Chapter III

Kristensen And The Meaning of Religion Through Merleau-Ponty

We have seen in the last chapter how the experience of the Holy according to Otto could be viewed from Merleau-Ponty’s perspective of the lived-through-world and bodily intentionality. In that attempt we have examined first of all, the structure of the life-world or the lived-through-world which served as a means to delineate the implicit structures of the numinous experience as described by Otto. Our experience of the numinous or the Holy as Otto calls it, has its structure in with man’s experience of the natural or perceptual world. This perceptual world has its invisible or the depth dimension that transcends itself to sedimented form of words and gestures giving rise to religious habits in man. These habits in man are then reactivated periodically with a view to recapture the contents of the originary experience as well as to find new signification. Following the same structure of the lived-through-world, we now go on to examine William Brede Kristensen’s description of religious experience. However, in order to place his views in perspective we need, first of all, to highlight his divergence from Otto’s approach to describing religious experience.

3.1. Critique of Otto’s Position:
Kristensen acknowledges that Otto through his explication of the ‘Holy’ as the essence of religion, gave a positive account of religious experience. He conceived ‘Holy’ as a category sui generis which cannot be reduced to
anything else. It has an irreducible character. By analyzing the ‘Holy’, Otto delineated its different elements or ‘moments’. And these elements constitutive of the ‘Holy’ are according to Otto universal. They are present in all religions.

Kristensen holds that Otto’s approach to the study of religion which although professed to be following the historical course, actually is an exercise in philosophy of religion that concerns itself with the essence of religion. The explication of the ‘Holy’ as Otto does is philosophical in character although “the evolutionary pattern is forced upon the historical reality.”¹

Phenomenology of religion should follow, according to Kristensen, the historical data of religious experience as evinced by the believers themselves. An objective history of religion is possible only if the researcher faithfully follows the belief of the believers. Kristensen speaks strongly against, “…the disastrous compulsion towards psychological orientation ... it diverts attention and interest from objective reality and reduces historical insight to a product of our fantasy.”²

Kristensen’s starting point, therefore, is different from that of Otto. For, Otto began his explorations into religious experience with an a priori assumption that the category of ‘Holy’ is *sui generis* and is universal to all religions. This was a purely deductive conclusion for which Otto does not provide sufficient proofs to substantiate except that he analyses different elements in the psychological experience. Kristensen rejects such deductive method in studying religious experience in alien religions because it often
amounts to describing the researcher's own religious convictions. We must, therefore, follow another method to study religion. He says,

We should not take the concept of 'holiness' as our starting point, asking, for example, how the numinous is revealed in natural phenomena. On the contrary, we should ask how the believer conceives the phenomena he calls 'holy.'

The starting point of phenomenology of religion, therefore, is "the viewpoint of the believer, and not the concept of 'holiness' in its elements or moments" as suggested by the researcher.

3.2. Threefold Approaches to the Study of Religion

Kristensen in his phenomenological investigations of the religious phenomena has unequivocally insisted on the need to accept the validity of the claims of believers themselves. This requirement, however, raises some questions. How are we to arrive at the 'right' view of religious phenomena as understood by the believers themselves? Can we ever 'enter' totally into the religious experience of an alien people and culture? Is there not a seeming gap between the ancient and modern perspectives on life? In other words, what are the methods that we can possibly employ in order to reach the view of the believers themselves? No one single method of studying religion can encompass all aspects of religion; in fact, each of them while contributing further to the common fund of knowledge regarding religion tends to be, more often than not, reductionistic in character. Consequently, they miss what is specific to religion, viz. the religious aspect. Kristensen, therefore, proposes a threefold approach to study religious phenomena
which in his view does justice to all aspects of religion. They are: (a) history of religion, (b) phenomenology of religion, and (c) philosophy of religion. He, however, occupied mostly himself with the first two.5

3.2.1. History of Religion

By history of religion Kristensen understood a descriptive history, and in this context, he was opposed to any reductionist–evolutionary, apologetic and rationalistic–understanding of religion.6 Religion for the believer is something absolute and it is this absolute character on which an historian should focus his attention. An historian, while attempting to understand the significance of religious phenomena particularly of those believers belonging to a religious tradition other than his own, should guard himself from the danger of falling into an “evaluative comparison.” In an evaluative comparison of religious phenomena there exists an implicit a priori ideal with which comparison and evaluation of the data under investigation are made possible. Consequently, one does not listen to what the data present themselves but imposes one’s own views on them - often pre-determined.7

In such an attempt,

We do not learn to know and understand the other (although that indeed should be the task of historical research) ; we see only its relation to us. We look for, find and understand ourselves in the events of history.8

There is, however, another type of comparison of religious phenomena that Kristensen endorses. It is the ‘informative comparison’ in the history of
religions. The purpose of this sort of comparison is not to 'establish' the alleged superiority or inferiority of one religious tradition over against another, but rather it aims at deepening of our insight into religious phenomena even if they are apparently historically unrelated.\(^9\) Comparison of religious phenomena in historical study, therefore, is not only desirable but may even be necessary for the methodological reason that in a particular religion the significance of certain religious phenomena are better described than in others. This method of studying religious phenomena already anticipates his comparative investigation undertaken in phenomenology of religion.\(^10\)

3.2.2. Phenomenology of Religion

The expression 'Phenomenology of religion' as Kristensen used it has an intermediary sense which falls between the meaning of history of religion and philosophy of religion. Here Kristensen is influenced by, though not exclusively, P.D. Chantepie de la Saussaye who also made a similar classification wherein the phenomenology of religion was interposed between history of religion and philosophy of religion. According to de la Saussaye while philosophy of religion defines the essence of religion, history of religion deals with its manifestation in historical contexts.\(^11\) And, phenomenology of religion systematically classifies the discrete historical data so as to arrive at their significance. Precisely because of its unique position and role, phenomenology of religion is "extraordinarily interesting and important." Phenomenology of religion, according to Kristensen, is
also called typology of religion, systematic history of religion and applied philosophy of religion.\textsuperscript{12}

Phenomenology of religion due to its unique intermediary position and role is at once dependent on history of religion for its 'resources' and on philosophy of religion for providing the "guiding principles." In other words, they mutually anticipate one another. While the history of religion studies religious phenomena in their historical development, philosophy of religion defines the essence of religion. However, it is phenomenology of religion that brings together the historical data out their historical context and studies them in groups so as to arrive at their meaning for the believers themselves.\textsuperscript{13} To that extent, it can be said with George Alfred James that Kristensen's phenomenology of religion is a-historical.\textsuperscript{14} Just because one characterizes Kristensen's phenomenology of religion to be a-historical in character, it does not, however, follow that he pays only a scant regard to historical facts. Quite the contrary. As a matter of fact Kristensen draws his material for phenomenological classification of religious types from historical data. Historical research, therefore, is of great importance to him.

Kristensen, however, does not endorse any sort of historical approach to the study religious phenomena. As for instance, he is opposed to the evaluative history of religions which endeavors to determine by means of comparison the alleged superior or inferior 'value' of a particular religion. This is totally unacceptable to Kristensen since it already introduces into phenomenology a valuation which is contrary to the explicit methodological
limitation, besides failing to treat the faith of believers as absolute.\textsuperscript{15} Kristensen also rejects any evolutionary form of the history of religion since it implicitly subscribes to a hierarchied form of religious life. It presumes that history follows a "continuous line from primitive through the developed up to the highest." In such a linear scheme, obviously the present as modern stands above the past which is often qualified as primitive. And the religion of the researcher is usually given the primary place over against which all other religions are compared.\textsuperscript{16}

Phenomenology of religion in Kristensen's scheme of studying religious phenomena has, therefore, a unique role, that is, it purports to arrive at the depth dimension of religious reality as understood by believers themselves. And, in order, to do this, Kristensen says, "We must always try ... to put ourselves in the position of the believers, because it is there alone that the religious reality is to be found which we wish to understand."\textsuperscript{17} In other words, Kristensen places a great importance on the need to experience religion as the believers do in order to arrive at the significance of religious phenomena as understood by them and not as by the researcher.

Following the phenomenological method of study of religious phenomena as understood by the believers themselves, Kristensen does not claim to have the 'full knowledge' of them. All that is possible for the researcher is to attain an "approximate knowledge" of the religious phenomena. This is because the researcher is always "one remove from the religion he is examining; a scientist can only \textit{partly} interpret the religion he is working
with." There is, therefore, a certain kind of methodological limitation to phenomenology of religion as understood by Kristensen.

This limitation, however, does not prohibit Kristensen from pursuing his study of religious reality phenomenologically. because despite its limitations, the method still provides a tool by which we can ascertain its (religious reality) significance. Kristensen opines that in order to understand religious reality as understood by believers themselves, there needs to grow a form of ‘sympathy’ between the scientist and the object of his research. In other words, study of religion should make the researcher grow religiously. This is because, “the study does not take place outside our personality and the reverse will also prove to be the case; the study exerts an influence on our personality ... when religion is the subject of our work, we grow religiously.”

A phenomenologist of religion, therefore, is not a dispassionate spectator, as it is sometimes demanded of researchers. but is one who nurtures a ‘feeling’ for the object of his study. It does not, however, mean that he converts himself fully into that religion which he studies; that would not be a research into religious studies but a religious conversion. With the aid of such an attitude towards religious phenomena under study, a phenomenologist of religion purports to ‘come closer to the mind of the believer.’
3.2.3. Intuition - A Means for Knowing Religious Significance:

Kristensen in his phenomenology of religion places a great emphasis on intuition as a means for both identifying that which is specifically religious reality and for knowing its depth dimension. Rational analysis of individual phenomenon. Kristensen feels. is of little use here. “A rational and systematic structure in the science of religion is impossible. Again and again a certain amount of intuition is indispensable.”\(^{21}\) Along with intuition a researcher should also have what Kristensen calls a feeling for religious reality under investigation. The feeling he talks about is not just a psychological one but rather it is “an awareness of what religion is” about in contrast to other realities. Kristensen, therefore, sees a need for appealing to intuition in order to arrive at deeper significance of religious reality. In practice what he does is that religious phenomena belonging to different religions are drawn together with a view that insight into a certain religious phenomenon can better be derived by comparing similar phenomenon in different religions. To understand, for instance, religious offering we must study this phenomenon in different religions. The question that a phenomenologist asks is: “what religious need has caused men in all times and places to present offerings to the gods.”\(^{22}\) In all these attempts what is important according to Kristensen is that “the scholar should do justice to the values which he studies and which are alien to him; so he should understand the others as autonomous and spiritual individuals.”\(^{23}\)
3.3. Modernity and Antiquity

Having made clear the unique role of phenomenology of religion, i.e. it is a systematic study of religious phenomena as understood by believers and the role of intuition in knowing that, Kristensen moves on to examining religious phenomena belonging to different religions. Here he draws a distinction between two types of religious orientations: the one represented by the European civilization, especially Christianity, and the other represented by the Mediterranean antiquity. Kristensen calls the former orientation 'modern' and the latter 'ancient.' These specific and distinct orientations can also be termed as 'civilization' because each is unique in its characteristic approach in understanding the cosmos, human and religious cults.

The modern civilization with its characteristic rationalistic orientation is the direct consequence of the Greek enlightenment. This was further reinforced by the 'Enlightenment' of the renaissance in Europe which gave rise to what came to be known as the 'scientific and ethical' orientation. The paradigm of the modern orientation is quite distinct and different from that of the ancients. The cosmos is no longer viewed by the modern man as a seat of mysterious power as the latter considered it. Rather it is the objective reality where the universal natural laws are at work. And it falls within the purview of scientific investigation to discover these laws, so that knowing their patterns of operation the scientists can manipulate them for greater control over natural phenomena. As a direct consequence of such scientific approach to natural phenomena the modern civilization has lost
sight of the religious sense of nature. They have become secular which is another way of saying that they have become ‘spiritless.’

The Ancients, on the contrary, have a different outlook to natural phenomena. For them natural phenomena are not mere means to an end - often human end. That is a very impoverished way of treating natural phenomena. Besides it is also robbing the natural phenomena of their divine character. The ancients had a very strong religious sense of nature. They had “...a vivid consciousness of the cooperation between, indeed a fusion of, the finite and infinite factors in all phenomena connected with the essentials of life.” The ancients shared a sense of mystery that surrounds everything. And this sense was communicated in myths. They considered the mysterious factor more important than rational. “They had a ‘religious realism’ with their religious sense of nature and their awareness of man’s holiness in his divine energies and aspects.”

Such a strong religious sense of nature is the reason behind the ancients accepting each phenomenon as sacred. For them each phenomenon was pointing to a ‘numen’ and, therefore, is not to be comprehended in terms of generalizations. Kristensen understands their polytheism as witness to an infinite variety in the mystery of being. As Waardenburg puts it.

“... each religious fact, to them, with all of its particulars, was grounded in a particular religious orientation opposite to our own; each one of these facts had an autonomous religious value; they were ‘religious’ phenomena in the sense that they aroused an awareness of spontaneous factors in life which are infinite and
absolute, and that through these indeed ‘religious’ phenomena they felt an other world invading the known one."

The ancients viewed each phenomenon as religious pointing to a ‘numen’. They shared a sense of the mystery of the infinite invading the finite, thus erasing all distinctions between them. Accordingly,

"... nature and human existence could be experienced as divine realities; a world order could be recognized as being divine reality. a mysterious dual unity of life and death could be perceived as a religious insight, and a harmony of opposites could be seen in the oneness of the totality."\(^28\)

Knowledge into this totality, therefore, has a character that is not ordinary but religious. It is not through rational propositions this knowledge is attained, but through religious insights coming as they do, through intuition. Kristensen makes it abundantly clear that a scholar studying religion other than his own should take the believers’ views into serious consideration. Because religion as understood by believers is a “sovereign entity rooted in eternity.” Insight into this sovereign entity is possible only through sympathetic intuition. And it is the religious man’s prerogative to gain such invaluable intuition into the essence of phenomena which reflect the divine.

3.4. Centrality of Man

Man is central in Kristensen’s study of religion. This is because man is a witness to “what was both an object and norm of his research: the belief of the believers.”\(^29\) He did not strictly adhere to any ‘established’ scientific
phenomena themselves. What is most important to him, therefore, was the testimony of believers - what they believed in and how they expressed their belief.

The centrality of man in Kristensen's study of religion, however, is not to be identified with anthropocentrism. Rather, he understood by it that man is the locus in which religious beliefs grow and religious practices develop. It would be quite right to say that religious phenomena outside the human realm make no meaning. This is exactly what Kristensen held and set out to explore in detail. From his writings it becomes clear that Kristensen had always a preferential option for the man of religious antiquity. Man of religious antiquity according to him was quite distinct from modern man in that the former shared a religious sense of natural phenomena which the latter has lost sight of. Modern man has neglected the presence of the mystery in phenomena, thus he is unable to 'perceive' anymore the religious character inherent in them. It is this lacuna that Kristensen wants to fill by first and foremost appealing to the religious sense the ancients shared and cherished. For he is convinced that the ancients can direct our steps in ways that lead not so much to expanding of our knowledge but to deeper insights. It can be said, "the ancients were often mistaken regarding the material course of events, but with respect to the spiritual side of events they often saw more deeply than we."
3.5. Structure of Religious Experience

Having seen Kristensen's views on man's centrality in understanding religious phenomena, the distinction he has drawn between the ancients and moderners, and the need for intuition in order to apprehend the significance of religious phenomena, we now go on to seek the possibility for understanding his phenomenology of religion through Merleau-Ponty's notions of lived-through-world and bodily intentionality. At the first instance, it seems preposterous to draw a parallel between Merleau-Ponty and Kristensen whose domains of interest and areas of inquiries lie quite apart. For while Kristensen was preoccupied with describing man's quest for religious experience, Merleau-Ponty busied himself in taking Husserl's phenomenology to new frontiers. How and where can then the two thinkers meet? The meeting point certainly is not a direct and explicit one, at least in our scheme of things, but there remains, however, a possibility of implicit meeting of structures. That is to say, the structure underlying Merleau-Ponty's lived-through-world, finds itself reflected in Kristensen's description of religious experience. According to Merleau-Ponty man's primordial experience of the world is through perception. The world that man perceives, the phenomenal world, is the real world. It is through perception that man "interrogates the world." Herein the perceptual style of knowing man does not follow a rational mode of understanding but rather it is pre-rational or pre-conceptual in character. It is primarily a lived experience that is more important than any theoretical or conceptual constructs. To put it another way, it is the bodily knowledge, gained
through the interaction with the phenomenal world that serves as the foundation of all other conceptual and theoretical formulations.

3.5.1. Religious Experience at the Perceptual Level: An Encounter Between Merleau-Ponty and Kristensen:

Merleau-Ponty's claim of the primacy of perceptual knowledge can relevantly be applied to Kristensen's phenomenology of religion. For Kristensen any serious study of religious phenomena cannot begin from an a priori assumption of either a concept or an act. That is precisely why Kristensen disagrees with Otto's view of the a priori category of the 'Holy' as the basis of all religious experience. Instead, he insisted that we must begin with the historical fact of the believers' understanding of their religion itself, since it is the only valid source of approximate knowledge about their religion.

While dealing with the religion of the ancients, Kristensen defends staunchly its right to be autonomous, as any other discipline, in regard to their beliefs and practices. It is for the researcher to understand religions other than his own on their terms which might appear unfamiliar and even grotesque. Religion for the ancients, according to Kristensen, was something absolute and he regulated his life and activities in accord with its demands. When considered in this manner, Kristensen finds that the ancients had close affinity with nature, and their religious beliefs and practices were uniquely weaved together in order to sustain and promote that relationship. The ancients' affinity with nature or the "cosmic orientation" and the consequent reverence of it would not have been
possible except through their perceptual encounter, or "interrogation" in Merleau-Ponty's terms, with different entities of the nature. Thus man, not as a detached consciousness, but as an embodied person, encounters the cosmic phenomena and thereby interrogates the sky, the sun, the moon, the earth and different entities of the earth. The knowledge gained by him at this level is not yet rational or reflective, rather it is, as Merleau-Ponty calls it, pre-rational or pre-reflective.

As an instance of "perceptual encounter", let us look into the ancients' understanding of the sky and other heavenly bodies. The worship of the sky is quite common to many religions and cultures of the past. Encountering the sky for the ancients was something awe inspiring as the it presented before them an all-embracing phenomenon. Kant expressed this feeling of awe most succinctly when he remarked that two things fill him with a steadily increasing admiration and respect: the starry heavens above and the (autonomous, absolute) ethical law within. Neither is to be sought for in what is hidden, nor are they fantastic (überschwängliche) magnitudes whose existence can only be surmised. They could be seen (perceptibility) and they can be related immediately to my consciousness of existence (subsistence).³²

Kant sees the infinity of the sky in relation to the image of the absolute moral law within us. For the ancients, however, the sky did not represent the absolute moral ought within us, rather it pointed to the religious belief in the self-sustaining power. Suffice here to say that the ancients greatly admired the sheer magnitude of the vast expanse of the sky which
encompasses with in itself everything. Among the several heavenly bodies that man encounters, it is the sun, more than others, that commands his high esteem. Man's experience of the sunrise, the sunset and its regularity has greatly impressed on him. In fact, no other natural phenomenon has impressed man as much as the sun. The splendor of the sunrise and sunset, the warmth of the sunlight, and its role in preserving life on the earth, etc. have contributed to man's incredible devotion to the sun.33

Besides the perceptual encounter of the sun as something exceptionally impressive which has led him to worship it as god, man also meets with the moon. The worship of the moon is mostly found among the nomads who usually journey at night as the day usually is too hot.34 The moon appears to man in different shapes in its waxing and waning phases, and it is a spectacular event. And people generally accept that there exists a correlation between the moon's different phases and man's life and (agricultural) activities. This correlation between the moon and man's activities, prompted him to see the moon reflected in other earth gods as well.35

Kristensen also refers to several earth gods such as trees and plants, water, fire, etc. which once again rise from man's daily interaction with them. Man sees the earth as bearer of all life including his own. The earth brings forth life, sustains it and takes it back only to rise anew; a cyclical process that goes on unceasingly. That is the reason why the earth is often called "the Mother Earth." 36 The Mother Earth's life reveals itself in the grain and
other food materials that she produces. And abundance and riches are sure signs of god’s blessing.

The ancients encountered the earth’s life in plants and trees in a preeminent manner, says Kristensen. In the life and growth of trees also man meets with a cyclic movement of birth, growth, death and regeneration in accord with seasons of the year. The ancients considered some trees as sacred, as they provided drink of immortality, while others served as source of ‘knowledge.’ Another means by which man met with the life of the earth is high places such as hills and mountains. The ancients experienced the sun as coming from behind the hills, and so these high places are considered as the dwelling places of god, besides they being treated as the naval of the earth from where life began and which sustains it.

Another two elements of the earth that man intensely interacts with are water and fire. The belief in holy water and sacred fire are almost universal. Man finds water at different places such as, rivers, oceans, ponds, etc. and he knows it to be having both destructive and constructive powers. Water is indispensable for sustaining all forms of life, besides it being used as a cleansing agent. Lack of water is death of all forms of life, while its abundance brings prosperity on the earth. Similar is the case with fire for the ancients. It is sacred in the sense it is also essential for life. It is the warmth of body, warmth of personality (“fire of youth,” “to speak with fire”), and also required for growing and maturing. Fire is thought to be imperishable and when it disappears it has merely changed its form. Fire, like water, has—both constructive and destructive powers inherent in it: as
such man dreads as well as reveres it. Man’s experience of volcanoes, lightning and other instances of fire must have produced in him a reverence towards it. Kristensen also makes reference to particular gods, momentary gods and gods personifying concepts. These gods, according to him are not to be understood as vestiges of pantheistic beliefs of the ancients; rather, each one of them is an autonomous god maintaining his individuality. Man’s perceptual experience of rivers, seas, mountains, clouds, rains, winds, etc. has given rise to these deities. Man also felt the need to have gods for all kinds of moments and aspects of his experience. Countering all allegations against ancients’ belief in particular gods, Kristensen says that their religion arises not from mere speculation but rather from practical course of life. “It is thoroughly a realistic religion, which takes as its starting point the particularities of life, and it is applied to the realities of life.”

The ancients have a cosmic orientation, they are close to nature. And this is most evident in their relationship with animals which, Kristensen says is difficult for the modern man to understand and reconcile with. It is incomprehensible to the modern man because animals represent no longer any mystery to him, but rather they are economic means, and his relation to them is directed accordingly. For the ancients, however, animals meant much more than as mere economic means; they were part and parcel of their household, and they shared their lives. The bull for example, was the source of strength and assistance to man in ploughing fields, generating more cattle heads, transportation, etc. “Man is dependent on the ox in the same sense
that he is on water, fire, and similar elements: the vital nature of the bull is in everything that lives." The power of animal often fascinated man. As for instance, the keen nose of dogs, the sharp eye sight of eagles, the capacity of snakes to shed their skins periodically, the strength of an elephant, etc. have made the ancients view them differently and reverently.

3.5.2. Perceptual Faith of Man in Himself

It not the case that Kristensen concentrates only on religious man's interaction with nature around that gives him the images of god, but he also turns his attention on man's meeting of himself, his likeness to and difference from god. As for Merleau-Ponty so also for the ancients, man, first of all, is an embodied being placed within the world, interacting with the world, before he indulges in abstractive process of reflection. There is little difference between man and the nature around him, and he relates himself with nature as closely as possible.42 Kristensen rightly says that the ancients had an "undifferentiated" view of life.43 For them: "Man lives the life of the earth and dies the death of the earth."44 This attitude to life shows that they, the ancients, had accorded much value to human corporeal existence. Physical health was real "life" while sickness was considered as a negation of life. Fertility and well-being were always seen as sign of god's blessings. Thus, it is said in the Avesta religion that "The satisfied man better able than the hungry to appropriate the spirit of Mazda."45 That the ancients, it is already said, accorded much value to man's corporeal existence. This is evident from his admiration for physical beauty
ancient Greeks and the Romans. It is to be noticed that among the ancients, the aesthetic and the religious often shaded off into one another; the beauty of the body was conceived in religious terms. The mythical hero of the Greeks was Hercules who represented physical strength. In other words, it is the conception of the attributes of living men which is at the foundation of hero worship. From such a conception arose the ancients' anthropomorphic images of god which, however, do not always limit themselves to human figures alone, but are often couched in exaggerated forms. By such portrayal of god the ancients saw the similarity as well as the difference between them and god.

We have so far seen how the ancients had perceived the world, and in what manner that "perceptual faith" had transformed their life and conduct within the world. It is to be noticed here that the ancients did not remain merely at the empirical level, but went on to explore that which subtends the visible phenomena, their latent significance. As Merleau-Ponty points out the visible world is a landscape, a topography to be explored, so too the ancients have brought to the fore the underlying significance of the phenomenal world.

3.5.3. Religious Significance of the Visible World

As we have noted before what distinguishes the ancients from the modern man is that the former had a quite unique religious attitude towards the visible world around. However, for the modern and scientific man the world is just an aggregate of material objects governed by universal physical laws which are within the reach of man's comprehension. For him the visible
world as such is not a mystery but a problem to be investigated and solved; and the empirical science is the means by which he claims to master the world and its forces. The ancients, however, viewed the visible world quite differently. For them the phenomenal world is more than its materiality, it has its spiritual dimension which commands man's respect and reverence. This view corroborates with Merleau-Ponty's claim that man's perception is multi-dimensional. There is a visible aspect of man's perception but there is also an invisible ideality to it which for Kristensen is the religious significance of the visible phenomena. As such the visible world has a depth dimension which is a mystery, a spiritual force works through it, and it is for man to cooperate with this spiritual force in its creative endeavors. For the ancients there are no two forms of spirit, only one spirit that encompasses both nature and man. It is true that man is determined by the phenomenal world, but not mechanically as he is essentially a spirit; as such, he relates himself to the spiritual factors at work in the natural events.

The visible world, therefore, is viewed by the ancients as a domain for the manifestation of the divine. He believes that there is an universal order at work within the visible world which is described differently in various religious traditions. This universal order is not equivalent to the universal laws of science constructed on the principle of cause-effect relation but is preeminently spiritual or mystical in character. It is this mystical character of the visible world intuited by man is what Kristensen, following Schleiermacher, calls the Anschauung des Universums. Given this
Weltenschauung of the ancients, it is not surprising to see them respecting and even worshipping nature. For them nature taken as a whole, is a living being, an organism. Within the cosmic order they recognize a universal order of life which is supreme encompassing both man and nature.\textsuperscript{52}

The ancients believed that that which sustains the visible world is a self-sustaining spiritual force manifesting itself in diverse forms. One of the forms by which it manifests itself is as sky gods found and worshipped in many religious traditions. Man experiences the sky, as the abode of such gods, all governing principle of both nature and himself. It is often called as the place of divine wisdom, wisdom of absolute life, of the ultimate and irrational law of life.\textsuperscript{53} Among the many sky gods, it is the sun god, personified as Helios, Shamash, Re, etc. which has a prominent place in many religious traditions. Kristensen reiterates that such a personification of the sun as god should not be treated as a naïve conception of nature but as primarily representing the divine energy of the sun. In other words, the visible sun is the manifestation of the invisible sun which is of divine origin. The visible sun rises and sets, but the real rising, according to the believers, occurs in ‘resurrection’ that has already been fought out and won in death, because it is in death that the mystery of life occurs.\textsuperscript{54}

As in the case of the sun, so is the case of the moon, the ancients intuited a deeper significance, a religious meaning. That the moon is closely related to man is evident from the fact that he has ordered his life and activities according to the waxing and waning phases of the moon. For, in the waxing and waning of the moon the ancients saw growth and decay of earthly life.
It is said in the *Avesta* religion, as for instance, that when the moon shines the plants grow and in the spring they sprout. The moon is thought to be casting an influence on nature, including the life and death of man. It has a double nature: mortal and immortal. While the mortal nature is reflected in the waning phase of the moon, the immortal nature in the waxing phase. The moon is said to be “dying” in its waning phase, whereas “rising” occurs in its waxing phase, and this occurs in a cyclic manner. The new moon is considered as the savior of life because it is itself the risen one, manifesting its infinite and immortal nature. It is often the case that kings in ancient cultures were seen as representatives of the divine on earth, and were equated with the moon. The moon is also considered as the god of wisdom. And this, according to some scholars, could be the rationale behind for man’s determining the calendar and chronology.

The ancients are characterized by a religious *Anschauung* in their approach to the visible world. Thus they view not only the powers of sky with reverence but even the earth and all entities on it in the same way. The earth is revered by man for it is from there life and death originate. The life of the earth is the life of man, and the death of the earth is his death. Man is born of the various elements of the earth so also at his death he returns to the same elements of the earth. There is therefore, an inalienable relationship between man and the earth. However, this relationship is not rooted primarily in materiality, rather it consists in the religious attitude towards the earth. If the earth is held as sacred, then all elements in it, such
as the fire, water, trees, mountains, rivers, etc. are also sacred. They possess and manifest the divine life of the earth.

Fire is viewed by the ancients as the basis of life and bearer of the divine revelation. The absolute, self-subsistent energy is present in fire. Such a view is found among the early Greek philosophers, as for example, Heraclitus held that fire is the eternal life of the world; and Pythagoras opined that it is fire that sustains the world. The sacredness of fire is manifested both in its positive and negative roles. Negatively it is said that fire removes evil, hostile and destructive forces, while positively, it is the will and law, the self-subsistent and abiding life of the world. These two roles are perhaps best illustrated in man's worship of the hearth fire, considered as the “naval” from where life began. And it is this hearth fire that saves man from all evil and destructive forces as well.\textsuperscript{57}

The Ancients were not rest content with treating trees, mountains, water, rivers, etc. as just natural phenomena to be subjugated to man. They possessed a supranatural dimension or deeper religious significance because of which the ancients revered and worshipped them. As for instance, the trees and plants were looked upon as sharing in the mystery of the divine life of the earth. The seasonal changes of trees and plants are the manifestation of the process of death and resurrection.\textsuperscript{58} Similarly, the ancients considered high places like mountains and hills as sacred because they reveal the divine. That is one of the reasons according to Kristensen why such places are called as the “naval” of the earth, from where creation first came to be.\textsuperscript{59} Because of the religious significance of such high places
the ancients always preferred to construct their temples there. It gives us a clear indication that the ancients had an undifferentiated view of the world and the divine.

The ancients also revered water not only because of its utility and indispensability for man, but it was more out of its sacred dimension. According to the ancient conception, water that is essential to the life of plants, animals and man must possess a self-subsistent life energy, i.e. a divine power. In other words, water is the mysterious bearer of the divine energy. It may be held that the ancient Greek philosopher Thales held that life originates from water. Water also represents the realm of death and resurrection of life, probably inferred from the ancients' experience of natural calamities such as floods and destruction followed by a revival and growth. All these goes to show clearly that there was among the ancients a concurrence between their religious conception and philosophic understanding of the world. Or to put it another way, the ancients' view of reality was permeated by religious significance.

3.5.4. Depth Dimension of Man

The ancients conceived not only the visible world but also man religiously. Man, for the ancients, was certainly an object among the objects in the world but with a difference in that he possessed, besides his material body, a depth dimension, the "vital principle" or the "soul." However, it is to be noted that the ancients did not share the modern dualistic conception of man having an immaterial and a-cosmic soul sustaining the material and finite
dimensions engaged in the world forming its part and yet distinct from it. Man is what he is because he is in the world. Merleau-Ponty has quite succinctly put it when he says that man is primarily an embodied being "interrogating" the world with his bodily sensorimotor intentionality, pragmatic, ambiguous and pre-thetic in nature. The ancients also had a strong sense of the bodily powers of man, and yet, he perceived a deeper dimension, a religious significance in him. This deeper religious significance, however, does not mean that the ancients viewed man dualistically. On the contrary, there seems to be no such clear distinction made between the soul and body. As for instance, the Israelites used the Hebrew term *nephesh* denoting a strong and essential unity of soul and body. According to this conception all spiritual activities come from *nephesh*, the total being of man. In fact there are no separate words in Hebrew for will and thought in our sense of them, since they are essentially expressions of *nephesh*. They are not attributes that man possesses but are identified with man himself. It is to be noted here that even when the term "soul" is used, it is taken in the sense of the "totality of our being" intuitively understood as the unity of the bodily and spiritual nature.

Similar are the conceptions of man in *Avesta* religion and in early Greek thinking. In the *Avesta* religion it is said that both the physical and spiritual worlds, body and soul are created by Mazda. It may be pointed out here that there is a sort of dualism present in *Avesta* religion between the good and the evil, or the *asha* and *druj*. However, they do not really point out to a dualism, opines Kristensen, as it is a religious elucidation of man's
experience of two opposing forces in him. Among the early Greeks also there is no concept of a soul independently existing from that of the body. Although there is no dualistic conception of man among the ancients, it does not follow that they were totally bereft of the idea of soul. They did possess such an idea though different from the modern nuance of it. The soul, according to the ancients, as the totality of our being, is the intuitive understanding of the unity of our spiritual and bodily nature. Such a conception of soul is commensurate with the ancients' attitude towards the world itself viewed as locus for the divine manifestation. Man therefore possesses the divine energy in himself and, as such, he deserves to be worshipped.

As the Hebrews have the term *nephesh* for soul, so the Romans and Avesta people have the expression *genius*. It is the soul of the living man, and it is under its protection that every person lives. The *genius* has its feminine form called the *juno*, and it is *juno*, remaining in the background, who determines the course of events in the life of women. Kristensen writes, "*Genius* or *Juno* represents the spontaneous factor present in every expression of life; it is thus a divine force or a divine being, conceived in personal and individual terms." The Egyptians speak of *ka* which is the "image" of a person. *Ka* is a person's "life-spirit" which works in the heart and fills food with energy that keeps life going. Closely related to the *genius* and *ka* is "my god" in the Babylonian religion which once again denotes man's soul. What is to be noted in all these diverse conceptions of soul in man among the ancients is that, they had an undifferentiated
understanding of man and nature. Man, though distinct from nature, is yet truly part of it, sharing in its mystery and divine power. Such conceptions, reiterates Kristensen, of the ancients should not be construed as primitive pantheism, rather it points to the profound relation between man and nature.

"Human life exists in a more profound relation to the universal and divine life of the cosmos than can be accepted by our modern dualistic conception of matter and spirit."

3.5.5. Cosmic Law and Man's Law of Life

As we have already seen the deeper significance of man lies in his religious view of himself as illustrated in the conception of "vital principle" or "soul." And this soul of man is none other than the divine dwelling in him because of which man counts himself to be united with nature but at the same time retaining his distinctiveness. The ancients do not see two separate spirit pervading nature and man; there is only one spirit that is operative in both. Consequently, it is the same cosmic law that operates in man as the law of life.

Such an unified view of man among the ancients always prompted them to portray man from a cosmic perspective. Man was always viewed within the religious context as a microcosmic being. As for example, in the Hindu religious tradition man shares a semblance with the cosmic Puruṣa whose limbs represent various elements of the universe, he is the totality of the universal life. In the Chinese thought, the human essence is described Lao-tze, which means that man's soul is a double dimension. It consists of the warmth from the sky-and the cold from the earth; man is like both sky and
earth. As man is the microcosmic being, he comes under the influence of
the same cosmic law that is at work in the universe.
The ancients conceived the world as an organism where the heavenly
powers form an integral part of it. The laws that govern the earth are
prescribed by the heavenly powers, and astrology is the ancient science that
studies this phenomena. The movements and position of different heavenly
bodies do have their bearing on the world including man. And, therefore,
man organizes his life around such cosmic laws which are not just ethical
but religious laws. These religious laws or cosmic laws are heteronomous,
i.e. it comes from outside, it is founded on the divine will. It is through
these cosmic laws the divine will is revealed.
Knowledge of these divine laws in man is not a rational knowledge but
"revealed insight" through which the esoteric knowledge of the cosmic
forces, of agriculture, of medicine, etc. are given. Such knowledge therefore
does not come to man through his own efforts, it is 'revealed' to him by
god. Accordingly, the ancients considered agriculture not merely as a means
of producing food, but as a "religio-magical act." That is why agricultural
activities such as ploughing, sowing, harvesting, etc. were treated as sacred.
Similarly, medicine was also sacred for the ancients. Although rational
methods of administering herbal medicines were employed, healing was
always thought to be a mystery, a resurrection of life from death. Through
such sacred acts such as agriculture, medicine, etc. man hoped to transcend
the rational and finite realms and reach to the realm of the infinite or the
divine.
That man is completely under the influence of the cosmic laws is quite evident from the manner in which the ancients grasped the various stages of man's growth. Nothing happens to man without the intervention of the divine. There is a god accompanying man at every stage of his growth. Different stages of man life such as birth, childhood, adulthood, married life, death, are not just natural processes, but they are determined by the divine. The cosmic laws are at work here in the case of man's life.

It is not only that the individual's life but also the social structures are 'revealed' and therefore determined by the divine. It means that community was not the result of man's ingenuity but divinely constituted. For the ancients social life is more important than mere individual life. In fact the individual receives his identity only after he has been initiated into the community through a series of rites performed. No one therefore can arbitrarily alter any of the social laws or structures, since that would bring disaster to the society. Social life has an irreducible aspect to it, viz. the "ethical" as understood in Kant's sense of the term. All social relationships and structures therefore are religious and sacred. Kristensen writes, "This conception of absoluteness implies that the relation between man and man has the same character as the relation between man and God." And, it is the self-subsistent and divine and is present and operative in community. Consequently, the ancients believed strongly that the society is a sacred community.
3.5.6. Dimensions of Transcendence

Having thus far seen how the ancients were able to comprehend intuitively the religious significance of the natural phenomena, we shall now move on to explicate the manner in which this dimension actualizes its inherent tendency towards transcendence. It is true that there is a inalterable need within man to express his experience of deeper dimensions, and, this is often actualized through external modes of expression. To put it in another way, man’s experience of deeper significance seeks transcendence to another realm of existence. Merleau-Ponty holds that this aspect of transcendence is actualized often in the realm of intersubjectivity. And he posits a symbiotic relationship between what is transcendent and imminent. That is to say the experience of deeper significance of the visible world is closely allied with the worldly phenomena themselves. The visible world is meaningful only in relation to a perceiving subject, and conversely, the subject can experience significance only in relation to the world. Such a cohesive relationship is found in the ancients’ “undifferentiated” attitude towards the world where he intuits its religious meaning or significance.

The deeper religious significance that man experiences needs to be expressed in modes other than his imminent acts. That is to say, man needs to communicate such experiences in terms that are shared intersubjectively. The best means of this intersubjective communication is language and gestures. Language is formed of words containing in themselves a universally agreed upon meaning although by way of convention. Similarly, gestures too have an ‘established’ meaning that is shared by their users. To
put it Merleau-Ponty’s terms, man’s experience of meaning gets “sedimented” in words and gestures, and by employing them he is able to communicate with others. Experience of religious significance also gets sedimented in words and gestures leading to the development of myths and rituals. In other words, man’s experience of religious significance gets transcended to more external modes of expression that are intersubjectively shared.

There are several myths that Kristensen refers to in his description of various religious traditions. Myths are not empty stories, but they are clear expressions of religious beliefs. What the ancients experienced as the mystery that surrounds them in the visible world is transcended into mythical forms that are handed down to posterity as tradition. Thus there are several religious traditions describing man’s religious experience with the powers of nature where the self-sustaining force is present. As for instance, man’s religious experience of the sun’s rising and setting is found in several “sun myths.” And these sun myths have also exerted a great influence over many myths related to the creation and flood myths. Although these myths describe gods’ ‘activities,’ they are, in point of fact, indicating man’s awareness of his mysterious existence in the world. For the ancients, nature which was worshipped was as much spirit, self-subsistant life as, on the other hand, deity was a natural being.

As there are a number of sun myths, there are also moon myths describing the ‘activities’ of the “moon god.” Man’s religious experience of the waxing and waning of the moon forms the foundation of the moon myths. And, the
ancients believed that different phases of the moon have their direct consequence on the life of the earth including that of man. Several earth myths are, therefore, closely associated with the moon myth. The myths of the earth gods are, once again, formed from out of the ancients’ concrete experience of engaging with the earth especially through agricultural activities. As we have noted before, man’s close interaction with the nature has revealed to him its mysterious ways of bringing forth and taking away life at all levels. And such experiences have given rise to myths that describe the earth gods’ power to generate and to destroy life only to bring it back again; there is a continuous process of death and resurrection of life. Not only the earth in general but also all objects on the earth also have myths associated with them. Thus there are myths regarding trees, plants, hills, water gods, fire gods, mountain gods, river and spring gods, etc.

As myths contain man’s religious experience of the visible world in a sedimented form, so too gestures. They are employed intersubjectively in social as well as religious contexts. In the religious context they mean man’s assumption of appropriate bodily positions while participating in religious rituals. Each posture is ascribed a specific meaning and by its repeated use during religious rituals it becomes a habit in man. As Merleau-Ponty says, man inhabits the world through his habit, and conversely, habits are formed and reinforced by inhabiting the world. A religious man inhabits his religious world through his religious habits and conversely, his religious habits are acquired through inhabiting a religious world. As for instance, some one learning to pray in yogic posture, first of all has to inhabit or
assume the appropriate posture which will dispose him of to develop gradually the habit of praying. And by repeatedly employing this praying habit, he is able to inhabit the world of prayer.

Prayer, according to Kristensen, is a religious act, in which man believes in the superiority of the spirit over nature. And it is to this spirit that man surrenders. "Prayer is thus based upon the conviction that nature is subjected to spirit, the conviction of the spiritual source of outward phenomena." So in prayer man does not become a-cosmic as a disembodied subject, as sometimes it is made out to be, rather he communes with the cosmos intensely and deeply thus drawing out its religious significance. This type of prayer of communion or religious act is most evident in religious rituals and practices.

Kristensen describes a number of religious rituals drawn from a variety of cultures and traditions in order to better understand their meaning. All these rituals, be they of purification, initiation, transition, sacrifices, ordeals are means by which man inhabits the religious realm, thus attaining, in the process, spiritual benefits. In most religions there are rituals of purification. And the meaning of such purificatory rites is not cleansing of oneself in the ordinary sense of the term, but it is in the religious sense of cleansing oneself from the stain of sin and iniquity. That be case, purification by water cannot be done in any water, it has to be specifically designated in which the power of the infinite is experienced by the believer. To put it in Merleau-Ponty's language, a believer inhabits the sacred water through his religious habit of either taking a dip in the
water or sprinkling it over himself. And through this inhabiting of the holy water, he is able to experience the religious significance of the purificatory rite. In other words, the sedimeted meaning of the purificatory rite resurfaces itself in the performance of the rite, and the believer appropriates it (meaning) by actively participating in it. The experience of freeing oneself from the stain of sin and iniquity is not merely an immanent act of the believer but an embodied one, his whole body is involved in the actual performance of the ritual.

This embodied inhabiting of the sacred realm becomes more direct and evident in the case of offering sacrifices at sacred places and times. Not every location and moment is deemed fit for offering sacrifices. There are specified places and times where the infinite reveals itself, and only at such places and times sacrifices become efficacious. The ancients used to offer sacrifices at those places that are believed to be belonging to the infinite divine world. In the ancient Rome, for instance, there were no constructed temples, but many sacred places, especially those grounds which had been struck by the lightning or meteorite of Jupiter. Even when temples and altars were built, they were always located in those grounds where the divine activity was observed. The believer had to be bodily present there at the place, temple or altar in order to perform the ritual of sacrifice. By occupying or inhabiting the sacred place where the divine activity was noticed, and by offering the sacrifice to the divine, the believer was enabled to commune with the divine present in the visible phenomena, thus obtaining the spiritual benefit for himself. There occurs an "intertwining" or
communion of the believer with the sacred location and objects from which arises his religious experience. The reason why the believer comes over and over again to the same or similar location is because only at such holy ground can he inhabit the realm of the sacred, and thus reexperience its religious significance.

At ritual sacrifices the believer makes offerings, usually in kind, to the deity. Once again it is to be noted that these offerings are not produced by man himself but given to him by the divine. That is to say, what has been created by God and lives by the power of God, or manifests divine life, serves as offering to God. The sacrifice has its definite purpose. Etymologically sacrifice is *sacrificium*, that is making sacred of both the offerer and the offered. It becomes then clear from the ancients' notion of offerings at sacrifices that his offering has some semblance to himself, in so far as both share in the infinite power manifesting itself, they are both perceptibly bearers of divine life. That be the case, the most sublime offering at sacrifice will be man offering himself as sacrifice which is found among some religious traditions. The meaning of sacrifice then is something very positive in the sense of making something sacred, and a believer can make himself sacred only when he disposes himself at such ritual sacrifices. Along with Merleau-Ponty, it can be said that the believer inhabits the religious realm of the ritual sacrifice primordially through his body. It is the body that disposes itself at a ritual sacrifice, by performing the prescribed postures and reciting appropriate prayers and offering specific gifts.
From our analysis of Kristensen's phenomenology of religion from the perspective of Merleau-Ponty, we have deciphered certain structures that underlie man's religious experience. It 'begins,' first of all, with man's encounter with the visible phenomena, especially with that which presents itself as exceptional in character. However, man does not stop at that level, he transcends to its deeper dimension which for Kristensen was the religious dimension of the visible phenomena. This experience of deeper dimension or religious significance has to be expressed in modes that are intersubjectively relevant. Man therefore takes recourse to words and gestures that serve as media for communicating his experience of religious significance of the visible phenomena. As we have already seen words and gestures contain in themselves sedimented meaning, and this meaning is relived by the reenacting of religious rituals where myths are recounted and religious gestures repeated. In other words, there is an embodied reliving of the experience of religious significance of the visible world by a man in religious rituals and practices. And through this reliving he 'returns' to the world as its inhabitant.
END NOTES - Chapter III

1 William B. Kristensen, The Meaning of Religion, Trans. John B. Carman, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960, p.17. Although Kristensen would consider himself a historian of religion, Waardenurg doubts the veracity of such a claim. For according to the latter Kristensen was, "... hardly concerned with any time sequence and practically used the concept of history in the sense of 'religious past'.” See Waardenburg, “Religion between Reality and Idea,” in Numen XIX, 1972, p.145. Richard J. Plantinga says that Kristensen did acknowledge a definite difference between the horizon of the past or text and the horizon of the present or interpreter. He however was not willing to dialogue with the text to understand it. In this process there occurs a monologue - descriptive history - "to forget himself and his own historicity.” See Richard J. Plantinga, Numen XXXVI, 1989, p.182.


3 Ibid. p.17.

4 Ibid. pp. 18, 13, 23,


6 Kristensen, The Meaning of Religion, pp. 11, 12, 15, 16.

7 Ibid. p.175.

Kristensen, *The Meaning of Religion*, op.cit. p. 2. Kristensen here criticises the Western approaches to the study of non-Christian religions in the nineteenth century which covertly or overtly maintained a position of the alleged superiority of Christianity over other religions.


There are a number of scholars who think that phenomenology of religion does not take the historical context seriously especially because of its emphasis of as Kristensen does the typology of religious phenomena.

Alfred James George, *Interpreting Religion*, op.cit. pp.141-55. The author makes a detailed analysis of Kristensen's a-historical character of phenomenology of religion. In comparison to P.D.Chantepie’s phenomenology of religion, the author finds that Kristensen’s approach is more thoroughgoing in the sense that he deciphers better the religious significance of the phenomenon under investigation.

Olof Petterson and Hans Akerberg, *Interpreting Religious Phenomena*, op.cit. p.18. This approach to study of religion is problematic since it is often the case that not all believers of a particular religion understand it unequivocally. He
also opines that this method is not unique to Kristensen, it has already been in practice. See footnote no. 17 on p. 19.


Kristensen, *The Meaning of Religion, op.cit.* p. 379. While drawing a distinction between the ancients who shared a sense of mystery in the nature and the modern man who views nature as guided by the physical laws present, Kristensen does not mean that there are no modern man sharing in the sense of mystery or have religious sentiments. Rather, he only wants to highlight a distinction in approach to the nature by people having two frameworks of thinking.

George Alfred James, *Interpreting Religion, op.cit.* pp. 191ff. Here the author gives a detailed account of the anti-reductive trait of Kristensen’s views.


*Ibid.* pp. 77-8. Kristensen contests the view that the moon worship is found usually among the nomad peoples. He says that there are no specific evidences to suggest that this was the case, for not all nomad peoples were moon worshippers, and secondly, even among the non-nomad peoples such a worship was found.

The ancients viewed the moon as related to the earth in so far as there is a connection between the moon and the earth, as the earth is lit up during the night by the moon, the waves in ocean changes its course and many other influences are exerted by the moon on the earth. Because of this connection the ancients believed that the moon is reflected in other earth gods.

Kristensen does not explicitly engage in such genetic arguments regarding the origin of worship of fire or for that matter any other practice of religious worship. But at the same time he does make reference to man's primordial experience with different entities before he articulates his religious significance.

Kristensen, *The Meaning of Religion*, op.cit. p.147. Kristensen defends the ancients who felt the need for having gods of different moments and aspects of their life by drawing examples from modern religious practices, such as those of the Catholic Church which has a host of saints who represent various needs and aspects of man.

An obvious difference in understanding of the perceptual faith between Merleau-Ponty and Kristensen is to be drawn here. While Kristensen speaks of the close affinity and even an identity of the ancients with the nature around them, Merleau-Ponty posits no such identity, but rather an "intertwining" between man and the phenomenal world.

The term "undifferentiated" used by Kristensen indicates a specific attitude of the ancients towards nature wherein they saw a close link between the life of man and nature. Nature is not an objective entity to be comprehended and

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37 *Ibid.* p.120 ff.

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43 The term "undifferentiated" used by Kristensen indicates a specific attitude of the ancients towards nature wherein they saw a close link between the life of man and nature. Nature is not an objective entity to be comprehended and
subjugated, as the modern science would have it, but it is an organism wherein man is a constituent element, thereby shares with its very process.

44 Ibid. p. 190


46 Ibid. p. 216 ff. Kristensen cites a number of examples from the Greek tradition, where a religio-aesthetic value was attributed to games and other physical activities.

47 Ibid. p. 252.

48 It is to be noted here that when Merleau-Ponty speaks of the dimensionality of perception, he does thereby imply a religious significance. However, the same concept is employed here with its meaning adapted to suit our purpose of elucidating Kristensen’s phenomenological description of religious experience.

49 Ibid. p. 152.

50 Kristensen cites examples of terms that represent the universal order of life. Rta in the Indian tradition, Asha in the Avesta tradition, M-a-a-t in Egyptian and Tao in Chinese traditions respectively. Cf. The Meaning of Religion, op.cit. pp. 29, 30, 33, 36, 44, 50, 70, 90, 154, 229, 276, 278, 286, 345 and 463


52 Kristensen, The Meaning of Religion, op.cit. p. 35.

53 Ibid. p. 41.
Kristensen gives an example of this belief in the king as the visible representative of the divine on earth from the Babylonian tradition. Cf. *The Meaning of Religion, op.cit* p. 84.

Kristensen uses same word “naphal” in order to explain the sacredness of the hearth fire as well as in the context of the sacredness of high places. pp. 107, 308 and 477.

Kristensen gives many more similar examples drawn from various religious traditions to reinforce his argument.


The word, *nephesh*, according to Kristensen, may have originated from the Babylonian *napishta* which means “life.” Accordingly it is said that “a man does not possess *nephesh*; rather he is a nephesh with body and soul.” *Kristensen, The Meaning of Religion, op.cit.* p. 204.
The word genius is related to *gignere*, which means "to generate."

Kristensen draws a clear distinction between the ethical and religious laws in describing the cosmic laws. Referring to Kant, he says that the moral law prescribed in the "Practical Reason" (*praktische Vernunft*) is based on the moral conscience. But in religious sense the law of life comes heteronomously, it is founded on the divine will. It is in this sense Kristensen uses it here while speaking of the cosmic law for the ancients.

Though it might look bizarre for the modern man to consider slavery as religious, this conception was quite natural to the ancients, argues Kristensen, since every social institution was sanctioned by the divine.

Kristensen makes it clear that by myth he does not mean the same as its commonly understood meaning as a story that deserves no serious attention. He writes, "By myths we understand, of course, not empty or false inventions, but expressions of religious belief in the form of visible images."
Although there are several references to such myths, we shall, for reason of brevity, give only a few selected ones here. pp. 56, 88, 109, 114, 127, 137, 153, 278, 358, 372 and 428.

Kristensen repeatedly reminds the reader that the purpose of phenomenology is to group phenomena in such a way that they shed light upon one another leading to a deeper insight into the essence or meaning of a whole group of similar phenomena.

Here once again, from among the many examples that Kristensen gives, only a few shall be mentioned. Cf. *The Meaning of Religion*, *op.cit.* pp. 109, 112, 114, 312, 316, 339, 444 - 52.

Kristensen gives some examples from various religious traditions where they consider certain rivers and springs sacred and in which purificatory rites are performed. The river *Ganges* in India, the *Eleutherion*, the Greek sping, the *Apsu* in Babylon, etc. Cf. *The Meaning of Religion*, *op.cit.* pp. 446-47.