

# 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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*Imaginative Moods* is part of a duology that also includes the book *Poetic Inclinations: Ethics, History, Philosophy*.<sup>1</sup> Together these books represent the first comprehensive presentation in English of what I term the metaphysics of experience, and which, owing to my monographs in Danish, is well known and widely used in the Nordic countries. Aesthetics plays an important role in both books, but each book has its own scope and can therefore be read as an individual work. As is evident from the description of *Imaginative Moods* presented in the previous paragraphs, this book includes a focus on aesthetics, religion, and philosophy (for example, the potential contribution of aesthetics to the understanding of prayer). *Poetic Inclinations*, on the other hand, includes a focus on ethics, history, and philosophy (for example, the ethical significance of aesthetic thinking, in the sense of its formative consequences). Nevertheless, the two books are interrelated due to their shared task as introductions to the metaphysics of experience and their mutual cross references. They genuinely supplement and complement each other.

*Poetic Inclinations* makes the metaphysics of experience available to beginners and introduces practitioners in various professions to the implications of this philosophy. It proves the relevance of the metaphysics of experience by emphasizing the significance of aesthetic thinking in fields such as education, politics, and social work. Besides appealing to scholars and students, this book may also appeal to practitioners such as teachers, pedagogues, and social workers. *Imaginative Moods*, on the other hand, provides further knowledge about and insight into the metaphysics of experience. This book is slightly more demanding, since it focuses on the aforementioned metaphysics as such and its theoretical implications in aesthetics and theology. *Imaginative Moods* may appeal to scholars, students, pastors, psychologists, and artists, as well as those who have read *Poetic Inclinations* and who are thus already familiar with the relevance of the metaphysics of experience.

1 Dorthe Jørgensen, *Poetic Inclinations: Ethics, History, Philosophy* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2021).

*Poetic Inclinations* and *Imaginative Moods* give an international readership access to innovative work that includes the re-interpretation of established concepts, the introduction of new notions, and the presentation of the practical and theoretical implications of both. They also offer new ways to conceive of and apply aesthetics, hermeneutics, and phenomenology, which includes groundbreaking theoretical work in the form of a unique integration of these disciplines as well as a unique integration of aesthetics and theology. Phenomenologists and hermeneutic philosophers generally reject or diminish aesthetics in favor of the philosophy of art. Traditionally, Protestant theologians also rejected aesthetics, and contemporary theological attempts to include aesthetics mostly confuse it with the study of art. Finally, *Poetic Inclinations* and *Imaginative Moods* present numerous practical (critical, ethical, pedagogical) as well as philosophical and theological perspectives for contemplating contemporary phenomena within the framework of the metaphysics of experience. They expose the importance of sensitive contemplation that has an eye for transgressive experience and acknowledges both the existential relevance of such experience and its significance for the production of knowledge, for contemporary culture, and for society in general.

Both books consist of collections of texts written in various contexts but revolving around the aforementioned topics. The texts I have selected for publication together constitute two monographs thanks to their thematic kinship, common terminology, and common introduction and application of the metaphysics of experience; I edited and organized them for their present release, in English and in book form. I was motivated to produce these monographs by my international colleagues, who have often lamented that the majority of my research, including my major presentation of the metaphysics of experience—that is, the 965-page monograph *Den skønne tænkning* (Beautiful Thinking)—is only available in Danish.<sup>2</sup> Many scholars and artists from various backgrounds have

2 Dorthe Jørgensen, *Den skønne tænkning: Veje til erfaringsmetafysik. Religionsfilosofisk udmøntet* (Beautiful Thinking: Pathways to the Metaphysics of Experience. Religio-Philosophically Implemented) (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2014).

requested a comprehensive English introduction to the metaphysic of experience, including the research in which this philosophy originates, the way of thinking of which it is a product, and its practical and theoretical implications. It is my great hope that *Poetic Inclinations* and *Imaginative Moods* will fulfill this request, at least partly, and I am deeply grateful for the interest that has motivated their publication.

The editing of the present material was guided by a wish to avoid unnecessary repetition but also to enable the reader to approach and understand each text and each book without prior knowledge of the others. A certain amount of repetition was thus unavoidable, but, as a teacher and knowledge disseminator, I have learned that repetition is far from harmful for educational purposes, especially when the content being mediated is philosophical and thus potentially difficult to access. Some of the texts presented in *Poetic Inclinations* and *Imaginative Moods* have been published previously, in various books or journals and in Danish or English, while others represent hitherto unpublished material produced with a foothold in my Danish monographs. Precise details can be found in the acknowledgments, where I also express my deep gratitude to the journal editors and publishers who have authorized me to reproduce previously published work. The editorial organization of the texts makes it possible, as mentioned, to favor an anarchistic way of reading in which one jumps between the texts and books or perhaps only reads a single text or book. However, it also entails that one benefits from reading the books from beginning to end, starting with *Poetic Inclinations* and finishing with *Imaginative Moods*. At the end of the day, reading with an open mind is the most important premise of the outcome, and such a mindset aligns perfectly with the moral implication of the metaphysics of experience and thus with the ethos of the books.

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The texts included in the present publication were translated into American English by me, in close cooperation with various copy-

editors and proofreaders, and edited following the Chicago Manual of Style. Each text constitutes a chapter. To make it easier to use the chapters on an individual basis, I provide full bibliographic information in a footnote about texts I refer to the first time they appear in a chapter. All quotations follow current translations into English; where there is no available translation, I have made one myself. Numbers and letters in references to Plato's texts refer to the Stephanus pagination, and in references to Aristotle's texts to the Bekker numbering. Citations and quotations from Kant's texts refer to page numbers in the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Kant followed by volume and page numbers in the Academy Edition, except for references to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which is cited and quoted by page numbers in the original first (A) and second (B) editions.