Editorial Introduction

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In December 2016 I invited Anthony J. Steinbock to present a talk on one of his books, *Phenomenology and Mysticism* (2007). After the talk I asked Steinbock to unfold the meaning of the verticality expressed in the subtitle of the book, “the verticality of religious experience”. Taking inspiration from the way in which W. H. Auden, G. Bachelard, and Jean-Luc Marion treated the notion of verticality, Steinbock defined it as the way in which the religious phenomenon is given to us: verticality refers to the dynamic lawfulness with which the religious experience becomes apparent to us (*Phenomenology and Mysticism*, 13, 14, 211).

This definition represented the point of inspiration for the articles that Iulian Apostolescu and I decided to collect in this special issue of *PhaenEx* dedicated to the work of Steinbock.

In his paper entitled “Vulnerability and Trust: An Attempt at Phenomenological Description”, Ignacio Quepons outlines an attempt at phenomenological description of two intermingled dimensions of human vulnerability. First, vulnerability understood as an essential dimension in the constitution of embodiment and second, vulnerability in regard to trust, as a form of emotive interpersonal disposition. In either case, he considers vulnerability not only as a reference to mere physical fragility, but to the situational horizon from which emerge progressive anticipations of “possible harm”. According to this account, vulnerability appears as a practical horizon of emotional awareness of risk involving not only bodily fragility but a dimension of concrete existence of individual persons, namely, the intimate affectation of being harmed, injured or deprived of a practical aim. In this context the paper makes claims for a second and more radical sense of vulnerability that problematizes the classical account of emotive protentionality, following Steinbock’s description of moral emotions. In this regard, vulnerability of trust involves an emotional risk and fragility that opens to consideration a dimension of human existence revealing human persons in their absolute and individual concreteness.

In his paper, “Immediacy: Steinbock and Lacoste between Emotions and Religious Experience,” Jason W. Alvis reflects on Schleiermacher’s conception of religion. According to Alvis, religion is life in immediate feeling. Yet, he asks what

1 Anthony J. Steinbock’s talk can be seen at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAxywvXr3is](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAxywvXr3is)
does immediacy concern? The hope “to be delivered from contingency” (Merleau-Ponty); things’ instantaneous givenness in “total interpenetration” (Sartre); inseparable/non-opposing relation with “mediation” (Hegel); a threat to faith through absolutizing the relative (Kierkegaard)? Addressing this question Alvis’ paper presents itself as an investigation of the immediacy of religious experience. The paper builds upon the (seemingly opposed) claims of Lacoste and Steinbock according to which “feeling” is inadequate for expressing the “non-experience” of the Absolute because it is too volitional and intentional (Lacoste). Whereas for Steinbock, although emotions are mischaracterized as sentimentality and solipsism, they have an inter-personal/personal or moral intelligibility.

The departure point of Iris Hennigfeld’s analysis is the phenomenological motto, “back to the things themselves”. In her paper “From Phenomenological Self-Givenness to the Notion of Spiritual Freedom,” Hennigfeld discusses the phenomenological program as a specific methodological approach toward the things whose final aims are the things as they are given in experience. One particular mode in which the things are given with full evidence and in original intuition is “self-givenness,” which also represents the criterion of evidence and truth. The phenomenological principles of givenness and self-givenness can be made fruitful in particular for an investigation of so-called “limit-phenomena” which, according to their very nature, resist other theoretical approaches. Continuing and extending Husserl’s own approach, Hennigfeld shows how Steinbock has in recent times investigated the specific kind of givenness of these “limit-phenomena” and showed how phenomenology cannot end with Husserl (Steinbock, Home and Beyond).

Hence, following Steinbock’s approach, Hennigfeld’s paper addresses the questions of how a phenomenology “after” Husserl can methodologically be made fruitful, especially for an investigation into religious phenomena. After giving an outline of Husserl’s notions of (self-)givenness, evidence, and original intuition, the paper portrays key elements of Steinbock’s discovery of a generative dimension in Husserl’s phenomenology and shows how this approach correlates to the field of religious experiences. Subsequently, it focuses on Steinbock’s *Phenomenology of Mysticism: The Verticality of Religious Experience* (2007) and elucidates how Steinbock’s different historical examples of mystical experience can serve as leading clues for the revelation of the essential, eidetic structures of “vertical experiences”—that is, phenomenologically speaking, the eidos of religious experience, which turns out to be “epiphany”. The expression “verticality,” as opposed to “horizontality,” denotes the existential and dynamic dimension of experiences which are oriented toward a new height (religiously or morally) “beyond” ourselves.

In “A Broader Concept of Experience: Reflections on Anthony Steinbock’s Concept of Vertical Experience,” Esteban M. Avila reflects on Steinbock’s work on how emotions—particularly moral emotions—and religious experience are closely related to a methodological claim. This claim is that the concepts of “experience” and “manifestation” should be understood in a broader manner than that of classical phenomenology, particularly Edmund Husserl’s. Avila examines
the way in which Steinbock understands and conceptualizes the kind of givenness to which he refers with the notion of “vertical experience”. The author thus focuses on his claim that vertical experiences are irreducible to the kind of experiences that can be described in terms of what he calls “provocation”, “presentation” and the “noesis-noema structure”. The author also discusses his assertion that the latter implies that they should not be understood as forms of givenness founded on the above-mentioned structure. While Avila takes some distance from this stance, he finds the descriptions on religious and moral emotional experiences very acute, and he agrees with some of the implications drawn from them. Consequently, Avila follows the suggestion that the Husserlian conceptualization of emotional givenness should be revised to set out its structure in terms of “evocation” and to try to give additional reasons, drawn from Husserl himself, to support the claim.

In “Recovering the Vertical: Confronting Religious Violence in a Phenomenological Key” Michael Staudigl brings Avila’s and Steinbock’s analysis back to life through an example of a problematic lived-experience. Staudigl examines the intricate relationship between religion and violence as it articulates itself in contemporary society. He uses the verticality of religious experience as a generative key to compare religious experience and religious violence as transformative power at a social and cultural level.

In his fascinating paper, “The Temporal Structure of Patience”, Michael R. Kelly discusses more broadly Steinbock’s theory of moral emotions and specifically the distinction he draws between the temporal orientation and the temporal meaning of emotions. This distinction is used in order to provide phenomenological descriptions of, and distinctions between, patience and impatience. The paper takes leading clues from Steinbock’s work in an effort to “do” phenomenology in a way that clarifies these specific natural attitude intentionalities.

To conclude, in “The Limits of Phenomenology of Religion” whose title inspired the title we chose for the volume, Simon Grimmich investigates whether Steinbock, in Phenomenology and Mysticism: The Verticality of Religious Experience, succeeds in overcoming the difficulties and objections which the phenomenology of religion traditionally comes up against. Among these are, most importantly, the problem of going beyond immanence and the question of whether the investigation of religion from a phenomenological point of view is in fact possible.

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