

Phenomenology of Religious Experience

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Religion and the Appresentative Mindset

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Abstract: Following Alfred Schutz’s “On Multiple Realities,” the religious province of meaning, like the provinces of phantasy, dreaming, and theoretical contemplation, differs from the “world of working,” everyday life’s form of spontaneity, because its tension of consciousness is more relaxed. The relative passivity characterizing the religious province, which depends on a benevolent transcendent accompanying everyday projects and overcoming the distance between the believer and itself, appears also in religion’s release of subliminal processes (e.g., in religious dreams) and in its reliance on passive syntheses. Such syntheses occur in appresentative pairing and apperceptual transfers among diverse symbols and between symbols and the transcendent. Consequently, the religious province becomes a very important site for the “appresentative mindset.” In addition, the peculiar *epoché* of the province is symbolically induced when the very symbol (e.g. temple or ritual) that serves as the gateway into the province and separates it from the “profane” world of everyday life also appresents the transcendent. The unrestrained reliance on appresentative pairing *within* the religious province overflows its boundaries as the mundane events of everyday life come to appresent the transcendent. The release of subliminal processes and unreflective, passive synthesizing, however, requires critique through theory, Levinasian ethics, and legal and social restraints.

Keywords: Philosophy of religion, appresentation, symbol, consciousness, multiple realities, passive synthesis, *epoché*, religious experience

Although Alfred Schutz never developed an account of religious experience, he did suggest in his essay “On Multiple Realities”¹ that religion was a finite province of meaning. The religious province of meaning, like phantasy, dreaming, and theory, stood over against the pragmatic world of everyday life, whose specific form of spontaneity he identified as “working,” that is, bodily interventions engaged with objects and persons for the sake of projects devised in advance.² In this essay, basing myself on Schutz’s discussion of finite provinces, I will argue that one could characterize the religious finite province of meaning as consisting in what I will call the “appresentative mindset.” To develop this point, I will first of all explain what a relaxed tension of consciousness like phantasy, dreaming, and theory is, in contrast to the wide-awake attention to life characteristic of pragmatically-oriented everyday life. Then I will demonstrate how the tension of consciousness of the religious province of meaning is more relaxed, more passively-oriented, than the tension of consciousness in the world of working. This is so insofar as in religion one finds oneself in the presence of the transcendent that accompanies one in one’s actions and invites surrender to it and insofar, especially, as religion depends heavily on symbolic, passive associations, particularly “appresentative pairing.” I will proceed to show how widely such appresentative pairing is operative within the religious province of meaning, such that religion could be rightly depicted as a taking up of the appresentative mindset. Finally, I will discuss how religion involves a peculiar *epoché*, analogous to the Husserlian *epoché*,

1 Schutz, “On Multiple Realities”, 231.

2 Ibid., 212.

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whose detachment from everyday life enables, as does the Husserlian *epoché*, a “new seeing,” which I will characterize in terms of an adeptness at discovering presentations of the transcendent way beyond the boundaries of one’s own religious community. A brief word of caution: this essay was crafted within a monotheistic context whose categories no doubt predominate in the discussion, despite its effort to take account of pantheistic perspectives.

1 Pragmatic everyday life and the relaxed tensions of consciousness

For Schutz, when one inhabits everyday life, one experiences its specific form of spontaneity, namely “working”,³ that consists in the highest tension of consciousness, wide-awakeness, in which one is fully interested in bodily engaging the world to realize one’s plan of action. One is active, not passive, and one does not allow the indiscernible small perceptions of consciousness, as Leibniz dubbed them, or their psychological equivalents, Freud’s “unconscious movements,” to emerge into consciousness since one marshals all one’s energies toward realizing the pragmatic goals that one’s bodily engagement serves.

To explain further what a tension of consciousness is, Schutz refers the reader to the work of Henri Bergson. In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson distinguishes poles of experience, beginning with one’s perceptual encounter with the material world—an encounter that Bergson⁴ insists is not oriented toward speculative thought but toward pragmatic action— which dictates what aspects of the perceptual world one focuses on. For Bergson, we are completely concentrated on bringing our actions to fruition, “not turning our eyes to right or left, and even for the most part of our time, behind”⁵. The memory that is drawn on and activated in this agential encounter with the world is basically motor memory; one implements skilled movements with which one is already familiar, such as those movements involved in maneuvering through heavy traffic, guiding a jack-hammer, or manipulating the mechanisms on an assembly line. One simply does not have the leisure to entertain the rich images, saturated with remembered colors, smells, and sounds, that Bergson believes pertain to the realm of “pure memory” and that can also be summoned up in idle phantasying or dreaming⁶.

Memories that are not immediately applicable or “useless” for pragmatic mastery of situations are able to flood consciousness when one’s interest in such mastery diminishes, as occurs for instance when one is on the point of falling asleep or indulges in day dreaming. Bergson himself mentions how someone facing imminent death, falling down a mountainside, drowning, or being hanged, experiences a shift in attention, a “change in the orientation of the consciousness which, up until then turned toward the future and absorbed by the necessities of action, suddenly loses interest in them. That is enough to call to mind a thousand different ‘forgotten’ details and to unroll the whole history of the person before him in a moving panorama”⁷. Often the flow of memories detached from action consists in memories loosely connected to each other, one memory passively suggesting another, and rushing along “with a dizzy rapidity”⁸. Associations in dreaming appear all the more incongruous and impractical, with, for instance, a lawn with daisies bringing to mind a billiard table with colored balls or with the lawn actually being transformed into a billiard table⁹.

Bergson conceives an excursion in the realm of pure memory, in which one withdraws from action and values what is “useless”¹⁰, as one of many possible overarching attitudes toward life, that is, tensions of consciousness, which one might take up. In dreaming, one unloosens the constraints by which pragmatic

³ Ibid., 213, 230.

⁴ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 17, 36, 195, 223, 302-307, 315-316.

⁵ Bergson, *Mind-Energy*, 93-94.

⁶ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 195.

⁷ Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 180.

⁸ Bergson, *Mind-Energy*, 130.

⁹ Ibid., 128.

¹⁰ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 94.

pressures submerge one's anxieties and fears, and the surf of discernible small perceptions surge into one's dreaming consciousness in wild combinations. The dreaming self, according to Bergson is a "distracted self" that has "let itself go"¹¹. Similarly, contemplation, which would roughly correspond with the finite province of meaning of scientific theory for Schutz, is weakened by action—an idea that Bergson finds expressed as early as Plotinus¹². Moreover, painters like Turner or Corot, according to Bergson, have exempted themselves from the need to act and are, consequently, able to see what we overlook in our mastery-oriented perceiving of reality¹³. Art, including music and poetry, puts to sleep the active side of our personality and renders us more responsive and sympathetic to what is going on in experience¹⁴. Schutz, in his essay "On Multiple Realities," following Bergson's guidance, examines the finite provinces of meaning of dreaming, phantasy, and scientific theory whose tensions of consciousness are more passive and relaxed than the tension of consciousness in everyday life, whose parameters Schutz presents in the first half of his essay¹⁵.

2 The religious province of meaning as a relaxed tension of consciousness

Schutz identifies religious experiences in all their varieties as involving a Kierkegaardian leap into a new sphere of meaning, comparable to the decision of the scientist to replace "all passionate participation in the affairs of 'this world' by a disinterested contemplative attitude"¹⁶. But why is the religious province of meaning more relaxed than the world of working?

In *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, Schutz approaches the question of God through the difference between an actor's subjective point of view and an outside, divine perspective that is taken up in relation to the actor's subjective viewpoint and that originates from the human tendency to see the meaning of objects, the universe, and history all as having been given by some mind. Hence, the entire universe is interpreted as having been produced by God to whose creative act it bears witness¹⁷. According to William James, this divine perspective is grasped, according to the experience of universal saintliness across diverse religions, as pertaining to a friendly ideal power that is in "continuity with" the lives of religious believers¹⁸. That is, this power is active in the circumstances of believers' lives, arranging events, sending into their lives other persons, and, as a consequence, sharing their history in such a way that responsibility for their lives is not theirs alone. The recognition of a benevolent God's involvement in one's history, as co-creating one's history with oneself, has the effect of providing relief from the tension of consciousness in everyday life. This is so insofar as religious believers recognize that even if they were to fail miserably at their most cherished everyday pragmatic projects, the friendly ideal power would still be accompanying them and perhaps indicating an alternative, but still positive, significance for their lives. One could still devote oneself fully to everyday projects, though with less anxiety about their outcomes.

There are different religious perspectives that in different ways contribute to religion's lessened tension of consciousness. For example according to the Advaita Vedanta and Buddhist doctrine of *annatā*, the present ego, habitually seeing the world as centered in itself, can displace its focus from itself—as it would in the general religious paradigm that Schutz describes—and onto an ever-available, non-personal Ultimate. Through such a shift in attention, the self achieves, not an annihilation of itself, but liberation from anxiety, and it develops a sense of compassion for others and all life¹⁹.

¹¹ Bergson, *Mind-Energy*, 132.

¹² Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 163.

¹³ Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 24.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁵ Schutz, "On Multiple Realities", 207-229.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 231.

¹⁷ Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, 138.

¹⁸ James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 216-217.

¹⁹ Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 183, 285-286, 301, 355.

However, the passivity characterizing the religious province of meaning does not derive only from the sense of a divine perspective that accompanies one's activity, is involved in it, or enables one to decenter from it. In the form of spontaneity characteristic of everyday life, namely working, intensity compresses consciousness in such a way that it is not free to indulge in more restful tensions of consciousness, and, as a result, one finds oneself progressively generating meta-levels of mastery that can easily heighten pressure and anxiety. For example, one might begin as an individual washing windows—a project within which one can exhibit competence and mastery. One then might seek to expand this project by creating a window-washing company, and then one finds oneself in competition with other similar companies, needing to advertise, to be ever mindful of public relations, to come to terms with the interpersonal conflicts that might arise within one's company, and to grow in size to be able to compete better with opponents. As a result, one can find oneself more and more self-conscious, more and more angry with oneself when one fails to be as successful as one needs to be, more and more worried about unforeseen contingencies that might threaten one's achievement. This evolving effort at mastery in everyday life finds an analogue within the religious province of meaning insofar as one strives might and mean to reach the divinity, to achieve sanctity, as if one were trying to realize a pragmatic project, only now within the religious sphere. William James documents numerous examples of how in such "projects," one becomes increasingly aware of one's imperfections, of one's falling short, which prompt one to strive all the more frenetically and which engender an even greater sense of one's failure, etc. At such a point, James concurs with E.D. Starbuck that when one stresses the importance of personal will in religious experience, "the imperfect self is the thing most emphasized".²⁰

James then proceeds to amass example after example of how, when one has reached that point in which all one's efforts have been exhausted, seemingly in vain, the higher power intervenes²¹. One experiences its action as something that is undergone passively; that is not one's own doing; that occurs when one feels absolutely powerless; that takes place suddenly, unexpectedly, despite or even without one's prior efforts; that is the fruit of one's having let go of oneself; and that is experienced as an invitation to entrust oneself to the transcendent. As James expresses it:

Under these circumstances the way to success, as vouched for by innumerable authentic personal narrations, is by an anti-moralistic method, by the "surrender" of which I spoke in my second lecture. Passivity, not activity; relaxation, not intentness, should be now the rule. Give up the feeling of responsibility, let go your hold, resign the care of your destiny to higher powers, be genuinely indifferent as to what becomes of it all, and you will find not only that you gain a perfect inward relief, but also, in addition, the particular good you sincerely thought you were renouncing²².

It is as though the religious dynamics move beyond the striving for mastery constitutive of everyday working and culminate in a passive surrender to the transcendent that is the second type of passivity distinctive of the religious province of meaning. Paul Ricoeur summarizes these dynamics by amalgamating psychology with the theological concept of "justification" when he asserts that "justification by works" reaches its terminus in self-accusation, narcissism, and masochism, whose only release happens through "justification by faith," by which one is held worthy because of the gratuity of the transcendent, regardless of one's merits²³. The religious province of meaning is more relaxed than working 1) because the transcendent shares one's responsibility for one's life and 2) because one reaches a point in which one's relationship with it depends on the transcendent's overcoming one's distance from it.

A third stream of passivity intermingles with these other two currents constituting the religious province of meaning, all three of which help distinguish religion from the active world of working. These streams of passivity reflect the break from the active, everyday struggle to master life contingencies that religious believers implement through taking up an attitudinal shift, an *epoché*, similar to the phenomenological one. This third source of passivity has to do with releasing the control over one's subliminal impulses and

²⁰ James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 172.

²¹ Ibid., 92, 94, 105, 113, 155, 159, 166, 170, 173, 174, 177, 178, 181, 185, 186, 191, 195, 196, 198, 202, 204, 226, 229, 238, 241, 251, 252, 253, 293, 296, 303.

²² Ibid., 98-99.

²³ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 146-147.

movements that the working self ordinarily confines to its horizons for the sake of successfully executing its pragmatic projects. This relaxing of controls characterizes other finite provinces of meaning, such as phantasying and dreaming, in which passive attention assumes prominence over the active attention typical of working. In such passive attention, one experiences what Schutz, following Leibniz, calls “the surf of indiscernible small perceptions”²⁴, which in dreaming, for instance, escape the censorship of working, proceed from the intimate center of the personality, infiltrate the contents of one’s dreams, and converge with Freud’s notions of the unconscious²⁵. It is not surprising, then, that in a variety of religions *dreams* become sites of religious revelation, as for instance occurs in the story of Joseph and his brothers in Genesis or Daniel in the Book of Daniel. Furthermore, James catalogues the dream-like character of many religious experiences, and he observes how both Tolstoy and Bunyan witnessed the dissipation of their sadness upon being overwhelmed by subliminal “uprushes”²⁶.

3 Passive syntheses, apperception, appresentation, and signifying

The removal of the controls usually in place in the pursuit of pragmatic mastery has the further effect of increasing one’s employment of passive, assimilative syntheses that Husserl argues function beneath the direction of active, thinking, inferring ego. Husserl explains how such syntheses work through the example of a child, who once having seen and used scissors, brings her previous experience (s) to bear on the perception of any future set of scissors²⁷. This bringing of one’s past experience to bear on perception is technically known as “apperception.” Hence, even though one scissors is never completely the same as another, the similarity between them suffices for the child to recognize the new object as a scissors, to expect that one can use it to cut paper—or to put it in abstract phenomenological terms, to apperceptively transfer one’s past experiences of an object onto the experience of a new object that resembles the past one²⁸. This fits with the very nature of mental life, whose fundamental tendencies are, as Dorion Cairns described them, “to identify and to assimilate”²⁹.

Widespread passive synthesizing, unleashed in the passive religious province of meaning, becomes particular significant to that province, when it is conjoined with the Husserlian process of appresentation that Schutz, in turn, takes for the central concept of his theory of symbolization and signification. For Husserl, the frontside of an object, makes present, by referring to, the absent backside,³⁰ and Schutz extends this process by which an appresenting member “‘wakens’ or ‘calls forth’ or ‘evokes’ the appresented one” to signifying activity³¹. Hence, “indications,” in which one object or event refers to an absent one, although in a way independently of humanly devised connections (such as linguistic signs), can be exemplified in the case of the smoke that one sees arising above far distant woods. Such smoke appresents, or indicates, fire, just as animal tracks indicate or appresent an animal that has recently passed by or just as a halo around the moon indicates coming rain³². Likewise, signs, linguistic expressions, appresent within everyday life the meaning of the other person, and culturally developed and transmitted symbols appresent from within everyday life something pertaining to another reality than everyday reality, such as the flag that appresents the whole nation as a kind of spiritual unity or the religious symbol that appresents the transcendent.

²⁴ Schutz, “On Multiple Realities”, 213.

²⁵ Ibid., 240-241.

²⁶ James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 128-134, 179, 189, 198.

²⁷ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 111.

²⁸ Ibid., 79-81; Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität*, Erster Teil, 345, 459; Zweiter Teil, 431, 433, 490; Dritter Teil, 14.

²⁹ Cairns, “Applications of the Theory of Sense-Transfer”, 57.

³⁰ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 109.

³¹ Schutz, “Symbol, Reality, and Society”, 297.

³² Ibid., 310-311.

Such appresentations make use of the structure of passive synthesis operative in apperception. Hence, after the first of experience of fire giving rise to smoke, one, without thinking or inferring, takes the smoke that one sees pluming up above the distant woods to be appresenting or indicating a not yet visible fire. Or if one experiences ascending smoke from distant woods, hikes over to the woods, and finds the fire burning—from that point on, whenever one sees smoke arising in the distance, one will take it to indicate or appresent a not yet visible fire. Once one has an experience of an appresentative connection, one apperceptually transfers to future similar experiences what one has learned from the past experience. Similarly, when one has learned to understand through repeated experiences linguistic expressions or “signs,” which differ from non-linguistic indications, one regularly and immediately transfers what one has learned to future similar experiences. For instance, once one understands that interlocutors’ use of the signs “I am angry” expresses or appresents their mental state, which is ireful—from that point on, whenever one hears interlocutors utter that (or a similar) expression, one anticipates, via apperceptual transference, that their state of mind is wrath-filled. In addition, once one is initiated into a religious ritual, one learns which symbols are used to appresent the transcendent and one apperceptively transfers, without inference or thinking, one’s expectations that this symbol appresents the transcendent to one’s next encounter with a similar symbol. Or one might further assimilate passively one’s own experience of a flag appresenting one’s own nation to the flag usage of citizens in other countries, apperceptively transferring to them the meaning that their flag, too, appresents their nation as a kind of spiritual unit.

The third dimension of passivity characterizing the religious sphere, namely that there is a relaxing of the controls imposed by the *ego agens* of everyday life, results in a variety of related phenomena coming to the fore. Subliminal impulses are allowed to emerge, and passive synthesizing is released and encouraged, in a wide variety of ways, including apperceptive transfers, appresentative references, and signifying behaviors, by means of indications, signs, or symbols. Furthermore, apperception, appresentation, and signification become implicated and involved in each other. The final outcome is that the religious province of meaning, hospitable in its passivity to all these phenomena and relying on their mutual interaction, becomes an important site wherein what I will call and explain as the “appresentative mindset” is able to flourish.

4 The appresentative mindset in the religious province of meaning

Symbols, as mentioned, are this-worldly events, occurring in everyday life, that appresent a reality pertaining to another province of meaning. For example, one can imagine the experience of the Israelites when the Egyptians bore down upon them by the Red Sea and suddenly the sea opened for them and allowed to pass through it to freedom. Such an experience of a mundane event would have become immediately transformed into a symbol taken to appresent another reality beyond everyday life, namely, the protective power and presence of the transcendent. This symbol, passed down through Jewish tradition, has been transmitted through images in pictures, Scriptural narratives, or liturgies. The contemporary Jewish community, encountering such images, apperceptually transfers their tradition’s past experience of the symbol of a sea dividing for the sake of the community’s liberation, and they would immediately take present images of the dividing sea to appresent that protective power. In fact, a present image of the opening sea (in pictures, narratives, or rituals) must be passively associated with the similar past event of the exodus and this passive assimilation, which occurs almost automatically and without inference or deduction and which proceeds so quickly as not able to be noticed, makes it possible for the community to apperceptually transfer forward their past experience to the present image.

As we have seen, apperceptual linkages via passive-synthesis, or what Husserl calls “pairing”,³³ that is, a primal form of passive syntheses by which one element in a pair is associated with another (as opposed to the passive syntheses involved in identifying a single object), take place between an original

³³ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 112.

appresenting event (e.g., the crossing of the sea appresenting the divine power) and a subsequent somewhat similar symbolic appresentation (e.g., of a sea-crossing in a ritual) that also appresents what is appresented in the original event (the divine power). In addition, apperceptual connections link a series of similar appresenting symbols. For instance, the authors of the Jewish Scriptures present the Israelites as having experienced the appresentation of the divine, liberating power in the exodus from Egypt upon crossing the Red Sea (*Exodus* 14-15), and this experience remained embedded in what Schutz would call their “stock of knowledge.” Years later, when they come to the point of fording the Jordan River before entering the promised land (*Joshua* 3) and when the river dries up so that they are able to cross, this experience is immediately paired with the exodus crossing many years earlier, and the significance appresented in the Exodus story, in particular God’s protection of the Israelites with power, is apperceptually transferred to the crossing of the Jordan, which likewise is taken to appresent the presence of the divine protective power. A similar pairing and apperceptual transfer occurs much later when the prophet Isaiah describes the image of God stretching God’s hand over the River Euphrates so that people of Israel coming out of exile can cross over dry-shod (*Isaiah* 11:15-16). In this transfer, the prospect of crossing the Euphrates to return from exile is paired with the exodus and its appresented significance (God’s protective power) is also being apperceptually transferred onto the Euphrates crossing. Hence the Israelites about to return from exile—a no doubt bewildering and even frightening transition—could believe that the protective presence of the transcendent, present to them in the exodus, would be within them in their return home.

Here indeed images of similar events stimulate an immediate pairing of appresentative experiences. In other words, one might say that the crossing of the Jordan and the Euphrates via apperceptual transfers appresent (or make reference to) another symbolic event, the crossing of the Red Sea, which in turn appresents the divine power and which has already made itself available in the Jewish tradition to be paired with later water-crossings. In a sense, via apperceptual transfers on the basis of similarities, symbols appresent other symbols horizontally, with the whole collection of these symbols appresenting the divine power vertically. The appresentative mind-set is “active” in establishing all these connections without inference or reflection, with one symbol appresenting another symbol, with both these symbols appresenting the transcendent, and with the transcendent being appresented in unexpected and diverse contexts, connected with each other through *some* similarities, such as crossing the Red Sea or the Jordan or Euphrates rivers, even though these contexts of discovering the appresented divine presence and power are quite different. In fact, the symbols appresenting each other can be even more remotely connected. For instance, Schutz in “Symbol, Reality, and Society,” recounts the biblical passage regarding Jacob’s ladder, in which Jacob experiences a divine revelation in a dream—a privileged site for religious experience insofar as the dream permits passive syntheses, much in the way that Bergson describes how a lawn with daisies is transformed in to a billiard table with colored balls on it. Schutz describes how the stone on which Jacob laid his head becomes a pillow, the pillow then becomes a pillar, and the pillar God’s house. There are remote similarities between a stone and a pillow, between a pillow (standing erect) and a pillar, and between a pillar and the divine house (in their sturdy uprightness). Despite the differences between these objects, the appresentative mindset rushes forward making connections, with one symbol appresenting another in a horizontal chain, and with the last, God’s house, appresenting (vertically) the presence of the transcendent. Another example of the rapid, unreflected, passive synthesizing of the appresentative mindset appears in William James’s account of associated reveries in Amiel’s *Journal Intime*. Amiel recalls temporally distinct experiences of the infinite while sitting in the ruins of Faucigny Castle, being visited by three butterflies under the noon-day sun above the Lavey mountains, and sitting on the shore of the Northern Oceans and staring at the Milky Way, and he describes all of them as “visits of the Holy Ghost”³⁴. These three experiences, similar to each other in being cosmogonic experiences of the transcendent, each refer to the other horizontally, with each also appresenting the transcendent vertically.

³⁴ James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 303.

5 The appresentative mindset and the epoché of the religious province of meaning

In discussing the six features constituting the cognitive style of finite provinces of meaning, from everyday life to the religious province, Schutz claims that each province contains an *epoché*, of an experience of shock, by which one breaks through the limits of everyday life, shifting the accent of reality to another finite province of meaning³⁵. For instance, one falls asleep and thereby leaps into the world of dreams; or, as a scientist, one decides to set aside one's engaged participation in this world to adopt a disinterested contemplative approach; or the curtain opens and the audience enters the world of the play. Schutz further observes that religious experiences of all varieties exemplify such a shock and a leap into another sphere of reality.

Schutz's idea of distinctive *epochés* is modeled on Husserl's phenomenological *epoché*, which in the *Cartesian Meditations* faces in two different directions. On the one hand, negatively, one inhibits and puts out of play the positions one takes toward the given objective world, no longer keeping in effect one's natural believing in the existence of what one experiences, though those believings and position takings remain in the field of consciousness, only now as grasped by one's noticing regard³⁶. On the other hand, positively, one gains possession of one's entire conscious life and the objective world as *meant*³⁷. In his *Nachlass*, Husserl describes the *epoché* as making possible a "new seeing"³⁸ of what had been invisible while living in the natural attitude prior to adopting the *epoché*.

In order to effect a disengagement, analogous to that of the phenomenological *epoché*, from the everyday pragmatic world, one would be able to adopt the religious attitude by oneself in much the way that a scientist or theoretician can take up a contemplative attitude. However, religious detachment, unlike its theoretical counterpart, is often symbolically induced. One "executes" the religious *epoché* by entering a temple or attending a ritual in which participants wear distinctive clothing and/or listen to special music. Even in moments of private prayer or reflection, one puts in place the religious *epoché*, by often borrowing from communal symbols, that is, by lighting a candle, burning incense, or assuming a certain physical posture or position. On the basis of symbolic structures such as these, one separates oneself physically and psychologically from the everyday world, drawing a kind of boundary between what have been called the "sacred" and "profane" worlds. This process of disjoining the religious province from the everyday one also takes place in temporal structures. For instance, one sets up sacred seasons, days, or times that are isolated from secular times, such as Ramadan, the Sabbath, or the five daily prayer times (*salah*) that Muslims observe. These symbolic spaces, times, and activities elicit from religious participants the *epoché* by which they enter the religious sphere over against the pragmatic world of everyday life.

At the same time that such symbols serve as the entrance gate into the religious province of meaning, they also appresent the transcendent. In the silence and beauty of a Gothic cathedral, in the soothing melodies of a religious chant, or the gestures or dance of a ritual, one feels oneself not only distant from everyday life but also in the presence of the transcendent. Furthermore, once within the religious province, the appresentative mindset is given free rein and whatever presents itself within that province can be taken to appresent the transcendent. For instance, rituals themselves provide for individuals or communities bountiful opportunities for such appresentation: the words of a reading, the artwork on a wall, statues, images, music, gestures, can move participants and give them a sense of the transcendent. Furthermore, the pangs of hunger one experiences during Ramadan fasting can themselves fulfill an appresentative function, calling to mind Allah's presence or making one more attuned to that presence during the days of that sacred period. When such symbols open up the religious province of meaning, appresent the transcendent, and set in motion the appresentative mindset, both encouraging its exercise and development insofar as it is able to find the transcendent in the subtlest details, one makes possible something like the "new seeing"

³⁵ Schutz, "On Multiple Realities", 231.

³⁶ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 19-20.

³⁷ Ibid., 20-21.

³⁸ Husserl, *Zur phänomenologischen Reduktion*, 225-226.

that Husserl thought the phenomenological *epoché* facilitated. In the phenomenological *epoché*, one brings to light acts of consciousness, features of objects, and constitutive processes through which objects are built up—all of which had been hidden and unnoticed as long as the pragmatic motivations of the natural attitude rules. Likewise, the religious withdrawal from the rule governing pragmatic everyday life makes possible a new seeing, an uncovering of the previously hidden presence of the transcendent in the least detail, in a word or turn of phrase, a melody, a smell, movements, the posturing of one's body, or the attunement to one's breathing.

Given that the appresentative mindset is relatively unrestrained, progressing rapidly and unreflectively from one symbol to another and from what appresents the transcendent to the transcendent itself, one begins to find that that appresentative mindset does not contain itself within the religious province alone. It as though the sojourn within the religious sphere so exercises and strengthens appresentative tendencies that they begin to operate way beyond the religious sphere itself, that is, even within the sphere that was supposedly profane, thereby dismantling the boundaries that separate the sacred from the profane. It is as though one passively transfers the appresentative activity fostered *within* the religious sphere to the world *beyond* it. For instance, William James explains how after Jonathan Edward's conversion, the divine glory appeared to him in everything, in the moon, the stars, the clouds, the blue sky, grass, flowers, trees, water, and even the thunder, which previously had terrified him³⁹. Mircea Eliade observes how earlier humanity was able to find human sexual relationships as appresenting the cosmogonic union of the Sky-God and Mother Earth⁴⁰. Eliade also comments on how the appresentative mindset overflows its religious context and discovers that the supposedly profane world is saturated with the sacred:

These few examples of the initiatory, funerary, and metaphysical symbolism of the bridge and the gate have shown in what way ordinary life and the "little world" that it implies—the house with its utensils, the daily routine with its acts and gestures, and so on—can be valorized on the religious and metaphysical plane. It is his familiar everyday life that is transfigured in the experience of the religious man; he finds a cipher everywhere. Even the most habitual gesture can signify a spiritual act. The road and walking can be transfigured into religious value, for every road can symbolize the "road of life," and any walk a "pilgrimage," a peregrination to the Center of the World⁴¹.

Of course, where the boundaries between the sacred and the profane lie vary from one historically-culturally inflected religion to another, but both James and Eliade point to tendencies within the religious appresentative mindset, whatever its historical-cultural shaping, to exercise itself beyond the boundaries of what is defined as sacred.

Furthermore, Husserl remarks that when one has made transcendental discoveries and returns to the natural attitude, one own psychic life and that of others are enriched, as if one were more attentive to aspects of everyday life because of what one experienced within the phenomenological sphere⁴²—and the same might be said as one moves from the religious province back to everyday life. One sees anew by finding everywhere the transcendent to which one had previously been oblivious.

6 Conclusion: caveats for the appresentative mindset

Despite the creativity, freedom, and spontaneity that the appresentative mindset exhibits, its very strengths can be its weakness. Agnes Horvath, in her *Modernism and Charism*, acknowledges the value of liminal processes, such as the initiation rituals for youth who for a limited time are released from societal strictures in order to experiment and reflect on various social roles before they pass on to the responsibilities of adulthood. But this exemption from the social rules ordinarily constraining their actions, which resembles religion's encouragement of unbounded free associations, is also often popular in totalitarian states. Fascists can easily make use of uninhibited associations that appeal to and unleash subliminal, subconscious

³⁹ James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 199.

⁴⁰ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 146.

⁴¹ Ibid., 183.

⁴² Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, 210.

angers and hatred.⁴³ Horvath rightly, I believe, points to the danger inherent in the appresentative mindset, and there are ample examples of how religion has capitalized upon repressed affect and directed it against minorities, other religions, women, immigrants, other nations, and sexual and gender minorities, while also covering this rage against others with a veneer of religious justification in the name of the transcendent.

There are three resources that are available, though, to ensure that the liberty of the appresentative mindset not become part of an unimpeded project of violence against others, particularly those who are most vulnerable to the attacks of the religiously “righteous,” who have often engaged in such violence. The first resource is, in Schutz’s terms, the theoretical province of meaning, including philosophy, which aspires to freedom from the pragmatic world of working bent on mastery and to exercise its critical power against that world’s excesses that might run roughshod over the ethical limits that ought to circumscribe pragmatic mastery. Theory, whether in its own sphere or in enclaves that overlap with the religious sphere (e.g. religious ethical theory), can also query and criticize religious movements uncritically under the sway of an unbounded hunger for social and political pragmatic mastery disguised beneath the pious veil of religiosity. Secondly, the ethical concerns for other human beings, even those beyond one’s religious group, that can be found in almost every religious tradition, can also act back against the violence, which religions might be prone to inflict upon others. Emmanuel Levinas suggests how the Other, to whom religions ought to sensitize their adherents, calls those religions to ethical responsibility beyond themselves. The transcendent’s very “epiphany consists in soliciting us by his destitution in the face of the Stranger, the widow and the orphan . . . God rises to his supreme and ultimate presence as correlative to the justice rendered unto men”⁴⁴. This is a curious kind of appresentation, by which the transcendent as it were “orders me to the other”⁴⁵. Thirdly, political, legal, and social structures can prevent religion from subjecting others to violence. Of course, these all are only resources that can help curb the pretensions of religion should it be tempted to shrug off legitimate restrictions and to serve covertly the purposes of mastery pertaining to the pragmatic world of everyday life, in opposition to which religion first asserted itself and offered the potential for liberation. There is no guarantee that these theoretical, ethical, or socio-political resources will be able to check religion run amok; indeed how often has an unbounded drive for mastery coopted these resources themselves and concealed its very coopting. Vigilance is required constantly.

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⁴³ Horvath, *Modernism and Charism*, 112, 131–132.

⁴⁴ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 78.

⁴⁵ Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 146.

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