of such a dialectical process, the critics might press their point more forcefully against that mode of elucidative interrogation interested in proposing religious universals. So-called universals, they might charge, once in place and accepted as universals, might be henceforth used unthinkingly and uncritically when coming up against new data. Moreover, a so-called universal once accepted by a community of scholars is less likely to be called into question than an heuristic device, and therefore might be employed in a prejudicial fashion. There is no denying a legitimate danger here, but, by the same token, being aware of this danger constitutes both a challenge and the possibility of avoiding the danger in the first place—by treating even so-called universals as heuristic to the understanding of religious dimensions of human existence.

Now that we have completed our review of the criticisms brought against both the essentialists and the historical-typological voices—and seeing the nuanced responses of the latter—we need to consider whether there are any additional problems that might be relatively distinctive to the historical-typological enterprise. There are at least two such problems—one is concerned with cultural bias (“if I were a horse” fallacy), the other with a difficulty we will call “diachronic bias.” The “if I were a

horse” fallacy charges that the historical-typological method is ineluctably infected with cultural bias because the investigator employing sympathetic reenactment inevitably imports his or her own cultural baggage into the imaginative empathetic process, for the investigator’s imaginative experience and thought is shaped at the deepest possible level by the language and conceptuality of that person’s cultural tradition.²⁷ There is considerable truth to this sort of contention—researchers are shaped by their cultural traditions—but the charge of inevitable bias overlooks the power and prospects of checks within the historical-typological method. Epoché clearly helps to nullify the effects of “cultural baggage,” and the process of comparison based on constantly reexamined typological categories also assists in freeing the investigator’s research from distorting cultural biases. Furthermore, trans-cultural and cross-traditional understanding is obviously possible as shown by activities ranging from language-translation to inter-cultural dialogue. So again we encounter a risk, but one that can be counteracted by an appropriately sensitive and controlled method.

The problem of diachronic bias is perhaps most perceptively discussed by the contemporary phenomenologist/philosopher/historian of religions, Ninian Smart.²⁸ In his discussion of how historical-typologists attempt to construct a dynamic moving picture of a tradition’s self-understanding (diachronically qualitative understanding), he points out that the researcher is faced with the problem of how to identify which temporal community’s self-understanding—within a given religious tradition—is to be taken as normative or definitive for the tradition. For example, within the Christian tradition, which historical community’s conception of God is normative for the entire tradition (if any), so that we may speak of a Christian tradition that subsumes (e.g.) Catholic and Protestant, medieval and modern, church and sect, and even fringe religious groups such as Unitarian universalists? Questions such as these point up the problem of whether the researcher’s choice of (e.g.) a conception of God as normative for the entire tradition might not build in a diachronic bias toward an historically and socially particular conception of God that might distort the researcher’s understanding of other historically and socially located communities within the tradition. There seems to be a real problem here, and Smart’s suggested solution is that the historical-typologist must try to identify the typical conceptions of God of these various historical communities of worship and then within these typical conceptions discern the “regulative ideal” toward which they all tend, while simultaneously being self-consciously sensitive to the finer differences among their particular conceptions. That is, Smart proposes that

the phenomenological researcher must construct an "ideal type" for conceptions of God within the tradition, while simultaneously recognizing that various instantiations of this ideal type have differences. This, suggests Smart, will help to correct for diachronic bias: being self-consciously alert to both the similarities within the different conceptions (the ideal type or regulative ideal) and the differences within the similarities (the finer grain of particular conceptions). This solution to the problem appears both possible and plausible. Awareness of this problem and a way of checking it permit us to be more critically alert to an issue seemingly endemic to the historical-typological voice.

As with the essentialist voice, reviewing these problems or concerns about the historical-typological voice assists us in seeing some of the weaknesses and strengths of its method. Though, again, we have tended to rebut these concerns, we should remain aware that continuing perceptions of them have no small role in helping to generate or at least strengthen the resolve of other methodological voices both within and outside the field of phenomenology of religion. Thus, for example, the criticisms of static typology, insufficient suspicion, diachronic bias, and so on have helped to support the development of other nonphenomenological methods in the history of religions, while the issues of detached objectivity as well as inescapable cultural bias have helped to support the emergence of the existential-hermeneutical phenomenology of religion. Nevertheless, none of these various methodological voices—whether within or outside the field of phenomenology of religion—would deny that the historical-typological voice has had and continues to have an important role in the academic study of religion.

Third Voice: Existential-Hermeneutical Phenomenology of Religion

The third voice in the phenomenology of religion is what we call, following Paul Ricoeur and his interpreters, the existential-hermeneutical phenomenology of religion.²⁹ "Existential" and "hermeneutical" here have rather precise meanings, and their linkage is intended to signal a distinctive turn in some recent research in phenomenology of religion. "Existential" refers to this voice's preoccupation with structures and problems of human existence in the world, including such broad themes as freedom, intersubjectivity, temporality, corporeality, finitude, and death as well as particular human experiences such as anxiety, hope, despair, guilt, caring. "Hermeneutical" refers to this voice's perception that

all human experience is mediated by language (or, more broadly symbolic systems). The linkage of the two—"existential" and "hermeneutical"—indicates this voice's further perception that all structures and problems of human existence and experience require an approach explicitly focused on exploring them through interpretation of their linguistic or symbolic expression. Thus, at the very outset of our discussion of this voice, we can see that it is oriented to both a particular subject-matter and a distinctive methodological approach. Before we move on to discuss this voice's aims and method, it may be useful to first identify in a more general way some of the basic traits of existential-hermeneutical phenomenology. For this part of our discussion, we draw freely on Ricoeur's justly famous *Encyclopédie Française* article on existential phenomenology as well as the discussions of other existential phenomenologists such as Gabriel Marcel and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.³⁰ As we do this, we will try self-consciously to connect certain points of our discussion to some of the issues and problems we identified in our examination of the two previous voices. In this way, we should gain a strong foundation for our subsequent examination of the distinctive aims, method, and problems of the existential-hermeneutical phenomenology of religion.

Orientation to Existential Phenomenology

The most important observation that Ricoeur makes about existential phenomenology in general is that it is an "oriented" enterprise.³¹ By this he means that it quite explicitly and self-consciously serves normative aims associated with the philosophy of human existence. Existential phenomenologists use the phenomenological method to explore the great problems of human existence (mentioned above), and they do this in such a way as to privilege one or another normative aim—for example, to counteract human alienation from the natural and/or social world, to recover the metaphysical dimensions of human existence, to rediscover humankind's bond with a transcendent sacred, and so on. Furthermore, in pursuing one or another of these aims, different investigators tend also to emphasize different forms of human experiences as being the "key" or central access to advancing a deeper understanding of the human condition—one might focus on experiences of radical freedom to make choices and create values (Sartre), another might focus on experiences of anxiety and dread (Heidegger), yet another might focus on experiences of hope and liberation (Marcel).³² And, in turn, these aims and pursuits tend to produce distinctively different "styles" of existential phenomenology.³³ Ricoeur's point is that existential phenomenology in all of its variations

is a radically oriented field in which the phenomenological method is clearly subordinated to dominant, organizing, and normative existential aims, insights, and hunches about what is most important in the human condition.

This aggressive openness on the part of existential phenomenologists about their normative orientations contrasts quite strongly with the stances of essentialists and historical-typological phenomenologists of religion, who, while often possessing hidden normative aims and agenda, appear to be trying to pursue within their phenomenology more descriptive aims associated with either explicating the essential traits of religious consciousness in general or understanding the ethos and worldview of particular religious traditions. Phenomenologists within the latter two voices do not self-consciously intend to be normatively existential within their phenomenological investigations—in fact, they try constantly to “check” or bracket out these aims because of their constant worry about distorting or biasing the data. This is a very different attitude from that of existential phenomenologists, who openly embrace and aggressively pursue normative existential aims. What factors might account for such a radical difference in attitude?

Answering this question takes us to the heart of what existential phenomenology is all about in terms of its shared insights into the nature of human consciousness and existence in the world. Though in his article Ricoeur discusses only four of these shared insights or themes, there appear in fact to be six such dominant themes. They are: (1) “consciousness is bound to a pre-given world,” (2) “we are incarnated,” (3) “we are temporal or historical,” (4) “we are essentially related to others in an intersubjective world,” (5) “we are linguistic beings through and through,” and (6) “we are free.” Individually and collectively these six organizing insights or themes explicate in a deeper way why and how existential phenomenology is an oriented field of inquiry, for they identify distinctive modes of human existential orientation in the world that, according to existential phenomenologists, all phenomenological inquiry must take into account as it works out its programs of research. These insights constitute “givens” (or “pre-givens”) that, from their perspective, all phenomenological programs must acknowledge on pain of fundamental shortsightedness (or even incoherence) in their aims and method. Let us now briefly discuss these insights, with a constant eye on how they might modify, add to, or correct features of our other two voices in phenomenology of religion.

The first organizing insight—the link between consciousness and a pre-given world—is absolutely crucial, for it “founds” in a sense all the

other insights. The claim is that upon becoming reflectively aware of itself all consciousness finds a world already there, “pre-given.” In Ricoeur’s words, “the ‘world’ . . . is pre-given in the sense that every present activity [of a conscious being] surges into a world already there.”³⁴ Merleau-Ponty puts this point well when he writes in his *Phenomenology of Perception*, “the world is there beyond any possible analysis of mine,” or, again, the world is given in our experience as “the background from which all acts stand out” and as “the field for all my thoughts and all my explicit perceptions.”³⁵ Now, how, one might ask, do these phenomenologists gain this insight, and what precisely is its significance? Merleau-Ponty provides the clue to answering this question when he suggests that we are so thoroughly embedded in the world that the only way to become aware of this fact is to suspend (bracket) this involvement, “put it out of play” in the manner of phenomenological epoché. And, he further suggests, when reflection is thereby enabled to stand back from its involvement it can “watch the forms of transcendence fly up like sparks from a fire; it slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world and thus brings them to our notice.” But then, he points out, by learning of “the unmotivated upsurge of the world” in us, in our being, we can see as well that complete reduction or epoché is for us—as beings in the world—not possible.³⁶ And so through epoché we see that epoché itself refers us to an existential structure underlying our experience—the fact that we are essentially beings in the world. In a sense, phenomenological reduction or epoché self-destructs—it finds that it is not attainable in a complete way, because our consciousness is tied inextricably to a pre-given world. As Ricoeur observes, “this shift in accent marks the passage to existential phenomenology.”³⁷

The significance of this insight is no doubt beginning to emerge in the reader’s mind: phenomenological reduction (epoché)—one of the linchpins of the phenomenological method—is radically bounded by the existential fact that our consciousness is linked to a pre-given world. And seeing this gives rise to the question, are there any other existential facts (or structures) that bound our understanding of life in the world? Further, are there perhaps such structures that concern some sort of significant link between humankind and the sacred? Being able to ask such questions as these indicates just how fundamental the first insight of existential phenomenology is, for with the establishment of a link between consciousness and a pre-given world comes also an approach to human existence replete with rich possibilities and opportunities for investigating the nature of our being in the world, for understanding ourselves at what is perhaps the deepest possible level. Is this insight shared by our

other two voices in the phenomenology of religion? If not, what are the possible implications of this for our critical understanding and appraisal of these two voices?

What seems reasonably clear is that the notion of a "bound" epoché is quite different from the essentialists' understanding of the step of epoché or bracketing. Their conception of this step appears to presuppose the idea of a detached objective observer who, through sympathy assisted by bracketing, focuses on religious consciousness as the Other to be understood and examined. Within the essentialist method, the phenomenological observer does not share a pre-given world with the other precisely because the observer does not acknowledge a pre-given world at all. But, in not acknowledging such a world bounding all consciousness, the question is raised as to whether the phenomenological observer might not be alienated in an important way from the standpoint of the religious consciousness he or she is investigating. If this line of reasoning is cogent, then the problem is re-raised of the possible biasing effect of the phenomenological attitude's radical detachment. Perhaps some essential features of religious consciousness will slip by the detached investigator unnoticed, unacknowledged, or uninvestigated. Similarly, with respect to the historical-typologist's phenomenological attitude, which, though supplemented by steps of diachronic understanding and comparative reference, is nonetheless shaped by the ideal of a detached objective observer—it too runs the risk of being alienated from the particular ethos and worldview it is attempting to investigate and thus may miss certain of its significant features. This possible bias in both the essentialist and historical-typological voices needs, of course, to be investigated further, and we will do this in connection with our discussion of the other insights of existential phenomenology.

The second insight of existential phenomenology—captured in Marcel's claim that "we are incarnated"—is related to the first but takes the latter a step farther in the direction of concreteness.³⁸ The claim here is that our consciousness is tied to a pre-given world in the specific form of being incarnate or embodied: I am my body, or more accurately, I am embodied, and there is no escaping this. Both Marcel and Merleau-Ponty contend that the feature of corporeality represents a fundamental and inescapable datum of our consciousness, implying that we are essentially "situated" and "oriented" in the world in a particular way. To put it roughly, "where my body is" shapes what and how I perceive; "how my body is" shapes the quality of my perception; "what happens to my body" also happens to my consciousness; and so on. Our bodies are not merely objects in the world to which we are contingently or accidentally

attached or related; rather they are part of how we are as conscious beings, orienting us in particular ways as spatial conscious beings. According to existential phenomenologists, this insight has significant implications for phenomenological inquiry into the nature of human consciousness and existence in the world.

One important implication is that phenomenological inquiry needs to be alert to the corporeal and, more broadly, spatially oriented features of conscious experience. This much seems obvious. Another less obvious implication pointed out quite effectively by Marcel is that our incarnateness so situates us in the world that it prevents us from being able to attain a radically detached objective and comprehensive view of ourselves.³⁹ Precisely because we "see" the world from only an oriented perspective, we find it difficult (indeed impossible) to gain a complete and neutral perspective on the world, including, of course, ourselves, our very own being. Indeed, this difficulty is especially stark in the case of ourselves (our being) because we are never simply objects to ourselves, able to investigate ourselves in a totally detached manner in the way of scientific inquiry into natural objects and events. Rather we are opaque to ourselves, and our being is a mystery to us in many respects. The further implication of this difficulty in being able to attain a detached, standpointless perspective is that the supposed cognitive ideal of "the anonymous epistemological subject" (to use Ricoeur's phrase) in phenomenology, who uses himself or herself as a neutral and impartial sounding board for understanding human experience and consciousness, is called into question.⁴⁰ That is, not only is the epistemological subject (the inquirer) bound to the world but he or she is also oriented in the world in a particular way—corporeally and spatially. Thus, the subject is no longer so "anonymous." Now how does the existential phenomenological perspective and its implications bear on our other two voices in phenomenology of religion?

One such bearing should be obvious. Since the essentialist method apparently presupposes the standpoint of the anonymous epistemological subject (the image of the detached, neutral, and objective observer), it fails to recognize and take account of the inquirer's corporeal orientation in the world. We in fact saw this vividly illustrated, for example, in the way that Earle so casually separated the (transcendental) ego or consciousness from the body in his investigation into the essence of mystical consciousness. And we need to ask whether this sort of separation of mind from body and dismissal from the latter's importance might not have the possible consequence of "blinding" the phenomenological inquirer to seeing or appreciating "embodied" aspects of (e.g.) mystical

experience—for example, the significance of physical discipline in meditative practices, the significance of kinesthetic elements in the experiences of mystical union or mystical love, and so on. Such distortional effects seem quite possible, and it may be no simple oversight that many Western essentialists (e.g., Otto, Scheler, Earle) fail to discuss or even explicitly acknowledge the corporeal elements in mystical or, more broadly, religious consciousness.

Clearly, a similar sort of problem could also affect the work of historical-typologists who also appear to presuppose the ideal of an anonymous epistemological subject. However, we must be cautious here, for it is equally important to recognize that by virtue of their focus on particular religious traditions and their methodological step of comparative elucidation, historical-typologists gain a “check” of sorts against any wholesale blindness to corporeality and orientation in the world. If, for example, a particular tradition emphasizes physical disciplines of some sort or perhaps the notion of some sort of sacred space, then it would be difficult for a self-consciously historical and comparative method to overlook, ignore, or dismiss these features of the tradition. Possible evidence for the efficacy of such a check may be seen in Eliade’s work, which clearly recognizes the fact and significance of spatial orientation in the “worlds” of various (if not all) religious traditions. Indeed, Eliade is quite well known for his studies of Yoga practices in Eastern religious traditions, and these practices involve important elements of physical discipline (phenomena of embodied consciousness) of which Eliade is fully cognizant.⁴¹ So we must conclude that historical-typologists are not nearly as prone as the essentialists to underestimate the significance of corporeality and spatial orientation in the world. This may be due in part to direct influence of existential phenomenology on some historical-typological research—Eliade, for example, is quite conversant with and frequently mentions influential existential phenomenologists in some of his methodological discussions. Nonetheless, it cannot be said that all historical-typological phenomenology of religion is so influenced and has shed the ideal of the anonymous epistemological subject—therefore, the risk of distortion remains with this voice.

The next three insights of existential phenomenology—temporality (or historicity), intersubjectivity, and linguisticality—are also related to the first theme of pre-given world, extending its range into additional modalities of our being oriented in the world. “Temporality” refers, of course, to the way we are oriented in the world in terms of time (past, present, and future) in addition to space: in the present we project ourselves from our past into the future. Our presents are shaped and con-

strained by our pasts, and our futures represent possibilities open to us which are also shaped and constrained by our pasts and what we are doing in our presents. To put it in a nutshell, we (our consciousness, our experience, our action) are historical beings, we find ourselves oriented in an historical way to our world. “Intersubjectivity” indicates the rudimentary fact that the world to which we are oriented is a world of social relations, a world of others who shape not only our identities but our very consciousnesses as indelibly social in nature. That is, when we become self-aware we become aware of our consciousness in distinction from and in relation to other consciousnesses: this is not merely a fact established by (e.g.) social psychology, but a deep sort of fact that makes possible (and therefore precedes) social psychology, for we find consciousness given to us in this way. “Linguisticality” refers to the related phenomenological datum that how we perceive and handle the world is shaped by language that is part and parcel of our intersubjective orientation to (or in) the world. Again, when we become aware of ourselves, our consciousnesses, we become aware of ourselves as linguistically structured—intersubjectively structured in a linguistic way. All three insights, then—temporality, intersubjectivity, linguisticality—are essential modes of our orientation in the world, modes that cannot be escaped or transcended. Even the consciousness of a hermit is so structured—even if he or she is not right now relating to others or using language with others in an active way—for the hermit still lives life in a temporally structured way, is related to others in a potential way, and uses language to think if only in interior monologue.

Now, according to existential phenomenologists, all three of these insights have significant implications for studying and understanding human consciousness and, more broadly, human existence in the world. Inasmuch as these insights represent basic structures or traits of our consciousness and existence, they further “bound”—in addition to a pre-given world and corporeality—how we and our inquiries are oriented or situated in the world. There is no escaping them or transcending them on pain of fundamental misunderstanding or even incoherence about what and how we are. This suggests or, more strongly, implies that the phenomenological attitude cannot escape these structures and that the very attempt to do so would be self-defeating since that would alter the phenomena to be investigated and understood. The phenomenological attitude, then, is itself radically “bound” or situated in the world, and to do justice to itself and its objects of inquiry, it must accept this orientation. All phenomena of consciousness must be viewed in their corporeal (spatial), temporal, intersubjective, and linguistic modalities to be properly

understood and appreciated. How, then, does this perspective compare with our other two voices in the phenomenology of religion?

The method of essential phenomenology of religion appears problematic from this point of view, for it has a tendency to ignore or at least downplay one or another of these modalities of our being in the world. Besides a tendency to discount traits of corporeality or embodiedness in its accounts of religious consciousness, it also exhibits a tendency to disregard temporal development, intersubjective connections, and linguistic structuring and expression of religious consciousness. Though Otto and Scheler, for example, do discuss large evolutionary development in religious consciousness (from "primitive" to "higher" forms), they do not discuss temporal orientation within any given instance of numinous state of consciousness or revelation. Moreover, they tend to conceive and treat religious consciousness as radically solitary and isolated within an individual consciousness as if it were not inherently socially structured. We must, of course, not overstate this point since, after all, for Otto and Scheler the religious consciousness is related to at least one other—the religious Other (the divine). Nevertheless, this is a consciousness conceived as having a private relation to the divine, not one clearly oriented in a world shared with other human consciousnesses. Furthermore, though Otto and Scheler are themselves linguistically inventive in developing suggestive and performative metaphors for evocatively describing phenomena of religious consciousness, they do not see this consciousness as shaped by socially shared linguistic structures.

By contrast, the method of historical-typological phenomenology of religion—despite its apparent adherence to the ideal of a detached, objective, and neutral phenomenological observer—does in fact take account of all three existential-phenomenological insights through those aspects of its method concerned with, for example, diachronic understanding, reference to data made available by other disciplines, and its focus on traditions and communities of ethos and worldview. Diachronic understanding "picks up" temporality; available data include linguistic and symbolic data; and traditions and communities "fix" intersubjectivity. These differences from the essentialist method are quite striking and reveal a closer relationship between the historical-typological and the existential-hermeneutical voices than perhaps either of these two voices seems fully to realize (though both Eliade and Ricoeur come quite close to admitting this).

The final insight of existential phenomenology that we need to discuss briefly is perhaps the most well known: the theme of human freedom. We have in fact already touched on this theme in connection with tempo-

rality, when we spoke of the way that we project ourselves from the past and the present into a future open with possibilities. It is here that we manifest our freedom to choose and decide anew. By this point in our discussion, however, we should be aware that we choose from a situation where we are already oriented in the world—spatially, intersubjectively, and so on—and so our freedom, while open to new direction and possibility, is nonetheless an already situated, contextualized, and constrained freedom. This too is a fundamental aspect of our conscious being in the world: we are free, within the constraints posed by our situation and its past and present, to determine ourselves according to new possibilities (plans, projects, hopes, and dreams). We are self-aware of being both oriented and yet free: this is a basic trait of our experience and consciousness. And, according to the existential phenomenologists, this trait also needs to be taken seriously into account by phenomenological inquiry—all phenomenological inquiry—to do justice to our being as freely becoming creatures. How exactly would this trait be manifested in phenomenological inquiry? The typical way is surely to focus on those aspects of our experience that involve openness to the future—for example, anxiety and hope, which are quintessentially phenomena expressing our freedom in the world. Do our other two voices in phenomenology of religion take account of this aspect of our being?

The answer to this question is somewhat mixed. For example, while we do not find essential phenomenologists of religion focusing an enormous amount of attention on those phenomena of human freedom with which existential phenomenologists seem occupied—for example, anxiety and hope—we do find them investigating (e.g.) phenomena of religious redemption from a condemnatory judgment of sin conceived as being made possible by the absolute freedom and power of the divine. Thus, for example, even though Otto appears to treat dread (or anxiety) as simply a forerunner of the overwhelming sense of awe before a numinous, powerful Other—thus seeming to discount the importance of dread as a phenomenon of human freedom in favor of another sort of experience (a focused and transfixed religious fear)—he also treats that Other's power as an agent of new redemptive and liberating possibilities for the believing soul, and this latter surely represents a phenomenon of situated human freedom of a distinctive sort. Nevertheless, it does seem that Otto is only concerned with the human freedom made possible by the liberating action of a redemptive agent and appears relatively disinterested in freedom as an existential structure of human being apart from the divine, and this difference in emphasis appears to distinguish his approach from that of existential phenomenologists who feel "bound" to

begin with the structure of human freedom in the sense shared by us and in our orientation to the world.

The historical-typological voice, by contrast, appears quite open to the existential insight of freedom, though it might not conceive of it as an existential structure. Nevertheless, its concern with diachronic understanding and historical change clearly recognizes a fundamental dimension of human freedom in the choices and decisions of historical agents to modify the ethos and worldview of their traditions. Moreover, as with the existential view, this freedom must be seen as situated freedom embedded as it is in ongoing, oriented traditions in the world. This acknowledgment of situated freedom would seem to be a fundamental presupposition (organizing insight) of the historical-typological phenomenology of religion.

Orientation to Existential-Hermeneutical Phenomenology of Religion

With this discussion of the basic insights of existential phenomenology in hand, we now turn to the aims, method, and problems characteristic of existential-hermeneutical phenomenology of religion. As might be expected, these insights have considerable implications for how this voice defines itself. We might begin by recalling Ricoeur's contention that existential phenomenology is an aggressively oriented enterprise that is quite self-consciously focused on basic existential structures of human being in the world, in the service of normative aims of varying sorts, and privileging certain human experiences as constituting key accesses to advancing a deeper understanding of the human condition. All these facets of aggressive orientation apply to the existential-hermeneutical voice in phenomenology of religion. It is self-consciously focused on basic existential structures such as temporality, spatiality, and freedom. Witness, for example, John Smith's concern with "crucial times" of life decision and choice, "boundary situations" of life and death, and forms of "special space" and "sacred space" as existential structures of human being in the world crucial to understanding experiences and concepts of the holy; or, for another example, Ricoeur's concern with situated or bounded (ethical) freedom as an existential structure crucial to understanding religious experiences and concepts of faith, hope, and liberation.

Moreover, it seems clear that inquiries within this voice self-consciously serve normative aims. In Ricoeur's case, for example, the aim is to recover humankind's "bond" between itself and what is considered sacred; in Smith's case, the aim is to explicate the deep connections between human experience of crucial events and places, on the one hand,

and "the reality of God as understood in a specific, historical tradition," on the other; in Westphal's case, the implications of the experience of guilt for appreciation of the way that the sacred can heal "the wounded self-consciousness"; and so the list continues. And it is further apparent that diverse inquiries within this voice view various experiences as constituting the key access for advancing human existential self-understanding; again, for example, experience of critical situations and times revealing the "precariousness of our existence" and calling for "momentous decisions" (Smith); confessions of experiences of evil as well as experiences of grace, hope, and liberation (Ricoeur); experiences of guilt, morbid self-awareness, and defensive denial of moral responsibility (Westphal).

Besides being oriented to the specific subject-matter of religiously significant existential structures and experiences, the existential-hermeneutical voice in the phenomenology of religion (like existential phenomenology in general) also possesses a reasonably distinctive methodological orientation as well. In the case of existential phenomenology, we saw that its methodology, while incorporating features of epoché and sympathetic re-experiencing, conceives of itself as radically "bounded" by the "pre-given" existential traits of human consciousness of being in the world. This conception is no less true of the existential-hermeneutical voice in phenomenology of religion. And so we find, for example, Smith delineating his methodology in the following way:

The phenomenological approach to any philosophical problem means an approach through the analysis of primary experience and the reflective grasp of what we actually encounter. This view, though positive, implies the negation of other views. First, it means that experience is not to be understood either as a way of transforming reality into mere phenomena devoid of power and otherness, or of reducing reality to the data of sense; second, it means that experience is not to be identified with an exclusively private or "mental" content confined to an individual mind; third, it means that ingredient in experience is a real world of things, events, and selves transcending the encounter had by any one individual or any finite collection of individuals. The general assumption behind these negations is that experience is neither a substitute for reality nor a veil that falls between us and what there is, but rather a *reliable medium of disclosure* through which the real world is made manifest and comes to be apprehended by us.

What seems clear from this passage is that Smith conceives of the phenomenological method as radically oriented or bounded (e.g.) by a pre-given world disclosing itself in experience that is fundamentally intersubjective in nature ("not exclusively private or 'mental' content confined to an individual mind"). And so he goes on to argue that "instead of beginning with special experiences . . . recorded and interpreted in biblical . . . literature [as he argues, Otto tended to do] . . . it would be more in accord

with a phenomenological approach to start from a broader base and consider recurrent situations that are to be found universally in experience" [i.e., experiences of crucial times and decisions and special places]. Thus does Smith see his methodology also "bounded" and "oriented" to existential structures of temporality, freedom, and corporeality. Later in his study, Smith signals the way in which his methodology is additionally bounded and oriented to the existential trait of linguisticity when he acknowledges that:

it is, however, an error to identify the experience of the holy, as it is open to any human being, with the apprehension of a definite being as such . . . there are too many possibilities for interpretation . . . just because there is such a plurality of religious traditions and cultural forms, we are not justified in identifying the experience of the holy, taken as a phenomenon of universal scope, with the intuition of God as understood from the standpoint of any one religious tradition. . . . The way is left open for *interpreting* the power present in crucial events and places encountered in living experience, in terms of the doctrine of God to be found in that tradition.

Here Smith acknowledges that his method is constrained by the existential structure of human linguisticity in the sense that diverse cultural traditions (including, of course, language) shape human understanding and interpretation of "the power present in . . . crucial events and places." And so we see his method as fully both embracing and oriented by the insights of existential phenomenology.

Ricoeur's method is similarly so oriented, though he accords a special primacy to the existential insight of linguisticity at the very outset of his inquiry:

I propose, first, to consider this term [guilt], not in its psychological, psychiatric or psychoanalytic usage, but in the *texts* where its meaning has been constituted and fixed. These texts are of penitential literature wherein the believing communities have expressed their avowal of evil; the language of these texts is a specific language which can be designated, in a very general way, as "confession of sins." . . . My point of departure is in a *phenomenology of confession* or avowal.

Ricoeur's focus on primary religious language as an expressive access to religious experience of evil is, of course, striking in its clear methodological acknowledgment of the existential structure of linguisticity. No less striking, however, is his orientation to existential structures of intersubjectivity (texts and language of "believing communities," "experience of sin rooted in the life of the community"), freedom ("in a first state of reflection, I say: to affirm freedom is to take upon oneself the origin of evil"), temporality (in the avowal of evil, "I declare myself, after the fact, as being he who could have done otherwise . . . this movement from in

front of to behind the responsibility is essential. It constitutes the identity of the moral subject through past, present, and future"), a pre-given world ("freedom has already chosen in an evil way. This evil is already there. It is in this sense that it is radical, that it is anterior. . . . Evil is this prior captivity"), and even elements of corporeality and spatial orientation ("the return to the origin is a return to that place where freedom discovers itself"). Thus we can see that Ricoeur, like Smith, is radically oriented by the insights of existential phenomenology.

Both the aims and method, then, of this third voice in phenomenology of religion are significantly shaped by the dominant themes of existential phenomenology. This is not to say, however, that this voice simply reduces to philosophical explanation of human existence as pursued by existential phenomenology in general, for this voice does exhibit rather distinctive aims and methodological concerns not held by all existential phenomenologists. We need now to clarify these distinctive aims and method.

Aims

As a general organizational principle, we might begin by noting that investigators working within this voice appear to pursue two distinctive types of aims: one is descriptive-interpretive, the other is ontological-explorative. The first descriptive-interpretive aim is focused on gaining access to, describing, and analyzing the believing soul's (and community's) existential orientation to the sacred—in terms of its (or their) distinctive experiential expression and understanding of the basic existential structures of human being in the world (pre-given world, corporeality-spatiality, temporality, intersubjectivity, linguisticity, and freedom). The dominating concern of this aim is to describe and interpret the believing soul's and community's own self-understanding of their experience in the world within the framework provided by the six basic existential structures—how these structures are experienced and interpreted by the believing soul and community. The second ontological-explorative aim then takes the findings achieved within the first aim and interrogates them with an eye to seeing what they might reveal, suggest, or imply about human existence or the human condition in a more general way—Are there basic religious dimensions of human existence in the world? Is there a sacred or transcendent realm, and, if so, how is it conceived and experienced? Is humankind naturally religious (*homo-religiosus*)? and so on. Often this ontological-explorative aim and inquiry are conducted in explicit dialogue with the findings and insights of other

humanistic disciplines (e.g., other schools of philosophical inquiry, other disciplines of religious studies, the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and social anthropology, the disciplines of literary criticism, even the disciplines of theology as well as inter-religious dialogue). This aim is a "wager" made by such inquirers that the self-understanding, expression, and experience of believing souls and communities have something important to teach us about ourselves, whether or not we are religious.

Method

In addition to expousing distinctive aims, existential-hermeneutical phenomenologists of religion also share a reasonably unified method of inquiry which, for convenience, we divide into five steps: (1) "bounded" epoché, (2) sympathetic re-experiencing, (3) evocative description, (4) interpretive interrogation, and (5) ontological exploration. "Bounded" epoché is our construal of the temporary bracketing or suspension of judgment practiced by our existential-hermeneutical phenomenologists with respect to all matters of truth, value, and commitment *except* those inescapable pre-given existential structures of all conscious experience. With respect to the latter, we understand the inquirer to acknowledge that such basic existential structures as corporeality, temporality, intersubjectivity, and the like "bound" or orient all conscious experience, though we also understand him to suspend temporarily his own specific interpretations of these structures in the interest of trying to understand and appreciate how the subjects of his inquiry experience and interpret these structures. In this way, the inquirer is able to use these structures as "probes" into how the believing soul and community are affected by and understand these structures, without imposing his own specific experience and understanding of these structures on the self-understanding of his subjects. On this construal, epoché is still operative in the method of this voice, but it is understood to be oriented or bounded by the basic organizing insights of existential phenomenology about our being in the world.

Though our authors do not speak explicitly of "bounded" epoché in the way that we have, they do say or imply things about epoché that suggest this construal; more important, perhaps, they appear to conduct their inquiries according to this understanding of "bounded" epoché. In his introduction to *God, Guilt, and Death*, for example, Westphal explicitly argues for the importance of the methodological step "in which evaluation (determination of truth and value) is temporarily suspended in order that description and thereby understanding may progress."⁴² At

first glance, this formulation seems no different from the other voices' understanding of epoché, but in the face of an impending charge of presupposing an ideal of detached objectivity, Westphal later qualifies his understanding of the method of existential phenomenology in the following manner: "To establish that the stance of detachment and disengagement which defines the descriptive attitude is not motivated by the desire to be rigorously scientific, but rather by a passion for self-understanding that is itself neither detached nor engaged."⁴³ Now this qualification could be taken to refer only to the subsequent step of ontological exploration or it could be taken to refer to the method through and through. If the first interpretation were followed, then we suggest Westphal runs the risk of introducing a fundamental incoherence in his understanding of the existential-hermeneutical method, especially since existential phenomenology appears to reject the stance of the anonymous epistemological inquirer. The second interpretation, then, appears preferable, and we have what is, in effect, a formulation of "bounded" epoché.

Ricoeur too, for another example, appears to be committed to a notion of bounded epoché when he speaks of sympathetic reexperiencing as a form of provisionally adopting "the motivations and intentions of the believing soul" in "a second naiveté," "a mode of as if," ultimately linked to an oriented field of investigation "situated" in a philosophical and cultural tradition shaped by a "Greek memory, from which rises the question: what is being?"⁴⁴ Ricoeur refers to this orientation—which, of course, shapes existential phenomenology—as a "principal methodological bondage"—and it is difficult to credit that this could not affect the step of epoché itself. And, in fact, Ricoeur himself is compelled to conclude his introduction to *The Symbolism of Evil* with the observation that "anyone who wished to escape the contingency of historical encounters and stand apart from the game in the name of a non-situated 'objectivity' would at most know everything, but would understand nothing. In truth, he would seek nothing, not being motivated by concern about any question."⁴⁵ So Ricoeur, like Westphal, rejects the supposed ideal of the anonymous epistemological inquirer, and this cannot but affect his use and construal of epoché—as oriented by the insights of existential phenomenology.

The second step of the method of existential-hermeneutical phenomenology of religion—sympathetic re-experiencing—has already been introduced in connection with Ricoeur's remarks about the first step. Though we are by now sufficiently familiar with the notion of sympathetic re-experiencing not to have to discuss it in any great detail,

we do need to be aware of a very distinctive "turn" in the existential-hermeneutical understanding of the step. This "turn" is very precisely captured in Ricoeur's representation of this step:

My point of departure is in a *phenomenology of confession* or avowal. Here I understand by phenomenology a description of meanings implied in experience in general . . . a phenomenology of confession is therefore a description of meanings and of signified intentions, present in a certain activity of language: the language of confession. Our task, in the framework of such a phenomenology is to re-enact in ourselves the confession of evil, in order to uncover its aims. By sympathy and through imagination, the philosopher adopts the motivations and intentions of the confessing consciousness; he does not "feel," he "experiences" in a neutral manner, in the manner of an "as if," that which has been lived in the confessing consciousness. But with which expression shall we start? Not with expressions of confessions that are the most developed, the most rationalized, for example, the concept or quasi-concept of "original sin" . . . we should not be embarrassed by the fact that behind these rationalized expressions, behind these speculations, we encounter myths, that is, traditional narratives which tell of events which happened at the origin of time . . . precisely because they have lost their explanatory pretention, they reveal an exploratory signification; they manifest a symbolic function, that is, a way of expressing indirectly the bond between man and what he considers sacred . . . in its turn, myth refers us to a level of expressions, more fundamental than any narration and any speculation. . . . Therefore it is to this experience and to its language that we must have recourse; or rather, to this experience *in* its language.

The "turn," of course, comes in Ricoeur's emphasis on the way that the religious experience of evil is embodied within the performative language of confession of sins. In his view, there is no other access to these religious experiences of evil—or, indeed, religious experiences in general—than through the way these experiences are expressed in language. Thus does he see the phenomenological step of sympathy quite explicitly "bounded" by the existential structure of linguisticity. The inquirer sympathetically reexperiences the consciousness and attitudes of the believing soul and community by sympathetically re-avowing their confessions of evil and through this re-avowal reenacting their motivations, intentions, and emotions as expressed in this discourse. It is important, according to Ricoeur, to focus on performative—not speculative—religious discourse, for it is in the performative use of language that one comes the closest to the primary intentions and experiences of the believing soul and community: this is the spontaneous and most revealing language of evil, unadulterated (so to speak) by subsequent rationalization, systematic reflection, and possible false consciousness. And, he further notes, this language of confession is symbolic, encoding layers and dimensions of meaning and signification that need to be reenacted and reexperienced to be recovered.

It seems reasonably obvious that in order to be recovered, this performative language must be carefully interpreted in addition to being reenacted, but before we move on to consider that methodological step, we need first to consider the intermediary step of evocative description.

Ricoeur, of course, is not alone among the existential-hermeneutical phenomenologists of religion in his focus on an appreciation of the sympathetic reenactment of the performative language of the believing soul and community. Westphal, for another example, makes much of the model of acting as an analogue for understanding the step of sympathetic reexperiencing. And he focuses attention on this analogous model precisely because, as he says, "when a great actress plays Lady Macbeth, she interprets the latter's experience by re-enacting it . . . [she] (re)feels the motivations and intentions of Lady Macbeth and (re)enacts her deeds and her consequent torment."⁶ Westphal's point might be better expressed by saying that the actress sympathetically refeels the motivations, intentions, as well as torment of Lady Macbeth *in* reenacting her words and deeds. Performative reenactment accesses, so to speak, the intentions and experience of the character. And, according to existential phenomenologists, this way of performatively accessing a subject's consciousness as expressed in language is no less true for the consumer than for the inquirer himself—and this, of course, introduces the step, reasonably familiar to us, of evocative description.

The rationale for this third step of evocative description is really no different than in the case of the other voices in phenomenology of religion—to permit and encourage the reader to reenact and reexperience individually the fundamental religious intentions, motivations, emotions of the believing soul and community. We can, of course, express this aim in a distinctively pointed way: the existential-hermeneutical inquirers aim to have their readers reenact for themselves the existential stance of the believer, in order that they, together with their inquiring guides, might fully and directly appreciate the insights and investigations of existential-hermeneutical inquiry into religion. To accomplish this aim, the existential-hermeneuticists consistently employ performative language to permit and prompt this existential engagement on the part of their readers. Thus, for example, Smith, Ricoeur, and Westphal consistently invite their readers to reenact with them the performative language of believers, to consider points in their own lives where they have encountered and been aware of key existential phenomena such as guilt, hope, and even redemption, to reconsider the deep meaning embodied in existentially moving literary and even mythic texts. They apparently wager that these invitational comparisons can be successful precisely because

they and their readers share basic existential structures—as points of orientation and access—to the stance of the believing soul and community.

The fourth step of the existential-hermeneutical method—interpretive interrogation—brings us to the heart of this voice. Building upon the preceeding three steps, inquirers within this voice launch careful, nuanced, and extraordinarily provocative probes into the levels of meaning embodied in the performative, symbolically structured, and experientially expressive language of the believing soul and community. Since this step is so important and distinctive to this voice, it will behoove us to spend some time on explicating its nature and implications.

The step of interpretive interrogation is nicely imaged in another of Westphal's models for existential-hermeneutical inquiry: the "good listening" that we tend to associate with the role of a professional counselor or psychotherapist, who listens to the discourse of his or her client with patience, sensitivity, and nonjudgmental openness. Westphal describes the good listener as follows:

If I am a good listener, I don't interrupt the other nor plan my own next speech while pretending to be listening. I try to hear what is said, but I listen just as hard for what is not said and for what is said between the lines. I am not in a hurry, for there is no pre-appointed destination for the conversation. There's no need to get there, for we are already here; and in this present I am able to be fully present to the other who speaks. The speaker is not an object to be categorized or manipulated, but a subject whose life situation is enough like my own that I can understand it in spite of the differences between us. If I am a good listener, what we have in common will seem more important than what we have in conflict. This does not mean that I never say anything, but I am more likely to ask questions than to issue manifestos or make accusations. . . . They will be the kind of questions the prosecuting attorney asks on cross examination, but they will not be asked in a prosecuting manner. They will rather be asked as a confessor or therapist asks them. For the purpose is not to win the case but to free understanding from self-deception. Though the goal is to "permit the believing soul to speak," it does not follow that the believing soul is automatically taken at face value.⁴⁷

Important in this image, of course, are those "virtues" that appear to be involved in the steps of existentially oriented and bounded epoché and sympathy—respect for the other, full presence to the other, recognition of commonality, patience. But equally important is the method of asking probing questions in a nonprosecutorial, nonjudgmental manner in order to get the other to reveal his or her basic intentions, motivations, and understanding of the world. This method corresponds to the step of interpretive interrogation—the gentle, insightful, but nonetheless critical probing that permits (indeed encourages) the believing soul to reveal himself or herself in a successively deepening way. Though this image of good

listening and gentle but critical probing helps us to understand the step of interpretive interrogation in its broad outlines, it needs to be taken farther if we are to gain an adequate comprehension of its features, and for this deeper and more systematic view we turn to Ricoeur's discussion of this step.

Ricoeur's representation of this step is predicated on his understanding of the believing soul and community's language as both performative and symbolic. We have already discussed the way in which this language is performative and therefore expressive of underlying (or better, embedded) motivations, intentions, and experiences, but now we need to focus on the symbolic aspect. Suggests Ricoeur, this language is symbolic in the sense that it "designates a thing in an indirect way, by designating another thing which it directly indicates." For example, the confessional expression of evil as a stain or impurity uses "the quasi-material representation of [literal] stain" as "symbolic of something else"—"a clear-obscure of a quasi-physical infection and of a quasi-moral indignity." Since this is so, continues Ricoeur, "the work of repetition as applied to the expression of evil is, in essence, the explicitation, the development of different levels of direct and indirect signification which are intermingled in the same symbol." Ricoeur's point is surely that in order to understand the symbolic language, we must probe it in such a way as to interpret its various levels of meaning and significance. And as much of this language is found embedded in complex dramatic narratives about the origins of evil, the task of interpretation turns out to be an extensive and demanding one, focused as it is on ever-deepening realms of meaning. Thus, the existential-hermeneuticist finds himself or herself contending with both the primary performative-symbolic language of awareness of evil (or, more broadly, religious experience) and the secondary symbolic-dramatic language of narrative myths. Furthermore, if he or she is to be fully alert to the reaches of this symbolic language, he or she must also be aware of their cosmic (ontological), oneiric (psychic), and poetic (imaginative) uses and dimensions of meaning.⁴⁸

Throughout this interpretive interrogative inquiry into the symbolic language of the believing soul and community, the inquirer is guided by the basic insights provided by existential phenomenology—corporeality, temporality, intersubjectivity, freedom, and the rest—using these to probe the contours and complexities of the existential stance and self-understanding being expressed by the religious consciousness. It is important to be aware of this guiding function provided by the basic existential structures, for they function to keep the inquirer's investigation grounded in existential reality as well as offer an orientation to his or her

interrogative probings. Ricoeur in particular is quite self-conscious about this guiding function of existential structures and, in fact, takes it a step farther by suggesting that his inquiry into religious experiences of evil is both bound and guided by distinctively Western sources (i.e., myths of evil) that permit him to see and appreciate various sorts of relation (of depth, lateral relations, retroactive and anticipative relations) internal to his sources that develop over time.⁴⁹ So his inquiry is additionally guided by what he calls our common "cultural memory" (itself expressive of the existential structures of temporality and intersubjectivity). Where, we might ask at this point, is this step of interpretive interrogation headed? What is its endpoint or goal? This brings us to the final step of the existential-hermeneutical method—ontological exploration.

We began our discussion of the existential-hermeneutical voice by observing that it is radically oriented toward one or another normative aim associated with clarifying and probing the basic religious dimensions of human existence in the world. This sort of aim is reflected in this voice's final methodological step of ontological exploration. Needless to say, the way that this step is taken will vary according to the existential concerns and interests of a given existential-hermeneuticist as well as the findings yielded by his or her use of the preceding four steps. Thus, for example, the Christian philosopher Gabriel Marcel is preoccupied with exploring the nature and implications of hope and liberation for a deeper understanding of the human condition; Ricoeur, while clearly interested in the theme of hope, suspects that the phenomena and myths of evil will yield a deeper understanding of humankind's "strained" or "broken" bond with the sacred; Smith appears preoccupied with the ontological implications of "crisis times" in human life and the way that these seem to disclose the holy in a mediated way to all humankind, and so on. Despite these differences, what all of these investigators appear to share in their ontological investigations—in addition to an interest in the structures of human existence—is a basic "wager" or "bet" that their various existential-hermeneutical inquiries reveal some sort of fundamental religious orientation within human existence in the world. They furthermore share the same methodological insight that their previous existential-hermeneutical researches may be more deeply interpreted to disclose or reveal this fundamental religious orientation if their "wager" is taken up, followed, or enacted. This implies still further that they think their various wagers can be somehow validated.

Smith, for example, follows this pattern of ontological exploration. He begins by suggesting that "certain recurrent situations [crucial times, special spaces] that are to be found universally in experience" will, if prop-

erly understood, reveal or disclose something significant about the religious dimension of human existence in the world. He then carefully describes (in a modestly evocative way) the precise existential character of these turning points and special spaces—in terms, for example, of their temporal or spatial uniqueness, capacity to evoke synoptic perspectives on life as a whole, self-revelation, significant decision—concluding that they "bring us to a realization of the problematic character of our existence, of our dependence upon a power not ourselves, and of the need to find an object of supreme devotion." Though he admits that "the most they can do is arrest us and impell us to consider the question and the possibility of a form of Holy Life upon which our existence depends," implying that "there is no necessary . . . transition" from these experiences to "the reality of God as understood in a specific, historical tradition," he nonetheless probes deeper that "the ways left open for *interpreting* the power present in the crucial events and places . . . in terms of the doctrine of God" because these experiences do ground "a mediating concept which we may call the general concept of God." The mediating concept thematized in the experiences of crucial times and events "finds its basis in philosophic reflection in the world and ourselves . . . [it] embraces the idea of a supremely worshipful reality which gives being and controls the final destiny of all finite realities." And, in turn, this general, experientially derived concept "mediates between the pervasive experience of the holy and the specific idea of God existing within an historical religious community." The adequacy of this concept—conceived as a religious existential structure—proves its worth (is validated) by its power to connect general human experience, on the one hand, and specific religious traditions, on the other, in an intelligible manner. Thus does Smith move from initial wager to existential-hermeneutical inquiry to deeper ontological exploration concluding with a validation of his initial wager. Whatever else we might think of the analysis—and it does seem to be theistically "loaded"—the pattern of analysis and argument seems clear enough.

Ricoeur, to take another example, also follows this general pattern of ontological exploration in his study of the symbolism of evil. He begins with the wager that, as he puts it, "I shall have a better understanding of man and of the bond between the being of man and the being of all beings if I follow the *indication* of symbolic thought."⁵⁰ He then goes on to conduct an existential-hermeneutical phenomenological "reading," so to speak, of the experiences of evil through the primary performative-symbolic language of confession and the secondary dramatic narrations or myths of evil found in the religious consciousness and traditions of the

west. His study, however, does not end there, for he subsequently moves into a phase of ontological exploration of these myths of evil based on a specific wager that these will assist him in understanding our existential situation. That is, he interprets, in an ontologically explorative way, the symbols and myths of evil to "speak of the situation of the being of man in the being of the world . . . the task, then, is, starting from the symbols, to elaborate existential concepts" [pertaining to human evil].⁵¹ He sees, for example, the whole series of primary symbols—defilement, sin, and guilt—as converging in the paradoxical but existentially operative notion of the "servile will" (bound will, unfree freedom) which raises questions of how and why we are in this state of unfreedom that are, in turn, answered in diverse ways by four principal types of myths of the origin of evil. He further interprets these myths of evil—primordial chaos, tragedy, exiled soul, and Adamic fall—in a dynamic or dialectical manner, resulting in a new reading of the origin of evil as ascribable to both misuse of human freedom and objective factors outside of human control (symbolized by seduction, infection, etc.). In effect, Ricoeur's exploration warrants the utility of some sort of concept of original sin—a paradoxical theological concept combining human responsibility for evil with an objective side to evil that precedes human freedom. And he concludes his study by arguing that his initial wager is "verified by its power to raise up, to illuminate, to give order to that region of human experience, that region of confession" known as moral evil.⁵² Again, whatever we might think of this analysis—and it too seems theistically "loaded"—it too clearly follows the general pattern of ontological exploration elaborated above: from wager to existential-hermeneutical inquiry to yet deeper ontological interpretation to validation of the initial wager.

There is one additional feature shared by the steps of both ontological exploration and interpretive interrogation that requires brief comment. In the process of both steps, existential-hermeneutical inquirers display a clear tendency to engage in dialogue with other disciplines interested in the same phenomenon. We might call this feature "hermeneutical conversation across disciplines." There appear to be a number of rationales accounting for this feature. One involves the insight that other disciplines—such as psychology, sociology, social anthropology, other philosophical schools of inquiry, history of religions, and so on—are themselves concerned to investigate the basic existential structures of human being in the world. Thus, existential-hermeneuticists are naturally interested in learning the results of similarly focused inquiries, in order to benefit their own work and contribute to the work of others. A second rationale involves the fact that some existential-hermeneutical inquiry—

for example, interpretation and exploration of mythic texts—crucially depends on the scholarship provided by other disciplines—in the case of myths, for example, history of religions, classics, literary criticism provide the mythic texts that the existential-hermeneuticists wish to investigate. Yet a third rationale involves the perception that existential-hermeneutical phenomenology of religion itself may "constitute" data to be investigated by other disciplines, and therefore in the interest of supplying such data in the most useful form, existential-hermeneuticists have to learn, through conversation, how these disciplines currently conceive and constitute the data from their disciplinary points of view in comparison and contrast with existential-hermeneutical phenomenology of religion. Without belaboring the obvious, we simply note that Ricoeur's inquiry into the myths of evil, for example, appears to rely in crucial ways on other disciplines concerned with mythic texts. By contrast, Westphal's inquiry appears to engage in hermeneutical conversation with other disciplines (e.g., psychoanalysis, sociology of deviance) in order to enrich his own work as well as to correct these disciplines' understanding of guilt. Paul Pruyser's inquiry into the phenomena of hope seems clearly focused not so much on making an original statement about hope as rather correcting and enriching psychological perspectives on these phenomena.

Issues

Thus far we have been attempting to clarify the aims and method of existential-hermeneutical phenomenology of religion by focusing on the work of some of its representative practitioners. We need now to go a step farther to gain a more critical perspective on this voice—by identifying and discussing certain of its possible problems. In that way, as with the other two voices, we can become more aware of this voice's strengths and limitations. As seems evident from our earlier discussion of existential phenomenology in general and the way that it compares with the other two voices in phenomenology of religion—as well as from our detailed discussion of the existential-hermeneutical method—this third voice appears to undercut or mitigate a number of the problems associated with the other voices.

For example, the notion of "bounded" epoché—in its rejection of the anonymous epistemological subject—appears to undercut in a decisive way the criticism of the biasing effects of detached objectivity associated with the other two voices. In its presumption of existential structures shared with the believing soul and community, "bounded" epoché avoids "alienation" from the religious Other that it is investigating. Moreover, the step of interpretive interrogation—in hermeneutical conversation

with the methods, researches, and results of other disciplines—appears to mitigate the criticism of insufficient suspicion (or simple naïveté) associated with the essentialist voice. The existential-hermeneuticist is well aware of the so-called schools of suspicion and is well positioned to argue with them about the shortcomings of reductive approaches to religious phenomena (see, e.g., Westphal's effective critique of Nietzsche's and Freud's handling of guilt in his contribution to this volume). Furthermore, the fact that this voice's method is oriented by the basic insights of existential phenomenology appears to "ground" its use of sympathetic reenactment so as to decisively undercut charges of epistemic murkiness associated with this procedure. In effect, this procedure is made possible by those existential structures shared by both the inquirer and the believing soul and community. And, this voice's evident acknowledgment of and concern with the existential structure of temporality appear to counter the criticism of anti-historical bias associated principally with the essentialist voice. Indeed, many existential-hermeneuticists go to great lengths both in discussing the temporal and historical aspects of religious phenomena and in making use of research provided by the history of religions. Finally, even the criticism of possible cultural bias has been seemingly anticipated and addressed by this voice—for its representatives often openly acknowledge their "methodological bondage" to Western cultural traditions and thus appear somewhat restrained in making more "universal" claims (consider, for example, the work of Ricoeur in this regard).

By this point in our discussion, we suspect that the reader is well able to appreciate the force of this brief recitation of how the existential-hermeneutical voice is able to escape many of the criticisms targeted against the other two voices. Nevertheless, he or she is also likely to feel some unease about the dominant characteristics of this voice—namely, its obvious and self-conscious service to normative aims advancing the cause, so to speak, of religious dimensions of human existence. Do not these characteristics, one might ask, run significant risks about gaining an impartial view of human existence in the world? Might not inquirers within this voice—methodologically oriented and bound as they are—be prevented from seeing and appreciating other perspectives on the issues and problems that interest them? Is it not disingenuous to think that open acknowledgment of methodological orientation and normative aim somehow diffuses criticisms of cultural and religious bias?

There is both something right and something wrong with the apparent rhetorical force of such questions as these. What is right is this: often existential-hermeneutical inquiries are, in fact, partial, perspectival, and (if one wishes to use the term) biased. They are explicitly partial to West-

ern cultural and religious experience; they are focused on existential structures discerned and formulated by Western scholarship; they are biased by their normative aims (some of which may be theological and Christian). What seems wrong is this: the questions appear to assume that totally impartial views of existential phenomena are both possible and desirable, and, further, that "partiality" prevents the attainment of knowledge and truth. Both of these assumptions are questionable, if not downright false. If the existential phenomenologists are right about pre-given existential structures, then all views are partial, perspectival, and biased when dealing with matters of human existence. This is inescapable and may as well be admitted. Acknowledging such partiality, however, does not prevent our attainment of increasingly more adequate views if we both admit this partiality and attempt to work within its constraints—for example, by opening our research to intersubjective assessment by others (as existential-hermeneuticists do), by engaging in critical conversations across disciplines (as existential-hermeneuticists do), by being open to new or hitherto unexplained phenomena (as existential-hermeneuticists are). In this way, it is possible to attain knowledge about existential matters so far as any such knowledge can be attained—relative to constraints of context.³³ Of course, what seems knowledge today may be overturned tomorrow, but that does not mean that we are unable to acquire over time increasingly more adequate and defensible views, again, if we will admit our partiality and work within its constraints.

We can see this dialectically corrective process—leading to a more adequate view of religious existence and experience—at work in the contribution of Carolyn Bynum in this volume. Bynum's aim is to correct the phenomenology of religion's focus on the religious experience of males (*homo religiosus*), by introducing the needed perspectival corrective of women's religious experience. This she does most effectively by laying out a series of case-examples of religious symbols, asking about each, "How do such symbols refer to and make use of gender?" "Whose meaning are we analyzing?" "Do female[s] . . . see God as mother and mean by 'mother' what their male counterparts mean?" Though she is enormously appreciative of Ricoeur's existential-hermeneutical understanding of religious symbolism—and in fact adopts that understanding for her own work—she nevertheless argues that "the phenomenological emphasis of Ricoeur on the process by which the symbol is appropriated may need to be expanded by the phenomenological emphasis of French feminism on genderedness until we have a more varied and rich notion of the experiences of symbol users." Her point is well taken, and we suggest that it has the potential of providing a corrective to Ricoeur's work and the

existential-hermeneutical voice, more broadly. Thus Bynum squares off the French feminist phenomenology (a partial view) against Ricoeur's existential-hermeneutical inquiry (another partial view) to come up with a gender-complex notion of religious symbolism (a more adequate view). Her effort provides a clear example of how partial views can be used to achieve a no doubt still partial but more adequate view of religious experience and its significance.

As with the other two voices in the phenomenology of religion, reviewing these problems or concerns about the existential-hermeneutical voice assists us in seeing some of its strengths and weaknesses. Though once again, we have tended to rebut these concerns, we need to be aware that continuing perceptions of them have an important role in helping to generate or strengthen the resolve of other methodological voices both inside and outside the field of phenomenology of religion. In particular, continuing concern about this third voice's strong normative orientation helps to support the enterprise of historical-typological phenomenology of religion as well as other methods in the history of religions. And, similarly, continuing worries about "insufficient suspicion" as well as the legitimacy of "sympathetic reenactment" help to increase the attention given to more "suspicious" and "formal" methods in the study of religion (e.g., deconstruction). Nonetheless, none would deny that existential-hermeneutical phenomenology of religion has been and continues to be a very "live option" in the academic study of religion.

This completes our review of the three principal voices defining the field of the phenomenology of religion. As we have seen, there are three distinct voices but with overlaps sufficient to speak of one unified field of inquiry. The reader of this anthology is now equipped to understand in an informed way the selections that follow. Though each selection stands on its own and makes a distinctive contribution to the phenomenological study of religion (as indicated by the headnote preceding each selection), the reader is encouraged to return periodically to this general introduction and use it for tracing out in particular selections those typical aims, methodological steps, and issues associated with their respective voices. In this manner, the reader can gain maximal advantage for appreciating critically the power and prospect of each voice's contribution to the rich melody of the phenomenology of religion.

NOTES

1. These developments are illuminatingly discussed by John Wilson in his introduction to Paul Ramsey and John Wilson (eds.), *The Study of Religion in Colleges and Universities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 3-21. See also Thomas L. Benson, "Religious Studies as an Academic Discipline"

pline" (sub-entry of the three-part article "Study of Religion"), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Mircea Eliade, Editor in Chief (New York: Macmillan, 1987).

2. Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 2nd ed., translated by John W. Harvey (New York & London: Oxford University Press, 1950).

3. Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, 2 vols., translated by J. E. Turner with additions by Hans H. Penner (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1967).

4. The third voice is well represented by the work of Gabriel Marcel and Paul Ricoeur among others. See, for example, Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, translated by Robert Rosthal (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1964), and Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, translated by Emerson Buchanan (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

5. P. D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Manual of the Science of Religion*, translated by Beatrice S. Colyer-Fergusson (London & New York: Longmans, 1891).

6. Husserl was a prolific author. Especially useful are the following of his writings: *The Paris Lectures*, 2nd ed., translated by Peter Koestenbaum (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975); *The Idea of Phenomenology*, translated by William P. Alston and George Naknikian (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970); *Cartesian Meditations*, translated by Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973); *Ideas*, translated by W. R. Boyce Gibson (New York: Collier Books, 1962); *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, translated by Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper & Row, 1965). All the translators provide helpful commentary; also helpful in this regard is Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), esp. chs. III and XIV. Spiegelberg provides masterful interpretations of many of the thinkers associated with philosophical phenomenology.

7. Robert Solomon (ed.), *Phenomenology and Existentialism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 6-7.

8. Max Scheler, "Phenomenology and the Theory of Cognition," in *Max Scheler: Selected Philosophical Essays*, translated by David R. Lachterman (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), pp. 136-201; quotation from p. 152.

9. Dilthey was another prolific author. Especially useful are the following selections translated from his writings: *Pattern and Meaning in History*, edited by H. P. Rickman (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), and H. P. Rickman (ed.), *W. Dilthey: Selected Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). Helpful interpretations of Dilthey's philosophy include: Rudolf A. Makkreel, *Dilthey: Philosopher of Human Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); Michael Ermarth, *Wilhelm Dilthey: The Critique of Historical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); H. P. Rickman, *Wilhelm Dilthey: Pioneer of Human Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

10. Max Scheler, *On the Eternal in Man*, translated by Bernard Noble (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), pp. 18-19, 159-161.

11. This phrase is used by Otto in the selection from his *The Idea of the Holy* included below in this anthology. Except where indicated, all quotations in the remainder of this editorial introduction are to be found in the selections of the authors quoted; since these quotations can be readily found, we will dispense with footnoting them.

12. Ninian Smart introduces and discusses this idea of evocative description

in both his *The Science of Religion and the Sociology of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 21–22, and his *The Phenomenon of Religion* (London: Macmillan Press, 1973), pp. 32–34.

13. The complete text of Husserl's March 5, 1919, letter to Otto can be found (in German) in Hans-Walter Schütte, *Religion und Christentum in der Theologie Rudolf Ottos* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969), pp. 139–142. The letter contains several important statements. To begin with, Husserl observes that "your book [*The Idea of the Holy*] has affected me as scarcely another book has for many years and he considers it to be "a first beginning for a phenomenology of religion." "will hold a firm place in the history of the philosophy of religion, particularly the phenomenology of religion. It is a beginning, in the sense that it focuses on beginnings, on origins, and thus in the best sense of the word is 'original'." It is important to note here that while Husserl believed there was more work to be done "before a theory of religious consciousness as a philosophical theory can be presented," the use of the word "beginning" is not a negative or slighting evaluation on Husserl's part. As we mentioned above, Husserl always called himself "perpetual beginner." Thus his evaluation is not that Otto's work is merely preliminary step that must be superseded but rather a solid first step, a foundation for further phenomenological exploration of religious experience and consciousness. The letter concludes with Husserl recalling their personal acquaintance in Göttingen: "From our Göttingen years you know how highly I have always esteemed you and with what pleasure I sought intellectual contact with you."

14. Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920), a founder of experimental psychology. For a brief discussion of Wundt's "folk psychology of religion," see David M. Wulff, *Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary Views* (New York: John Wiley, 1991), pp. 14–15.

15. Van der Leeuw provides the classical discussion of this problem in *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, vol. 2, pp. 683–684.

16. In addition to Dupré (discussed below), Westphal has a penetrating discussion of this problem which he characterizes as "Nietzsche's objection" to "the transparency of consciousness to itself." See Merold Westphal, *God, Guilt, and Death* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 16–20.

17. Chris Arthur, in his contribution to this volume, mentions this sort of rebuttal and also finds it somewhat question-begging.

18. Westphal, *God, Guilt, and Death*, pp. 10–12.

19. Smart, *Phenomenon of Religion*, pp. 69–76.

20. Evidence for this acknowledgment on Scheler's part can be seen throughout his lengthy study "Problems in Religion" found in *On the Eternal in Man*, pp. 105–356.

21. Smart, *Phenomenon of Religion*, pp. 38–39.

22. Husserl's avoidance of this problem is perceptively noted by David Stewart and Algis Mickunas in their useful study, *Exploring Phenomenology*, 2nd Edition (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1990), pp. 65–66.

23. See Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, p. 20, where he writes: "To be incarnated is to appear to oneself as body, as this particular body, without being identified with it nor distinguished from it—identification and distinction being correlative operations which are significant only in the realm of objects. What clearly emerges from the foregoing reflections is the fact that there is no distinct haven to which I can repair either outside of or within my body. Disincarnation is

not practically possible and is precluded by my very structure." This notion of our being incarnated will be discussed further in connection with existential-hermeneutical phenomenology of religion.

24. Although he does not himself coin this precise label, Smart does emphasize the interaction and interdependence of what he calls "historical phenomenology" and "typological phenomenology" of religion; see his *Phenomenon of Religion*, chs. 1–2. Smart is following in the footsteps of van der Leeuw whose work reflected an explicit commitment to typological presentations as well as the incorporation of larger numbers of, and more diverse materials from, the history of religions. Lying in the background of the work of both van der Leeuw and Smart is the influence of Dilthey's philosophy of human existence.

25. Smart, *Phenomenon of Religion*, pp. 38–39.

26. Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872). See his classic *The Essence of Christianity*, translated by G. Eliot (New York: Harper and Row, 1957).

27. This fallacy is discussed by both Arthur (in his selection below) and Smart (in his *Phenomenon of Religion*, p. 70). Both are responding to E. E. Evans-Pritchard's classic discussion of this fallacy in his *Theories of Primitive Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), ch. II.

28. Smart, *Phenomenon of Religion*, ch. 2; see also his *Science of Religion*, ch. 3.

29. Although he does not himself coin this precise label, Ricoeur does emphasize the interaction of hermeneutics and existential phenomenology in the study of religious meaning. See, for example, his *Symbolism of Evil* and the articles collected in his *The Conflict of Interpretations*, edited by Don Idhe (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974).

30. Ricoeur's article is available in English translation as ch. 8 ("Existential Phenomenology") of his *Husserl: An Analysis of his Phenomenology*, translated by Edward G. Ballard and Lester E. Embree (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967). This article forms the basis for the illuminating discussion of existential phenomenology in Stewart and Mickunas, *Exploring Phenomenology*, ch. 4. Particularly useful and accessible works by Marcel and Merleau-Ponty include the former's *Creative Fidelity*, chs. I, III, VII, and the latter's *Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962).

31. Ricoeur, *Husserl*, p. 212.

32. See, for example, Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, special abridged edition, translated by Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Citadel Press, 1956), Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), and Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, 2 vols., translated by G. S. Fraser (Chicago: Regnery, 1960).

33. Ricoeur, *Husserl*, p. 208.

34. Ricoeur, *Husserl*, p. 205.

35. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. x–xi.

36. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. xii–xiv.

37. Ricoeur, *Husserl*, p. 204.

38. Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, pp. 12–23. Merleau-Ponty's discussion of corporeality can be found in *Phenomenology of Perception*, part one.

39. Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, p. 69.

40. Ricoeur, *Husserl*, p. 208.

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- immortality and freedom, translated by Willard R. Inge, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958).
41. M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 5.
42. L. J. O'Connell, *Being and Death*, p. 22.
43. W. Heidegger, *Being and Death*, p. 19-20.
44. W. Heidegger, *Being and Death*, p. 24.
45. W. Heidegger, *Being and Death*, p. 11.
46. H. Heidegger, *Being and Death*, p. 12.
47. H. Heidegger, *Being and Death*, p. 12.
48. H. Heidegger, *Being and Death*, p. 12.
49. H. Heidegger, *Being and Death*, p. 12.
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95. H. Heidegger, *Being and Death*, p. 12.
96. H. Heidegger, *Being and Death*, p. 12.
97. H. Heidegger, *Being and Death*, p. 12.
98. H. Heidegger, *Being and Death*, p. 12.
99. H. Heidegger, *Being and Death*, p. 12.
100. H. Heidegger, *Being and Death*, p. 12.



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41. Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, translated by Willard R. Trask (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958).
42. Westphal, *God, Guilt, and Death*, p. 5.
43. Westphal, *God, Guilt, and Death*, p. 22.
44. Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, pp. 19–20.
45. Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, p. 24.
46. Westphal, *God, Guilt, and Death*, p. 11.
47. Westphal, *God, Guilt, and Death*, p. 12.
48. Ricoeur discusses these dimensions of symbolic meaning in *Symbolism of Evil*, pp. 10–14; see also his *Freud and Philosophy*, translated by Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), pp. 13–16.
49. Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, pp. 20–23.
50. Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, p. 355. For an illuminating critical discussion of Ricoeur's hermeneutics of evil, see Don Idhe, *Hermeneutical Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), ch. 5.
51. Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, p. 356.
52. Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, p. 357.
53. Merleau-Ponty provides a version of this dialectical, rational, and corrective process in *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. xvii–xxi.



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