From Phenomenological Self-Givenness to the Notion of Spiritual Freedom

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The program of the phenomenological movement, “Back to the things themselves!” does not point to any particular topic of phenomenological investigation, for example the question of being (ontology) or the question of God (metaphysics). Rather, it designates a specific methodological approach toward the things, and, as its final aim, toward a particular mode in which the things are given in experience. One particular mode in which the things are given with full evidence and in original intuition is “self-givenness”. In the experience of self-givenness, the object is fully present, or, in Edmund Husserl’s words, given in “originarily presentive intuition” (Husserl, Ideas I 44, cf. 36). The correlative act on the part of the subject, the noesis, is a “seeing” which is not restricted to the senses but must be understood “in the universal sense as an originally presentive consciousness of any kind whatever” (Husserl, Ideas I 36). Self-givenness also represents the criterion of evidence and truth.

The phenomenological principles of givenness and self-givenness can be made fruitful in particular for a description and investigation of those phenomena which, according to their very nature, resist other theoretical approaches. Such more “resilient” phenomena include interpersonal, religious or aesthetic experiences.

Presentation becomes, in accordance with philosophical tradition, the dominant model in phenomenological research. But first-person experience shows that presentation is not the only mode of givenness and self-givenness. Rather, pushing phenomenology to its limits, the full range of experience shows that there are certain kinds of phenomena of which the genuine mode of givenness cannot be reduced to the way in which objects are presented to a subject. These so-called “limit-phenomena” include, for example, the aesthetic, moral, and religious dimensions of experience. Religious phenomena resist both “religionism” (founded on axiomatic beliefs) and “reductionism” as common approaches in the (academic) field of philosophy of religion. The works of Max Scheler, Emmanuel Levinas, Michel Henry, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jean-Luc Marion can be named as early examples of phenomenological inquiries especially into these regions of phenomena.

Continuing and extending Husserl’s own approach, Anthony J. Steinbock has in recent times investigated the specific kind of givenness of these “limit-phenomena.” Limit-phenomena are not simply phenomena which traditionally have been excluded from philosophical discourse, but they
are also characterized by a specific kind of evidence, namely to be “given as not being able to be given” (Steinbock, *Generativity* 290). Based on Husserl’s late A-, C-, and E- manuscripts (1930-37), Steinbock developed a “generative” phenomenology “after” Husserl, and showed why, by its very nature, phenomenology cannot end with Husserl (Steinbock, *Home and Beyond*). Within generativity, the “limits” can become phenomenal, and the historical, cultural, and intersubjective dimension of experience can be revealed. Thereby, Steinbock opened the Husserlian criterion of self-givenness as presentation to other modes of givenness, through which especially those phenomena can be investigated which are traditionally situated within the limits of phenomenal givenness as presentation. Following the phenomenological first-person perspective and according to the situatedness of the phenomenologist within generativity, the description and analysis of experiential evidence is a main feature of Steinbock’s method.

In my paper, I want to focus not only on the notions of givenness and evidence in Husserl’s phenomenology, but also on phenomenological work “after” Husserl. I will elaborate on how these phenomenological key ideas 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 (I), I want to portray key elements of Steinbock’s discovery of a generative dimension in Husserl’s phenomenology and show how this approach correlates to the field of religious experiences (II). Subsequently, I want to focus on Steinbock’s book *Phenomenology of Mysticism: The Verticality of Religious Experience* (2007), and elucidate how for Steinbock different historical examples of mystical experiences can serve as leading clues for the revelation of the essential, eidetic structures of “vertical experiences”—or, phenomenologically speaking, the eidos of religious experience, which turns out to be “epiphany” (III). 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.

One of Steinbock’s insights is that the knowledge revealed in mystical experience is a specific cognition of the divine Self. Further investigation into the testimonies of mystical experiences gives a deeper understanding of different modes of how that which is experienced as the “Holy” can be given in experience. The evidence of mystical experience leads to the question of the “Who” of this experience. Is the “self” self-grounding? Or does the “self” receive its “Self” from somewhere else, is it bound to and by God? Taking the testimonies of the mystics and their manifold experiences of how the “Holy” is given to them as leading clues, it can be shown that the self is not self-giving, but receives its individuation and freedom from the “Holy.”

### I. Husserl’s Notions of Self-Givenness, Evidence, and Original Intuition

The notion of givenness or self-givenness has a high relevance in Husserl’s and post-Husserlian phenomenology. The concept of self-giving first appears in the context of Husserl’s refutation of representational theory (image/sign theory) of consciousness in the second volume of his *Logical Investigations* (1901). In particular, the term self-giving or self-givenness is situated in the context of a phenomenology of perception, since in Husserl’s view the image-theory of consciousness primarily fails concerning the problem of perception (see *Logical Investigations* 2 125-6). In short, the image theory of consciousness argues that there is a thing itself outside of consciousness, whereas in consciousness, there is a copy of the thing. Husserl opposes his phenomenological...
theory of perception according to which “the intentional object of a presentation is the same as its actual object, and on occasion as its external object, and that it is absurd to distinguish between them” (*Logical Investigations* 2 127).

The phenomenological endeavor aims at investigating the manifold experiences of the self or I (ego) in the world and, *vice versa*, its intention is to understand the manifold ways in which the world is given in experience. The notion of experience in phenomenological thinking is not restricted to “matters of fact” (Husserl, *Ideas I* 7, 17, 33, 143) or to “things belonging to nature” (36), as it is in empiricism, but the phenomenological concept of experience is a “widened one of original self-giving intuition” (Husserl, *Phänomenologische Psychologie* 254) (author’s translation).

In terms of conscious experience, and reduced to the immanence of consciousness, this intentionality between self and world indicates that “it belongs to the essence of every actional cogito to be consciousness of something” (Husserl, *Ideas I* 73). In his late period Husserl calls this reciprocal interrelationship in the context of his reflections on the life-world “the universal a priori of correlation” (Husserl, *Crisis* 159). At first sight, the phenomenological insight into the interdependence between self and world seems commonplace. But in contrast to our natural day-to-day experience and variant theories of naive realism (or scientific objectivism), phenomenology does not take any assumption, presupposition or theory about the self and the things in the world for granted, including the position of existence. In fact, both the supposition of the existence of external (transcendent) things in the world preceding and independent of our experience of the world, and, a fortiori, a Kantian “thing in itself,” are once and for all eliminated.° One goal of this radical phenomenological suspension of any existence of the world and “bracketing” of all truth claims, for which Husserl also uses the Greek term *epoché*, is to set oneself free for the “things themselves” and for a genuine experience of how the things are given to us. Phenomenological thinking focuses on how different acts of consciousness are constituted, experienced, and on the question of how they bestow meaning upon the world (see Ströker 118). Phenomenological inquiry advances from the “different modes of presentification in general,” as Husserl states, into “inquiring consistently and exclusively after the how of the world’s manner of givenness” (Husserl, *Crisis* 160).


2 “What transcendental idealism establishes, in broadest terms, is the dependence of the world as experienced on the experience of the world. What is forever eliminated is the idea of a world independent of experience, or in Kant’s term a thing-in-itself.” “The belief in a mind-independent world, which Kant calls empirical realism, is, in turn, only possible on the basis of transcendental idealism, simply because the statement ‘the world exists independently of experience’ is a statement made on the part of an experiencing agent. There is no escaping transcendental idealism; boldly stated, it is impossible to leave the confines of our mind” (Luft 12).

3 Elisabeth Ströker writes: “Dabei ist nicht die Frage, woher das Sein stamme oder gar, wer es gemacht habe. Sie hätte in der Husserlschen Phänomenologie gar keinen Ort. Husserls Frage lautet metaphysisch bescheidener, aber phänomenologisch eindringlicher: welchen Sinn die vielerlei Rede vom Sein habe, und als was dieser Sinn begriffen werden könne” (Ströker 118).
After carrying out the epoché, the existence of the world is not doubted or deemed an illusion, but inhibited in favour of understanding and clarifying “precisely the meaning of the world which is considered as really existing for everyone, and with real justification” (Husserl, *Ideas III* 152) (author’s translation). Thus, the ultimate task of philosophy and phenomenology (as transcendental-phenomenological idealism) is not the question of being or existence; rather phenomenology aims to elucidate the sense of this world, the meaning of the being of the world and of human existence. The “existing world” is, Husserl says, a “structure of sense and validity” which “goes back to knowing subjectivity” as its “primal locus” (Husserl, *Crisis* 99). One thing is to experience the world in the naivety of the natural attitude. Another thing is to understand this experience. For the latter, a methodologically guided return to the manifold conditions of the ego is necessary. Husserl explicitly established transcendental idealism as the phenomenological return to and reflection of the subject’s experiencing and bestowing meaning upon the world.

In the philosophical tradition, particularly in the Cartesian tradition, the sphere of evidence and the field of what can be taken as philosophically relevant experience have often been limited to the kind of evidence which sensory-empirical or intellectual objects have. As a result, the standards and concepts of possible cognition and understanding have also been confined to these objects and their specific kind of evidence. On the other hand, both our normal day-to-day experience and philosophical or scientific research show that there are phenomena or, more precisely, layers within the phenomena which resist by their very nature any attempt to reduce them to the kind of evidence which sensory-empirical or rational intellectual objects have. The reason for their resistance is that they are not given in the same intentional mode as if, e.g., a subject is affected by an object; phenomenologically speaking, their intentional structure does not follow the same subject-object or noesis-noema scheme and its peculiar laws of constitution as sensible or intellectual objects. This does not mean that these resisting phenomena cannot be accessed through or analysed by reason in any respect whatsoever. Instead, the claim here is that there are specific layers within these phenomena, the very essence of which cannot be adequately grasped and apprehended by standards which a confined set of possible epistemological tools—due to a restricted view of the scope of consciousness—has postulated beforehand. Unprejudiced experience shows that they have their own kind of givenness which can be phenomenologically shown, described, and analysed by their laws of constitution. In order to reveal the fullness and depth of the phenomena, a phenomenologically widened or intensified notion of experience is required. Correlatively, widened and deepened methodological tools and faculties of cognition appropriate to these limit-phenomena or depth layers of the phenomenal world are necessary. Thereby, the possible phenomenal field of research can be extended.

In contrast to rationalism, the significance of phenomenological thinking is a radical openness with respect to different modes of givenness within the phenomenal world without reducing them to the mode of givenness in rational-discursive or representational thinking. Instead of analysing the “subjectivity” or “objectivity” of cognition, phenomenology investigates the manifold modes of how phenomena are given and how they are constituted in experience. The phenomenological term “givenness” does not point to the what, but to the how of experience, and

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4 Husserl states regarding the task of transcendental phenomenology: “Seine einzige Aufgabe und Leistung ist es, den Sinn dieser Welt, genau diesen Sinn, in welchem sie jedermann als wirklich seiernd gilt und mit wirklichem Recht gilt, aufzuklären” (Husserl, *Ideas III* 152).
“each type of objectivity has its typical mode of experience” (Husserl, *Paris Lectures* 24). A specific mode of givenness is the “self-givenness” of things in which the object is fully and directly presented and intuitively given in conscious experience. Therefore, Husserl asserts: “For us, self-giving should be the criterion, and its absolute optimum the ultimate criterion, according to which we justify all judgments, and all our opinions about being” (*Erste Philosophie* 233) (author’s translation). The concept of self-giving does not implicate any ontological or metaphysical statement about the matters which are self-given. Rather, self-givenness indicates the specific measure of adequacy of the intended object in the progression of an “empty” opinion to intuitive fulfillment. Truth, on the other hand, can be characterized as the experience in which the intended object is intuitively self-given.

With the help of phenomenological philosophy, it is possible 1) to show and describe how each phenomenon correlates to a particular kind of evidence or givenness, 2) thereby to develop new methods, and 3) to analyse the specific structure of their correlative experiences. Regarding the latter, Husserl tells us: “Each type of objectivity has its typical mode of possible experience” (*Paris Lectures* 24). And “[e]very existing object belongs to a universe of possible experiences” (25). Similarly, Husserl writes in his *Cartesian Meditations*: “All Evidence, we may say, is experience in a maximally broad, and yet essentially unitary, sense” (*Cartesian Meditations* 93).

The notion of evidence is not to be understood as a mysterious, private feeling, but rather it is the result of a precise intellectual procedure which Husserl calls “ideation” (*Ideas I* 43). Husserl defined evidence, in distinction from inadequate modes of givenness, as “adequate self-givenness” (*Idea of Phenomenology* 44), as “originary presentive consciousness of an essence” (*Ideas I*, 43), and specified it as an “insight into essential relations with ordinary seeing” (43), or as a “mental seeing of something as itself” (*Cartesian Meditations* 12).

The method of “phenomenological reduction” leads back to an “absolute givenness that no longer offers anything transcendent” (Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology* 34); it leads back to “pure seeing,” to “pure phenomenon,” and to “pure consciousness” (42). Phenomenological reduction is not a going back, a regression to the immanence of the cogitatio in contrast to objective transcendence, as it is, for example, in Descartes, but “entails a limitation to the sphere of things that are purely self-given” (Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology* 45).

In order to extend the possible sphere of givenness, Jean-Luc Marion radicalizes Husserl’s method of phenomenological reduction or Heidegger’s reduction to the “Being of beings” (Marion 2) by performing a “third reduction.” This “third reduction” reduces immanent givenness—which

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5 “Selbstgebung soll für uns Maß, und ihr absolutes Optimum das letzte Maß sein, an dem wir alle Urteile, alle unsere Seinsmeinungen bewähren” (Husserl, *Erste Philosophie* 33).

6 “Phenomenological method is a style of openness that in turn allows one to be struck by modes of givenness, by the phenomena. Yet it would be misleading to characterize phenomenological method only in this manner, namely, as a way of circumscribing modes of givenness, since the phenomenal field can on its own part overstep the bounds of a pronounced or presupposed methodological undertaking and demand the formulation of new methodology” (Steinbock, *Static and Genetic Phenomenology* 127).

7 “[F]or Husserl, evidence in the strict sense of the term designates the ideal of a perfect synthesis of fulfillment where a signitive existence-posting intention (typically a claim) is adequately fulfilled by a corresponding perception, thus providing us with the very self-givenness of the object” (Zahavi, *Husserl’s Phenomenology* 32).

8 Jean-Luc Marion writes: “Both [Husserl and Heidegger] are familiar with givenness without officially recognizing it as such” (*Being Given* 38).
is the specific mode of appearing/givenness in “pure” or “transcendental” consciousness—or Dasein to the “being given” of that being because, as Marion puts it, “what shows itself first gives itself” (5). In order to undertake phenomenological research, something must be brought to light and to appearance, it must become a phenomenon. But there are phenomena, e.g. religious phenomena, which radically withstand any attempt to reduce them to the subjectivity of (transcendental) consciousness. Marion calls these phenomena, traditionally located at the “limits” of “phenomenality,” and, thus, of phenomenological inquiry, “saturated” or “paradoxical” phenomena (see 199-220). These phenomena include the “event,” the “idol,” the “body,” the “icon,” and—as an encompassing phenomenon—“revelation” (see 199-220).

II. Generative Phenomenology “after” Husserl

Phenomenology is not a philosophical discipline like metaphysics, ethics, or ontology—rather, it is a style of thinking characterized by a specific correlation between the field of research and the methodological approach, giving the former its primacy. This means that in phenomenological thinking, the constituents of the field of inquiry—the phenomena—determine their correlative access, and not vice versa. In Husserl’s words: “The true method follows the nature of the things to be investigated and not our prejudices and preconceptions” (Husserl, Philosophy as Rigorous Science 102-103).9 According to this claim, Husserl also developed different methods—such as the “static”, “genetic” and “generative” method—in and through the process of research. As Steinbock writes, “the conceptualization of method is accomplished through its execution” (Home and Beyond 7).

In two manuscripts, translated and published as Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Genesis: Lectures on Transcendental Logic (in volume XI of Husserl’s Collected Works) and Phenomenology of Intersubjectivity, Second Part (in volume IV of Husserl’s Collected Works), Husserl explicitly discerns between two methods in phenomenological research: the static and the genetic approach, which correlate, conversely, to different aspects of, or layers within, the phenomenal world.10 Briefly summarized, in static phenomenology, different modes of conscious experiences or acts of consciousness can be described in their essential structure, their static constitution, and at a specific point in time. Husserl’s development of genetic phenomenology between 1917 and 1921 was motivated and induced by new fields of research: genetic phenomenology investigates the problems of genesis and temporalization, teleology and history, dynamic processes, in and through which different experiences are developed and constituted, and the becoming of individual subjectivity, the “self-temporalization” of the monad, monadic individuation (Steinbock, Static and Genetic Phenomenology; see Staiti 129).

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9 “Die wahre Methode folgt der Natur der zu erforschenden Sachen, nicht aber unseren Vorurteilen und Vorbildern” (Husserl, Aufsätze und Vorträge 26).

10 Whereas Husserl refers to the static and genetic method explicitly, Steinbock carves out of Husserl’s unpublished writings a third and implicit dimension of phenomenology. According to Husserl’s own use of the term “generativity” Steinbock calls this approach the “generative method” (Steinbock, Home and Beyond 3).

11 Husserl developed the genetic method, for example, in his lectures of the 1920s, which is documented in texts published in Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Genesis: Lectures on Transcendental Logic (Hua XI) and in Phenomenology of Intersubjectivity, Second Part (Hua IV).
In the manuscripts unpublished in Husserl’s lifetime from the period between 1930 and 1937, Anthony J. Steinbock has—in additional to the static and the genetic method—discovered a new phenomenological dimension which he calls (according to Husserl’s own terminology) “generativity” [Generativität]. Steinbock introduces and develops the concept of “generativity” at length in his book Home and Beyond (1995): “Stated in a provisional manner by generativity or ‘generative’ Husserl means both the process of becoming—hence the process of ‘generation’— and a process that occurs over the ‘generations’—hence specifically the process of ‘historical’ and social becoming that is circumscribed geologically” (3).

Based on Husserl’s unpublished manuscripts, Steinbock develops a “transcendental phenomenological philosophy” of the social world which is transcendental but “non-foundational” (Home and Beyond 3, 9). In Husserl’s phenomenology, sense bestowing consciousness is the condition for the sense of the world and, as Husserl explains in his Cartesian Meditations, also of the other person. In contrast, “non-foundational” refers to the fact that there are phenomena—like those of the social world—which cannot be reduced to the structures of pure consciousness and to transcendental subjectivity. As Steinbock subsequently showed in his book, Phenomenology and Mysticism (2007), the same applies also to religious or mystical experience: in mystical experience, the self which undergoes a mystical experience is not self-grounding, but receives its self from somewhere else (Steinbock, Phenomenology and Mysticism 168). I will come back to this point later.

In these research manuscripts, Husserl addresses, among others, the problems of birth and death, social ethics, homeworld and alienworld, which form the basis for a “generative phenomenology”. Generative phenomena are “historical, geological, cultural, intersubjective, and normative from the very start” (Steinbock, Home and Beyond 178). Generative phenomenology offers specific methodological tools with which so-called “vertical” phenomena—such as the religious experience, the moral sphere, the bodily [leibliche] and ecological dimensions of experience—can be described and analyzed in their specific mode of givenness and experience. The phrase “after Husserl” has two meanings: on the one hand, it refers to a method oriented to Husserl’s phenomenology (even though Husserl did not explicitly use the term “generative” phenomenology); on the other hand, the expression “after Husserl” relates to a method developed and transformed according to the main principles of Husserl’s phenomenology but at the same time transcending it (Steinbock, Home and Beyond 258). The idea of “generativity” includes the social and historical development of phenomenology itself. Steinbock differentiates between “generative” and “Generative Phenomenology”: The former (with a small “g”) deals with generative phenomena such as birth and death, cultural traditions, the concepts of “homeworld” [Heimwelt] and “alienworld” [Fremdwelt].12 The latter (with a capital “G”) addresses the problem of “Generativity.” Generativity deals with intersubjective/social and historical “becoming,” and produces generative phenomena. Traditionally, these phenomena are situated at the “limits” of phenomenality; with the help of a generative method and in generative phenomenology, these phenomena can become phenomenal and can be accessed.

12 A concise overview regarding generative/Generative phenomenology and the main ideas in his books Home and Beyond (1995), Phenomenology and Mysticism, and Moral Emotions (2014) can be found in an interview Iulian Apostolescu conducted with Anthony J. Steinbock (Apostolescu, “The Phenomenologist’s Task” 13-26, 15).
III. The Givenness of Vertical Phenomena

One main (re-)discovery of phenomenological thinking is that the essence of consciousness is intentionality: namely that consciousness is always “consciousness of something” (Husserl, Ideas I 73). Husserl’s lifelong investigation into different forms of intentionality such as perception, memory, imagination, etc., has also shown that what counts as evidence is not limited to empirical or rational-discursive objects, but also includes the intuitive and imaginative dimension of consciousness. The possibility of different modes of givenness or evidence requires, on the part of the phenomenologist or subject, a radical willingness to be open to those phenomena at the limits of experience which contradict any previous type of experience, and, correlative, the type of evidence. Due to the correlation of experience (in the broadest sense) and givenness, in phenomenology, every experience can be described in its necessary and essential structures, starting from and based on the way it is given in experience.

Gerda Walther (1897-1977), a student of Edmund Husserl and Alexander Pfänder, investigated with a phenomenological method, as a pioneer in this field, into religious—more precisely, mystical—experiences. Rather than taking any philosophical, psychological or empirical theories about religious and mystical phenomena for granted, Walther carried out in a phenomenological manner the epoché in order to “unprejudicially envisage” mystical phenomena “just as they present themselves to us in the experiences of those who had mystical experiences” (Walther, Phänomenologie der Mystik 21) (author’s translation). According to Walther, mystical phenomena represent an “archetypal phenomenon” [Urphänomen] (21) which has its unique mode of givenness and which cannot be reduced to, or derived from, other phenomena. Walther also calls this kind of archetypal phenomenon a “primordial givenness” [Urgegebenheit] (21), analogous to the basic evidence of sensory experience.

In the philosophical tradition, one mode of givenness—as the model, as it were, for what counts as reality—is the way objects are presented in perception (in contrast to representing acts, such as remembrance, imagination, anticipation, etc.). Perception has its own specific character of evidence. The givenness of perception is the presentation of the intended object, in contrast to representing acts through signs, images, and symbols. However, from a phenomenological standpoint, it would be a false conclusion to restrict, from the very outset, the field of possible research to the mode of evidence of objects given in pure perception or presentation. It is a characteristic feature of perception that the subject prevails over the object. According to Steinbock, in perception, it depends on the perceiver, on his or her particular focus of attention and activity, which aspect and which quality of the appearing thing is given in each case. Presentation is the mode of givenness correlative to sensible or intellectual objects (Steinbock, Phenomenology and Mysticism 7). In presentation, the intention of the subject, his or her “power to usher things into appearance,” (7) lets the things present themselves. Steinbock calls this particular intentional mode on the part of the subject the “power of provocation” (7), which can also be applied, although in a modified way, to acts of memorizing, imagining, and anticipating.

There are other regions of phenomena which are not given or experienced the same way sensible or intellectual objects are presented, and they are not accessible in their very own essence

13 “Und dieses Urphänomen wollen wir hier völlig vorurteilslos ins Auge fassen, genau so, wie es sich uns im Erleben derer, die mystische Erlebnisse gehabt haben, darstellt” (Walther 21).
through a rational style of evidence. These phenomena are not given through an active intention or “provocation” on the side of the subject correlative to objects of presentation, but rather they presuppose a different attitude and disposition of our Selves so that the matters can give and show themselves and thus, genuinely, give themselves.

This new attitude can be characterized by a certain shift in which the experience of the matters themselves is not intentionally (and subjectively) produced, but “elicited”. Such phenomena, whose self-givenness requires a fundamentally different approach from objects of presentation, Steinbock calls “vertical” phenomena, correlating to the act of “evocation” on the part of the Self. Regarding the specific terminology used in this context, it is important to recall Husserl’s own claim that—in contrast to the so-called exact sciences—in phenomenology correlating to new fields of research, new terms and concepts must be developed which shall not be taken as fixed definitions, but as descriptive terms which are “in flux” [im Fluss] (Husserl, Ideas I 201).

“Vertical” phenomena include the religious or mystical dimension of experience, the experience of the “Holy” (Steinbock, Phenomenology and Mysticism 5), the moral dimension (the experience of the other as a “person” and the experience of the Self as a “person”), and cultural products, insofar as they do not function merely as objects of presentation but, in Steinbock’s words, manifest the “Holy” as “icons” (15). These phenomena cannot be reduced to the mode of givenness of presentation; rather they have their own conditions of constitution which can be described, demonstrated [aufgewiesen], and analysed. Therefore, attempts to merely extend the limits of presentation, and to ignore both how the Divine or Holy is given and the mode of these phenomena in their particular character of evidence will fail to include religious (mystical) phenomena.

Husserl distinguishes different attitudes which the self can adopt in his or her relationship with the world: the natural versus the phenomenological attitude, the attitude of naturalism versus a personalistic attitude, and the theoretical versus a volitional attitude. Verticality cannot be subsumed under one of these attitudes, but represents a radically different type of “attitude” opposed to a “horizontal” attitude or to horizontality induced by a “delimitation” (237), which can be understood as a radical orientation to something particular as if it were absolute. Steinbock calls this attitude a mode of “idolatry” (237). The countermovement to idolatry is “epiphany” (2), which, in turn, represents one specific mode of verticality related to the “Holy” (5). In this context, the more unprejudiced and neutral term “epiphany” is favoured over the expression “experience of God,” for example, since the latter runs the danger of metaphysical equivocation.

Vertical experiences, in contrast, refer to a “dynamic” orientation of the self—whether in religious, moral or even bodily [leiblich] terms—towards “new heights”: “Verticality is the vector of mystery and reverence; horizontality is what is in principle within reach, graspable, controllable” (Steinbock, Phenomenology and Mysticism 13). From a phenomenological point of view, the term verticality, used in this context, is less ambiguous than, for example, the traditional concept of “transcendence,” since in the philosophical tradition the latter is mainly juxtaposed to the notion of immanence (13).

14 Regarding Husserl’s notion of different attitudes, see Staiti, Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology 97-109.

15 Regarding a more detailed description of the specific character of evidence of epiphany, see Steinbock, Phenomenology and Mysticism 2, 5, 149–166.
Mystical experiences might serve as a phenomenological “leading clue” (Steinbock, *Phenomenology and Mysticism* 158) in order to 1) gain access to the various ways in which the “Holy” appears and manifests itself, and 2) to describe the eidetic structure of “vertical” experiences. In *Phenomenology and Mysticism*, three examples of the Abrahamic tradition are presented: the Christian mystic St. Teresa of Ávila, the Jewish mystic Rabbi Dov Baer, and the Sufi Rūzbihān Baqlī. Verticality not only includes religious experience, but can also be experienced in other dimensions of existence such as the inter-personal, ecological or aesthetic sphere. One character of givenness or evidence of vertical phenomena, one mode in which vertical phenomena appear would be, according to the mystics, that they incite “awe,” and, in consequence, “wonder” (14). In analogy to acts of presentation, vertical phenomena also have their corresponding system of modalities which includes, for example, “possible deceptions and illusions” (32), “delusions” (52), “self-deceptions” (121), “hallucinations” (175), and so on.

Other modes of vertical experiences would be “the revelation of human persons,” “the manifestation of cultural products,” “the disclosure of the Earth” (in contrast to the way the “planet” gives itself), and the “display of elemental beings” (5; see also 16). Vertical experiences and their different forms of counter-movements also include the sphere of “moral emotions,” such as pride, shame, guilt, hope, despair, trust, and love. In contrast to other emotions, “moral emotions” essentially and necessarily “belong” to the person as a person, and are both inter-personal and inter-Personal in orientation (Steinbock, *Moral Emotions* 14, 16).

Husserl distinguishes in his 5th *Logical Investigation* between acts that are objectifying (acts of presentations) and ones that are not, such as valuing, emotional, or willing acts. He claims, “Each intentional experience is either an objectifying act or has its ‘basis’ in such an act” (*Logical Investigations* 2 § 41 167). In his book *Moral Emotions*, Steinbock has shown in a phenomenological method that “moral emotions” are not founded in an act of presentation or in what Husserl calls an “objectifying act,” but have their own phenomenological “order” of constitution (Steinbock, *Moral Emotions* 11).

Following Husserl’s own claim that the matters and problems determine the correlative approach and not vice versa, feelings and emotions must be described and valued in their own style of evidence and constitution. Emotional acts which are interpersonal, i.e., in which the other is revealed as a person, do not follow the noesis/noema structure of intentional acts; similar to the vertical phenomena in the field of religious experience, the person as a person is to be understood as “absolute” (Steinbock, *Moral Emotions* 13).

But how can we attain a methodologically guided access to these limit-phenomena? In order to gain access to the “things themselves,” it is, according to Husserl, necessary to inhibit all presuppositions of natural life and scientific theories, to apply to them the “index of indifference” or of “epistemological nullity” (Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology* 30). It is an inhibiting of any judgment, a “disconnection” [Ausschaltung] und “bracketing” [Einklammerung] (Husserl, *Ideas 1* § 31). Step by step, phenomenological “reductions” ultimately lead to “transcendently purified consciousness and its eidetic correlates” [transzendental gereinigtes Bewuβtsein und seine Wesenskorrelate] (Husserl, *Ideas 1* xxi). Applying the method of “bracketing” all kinds of beliefs and theories, the suspension of truth claims, including the presuppositions of modern sciences and the “phenomenological reduction” (Husserl, *Ideas 1*, §§ 31-32) to pure consciousness, to how the matters [Sachen] are immanently given or experienced might set us free for new dimensions of
experiences. This bracketing also liberates oneself for the “things themselves” [*Sachen selbst*]—specifically for those, as Richard Kearny writes, which are not based on any past experiences (Kearney, *Poetics of Imagining* 65).

The method of the phenomenological *epoché* and transcendental reduction, taken in a radical sense, are not accomplished merely through a rational act. They are accomplished through a withdrawing of the whole person from the natural attitude in order to adopt a new attitude (which Husserl calls the “phenomenological attitude”), by which the world as world can be revealed, which on the side of the subject opens a radically new sphere of experience. The radical detachment from the world can be “experienced” (Steinbock, *Phenomenology and Mysticism* 3) in various ways—in the case of the mystic, for example, in an attitude of humility, which the philosopher, theologian, and mystic Meister Eckhart also calls “inner poverty” [*innere Armut*]. Steinbock stresses, “This disposition of the self, however, is not merely an intellectual exercise, for such a divestment of self is lived through” (*Phenomenology and Mysticism* 31).

It is possible only through a free decision that implies a complete “renewal” [*Erneuerung*] of the whole person. Regarding the phenomenological attitude and the method of *epoché*, Husserl even speaks of a “complete personal transformation, comparable in the beginning to a religious conversion” (Husserl, *Crisis* 137). Also in Max Scheler, for example, an analogical process of setting oneself free is accomplished not merely in a rational act, but rather through an existential and personal movement which involves the whole personhood of the person. For Scheler, being free for the things themselves is possible only in an act of love and humility towards all phenomena, through a bracketing of natural impulses and desires (in Scheler’s terminology the “drive”) and thereby an opening to the essential nature of the fullness of the phenomena: “The motivating moment for the execution of the acts which lead to some form of participation can only be a taking-part which transcends itself and its being. We call this, in the most formal sense, ‘love’” (Scheler, *Die Wissensformen und die Gesellschaft* 203) (author’s translation).

What is “bracketed” in the *epoché* is, above all, the “self-interest” of the phenomenologist (Steinbock, *Phenomenology and Mysticism* 4) in the world and in the things. Therefore, “the preconceptions in question concern the preconceptions of the self with which one comes to the phenomena” (4). “What phenomenology really wants to bracket is a self-imposition so as to let the matters flash forth as they give themselves” (4). When the phenomenologist “brackets” his or her self-interest, this attitude initiates an “openness” and “dis-position” (2) for the things, which, in turn, is motivated by a possible self-giving of the things. In the phenomenological attitude, the phenomenologist has become, as Husserl puts it in his late work, a “‘disinterested’ spectator” [*‘uninteressierten’ Betrachters*] (Husserl, *Crisis* 174).

These methodological steps presuppose an act of free (and fully conscious) will. True imagination is oriented towards the things themselves; it is a mode of loving participation in the things, and as Brian Elliott puts it, it is a “function” (*Phenomenology and Imagination* 35) of human freedom. Or as Kearney writes, imagination is “the very precondition of human freedom,”

16 “[B]ewegungsbestimmendes Moment für den Vollzug der Akte, die zu irgendeiner Form der Teilhabe führen, kann nur die sich selbst und sein eigenes Sein transcendierende Teilnahme sein, die wir im formalsten Sinne ‘Liebe’ nennen” (Scheler, *Die Wissensformen und die Gesellschaft* 203).
and “to be free means to be able to surpass the empirical world as it is given here and now in order to project new possibilities of existence” (Poetics of Imagining 6).

Instead of “straightforwardly living into the world” (our normal, everyday experience) and taking the world as a whole and individual objects in the world for granted, the phenomenologist radically reverses his or her views and reflects “the subjective alteration of manners of givenness, of manners of appearing, and of the modes of validity in them” (Husserl, Crisis 146). This new attitude is, as it were, an exceptional existential state, since phenomenological reflection is a radical “rupture” (Steinbock, Phenomenology and Mysticism 3) from the normality and concordance of the natural attitude. In Phenomenology and Mysticism, Husserl’s principle of a reflective attitude toward the “how” of givenness is implemented and, by opening up a new field of research, at the same time carried forward “after” Husserl. A phenomenological exploration of the testimonies of the mystics in a first-person perspective unveils essential characteristics of mystical experience and makes possible a deeper understanding of how “the Holy” is given in immediate experience and in its manifold manners. The textual exegesis or the testimonies of the mystics shows that the specific evidence of mystical experience can generally be described as “epiphany,” although the individual mystical experience alters. Therefore, the unio mystica is described in various ways, for example as “bright light entering into a room,” or “rain falling from the sky” (St. Teresa of Avila), a “radical loss of self-awareness” (Rabbi Dov Baer), or as an “annihilation of the self” (Rūzbīhān Baqlī) (167). The specific character of mystical experiences leads to the question of the “who,” the “I,” or the “self” of this experience. Is the self in mystical experience “self-giving” (167) or “self-grounding” (168)? In his earlier work, Steinbock has shown that Generativity as an eidetic phenomenon (dealing with the “becoming”) is “absolute,” it is irreducible to how the structures of consciousness are discussed in a static or genetic phenomenology. Even though Generativity is “absolute”, it is not “universal”, but specific for the culture and history of the Abrahamic or Greek tradition (Apostolescu, “The Phenomenologist’s Task” 16). Analogous to their essential insights into Generativity and generative phenomena, the experiences of the mystics also show that in the experience of the “Holy,” the self is not “self-grounding”, but “given to Myself” (168). The self is not the constitutive source of itself, but experienced as “received” (168) from somewhere else. The self is bound to the “Holy” or “God” (168), and from there it receives its individuation and its freedom.

Works Cited


