

THE LIFE WORLD AND RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS A PHENOMENOLOGICAL READING

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Abstract

Religious experience and religious consciousness are intimately related to the lifeworld. The religious experience points towards how the Ultimate is experienced in our lives. Religious consciousness points towards the awareness of the experience. Both of them draw meaning from the lifeworld. This study looks at how religious consciousness is related to the lifeworld and how religious experiences help one form religious consciousness from a phenomenological viewpoint.

The first part of the study defines lifeworld, religious consciousness, and religious experience. It tries to differentiate the ordinary experience from religious experience with the help of the initial experiences of Lord Buddha. His life is used as an example to demonstrate how one's religious consciousness is formed. At the end of the paper, a few common characteristics are shown. The phenomenological approach is used as the method of this study.

Keywords: Religious Consciousness, Religious Experience, and Lifeworld

Situating Religious Consciousness in Lifeworld

The advanced scientific research on religions from history, sociology, anthropology, and psychology have induced favourable conditions to study religious consciousness from multiple angles(Smart 9). Those methods were applied to investigate an objective examination of religious consciousness and its significance. The phenomenological approach is yet another alternative way of exploring religious consciousness. It explores the lifeworld of a religious person to

understand his/her similarities and dissimilarities in religious experiences.

The lifeworld is defined as the primary human world or the everyday world, where the community lives. It can also be understood as the archology of human experience, a search for the ultimate, constitutive functions of experience of the world as the world of human consciousnesses (Velassery and Patra 406). Husserl, the father of Phenomenology, says the lifeworld is a '*pregiven*' world (Husserl 145). It is a synthetic totality in which we discover the world as a correlated and connected reality with a universal thematic horizon. Horizon is the natural attitude of the world, which is always '*pregiven*.' This *pregiveness* of the world has a meaning, which he asserts about this universe as 'actually' existing actualities. According to him, the actuality is not merely supposed, doubtful, or questioned; instead, it is authentic and accurate (Husserl 146). Therefore, the *pregiveness* of the lifeworld is necessary because it is intimately connected with the meaning and manner in which it appears. He further states that the lifeworld is also a formal framework to become conscious of the world. This framework shows how we are aware of the objects and distinguishes the different ways our lives are carried on within the given horizon. Husserl's understanding of lifeworld is related to the certainty of the world. He says: "To live is always to the live-in-certainty - of the world. Walking life is being awake to the world, being constantly and directly 'conscious of the world and oneself as living in the world, actually experiencing [*erleben*] and actually effecting the ontic certainty of the world"(Husserl 142–43). This experience takes place within the world of the horizon.

It is the attitude towards the horizon that make our lifeworld meaningful. There are two kinds of attitudes- natural and theoretical. The natural attitude is an *everyday* or *ordinary* way of *being-in-the-world*. From a phenomenological perspective, it refers to our surrounding world, factually present to us (Applebaum). It is simply the

world of our interest and concern with all its particularities. The theoretical attitude in the lifeworld is a vocational attitude, which is unpractical. He says: “in the sphere of its own vocational life, then, it is based on a voluntary epochē of all natural praxis”(Husserl 282). The vocational life, he says, runs through concrete temporality. Husserl considers religious attitudes a higher level of vocational attitude (Husserl 282), founded in natural and theoretical attitudes. All forms of attitudes are involved in the formation of religious consciousness.

Meaning of Religious Consciousness

Religious consciousness is usually defined as the awareness of God and of others in God (*What Is Religious Consciousness?*). It is an *awareness* of the Ultimate or Ultimate meaning. It is the consciousness of the author and source of all that is, including oneself. It is the consciousness of being unconditionally accepted and loved. Religious consciousness includes the awareness of the reality other than oneself, the source of one’s being, which is totally and absolutely loving (Blake).

Religious consciousness is inseparably linked with the belief in the supernatural. It comprises two layers of facts: religious philosophy and religious psychology. The philosophy bases itself on totally different ideas, points of view, ideas about the world, and people. Religious psychology includes religious beliefs, feelings, and spirits. Religious consciousness characterises sensual presentation, imagery, a combination of reality and solid emotional saturation (Starbuck 6–7). Therefore, religious consciousness has two levels of realisation: causal and conceptual. Casual religious consciousness is presented in images, ideas, stereotypes, installations, mysteries, illusions, spirits, aspirations, the directivity of will, habits, and traditions that reflect the conditions of people’s lives (Otto 48). The conceptual level of consciousness is the idea about the ultimate, which can be articulated in concepts. It is mainly used for the communication of experience.

The Divine is always experienced and interpreted. Through these processes, the Divine is personified based on faith at the ordinary and theological levels. The ordinary levels are rational, emotional, and volitional elements (though the dominant role is played by consciousness). Our religious consciousness initiates this process. According to Otto, religious consciousness starts with the daunting aspect of *the Numen*- demonic dread. It could be a compelling experience pressing up gradually into consciousness. In the process of translating an encounter into an experience, there should be a feeling of positive self-surrender to the *Numen* (Otto 32). The consciousness involves the natural emotional life. At the same, there is also a religious feeling involved. Experience lives in reverent attitude and expressing its momentousness. Otto says religious consciousness is an ineffable, unutterable mystery, the absolute other as the incomprehensible. It is a sense of being unconditionally accepted and loved. The content of religious consciousness is always a religious experience rooted in daily experiences. They are always formed around our idea of God and its manifestations in different cultures.

Kinds of Experience

There are three kinds of experience in a lifeworld:

a) Ordinary Experiences

They are our everyday experiences that are frequently happening within everyday life. These experiences quickly lose their fascination in our everyday life experiences. We rapidly forget the intricate mechanisms behind the enjoyment or recreation of any experience in mind. Our focus is more on the contents of our experiences. Therefore, we seek extraordinary ones. Whether we consider any experience ordinary or extraordinary, the mind's interface remains the same. Eating, playing, entertainment and ordinary conversations are examples of ordinary experiences.

b) Extraordinary Experiences

Extraordinary experiences are uncommon, infrequent, and go beyond the realm of everyday life. It is assumed to be both unusual and inherently superior to ordinary experiences; for example- winning a medal, passing a hugely consequential examination or meeting an important person.

c) Foundational Experience

Foundational experience denotes a principle experience upon which other experiences are built, forming a solid basis for future processes. Thomas Kuhn calls it a *Paradigm shift* (Zalta). This shift points to a fundamental change in approach or underlying assumptions. The foundational experience helps one change the ordinary way of looking at things. Examples: -

- i. Mahatma Gandhi was forcibly removed from a whites-only carriage on a train at Pietermaritzburg in South Africa. This transformative experience urged him to fight for justice.
- ii. Martin Luther Jr., a civil rights activist, was denied the right to travel on a bus, which ultimately led to the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955.

Meaning of Religious Experience

Religious experience is a combination of extraordinary and foundational experiences. They are profound and ubiquitous and, therefore, difficult to define. However, a religious experience can be defined as a non-empirical occurrence perceived as supernatural. It is described as a ‘mental event’ that an individual undergoes and is aware of something or someone. This experience is a pre-reflective self-consciousness, which is understood as an experience that points beyond everyday life and has a religious significance.

There are considerable differences between ordinary experiences and religious experiences. According to Robert Kugelmann, the everyday

experience does not entitle an overwhelming sense of the Divine; it is not a numinous experience (Kugelmann). It shows that it lacks any transcendental dimensions; thereby, it does not point beyond its domain of experience. He furthers that there is no sense of any high power overwhelming them. Such an experience has three main characteristics:

- i. Absence of *Numinous*: Everyday experiences has no mystical dimensions.
- ii. The Social Dimensions of Experience: Such experiences are not solitary experiences; instead, other people are involved at every stage.
- iii. The Communal Character of Experience: A community is needed to interpret such experiences because such experiences are analysed based on the ethos of the community (Kugelmann).

Ordinary experiences can be momentary experiences that may not have a more prolonged effect on our lives. Such experiences are considered to be insignificant experiences. On the contrary, religious experience is a *Numinous* encounter (an encounter of a captivating power or absolutely supreme in power), which is fully rooted in the life world of people. Some encounters turn out to be primordial experiences or life-changing experiences, where higher power overwhelmingly engulfs such experiences.

Phenomenological Understanding of Religious Experience

The phenomenological approach to religion deals with the experiential dimension of religious life. It basically studies how religious experience affects our lives. It focuses on accurately describing the totality of the phenomenal manifestation of the sacred in human experience. It does not theorise the religious experience; instead, it describes the religious phenomenon. It studies how people experience the religious phenomenon accurately in people's lifeworld. It engages or connects itself with consciousness with the perceived pre-objective world, the

world as it is perceived before being objectified in our consciousness. Therefore, the phenomenology of religious experience seeks to transcend lived experiences by distancing theoretical and methodological languages. It turns away from reductionist theorising of human experience- portrayed by radical empiricism. Let us consider four influential thinkers of religion, namely, Emile Durkheim, William James (1842-1910), Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834), and Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), to understand the religious experience.

a) Durkheim's Understanding of Religious Experience

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) is a French Sociologist. He sees the religious experience as a social phenomenon. He defines religious experience as shared mental representations or beliefs, rites, and rituals separating the sacred from the profane. Religious experience is a social awareness based on society's social beliefs and rites and rituals (Durkheim xxxiv). These two explanations are the social aspects of religious experience. Nevertheless, they do not give us the dimension of personal experience. It necessitates us to reflect upon the importance of the phenomenology of religious experience. Process of religious experience leads to – formulation of community – cult to preserve the original experience- code for practical life.

b) William James

William James (1842-1910), the author of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, defines religious experience as “The feeling, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand regarding whatever they may consider the divine”(James 38). According to him, religious experience is a feeling or an emotion which happens to an individual. It is experienced in their solitude. It is a state of being alone or remote from society. Consequently, religious experience recognises the relationship of

oneself with the Divine Self. He suggests four aspects of religious experiences:

- i) **Ineffability**:- There is no adequate report of its contents that can be given in words- its contents should be directly experienced. It is not customarily imparted or transferred to others (James 366).
- ii) **Noetic Quality**: Although they are similar to states of feeling, mystical states seem to be states of knowledge (James 367).
- iii) **Transiency**: It is a fleeting state that cannot be sustained for long except in rare instances.
- iv) **Passivity**: Mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by superior power (James 367).

c) Schleiermacher's Notion of Religious Experience

Schleiermacher is one of the original thinkers on religion who laid the foundation for the phenomenology of religion. He asserted that the experience of *the Infinite* is the core of any religion (Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* 39). Religious experience is defined as the experience of *the Infinite* in one's self-consciousness. He says: "The immediate feeling of absolute dependence is presupposed and actually contained in every religious and ...consciousness as the only in which, in general, our being and the infinite Being of God can be one in self-consciousness"(Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* 131). He believes that mere God-consciousness does not constitute by itself a religious experience.

Schleiermacher speaks about *the feeling of absolute dependence* upon *the Infinite* as the topmost form of religious experience. He calls it *the taste of the infinite*. He says that *the feeling of dependence* is the inward and emotional nature of religions. Moreover, it also functions as the means to apprehend God. Therefore, *the feeling of absolute dependence*

is the total dependence upon a source of power distinct from the world, that is, the Divine.

Schleiermacher perceives that *the feeling of absolute dependence* is the essence of religion (Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* 101). He explains that the purpose of religion is to seek *the Infinite* and find it in all that lives and moves (Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* 37). At this point, he finds a difference between finite and infinite; and temporal and eternal. For him, the infinite and eternal are experienced only through immediate feelings, whereas the finite and temporal are experienced through mediation.

Schleiermacher rejects the notion of the religion of Kant and the teaching of Orthodox Christians and Jews. For Kant, religion was only an ethical categorical norm, and God is only a moral principle. Schleiermacher differs from Kant and states that feelings characterise the core of religious experiences that lies at the heart of every genuine religion. In the same way, the Orthodox Christians and Jews perceived religion as a system of beliefs or doctrines or as a moral code prescribing behaviour (Mouton 347). On the contrary, Schleiermacher wants to show the distinctive character of religion and present the most original form of the religion founded on feelings and personal experience.

Schleiermacher perceives that *the feeling of absolute dependence* is not the awareness of the world's existence but the awareness of the presence of God. He says that eventually, the core of religious understanding is "our consciousness of the world as the medium through which the infinite God is acting upon us" (Mouton 351). Therefore, according to Schleiermacher, the experience of the world is divided, whereas the experience of God is absolute undivided unity ("The Christian Faith" 132). In this absolute dependence, he raises the question of freedom. He asks: if a human being depends upon God,

how does one experience freedom? He answers that *the feeling of dependency*: "... (is) the highest point of Christian devotion and with the clearest consciousness of the most unimpeded self-activity" (Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* 132–33). In this process, the absoluteness of *the feeling of dependence* remains undiminished. He further states that when one realises that one is dependent on God, s/he experiences that God and the self can co-exist in self-consciousness. He emphasises that *absolute dependency* is the only way God and self can co-exist. *The feeling of dependence* does not explain the awareness of the world's existence; instead, it explains the awareness of the existence of God.

d) Eliade's Notion of Religious Experience

Mircea Eliade (1907-1986) was a Rumanian-born American historian of religions, a well-known philosopher, and professor at the University of Chicago. He studied history and philosophy; and applied them to religion to evolve the philosophy of religion. Eliade defines religious experience as the experience of *Hierophany*. According to him, *Hierophany* is the breaking forth of the sacred. *Hierophany* comes from the Greek word *hieros*, which means 'holy' or 'sacred', and *phainein*, which means to show, manifest, reveal or bring to light (Eliade 11). Thus, *Hierophany* is defined as the perception of the sacred. He says that it is a term that stands for anything which manifests the sacred.

To make *Hierophany* clear, Eliade separates the sacred from the profane. *Hierophany* is a non-homogenous experience that breaks through into effect in space that allows the world to be constituted as the sacred. He identifies the non-homogenous place as sacred and the homogenous place as the profane. According to him, the non-homogeneous site has a special significance or an added value or added meaning. This added value/meaning/significance elevates this place, separates it from the rest of the site, and makes it a *hierophany*- a place of religious experience (Eliade 22–23).

Eliade says that the sacred manifests itself as *Hierophany*, which breaks through the homogeneity of space. It needs to be described as the revelation of absolute reality. He believes that a *hierophany* is always historical. On the contrary, it does not mean it lessens its universal quality. Some *hierophanies* have a local purpose, and others have a universal significance. They are neither time-bound nor place-bound; instead, they happen at all times and everywhere for a specific mode of experience (Eliade 155). According to Eliade, encountering any *Hierophany* is a religious experience. They become the only mode/medium of experience. In other words, they transmit the experience of the ultimate.

The following conclusions are drawn from the phenomenological approach to religious experience:

- i. The centre point of religion is experience. These experiences are generated from the surrounding lifeworld, making the experience concrete and contextual.
- ii. It is practical and lasting. Such experiences have an everlasting impact on our lives.
- iii. Such experiences have a communitarian dimension. It transforms not only a person but also the whole community and society.
- iv. Finally, it has a universal impact. Such a profoundly religious experience contributes something unique to the entire humanity. Studying the life of Buddha gives a glimpse of this experience.

The Religious Experience of Buddha

Buddhism is one of the oldest religions that originated in India (*10 Best Books to Start Your Journey on Buddhism*). The historical origin of this religion has a definite context. Though many religious traditions existed in India at the time of Buddha, he realised that no one had sufficiently addressed the issue of suffering. Through his enlightenment, he found

the causes of human suffering. Therefore, it is essential to explore the lifeworld of Buddha to understand his religious consciousness.

The Lifeworld of Lord Buddha

The Prince, Gautama Siddhartha, was brought up in a well-secured palace with all the luxuries of life by Suddhodana, his father. He ensured that the Prince had lacked nothing in life. (Mathur xiii). His father wanted his son to be great and powerful. In order to keep his son from seeing a suffering world, he raised Siddhartha in a world of perfect health and beauty. However, Siddhartha was a compassionate and contemplative person from his childhood. He decided to renounce his worldly life to find a state of assurance and peace and ease the suffering.

When Siddhartha grew into adulthood, he wanted to explore the world outside his palace. He went out to meet his subjects with Channa, his charioteer. On his first visit, Prince Siddhartha encountered an older man in a pitiable situation who was fragile and hardly able to walk. The older man appeared grey-haired, crooked, with a bent body and broken teeth, leaning on a staff and trembling (Madden 47). He discovered the first meaning of life from this experience: age makes everybody weak, and those who live long must grow weak. It broke down the artificial life of palace life, which his father had created around him. His father had made everything appear young, energetic, and attractive. However, Siddhartha realised that he would reach that condition of life one day.

Siddhartha saw a man suffering from a fatal disease during his second visit. He realised that sickness comes to every person secretly and suddenly. His curiosity increased to know the end of a person. He saw people crying in pain. It disturbed him a lot, and he became conscious of people's numerous pain/sufferings in this world. He began to reflect upon the gravity of the problem.

During his third visit, he encountered a dead body, whereby he realised the crucial reality of life, which is inevitable from our lifeworld. He realised that life is short, and in one moment, it passes. Our attachment to this impermanent body leads to greed, anger and ignorance. Buddha was troubled with his new finding of reality and wanted to find the true meaning of life.

During his fourth visit, he encountered a hermit who had denounced this world moving with measured steps, calm and serene. He learned that a hermit is a person who left his home to live a life of purity to seek the truth and solve the riddle of life. This encounter excited him and paved a new hope for him.

The four powerful experiences, namely ageing, sickness, death, and renunciation, shattered his outlook on life. The Prince understood that ageing, sickness and death bring worldly persons' suffering; on the contrary, renunciation brings peace. This realisation helped him renounce his well settled and secured life to search for a new horizon. There was an inner conflict between life inside and outside the palace.

Prince Siddhartha's experience of reality beyond the boundaries of the secured life had shattered his life's aspirations. His conversation with his charioteer, Channa, profoundly impacted Siddhartha's life because he was knowledgeable and knew the realities of life very well (Kumar and Susma). He encountered an unknown world that had not been explored or was hidden from him. He grew unhappy within the four walls of his life, and he wanted to pursue a new meaning for his life. The nothingness he experienced in the luxurious life led him to renounce his comfortable life. Looking at the life of Siddhartha, the following are the four factors that helped him find the new path of life:

- i. His curiosity: He appears to be a curious man; therefore, he wanted to know how his subjects lived their ordinary lives. He was equally interested in the ultimate meaning of life; that is why he renounced his well-secured life.

- ii. His compassionate heart: Buddha seems to be a compassionate person from childhood. He learned that his mother was compassionate to his dear and near ones. Therefore, he followed the path of his mother throughout his life. Later the message of compassion became the centre of his teaching.
- iii. His determination: Once Buddha is convinced of something, he will execute the plan without fail. Buddha's determination was so strong that at his insistence, Channa, his friend and charioteer, had to take him out of the palace to show the actual status of people, even risking his own life.
- iv. His Companions: Buddha always had good companions who helped him discover his true life mission. Buddha had a few close friends like Channa.

After his omniscient enlightenment, Buddha taught Dhamma by discourses for the next 45 years of his life. *Dhamma* refers to Buddha's teaching about overcoming dissatisfaction or suffering in life as a typical case study to understand the lifeworld of Buddha. These experiences helped him discover the causes of the suffering (Ambedkar 3).

Role of the Lifeworld in the Formation of Religious Consciousness

The most significant contribution of Buddha to philosophy was the Four Noble Truths about suffering. The enlightenment is a consequence of his reflection/meditation on the lifeworld of Buddha. His father wanted to create an artificial lifeworld for him to not know the reality outside of his palace. Buddha's experience teaches that the lifeworld cannot be artificially created. The lifeworld is a meaningful system that constantly accompanies human action by giving new significance to life. Siddhartha was just kept away from the authentic lifeworld, from where he was supposed to draw a new meaning for his life. His religious consciousness was not sufficiently formed due to the artificial lifeworld. In Husserl's words, he was denied his natural attitude/world.

Since Siddhartha's upbringing was unnatural, he experienced a life of contradiction. There was a disconnect between the world inside and outside of the palace. His father tried to convert the palace into a manufactured paradise. However, life outside the palace was full of suffering and misery. Siddhartha's foundational experience was encountering the realities of life. The constant denial of natural attitude ultimately became the foundation for his religious experience. It is the encounter of the authentic lifeworld, and his inner/religious exposition to the reality of life made his enlightenment possible.

Buddha's curiosity about the mystery of suffering did not start from encountering the four realities, but his very going out of his palace was itself a sign of it. He tried several attempts to reach out to the world (though he initially failed) because he was curious about life. In other words, the real suffering was within himself, and he was suffocated by it. His encounter with the realities of life had triggered the need to search for a solution within himself. His lifeworld had enough material to sustain his search and suggest a remedy to quench it; it was possible because Buddha's consciousness was genuinely searching for meaning in life and finding a solution for suffering in life.

In the case of Buddha, he was conscious of what he was going through. He analysed his suffering carefully with the help of his lifeworld, and he arrived at the recognition that the desire is the root cause of his suffering. The formation of his religious consciousness had happened long ago, but it was triggered by the sight of the four stages of the reality of his lifeworld. His awareness grew as he deeply meditated on life. He meditated upon his lifeworld, which affected him most. Therefore, we can conclude that lifeworld and religious consciousness are interconnected.

Relation between Religious Consciousness and Lifeworld.

The phenomenological study of religious experience has shown that the lifeworld is inseparable from religious consciousness. The lifeworld

provides a framework/platform to actualise it because any religious formation of consciousness takes place only within a lifeworld. The descriptive study of Buddha's life experience has shown that his lifeworld had enabled him to search for the solution to unlock the mystery of suffering. While studying the lifeworld of Buddha, one could glean the following factors as having helped him form his religious consciousness:

a) Contextual

Contextualisation stands for an act of making something meaningful. Every lifeworld is contextual. Siddhartha had a particular situation where he had to find an answer/meaning to an existing problem of suffering. Though it was a common problem, he was the most troubled person during that time. Since he was kept away from the reality of suffering, he was troubled and disturbed when he was exposed to this reality. Therefore, his religious experience was concretely rooted in his lifeworld. His religious consciousness was so deeply rooted in his authentic lifeworld that he did not spiritualise or glorify suffering; instead, he could provide practical suggestions to eradicate it. It was possible because his religious experience was contextual, and he could make meaning out of it.

b) Spatial and Temporal

Lifeworld has a spatial and temporal dimension, which helps locate and concretise religious experiences. Every religious consciousness is spatial and temporal because space and time function as reference points. They play a dynamic role in the formation of religious consciousness. It is spatial and temporal dimensions that bridge the gap between lifeworld and religious consciousness. The spatial dimension helps locate the religious experience, and the temporal dimension makes it historical. Lifeworld provides meaning, and religious consciousness brings awareness. When these two factors come together, we have a religious experience. Buddha had a profound

religious experience because he could bring together his lifeworld and consciousness in particular space and time to form his religious consciousness about the reality of suffering.

c) Interconnectedness

Both religious consciousness and lifeworld are interconnected. A lifeworld is formed from the various levels of meaning and values. Our mind absorbs various levels of meaning to create a religious consciousness from the lifeworld. It amalgamates religious and ordinary experiences to form a meaningful system. From the lifeworld, Siddhartha already had appropriated specific values like compassion, kindness and mercy towards all beings from his childhood. He was already mindful of his action towards his fellow beings. He also equally maintained interconnectedness between his lifeworld and consciousness towards all beings. Therefore, the religious consciousness is formed in relation to one's lifeworld and his experience from it.

d) Universal

Religious consciousness has a universal appeal. Though it is rooted in a particular lifeworld, it is open to the world. For Buddha, his religious experience was unique and contextual. However, later it became a philosophy acceptable to all cultures. Because the lifeworld helps to convert an ordinary experience into a profound religious experience and transforms it into religious values, and like *hierophanies*, it makes this experience available to all. However, the religious consciousness has the active power to convert religious experiences into religious values and the lifeworld functions as the archive to preserve them. Consequently, both mutually support translating particular values into universal values. Those values have a universal impact because they appeal to all cultures.

Conclusion

The study of *Life World and Religious Consciousness: a Phenomenological Reading* has shown the relationship between lifeworld and religious experience in forming religious consciousness from a phenomenological point of view. It showed that the religious consciousness is formed from religious experience, which takes place in the lifeworld. The lifeworld facilitates such experiences by functioning as frameworks or meaning-giving systems. Buddha's example has shown the world how his lifeworld influenced his religious consciousness. The phenomenological reading shows that every religious consciousness is contextual, spatial, temporal, interrelated and universal. The detailed phenomenological study of religious experience has shown that it is a crucial factor that helps form the religious consciousness. Moreover, the prime function of the lifeworld is to provide meaning. Therefore, both lifeworld and religious consciousness are interrelated.

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