

The Phenomenology of Religion as Philosophical Anthropology

- A Virtual Conference -
4th October - 6th October 2021



Introduction

The Phenomenology of Religion has virtually disappeared as a serious intellectual endeavor having been subjected to sustained political and philosophical critique primarily on three fronts: from (a) what might broadly be called a socio-cultural constructivist stance, from (b) the Neuroscience of religion, and from (c) Phenomenological Theology. (a) The socio-cultural critique has highlighted that the Phenomenology of Religion either has no explanatory power because it is in thrall to the categories of religions themselves in its declared attempt to be descriptive or that it contains an implicit theology that ignores power structures in the histories of civilizations. On this view the study of religion should be critique, a critique whose origins lie in a Critical Theory perspective (and partly in Deconstruction), which has, at the end of the day, an emancipatory agenda in exposing the structures of power and oppression, particularly of women and the colonized other. (b) The neuroscience of religion has been unabashedly reductionistic with the high ambition of explaining the cultural fact of religion through individual neurological processes. (c) Theological Phenomenology has drawn the Phenomenology of Religion away from its agnostic or secular presuppositions towards an exclusively Christian theological orientation. In contrast to (a) and (b), the appropriation of Phenomenology by (mostly Francophone) Theology, has sought to redescribe Christian thinking in terms of phenomenological categories – such as Being, body, world – that is in the articulation of Christian truth. This absorption of Phenomenology by Christian Theology is an implicit critique of the Phenomenology of Religion on the grounds that the latter disclaims truth in the service of agnostic description.

There are, however, problems with these forms of critique. What we might call the ‘power critique’ of the Phenomenology of Religion as well as the Neuroscience perspectives are too reductionist in not taking seriously emic claims and in not regarding human aspiration to verticality as having explanatory force. The Theological critique becomes too specialized, restricted to Theology, and loses relevance to the wider society and pluralist communities in which we live; it becomes the pursuit of privileged elites.

The purpose of this conference is to examine these issues with a view to an intellectual reinvigoration or repristination of the Phenomenology of Religion not as its former incarnation of an attempted neutral description of religions’ doctrines, practices, and histories, but with a view to its explanatory potential as a form of philosophical analysis that drives to the heart of what it is to be human. If what we might call ‘the religious impulse’ or less controversially ‘the vertical attraction’ present through the histories of civilizations is central to the humanum, then a Phenomenology of Religion is an intellectual practice that seeks to expose its parameters. The Phenomenology of Religion is thus a philosophical discourse about what it is to be human and a way of offering an account of religions (in the plural) through history. A Phenomenology of Religion on this view is a kind of Philosophical Anthropology.

In concrete terms, such a programme might entail an initial level of description that draws on the ontic sciences such as Psychology or Sociology but in particular, perhaps above all, Philology. The Philological study of religious documents sets



Phenomenology at a coal face of religious articulation and the evidential ground of the history of civilizations. A higher-level Phenomenology that assumes the first level will ask questions of meaning and raise the necessity of the specification of constraint in any given instance and might constructively interact with the hard sciences, such as Evolutionary Anthropology. A further level might raise questions of truth, would be a primarily ontological inquiry, and might interface with the Philosophy of Religion. The first level Phenomenology is close to what in Anthropology has been called the Ontological Turn, although this current proposal is focused on ontologies exposed through deep textual study. Here Philology comes into its own as the way in which a civilization can show itself through the texts it produces. This is to privilege text as the most important site of cultural production and to rejoice in the method that allows what shows itself to be seen. Our conference will begin to explore the enterprise that is the Phenomenology of Religion, as being richly human and as being simultaneously detached and engaged. A new Phenomenology of Religion is actively and joyously dialogical in the fields of its production (textual or even ethnographic) and concerned above all with exposing human truth and articulating a Philosophical Anthropology that must re-vision the human in the contemporary situation of the post-global pandemic and the environmental imperative to change our habits. This new Phenomenology of Religion will be relevant in its cultural fields of production and at the end of the day, needs to offer more than description but a deeper, contemporary account of what it is to be human.

Sponsorship

The conference is jointly sponsored by Campion Hall, Oxford University and the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies (OCHS). There is dedicated internet presence created by Tanja Louise Jakobsen, hosted by the OCHS: newphenomenology.org.

The conference is administered by Tanja Louise Jakobsen, OCHS.



Programme

Day 1

9.45-10.00

Welcome – Gavin **Flood** (Oxford University)

10.00 – 10.45

Emmanuel **Falque** (Honorary Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy at the Catholic University of Paris)

The Turning Point of the Flesh

10.45-11.30

Gert-Jan van der **Heiden** (Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands)

Engaging and Disengaging Religion: A Hermeneutic-Phenomenological Approach

11.30-11.45

Short break

11.45-12.30

Satoko **Fujiwara** (University of Tokyo)

Global Phenomenologies of Religion and their Implications for Philosophical Anthropology

12.30-13.15

Hent de **Vries** (New York University, Cornell University)

Conversion: Phenomenology's Anti-Naturalist Attitude

13.15-14.00

Lunch break

14.00-14.45

Anna **Vind** (University of Copenhagen)

Psalm 33,9 'He speaks and then it is present': Reflections on the human being, language and time in the early modern Christian tradition

14.45-15.30

Kevin **Hart** (University of Virginia)

Phenomenology and Contemplation

15.30-16.15

Joseph **Simmons** (Oxford University)

Mediating verticality in community – the phenomenological vision of Nicholas of Cusa

16.15-16.45

General Discussion

Day 2

10.00-10.45

Yoshitsugu **Sawai** (Professor Emeritus of the History of Religions, Tenri University)
A Semantic Interpretation of Rudolf Otto's Religious Theory

10.45-11.30

Philip **Moller** (Oxford University)
Human Experience in the Study of Religion: Phenomenology, Verticality, and the 'Natural Desire to See God'

11.30-11.45

Short break

11.45-12.30

Nikolaas **Deketelaere** (Institut Catholique de Paris)
Geometry of Embodiment: Husserl with Tertullian

12.30-13.15

Bjarne **Wernicke-Olesen** (Oxford University)
Orders of Discourses and Levels of Phenomenology in the Study of Religions: The Conceptual Modeling of a Religious Tradition and its Anthropology in Medieval India

13.15-14.15

Lunch break

14.15-15.00

Anthony **Steinbock** (Stony Brook University)
The Beloved from a Phenomenological Perspective

15.00-15.45

Jessica **Frazier** (Oxford University)
Gadamer's Orchard: Phenomenology and the Role of Religious Studies in the Destiny of Humanity

15.45-16.30

Sam G. **Ngaihte** (Manipur University)
Desiring Dharma: Anthropotechnics and Ritual in the Mīmāṃsāsūtras

16.30-17.00

General discussion



Day 3

10.00-10.45

Carl **Scerri** (Oxford University)

Phenomenology and Mystery: Erich Przywara's "Reductio in Mysterium"

10.45-11.30

Matthew **Dunch** (Oxford University)

John Zizioulas and Emmanuel Levinas on Totality, Otherness, and the Possibility of Communion

11.30-11.45

Short break

11.45-12.30

Jeppe Sinding **Jensen** (Aarhus University)

The contribution of Philosophical Anthropology to (any) Phenomenology of Religion: What is the phenomenon to 'ologise'?

12.30-13.15

Lucian **Wong** (Oxford University)

Hinduism, History, and the Phenomenology of Verticality

13.15-14.00

Lunch break

14.00-14.45

Oliver **Davies** (Emeritus Professor of Christian Doctrine, Kings College London)

What is Enlightenment 3?

14.45-15.30

Gavin **Flood** (Oxford University)

A Phenomenology of Holiness

15.30-16.30

General discussion

THE END



Abstracts

Global Phenomenologies of Religion and their Implications for Philosophical Anthropology

*Professor Satoko **Fujiwara** (University of Tokyo)*

Together with international colleagues I have recently published a book that reveals how the Phenomenology of Religion (PoR) has been accepted and developed in ten different national contexts (S. Fujiwara, D. Thurfjell and S. Engler eds., *Global Phenomenologies of Religion: An Oral History in Interviews*, Equinox, 2021). The book project originally aimed at an intergenerational dialogue between senior scholars who had witnessed the rise and fall of PoR and younger scholars for whom PoR had always been of mere historical interest. In the course of a series of interviews, the project soon turned out to be a refreshing way to view and assess the multifaceted history of the study of religion as a discipline. This paper/lecture will present its key findings and attempt to draw suggestions for the reformulation of the PoR as Philosophical Anthropology (PA). Reflections on the history of the PoR in Japan may play a unique role in the attempt because the Japanese PoR has largely been formed as PA from the beginning though with a variety of understanding as to PA. Moreover, from an internationally comparative perspective, it is not difficult to observe implicit PA in the works of scholars who have usually been categorized as anti-PoR (I will focus upon J. Z. Smith as an example). This colloquium's call for PoR as PA can thus open up both wide-ranging and in-depth discussions over shared and unshared presumptions of the study of religion.

Engaging and Disengaging Religion: A Hermeneutic-Phenomenological Approach

*Professor Gert-Jan van der **Heiden** (Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands)*

To show how the phenomenology of religion may be rescued from (some of) its critics by approaching it as a (well-understood) philosophical anthropology, I proceed in two steps. First, I aim to show how some of the 20th century hermeneutic-phenomenological accounts of the phenomenon of religion are already on their way to such an approach and, indeed, can in fact be understood as a pre-emptive rebuttal of or response to the criticisms at stake in the 'theological turn' of phenomenology and critical theory, respectively. I illustrate this by briefly developing the exemplary cases of Heidegger's "Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion" and Ricoeur's concern with a twofold hermeneutics of religion in the 1960s. While their perspectives are, in a sense, outdated by their emphasis on Christian religion alone, their hermeneutic-phenomenological approaches do offer a clear example of how the emic claims of a religion can be taken seriously and of how the combination of detachment and attachment – or: disengagement and engagement – exactly plays out in these respective phenomenological approaches to religion. Second, taking these exemplary cases as a guideline, I aim to develop in a more systematic way how a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach aims to see religion as a cultural expression or testimony of basic experiences of human life and existence that asks for both interpretation and critique, as the epistemological forms of engagement and disengagement.



The Turn of the Flesh

*Professor Emmanuel **Falque** (Faculté de philosophie Institut catholique de Paris)*

The translation of the word Leib into different languages, especially into French, constitutes a problem that guides the whole history of phenomenology, and even the philosophy of religion. Originally, Emmanuel Levinas translated the word Leib not by the French ‘chair’, corresponding to the English ‘flesh’, but by ‘organic body’. It is under the double impetus of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Paul Ricoeur that the French translation of the word Leib by ‘chair’ or ‘flesh’ came about. This ‘turn of the flesh’ then determined the whole history of phenomenology’s confrontation with the philosophy of religion. Superimposing the ‘Word made flesh’ (sarx) onto ‘the lived experience of the body’ (chair or flesh) or onto ‘the living body’ (the organic body), constitutes the way in which the Christic Incarnation is interpreted in light of phenomenological incarnation. With, or alongside, the ‘theological turn’, I will therefore here outline a ‘turn of the flesh’ [or ‘carnal turn’] of French phenomenology.

Conversion: Phenomenology’s Anti-Naturalist Attitude

*Professor Hent de **Vries** (New York University, Cornell University)*

There is a reason Edmund Husserl invokes the theological trope “conversion [Konversion]” as a critical term describing the well-known epoché or suspension-cum-bracketing of the naturalist interpretation of the psyche and its world. This talk tracks the motif of conversion towards the anti-naturalist attitude in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* and *Cartesian Meditations*, together with its analogical terms in authors such as Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jean-Luc Marion. What emerges is a more complex understanding of the relationship between religion and spiritual experience, theology and philosophy than has been suggested in the standard reception of phenomenology’s distinctive “turn.”

Psalm 33,9 ‘He speaks and then it is present’: Reflections on language, the human being and time in the early modern Christian tradition

*Professor Anna **Vind** (Section of Church History, University of Copenhagen)*

In my paper I will try to show through historical textual examples how the biblical texts spur a distinct aesthetic comprehension of language, which gives rise to a particular understanding of what it is to be a human being in time. In criticism of scholastic concepts of logic and dialectics (with roots in Petrarca) the Italian humanist Lorenzo Valla develops an – admittedly widely discussed – redirection of the relation between *res et verba*. Language and rhetoric are put on the throne as queen(s), subjugating thought and philosophy. This reorganization, occasionally labelled ‘The Latin Language Turn’ (Ann Moss) and not only endorsed by Valla, distinctly marked the time of the reformers: Both Melancthon and Luther were deeply involved with reorganizing the *artes liberales*, with hermeneutics and concepts of translation, but, it seems, in quite different ways. Comparing the two, we may see how Luther combines the new focus upon words with the characteristics of the biblical texts in a quite novel way. Whereas Melancthon works with a given semantical frame within which utterings make sense (a concept of dialectics and *res* before and over rhetoric and *verba*), Luther is much more radical and turns things around with specific reference to the Bible – and in line with Valla. The differences between the two reformers lead to different understandings of what it is to be a human being in time: different views of anthropology, different concepts of time and different understandings of the arts.

Orders of Discourses and Levels of Phenomenology in the Study of Religions: The Conceptual Modeling of a Religious Tradition and its Anthropology in Medieval India

Dr Bjarne **Wernicke-Olesen** (Oxford University)

When we study the history of religions, we primarily study the continuity and change of traditions through time. Since we are not merely describing the world as it is ‘in itself’, but rather ‘letting be seen that which shows itself’ by creating knowledge of it through our conceptual models, questions of phenomenology and modeling directly influence the way we study these traditions and also what we understand them to be. Through a model of orders of discourses and levels of phenomenology in the Study of Religion(s), this paper intends to show the relevance of a Phenomenology of Religion whose intellectual object is the integration of text into practice. It is argued that Indology and the Study of Religion tend to work on different analytical and phenomenological levels in their approach to modeling religious traditions and that this has resulted in quite different writings of the history of religions in India. The point is illustrated in relation to the conceptual modeling of goddess traditions in medieval India or what has become known as Hindu ‘Śāktism’ and its vertical push/pull Śākta anthropology.

Mediating verticality in community – the phenomenological vision of Nicholas of Cusa

Revd Joseph **Simmons SJ** (Oxford University)

Nicholas of Cusa’s *De Visione Dei* helps us notice how the act of receiving a work of art is never done in vacuo (any more than its crafting was accomplished *ex nihilo*). I examine the famous account of Cusa gifting an icon (presumably of Christ) to the monks of Tegernsee, instructing them to hang it above while move around below, letting the eyes follow each as he wanders. Where an earlier aesthetic vision places the viewer in one predetermined point vis-a-vis the painting, Cusa’s *vera icona* of Christ inverts the gaze while allowing pluriform reception: the icon’s eyes mark the perspectival point of infinity, from and to which all gazing flows. Each wandering monk reports the icon’s eyes following him around the room at the same time. The infinite gaze remains graciously present to each monk in his quantum finitude, with each perceiver visually attuned back to the infinite. Importantly, understanding the whole (*kath’holou*) of this schema requires not only vertical (visual) but also horizontal (auditory) attunement: the monks are instructed to report what they see to one another. Cusa’s phenomenology (*avant la lettre*) of aesthetic framing demonstrates that attunement to a work of art happens in communities of reception and verification. I extend his analysis to see how phenomenology of religion likewise occurs in communities of reception.

A Semantic Interpretation of Rudolf Otto’s Religious Theory

Professor Yoshitsugu **Sawai** (Professor emeritus of the History of Religions, Tenri University)

My presentation is a semantic attempt to clarify the totality of Rudolf Otto by describing the characteristics of his religious theory, characterized by such key-terms as “the holy” and “the numinous.” In his academic life, Otto had three “faces,” i.e., a Christian theologian, a philosopher of religion, and a scholar of comparative religion. In the History of Religions, his religious theory is often regarded as the beginning of the phenomenology of religion. The phenomenologist Edmund Husserl called Otto’s book *Das Heilige* “a first beginning for a phenomenology of the religious.” Max Scheler, one of Husserl’s disciples, also praised *Das Heilige* as a book of the phenomenology of religion. In his life, Otto worked on the study of Indian religious thought while conducting

Christian theological studies as a Lutheran theologian. His concept of the “wholly other” (das ganz Andere) certainly has the meaning of “God” in his Christian theology. From his perspectives of comparative religion, however, this same term semantically implies the “ultimate reality” of other religious traditions: “Brahman” and “God” (Īśvara) in Hindu tradition. This example shows us how the same religious concepts used by Otto may contain different implications in different religious traditions. In my presentation, on the basis of my analysis of his religious theory, I will semantically elucidate the nature of his religious perspectives.

Human Experience in the Study of Religion: Phenomenology, Verticality, and the ‘Natural Desire to See God’

Revd Dr Philip Moller SJ (Oxford University)

In the later twentieth-century, the phenomenological method in continental philosophy has provided considerable resources for the analysis of religious experience in human life, especially as it pertains to the ‘horizontal realm’ of what might be said to be capable of being grasped. Such phenomenological analysis, in turn, is capable of supplying evidence and a certain horizontal ‘givenness’ for those engaged in the study of religion, especially if it is employed as a complement to more the traditional methodologies in that field. Nevertheless, both phenomenology and religious studies, in their differing ways, overlook the unique dimension of human experience which possesses a ‘vertical’ rather than a horizontal structure, and which specifies that which is oriented beyond the present realm. By contrast, the Christian theological tradition has held to the notion that the human in her experience is possessed of an innate, natural desire for the transcendent, known as the ‘natural desire to see God’. In this paper, it is proposed to argue that the current concentration on the ‘horizontal realm’ of experience in both phenomenology and religious studies also requires a further, complementary focus on the ‘verticality’ of human experience, especially as it manifests in the phenomenon of human desiring. It is the principal contention here that the tradition of the ‘natural desire to see God’ indicates a crucial example of ‘verticality’ for religious studies, and this paper explores how this might be plausibly said to be also true for the contemporary era.

Geometry of Embodiment: Husserl with Tertullian

Dr Nikolaas Deketelaere (Catholic University of Paris/Australian Catholic University)

This paper presents the experience of human embodiment as the foundation for two distinct discourses: phenomenology and theology. Insofar as phenomenology is concerned, Husserl famously refers to the body as the ‘zero point’ of all subsequent intentional orientations, meaning that it is the body that makes phenomenality possible. Insofar as theology is concerned, the Fathers of the Church emphasise the intrinsic connection between Revelation and Incarnation, meaning that God is only revealed insofar as he enters into a human body. At the same time, however, by facilitating certain experiences, embodiment precisely precludes others: though the subjective body makes all phenomenality possible, in doing so it makes the objective body transcendent to that phenomenality; likewise, though the Incarnation of God makes his revelation possible, it does so precisely by making him appear as a human being rather than manifesting divinity as such. Drawing on Husserl and Tertullian, as well as their contemporary French interpreters, the paper therefore argues that embodiment constitutes not only the ‘zero point’ of all experience (whether religious or not) but equally its ‘vanishing point’. Moreover, it suggests that the relationship between these two points then needs to be described before any phenomenological analysis can take place (because it concerns the ‘vanishing point’ of phenomenality), namely in a ‘geometry of embodiment’ that sets the terms on which things can appear to intentional consciousness (because it concerns the ‘zero point’ of phenomenality).

Phenomenology and Contemplation

Professor Kevin **Hart** (*The University of Virginia*)

Edmund Husserl's meta-philosophy makes him an unusual figure in twentieth-century philosophy: he affirms the task of philosophy to be reflective, meditative, or indeed contemplative (Reflexion, Besinnung). Only in a reflective state, which Husserl believes can become a permanent achievement of the philosopher, can one examine the noetic-noematic correlation and thereby grasp how phenomena are constituted. In this respect, he is to one side of the current of modern philosophy, which generally regards the discipline as oriented toward analysis, critique or struggle. One of the first attacks on Husserl's meta-philosophical position was Heidegger's: the tranquility co-ordinate with reflection does not give us what we need in order to register Sein. Rather, we need to be attuned to deep boredom or Angst or another "mood" at the dark end of the spectrum. Husserl's orientation to reflection invites us to ponder the roles that contemplation might play in his thought; it also invites us to think of phenomenology as contributing to the history of contemplation and thereby casting an oblique light on possible ways of construing the relation between Christianity and phenomenology.

Knowing By Heart

Professor Anthony **Steinbock** (*Stony Brook University*)

In the context of 'generative loving' this lecture advances a philosophical anthropology of the beloved and a metaphysical phenomenology. The lecture begins with a phenomenological description of loving from the first-person perspective of myself as beloved. After discussing the metaphysical implications of the things themselves through loving, and accordingly understanding phenomenology as inherently metaphysical in scope when describing loving, the lecture addresses the mode of givenness of loving as revelatory where persons are concerned. The first-person experience and description of the beloved, which is also a second-person one, is received from the perspective of loving in the mode of givenness, epiphany (the religious sphere), and from the perspective of loving in the mode of givenness, revelation (the moral sphere). Through epiphany as loving, we are revealed to ourselves most fundamentally as beloved. Any other revealing act-movement points back in its own way or clarifies and disposes us to this fundamental revelation of loving and being given as beloved. From here, the lecture gestures toward a philosophical anthropology of loving, and suggests that loving is a process of participating another.

Gadamer's Orchard: Phenomenology and the Role of Religious Studies in the Destiny of Humanity

Dr Jessica **Frazier** (*Oxford University*)

This paper will look at what Gadamer thinks we are doing when we explore unfamiliar ideas, adding new interpretations, and creating new contemporary culture as we go. It will focus on his accounts of education about other cultures, and what disciplines like the Study of Cultures and Religions are doing to reality itself through their work. In the beginning, Phenomenology was often concerned to end philosophy's 'mummification' (as Nietzsche put it in *Twilight of the Idols*) and breathe new life into our efforts to understand our own living participation in the world. The work of Hans-Georg Gadamer continues these wider, almost 'religious' goals of phenomenology in two ways – it reveals our hidden identities as creative conduits of reality, and it shows how different activities like education, cultural interpretation, community building, and reflection about our own health, all facilitate this. We will see that, for some phenomenologists, fields like Religious Studies are part of a larger destiny.

Desiring Dharma: Anthropotechnics and Ritual in the Mīmāṃsāsūtras

Dr Samuel G. Ngaihte (Manipur University)

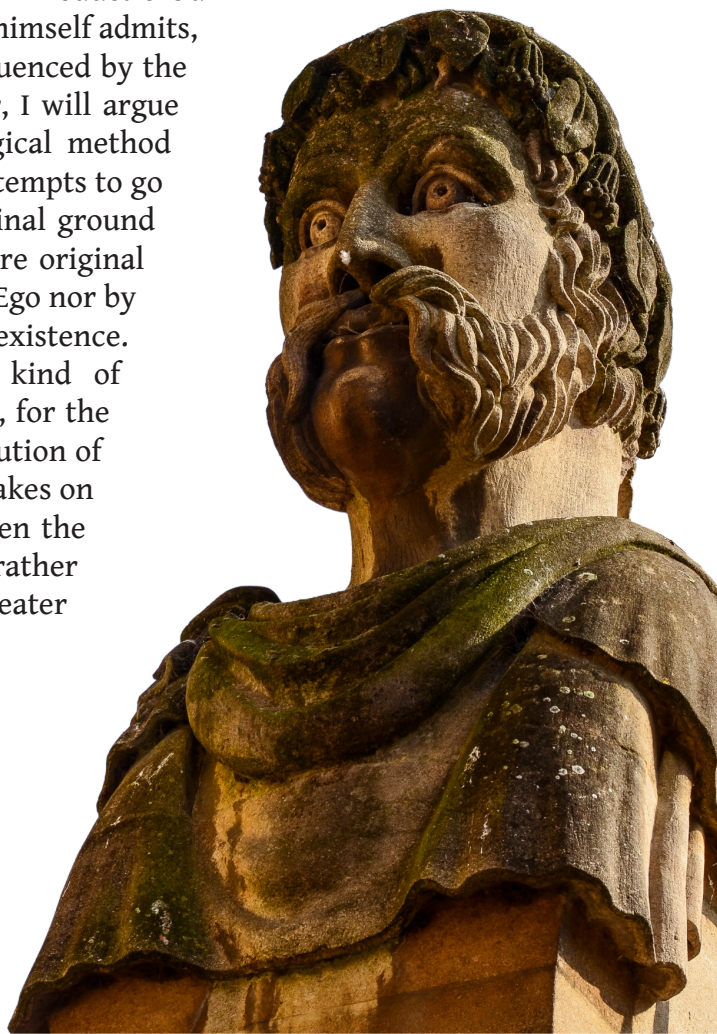
Although a major component of the Mīmāṃsāsūtras revolves around the exegesis of the injunctions of the Veda in relation to the elaborate practice of sacrifice, Jaimini introduces his project as a dharmajijñāsā. This curious introduction, when placed in the wider context of his concern for developing the intrinsic intelligibility of sacrifice in the midst of a growing criticism over its continuing efficacy and relevance, discloses the dialogic manner in which Jaimini seeks to reimagine the nature and vitality of sacrifice as a meaningful practice for the Vedic tradition. In contrast to the functional representation of sacrifice as a communication or site of ‘covenantal’ exchange between the humans and the gods (or deities) in the quest for phalas, Jaimini repositulates the act of sacrifice as an art of fulfillment whose realization is firmly reliant on the ritual subject’s desire for the invisible dharma. This focus on the subject allows us to disclose the fabrics of the human vertical tension that constitutes the ‘homo repetitivus’.

Phenomenology and Mystery: Erich Przywara’s “Reductio in Mysterium”

Revd Carl Scerri (Oxford University)

Erich Przywara is best known for his work on the notion of the analogia entis. In his magnum opus bearing the same name as the Scholastic notion, he offers a renewed reading of the analogy of being: it is not a conceptual framework which encapsulates God and the creature within a common understanding of Being but a dynamic path going from the creaturely realm towards the Divine mystery. Indeed, Przywara identifies the analogy of being with the reductio in mysterium, i.e., a going back (re-ductio) into mystery.

My paper will focus on the reductio in mysterium – an axiom that was coined by Przywara himself and picked up by Edith Stein in her works on phenomenology and mystery. Przywara’s choice of words carries interesting implications: the term reductio is a clear reference to phenomenology. In fact, Przywara himself admits, in his preface to Analogia Entis, that his work is influenced by the philosophies of Husserl and Heidegger. In my paper, I will argue that Przywara is subscribing to the phenomenological method and, in a similar way to Ideas and Being and Time, attempts to go back, to employ a re-ductio, towards the more original ground of philosophy. However, in Przywara’s case, this more original ground is constituted neither by the Transcendental Ego nor by Being, but by the mystery that structures creaturely existence. In other words, Przywara proposes a different kind of phenomenology. His is a phenomenology of mystery, for the reductio uncovers the irreducible mysterious constitution of the human being. In this light, the analogy of being takes on a new meaning: it is not simply a proportion between the being of the creature and that of the Creator, but rather a participation of the creaturely mystery in the greater Divine mystery.



John Zizioulas and Emmanuel Levinas on Totality, Otherness, and the Possibility of Communion

*Revd Matthew **Dunch** SJ (Oxford University)*

Emmanuel Levinas provocatively claimed that “All philosophical thought rests on pre-philosophical experiences” (*Ethique et infini*). This influence is often unconscious and available only retrospectively but nonetheless threatens the neutrality of phenomenological reflection. The paper considers the possibility of communion with the Other as pre-philosophical religious commitment manifest in the phenomenological. The Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas sees in Levinas an attractive path for ontology to move beyond totality and Heidegger’s reduction of the “Other to the Same”. Levinas’s account of otherness frees human beings from totality, yet the Other constrains the self. Zizioulas finds in Levinas’s ‘I’ constituted by encounter with the Other an account consonant with early Christian understandings of the person. Zizioulas criticizes Levinas on the possibilities for verticality and relationship in philosophical terms but ultimately along confessional lines. For Levinas, one approaches God only through ethical praxis directed to the neighbor as Other. For Zizioulas, liturgy is the realization of otherness and communion both with the human and divine Other. Phenomenology helps to articulate rather than arbitrate this division.

The contribution of Philosophical Anthropology to (any) Phenomenology of Religion: What is the phenomenon to ‘-ologise’?

*Professor Jeppe Sinding **Jensen** (Aarhus University)*

The original, ‘first’ phenomenology of religion was classificatory and methodological in its attempt to arrive at a ‘periodic table’ of religious phenomena. This continental tradition must continuously be driven by attending to the latest research modes in the study of religion. The validity of these is a matter for any philosophical anthropology. When arrived at, these insights may be relevant for those who contemplate existential and experiential phenomenologies. To wit, what a religious experience means will of course depend on what we mean by ‘religion’.

Hinduism, History, and the Phenomenology of Verticality

*Dr Lucian **Wong** (OCHS)*

This paper argues that a phenomenology of what has been dubbed ‘verticality’ (Steinbock 2007, Flood 2019) can be profitably deployed in the service of historical explanation vis-à-vis the study of religions. It makes its case with special reference to the study of Hinduism. Responding to recent invocations of Rudolf Otto’s concept of the ‘numinous’ as providing a resource for theorising the vertical blind spots that pervade histories of Hindu religious actors, the paper proposes Martin Heidegger’s early work on religion as offering a potentially more fruitful way forward in this regard—one which takes ‘the historical’ seriously yet nevertheless provides genuine access to the vertical dimension of religious life. And so, rather than a phenomenology of religion that privileges appearances to consciousness and which thereby threatens to short-circuit historical explanation, we are presented with a pathway to a phenomenology of religion that proceeds from factual life experience and which can thus be harnessed to speak directly to the historical treatment of religious traditions. The paper will demonstrate the explanatory force of such a phenomenology in relation to an example from the study of modern Hindu devotion (bhakti).

What is Enlightenment 3?

*Professor Oliver **Davies** (Emeritus Professor of Christian Doctrine, Kings College London)*

In his close study of Kant's *Was ist Aufklärung?*, Foucault proposes that this text is an appeal to history and to progress in history, while also being an expression of the actuality, and the possibly transgressive actualities, of the now. We might paraphrase this as living in the tension between history, as a *factum*, and the immediacy of our own processes of becoming, with all their possibilities. Foucault makes it clear that this philosophy needs to become interdisciplinary on the one hand and yet also practice-centred on the other, in 'practices envisaged simultaneously as a technological type of rationality and as a strategic game of liberties'. These have their 'practical coherence in the care brought to the process of putting historical-critical reflection to the test of concrete practices'. Foucault concludes his essay with the words 'I do not know whether it must be said today that the critical task still entails faith in Enlightenment; I continue to think that this task requires work on our limits, that is, a patient labor giving form to our impatience for liberty.'

I propose in this paper that the interdisciplinary science of the present day (evolutionary science together with social neuroscience) can offer us new understandings of a basic structure within the human which governs how we can realize our liberty. This is a 'deep' linguistic structure, previously unconfirmed as a complete, though open, one. The implications of the structure are that our self-awareness has evolved from within long term, species wide practices which constitute the forms of our belonging within the environment, through cultural affordances. Our capacity for freedom is realized in each of these forms of belonging where we consent to the wholeness and openness of the unity of mind and body, of mind in body, as this occurs conditionally within an environment.

The argument developed here supports the view that the emergence of this newly discerned structure, in its social form, is itself accessible in phenomenological terms, in accordance with its structural nature. We know it as a prior form of belonging which is accessed in small scale community. But to this we must add a further, more critically refined, level. As explicitly cosmic, we can also begin to define this structure in the specifically open terms of a phenomenology of religion. Religions are the largest and, arguably, deepest forms of community belonging that are present on the planet. Within the context of practices involving both 'structured' embodiment and our capacity for learning, it may become possible for us to derive from phenomenology of religion a new and more capacious 'phenomenology of humanity'. If this can in turn be driven by a 'virtuous circle' of new and tested practical knowledge in the area of human social practices, then we may find that structural misapprehensions can be corrected or 'healed' through new forms of channelling our freedom, in ways that can change behaviour across both religious and cultural divides.

Becoming Who You Are: Holiness and Person

*Professor Gavin **Flood** FBA (Oxford University)*

The Phenomenology of Religion adopted (or mis-adopted) a Husserlian model in which through the *epoché*, the deep subject of consciousness can view the flow of the objects of consciousness, the *cogitationes*, and move from the natural attitude to the phenomenological mode of analysis. On this view, holiness is a *cogitatum*, an intellectual object of inquiry, the intuition of perfectibility or even of God as an intellectual object. But this model is problematic. What was a virtue - the suspension of the question of Being behind appearances - is revealed to be a hindrance to a deeper understanding of the nature of the human and its relation to holiness. To get some leverage on the category of holiness, we need to describe the shift from transcendental

ego to existential encounter, from disembodied self to embodied person. Phenomenology in the twentieth century has provided three accounts or re-descriptions of person as other than transcendental ego, Heidegger's Dasein, Merleau-Ponty's embodiment or flesh, and Ricoeur's narrative, positions that have been modified mostly in the Francophone world with accounts of pre-linguistic experience by Romano and a co-belonging view of person by Housset. With these developments in the background, I wish to present a view of holiness as comportment to verticality linked to conceptions of person as a task of becoming (Heidegger) and as wanting to want oneself (Housset). We might say that holiness is part of such desire to become who one is, which means that with holiness we have an orientation towards verticality and a sense of becoming that moves towards – but never reaches – the notion of fullness. Such an orientation is articulated through a narrative structure, the story of a life framed by birth and death, and culturally expressed as a journey. This is not a perennial philosophy because such a view respects the radical difference in conceptions of verticality across civilizations, but it is a universalist position in the sense of recognizing such a human drive and the cultural forms that articulate processes of becoming. It is also a metaphysically realist position in positing invisible constraint on the appearances of holiness.

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