Phenomenological Spirituality
and its Relationship to Religion

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ABSTRACT   This paper develops a phenomenological account of spirituality that can help us think more broadly and deeply about religion and its role in our lives. It begins by explaining spirituality as a supra-subjective force that shapes a subject's intuitive engagement with the world (Section I). Then, it shows that such a spirituality is affective in (and affected by) cultural expression (Section II), by way of historically situated institutions or traditions [*Stiftungen*] (Section III). The last step of the paper will be to connect this account of spirituality to our understanding of religion by articulating four distinct levels of phenomenological analysis that will have emerged in the discussion of spirituality and showing that each of these levels must be accounted for in a distinct way if we want to offer a full-fledged philosophy of religion (Section IV). In so doing, we will see that this account of spirituality potentially helps us see a broader range of things that could count as "religious," in part by helping us see that religion is a particular mode of expressing the spirituality that operates as the deepest motivating impulse driving our lives.

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While "religion" can be a difficult word to define precisely,[1] most of us feel that we know it when we see it. But what if we are wrong? My contention in this paper is that "religion" plays a larger role in our everyday lives than we think, precisely because our operative concept of "religion" is too narrow and/or too shallow for us to properly identify the breadth and depth of religion and its role in our lives. I will try to show this via a phenomenological analysis of our experience. Such an analysis will show us that our experience of the world is fundamentally shaped by what phenomenology calls our "spiritual" situation.[2] This "spirituality" is the culturally affective (and affected) force that shapes our intuitive engagement with the world. Once spirituality's role in our experience is recognized, we will see that what we normally call "religion" must be analyzed, phenomenologically, on at least four different levels. Each of these levels must be accounted for if we are to offer a more robust account of "religion," one that can help us see a broader range of things that function as "religious" in our lives.

I. SPIRITUALITY AS A SUPRA-SUBJECTIVE FORCE

Let us begin, then, by developing the phenomenological account of spirituality that is a main theme of this paper. Such an account begins in Husserl, and most explicitly in Husserl's evocation of spirit in texts from the *Crisis* era. In the "Vienna Lecture," for example, Husserl summarizes his account of spirit by calling it a "vital presentiment" (Husserl 1970, 275). This highlights two key elements of Husserl's account of spirit. First, spirit is essentially living, that is, tied to life:[3] it is a dynamic force and not merely a concept, position, or goal; it is affective, not merely effected. Spirit moves people, shaping the very way they engage with the world around them in profound and innumerable ways, while at the same time being constituted in or by

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1. See Schilbrack 2014 for a summary and analysis of this difficulty.

2. The notion of "spirit" is an inherently ambiguous term. Here, I will seek to develop and explain how that term is used within the philosophical tradition of phenomenology. In that tradition, "spirit" is a translation of Geist and its variations (geistig, geistlich, etc.), and as such there is nothing inherently "religious" or supernatural about "spirit" as it functions in phenomenology, as I will try to show in the first three sections of the paper. In the fourth section, I will then try to show how this account of spirituality relates to the more traditionally English associations spirituality has with religion. I also do some of this clarification of spirituality vis-à-vis the religious in (DeRoo 2018).

3. The beginning of any evaluation of the relationship between Henry's and Husserl's accounts of spirituality—a relationship that I will be taking for granted in this paper—begins with this question of life. For a more in-depth analysis of the relation between Husserl's and Henry's accounts of spirituality (see DeRoo, forthcoming B).

the (surrounding) world(s) in which it finds itself.[4] This is the "vital" part of spirit as a "vital presentiment."

Secondly, the invocation of "presentiment" here is meant to indicate that spirit plays an essential role in our intuitive engagement with the world. More specifically, and without going too far astray into Husserl's epistemology, spirit shapes the "clarifying" mode of intuition that helps narrow the range of intuitional possibilities via the horizon of expectations out of which we operate (Husserl 2001, 79–80). By filling some of the emptiness of the intended object, the clarifying mode enables the intended object to coincide with a confirming-fulfilling intuition in a synthesis by which "the merely expected object is identified with the actually arriving object, as fulfilling the expectation" (Husserl 2001, 79). In this regard, spirit is a central facet of the horizons that shape and condition our engagement with the world: spirit is an active, dynamic force that shapes how we bring the world to intuition by shaping the "clarifying intuitions" which enable us to pre-figure what is coming within a horizon of expectations that is operative in any and all experience. Without such pre-figured expectations, experience would simply not be possible.[5]

But the fact that spirit plays a central role in the constitution of our experience does not mean that spirit is simply a subjective attitude or action. Rather, as Husserl makes clear, "the attitude [in which spiritual meaning is seen] does not itself constitute the spiritual entity" for "the material-spiritual is already preconstituted, prethematic, pregiven" (1989, 238 n. 1; see also Pulkinnen 2013, 127). The invocation of the "material-spiritual" is important to signal that spirituality is not a "super-empirical" (Schilbrack 2013) entity somehow divorced from material conditions. This is not a dualistic, supernatural spirituality, as one finds, e.g., in many popular forms of Protestant Christian evangelicalism, but rather the very meaningfulness inherent in material things themselves: "spiritual meaning" is "embodied" in the environment of the lifeworld (Husserl 2008, 427),[6] such that we can

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4. This reciprocal nature of the spirit-culture relationship would seem to be the starting point for distinguishing the phenomenological account of spirituality from Hegel's account of Spirit: while Spirit is expressed in the world, for Hegel it is not clear that such expressions alter the essential nature of Spirit itself. There is, then, a very different understanding of the relationship between subjectivity and culture at work in the phenomenological account than in Hegel's account, which greatly impacts their respective understandings of spirit, culture, and expression (see Miettinen 2014).

5. I defend this claim at some length in the second chapter of *Futurity in Phenomenology* (DeRoo 2013).

6. This theme is examined at much greater length in (Pulkinnen 2013) than I can do here. I think the notion of expression would be a helpful addition to Pulkinnen's analysis.

see "houses, bridges, tools, works of art, and so on" (Husserl 1959, 151) as "spiritual products" (Husserl 1970, 270) insofar as they have a "spiritual" meaningfulness (Husserl 1997, 111, 8, 384f, 408f; see also Husserl 1952, 236ff) that is "not externally associated, but internally fused within as a meaning belonging to [the material object] and as expressed in it" (Husserl 1997, 112; Pulkinnen 2013, 125). As such, spirituality is not simply a matter of individual choice, individual beliefs, or individual actions. Rather, spirituality is a force that we encounter in the world itself, one that conditions the intuitive engagements that individual subjects have with the world and that also shapes the very material make-up of the world itself. Both subjects and objects are affected by—and, in a certain sense, affect—spirituality, even if this affection happens pre-consciously, pre-theoretically: intuitively.

Spirituality, therefore, is a dynamic, vital force that shapes our pre-theoretical horizons—not just intra-subjectively, but supra-subjectively, including the very material make-up of our world—in a way that is necessary for experience itself but of which we may not be consciously aware, even as we are being guided by it.

II. Spirituality and Cultural Expression

Yet this brief summary of the phenomenological account of spirituality certainly leaves something to be desired. Most notably, we have said that spirit helps shape the horizons of expectation and so influences the "clarifying intuitions" of particular subjects, but we have not made clear how this is accomplished, and we have not even come close to explaining how spirit shapes the material conditions of the world. We must now try to remedy this lack, if we are to see the true impact of spirituality for phenomenology, and for our understanding of religion.

To begin to address this lack, let us clarify the mode of affectivity by which spirit is affective. If, as we have said, spirit affects subjects and the world, it then makes sense to ask: what is the nature of the affectivity and how is it carried out? One can distill an answer to this question from Michel Henry, who speaks of spirituality as affectivity itself, an affectivity that is shaped by (even as it also shapes) our (cultural) relation to the world.[7] For while Henry offers us a distinction[8] between the world of things, on the one hand, and the world of human reality as affectivity, on the other,

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7. I have discussed spirituality as the relationship between self, world and Life in Henry in much greater detail in (DeRoo, forthcoming B). Those wishing for a more in-depth reading of Henry than I offer here are asked to consult that article.

8. Henry is clear that this distinction is one in modes of appearing (Henry 2012, 17).

he invokes spirituality as the movement that connects Life to the world in the human (2012, 14).[9]

Spirituality, for Henry, is the relationship, within Life, between Life and its experiencing of itself (2012, 85). It is, in other words, the relationship between experience, the experiencer and what is experienced: it is affectivity as expression.[10] Given the dual nature of the human as both generated (i.e., inherently related to Life) and created (i.e., external to Life itself and therefore "in the world" (Henry 2012, 84)), human spirituality is also dual: our internal connection to Life in its generativity (auto-affectivity) and our inherent "openness" to the world as created (hetero-affectivity). Both of these are premised on an internal resonance with Life within our own being, a resonance that is the principle of our relation with ourselves, with the world (Henry 2012, 31), and with others (Henry 2012, 30).[11] This resonance is not one way of being affected, but our very mode of being-affected itself, prior even to the distinction between auto-affectivity and hetero-affectivity. As such, spirituality does not merely affect us in one particular way or other but is the very affectivity that is at the root of our relationship with ourselves, the world, and with Life.

But this affectivity is not an a priori given of subjectivity. Rather, affectivity is generated within our living, which is to say, for Henry, through Life's unfolding of itself through living beings (*vivants*). Spirit—qua affectivity—is generated through the unfolding of life itself and therefore spirituality is constituted within human living. In exercising the task of our own living,[12] we inevitably use "elements of the Earth [to] move and modify the Earth in multiple ways and to give it a new form" (Henry 2013, 45). We call these elements "tools," and the "tool is originally nothing but an extension of the immanent subjective Body [that] is thus part of the organic body" (Henry 2013, 45). Thus, through cultural creation (e.g., of tools), the Earth is

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9. In this regard, a proper understanding of the role of spirituality in Henry is crucial to responding to the claim that Henry is dualistic, and perhaps even Gnostic, in his portrayal of a sharp distinction between Life and the world (Rivera 2015).

10. The accounts of expression offered by Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and Deleuze may prove crucial to properly understanding Henry's account of expression, and therefore of the relationship he posits between Life and world, and the role that spirituality plays in that relationship. On expression in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, see (DeRoo, forthcoming A, 2020). On expression in Deleuze, see: (Deleuze 1992; Wasser 2007; Bowden 2017).

11. Who, qua livings (*vivants*), are also generated within, and resonate with, the same Life that generates and resonates within myself (Henry 2012, 37).

12. In the original Praxis of Life, there is a Co-belonging (*Copropriation*) or co-embodiment, a shared *corps-propre* between Body and Earth (Henry 2013, 45), that entails that, from the perspective of life, we must begin with the world as the extension of Life, i.e., as the life-world.

the extension of the living of Living beings (*vivants*), the extension of Life, into and as the (life-) world. Such cultural "tools" include "cultures of food, shelter, work, erotic relations or relations to the dead," (Henry 2013, xv) but also the "higher forms of culture such as art, ethics or religion" that "are also modes of *techne*" (Henry 2013, 47). Beyond concrete things and institutions, culture also includes "the moral or religious *habitus*" that are "direct and immediate expressions of living subjectivity" (Henry 2013, 47) and which, as Husserl's analyses of spirit and the lifeworld in the *Crisis*—and analyzed in the first section of this paper—have shown us, are deeply constitutive of the whole of the subject's engagement with the (life-) world.

Via this subjective engagement—which is nothing other than Life continuing to grow itself through the practical living of living beings—the cultural world is the Life-world, and the Life-world, in turn, is not simply a horizon or stage on which the drama of human living unfolds, but is the proper body [*corps propre*] (Henry 2013, 47)[13] (perhaps even the Flesh?) of the living being insofar as that (life-)world is the cultural expression of the living being's relation to Life. In this regard, culture simply is the various ways Life grows itself via living beings' relations to themselves, others, and the world. It is also, therefore, spiritual through and through, insofar as spirituality names the relation between life, living beings (*vivants*), and their living. Culture is the enactment of spirituality, even as that spirituality is inexorably shaped by the culture in which it finds itself.[14] That is to say, spirit does not just affect how we understand or make sense of culture, it affects also how Life is able to grow and unfold itself within that culture, and as such it affects the very relationship living beings are able to have with Life within that culture. Culture is what it is because of the spirituality at work in it, even as that spirituality is what it is because of the culture in which it is operative. The nature of spirituality is always at stake in the question of culture, even as the possibility of culture itself is at stake in the nature of spirituality.

III. Spirituality and Tradition
But Henry's place within the phenomenological tradition is not universally recognized or affirmed.[15] Hence, to placate those who might object

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13. For more on Henry's idiosyncratic use of corps-propre and several related neologisms (e.g., Copropriation and corps-proprié) and their translation into English, see the translator's introduction to *Barbarism* (2013, xii).

14. A point Henry discusses at length in *Barbarism*.

15. His status as "phenomenologist" is contested most famously in: (Janicaud 2000).

to an appeal to Henry in developing a "phenomenological" account of spirituality, and to further clarify the relationship between culture and spirituality, there is one last moment in phenomenology that I would like to turn briefly to here. We can see that "spirit," as developed by Henry (as an extension of Husserl; see DeRoo, forthcoming B), names a sort of primordial pre-phenomenon constituting both subjects and world. Henry considered spirituality to be the very relationship between Life and its experience of itself, and therefore considered it coterminous with affectivity. But this affectivity was not merely subjective, insofar as life does not merely reside within subjects but, via culture, encompasses both subject and world within the "living body" of the subject-world's shared *corps propre*. Turning to Merleau-Ponty here will therefore accomplish two goals: it will help us see more clearly how this spirit acts, via culture, to shape and alter the entirety of the subject's engagement with the world, while also more firmly entrenching the analysis within the mainstream of phenomenological reflection (for those for whom that might be a concern).

Spirit's mode of action is bi-directional: subjects enact the force of spirituality through their actions in the world, even as the world enacts spiritual force upon the subject. This is alluded to already in Husserl (where the material-spiritual is "preconstituted, prethematic" and "pregiven"), but is made clear through Merleau-Ponty's late account of sense. In his later work, sense comes to be understood, for Merleau-Ponty, as the movement out of which subjects (and the "world") are constituted,[16] similar to how we have been talking about spirit so far. But rather than attributing this movement explicitly to spirit, Merleau-Ponty attributes it to "Nature," insofar as nature is understood as the "auto-production" of sense (2003b, 3)[17] rather than as a collection of objects. On this understanding, sense is understood primordially as a background or field (Merleau-Ponty 2003a) that provides the foundation for distinct acts of sense: sense is a sort of "pre-culture" (Merleau-Ponty 2003b, 176) that provides the foundation for later cultural acts. This "pre-culture" takes on existence in the mode of a *Stiftung*, that is, of an institution or tradition that pursues a purpose determined in its founding. In this regard, *Stiftungen* are the mode of being of sense (Barbaras 2004, 58).

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16. On sense as a movement of self-differentiation and auto-production (see Ferrari 2018).

17. In describing Nature this way, however, Merleau-Ponty clearly moves beyond a simple Nature-spirit dichotomy in ways that are reminiscent of Husserl's hyphenated material-spiritual.

If sense is a field that "is" in the mode of a *Stiftung*, this is in part be-cause Being comes to be understood, for Merleau-Ponty, as interrogation (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 121) and not simply the "being-there" of objectivity: "The existing world exists in the interrogative mode" (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 103). To be is to interrogate, that is, to operate as a type of questioning, an opening of something that demands an answer even as it precludes giving a final and definitive answer that would close the question down entirely, and therefore enable us to stop interrogating. Such a project of interrogat-ing is simply called "living" (Lawlor 2003, 1–2), and it is the fundamental mode of Being of all living creatures. At least in the human case, this living takes the form of cultural creation, producing "tools" that are extensions of that living into the life-world. But these "tools" are not confined strictly to physical objects (though it would include those as well—the hammer is a sort of *Stiftung* as well), but can include also, as Henry said, the "higher forms of culture such as art, ethics or religion" (2013, 47). As such, these "higher forms of culture' exist as *Stiftungen*, that is, as institutions or tra-ditions that embody or express a particular sense, a particular spirit. Such *Stiftungen* shape the subject's (interrogative) life, influencing the questions she asks, the possibilities she sees, the expectations with which she engages the world (to return to the Husserlian explanation of spirit). Spirit, then, is expressed concretely in and as *Stiftungen*, institutions or traditions that are both spiritual products (resulting from human action) and spiritually productive (shaping subjects and their modes of engaging with the world). And people live both in and through these *Stiftungen* in the development of their own concrete modes of life. *Stiftungen*—traditions or institutions—are the direct means by which spirit affects subjects and the world. They are the concrete "how" of spiritual affectivity.

IV. SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION

The preceding description of a phenomenological understanding of spiri-tuality and its function in shaping subjects and the world is sufficient for us to already see some significant repercussions for our understanding of, and engagement with, religion. In doing so, I also hope to deal with another issue that might arise from this account of spirituality, one alluded to al-ready by the questions raised about our use of Henry in this analysis. For some may object to my use of "spirituality" here as an attempt to smuggle religious presuppositions into phenomenological analysis:[18] "Why would

18. Indeed, I have gotten several comments to this effect when I have presented this mate-rial at various conferences, workshops, etc.

you want to call this 'spirituality'?" such people could ask me: "Doesn't that make the whole thing seem too religious?"

This problem might be unique to the Anglophone world (I'm not sure people would object the same way to my talking about *Geist* as they do to talk about "spirit"), but raises an important consideration: what is the relationship between this account of spirituality and religion? I have tried to be clear that this "material-spiritual" account of spirituality cannot be confused with Judeo-Christian (or at least Protestant Evangelical)[19] accounts of spirituality as the immaterial correlate of materiality: there is no other-worldly dualism at stake here, but simply the (life-) worldly nature of this world itself. But let me try to explain now, more positively, how the account of spirituality developed here affects our understanding of religion, and vice versa.

To begin this explanation, we must remember that this phenomenological account of spirituality, as the culturally-situated name for the pre-primordial phenomena constituting both subjects and world, is expressed in all parts of our (cultural) lives. As we said in our discussion of Henry, this spirit is expressed in religion, but also in art, ethics, cuisine, and so on.[20] Religion, therefore, signifies one mode of spirituality's expression—a mode that must be further clarified to articulate, precisely, what it is for spirit to be expressed religiously, rather than ethically, aesthetically, etc.[21] This leads us to a distinction that is important to clarifying the relationship between spirituality and religion: religion is an expression of spirituality but cannot be conflated with it.

19. What I am describing here is the notion of spirituality at work in many popular forms of Protestant Christianity. Its most extreme form can be found in the popular theology of Evangelicalism, though it finds expression also in a lot of "devotional" practices across the Protestant spectrum. Indeed, the very distinction between a "devotional" or "spiritual" life, and a "mundane" or everyday life is itself indicative of the very dichotomy I am trying to highlight here.

20. There are structural similarities to Hegel here, in terms of Spirit being expressed in religion, but also in other cultural modes. As such, the Hegelian reflections on religion as a form of expression of Spirit may prove helpful in expanding on a philosophy of religiosity (whose need I will argue for below), and I thank an anonymous reviewer of this article for pointing out this potential. I do not think the Hegelian account of spirit will prove as helpful for a philosophy of spirituality, though, given some of the fundamental differences I see between Hegel's and phenomenology's accounts of spirit. For the Hegelian account of religion, (Hegel 1984–1987). The secondary literature on Hegel and philosophy of religion is massive; some texts that might prove helpful for the purposes outlined here include (Black 1977; Labuschagne and Slootweg 2012; Birchall 1980).

21. I have tried to argue elsewhere that the uniquely "religious" expression of spirit is to make spirit explicit, to bring it concretely (though not necessarily consciously) to the forefront of the subject's life and behavior (DeRoo 2018, section four).

Yet thus far our analysis of spirituality has also shown us that "religion," or the religious expression of spirit, can itself be broken down into further levels of analysis. We can distinguish, then, between spirit and religiosity (i.e., the drive to express spirit religiously, rather than aesthetically, etc.), but we can also distinguish religiosity, as the drive to express spirit religiously, from its concrete expressions in particular religious *Stiftungen,* the different traditions or institutions that have arisen historically as distinct modes of the religious expression of spirit (Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, etc.). These constitute a third level of phenomenological analysis of religion: in addition to spirit, and the uniquely religious way in which it is expressed, we must also examine the distinct traditions/institutions by which that spirit is religiously expressed in any particular historical and concrete instance. This, then, leads to a fourth level of analysis, insofar as those traditions/institutions can also be distinguished from the actual concrete phenomena (beliefs, objects, rituals, practices, etc.) that express the religious tradition in a religious way.[22]

There are then four layers of the phenomenological analysis of religion that emerge from this understanding of spirituality: spirit; its uniquely religious expression (which we are calling religiosity); the historical tradition/institution through which that religious expression manifests itself; and the concrete phenomena that express those traditions/institutions and are the direct object of our (religious) experience. These four layers are phenomenologically distinct, though experientially intertwined: I can only experience the earlier levels via recourse to the later ones (e.g., I can only experience Christianity through exposure to Christian beliefs, practices, rituals, etc.; I can only experience religiosity through Christianity, Islam, Judaism, etc.), and the meaning or significance of the later levels is found in the way they express the earlier levels (my drinking wine from a cup, for example, takes on religious significance in the context of certain Christian beliefs and practices pertaining to the Eucharist).

It is important to keep the levels distinct in our (reflective) analysis of religious experience. Failure to do so results in category mistakes. Let me use an example to illustrate the significance of such category mistakes for how we reflect on religion: it is common, nowadays, to think of religion in terms of beliefs in super-empirical realities (to use Kevin Schilbrack's phrase). But such a notion seems, to me, to conflate both one particular religious tradition (the Abrahamic one) with the religious mode of expression itself,

22. That is, they attempt to bring our relationship to spirituality to the forefront of our subjective life in some meaningful way.

and conflates one particular element of that tradition (e.g., its epistemic contents) with the whole of that tradition. Due to this double-conflation, we take Abrahamic religions to be primarily about belief in God,[23] and then take such a belief to be constitutive of religion itself. This, in turn, limits what could ever count as religion: since religion is conflated with a particular type of belief, it can only be operative in certain experiences we have that pertain to that belief, which, in turn, means that only certain traditions/institutions could count as religious (we can maybe find a way to fit Buddhism or Taoism into such a category, but never sports or consumerism), and, therefore, also that only certain concrete phenomena (and our experience of them) could count as "religious" phenomena of which we could have a "religious" experience.[24]

But if we acknowledge the conflation of a religious tradition (or one element of one religious tradition) with religiosity itself, we are open to the possibility of a more expansive definition of religiosity, which would, in turn, open the possibility of a wider array of both religious traditions and religious phenomena. For example, James K.A. Smith has offered a phenomenology of the mall as a religious site of worship (2009). While few would debate that the mall offers a particularly poignant expression of consumerism (one that has perhaps now been eclipsed by Amazon), there is great reservation to thinking of the mall as a religious site, insofar as consumerism cannot be a religion because it harbors no beliefs (positive or negative) concerning super-empirical entities. If religiosity is about articulating beliefs about super-empirical entities, it is unclear that consumerism can be a religious tradition[25] or the mall a religious phenomenon.

Now, and in keeping with Schilbrack's concern in "What is not religion," this does not mean that we wish to consider "everything" as religion, thereby overextending the definition of religion to the point of uselessness.

23. As we will see below, this account of Abrahamic religions is itself expressive of a particular spirituality and as such is a particular, historically- and culturally-contextualized understanding of Abrahamic religions. It is how many people today conceive of (Abrahamic) religions, both academically (Taylor 2007) and popularly, but this does not mean that it is how all people within the Abrahamic religious traditions would conceive of religion. In fact, as I have argued elsewhere, I do not think this is a particularly good understanding of religion, according to what religion means to many of its most devoted followers (see DeRoo 2018).

24. For more on the relationship between spirituality as conceived in phenomenology and "religious experience" (DeRoo 2018).

25. Assuming, of course, that what we are here calling "spirituality" would not rise to the level of a "super-empirical reality," as Schilbrack uses that term. If it does, then there should be no problem in considering consumerism as at least a possible religion, insofar as it would be an expression of a consumerist spirituality.

The analysis offered so far has clearly stated that not everything is religion: religiosity is but one mode of spiritual expression, distinct from, e.g., aesthetic expression, ethical expression, culinary expression, etc. So, while this analysis would broaden the scope of what counts as religion, I do not think it follows that it would therefore consider everything religious.

However, this analysis might end up offering as religious things that seem counter-intuitive (to some people) to consider religious. But such a move is not, in and of itself, inherently problematic: we no longer think it problematic, for example, that our consideration of who was considered a person was expanded, in previous decades, to include racial, ethnic, and sexual groups that some people had not thought fit to attribute full personhood to. However, including non-religious things within the confines of "religion" may be uniquely problematic when it comes to religion in part because it is common in religious studies to work at defining religion by taking the full range of what people consider religious, and trying to distill or abstract from that group the set of characteristics that enable one to classify the thing in question as "religious." On such a methodology, including things that are not "religious" in the original set therefore threatens to corrupt the entire definition of religion.

In response to this concern, allow me to raise two possibilities:[26] first, it is entirely possible that what is appropriate for religious studies (insofar as that is an empirical discipline studying empirical realities) may not be appropriate for a phenomenology of religion (insofar as phenomenology may have a necessarily transcendental dimension to it[27]). In that sense, it may be the case that the object of study in the two fields is not the same, and so there need be no problem if what one field considers "religious" is not considered religious in the other field. There could simply be different definitions of "religion" at work in the two fields. Indeed, using our fourfold distinction proposed earlier, we could perhaps say that the task of religious studies is to investigate religious traditions and the phenomena which express them (levels 3 and 4), while the task of a phenomenology of religion is to clarify religiosity (level 2) and its relationship, structurally, to the other three levels.

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26. There is also a third possibility, which we will not have time to pursue here: that "religion" best applies, not to distinct phenomena, but to a distinct element of experience operative in all phenomena. For the outline of such a possibility, (see DeRoo 2018).

27. Since I do not want to take time here to argue the necessity (or not) of a transcendental move in phenomenology, let us leave this simply as a possibility.

This possibility of different definitions of religion for religious studies and the phenomenology of religion suggests that there may be a different definition of religion operative at the level of religious traditions than there is at the level of "religiosity." Rather than being problematic for our preceding analysis, however, this could, in fact, give further evidence for it. Here I would like to raise a second possibility, namely that there might be spiritual reasons (in the phenomenological sense) for the fact that some people find it counter-intuitive to extend the range of "religion" to include things that make no reference to super-empirical realities. If Henry's analyses are correct that our current age is empowered by a spirit of "barbarism" that inherently denies subjective Life—and, by implication, the spirituality that expresses and constitutes subjective Life concretely (Henry 2013)—should we not expect a cultural expression that brings that spirituality to the forefront to be one that denies any (this-worldly) significance to spirituality or religion? This would not mean that spirituality would cease to be affective (as Henry makes clear, barbarism remains an expression of Life, even if it is a sick one), but merely that such a spirit would express itself precisely in a denial of the practical value of any kind of spirituality. As such, defining religion as pertaining only to "belief in super-empirical realities" may itself be a moment in the (religious?) expression of a contemporary spirituality, a spirituality that is expressed religiously through consumerist practices and rituals, such as television, a culture of advertising, and getting lost in the frenetic pursuit of lifeless "things" rather than in the production of spiritually-rich "tools" or works of art.[28] If this is the case, then defining religion as belief in super-empirical realities would itself be a religious phenomenon, a statement expressing a particular religious expression of a particular spirituality, and therefore continuing with that definition of "religion" would, at best, provide us only with a religiously "regional" definition of religion, one that would be persuasive within the tradition of barbarism but would have no bearing upon those inhabiting, or wishing to inhabit, a distinct religious tradition or spirit;[29] at worst, it would be to suffer a category mistake, conflating religious phenomena with religiosity itself.

28. All of these phenomena are explicitly tied to the spirit of barbarism in Henry's analyses in *Barbarism* (2013).

29. This "or" here is disjunctive, not associative: I do not mean to conflate religious traditions and spirituality, but rather to say that the definition would have no bearing on people: a) who inhabit, or wish to inhabit, a differing religious tradition; or b) who express, or wish to express, a differing spirit.

My point in raising these possibilities is not to argue against Schilbrack or to offer a competing account of religion. Rather, I am trying to highlight how the analysis of spirituality offered here is not only distinct from religion, but can, in fact, help us broaden our experience of religion (by opening up the possibility of more things being taken as "religious" than we might currently think) and help us deepen our experience of religion (by seeing it as a mode of expressing a primordial spirituality, and not merely as distinct traditions or phenomena). In so doing, our preceding analysis has also suggested that the various levels of phenomenological analysis may need to each be understood on their own terms, in addition to how they relate to each other. In that regard, we should expect, and perhaps require, different methods for the study of concrete religious phenomena, for example, than for the study of the religious mode of expressing spirituality itself. Indeed, there might even be differing philosophical approaches to the various levels: a philosophy of spirituality will not be the same as a philosophy of religiosity, which itself would be different from the philosophy of a particular religious tradition or other (e.g., a philosophy of Christianity and/or a Christian philosophy). These distinctions are ones that (Western) philosophy of religion has not paid attention to. For too long, this field has simply been conflated with doing a philosophy of some particular religious tradition or other (usually Christianity), such that "philosophy of religion" has become conflated with philosophical explorations of particular doctrines (e.g., the foreknowledge of God in the "free will" debates; Divine impassibility; etc.) or with proving the "rationality" of religious claims or experiences (e.g., proofs for the existence of the Abrahamic God; the justification of the possibility of having an experience of such a God (Marion 2008 and 2017)). Such "philosophy of religion" seems, rather, to be "philosophy of one particular religious tradition," rather than a philosophy of religion itself.

Noting this does not make what has traditionally been called the "philosophy of religion" insignificant or somehow philosophically suspect. Phenomenologically speaking, our access to spirit is always mediated, we have said, through our experiences of the lower levels. In describing and philosophizing about the various ways in which we experience spirituality, we will therefore necessarily and inexorably draw on the various religions whereby we express the religious impulse to express that spirituality. As such, religious scholars cannot help but use religious language to talk about their experiences of spirituality; doing so is not veering outside phenomenology (Janicaud 2000) or philosophy precisely because, qua spiritual expression, religious language is a religious (and therefore phenomenal)

expression of (the religious expression of) spirituality, which, qua pheno-
menal, therefore remains within the purview of phenomenology. As such,
the discussions remain distinctly philosophical. However, such discussions
do remain wholly dependent on the religious tradition and theology one
occupies when one is engaged in them.[30] As such, while these responses
may offer a philosophy, it seems to be a philosophy of a particular religion
(Henry 2002), and not yet a philosophy of religion itself, or of the religious
impulse or spirituality.

The account of spiritual expression suggested here therefore calls us
to develop a philosophy of religiosity and a philosophy of spirituality,
alongside (and perhaps in order to situate) any philosophy of religion(s).
Indeed, paying attention to the four distinct levels of phenomenological
analysis laid out here, we can see four distinct philosophical tasks emer-
ging from the domain of what was previously considered "philosophy of
religion": 1) a philosophy of spirituality (which would have impacts on
a philosophy of religion, but would not be wholly within its purview);
2) a philosophy of religiosity as a distinct mode of spiritual expression;
3) the philosophy of particular religious traditions/institutions, such as
a philosophy of Christianity, and perhaps a Christian philosophy, depend-
ing on how the latter term is understood (see Simmons 2019); and 4) the
philosophical exploration of concrete religious phenomena—through a
philosophical theology (i.e. a philosophical justification or exploration of
particular beliefs and practices[31]) that could also include a phenomenology
of particular (religious) experiences; (Steinbock 2007)[32]. The sooner we
can recognize that these are four distinct philosophical tasks, the sooner
we can clarify the object(s) of our inquiry and contribute more helpfully
to the academic study (and, ideally, also to the lived practice) of religion.

My hope, therefore, is that this understanding of spirituality-as-
(phenomenological)-sense can help us think differently about religion,

30. It must be noted that the "death of God" theology is one such type of theological or
religious approach. It might be parasitical upon other religious traditions (especially Christia-
nity), but this need not entail that it cannot also be its own unique approach.

31. Perhaps the "problem of evil" would be situated here, since it constitutes a philosophi-
cal problem of the coherence of certain "Greek-Abrahamic" attributes of God (omniscient,
omnipotent, and omnibenevolent) with either our experiences of evil, or with rational justifi-
cations/understandings of evil. But it remains a problem of philosophically justifying certain
claims held within the Abrahamic religious tradition(s), and not a matter of philosophizing
about religion in a broad sense.

32. As should be clear, a "phenomenology of spirituality," where spirituality is conceived in
a particular religious or mystical way, would fit here, and not in a philosophy of spirituality
in the broader sense.

religious traditions, and religious experience. It would enable us to open the field of "religious studies" to potentially new phenomena (e.g., the mall) and traditions/institutions (e.g., consumerism), and it would significantly alter our understanding of the task of philosophy of religion, which is now revealed to include, at least, a philosophy of religiosity, a philosophy of distinct religious traditions, and a philosophy of concrete religious phenomena.

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