

Phil 23: Religious Experience, Experience of the Sacred

Religious experience is at the heart of religions, not belief, doctrine, ritual, though these are critical elements. What is religious experience?

Eliade: Experience of the sacred is an experience of the Power of being

Guerriere: Salvational Experience is the core of religion and is an experience of Love: to let be. Experience of iniquity, self-centeredness and pride is an experience of what deprives one of one's being. Evil is what undermines my being, salvational power is what renews or restores my being. This salvational experience and its effects are essentially temporal.

Miller: Temporality is the condition of vulnerability and suffering. Craving to control or escape this vulnerability runs our lives. [read p159 "dream of eternal present."] P160: Eternity is not an escape from time. Eternity is experienced as the **rupture** of temporality. This rupture is the constant moment and movement of desire and yearning (the experience of resistance to our will, conflict-Russon). This is the motivation that arises from our vulnerability most deeply experienced in wonder, horror, anguish and awe that moves us beyond our meaning to a realization of our finitude, contingency, and nothingness. [a rupture is an entry of radical otherness into consciousness, something that makes consciousness self-conscious by its otherness, but cannot be known. It is much more powerfully felt than ordinary emotions that operate IN a world. Rupture happens TO a world, TO meaning, is the **other** of meaning that cannot be grasped IN meaning, but is undeniable as rupture, as an experience] The rupture of time would only be rupture by what is radically NOT time, namely Eternity [temporality, the constant rupture of the present by an unknown future, has the same phenomenal structure as wonder and horror, namely, radical otherness, the unknown as unknown showing up in meaning which meaning itself cannot grasp and encompass, but nonetheless can experience]. The RADICAL OTHER of any temporal world/meaning we inhabit, namely ETERNITY, can only be accessed via temporality and vulnerability as it shows up in POWERFULLY rupturing experiences, in wonder, horror, that can lead to nothing via anguish then awe, complete self-overcoming, the rupture of the sacred into the ordinary, the mundane]

Jesus: Kingdom of Heaven is now, right before us, yet we do not see it.

Buddhism: Nirvana IS Samsara

Russon: We experience dividedness and the **need** for fulfillment that drives us toward emancipation, freedom to pursue fulfillment. This is naturally ethical if freedom is genuine (genuine means concrete, read off experience, not useful but disconnected abstractions). The very core of what freedom is, is to be sufficiently motivated (by conflict, curiosity, suffering the rupture of temporality as Miller would say), to develop the skills of inquiry necessary to overcome habits of meaning to really pursue one's possibilities. Self-transcendence is our fundamental nature, the freedom to redefine ourselves and our world, the capacity to "rehabilitate" ourselves, inhabit a new world, re-world. **"What fulfillment is or looks like is always unknown because it lies beyond the enabling horizons that open on to this possibility."** These "enabling horizons" are the ever evolving, self-overcoming boundaries that provide the space of our freedom.

As Miller says, our opening on to our possibilities is through inquiry and wonder. When this goes all the way, when we are caught in the throe of inquiry/wonder, then the unknown as unknown presents itself as an **experience**, not something knowable, but only knowable or recognizable AS unknown. To know is to colonize the unknown with a world/meaning system that is already in place that generates "truths." Moving toward the unknown as unknown and remaining open to this all the way to our nothingness/contingency overcomes self-centeredness, overcomes our truths, and thus opens us to **the sacred**.

Steinbock: Best traces of religious experience is in the writings of mystics. He focuses on Abrahamic religions using the notion of "verticality" as roughly a life lived oriented to the sacred. Verticality exposes idolatry, which is prideful self-centered human life. Fundamentalism is perhaps the most ironic of idolatries, since it speaks in the name of God.

Pickard: The final movement toward freedom is toward freedom from selfishness. **Transformation:** When vulnerability is transformed to overflowing LOVE: Power via the sacred is not self-centered. There is no fear, no desire for control. Only love/compassion/giving, service to others. **Giving** is the pinnacle of fulfillment for temporal beings. Religious experience is selfless purity of heart at the heart of religions but is a human phenomenon, not merely found in religions. The "religious impulse" may not necessarily require religion as it has developed, if we understand that impulse as a need to be oriented toward the sacred, which is immediate and felt, rather than toward the true or the real which is always abstract and after the fact."