

EXPORT SEMINARY PROGRAM

OF

VIRGINIA TRIUMPHANT COLLEGE & SEMINARY
Richmond, Virginia

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Doctorate Program in Religion and Phenomenology

ABSTRACT

Introduction to a New Degree Program

There has long been a need for a degree in the discipline of religion and phenomenology. Virginia Triumphant College & Seminary has formulated under the exemptions from the Virginia State Council on Higher Education the Ph.Dr. or the designated *Doctorate of Religion and Phenomenology*. This program is an intensive investigative experience which transforms the candidate from student to scholar within twelve months of independently guided study. Entrance into the program is premised on the candidate's academic preparation and skills, honed to meet the rigors of study.

Prior to entering and undertaking a candidate should realize what they want to accomplish in the acquisition of the Ph.Dr i.e., whether the ends are teaching, reaching, scholarship, research or post-nominal vanity. Also a certain amount of self-assessment and examination is required to determine whether one has the discipline necessary to meet the aims and ends of the program.

After these subjective matters have been considered, Virginia Triumphant College & Seminary spreads the program requirements in Tracks and Modules, of which, the final is the Dissertation within a guided prospectus.

One of the first requirements for candidates is that the program explores the realities of faith and reason in religious tradition; and the evidence may run antithetical to certain doctrines, tenets and dogmas held within one's faith. Candidates will need certain tools and methodologies such as logic, history,

paradigms, deductive and inductive scientific methods and phenomenology basics within a *General Theory of Religion* and within the area of normative assumptions and tradition.

Finally, writing, reading and research skills are imperative in the development of the thesis and dissertation. These are instruments of scholarship, persuasion and documentation in support of the thesis or hypothesis formulation.

COGNITIVE INVESTIGATIONS: PHENOMENOLOGY IN RELIGION

OVERVIEW

Phenomenology is a cognitive science and methodology for analyzing phenomena in relation to human experiences, Its utility and application serves as an analytical and interpretative tool. Phenomenology, serves several disciplines, including religion, and can mean several things. Historically as the phenomenology or the philosophy founded by Edmund Husserl'. a term used in science, particle physics, contemporary architecture or a kind of exegesis, essence and manifestation of Spirit and Revelation in Religion. [SEE e.g., Pierre Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye in 1887 use of the phrase “phenomenology of religion” where he divides the science of religion into two areas of investigation, “essence and manifestations”].

Phenomenology in philosophical history finds itself in the writings of Edmund Husserl as “the reflective study of the essence of consciousness”. Many of Husserl’s ideas derived from the work of Frantz Bretano, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Max Scheler. Husserl’s ideas are described as *transcendental phenomenology*, most intuitive or phenomenological reflections.

Martin Heidegger noted that Husserl overlooked the significance of “being” or the subjective and objective of experience and expanded phenomenological inquiry into the study of being (*ontology*). His ideas gave rise to the development of existentialism [Jean-Paul Satre, et al].

George W. F. Hegel notes the Spirit of History i.e., what it means to grasp the logical, ontological and absolute in *dialectical phenomenology*

PHENOMENOLOGICAL NEXUS

Although not considered a phenomenologist, but a paleontologist and Jesuit Priest, research strongly suggests that Teilhard de Chardin in his book, (*Le Phenomene Humain or the Human Phenomenon*) presents a cogent case in phenomenological nexus and his inclusion in phenomenology. Chardin forges the thesis of the *evolution in the rise of consciousness, union affected through progression of geogenesis, biogenesis, noogenesis and the noosphere.*

Tielhard is convinced that geogenesis (the evolution and transformation of matter) moved in an increasing direction of conscious which resulted in biogenesis (life in irritability and reproduction). This process later led to *thought and reflection* (noogenesis or thought processing, including the integration and reconstruction thereof as “*imagination*”) . The results gained both an interactive relationship between the noosphere (outer and inner dimension and products of things and ideas, including experiences in time and being). Chardin states that “Man is not the center of the universe (anthropocentrism) as once we thought in our simplicity, but something more wonderful-the arrow pointing the way to the final unification of the world.” This position is paradigm-shifting and earth moving as Copernicus formulating the heliocentric theory. Although Chardin is not burned at stake for his views, they were contrary to the Catholic Church. He was deprived of his teaching position and advised not to publish his observations on religion and science. After his death in 1955, his central work *The Phenomenon of Man* was published. He was a leading proponent of orthogenesis, that the evolution is directional or teleological. His postulations may have created conflict and controversy regarding Christ’s mission and whether the mission was completed or ended in his crucifixion or advanced by the evolutionary process. Regardless, it is undeniable that consciousness has given rise to the evolution of religion and the ascent of man towards increasing divinity. For all intents and purpose, phenomenologically the intentionality is toward God.

TOWARDS DEFINING

Phenomenology is the description of an object that is it’s own subject and awareness of itself. The information and the stimuli that makes “input” or “engrams” are bundled into “wholes”, “feelings”, “pictures” or noetic templates. It is the “isness” and processing of human experience, the imposing of order and meaning, which gives form and perception.

This “bundling” of stimuli, data or experience, whatever quanta is a means of mental efficiency and tends to rise with the level of consciousness. Even needs and wants give rise to objective and sometimes subjective wants. This “bundling” or “rebundling” can be symbolic or semiotic. Dreams, no matter how clear or bizarre can raise the consciousness to cognitive levels until awakening [Note nightmares]. General insight and understanding is not attained until one can see the whole relationship of two or more perceptions, and the distinctions between two objects of perception that “appear” as “one”. Death, phenomenologically, is the gradual decline of the conscious state as a collapsed star whose nuclear fusion has been spent and whose processes are de-evolving and conforming to the Second Law of Thermodynamics.

Phenomenologically, the Spirit, Soul and Ghost in essence must be defined by the integration of human experience , quanta and quality of cognition level. Here we refer to the subjective states of humans and not the states of aseity of God or gods or

theological symbolologies. The perishability or immortality of these states are to date unresolved questions since each state is a kind of product of human experience. Whether these states survive phenomenological death does not lend itself to objective examination by others nor are the subjects at sufficient cognitive levels to articulate results of an analysis of the experience. Accordingly, this uncertainty may provide the thesis to the rise of extended consciousness (antithesis) and the formulation of synthesis (as expressed by religion) (*dialectical phenomenology*).

Let's take note of the deep need for order and meaning with increased consciousness and the struggle against phenomenological and physical death. Since this is objectively irreconcilable by logic and reason, religion and faith extends order and meaning. Religion expands consciousness and hope in the face of phenomenological despair and objective reconciliation.

AN INHERENT PHENOMENOLOGICAL DUTY OF MAN

Religion expresses an inherent phenomenological duty of man to evolve to highest cognitive level. It is further the objective manifestation of essence through symbols, rites, rituals and revelations. An examination of religion advances the theses. No matter what the critics may assert as to the short comings of religion; the atheist with God absent; the agnostic of our limited knowledge and theology regarding the idea of God or gods; the monotheistic or the polytheistic debate as to number, man is unlikely to have evolved without an intuitive or phenomenological sense of the divine and the requirements of duty. Even the unknown and the uncertain requires the human mind to impose order and meaning of and to our ontological relation to the world. Views held by Gerardus van de leeuw lend collateral support to this position in that the task of phenomenology of religion is to interpret the various ways in which the sacred appears to human beings in the world, the ways in which humans understand [*homo religious*]. Also in the absence of religion or belief in God or gods, humans could not have evolved.

There is much more to the creation and the fall of man than mythology. The fall of man is symbolism, while the creation is cosmogony with meaning and order. Religion, itself, is a projection; an expression and vehicle to carry out an inherent phenomenological duty, *intentionality*, divinely required and inspired. Man is akin to a servo-mechanism (fueled by purpose and teleology) [cosmic energy] (*intentionality*) towards meaning, order and purpose, sometimes "inherent" and sometimes "acquired". It is when the essence loses manifestation as a [misguided missile] that the projectile, "Man", is in a cognitive and evolutionary nose-dive away from salvation. The history of man is one of linear salvation which is not straight-lined nor truly in conformity with the bell-shaped curve.

In the journey towards truth in both religion and phenomenology, external and internal realities, with scientific methods, logic is not equated with truth, but a methodology of hope for the arrival of truth and convincing proof. Contradictions do not necessarily mean refutation; and understanding is that insight which sees the

universality in distinctions and diversity and the distinctions and diversities in those things (objects) and ideas (intents) of those which appear as One.

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