

**Dorthe Jørgensen**

# **Imaginative Moods**

Aesthetics,  
Religion,  
**Philosophy**

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*In ever loving memory of my beloved Willy*

Willy Aastrup (1948–2019)



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# Introduction

The word ‘metaphysics’ usually denotes philosophy about something static and ahistorical, but this notion of metaphysics is ripe for revision. Both traditional metaphysics and modern antimetaphysics have become dismissible, and many people appear to seek an alternative. In *Imaginative Moods*, I insist on reinterpreting metaphysics rather than rejecting all metaphysical thought. I explore what philosophical aesthetics and hermeneutic phenomenology can offer the attempt to develop a new view of metaphysics, and I exhibit the potential of this effort for the philosophy of religion. My *metaphysics of experience*, which innovatively treats the mind-opening and world-transformative experiences usually called ‘aesthetic’ or ‘religious’ experiences, including the sensitively expanded thinking related to such experiences, crosses and revitalizes philosophy and theology, and it introduces and applies new concepts such as the ‘experience of immanent transcendence’ and the ‘intermediate world.’ I explore the revelatory nature of sensitivity as well as its ethical value and epistemological significance, including its importance in both science and religious practice. I also explore the importance of imagination for any kind of transgressive experience, including the felt insight and appeal to action delivered by such experience.

Presenting the epistemological significance of aesthetic and religious experiences, the texts included in *Imaginative Moods* offer detailed explanations of the value of treating such experiences in the experience-metaphysical way performed here. For example, the book’s various texts attest the potential consequences of the

epistemological value of aesthetic experience for our understanding of the relation between sensation, faith, and comprehension, and thus also for philosophical and theological thought. They also make evident that the metaphysics of experience and its notions of ‘immanent transcendence,’ the ‘experience of divinity,’ the ‘intermediate world,’ and ‘world poetry’ contribute innovatively to the philosophy of religion. Similarly, they demonstrate how the metaphysics of experience can qualify our understanding and treatment of secular phenomena of both philosophical and theological relevance, for example, contemporary works of art or the question of what it means to be a human being.

In *Imaginative Moods*, I introduce and apply new interpretations of our concepts of, for example, truth, beauty, experience, sensation, metaphysics, transcendence, imagination, faith, and prayer. With reference to an unusual museum visit, the first chapter presents and highlights art’s capacity to seize and change us as humans. The second chapter follows up on this by introducing the distinction developed by philosophical aesthetics between sense perception and sensitive experience, and the distinction coined by hermeneutic phenomenology between the body and the lived body. Moreover, this chapter describes the significance of sensitivity in relation to our understanding of not only art but also nature, science, and ethics. The third chapter consists of a meditation on the importance of being lived-bodily attentive in one’s bodily presence, be it as pastor or stage performer. The fourth chapter further develops this reminder of the importance of lived-bodily attentiveness by discussing the human receptivity to faith regarded as a potential that is both innate and vulnerable. Consequentially, the fifth chapter challenges many Protestant thinkers’ and hermeneutic phenomenologists’ ambivalence toward aesthetics and emphasizes the ethical significance and theological relevance of aesthetic sensitivity.

The sixth chapter challenges the current tendency to favor the sublime at the expense of the beautiful. The criticism articulated here is based on a study of the historical metamorphoses of beauty since antiquity and a distinction between traditional and

modern notions of beauty. Similarly, the seventh chapter challenges the current antimetaphysics by interpreting aesthetic and religious experiences as experiences of transcendence and by explaining the meaning of immanent transcendence, regarded as the most recent notion of transcendence and as a key concept in the metaphysics of experience. Describing the experience of beauty as the experience that something is valuable in itself—and thus as an experience of divinity, but not a religious experience of the divine—the eighth chapter follows up on the reflections on aesthetic experience articulated in the previous chapters. Likewise, the ninth chapter takes up references to the imagination made in the previous chapters, and paves the way for the following chapters by interpreting various historical and contemporary understandings of imagination and by presenting an experience-metaphysical understanding according to which imagination is essential for cognition, moral action, aesthetic experience, and aesthetic thinking. The tenth chapter describes the intermediate world, which was introduced in the second chapter, as the origin of all knowledge: it is a state related to attunement, mood, and atmosphere and characterized by feeling, sensation, and presentiment. It is in this state constituting the realm that houses ‘basic experience,’ which is characterized by sensation, faith, and comprehension, that imagination is at work and transcendence takes place. Through a contemplation on prayer interpreted as an aesthetic-sensitive phenomenon, the eleventh chapter studies what actually happens in the intermediate world. This chapter thus develops the approach to prayer introduced in the third chapter by integrating elements of aesthetic, hermeneutic, and phenomenological thought introduced in other chapters. The chapter shows that prayer both presupposes and constitutes *kenosis*, that is, an emptying of the rational subject in favor of emotional subjectivity and a suspension of instrumental thinking in favor of sensitive contemplation.

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