



Society for the Phenomenology of Religious Experience (SOPHERE)

Second Regional Conference

October 10-12, 2019

**Valparaiso University
Valparaiso, Indiana USA**

Presentation Abstracts



Religious Experience and Description

The Society for the Phenomenology
Of Religious Experience (SOPHERE)

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Hosted by the
Departments of Philosophy, Psychology and Theology
Christopher Center for Information Resources
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ABSTRACTS

DAY 1 Morning, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10

9:00—10:30 Keynote Address, *Christopher Center Community Room*

Bruce Ellis Benson (University of St. Andrews), *Is there Such a Thing as Religious Experience?*
Eine Rückfrage nach dem Ursprung der Spiritualität
Chair: Aaron Preston

You asked me to open a can of worms. I will be opening many cans. My title, obviously, plays of the current "I spiritual but not religious." But there is a lot of research at this point that would lead us to think that the idea of "religion" (the exact etymological origin of this word is obscure) emerges around 1500 specifically in Christianity and then gets applied to other "religions." I'm interested in the "Urphenomenon" that we could call religion or spirituality or perhaps some other term that has less metaphysical baggage.

10:45—11:30 Presidential Address, *Christopher Center Lecture Hall Room 205*

Martin Nitsche, Vice-President of SOPHERE (Institute of Philosophy, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic)
Religious Experience and Descriptive Models of Transitive-Topological Phenomenology
Chair: Olga Louchakova-Schwartz

DAY 1 Afternoon, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10

12:45—1:30 Plenary Session 1

Christopher Center Lecture Hall Room 205

Jim Hart (Indiana University)

Some quasi-mystical moments within transcendental phenomenology

Chair: Martin Schwartz

Husserl's transcendental phenomenology aspires to be a philosophy that pursues with scientific rigor all the areas of philosophy. The philosophy of religion, like the philosophy of nature and metaphysics are sparingly addressed. Nevertheless even within the familiar territory of transcendental phenomenology there are issues raised and addressed which must catch the eye of the philosopher interested in these areas. This paper proposes that there is a distinctive wonder proper to phenomenology which is neither that directed to how things are or that they are, but rather the wonder connected to the most fundamental principle of transcendental phenomenology. That principle is the ancient principle of the convertibility of being with what is true or the inseparability of being and manifestation. Phenomenological wonder is primarily at the correlation of being as what is true or made manifest with consciousness. And yet there is an even more basic phenomenological wonder which founds this correlation, and that is the manifestness of first-person experience within which all other wonder emerges. Phenomenology comes across numerous other occasions for wonder with the phenomenon of consciousness itself, such as the modifications of its being awake and asleep; that wakefulness is not merely a state nearly equivalent to first-person manifestness but also, as being awake, a regulative ideal within which the life of theory and praxis take place. Not only does consciousness sleep but each person has reason to believe she is born and dies even though she knows of these only through a third-person perspective on herself. And although the mind meets surds and itself is capable of surd-like behavior, for it to function and follow the moral-rational imperative it must believe in what is constitutive of itself, what Husserl calls the divine entelechy. The good life which is ineluctably aspired to requires a basic sense of faith in this entelechy.

1:30—2:15 Plenary Session 2, Christopher Center Lecture Hall Room 205

Distinguishing four levels of the phenomenological analysis of religion

Neal DeRoo (The King's University)

In this paper, I will seek to distinguish, for methodological reasons, four distinct levels of analysis involved in a phenomenological analysis of religion. I will begin in Section I by describing each of the four levels briefly: 1) spirituality, as the most basic *ür*-phenomenon; 2) religiosity, as one particular way (*vis-à-vis* ethics, aesthetics, science, etc.) that spirit is expressed in culture; 3) religious traditions, such as Christianity, Buddhism, and consumerism, as particular ways that religiosity is expressed in various material conditions; and 4) religious phenomenon (e.g., concrete beliefs, practices, objects, etc.), which are concrete expressions of those religions traditions. Then, Section II will clarify the nature of the relationship between these levels: qua expressions, the levels are theoretically and methodologically distinct, but experientially inter-penetrating. That is, while I do not experience the levels as distinct, it is necessarily the case that I gain access (epistemologically and methodologically) to the higher levels through my experience of phenomena on the lower levels, even as an understanding and analysis of the higher levels helps us better describe our experience of the phenomena on the lower levels. I will end by highlighting in Section III some of the difficulties that arise when these levels are not kept distinct in phenomenological analysis, including: 1) a conflation of a lower level with a higher level (e.g., philosophy of a particular religion with a philosophy of religion itself, or an experience of some particular religious phenomenon with the religious tradition itself), which has a direct bearing on issues of oppression, especially white supremacy; 2) a misunderstanding of the nature of religiosity, which leads to us: a) failing to see the religious dimension of certain phenomena (e.g., not seeing consumerist practices as religious); and b) describing poorly the religious nature of other phenomena (e.g., our experience of God as primarily transcendent rather than

immanent); and 3) that our descriptions of religiosity and religious traditions affect how people experience religious phenomena, and so in fact shapes and constitutes the religious tradition(s) we are describing.

2:30—4:00 Breakout Session 1, Track A: Methodologies (1), ASB 231

Chair: Peter Costello

2:30 pm: Veronica Cibotaru (University Paris-Sorbonne / Bergische University Wuppertal)

How is a phenomenological description of the religious experience possible?

The aim of this paper is to examine if it is possible to describe accurately religious experience from a phenomenological point of view, and if yes, how. In order to answer to this question I will first draw on the phenomenology of Husserl, since he conceives the fundamental principles of phenomenological method. Thus, one essential feature of this method is the reduction of the living of the subject to an original evidence which gives meaning to this living. This implies that if we want to describe phenomenologically a living, or an experience, with have to describe the original evidence which gives meaning to this experience, and so also the religious experience.

Or Husserl's phenomenological method presents two problematic points for the description of religious experience: the assumption of transcendental ego as a source of every meaning about which he writes already in the *Ideas I* and the intersubjectivity as an essential feature of transcendental subjectivity, on which he insists particularly in the *Cartesian Meditations*. First, religious experience seems to inverse the intentional relationship between the transcendental subject and the intended object, which is here God. Indeed God is experienced by believers as an entity which reveals itself to them and not as being constituted by them. This transcendent meaning of God cannot be reduced to the sphere of transcendental subjectivity, as Husserl does with the objects which are experienced as real, since the structure of the experience does not display in both cases the same kind of transcendency. Indeed, I cannot touch, see or even think God as a real spatio-temporal object. Secondly, religious experience is profoundly individual since it cannot be fully expressed in terms which are intelligible to everyone as we can describe a daily experience for instance. That is why, even if we can find some common features between religious experiences, among different individuals but also religions, it is not clear how this experience can be the object of an intersubjective dialogue, since it does not imply evidences which can be accepted by everyone.

In the second part of my paper, I will explore the phenomenologies of Levinas and Ricoeur as a possible answer to these two problematic points. Thus, first I will ask myself in how far religious experience is fundamentally an ethical experience in which the experience of the Other is involved as Levinas does describe it. This framework would allow us to describe religious experience as being profoundly intersubjective but would require to give up the assumption of the transcendental ego as being the origin of every meaning. Secondly the question will be in how far a hermeneutical approach of religious texts, on the model of biblical hermeneutics of Ricoeur and particularly his hermeneutics of the parables, can safeguard this original position of the transcendental ego, since it is finally only this ego which can give meaning to religious texts but also to other types of religious experiences, without textual support. This would finally raise the question of the necessary hermeneutical nature of religious experience.

3:00 pm: *Nietzsche's genealogical method and religious experience*

Matt Clemons (Stony Brook University)

In this essay, I approach the question of phenomenology as method in the description of religious experience by way of a foil, namely genealogy. Taking Nietzsche as a point of departure, I'll explore the relationship between his naturalistic "metaphysics" of the human being "back among the animals" (*Antichrist* 14), i.e., as a locus of the interplay of competing drives, and his own genealogical analysis, i.e., the excavating of the multiple origins of moral values in various social customs, practices, and reversals, of religious asceticism in the third essay of *The Genealogy of Morals*. More specifically, I'll argue that genealogy presupposes the physiopsychological causality of his naturalistic

anthropology, and in this presupposition comes to religious ascetic ideals in advance with the interpretive tools by which it determines their meaning. Thus, the genealogical method is limited in what it can say about the meaning of ascetic ideals, and therefore, also of religious experience. Although this will be the bulk of the essay, I intend the discussion to be a contribution towards challenging causal-reductive accounts of religious experience and highlighting the necessity of a method that does not presuppose a specific anthropology and thus, can interpret those experiences on their own ground and of their own accord.

3:30 pm: *The fruits of the unseen: A Jamesian critique of explanatory reductionism in accounts of religious experience*
Walter Scott Stepanenko (John Carroll University)

In *Religious Experience*, Wayne Proudfoot argued that a tout court rejection of reductionism in accounts of religious experience was not viable. According to Proudfoot, it's possible to distinguish between an illegitimate practice of descriptive reductionism, which distorts or omits the details of an episode, and the legitimate practice of explanatory reductionism, which constructs an etiological account of an episode that need not appeal to the posits of the description, and thus need not regard the episode as veridical. The failure to distinguish between these two forms of reductionism resulted in a protective strategy, or an attempt to protect religious experience from the reach of scientific explanation. Among the theorists whom he accused of deploying this illegitimate strategy Proudfoot included William James and his work in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. In this paper, I argue that while James does occasionally deploy a protective strategy in *Varieties*, this is not the only, or most important, method of treating religious experience James developed. Implicit in his rejection of medical materialism, James not only deploys the protective strategy Proudfoot criticizes, but the pragmatic method with which he treats all claims. I argue that James' pragmatic method leads to what James called noetic pluralism, or the view that there is a plurality of knowledge practices, and that this method puts pressure on the theoretical reductionist, for whom the spectatorial point of view is supreme.

2:30—4:00 Breakout Session 1, Track B: Tradition and Hermeneutics, ASB 237

Chair: Martin Nitsche

2:30 pm: *Ao-Naga religious experience and ethics: A phenomenological inquiry*
Longchar Karilemla (Phule Pune University, India)

This paper will examine the religious experience from a phenomenological perspective. The first part deals with the nexus between 'cognitive framework' and the 'embodied faith' in religious traditions. By cognitive framework, I mean the abstract concepts underlying human behavior in acquiring the knowledge of the ultimate reality in religious experiences. It is a mental act that claims in some way that knowledge of religious representations is confined within the mind and forms the necessary basis of religion. In contra-distinction to this account of knowledge is the notion of cognition as embodied faith. In order to develop mental thought, for instance, god concept, we need to first of all understand the agent concept because agency plays a crucial role in explaining the experiences of religious beliefs. Embodied faith is thus the self-experience of the very constitution of faith in the practical modes of everydayness. In the second part, I attempt to show that the embodied praxis of the embodied faith is tied to the existential faith which I argue is not a cognitive framework. This debate, I argue would in turn help to attend to the practical modes of the very constitution of faith and brought to highlight some of the arguments in relation to morality. I do so with reference to Ao-Naga religion of India's northeast. In light of AOs unique embodied praxis of beliefs system and the centrality of 'truthfulness' being the highest goal of human life, AOs religious belief is seen in terms of the body-mind-culture circuit tested through generations of practices that make up the Ao religious system. The concluding remarks will highlight upon the cultivated ethos which in turn, will be instrumental in how we occupy space in the public space with the religious others. Traditional Ao religion extends to show that AOs religious beliefs contribute relational modesty and

receptivity towards others in the public realm while contesting the notion of absolute tolerance. Thus, AOS religious beliefs inculcate a broader ethic of equality.

3:00 pm: *Going up? Metaphors of direction and identity in religious phenomenology and Buddhism*

Gordon Bermant (University of Pennsylvania)

This paper explores the apparent tension between the vertical and the horizontal in religious imagining and discourse. The sources of the tension include at least the following, strongly interrelated factors:

- Insisting that the sacred resides in the vertical plane while the secular or profane occupy the horizontal plane;
- Placing morality and affectivity on the vertical plane, while leaving the horizontal to support "value-free" physicality;
- Treating time differently on the vertical versus horizontal planes;
- Conflating hierarchy with superiority on the vertical plane, and parts with wholes on the horizontal plane;
- Limiting special identities and intersubjectivities (e.g. the Other rather than the other, and the Personal rather than the personal) to verticality, leaving other intersubjectivities in the realm of the horizontal mundane.

Strong separation of the directional metaphors leads to difficult issues of doctrine, practice, and commentary. Well known in the western traditions is the "soul-body problem", in traditional form or its modern descendant, the mind-body problem. Some phenomenologists seem to finesse the issue by locating the important experiential and evidentiary features of religion solely in verticality (e.g. Steinbock), while others seek a synthesis that renders the traditional separation irrelevant (e.g. Merleau-Ponty, especially as interpreted by Varela, Thompson & Rosch). Regarding practice, a problem arises in the relationship between effort and accomplishment. The history of Buddhism reveals an important trajectory on this point. Early Buddhist cosmology co-located positions on the world-mountain Sumeru and levels of meditative attainment (Gethin, Cheatem). A profound elaboration of this trajectory over centuries became the stages of the Bodhisattva path, a most strenuous psychic climb whose final reward is rejected on behalf of the welfare of others. But the "ultimate" development of this vertical trajectory describes the salvation of all sentient beings by the heroic accomplishment of Bodhisattva Dharmakara, who operated over cosmic space and time. Dharmakara's reward is form, as Amida Buddha (Infinite Wisdom and Compassion), and place in the universe: Jodo, the Pure Land.

Because Amida's work is done, there is "nothing left to do" by sentient beings except to realize "things as they are." Of course, there's the rub. To aid the understanding, the tradition uses numerous metaphors of horizontality (ocean, raft over stream), thus turning the vertical vector of the western tradition a full ninety degrees. Finally and most interestingly, first-person accounts of Western epiphanies include exactly this same feature: epiphany as a gift rather than an accomplishment. Vertical? Horizontal? The Giver pervades the universe. Scaffolding falls away, leaving space-time for humility and gratitude.

3:30 pm: *Gemstones as religious symbols: Revealing religious experience*

Agnese Marianna Mikelsons (University of Latvia)

In Latvia, the continuity of the religious tradition was discontinued during the Soviet occupation, and therefore extensive research is required in the field of religious science. As traditions manifest themselves in various material objects, religious artifacts studies in Latvia are recommended for preservation of cultural heritage. Field studies reveals that numerous religious artefacts not have been discovered in Latvia, therefore the knowledges of religious experience of previous generations often are not available. Religious artefacts are often decorated with symbols or are themselves expressed as symbols. Symbols, indirectly "making present" another reality, are important aspect of religious experience. It is necessary to use phenomenological description of those symbols for understanding religious experience of community. In the first part of my thesis I described Latvian artefacts with gemstones, natural and sythetic.

Precious stones and ornamental minerals in religious tradition often are thought to symbols can be observed not only in artefacts, it reveals also in the analysis of religious texts. The description of Heavenly Jerusalem in biblical texts symbolize transformed, new reality, because precious stones are shown as altered. Many saints use the symbolism

of precious stones, St. Teresa of Avila compares the human soul with a crystal ball, in the center of it dwells God reachable in mystical experience. In the second part of my thesis I analysed symbolism of precious stones in religious texts.

The symbols as phenomena can be pertain to sensory perception. In case of gemstones due to their physical features, reveals multiple levels of phenomena - color, amount, place etc. The color is most important feature, that can be related to symbolism of stone. But is not a safe diagnostic feature - rubies along with spinels and garnets may be similar color, therefore analyses of ancient texts has geological problem in deciphering of gemstones terms, therefore and only by means of both - religious and geological knowledge is possible to explain the meaning of them. Current focus of research is Latvian Catholic Church artefacts and their symbolism, but multiconfessional environment of Latvia requires to compare the religious symbolism of the Catholic Church and Orthodox Church tradition.

2:30—4:00 Breakout Session 1, Track C: Description and Truth, ASB 236

Chair: Olga Louchakova-Schwartz

2:30 pm: Religious experience and the principle of scrutiny

Alex R Gillham. (St. Bonaventure University)

Swinburne's Principle of Credulity (PoC) claims that if a person has an experience that seems to be of *x*, then unless there is some reason to think otherwise, it is rational to believe that *x* exists. Rowe doubts that PoC justifies one in holding that religious experiences are genuine perceptions of reality. He only appears to give one argument for this claim. Rowe says that if PoC works for any, then it will work for all. The problem then becomes that PoC could be used to justify two people holding inconsistent beliefs based on their religious experiences, which seems to violate the Law of Non-Contradiction. The aim of this paper is to argue that we can rebut Rowe's objection by making a slight alteration to PoC so that its application to religious experience becomes permissible. I call this the Principle of Scrutiny (PoS), which says that if a person has an experience that seems to be of *x*, and that person has tried but failed to find reasons to think otherwise, then it is rational to believe that *x* exists. Whereas PoC says that a religious experience could be representative of reality so long as the believer has no reason to think otherwise, PoS says that someone could believe that a religious experience represents reality only after she subjects the content of belief to further scrutiny. This provides a way to resolve the contradictions to which Rowe argues that PoC might give rise. In application, this resolution might go as follows. Suppose one religious experience reveals God as merciless to A, and another reveals God as merciful to B. According to PoC, merely having the experience of God as one way or the other would be insufficient for believing either. However, on PoS, one could become a rational believer through further investigation. The virtue of PoS, then, is that it gives religious experience a role to play in the formation of rational belief without running into the complications that come along with PoC.

3:00 pm: The normativity of the spiritual experience

Drew Chastain (Loyola University—New Orleans)

Against John Cottingham, I argue that nonreligious spiritual experience contains within itself sufficient resources for understanding our normative response to the sacred. To demonstrate this, I lay out what I take to be some key aspects of nonreligious spiritual experience and then critique Cottingham's claim that supernatural fear-based spiritual experience of the transcendent provides the basis for spiritual experience's normativity. I analyze nonreligious spiritual experience into three aspects – wonder, vitality and connection – and indicate how these experiential aspects inspire various kinds of valuing and norms. Stated briefly, first, to experience wonder is to be keenly aware of the marvel of being and reality, and also the marvel of particular things and one's own existence. Within this more philosophical aspect of spiritual experience, we experience amazement that there is something rather than nothing. Second, to experience vitality is to feel life within oneself, whether this is in a moment of exhilaration or in calmer moments of peace, when one is largely or entirely free of disease, distress or displeasure. Third, to experience

connection at its most extreme is to feel absolutely at one with reality, without separateness of self and world, but a sense of connection is also present without the total shattering of boundaries, in experiences of belonging and bonding with particular people and places. These various aspects of spiritual experience naturally hang together, forming what I take to be a core experiential quality of what is positively spiritual. Although my analysis has prima facie plausibility, spiritual experience could surely be sliced up in alternative ways, but what's more important is that the broader method works. While Cottingham points to fear of the transcendent as a source of moral inspiration, I point to some other morally inspiring aspects of spiritual experience that don't require supposition of the transcendent.

3:30 pm: *Reduction, tribunal, and teleology; or, How to avoid despotism in philosophy of religion*
Scott Ferguson (University of Chicago)

Kant's *Critique* begins with an implicit attack on Cartesian method: given that reason itself is always "interested" (i.e., never neutral), private introspection as a source for philosophical authority inevitably leads to illusion and eventually, as different rational needs suggest different conclusions, philosophical civil war. He conceives the task of a critique of reason, by contrast, as that of a *public tribunal* to which everyone may contribute and where debate about any philosophical plan is left open-ended in principle. Absent any internal check on reason such a tribunal is, he suggests, the only way to avoid philosophical "despotism." Contemporary philosophy of religion broadly following Husserl is, I suggest, vulnerable to the same problem. Phenomenology of religion can successfully rebut charges (e.g., those of Janicaud) of inserting sectarian doctrines into its conclusions by appeals to its methodology, particularly that of reduction (which I focus on for the purposes of this paper). But the deeper danger lies precisely in the method itself, which seems to require exactly the Cartesian approach that Kant worries about. Beginning from Kant's concerns, I will therefore suggest that the process of reduction can and should be radically reconceived as inherently public, political, and teleological, and that such a reconception can find support and some initial sketches in the final unfinished discussions of Husserl's *Crisis*. I will moreover suggest that certain *religious* phenomena can function as useful noematic correlates of such a reduction, and thus as models for phenomena in general, once one grants (against prejudices concerning the "privacy" of "religious experience") that such phenomena too can and should be read as public, political, and teleological. As an example of such a maximally public phenomenon I will briefly consider the much-discussed case of *revelation*, here specifically as it appears in the gospels.

4:15—5:45 Breakout Session 2, Track A: Methodologies (2), ASB 231
Chair: Olga Louchakova-Schwartz

4:15 pm: *On receiving unexpected gifts: Reflections on first-hand accounts of spiritual experiences*
Steen Halling (Seattle University)

This presentation argues for the appropriateness of phenomenological study of specific spiritual experiences drawing upon phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Luc Marion and theologians such as Karl Rahner and William Stringfellow. The value of such phenomenological study is illustrated through analysis of two accounts of spiritual experiences, focusing on dimensions such as embodied experience, the presence of the transcendent, and personal transformation. My presentation concludes with a discussion of the broader implications of this brief analysis of first-hand accounts for phenomenological research on religious and spiritual experiences. Key issues include the collection of data, the development of subtypes of spiritual experiences, and the challenges of addressing researchers' assumptions about what constitutes religion and spirituality.

4:45 pm: *On the conditions of religious conversion*
Douglas Zimmerman (University of South Florida)

This paper will think alongside the work of William James and Jean-Luc Marion in its discussions of religious experience. The goal shall be to highlight and elucidate the conditions of the process commonly referred to as

"conversion." That is, the process by which someone reorients their entire life around some new viewpoint or position. I shall use some examples of religious conversion from the history of Christian thought as reported by the converts themselves. In analyzing these experiences through the methodologies of James and Marion I shall attempt to highlight two common conditions which underlie religious conversion. First, a conversion experience is always understood retrospectively and second, a conversion always seems to come upon a person suddenly and unexpectedly. In highlighting these two conditions via the experiences of some key figures in Christian history (Augustine, Thomas Merton, Teresa of Avila), I shall suggest two things. First, that the respective works of James and Marion truly help shed light on the topic of religious experience by giving us a vocabulary to describe unique experiences. Second, I conclude that there seems to be little other option in understanding religious experience than to accept first person reporting of the subject precisely because of a lack of non-reductionist options when considering the experiences of others. Thus, phenomenology gives us the best tools to analyze and consider the experiences of others.

5:15 pm: *The nature of religious experience: The role of a naturalized phenomenology*
Donald Borrett (University of Toronto)

Skeptics argue that the objects of religious experience are fictitious creations of the imagination arising from fear and ignorance. Justification for their arguments rely on evidence derived from all of the natural sciences, most importantly from the psychological sciences. Religious believers accept that religious experience exceeds the explanatory limits of the natural sciences and must rely on natural language to describe that experience. The advantage of incorporating the mathematical methodology of the natural sciences in the description of religious experience is that it provides a formalism that can exceed that of natural language in its description of the phenomenology of that experience. It also provides a formalism acceptable to the "cultured despisers" to deflate the sceptical reductionism of their viewpoint in the attempt to argue for the reality of religious experience as described by its believers.

The proposed purely mathematical naturalized phenomenology remains in the phenomenological sphere, treats natural science as an explanandum rather than the explanans, focusses on temporality in its definition of subjective experience and provides a perspective of religious experience that respects its true nature and its relation to the infinite. Because what is being naturalized is subjective experience and not any part of the physical world, the project is not meant to replace the natural science's understanding of man but to provide a complementary view that respects the reality of religious experience evident on phenomenological analysis in a manner that is still acceptable by scientific standards.

4:15—5:45 Breakout Session 2, Track B: Existential Aspects of Phenomenology, ASB 237
Chair: Neal DeRoo

4:15 pm: *Senseless pain in the phenomenology of religious experience*
Emil Salim (Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Reformed, Indonesia)

There are three models of pain in the phenomenology of religious experience. The first model suggests that pain is instrumental to attaining the desired religious experience. The second model proposes that pain is constitutive of the desired religious experience. The third model, which is a model of senseless pain in religious experience, is underdeveloped. I provide an exposition of this model in this paper.

I also give four arguments for the necessity of affirming senseless pain in the phenomenology of religious experience. First, affirming senseless pain in religious experience provides a way to describe the process of meaning attribution to pain qua perception or emotion. Second, such affirmation also provides a way for describing the meaning formation in religious experience through interpreting pain qua symbol. Third, the affirmation is also necessary to maintain continuity between mundane and religious experiences. There are instances of senseless pain in literature on tragedy, chronic pain, and torture. Maintaining continuity between ordinary and religious experiences via the notion of senseless pain opens the possibility for developing mysticism in everyday life. Lastly, the presence of the unknown in senseless pain makes room for mystery in religious experience.

I anticipate three objections to my proposal and respond to them. First, affirming sense-less pain in religious experience may diminish God's role in one's life. The response to this is that pain may be senseless only from the human perspective, not from God's. Second, affirming senseless pain may hinder one's ability to cope with pain. The answer to this objection is that it would require an empirical research to know whether this is true. Lastly, affirming senseless pain might make people reluctant to remove it from their lives. The response to this objection is that it is enough to see pain as a negative experience for one to want to remove it.

4:45 pm: *Religious experience as the hermeneutics of desire*

Bruno Cassara (Fordham University)

This paper will argue that religious experience primarily manifests as a dialogue between what I call the subject's fundamental desire and religious phenomena, i.e., those that manifest themselves as fulfilling this desire. Phenomenology is particularly well-suited to this understanding of religious experience, but only so long as it does not forget that needs a hermeneutical presupposition. Some prominent phenomenologies of religious experience do not recognize the need for a hermeneutic moment, but when considering a phenomenon as complex as religious experience—one that depends for its very phenomenality on the subject's self-understanding—phenomenology must be a hermeneutic phenomenology. Far from being a phenomenon that obliges the subject's recognition, religious experience leaves to the subject a space of essential freedom and requires a difficult hermeneutic work in order to be experienced from itself and as it gives itself. This paper will therefore take up three tasks. First, it will demonstrate the need for a hermeneutic moment in the phenomenology of religious experience by discussing briefly Jean-Luc Marion's analysis of the Eucharist and laying bare its hermeneutic shortcomings. I will show that Marion's account of the Eucharist leaves no space for freedom of recognition in the subject. Second, I will argue for an understanding of religious experience as a dialogue between fundamental desire and religious phenomena. Third, I will discuss the hermeneutic process involved in this understanding of religious experience. To this end, the concept of fundamental desire must be clarified and distinguished from similar phenomena (e.g., wants, needs, and other forms of desire). Furthermore, the subject must let the religious phenomenon show itself in its truth, without reducing or delimiting it. Mired in reductive self-conceptions and a myriad prejudices about the meaning of its experiences, the subject must enact a constant interpretation of self and phenomenon in order to experience religious phenomena in their truth.

5:15 pm: *Pilgrimage of Hajj: The transformation of laws in "following" Islam*

Hessam Dehghani (Boston College)

In this paper, I will argue that the phenomenological-existential analysis of the ritual of pilgrimage (Hajj) in Islam, can potentially bring about the experience of the deconstruction of laws for Muslims. By analyzing the actions, services and stories behind the ritual, one can see that Muslims are compelled to follow the laws but at the same time the very following of the ritual reveals the genesis and the grounding of laws as *aporetic*. I will finally argue that the pilgrimage manifests that following the laws as universal and eternal becomes impossible and one needs to actively try to find one's bearings in the "nomadic following" of the tradition.

4:15—5:45 Breakout Session 2, Track C: Description and Applications, ASB 236

Chair: Jim Nelson

4:15 pm: *Global missions, church-planting, and spiritual development: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of a theologically conservative evangelical pastor*

Tanner Morrison (Wilfrid Laurier University)

“Church-planting” is a type of missionary effort, which refers to the intentional creation of new churches. Although discussion of church-planting is rare in academic literature, the present study is part of the literature on the globalization of religious phenomena. The in-depth interview of a Canadian megachurch minister is examined in order to investigate what motivates evangelical communities to partner with and plant churches around the world. The interview was analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), with the purpose of revealing how the phenomena of church-planting and partnering-with impacts the participant, what is the impact on his life, identity and spiritual development and how he contributes to a transnational evangelical subculture. The five emerging themes were: harmonious passion and positive affect, developing a participatory theory of mind, internal processes for spiritual development, affective consequences of missionary endeavours and the DNA of a church-planting culture. These themes weaved an image of a passionate leader, a profound and dynamic process, harmonizing orthodoxy and orthopraxy, attitudinal certainty, an astute sensitivity to the supernatural, and a reflective missionary practice. The findings are explained with the help of available literature.

4:45 pm: *The phenomenological constitution of the Holy: Charles Taylor, Espen Dahl and the gospels*

Bill Powers (Independent Scholar)

Max Weber claims that today there is no longer any residue of the holy, except in nostalgic longings for a long past of religious escapism. Mircea Eliade says, “nonreligious [modern] man has lost the capacity to live religion consciously, and hence to understand and assume it; but that in his deepest being, he still retains a memory of it (pg. 213).” Charles Taylor begins his massive tome *A Secular Age* with the question as to why is it so hard to believe in God today, while 500 years ago it was virtually impossible not to. What we want to explore in this essay is how it is that we moderns accomplish such a situation. The life-world is a reality given to us in a straightforward way, experienced in the natural attitude. We argue that God can be taken as part of the life-world, as described by Eliade and others. What is at stake is the nature of our life-world, one that if it doesn’t exclude God and the sacred, regards it in a very different way than pre-moderns did.

Taylor argues that there were five principal changes that took place in the secularization of Western society: disenchantment of the world, transition from a “porous” to a “buffered” self, revision of our societal tensions between the transcendent and the immanent, dissolution of sacred time and replaced by a secular time, and the old idea of the cosmos replaced by the modern neutral universe. In the course of these changes, the life-world was changed such that encounters with and our possible relationships with God were likewise changed so that today belief cannot be the same as it was 500 years ago. Since God and the sacred is not an intimate part of “immediate reality,” we can no longer live as naïve believers but instead live as in between engaged and disengaged, belief and doubt.

If Taylor’s genetic analysis is taken to account for the change in the character of the life-world, we ought to take these changes as somehow making the constitution of God as a “real” entity much more difficult today. We explore these changes in the light of proposed models for the constitution of an objective and real God of power.

At issue is how the “real” is constituted. As Husserl has taught us, every intention is associated with a noematic-noetic pair. As such, we suggest the intentional object to be an invisible, subjective, and powerful being that is manifest in the phenomenal world. It is something like this intentional object that must be noetically accomplished. We explore the possibility that the constitution of such a God and our relationship with God proceeds along lines similar to that of the other subject, as outlined in the Fifth Mediation. Alfred Schütz argues that paramount reality is constituted from our everyday, practical and bodily involvements with the working world, in what we can and must manipulate for those ends. More generally, it is essential that what we regard as “real” offer a coherent resistance to our endeavors and

desires. Joona Taipale ascribes objectivity to the experiences of our lived body guided by various modes of normality.

Both the believer and unbeliever share notions of the working world and modern normality associated with the constitution of intentional objects. Since it is from these that a real, casual God would be constituted, both believer and unbeliever have similar difficulties today in constituting such a God. And without the ability to constitute a "real and causal" God, God must take on other modes of presentation, perhaps as an abstraction, ideal, or a therapeutic tool.

5:15 pm: *Fighting infertility in Islam:*

Religious experience and reproductive health issues of Muslim spouses

Monika Zaviš (Comenius University, Bratislava) [Remote Presentation]

I have a problem to link religious experience of infertile Muslim couples with that of migrants or refugees. What unites them, is stepping into unknown both by decision making regarding assisted reproduction or by coming to new country with its religious, cultural and other specifics. In both cases prayer, *salah*, as one of religious duties, is a main spiritual support and reliance on Allah's will, which causes also beneficant altered states of mind according to findings of Newberg et al. (2015). Even at the level of pragmatic or utilitarian religiosity (according to Soroush 2000, who divides Muslim religiosity in 3 categories; the other two are gnostic and experiential), fulfilling religious duties in Islam brings concrete benefits for mind and body (Amer 2017, et al.). Also religious therapeutic counseling in Islam reflects both sexuality, reproduction and sexual dysfunctions (Killawi 2012) as same as position of migrants and refugees (Frederiks 2015, Rahiem and Hamid 2012, Ahmed and Aboul-Fotouh 2012). The faith of both infertile couples and migrants faces questions of origin of their situation, which is often connected to magical concepts of evil coming from the black magic, the *evil eye* or *jinn*. They fight them with *sadaqa*, *rukya* and not generally accepted wearing the amulet *tawiz*. While infertile couples are to act actively and decide for concrete method of assisted reproduction, migrants or refugees stay passive waiting for understanding of their linguistic and religious contents (Zaviš 2017), whose absence leads to inability to diagnose the Ulysses Syndrome in them and treat it appropriately (Delgado Ríos 2008, Valero-Garcés 2014, Achotegui 2005). Religious experience of infertile couple includes a try to stay obedient to God's will represented in the Qur'an, hadiths and fatwas (which is often very hard because of diversity of fatwas dealing with the same issue); a woman but has one more obedience duty and that is to decision of her husband, sometimes even to that of the whole family. This brings huge humility and unconditional surrender to husband's and family's will, which assures her, that she acts in accordance with the Qur'an, what consequently brings her hope that Allah will bless their effort. Ultimately, even if assisted reproductive method succeeds, it can happen, that a husband, who forced his woman to third-party donation, begins to hate and despise their children and her as an adulteress (Tremayne 2012). Such events often result in violence and threat of death, which cause her and their children religious experience of God's abandonment and scoundreldom.

DAY 2 Morning, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11

8:30—10:00 Keynote Address

Christopher Center Community Room

Chair: Kristóf Oltavi

Phenomenological insights for an urban theology of nature

Lea Schweitz (Former director, Zygon Center for Religion and Science)

Using a narrative, case-study, interdisciplinary approach and a problem-based method from religion and science, I will argue for Lutheran natural history as a robust framework for understanding religious experiences in urban nature. This approach brings together the devotional/personal, social, ecological, and theological, and it generates thick descriptions of religious experiences of nature in an increasingly urban world. In addition, this framework helps diversify the alternatives available for public discourse around religion and nature. More generally, a Lutheran natural history framework pushes us to explore the big question: what does a public phenomenology of religious experience look like? .

10:15—11:00 Plenary Session 1

Christopher Center Lecture Hall Room 205

Chair: Neal DeRoo

Does the object of religious experience make any difference to the experience itself?

Schutz and Scheler on the noetic and noematic dimensions of religious experience

Michael Barber (Saint Louis University)

A phenomenological account of religious experience depends upon deep presuppositions basic to the phenomenological tradition, which focuses on acts of consciousness as well as the objective correlates such acts encounter. But phenomenologists often balance these noetic and noematic poles in different ways, thereby affecting how religious experience is to be understood.

Philosopher Max Scheler, to avoid idealism, emphasizes the ecstatic encounter with resistant reality that precedes and evokes consciousness that responds to, elucidates, but never produces that reality. Alfred Schutz, while emphasizing the resistance everyday reality imposes upon us, allows for consciousness to withdraw from that reality within finite provinces of meaning, alternative realities, on which consciousness activity “confers the accent of reality,” not as though reality is reduced to what mind makes but it is correlative to diverse finite provinces of meaning and their acts.

I will show Scheler’s noematic approach alters three features of religious experienced more noetically from within the finite province of religious meaning: epoché, tension of consciousness, and form of spontaneity (i.e., ordering actions toward purposes). By arguing for a distinctive religious act (on which everything hinges) generated from the absolute sphere of reality insofar as all knowledge of God comes from God, Scheler marks out a distinctive realm of being irreducible to being the correlate of everyday psychological acts and therefore achieves a more rigorous epoché than one might find in religious province of meaning. Furthermore, Scheler’s account of the religious act, the ordering of values in relation to reality (we have less control in relation to higher values), and the personal character of the absolute—proceed within a noematic framework that would mandate and solidify the reduced tension of consciousness typical of religious experience in a finite province of meaning. Finally, while the finite province of meaning account must appeal to psychological experiences to argue for the absoluteness of God, Scheler’s distinctive religious act and its correlative absolute reality prescribe a ranking of purposes that other psychological acts cannot undermine. Scheler even provide for religious normativity insofar as religious delusion projects a non-absolute object within the absolute sphere (i.e., idolatry).

11:00—11:45 Plenary Session 2
Christopher Center Lecture Hall Room 205

*Comparing religious and pathological religious experience
 for the benefit of a phenomenological psycho(patho)logy and philosophy of religion*
 Patricia Feise-Mahnkopp (Alanus University)

In ancient times, the concept of madness entailed both sacral and profane manifestations (Plato 1966). In modernity, psychopathology explored interferences between religious and pathological modes of perception. In his fundamental study on the psychopathology of conversion, Weitbrecht (1948) found analogies between religion and psychopathology on phenomenal grounds (i.e. in Schizophrenia, there are states of purest clarity and ecstasy – just as in the „unio mystica“). More recently, Wapnick came to similar results (1981). Despite of these insights, the Freudian view on religion as „collective compulsion neurosis“ (1948) was dominant for a long time. It has just recently, that is in postsecular modernity, been replaced by the notion of religion respectively religiosity / spirituality as a perceptive mode *sui generis* - causing rather therapeutical effects than psychic deformations (Utsch et al. 2014). In addition to that, the influence of cultural beliefs on the decision if a phenomenon has to be judged as religious or pathologic has been acknowledged, too (Tobert 2010).

But the crucial question has not been answered sufficiently yet: does religious experience differ (and, if any, in what respect) from pathological religious experience (see for first approaches Henning / van Belzen 2007; Clarke 2010; Feise-Mahnkopp / Stoellger 2020).

By drawing on case studies (first-person-descriptions) of mystical experiences and seemingly religious experiences by persons with diagnosis of Schizophrenia, I will examine, if analogies and / or differences can be found on phenomenal grounds. After that, I will reflect on the outcome by the help of responsive phenomenology (Waldenfels 2002; 2014) and the phenomenology of mystical experience respectively phenomenology of Schizophrenia by Gerda Walther (1923; 1927).

The following is to be recorded as main results: besides a gradually different *pathic* quality (in Waldenfels' notion), essential differences (in Walther's sense) between religious and pathological religious experiences are to be found on noetical and noematic grounds.

Finally, I will use the findings for - preliminary - systematical reflections on a phenomenological psycho(patho)logy and philosophy of religion.

DAY 2 Afternoon, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11

1:00—2:30 Breakout Session 1, Track A: The Holy, after Husserl, ASB 231

Chair: Martin Schwartz

1:00 pm: *"I am That": Predicative judgement following the Vedantic reduction*
 Olga Louchakova-Schwartz (University of California, Davis)

According to Husserl (*Formal and Transcendental Logic*), "The subjective a priori precedes the being of God and world, the being of everything, individually and collectively, for me, the thinking subject. Even God is for me what he is in consequence of my own accomplishments of consciousness; here, too, I must not look aside lest I commit a supposed blasphemy, rather I must see the problem". But according to Vedanta, the pure ego *is* God (*Brahman*), who gives itself immediately in direct non-objectifying intuition. According to Śaṅkara, the main theological authority of Vedanta, this identity claim must take on a form of a lived through, conscious self-experience of being *Brahman*. The identity claim is reflected in the statements known as Mahavakya-s, four of which Śaṅkara canonized; and in a colloquial form, they

are often reduced to "I am That". According to the teaching tradition of Advaita Vedanta, fulfillment of the identity claim is attained in two steps: first, the seeker recognizes herself as the pure ego empty of presentations; and second, she recognizes that, as this pure ego, she is *Brahman*. This purified ego is not the transcendental ego, but the ego-pole whose first person character is brought out of anonymity in a thorough self-reflection. The latter doesn't bring out a determinate, fixed structure of experience, but rather, opens a number of options with different modes of accessing "I am That", and to this, Vedanta provides many metaphorical illustration (so called *darshana-s*). Likewise, the tradition doesn't specify what exactly are the experiences referred to by the identity claim, and, except for scriptural authority, doesn't offer any aprioristic valuation of the latter. In addition, different schools of Vedanta argue what the ratio of teaching vs. self-revealing aspect of such experience(s) is.

In this paper, I proceed from the colloquial form of Makavakakya, "I am That", in order to establish whether this statement can be treated as a logically justifiable predicative judgement. According to Husserl's transcendental logic, a judgment is to be interrogated within the compass of its concrete relation to that which is judged. Thereby, I examine the meaning of Vedantic *drk-drshya viveka*, differentiation between the seer and the seen, and show that rather than being treated as an attentional technique creating a certain "experience", this is a reduction which uncovers aprioristic horizons with infinite possibilities for concrete forms of self-awareness. For example, one horizon "hosts" experiences with awareness reflecting awareness per se, another "hosts" experiences in which awareness and cognitions are differentiated ontologically, and yet another horizon contains shifts between the presence and absence of the psychological ego, etc.,—a plausible reason why Vedanta doesn't feature a particular form of experience, but rather, makes a blanket reference to the pure ego. After the pure ego is disclosed by reduction, Vedanta modalizes it according to definition of Brahman as existence-awareness-fullness (i.e., brings up another set of horizons), and each modality is subjected to many reflective logics known as *pramana-s*. In all these operations, the ego is split (as observing, reflecting, commenting on its own first person character etc.), and then further fractured by the above logics. However, these separate intentional ego acts are non-independent (in a sense introduced by Husserl in investigation IV of the Volume 2 of *Logical Investigations*), because of their grounding in the same founding substratum of self-awareness. Since the meanings of *pramana* signify variant types of relationships between the changing objects and constant and always self-identical awareness, the essential in the meanings shows apodictic unity. This brings out a sense of interconnectedness and "non-duality" which now underlies all cognitions. Thereby, the statement "I am That" is veridical, in a sense that modified self-experience now appears to contain all appearances, and that everything appears interconnected. Thus, the opening statement (by Husserl) provides a framework for understanding Vedantic identity claim, as opposed to an absurdity of reading "I am That" in classical metaphysical terms.

1:30 pm: *Approaches of the indescribable in Advaita*

Patrick Laude (Georgetown University, School of Foreign Service in Qatar)

The mystical domain has to do with silence: *muô*. Although silence ordinarily conveys the suggestion of an emptiness mystics tend to experience it as spiritual fullness and as the essence of all sounds. Hence, the translation of spiritual silence into words has been the chief challenge for mystical poets and authors. Suggestion, allusion, symbolism, ellipsis and paradoxes have been used as ways of conveying the ineffable.

Advaita can be considered a form of mysticism inasmuch as its core teaching of metaphysical non-duality is taught to be validated by an actual spiritual realization. Its dialectics, particularly in Shankara and its successors, is not characterized by symbolism or indirection, however, but by rigorous demonstrative logic. Herein lies the specific relevance of analyzing the ways in which Advaita articulates its approach of the Indescribable. In doing so, this presentation relies on a selection of Shankara's texts, but also on the contemporary Advaitin Ramana Maharshi and Franklin Merrell-Wolff, with a view to elucidate some aspects of the Advaitin envisioning of the Indescribable.

In non-dualistic metaphysics and spirituality the foundation of the indescribability of what we can call provisionally the spiritual "experience" lie in the absence of a consciousness rooted in the polarity subject-object, and consequently the impossibility of conveying what constitutes the very essence of non-duality in the framework of consciousness understood as intentional. Therefore, the problem is not only the linguistic translation of an ineffable experience but it lies more fundamentally with the very nature of non-dual consciousness, and its epistemological incommensurability with the domain of subject-object consciousness. In essence this is none other than the question of the relationship

between Ātman and Māyā. On the one hand there cannot be a measure, or a description, of the immeasurable, Ātman. On the other hand, Māyā is the only available measure of the immeasurable, or description of the Indiscribable. Ātman and Māyā are, therefore, the two indiscribable realities of Advaita, but they are so for different reasons. Ātman is indiscribable because it is what Franklin Merrell-Wolff denotes as consciousness-without-an object, whereas any description presupposes the framework of a subject-object consciousness. Māyā is indiscribable because it is the only descriptive means of approach of that which cannot be described. This is another way of saying that Māyā is neither real nor unreal.

Now it is argued in this essay that while the gap between relative consciousness and non-dual consciousness is at the foundation of the indescribability of the latter, consciousness-without-an-object, or Ātman, can penetrate and reabsorb the relative field through spiritual silence and the mantra. Silence and the mantra are the only realities which, from within the domain of the subject-object consciousness, allow for an approach of the indescribable. But they can do so precisely because they do not unfold as attempts at describing the indescribable but rather at “non-intelligible” expressions or manifestations of the latter. Thus, Ramana Maharshi can characterize silence as a “continuous eloquence”. This continuity has to do with the absence of any object that would be distinguished, and therefore separated, from a subject in the way sound is a separation from silence. As for the mantra, it is the very manifestation of consciousness-without-an-object, and it is as such a perfect articulation between the latter and the field of subject-object consciousness. Although it is a priori an intentional object for individualized consciousness it is ultimately realized as consciousness-without-an-object itself. This is specifically the meaning of AUM such as it is understood by Shankara as “the essence of all the Vedas (...) [that] reveals the highest Truth” and therefore as means of liberation. “

2:00 pm: *From The Syntax of Time to a phenomenology of the spheres*
Randy Dible (New School for Social Research)

Peter Manchester's 2005 book, *The Syntax of Time: The Phenomenology of Time in Greek Physics and Speculative Logic*, is a study of time from Husserlian phenomenology all the way back to Anaximander. This important study leads through unique methodology to insightful conclusions, and therefore calls for elaboration and development. An early suggestion to extend Manchester's phenomenology of time for a phenomenology of space and space-time, made by Donn Welton, is supported by the centrality of the problematic of continuity and discontinuity in the Husserlian philosophy of time and its ancient precedents, by the image-character of the diagram of inner time-consciousness and ancient diagrams of the soul, and by Manchester's unique institution of a phenomenology of disclosure space after the form of ancient cosmological scientific philosophy. Just as time is an image (*eikon*) of eternity, which is its paradigm (*paradigmata*), there emerges in the course of the book a solitary idea that directly frames the disclosure space of time's interval of the “Now” and its science: the infinite sphere, or the Sphere of the All. The power of this image and idea was first disclosed in a thought experiment in Manchester's earlier work, “The Religious Experience of Time and Eternity” (1985). Combining these works is sufficient to initiate, on Manchester's model, a phenomenology of eternity as “the original phenomenology of the sphere” (2005, 53), or equally, a phenomenology of the spheres. Manchester draws on an ancient mode of thinking and deliberate scientific methodology, lost since Aristotle to a merely figurative status, making it “a lost continent in the history of philosophy” (2005, 56); the ancient spherics (*sphairkē*, or *astrologia*). The aim of this paper is to let this sunken paradigm of the spheres air out, and to explore the phenomenological role of the original science of phenomena, the science which describes the spheres.

1:00—2:30 Breakout Session 1, Track B: Philosophy, Theology and Metaphysics, ASB 237

Chair: Neal DeRoo

1:00 pm: The backlash of Maurice Blondel upon phenomenology:*Towards a metaphysics of the bond and a phenomenology of force in religious experience*

William L. Connelly (Catholic University of Paris)

The question of the limit of phenomenological method has come to be one of the leading questions for understanding how to situate religious experience in contemporary continental thought. Prompted by Dominique Janicaud's 1991 *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn*, this debate has centered on the question of how phenomenological method may be open to questions of transcendence more generally, and the question of God and religious tradition more specifically. While Janicaud notes that phenomenology is open to questions of metaphysics, he questions the capacity of phenomenology to remain within "imminent phenomenality" in exploring questions of religion. He claims Maurice Merleau-Ponty represents a phenomenologist who never brakes with imminent phenomenality, but still pushes phenomenological method to its limits. This is most evident in Merleau-Ponty's later work, which develops an ontology and a philosophy of nature.

Despite his sudden and tragic death, Merleau-Ponty already laid out the terrain for developing these ontological themes; and emerging here we find that Maurice Blondel served as a *pivotal* figure in Merleau-Ponty's later philosophical enterprise. In connecting together, the philosophy of Maurice Blondel with that of the Husserlian phenomenological tradition through Merleau-Ponty, we can find there to be a "backlash" of Maurice Blondel's philosophy upon phenomenological method, which serves to open up phenomenological method to better treat religious experience. Just as Emmanuel Falque has recently proclaimed the backlash of psychoanalysis upon phenomenology, we assert there to be a second and just as fundamental re-structuring of phenomenology though this time under the influence of Maurice Blondel's philosophy. This paper will explore this "backlash" by showing how Maurice Blondel's philosophy constitutes a metaphysics of the bond, in essence a philosophy of power or dynamism, which altogether serves to illustrate the activity at work both in nature and in human life through which a religious revelation comes into being.

1:30 pm: Experiences of God, time & environment:*Seasoning Serres, Nicholas & Eckhart with Heidegger, Hopkins & Derrida*

Virgil Brower (Charles University, Prague)

This paper endeavors to find a common thread of descriptions of religious experience in mysticism, phenomenology, and empiricism. It begins with the description of simultaneous action and reception described by Heidegger in *Phenomenology of Religious Life*. Drawing toward Paul's epistles, Heidegger suggests (§3) a simultaneous supplementation of 'experience' in the budding messianic tradition: "*we use the word* ['experience'] *in its double sense*,...the experiencing self and what is experienced are not torn apart like things... *It has both a passive and active sense*." This double-experience is, then, juxtaposed with one of Derrida's last essays, "Justices," which describes the solemn difference between an agential "auto-affection" and a receptive "letting-oneself" be affected, while reading the spiritual writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins, specifically while struggling with the latter's portmanteau word, "selftaste." This entanglement of simultaneous action/reception through tastings, then addresses the radical empiricism of Michel Serres who, in *The Five Senses*, appeals to taste to describe a broader environmental experience of time as *temperance, terroir, weather, regionality, climate, and clemency*. Serres further embodies the differential/diffuse descriptions of Heidegger and Derrida regarding passive and active reception. One does not so much actively taste time as passively receive time as it *tastes-itself* to the taster. Temperance *writes-itself* on the tongue, which Serres describes as *time kissing the taster*. As with Heidegger and Hopkins, Serres associates this experience with religious and, more importantly, *eucharistic* experience. The fourth and final figures on which the

paper concludes, returns to the sermons of Meister Eckhart (who arguably along with Nicholas of Cusa) first attempts to describe such phenomena. Whereas Nicholas described experiences of god and world as "foretastes" (*De Idiota*), Eckhart describes it with his signature syntagma, the "taste of time" (Sermon 42).

2:00 pm: *Dallas Willard and the phenomenology of religious experience*
Aaron Preston (Valparaiso University)

Dallas Willard was well-known in the academy as a translator and interpreter of Husserl's early work. He was also well-known outside the academy as a one of the deepest contemporary writers on Christian spirituality. Perhaps surprisingly, there is no obvious connection between Willard's scholarly work and his religious writings – a fact which has led many to question whether there is a connection at all. However, close attention to Willard's views both on phenomenology and on religious experience reveal that the disconnect is merely apparent, and that there are numerous implicit and occasionally explicit points of connection after all.

1:00—2:30 Breakout Session 1, Track C: Descriptive Psychology, ASB 236

Chair: Jim Nelson

1:00 pm: *Religion beyond the brain: Liberating the cognitive science of religion from its canon*
Ryan R. Lemasters (Western Michigan University)

In the past thirty years, the cognitive science of religion (CSR) has gained significant momentum in the academic study of religion. This movement, beginning with Thomas Lawson and Robert McCauley's book *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture* (1990), is premised on the idea that cognitive science could explain religious experience. Although it is appropriate to credit Lawson and McCauley as founders of this field, their position is heavily influenced by earlier scholarship in the philosophy of mind and cognitive sciences. With the dissemination of Lawson and McCauley's text, a wealth of scholarship and peer reviewed journals has emerged. Scholars, including Justin Barrett, Pascal Boyer, Ann Taves, Todd Tremlin, and many more, have developed and improved some of the ideas of the founders and have taken the field into new intellectual territory. Although the CSR has advanced the study of religion, the foundation of the field's assumptions, and conclusions drawn from its empirical research, relies heavily on a particular cognitive model. This model is the focus of the first part of my thesis. Specifically, I argue that CSR is too narrow because it embraces modularity and computationalism. I justify the claim that the modularity assumption is too narrow by appeal to embodiment hypotheses, and I develop a similar critique of computationalism based on the plausibility of extended cognition. After developing this argument, I turn to the second part of my thesis: the embodied thesis does better than the *standard* cognitive model that CSR endorses. The model that includes embodiment is better because it (1) does not reduce the object (religion or religious phenomena) to the cognitive system that detects the object, (2) it is more empirically tractable in that it fits better with our current psychological sciences, and (3) it is more explanatory. In support of (3), I consider the theology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

1:40 (note time): *The timeless interaction of object and flesh:
The study of zanjeer in understanding religious experience*
Sevgi Demiroglu (Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar) [Remote Presentation]

This research paper reflects on *zanjeer* as an object central to the experience of Muharram procession. *Zanjeer*, the five blades attached to the same number of chains with a holder is used to re-create through the self, the agony of Husayn in Karbala. The unknown origin and the well-documented process of the flagellation during the commemoration have contributed to several researches especially under the anthropological lens. However, the flesh and *zanjeer* interaction has not been analyzed beyond *zanjeer's* utilization as a medium for the desired experience. By following Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology as a theoretical framework, this research aims to initially tackle the disappearance of the gap between subject and object during the religious experience and show the importance of the study of *zanjeer* to explain the incommunicable stage that the devotees experience. For the data collection, the time frame before the procession has been chosen purposefully to explore the reflections of the devotees on their body-awareness and

interaction with *zanjeer* in order to understand how the religious experience gets embedded in *zanjeer* even before the actual kinesthetic experience of the blades. This research is expected to minimize the inability to articulate the reason for the commemoration by focusing on the religious experience enshrined in the production, maintenance and utilization of *zanjeer*.

2:45—4:15 Breakout Session 2, Track A: Development and Transformation, ASB 231

Chair: Olga Louchakova-Schwartz

2:45 pm: *A phenomenology of change in religion and psychotherapy*

Paul Whitemore (Pepperdine University)

Positive changes in thoughts, feelings and behavior that take place through religion and psychotherapy are compared and analyzed using a phenomenological approach. Drawing on insights from William James, Edmund Husserl, and Alfred Schutz, the “unseen order” is defined in a way that reveals common processes, structures, and preconditions to the ways in which consciousness is modified to induce positive change. Despite obvious differences between religion and psychotherapy, both may be understood as providing paradigms that function as lenses through which participants may perceive an “unseen order” in their life and world that was invisible to them previously. This paper further describes similarities in the structure and sequence of how conscious attention is directed and re-directed, in the preconditions for participation, and in the ways religion and psychotherapy provide for the optimum conditions for redirecting attention from the known to the unknown. By describing, comparing and contrasting these features, the present work aims to expand our understanding of the process of positive human change.

3:15 pm: *Profound transformation wrought by transcendental encounters*

Kelly Wadsworth (Alki UCC Church and Seattle University)

This phenomenological study researched the transcendental encounters of six adults who had lived through extreme human conditions. The subsequent paper explores the psychological and spiritual after-effects. In life-and-death situations, otherworldly experiences can occur more often than commonly recognized. Participants described in detail their profound transformations as related to close encounters with death. Colaizzi’s (1978) procedural steps for phenomenological analysis were employed during the data analysis which included a full reading of the interview transcripts, significant statements, formulated meanings, clusters of themes, exhaustive description, fundamental structure, and a return to the participants. The structure that emerged was a coherent account that took place on an iterative continuum where experience, recognition, and impact continually informed one another for years afterwards and a before-self stood in deep contrast to an after-self such that a new and different life was being lived. When analyzed, the descriptions produced a high-level account of the phenomenon at hand. Profound transformation could not be reduced to experiences, symptoms, emotions, or coping skills although it embraced all of these. Likewise, it could not be reduced to trauma, mental illness, grief, or moral injury even though it incorporated these as well. The findings emerged at the level of an organizing principle. Religious language was frequently employed and the implications are significant. The complex work of heightened awareness and psychic integration are often the purview of developmental theories although in praxis, symptom-reduction was the first line of defense participants encountered in the health care system. Mental health approaches were inadequate when addressing the disruption caused by the transcendent encounters. Religious traditions more readily provided effective concepts and language as do developmental approaches that utilize stages and levels. Steinbock’s (2009) structure of mysticism and Fowler’s (1995) stages of faith avoid over-pathologizing transcendental encounters and are essential frameworks for this phenomenon.

3:45 pm: *Toward a phenomenological psychology of adolescent religious experience*

William Stanford (University of Georgia) and Griffin Klemick (University of Toronto)

Religiosity and Spirituality (R/S) are important aspects of adolescent development. R/S has been defined as a factor of Positive Youth Development, compelling adolescents towards socially beneficial and psychologically healthy behaviors. It is also an important source of resilience. Accordingly, further clarity regarding the developmental trajectory of R/S and its effects is vital for studying adolescent development.

Despite this importance, approaches R/S are hampered by deep conceptual ambiguities, which generate myriad incompatible definitions and operationalizations of R/S. Many researchers have been led by their methodological (and, often, metaphysical) naturalism to eschew any account of R/S experiences as stimulus-prompted or object-directed. Resulting accounts of R/S experiences inevitably lack ecological validity: the proposal, e.g., that R/S experiences are motivated entirely internally by the subject's meaning-making system founders on the fact that such experiences are meaningful for experiencers precisely through directing them to transcendence. We argue for a phenomenological framework which more adequately describes R/S experience without compromising methodological naturalism by bracketing the question of the object's real existence. Instead, we recommend scrutinizing how the experience directs the experiencer toward its putative object. This framework reconciles two competing conceptualizations by positioning R/S experience as a kind of meaning-making, but one that is so precisely as an experience *of the sacred*. A phenomenological framework further presents the possibility of the experiential givenness of the transcendent, and indeed of uncovering such a relation to transcendence as presupposed by ordinary cognitions of things. We draw on Levinas' account of this type as a fruitful philosophical framing of the particularly bi-directional individual ↔ context interactions in which adolescent R/S develops and is experienced. We are thus able to capture and account for the propensity of R/S experiences not only to derive from adolescents' heightened encounters with otherness, but also to produce in them a heightened sense of urgency for contributing meaningfully to community.

2:45—4:15 Breakout Session 2, Track B: Scripture, Liturgy and Contemplation, ASB 237

Chair: Neal DeRoo

2:45 pm: *The phenomenology of Scripture and the Word of God*

Steven Nemes (Fuller Theological Seminary)

Is there an encounter with the Word of God in Christian Scripture? The theological doctrine of inspiration affirms that "all Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Tim. 3:16). God is supposed to be the transcendent, providential Author of Scripture beyond its various human authors. If one grants the doctrine of inspiration, then perhaps all scriptural reading is in some sense an encounter with the Word of God, regardless of the nature of the experience. But a phenomenology of Scripture should seek to ask the question of whether there is some experience in which the distinctly divine quality of the text in some way comes to light. Careful

phenomenological reflection leads to the conclusion that the divine origins of the biblical text is most often a presupposition of the act of scriptural reading, something which is ascribed to the text by the reader in faith, rather than something which arises from the experience itself. But there is an experience of Scripture which might arguably constitute an encounter with the Word of God. The phenomenon of the Third Voice, as I have called it, constitutes a possible candidate for an experience of the Word of God in Scripture. It is an experience that has been noted by a number of Christian thinkers throughout history, from St. Anthony and Augustine to Dietrich Bonhoeffer and others, but it has not been described in significant detail, nor has its theological significance been considered. This paper will define the function of a phenomenology of Scripture, underline the importance of a rigorous application of the *epoché* in the phenomenological study of Scripture, and propose the phenomenon of the Third Voice as a sort of saturated phenomenon which plausibly constitutes an encounter with the Word of God in Scripture.

3:15 pm: *The eucharist in Marion and in the liturgy*

Chungsoo J. Lee (Loyola University Chicago)

The meaning of the Eucharist is offered here by utilizing Marion's analyses of it. I also employ his notion of icon to argue that the Eucharist is a sacramental icon. As such it invokes coming of God's kingdom on earth--the invocation

made possible by God's pledge made possible by the work of Christ. The mode of revelation that occurs in the Eucharist is counter intentionality in which Christ, the Word, reveals himself of himself and by himself. Christ reveals himself as a gift—the gift offering itself, being offered, received, and given out. I further interpret the kingdom of God invoked in the Eucharist in terms of ethics of Levinas and pose the possibility, posed only as a question at the end, that the Eucharist as a sacramental icon may function as the icon of hope: that my responsibility to my neighbor here and now would lead to justice and peace of the world without being duped by morality.

3:45 pm: *Utilizing Michel Henry's radical phenomenology to analyze the Hesychastic meditative experience*
Sally Stocksdales (Towson University)

Literally meaning "inner stillness," hesychasm is a mystical, meditative practice in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, whereby the individual, in prayerful solitude, practices self-emptying, and both experiences and gains knowledge of both the self and God. In this paper I briefly discuss a number of aspects of "doing" hesychasm. I analyze the prescriptive characteristics of the hesychast meditative practice, as well as identify some structural features of the mystical experience. Some of these include, but are not limited to, the setting; the bodily positioning; visual, audio, and respiration attentiveness; and mindfulness – that is, clearing the mind of all thoughts and focusing on the present, physiological experiences of the meditative experience. In a word, the subject "brackets" him/herself. The main focus of this paper, however, is analyzing the experience of the hesychast meditative practice by utilizing a number of aspects of Michel Henry's radical phenomenology. I explain how the hesychast meditative practice exemplifies Henry's theories of immanent affectivity; auto-affectation; transcendental ipseity; and interiority, to name a few. Among many things, I suggest hesychasm is at once the epitome of Henry's radical phenomenology: interiority, of the self affecting experience, and of the self experiencing the *self* via the materiality of the body as a result of the latter being immersed in God's energies. This is significant in that, whether or not others believe in the efficacy of another's mystical experience during mediation, the subject is certain of the veracity of their experience. In short, Michel Henry's radical phenomenology provides those who study religious (mystical, transcendental) experience with a formula to understand both the mechanics and the essences of it.

2:45—4:15 Breakout Session 2, Track C: Art and Religious Experience, ASB 236

Chair: Martin Nitsche

2:45 pm: *Heidegger on art and religious experience*
Xiaochen Zhao (Columbia University)

This paper argues that though Heidegger clearly takes an atheistic stance in *Being and Time*, his phenomenology is essentially compatible with the religious dimension of human life. This is demonstrated through my analysis of his philosophy of art formed in his middle years around the "turn" in the 1930s, which is, as I would show, not only a continuation of *Being and Time* but also a preface to his later idea of the "fourfold." My argument includes four parts: 1) Based on Heidegger's definition, "truth" as the Open of the endless strive between concealment and unconcealment, is consistent with, to a significant extent consisting of, but not limited to the inevitable double-condition of Dasein (interpreted by T. Sheehan as "thrown Openness") existing in both authenticity and inauthenticity described in *Being and Time*; 2) The whole realm consisting of such disentangleable interplay between concealment and unconcealment is exactly what Heidegger calls *phusis*, or *logos* in the pre-Socrates sense in the 1930s, and is identical to the "thing," or the "fourfold" as the "gathering of sky and earth, mortals and divinities" in his later thinking; 3) Art as "the becoming or happening of truth," in letting the realm discussed in 2) Open, does not aim to eliminate dissemblance, which should be regarded as a self-concealing part of "truth," but only urges to bring its meaningfulness into intelligibility; 4) Though the atheist Heidegger considers religious experience as a kind of dissemblance covering up Dasein's authentic being-toward-Death, the artist/poet Heidegger, in attempting to make Open the full range of "truth" to his audience, has come to appreciate the meaningfulness of religious description as a dimension of the "fourfold," which also marks the transition of his view of human existence from "uncanny" to "poetic dwelling."

3:15 pm: On the musical description of religious experience:

Understanding the temporal structure of transcendence through

Augustine's analysis of *Deus, creator omnium* in *Confessions* and *De musica*

Jessica Wiskus (Duquesne University)

Augustine's account in the *Confessions* of his ecstasy at Ostia remains timeless in its poetic force, yet unusual, as a description of religious experience, in two particular respects. First of all, what he describes is not a "vision" of God, but, an experience of *listening*. Secondly, it is not a solitary but a *shared* experience (e.g., with his mother, Monica).

This paper considers the significance of these two elements by analyzing the relation between his description in Book IX and the analyses that he makes in the following books of the *Confessions*, e.g., on memory (Book X) and time-consciousness (Book XI). I aim to show how the structures of time-consciousness – particularly in relation to the "part" of time-consciousness that I am calling "primary memory" – are involved in Augustine's experience of transcendence¹; drawing upon the analysis of a monophonic hymn (*Deus, creator omnium*) that Augustine makes in Book XI, I detail how the temporal structure of music-listening fittingly describes this transcendence (thus addressing the first particular element of his religious description). Informed, as well, by Augustine's analysis of *Deus, creator omnium* (worked out in Book VI of *De musica*), I further show how the overall temporal structure of the musical melody is like that of a living being – and is the very structure that makes possible our capacity for empathy.² This analysis I apply to an understanding of the second particular quality of Augustine's description – its relational aspect.

Finally, I emphasize the role that *Deus, creator omnium* plays in the overall narrative arc of the *Confessions*, arguing that much of the power of Augustine's description in Book IX is due to its "musical" relation to the whole of the work.

3:45 pm: Text, Sound or Image?

Where should phenomenological description of religious experience begin?

Discussion, chairs Peter Costello, Martin Schwartz

DAY 3 Morning, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12

8:30—10:00 Keynote Address

Christopher Center Community Room

Chair: Olga Louchakova-Schwartz

Imagining the source—Jesus as a phenomenon of self-forgetfulness

Peter Costello (Providence College)

Religious experience for me is tied to our interpretive acts of sacred scripture and to textuality as such. I will look closely at a number of stories in the Gospel of Luke for the way in which writing and interpretation work there—both for those involved with the life of Jesus and for us as readers. In examining the theme of writing across the Gospel, I hope to articulate something important and necessary about the role of forgetting and remembering for both the divine and the human and thus about the role of forgetting and remembering within religious experience as such. Along the way, I will enlist help from Julia Kristeva, Jacques Derrida, Jason Alvis (who is a member of Sopher and whose recent article on faith and forgetting is quite good), and Jacques Chretien. Ultimately, I will argue that religious experience as an experience of textuality aims at the liberation of us as human beings. And so it has a political and psychoanalytic character.

10:15—11:00 Plenary Session 1

Christopher Center Lecture Hall Room 205

Chair: Michael Barber

Zoroaster: Visionary religious experience crafted into poetic structures

Martin Schwartz (University of California, Berkeley)

This presentation is a relatively simple aspect of a project in which I'm engaged, the texts composed by the religious innovator Zoroaster. What distinguishes my approach to Zoroaster, in complementarity to retrieving his religious ideas, is a emphasis on showing him to have been a historical personality (denied or deemphasized by some scholars) and, importantly an astoundingly ingenious poet, whose intricate style included encryptive devices aimed at an audience of initiates.

Zoroaster was a poet-priest who flourished in Iranian Central Asia ca. 1200-1000 B.C.E. before his culture had writing. Thus his seventeen Old Avestan poems were composed, delivered, and for many centuries, handed down all orally. On the heels of a long ritual tradition in which worship was embodied in poetry recited by priests, by means of his poems, Zoroaster put forward an innovative religion which, with continuous modifications, developed as Zoroastrianism, a religion existing to the present day in which Zoroaster's God Ahura Mazda, is central in worship, although modern Zoroastrians are far from any detailed comprehension of the poems, due to both their linguistic remoteness and their intricacy.

In four of his poems, Zoroaster reports visionary experiences of how, in the beginning of things, existence was constituted by two Spirits, one holy and productive, the other hellish and destructive, and how their respective choices between Rightness and Wrongness are recapitulated by human beings with reciprocities, in accord with their choice of heaven and hell. All this is ordained by Mazda Ahura, the Lord Wisdom, Who is Himself an emanation of the Holy Spirit, and Who acts together with several divinities who are aspects of Himself. These religious insights, of notably experiential character, is exactly what constituted the core of his innovative theology and eschatology. Thereby, clarifying the relationships between the contents of these experience and the ways Zoroaster's casts their meaning into poetic form, as opposed to a prosaic descriptive report, contributes to understanding of Zoroaster's religiosity.

Notably, Zoroaster's poetic speech is both laconic and descriptive, lacking metaphors and similes, coloration and interpretation, but immensely complex and manifold. In one of the relevant four poems, the lived first-person visionary experience is reported in terms of a dream which was heard; in the other three, the experience is specifically said to have

been seen in the eye. Now, from these four poems, one can assemble a number of constituents of the visionary experience: existence in terms of firstness and lastness, the latter with attendant rewards and punishments, the role of the divine entity Good Mind, and the appearance of a goddess-like figure. This repertory of constituents is. in each of the four texts, put into different poetic gestalts, each ingeniously constructed, and to varying extents give a kind of formally iconic “pictures” of the chief features of what was experienced. As suggested by Louchakova-Schwartz in her commentary on my approach, this is not a hermeneutics, but, a kind of poetic reconstitution (similar to Natorp’s critical method of reconstruction) of revelation, by which Zoroaster enabled one to “see” the invisible through the concreteness of non-metaphorical spatial-linguistic structures of his poetry.

11:00—11:45 Plenary Session 2
Christopher Center Lecture Hall Room 205

Conscientious objectivity:

Intellectual freedom and the problem of description in the early Luther’s critique of metaphysics

Kristóf Oltvai (University of Chicago Divinity School)

Although scholarship increasingly recognizes Protestantism’s influence within the continental philosophy of religion – it’s been noticed, for example, that most theologically-attuned phenomenologists use scriptural exegesis to re-describe religious phenomena against prevailing theological paradigms – the intellectual method that makes such a critique of tradition possible at all, but that defined the Reformation as a quest for intellectual freedom, remains philosophically underdeveloped. I thus here engage in a close reading Martin Luther’s pivotal ‘conversion’ texts – the first Psalter, the first Romans lectures, the first Galatians lectures, the Heidelberg disputation, *De servo arbitrio*, and *De libertate Christiana* (all 1515-1525) – to show how Luther uses the biblical text’s literality to open up a space for descriptive dissent. How could a lone theologian critique the tradition – the Scholastics’ ontotheological *theologia gloriae* – when tradition passes itself off as universal philosophical rationality and so frames its metaphysical descriptions of religious phenomena like Law, grace, justification, etc. as unassailable? Luther’s answer turns to Scripture’s literal meaning, not as a fundamentalist claim to biblical inerrancy, but by foregrounding the text’s plain “grammatical” possibilities. Of his many grammatical arguments, I focus on Luther’s discovery of the term *iustitia Dei*’s (‘the righteousness of God’) double meaning. The genitive *Dei* has two grammatical possibilities: the active (by which God is righteous *in seipso*) and the passive – the latter being the righteousness which “comes from God,” justifying sinners *gratis*. This second, equally literal meaning empowers Luther to read the whole scriptural narrative ‘otherwise,’ against tradition. Textual objectivity thus becomes, paradoxically, the basis for subjective authority, because the conscience must decide between the two objective grammatical meanings. The theologian is liberated *from* tradition and *to* the text, allowing her to re-describe religious phenomena in freedom of conscience. Although, for the Reformers, this liberation is restricted to the Christian community, I suggest how later historians of religion like Feuerbach and Troeltsch, in addition to theologically-attuned phenomenologists, will explicitly appropriate this freedom to re-describe religious phenomena against prevailing intellectual and ecclesiastical orthodoxies. I thus not only show why we should say, with Mark Taylor, that, “long before Nietzsche, Luther had already killed the ontotheological God of western metaphysics,” but why this idol’s death at the Reformers’ hands laid the seeds for the critical study of religion.

1:00—2:30 Breakout Session 1, Track A: Theology, Texts and Experience (1), ASB 231

Chair: Richard Stith

1:00 pm: “Let me know your ways:” Givenness and revelation in the book of Exodus

Michaela Podolny (University of Chicago)

YHWH’s manifestation at Sinai in the book of Exodus comes at a pivotal moment in the biblical text: the establishment of Israel as a national community based upon the covenantal relationship as outlined in the Decalogue in Exodus 20. Yet, the events that follow this manifestation are rife with tension. The episode of the Golden Calf, Moses’ rage, and YHWH’s threat of destruction all seem antithetical to the promises made to establish a nation. The reiteration of the Decalogue in Exodus 34 and the reestablishment of the covenant indicates that something at Sinai was left incomplete. This study

suggests that a phenomenological reading of Exodus 19-34 is necessary for understanding the failure of the initial attempt to establish the covenant.

Following the model of givenness as outlined in Jean-Luc Marion's *Givenness and Revelation*, this study argues that it is Moses' process of *anamorphosis*, or becoming a loving witness, that prevents the destruction of the community in the wake of the Golden Calf. The paradox of the "invisible visible" that emerges from YHWH's non-corporeal manifestation causes the community at Sinai to be unable to recognize God-as-given, they are thus unable to uncover YHWH as manifest and truly understand His intention. It is only Moses, in his declaration of love for both God and Israel, who is allowed to uncover that which is *apokalypsis*, and to preserve the covenant despite the transgression of the community. This model of givenness as applied to the events at Sinai can provide an alternative methodology to reading Exodus, as opposed to using a historical-critical analysis. Examining Sinai phenomenologically through this model of givenness allows for a more generous reading of the text as a cohesive narrative while also responding to the apparent discrepancies present in the events of the text.

1:30 pm: *Phenomenology, Angelic Time Consciousness, and Impatience: Some Clues About Lucifer's Psychological State Before His Fall*

Thomas Ryba (Purdue University)

This highly speculative paper proceeds on the assumption that rational psychology can be extended from humans to angels because the analogy of being implies an analogy of psychology. Following the widespread Patristic idea, that impatience is at the root of sin and recognizing the close relationship between anxiety and impatience as intellectual states, I examine what Thomas says about impatience and anxiety to argue that although he did not apply them in his theological explanations of Satan's fall, they *are* applicable (on Thomas's own premises), especially in light of the analogy between human and angelic consciousness. In this paper, I expand Thomas Aquinas's understanding of angelic and demonic consciousness according to the following Husserlian ideas: (1) horizontality, (2) attention, and (3) time consciousness in order to show how Lucifer might have experienced impatience and anxiety as preconditions to his envy, evil choice, and perdition.

2:00 pm: *Phenomenological description and textual hermeneutics*

Discussion, Chair Neal DeRoo

1:00—2:30 Breakout Session 1, Track B: Theology, Texts and Experience (2), ASB 237

Chair: Jim Nelson

1:00 pm: *Heidegger on reading St. Paul: Phenomenology and the use of religious descriptions*

Jonathan O'Rourke (National University of Ireland, Galway)

The status of religious experience in Heidegger's phenomenology has long been a source of contention. In the early Freiburg lectures in particular, he inherits a number of key methodological ideas from figures such as St. Paul, Augustine and Luther. Despite appearing to secularize such accounts, Heidegger nonetheless asserts that it is because of their religiosity, and not in spite of it, that they are of phenomenological interest. This contradiction is especially clear in his WS-1920 lectures, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*. There, St. Paul's account of time in Thessalonians II is read in a phenomenological context and lays the ground for the later analytic of Dasein. According to Heidegger, however, it is only because "Christianity lives temporality", that St. Paul's account contains such descriptive insights. Whether his secularization of such accounts, therefore, comes at any cost has divided critics. My argument in this paper is that Heidegger's methodological work in 1920 offers a more subtle approach to describing experience than it first seems. In particular, his approach to inherited language, exemplified in the concept of Destruction [*Destruktion*], is an attempt to give phenomenology access to a described experience, without rejecting the possibility that it cannot be repeated. By emphasizing the performative character of phenomenology, I argue, Heidegger's account in the early Freiburg lectures offers key insights into conserving the unique character of religious description.

1:40 pm: *Ontological argument reconsidered as a religious thought experiment*

C Peter Hertogh (Free University Brussels) [Remote Presentation]

In this contribution St. Anselm's ontological argument for the existence of God is identified, analysed, and interpreted as a religious thought experiment (RTE). First, some characteristics of RTE are introduced, and applied to the ontological proof. Second, recent discussions on St. Anselm's proof are critically adjudicated by means of various TE analyses. Third, it is concluded that the logical-empiricist analyses may be accused of a confusion of the natural and the supernatural: They try to prove too much, i.e. the referent instead of the meaning of God.

The RTE account consists of two parts--1st Bochenski's notion of supernatural verification is introduced to describe and explain religious experiences of believers; 2nd on basis of a close analysis of St. Anselm's original Latin text we propose some indications for higher-order predicate logical or modal logical analyses of the ontological argument that can render it valid and sound as a proof of God's existence.

1:00—2:40 Breakout Session 1, Track C: Phenomenology and Faith, ASB 236

Chair: Aaron Preston

1:00 pm: *Religious experience and faith:*

How religious experience can bridge the gap between faith and belief

Liz Jackson (Australian National University)

In this paper, I examine the relationship between religious experience and faith. I begin by assuming, as several in the faith literature have done, that it is possible to have faith that God exists without believing that God exists. I show how this assumption also supports a second claim: that religious experience is not required for religious faith.

Nonetheless, there is something desirable about faith that is accompanied by belief. Belief brings a certain epistemic stability. Further, it has been argued that even if faith doesn't require belief, it involves a *desire* for oneself to believe the relevant propositions. However, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to make oneself believe something. Are those who faithlessly believe just necessarily in this non-ideal state? How can those with religious faith, who don't believe that God exists but want to believe, come to believe?

I argue that religious experience can bridge the gap between faith and belief. Here is how: the mindset and actions of the faithful are ones that are conducive to having a religious experience. For instance, they will participate in religious communities, pray, and engage in religious rituals. They will think God's existence would be a very good thing, and desire to know God. These are all conducive to having a religious experience, especially when we interpret 'religious experience' broadly. A religious experience will, in turn, often lead to belief in God. Thus, on this model, many of those with faith will act in ways that make a religious experience quite likely, which can bring them to believe.

1:35 pm: *Kierkegaard: The true nature of God and faith*

Siobhan Doyle (University College, Dublin) [Remote Presentation]

If one could ask the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard *what the functions of language are in terms of describing religious or spiritual experience*, his response would be that the functions of language are totally defunct in this regard. What Kierkegaard's vast and varied authorship uncovers is a God who not only created the world, but also sustains it. Under this description, God, being infinite and eternal—can at best—only be described or explained in terms of either Plato's 'Good beyond Being' or Plotinus' First Principle 'The One'.¹ Part one of this paper will raise and address this question: what is Kierkegaard's understanding of the true nature of the Christian God? This section will also outline his response to the questions that blind-belief in God raises; and will endeavour to explain why, at the highest level of existence (Religiousness B), the functions of language are totally defunct. Part two will show how Kierkegaard addresses the incommunicable aspect of true faith in God—in *Fear and Trembling*—through his analysis of the religious implication of

Genesis 22. The final part of this paper will address a problem that arises from Kierkegaard's description of the true nature of God and faith at the religious level of existence: the problem of exclusivity at Kierkegaard's highest existential level.

2:10 pm: *Being and time-less faith: Juxtaposing Heideggerian anxiety and religious experience*

Jonathan Lyonhart (University of Cambridge Divinity School) [Remote Presentation]

Heidegger's embracement of mood is a possible way forward for a phenomenological theology. Moods are not subjective lenses laid over a more objective world. Rather, mood un-conceals the world, disclosing the presence of things within it in a way that is more phenomenologically accurate than mere theory. E.g., Fear reveals the thing to be feared in a fuller way than theoretical description can. However, anxiety is distinct from fear, for while fear is directed towards a specific thing within the world, anxiety is anxious about existence itself, disclosing the bigger picture of being. I would like to suggest that something similar can be applied to faith. Faith is a mood that can be phenomenologically consistent and at times overwhelming. The mood of faith is experienced in some form or other by the vast majority of the human race both now and throughout history. However, faith is not necessarily directed towards a specific object within the world. One cannot point and say: "I've found Him/Her. God is right there!" Indeed, attempts to do so through miracles or dialectics have been roundly critiqued by the Western philosophical tradition, and now seem to be dismissed with little more than a blithe 'nah'. But then what is this mood of faith disclosing if not something within the world? Perhaps, like anxiety, the mood of faith is not revealing an object within the world, but the world as a totality. What if the experience and mood of faith discloses a divine being that is the primordial root of all beings? Since God is not *a being* but *Being* itself, He cannot be disclosed in the world as an object but has to be disclosed as that which is transcendently beyond and at the root of the world. Since faith is a powerful mood that cannot point to anything definitively tangible in the world, perhaps it is disclosing that which is greater than the world.