

A great text I've used in teaching Phen.Rel. defines in a way to illumine "paradigm" (p.5, Henry Duméry's PHENOMENOLOGY AND RELIGION; STRUCTURES OF THE CHRISTIAN INSTITUTION [U.Cal./75]): "a phen. of *instituted meaning*, of meaning that takes on body from events, of events that acquire form from historical interpretation....arrives at meaning, not by way of categories, nor by way of facts alone, but integrally and directly, through the intentional relation that man has with the world and with history."

In his description of the "characteristic interests" of phenomenology of religion, Ian G. Barbour, pp.174ff, MYTHS, MODELS AND PARADIGMS (Harper/76) illumines "paradigm" indirectly vis-a-vis his "critical realism," which steers a course between the naive realism of literalism and the reductionism of instrumentalism (the notion that religious notions are only functional fictions):

1. *The meaning of religion to its adherents.* Instead of reducing religion to something else by interpreting it in categories foreign to its participants, one should try to look at religion in its own terms. The scholar should imaginatively enter into the activities and ideas of the religious community and ask about its interest and outlook, the phenomena as they appear to the persons involved.

2. *The variety of religious phenomena.* Phenomenologists study myths and rituals as well as doctrines and ideas, systems of action as well as systems of belief. They are interested in the diversity of religious experience as much as in religious institutions and leadership roles. They try to see a religious community in the organic wholeness of its life, action and thought before generalizing about similarities between different traditions.

3. *Patterns common to diverse cultures.* The comparative study of many religious traditions reveals typical forms which recur frequently. For example, sacrifice, sacraments, or prayer each has a characteristic constellation of meanings despite cultural variations. The phenomenologist is interested in basic structures of consciousness, types of religious expression, forms of representation and institutional patterns. He attempts a careful comparison of structurally similar experiences, acts and forms of life, such as feelings of awe and peace, initiatory ceremonies and priesthood roles. He finds these forms in the 'primitive' religions of archaic civilizations and preliterate cultures today as well as in the 'higher' religions.

4. *The suspension of judgment.* The phenomenologist tries to be descriptive; he avoids passing judgment on the truth or falsity of the beliefs held by the persons he is studying. Philosophical questions are bracketed; theological claims are acknowledged as important to the believing community without being either accepted or rejected by the investigator. Attention is focused on the explanations given by the participants.

Phenomenology is compatible with a non-reductionist instrumentalism which is sensitive to the variety of functions of religious language. However, the critical realism to which the discussion of models and paradigms points offers several advantages. It gives stronger support to the phenomenologist's concern for the meaning of religion to its adherents, since it takes seriously their systems of belief. To be sure, the paradigms of the scholar's own community will influence his viewpoint. He can never completely enter the interpretive framework of a culture vastly different from his own. But he can so immerse himself in its life and thought that he can sympathetically imagine how the world would look from another perspective.

