Research Article

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It Takes Two to Make a Thing Go Right: Phenomenology, Theology, and Janicaud

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Abstract: In his influential essay, “The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology,” Dominique Janicaud suggests that phenomenology and theology “make two.” On the thirtieth anniversary of that essay, here we consider some of the main lines of response that have been offered to his account. We suggest that there are three general approaches that have been the most prominent: indifferentism, integrationism, and pluralism. The indifferentists implicitly suggest that Janicaud is right about the divide between phenomenology and theology. The integrationists think that Janicaud is wrong about the divide because theology and philosophy are unable to be strictly distinguished. The pluralists suggest that Janicaud is right about the division, but wrong about how it works. For pluralists, philosophy and theology are distinguished due to the immediate evidential authorities that operate in the two discourses. As such, phenomenological theology and phenomenological philosophy of religion are importantly different. Defending pluralism as the best of the three options, we argue that it avoids the potential reductionism that is present in the other two. We conclude by turning to the ways in which, precisely because phenomenological philosophy and phenomenological theology make two, they can both benefit from being put into robust engagement with the other.

Keywords: Dominique Janicaud, phenomenology, theology, methodology, evidence, appearance

1 Introduction: Interpretation matters

Disturbed by what he discerns as theological imperialism in new phenomenology, Dominique Janicaud insists in his influential essay, “The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology,” that when phenomenology leaves room for theological considerations it is compromised as a rigorous science. His basic charge is that thinkers such as Emmanuel Levinas, Michel Henry, and Jean-Luc Marion all go beyond the Husserlian framework in ways that distort the phenomenological method beyond recognition.¹

Janicaud accuses new phenomenologists of being covert theologians, seeking not just to draw upon theological resources in their phenomenology, but to hijack the discipline altogether. Rather than making rational decisions on the basis of straightforward notions of evidential appearance, those phenomenologists who turn their attention to what Heidegger calls the “unapparent,” he says, bring God into phenomenology in ways that corrupt its philosophical purity. Thus, he decries that “we will have to listen, again, to the refrain of the beyond”² as the method becomes not just un-phenomenological philosophy, but actually

¹ Janicaud, “The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology,” 16–87.

² Ibid., 42.

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abandons philosophy altogether in favor of confessional theology. For Janicaud, perhaps this “theological turn” (as he terms it) in phenomenology produces something that is adequately religious, but insofar as it concerns itself with the unapparent and the transcendent, it betrays phenomenology’s focus on that which appears to intentional consciousness. In order to maintain their integrity, theology and phenomenology, he insists, must *make two*.³

Despite the substantive philosophical scholarship that has emerged in light of Janicaud’s account, it is not often easy to track with the various ways of interpreting his account. If Janicaud is right, then it seems that anyone working in phenomenology would need to be exceptionally clear about the “twoness” of phenomenology and theology in order to avoid the mistakes he outlines. Yet, if Janicaud is wrong, in what ways exactly does he misstep? Does rejecting Janicaud’s account amount to erasing the distinction between theology and philosophy, or refusing to see new phenomenology as theologically engaged at all? These are distinct options and it matters where we come down on these issues.

In order to get some clarity about the stakes of interpreting Janicaud, in what follows, we will sketch a general map of some main lines of possible reaction to his essay. We will suggest that there are three basic sorts of interpretive responses implicit in the literature. First, some seem to suggest that he is right regarding the idea that theology and phenomenology, in fact, make two. Yet, for those who affirm this first option, the division falls along the lines of what should be talked about in each discipline. Theology talks about God and phenomenology, generally, does not. The elimination of God-talk is justified, on this view, because God is not obviously a phenomenological object and, therefore, largely inaccessible for phenomenological inquiry. To suggest otherwise, these critics contend, is to import evidence reserved for theological revelation and doing so oversteps the implied constraints operative in Husserl’s philosophy. Most scholars falling in this camp do not explicitly engage in questions of philosophy of religion, but rather focus on classical phenomenological concerns that do not open onto the issues about which Janicaud worries. As such, we will call this first option *indifferentism* because rather than being an explicit phenomenological rejection of theology it simply sidesteps the question of the relation of phenomenology and theology altogether. As such, this first option is not really a “response” to Janicaud, but more of a tacit affirmation of some aspects of his work as a backdrop for phenomenology.

The second option is to suggest that Janicaud is wrong such that phenomenology and theology should not make two, or at least should not be resigned to separate corners, since they are neither fundamentally different kinds of knowing nor are they engaged in entirely different kinds of pursuits. This second alternative amounts not only to a more expansive conception of phenomenological methodology, but also involves a blurring of the lines of demarcation between the disciplines of theology and philosophy. For this reason, we will term this option *integrationism* since it seeks to bring theology and phenomenology together in ways that no longer allow for clear-cut divisions to be drawn either methodologically or disciplinarily.

When faced with these first two alternatives, it might seem that we have exhausted the range of options. However, notice that it is entirely possible to think that Janicaud is right about distinguishing different evidential authorities that function in philosophy and theology and yet wrong about how he understands such authorities. On this third reading, he is both right and wrong. He is *right* for what we can call “discursive” reasons to claim that philosophical evidence and theological evidence operate differently, and *wrong* for phenomenological reasons to suggest that the new phenomenologists are inappropriately moving from philosophy to theology. We will term this third option *pluralism* because it acknowledges multiple discourses, disciplines, and evidential authorities, but finds such distinctions to foster important non-reductive engagement rather than a confessional takeover.

All three of these views are reasonable. Yet, in this essay we will suggest that pluralism, as found in the work of such thinkers as Jean-Luc Marion, Merold Westphal, Bruce Ellis Benson, and Kevin Hart,⁴ is the

³ Ibid., 100.

⁴ One of the authors of the present essay, Simmons, has also defended this view for many years. For just a few examples, see Simmons, “New Phenomenology and Open Theism;” Simmons, “Living in the Existential Margins;” Simmons, “Cheaper than a Corvette;” Simmons, “Prophetic Philosophy of Religion;” and Simmons, “Postmodern Kataphaticism.”

most promising because it allows for disciplinary distinctiveness and methodological rigor while also fostering discursive openness and experiential humility (phenomenological virtues to be sure). Of particular note is the way that pluralism neither forecloses confessional religious identity (as indifferentism might do in some cases if it slid into an exclusivist dichotomy), nor subsumes everything into the orbit of confessional religion (as integrationism threatens to do in all cases). Before turning to the three views, however, we will begin with a consideration of what “theology” means in these debates since it informs everything that follows.

2 Philosophy and theology after Janicaud

The key component of Janicaud’s essay that subsequently serves to facilitate the various responses to his thesis is the distinction drawn between phenomenology and theology. Janicaud was not the only, or even the first, to worry about the possible slide from phenomenological philosophy to “pseudophenomenological” literature with a broadly theological tenor. In particular, as Bernard Prusak discusses in the translator’s introduction to Janicaud’s essay, Jean Hering had already warned against problematic slippages as early as 1925.⁵ Although Janicaud and Hering located the problem slightly differently – which makes sense given that Hering was writing before any emergence of new phenomenology and Janicaud is specifically critical of that trajectory – they are both invested in being rigorous about what does and does not count as phenomenological philosophy.⁶

Even if one appreciates the importance of such criteriological work, problems immediately present themselves due to the fact that both of the terms/concepts “theology” and “phenomenology” are definitionally non-obvious. What counts as theology as opposed to, or distinguished from philosophy, generally, and phenomenology, specifically, depends upon what framework/thinker/discourse one turns to as a framework. There are a variety of stipulative definitions that we might offer, though, in order to try to unpack things after Janicaud. Making things even more difficult, however, is the fact that his own conception of theology is slippery. At times he seems to suggest that theology is anything that contains God-talk. At other times he gets a bit more precise and locates the difference as a matter of evidential authority structures. We think that the latter distinction is the right one to keep in mind as we try to navigate the complicated and varied literature that has emerged in relation to the phenomenology/theology debate.

The basic idea is this: theology and philosophy are both contingent historical discourses that appeal to, or have access to, divergent evidential authority structures. At its most basic, theology is able to appeal to revelatory sources (operative within confessional and ecclesial communities) that remain unavailable to philosophy. Yet, the distinction here is not that philosophy can’t appeal to a religious text, an historical creed, or confession, etc., but simply that the appeal can’t be deployed as *immediately* evidential such that the revelation it assumes would be granted as actual. Instead, philosophy ought to relate to such revelation as possibly the case and the evidence claimed within such communities positioned as potentially justificative. In this way, philosophy (and phenomenology, specifically) remains *prima facie* agnostic to the idea of *religious* phenomena. Such phenomena are a possibility standing in need of arguments that show their structure to be *religious*. Yet, theologically, it is what Paul Ricoeur calls the “immediacy” of the religious standing that is taken for granted such that what philosophy sees as a possibility, theology can see as an actuality.⁷

That said, on this model, it is entirely possible to have phenomenological theology and phenomenological philosophy as distinct options. For example, as we will discuss in more detail below, we would locate Kevin Hart and Jean-Yves Lacoste in the first group and Merold Westphal and Michel Henry in the

⁵ Prusak, “Translator’s Introduction,” 4.

⁶ For a consideration of the Hering/Janicaud intersection, especially as related to how we might read the work of Levinas, see Mercer, “Phenomenology and the *Possibility* of Religious Experience.”

⁷ See Ricoeur, “Experience and Language in Religious Discourse,” 129.

latter group. Further, it is possible to move back and forth between these discourses such that different books in a single authorship operate variously as theology or philosophy. For example, Jean-Luc Marion's *God Without Being* is doing theological work in ways distinguished from the philosophical approach of his *Being Given*.⁸ We have no interest in trying to decide which is the "right" approach. Indeed, part of why we take pluralism to be the best way forward is due to the way that it allows us to see theology and philosophy as both equally important for human flourishing.

We are not interested, in this essay, though, in who rigidly fits into which camp, but how various thinkers, whether rightly viewed as philosophers or theologians, understand the distinction in particular ways that either accord with Janicaud's specific account or stand at odds with it.⁹ Yet, we recognize that part of why one might side with the integrationists instead of the pluralists is due to a rejection of the philosophy/theology distinction with which we are working here. Specifically, if one follows a broadly Reformed epistemological path, say – but offered internal to phenomenological discourse – it makes sense to reject the two evidential domains as being distinct enough to warrant the disciplinary boundaries the pluralists affirm. So, although admitting that the general stipulative framework by which we are working here might be challenged, we actually think that drawing the distinction according to the immediacy of divergent evidential authorities actually provides a helpful lens by which then to consider the actual differences between integrationism and pluralism.

3 Indifferentism

Janicaud's basis thesis is about the relation between phenomenology and theology. Yet, in order to argue for that view, he contends that those associated with new phenomenology have ultimately abandoned phenomenology in the name of confessional theology. It is this latter claim that can easily be refuted simply by realizing that there are many thinkers working in the general trajectory of new phenomenology (whether or not explicitly identified as the key figures within it) who simply have very little interest (or even none at all) in questions related to theology or philosophy of religion.

Such thinkers might include folks like Françoise Dastur, Marc Richir, and Didier Franck, who all operate with broadly new phenomenological concerns regarding the excessiveness of phenomena and the idea of phenomenality itself but do not take up these investigations as having to do with theology or even philosophy of religion. Hence their work simply sidesteps the question of the relation between theology and phenomenology since it is largely irrelevant to it. We describe this general approach as *indifferentism* because the proponents of it as simply indifferent to theology because it is simply beyond the purview of their philosophical interests.

⁸ Chrétien is a particularly hard case because he often seems to move back and forth within the same essay. Although we would finally locate him as a philosopher, it would be certainly reasonable to claim the alternative. Similar to Marion, Chrétien's authorship is composed of both theology and philosophy, but maintains a distinction between the two in his individual texts precisely along the lines of epistemic sources of authority available to each. *The Call and the Response*, for example, analyzes on philosophical terms the originary call heard in the response as the call of beauty. While the text makes frequent reference to religious phenomena, or draws from a religious archive, such phenomena are not the focus of the analysis but are illuminative of the more general phenomenal experience. In contrast, *Under the Gaze of the Bible* begins with the assertion of Christian scripture as God's *actual* word of address and employs the tools of phenomenology, particularly the structure of counter-intentionality, to better understand what it means to submit oneself to it. Hence, the primary and most immediate appeal in each text is to different sources of evidence even as he demonstrates how philosophy and theology can relate in mutually beneficial ways.

⁹ We have argued for this metaphilosophical view at length elsewhere and shown that it functions well as a rubric for considering new phenomenology, in particular. See Bowen and Simmons, "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, and Christian Scholarship." For our purposes here, however, we mention this general way of understanding theology/philosophy/phenomenology in order to provide some clarity to the reason we identify the responses to Janicaud in the way that we do.

By exploring phenomena in the style of new phenomenology without any reference to theology, these thinkers offer a performative critique of Janicaud's charge that new phenomenology is simply theology. In order for his charge to be accurate, he would have to narrowly stipulate which new phenomenologists he is talking about, excluding these influential thinkers. For their part, though, the charge of doing theology is simply false and so there is no need for them to be drawn into metaphilosophical debates that do not bear on their specific authorships. Accordingly, they do not engage Janicaud directly because his criticisms regarding the "theological turn" are largely unrelated to their approach.

It makes sense that indifferentists would rarely engage directly with Janicaud's account since they generally see it to be a framework that hardly needs such direct attention. Moreover, Janicaud's frequently dismissive rhetoric toward theology, generally, and new phenomenology, specifically, is just not the mode in which indifferentists tend to operate. So, rather than seeing them as those who outright agree with Janicaud, perhaps a better way to describe things is to say that this position functions behind the scenes in their work.

We can especially see this implicit framework in the work of mainstream phenomenologists such as Dan Zahavi, Steven Crowell, and Shaun Gallagher. These thinkers neither engage in investigations of religious experience, specifically, nor do they draw as heavily on the new phenomenological approaches that still influence indifferentists such as Dastur, Richir, and Franck. Although their work is original, important, and exciting, it tends to unfold according to more classical formulations of the appearance, significance, and intelligibility of the world and the structures of consciousness that Janicaud takes to be hallmarks of phenomenology, as such. In this way, Zahavi, Gallagher, and Crowell are similar to Dastur, Richir, and Franck in that they would all agree in principle – that theology and philosophy make two and that phenomenology should generally not engage in God-talk. Unlike Janicaud, and those who fall into the integrationist and pluralist camps, they simply do not have a dog in this particular fight. As such, they are usually not ardently rejecting theological concerns, but are unconcerned with them in favor of directions that they find to be more robust for the future of phenomenological research – e.g., the recent emergence of a sustained engagement with cognitive science.¹⁰ If one is an indifferentist, then spending time arguing about the irrelevance of theology would largely be a distraction from the appropriate aims of phenomenological study.

That said, our general worry is *not* that indifferentists are uninterested in the possibility of religious phenomena, questions in philosophy of religion, or drawing on a theological archive. Indeed, all philosophers are indifferentists of some sort regarding some discourse that other thinkers take very seriously. The problem is more that indifferentism might give way to an exclusivism that then serves to inappropriately limit the domain of inquiry available for phenomenological research from the outset. In this way, a methodological agnosticism would slide into a methodological atheism. Doing so, however, would not be a reflection of fidelity to phenomenology, but a refusal to remain open to the radicality of the "principle of all principles." As such, indifferentism is not problematic due to its lack of interest in the possibility of religious phenomena, but becomes problematic if it refuses to admit such possibilities. We are not charging any of these thinkers with such a slide, but instead raising it as a specter about which all phenomenologists should be aware. Importantly, then, this first option is not really a "response" to Janicaud, but more of a tacit affirmation of some aspects of his metaphilosophical commitments. For direct responses to Janicaud we must look to integrationism and pluralism.

¹⁰ For just a few examples of such phenomenological work sidestepping such engagement with theology via a focus on cognitive science and related issues attending naturalism, see Petitot et al., *Naturalizing Phenomenology*; Simmons and Edward Hackett, *Phenomenology for the Twenty-First Century*, part IV; Aikin, "Pragmatism, Naturalism, and Phenomenology;" and Schmicking and Gallagher, *Handbook of Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*, see especially Zahavi's chapter in that volume, "Naturalized Phenomenology."

4 Integrationism

In order to get a better handle on the distinction between integrationism and pluralism, we need to realize that Janicaud's major claim can be divided into two parts. First, that theology and philosophy make two; second, that phenomenology should not engage in any form of God-talk. These two separate claims open him up to criticism in different ways. The integrationists take issue with both parts of the claim. The pluralists affirm the first claim (that theology and philosophy make two), but definitely take issue with the second claim (that phenomenology should not engage in any form of God-talk). By adding qualifiers to exactly how this division unfolds, pluralists often suggest that new phenomenologists are not doing theology at all, but simply phenomenologically situated philosophy of religion.

The integrationists are a diverse group of thinkers. For example, Jean-Yves Lacoste argues that disciplinary boundaries between theology and philosophy are merely products of the modern academy.¹¹ Prior to their separation by the university system, he contends, there was no significant distinction between the philosopher and the theologian – in fact, to be a theologian included being a philosopher, and *vice versa*. Here we can see why such an inclusive view would lead to integrationism as a meta-commitment for phenomenological work. As Lacoste sees it, and here he comes quite close to thinkers such as Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, these disciplinary divisions, which are constructed and arbitrary, ought to be “prudently abolished” in order to make it possible for the philosopher as well as the theologian to think theologically – that is, confessionally, biblically, liturgically, and doxologically.¹² In this way, we contend, Lacoste defends a continental version of analytic theology.¹³

In addition to Lacoste, though in different ways, Emmanuel Falque also contests the claim that theology and philosophy make two, but rather than collapsing the disciplinary boundaries altogether, as does Lacoste, he calls for philosophy and theology to engage with less restrictive interaction in a shared space he calls the “borderlands.”¹⁴ The idea is that full-bodied engagement between philosophy and theology will challenge and strengthen each. Falque argues that not only should philosophy be allowed to serve and even confront theology, but theology ought to be allowed to do the same for philosophy, transforming it “through and through.”¹⁵ His “crossing the Rubicon” motif in some sense confirms Janicaud's worst fears that “phenomenology has been taken hostage.”¹⁶ But what Janicaud would call “hostage taking,” Falque, and those thinking in his wake, would see as transformation and enrichment. “The more we theologize the better we philosophize,” he famously retorts. Martin Kočič notes that Falque's partition-lowering impulse comes from a particular understanding of what theology is, namely an exploration of being-in-the-word and thus of the experience of finitude converted (or metamorphized) by theology into religious existence.¹⁷ From the perspective of philosophy, Kočič points out, Falque agrees with Janicaud that phenomenology is an exploration of finitude common to all human beings.¹⁸ Yet unlike Janicaud, he locates theology within the same immanence of finitude such that God's presence is generally continuous with, rather than a rupture of, human experience.

Whereas Lacoste's integrationism is located in an historical articulation of disciplinary contingency, Falque's version is a matter of expanded discourse among disciplinary neighbors. There is, however, another way to approach integrationism, which we see as a matter of existential proximity. Insofar as both philosophy and theology address similar perennial human issues, such as finite existence, death, love, and transcendence, and insofar as they study human life in its lived acts in the world, thinkers like Steven Delay and

¹¹ See Lacoste, *From Theology to Theological Thinking*.

¹² *Ibid.*, 82.

¹³ For more on analytic theology see Crisp and Rea, *Analytic Theology*.

¹⁴ Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 25.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹⁶ Janicaud, “The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology,” 43.

¹⁷ Kočič, “Phenomenology and Theology Revisited,” 919; and Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 124.

¹⁸ For a substantive consideration of Falque's contributions to this metaphilosophical debate, see Kočič and Alvis, *Transforming the Theological Turn*.

Joseph Rivera suggest that a strict partition between the two discourses is not only misguided, but ultimately impossible.¹⁹ For these existential integrationists, philosophy and theology mutually contribute to the fecundity of thought and exploration of the full range of human experience. However, it is not unimportant that integrationism of this type tends to have a much more triumphalist tone than found in Lacoste or Falque, such that to do philosophy well seems necessarily to open onto theological truth.

Thus, those who think Janicaud is wrong about theology and phenomenology “making two” typically argue that *both* philosophy and theology are interested in the pursuit of wisdom – and so integrating them will lead to be enactment of each of them. For integrationists, again reminiscent of Plantinga’s critique of classical foundationalism, maintaining a strict partition between theology and philosophy problematically breathes new life into the rightly abandoned vestiges of modernity’s sacred/secular distinction and a rationalistic approach to theology.

5 Pluralism

Although there are those who agree both that philosophy and theology “make two” (what we are broadly calling indifferentists) and that there can/should be no God-talk in phenomenology, and there are those who reject this claim as wrong on both counts (what we are calling integrationists), there are others who react to Janicaud in a third way by suggesting that he is both right and wrong (a view we call pluralism). He is right for what we could call “discursive” reasons that theology and philosophy “make two,” and wrong for phenomenological reasons that there can be no God-talk in phenomenology. Following after Jean-Luc Marion, figures that represent this kind of approach are Merold Westphal, Kevin Hart, Bruce Ellis Benson, and both of us.

As already suggested, this pluralist option draws the distinction between theology and philosophy not according to subject matter – in the sense that philosophy engages only secular phenomena while theology engages religious phenomena – but according to the distinct sources of epistemic authority that distinguish philosophy and theology as individual discursive communities. Rather than a *thematic* distinction, in this case, there is an *epistemic* distinction at play that resists the blurring of disciplinary lines that we find in the work of the integrationists. Moreover, defining the disciplines epistemically rather than thematically provides space for theological pluralism. When defining theology thematically, the risk is that the themes and points of emphasis will be based on a particular theology whether specifically Christian (e.g., Reformed Protestant theology, Liberationist theology, Roman Catholic theology) or not. Thematic definitions inadvertently privilege one theology over others. Our epistemic distinction, however, addresses this risk because it is simply concerned with recognizing the kinds of governing authorities that would be immediately available to theology – or theologies – regardless of their content or approach.

A full account of the argument for the epistemic distinction between theology and philosophy would take us too far afield here. However, much of what we are claiming here builds on what J. Aaron Simmons has written elsewhere.²⁰ However, since we laid out the general contours above regarding the idea of “theology” in play here, we will try to offer just a bit more detail about how this framework might operate in productive ways. We can begin by asking what the differing sources of authority actually are and why we should respect them as disciplinarily distinctive. As all the integrationists understand, and many of the indifferentists sometimes ignore, there are many ways in which philosophy and theology are similar. They are both concerned with human experience and the goal of living truthfully in relation to oneself, others, and the world. Not surprisingly, then, they share many of the same interests, concerns, and even subjects. Moreover, it is not the case that philosophy deals with objective rational analysis while theology has to do with biased faith. Any kind of intellectual pursuit (philosophical, scientific, theological, or otherwise)

¹⁹ Delay, *Phenomenology in France*, 4; and Rivera, *The Contemplative Self after Michel Henry*, 51–6.

²⁰ See especially Simmons, “Living in the Existential Margins;” Simmons, “Introduction: Why This? Why Now?;” and also the sustained argument throughout Simmons and Benson, *The New Phenomenology*.

requires a kind of faith – a basic posture of trust, even if it is a primordial belief in the world, as Falque points out.²¹ In this sense, faith is a *risk-with-direction*, whether or not that direction is religious.

Such faith/trust serves as a background condition for then asking questions in light of what we take for granted as assumptions. We can easily ask questions about those assumptions, themselves, but doing so then requires that other assumptions become operative to undergird such self-referential concerns. We might distinguish then between philosophical faith and confessional faith such that the former conditions inquiry whereby rationality becomes the criterion for inquiry and the later conditions inquiry whereby rationality continues to signify but as supplemented by ecclesial histories and revealed sources. Of course, we must resist any oppositional dichotomy here. Confessional theological faith does not exclude the basic philosophical faith any more than special revelation would exclude general revelation. Moreover, the direction of influence can run in both directions: philosophical faith can serve to motivate an openness to confessional faith, and confessional faith may cause one to dig deeper into the philosophical conditions by which confessional commitments are articulated, illuminated, and affirmed.²²

Again, the difference between philosophy and theology, according to the pluralists, and as we have suggested at moments for Janicaud as well, has mainly to do with the unique sources of epistemic authority that stand as immediate evidence for belief and action. For Christian theology, those unique sources would be Christian scripture and church tradition, and they are received from a standpoint of identity within the confessional community itself. Membership in that community is what allows such ecclesial and revelational authorities to signal as, again, what Ricoeur terms, *immediate* evidence. For people outside of that community, the church and scripture might indeed count as evidence, but it would depend on the question being asked and the argument given for what sort of evidence would be relevant. That is, for philosophers, confessional faith is not excluded, as such, but simply not available without supplemental arguments for its relevance to the philosophical inquiry being conducted. In this way, theology is necessarily less inclusive than philosophy regarding matters of access. We should not be worried about this fact, though. For example, denominational differences matter within Christianity and they have epistemic impacts. Specifically, a Reformed theologian and a Pentecostal theologian, say, are likely both to affirm the authority of the Bible and the Church, but they will start with very different accounts of how each of those authorities functions in relation to religious life.

Accordingly, significant differences in the concepts of God, soteriological articulations, pneumatologies, eschatologies, etc., are not simply likely, but almost necessitated. In brief, theology does not require that immediate evidence be accessible by all theologians. Instead, it relates to evidence in ways that admit of the communities of discourse within theology that will not only hold different conclusions, but also begin with different assumed premises. Alternatively, philosophy works with the sources of epistemic authority that, *in principle*, are accessible to all members of the philosophical community – e.g., the sort of evidence that Aquinas would term “natural revelation” – which does not require any confessional commitment to specific community identity. So, although there are going to be robust disagreements among philosophers on nearly every issue, such disagreements, again in principle, should not reflect an incommensurability of assumptions, but arguments that all participants can weigh and consider in light of the arguments given.

Pluralists are concerned that when Christians come to professional philosophical discourse making confessional assertions, whether a properly basic belief in God (e.g., Plantinga) or even theoretical pre-suppositions about God recognized as actual only by special revelation (e.g., Van Til), they are more likely to stifle conversation than they are to stoke it. As such, this approach is, “poor strategy” at best, and foul play at worst.²³ In this regard, Janicaud is right to argue for a broad non-reductive distinction between theology and philosophy, though perhaps not for the phenomenological reasons he outlines.²⁴

²¹ Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 82.

²² See Wolterstorff's account of the relation between data beliefs and control beliefs in *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*.

²³ See Simmons, “The Strategies of Christian Philosophy.”

²⁴ Janicaud tends to divide the two more immediately based on specifically phenomenological subject matter instead of in reference to the sources of epistemic authority relative to each domain. Yet, it is only due to the latter that his account would seemingly be plausible relative to warranted assertions relative to inquiry.

Pluralists who affirm, with Janicaud, that philosophy and theology should, indeed, be understood as epistemically distinctive and yet mutually beneficial discourses, part company with him when it comes to his account of phenomenology's radical eschewal of God-talk. For pluralists, there is a difference between phenomenological theology and phenomenological philosophy of religion. The former will necessarily engage in God-talk, and rightly so, given the affirmation of the actuality of religious phenomena under consideration. Phenomenological philosophy of religion, alternatively, does not close off such engagement with religious phenomena, but approaches such phenomena as a possibility for how phenomenality might function. As such, for pluralists, it is acceptable and even beneficial for phenomenology *as a philosophical enterprise* to investigate the possibility of religious phenomena, even if it cannot speak to their actuality in an authoritatively theological way.

The willingness to explore all kinds of phenomena, including those that are inconspicuous or not straightforwardly apparent, is a methodological imperative established by Husserl and especially Heidegger. In fact, as J. Aaron Simmons and Bruce Ellis Benson have pointed out, it is odd that Janicaud appeals to Heidegger for reasons why God-talk in phenomenology is problematic while also accusing his "phenomenology of the unapparent" of being a key source for the so-called "theological turn."²⁵ Jean-Luc Marion explains that phenomenology, as a philosophical method, cannot itself affirm the actuality of religious phenomena because it does not have immediate access to the kinds of authoritative sources necessary to make such an affirmation.²⁶ Nevertheless, philosophy can explore them phenomenologically under the condition of *possibility*. It can draw from a theological archive, using religious texts, traditions, and practices as *heuristic* and *illuminative* rather than immediately *evidential* and *authoritative*. Doing so allows phenomenology to explore a wider range of human experiences and consider phenomena that otherwise would have been ignored or would have gone unnoticed by classical phenomenological formulations, such as excess, alterity, invisibility, and other limit experiences.

Phenomenologically, we might say that such resources give us a new adumbration on the full context of what is possible for human meaning and relationships. In fact, in agreement with Marion and Westphal, we decidedly think that phenomenology can and should engage in God-talk precisely for phenomenological, rather than theological, reasons. In saying this, the grounding commitment is methodological rather than confessional. As such, new phenomenological God-talk is better understood as philosophy of religion inspired by the phenomenological interest in the experience of phenomena in their mode of appearing (even if that mode is as "unapparent"). Being willing to draw from a theological archive, thus, does not transform phenomenology into a theological project, but simply expands the kinds of experiences it analyzes.

That said, Janicaud would likely balk at such a pluralist account because the problem he sees with both phenomenological theology and philosophy of religion is the attempt to allow for the "unapparent" somehow to show itself according to the confines reserved for appearance itself. His objection here is not without merit. It is sensible to suggest that phenomenology is not identical to philosophy, as such, and that there are limits to what phenomenology can investigate. Yet, rather than adhering to the letter of the principle of all principles, his restrictive reading of phenomenological method actually undermines the principle itself. In this way, he fails to avoid the problematic slide from agnostic indifferentism into atheist exclusivism. As pluralists have acknowledged, it is problematic for philosophers to begin with the assumptions that operate internally to confessional communities, but it is just as problematic for those same philosophers not to be open to phenomenal evidence that would suggest the possibility of religious phenomena. In other words, Janicaud's opposition to God-talk needs to be the result of a phenomenological argument that shows the impossibility of such phenomena. Yet, to give such an argument, he would need to assume a closed-system whereby evidence was limited *prima facie*. To abide by the principle of all principles, though, he must admit that the *possibility* of religious phenomena – under the guise of a phenomenological consideration of phenomenality and excess – cannot be excluded from the outset, but only

²⁵ Simmons and Benson, *The New Phenomenology*.

²⁶ Marion, *Being Given*, 235.

achieved as a conclusion. Neither he nor any of the indifferentists have provided such an argument, and we do not believe that they can – for again, to do so is already to beg the question regarding the limits of the phenomenality that they are attempting to investigate.

6 Phenomenological theology

Having explored the three general types of philosophical response that have been given to Janicaud, it is important to push a bit further into the possibilities of phenomenological theology. That is, what follows if we were to do phenomenology on the theological side of Falque's Rubicon? What if one follows the integrationists and does phenomenology whereby sources are allowed from confessional epistemic authorities? Moreover, it is possible to be a pluralist and affirm the divide between philosophy and theology but then stand firmly within the theological camp? These questions are far reaching, and we can only begin to unpack them a bit here, but it is important to appreciate that a decidedly pluralist response requires that we not only admit that phenomenological theology is possible, but that it is an important contribution to phenomenology, as such.

According to theologians, philosophy is often said to be a “handmaid” to theology. Its resources are used to help strengthen the actuality affirmed by theological sources of authority. Understood as a handmaid, philosophy has no immediate authority of her own, but it can be an invaluable service to theology by supplying resources that are illuminative and offering tools that are effective for clarification and analysis.

An example of this kind of approach is found in the work of Kevin Hart. He identifies himself explicitly as a theologian, but one who employs the tools of phenomenology in order to carry forward theological investigations. Phenomenology, he says, is a method that allows us to look more deeply, more penetratingly, at issues, including those raised in scripture, by attending to the things themselves and allowing them to disclose themselves in their own ways.²⁷ Thus, while phenomenology can draw heuristically from a theological archive, Hart shows how theology can be conducted phenomenologically in order to investigate questions formulated on the basis of Christian scripture and church tradition.²⁸

7 Two hats, one head

For those in this third-way pluralist lineage, the rules are as simple as “when in Rome, act like the Romans.” When writing as philosophers, or as theologians, we do so under the sources of authority that govern the discursive community in which we find ourselves, even as we draw heuristically from other communities and archives. Westphal calls this approach the “two hats” thesis.²⁹ Wearing two hats means that the Christian philosopher, or any philosopher who also identifies as part of a confessional religion, recognizes herself as belonging to two communities: the philosophical community and the religious community.

²⁷ Hart, *Kingdoms of God*, 4.

²⁸ Another example of employing the tools of phenomenology in theological discourse is Chrétien's, *Under the Gaze of the Bible*. Chrétien appropriates phenomenology's analysis of counter-intentionality to the question of what it means to place oneself beneath the authority of Christian scripture. He begins his analysis with the theological claim that the Bible as God's actual word of address, and as such should hold an authoritative position in the life of the believer. In contrast to his text, *The Call and the Response*, which we would designate as a philosophical inquiry that draws from a theological archive, *Under the Gaze of the Bible* places itself within theological discourse by the explicit claims it makes about Christian scripture. The same sort of distinction can be found in Marion's text, *God Without Being*, which is a theologically oriented text that draws from a philosophical archive, and *Being Given*, a philosophically oriented text that draws from a theological archive. Once again, the designation depends on which sources of epistemic authority are asserted to be primary or most directly accessed.

²⁹ See Westphal, “Prolegomena to Any Future Philosophy of Religion.”

Although we agree with Westphal, we think that his general framework can be pushed a bit further existentially.³⁰

What Janicaud was most worried about is that theology was being smuggled into phenomenology much like a Trojan horse that would then destroy the method from the inside. While there are thinkers associated with the so-called “theological turn” who “could pass for atheists,” and even those within new phenomenology who are exploring a “secular” philosophy of religion (e.g., Joeri Schrijvers, Bradley Onishi, and David Newheiser),³¹ many of the thinkers associated with new phenomenology are themselves Christians and sometimes write explicitly as such. They not only talk about God from a philosophical perspective, but they also actually *find themselves confessionally committed to that God as a way of life*. Hence, there is an *existential* factor at play that sometimes can be missed in purely methodological accounts. The worry is that these figures can be likened to undercover missionaries who smuggle into a closed country in order to secretly and subversively proselytize. Falque suggests that if we stopped obsessively guarding the border between philosophy and theology, we would see there is no need to be secretive and instead could come forward as Christian philosophers “unmasked.”³²

If not appreciated with care, Westphal’s “two hats” thesis threatens to compartmentalize our tasks. Although this approach allows us to be loyal to two different communities, the problem is that while we may have two hats, we only have one head. Putting on a theology hat or a philosophy hat is always a *personal* act, one that provokes a particular kind of existential experience. Therefore, “crossing the Rubicon” is always a *personal*, not just a professional, endeavor, and Westphal and Falque both rightly remind us, in a decidedly Kierkegaardian fashion, that it is a *living* person doing the crossing.³³ The question, then, is how might a Christian scholar participate virtuously in the philosophical community without bifurcating herself, sealing off her professional life from her personal religious commitments? How might she come forward *authentically* while also realizing that her loyalties are not automatically to one community or the other, but must be navigated with care? In other words, the danger with Falque’s and Plantinga’s account of Christian boldness is that it can often just amount to being ultimately loyal to Christianity and only secondarily loyal to philosophy. Yet, there is no need to decide such things in an ultimate fashion. Life is complicated and so are our loyalties. One hat is not the best hat, but simply better or worse given the questions, the situation, and the context. Just as we sometimes need to adjust which hat we are wearing due to weather – a wool beanie in a South Carolina summer doesn’t make much sense, but might be a good choice in Canada – we can better appreciate through experience, trial and error, and discursive practice, how better to navigate the personal stakes of moving between philosophy and theology as a lived practice.

Nonetheless, we recognize that some amount of tension will likely remain for those who make a habit of crossing the Rubicon. Marion offers a beneficial tool for pluralists who are trying to live in light of such tension. Although imports from theology cannot be used as primary building materials (again, because they appeal immediately to theological sources of epistemic authority), they can be taken as secondary resources for one’s philosophical aims. Moreover, there are phenomena discovered in light of theological Revelation that nonetheless stand on their own philosophically even without the actuality of Christian revelational evidence or personal confessional convictions. Such phenomena can be given “with abandon” to philosophy for its own edification. While Janicaud might have taken edification to mean a subsuming of philosophy into theology, Marion’s insistence that such resources be given “with abandon” means that they are not a “masked” attempt at ideological imperialism or indoctrination. Phenomena that are “saturated with meaning and glory” that stand on their own philosophically can be given for the sake of the philosophical

³⁰ See Bowen and Simmons, “Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, and Christian Scholarship,” and also Simmons, “Prospects for Pentecostal Philosophy.”

³¹ See Schrijvers, *Between Faith and Belief*; Onishi, *The Sacrality of the Secular*; and Newheiser, *Hope in a Secular Age*.

³² Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 184. See also Falque, *The Loving Struggle*, 126–9. One wonders though whether this would amount to the very triumphalism about which Plantinga is worried in light of so many who followed his own “advice to Christian philosophers” to be bolder in their Christian commitments (Plantinga, “Response to Nick Wolterstorff”).

³³ For more on how philosophy can be personal without being confessional, see Simmons, “Personally Speaking.”

discourse taken on its own terms. Simply put, when we acknowledge the distinction between philosophy and theology, but still phenomenologically engage in explorations of the possibility of religious phenomena, we philosophers should be open to learning from theology in ways that not only inform, but also inspire. This avenue is closed off to indifferentists and integrationists because they are both potentially reductive in ways that pluralism is not. The dynamic play between theology and philosophy helps both discourses to be better hats whenever we have good reasons to wear them.

Rather than simply “plundering the Egyptians” (as the old saying goes), taking what might be beneficial for Christian theology’s own investigations, Christians might also practice *learning from* while *giving to* the Egyptians, as it were. Phenomena that exist *in* natural experience but are discovered or constructed by the auxiliary of revelation are relevant both to philosophers and theologians. Yet, theologians can give to the philosophers new possibilities – possibilities to expand, to create, to mend, to heal, to imagine, to see differently, to be otherwise, to investigate deeper, and to look farther. Phenomena first discovered by the light of Revelation are made visible to phenomenology where they can stand on their own. They are introduced not to turn philosophy into theology, but for the sake of philosophy itself.

8 Conclusion

It is reasonable to think that Janicaud is all the way right or all the way wrong. But, we have argued that it is better to think that he is partly right and partly wrong. One thing we can all say about Janicaud’s essay on the occasion of its thirtieth anniversary is it has helped us recognize how possibility-laden the phenomenological method is, and it has challenged us to think carefully about how to use that method not just strategically, but faithfully (whether as a philosopher or as a theologian), and creatively as well. We hope that by attempting to gain some clarity regarding the various ways of appropriating Janicaud, we do not shut down conversation, but instead motivate another 30 years of truly constructive, collaborative, and even edifying, work in phenomenology and theology.

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