religions

MDPI

Article

Turning the Theological Turn on Its Head—The Levinasian Secularization of Heidegger's Theology

Theodor Sandal Rolfsen

Department of Archeology, History, Religious Studies and Theology, Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, UiT—The Arctic University of Norway, 9019 Tromsø, Norway; theodor.sandal.rolfsen@uit.no

Abstract: In this article, I attempt to contribute to further the understanding of what has happened with the so-called 'theological turn in French phenomenology' through juxtaposing two sets of discourses: the theological in Heidegger and the secular in Levinas. While Levinas was identified by Janicaud as the first mover in the theological turn, much attention has recently been given to the theological themes in Heidegger's writings. Less attention has been given, however, to the way in which Levinas' philosophical and Talmudic writings often seek to be a secular critique of Heidegger's philosophy. Through showing how a Levinasian secularization of Heidegger's theology can make sense, I hope to shake up the debate surrounding the theological turn by placing it on its head.

Keywords: philosophy; phenomenology; theology; religion; God; secularism; atheism; Heidegger; Levinas; Falque

Citation: Rolfsen, Theodor Sandal. 2023. Turning the Theological Turn on Its Head—The Levinasian Secularization of Heidegger's Theology. *Religions* 14: 1464. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14121464

Academic Editor: Philip Goodchild

Received: 1 September 2023
Revised: 13 November 2023
Accepted: 22 November 2023
Published: 27 November 2023

1. Introduction

What does it mean to say that there has been a theological turn in French phenomenology? Recently, advances have been made towards answering this question through reframing it in this particular way. As Emmanuel Falque argues, the debate surrounding the theological turn must be re-oriented away from a methodological quarrel over whether it should have taken place or not:

> The relation between philosophy and theology in France has recently shifted. To deny this would be to act in bad faith or in such great blindness that we would seem to be guided by nothing but ignorance of that which has transpired. (Falque 2016, p. 16)

Whatever one thinks of it, the theological turn is an event that has taken place, and the question today should therefore not be *whether* it should have happened, but more precisely *what* has happened. The theological turn is not simply a methodological debate, but also an event that must be understood.

A cursory account of what has taken place might go something like this: While on the secular trajectory of modern philosophy, phenomenology suddenly and surprisingly converted or 'turned around' on this path. Perhaps like Paul on his way to Damascus? This must be said with a lot of irony, since the conversion of the theological turn does not take place with the Jewish Saul turning into the Christian Paul, but secular phenomenology being turned to theology by the Jewish Levinas, at least according to Janicaud's classic essay.

This short narrative already begs a lot of questions. Amongst the secular philosophical traditions, why was phenomenology particularly open to theological objects? Conversely, why do theological objects lend themselves so suitably to phenomenology? What does it mean to go from a secular to a theological phenomenology, and what does it mean for theology to be welcomed into phenomenology? And what of the objects in question, seen from the side of philosophy and theology? What is their status?

I wish to contribute to further advances in our understanding of these questions, and thus generally towards understanding 'what has happened' with the theological turn,

through pursuing a novel and somewhat counter-intuitive path in this context, namely *the Levinasian secularization of Heidegger*. This path should be interesting for a couple of reasons. As already mentioned, Janicaud, who coined the term, names Levinas the first mover in the theological turn because of the way in which transcendence features as a theme in Levinas' phenomenology. To find that *the secular* features as a prominent theme in his writings, as I intend to show, is therefore quite curious and an under-interrogated aspect of his work, especially in the context of the theological turn. Moreover, the fact that his discourse on the secular often features as a critique of Heidegger makes things even more interesting, especially since this secularizing critique also targets the Heidegger of *Being and Time*. In his original essay, Janicaud claims that the theological turn could not have happened without Heidegger's own 'turn' (*Kehre*) and his treatment of the sacred in his later writings (Janicaud 2000, p. 31), but traditionally, the Heidegger of *Being and Time* has been considered an atheistic philosopher not directly involved with the theological turn. In more recent years, however, more attention has been paid to how Heidegger's theological work on Paul and Augustine influenced *Being and Time*. The time is therefore ripe for assessing what a Levinasian secularization of Heidegger entails. Finally, this approach is interesting because 'the secular' features as a theme in Levinas' Talmudic as well as philosophical writings. Interrogating this theme thus leads to a peculiar example of what Falque calls the 'theological backlash' of theology on philosophy.

The Levinasian secularization of Heidegger's theology—does this proposition risk turning the theological turn on its head? But what is gained through turning it around in the first place? I would hope this rotation at the very least teaches us something new about how things stand with the theological turn. It should, through the reading of Heidegger's interpretation of theology, teach us something about how we might understand the possibility of theology illuminating the phenomenological horizon, namely both as a possible rejuvenation and death sentence. It should furthermore show us, through Levinas' secularization of Heidegger, that the theme of the secular itself has been overlooked in the debate surrounding the theological turn. It might be the case that the secular, the profane and the mundane are not simply methodological terms that distinguish secular disciplines from confessional ones, nor sociological demarcations, but that these terms in fact refer to the experiential structure of the human condition itself. Finally, this fact might itself be open to both secular and theological interpretations.

2. Experience and the Secular Turn in Philosophy

An understanding of the secular has been implicit in the theological turn since its beginning, for the theological turn in French phenomenology is intelligible only within the larger trajectory of the secular turn in modern philosophy that takes place with Kant. It also ties into the first reason as to why the theological turn takes place precisely in phenomenology, namely the role played by experience in this general secular turn. This is because God is excluded as a legitimate theme within philosophy at the same time as experience is defined as the court that metaphysics must appeal to for its legitimacy. The Kantian legacy of phenomenology is at its strongest precisely at this point. As Derrida notes, Kantian philosophy and Husserlian phenomenology are united in their simultaneous delimiting of empiricism and metaphysics, using the one to limit the other (Derrida 2001, p. 190; 2016, p. 54). Empiricism is reproached due to its simplistic reduction of sensory data, for the possibility of our experience being intelligible in the way it is given requires more than sensory data, but also implies, e.g., categories.[1] On the side of metaphysics, pure metaphysical notions like 'universal', 'necessity' and 'infinity' can only have sense insofar as they refer, in some way, to the experience they structure. Metaphysical concepts are therefore only legitimate insofar as they are implicit in experience. It is on this ground that both Kant and Husserl place God outside of the legitimate boundaries of inquiry for philosophy. Both are ready to admit that God makes sense without contradictions as a metaphysical idea, but the very nature of this idea prevents the possibility of it appearing

in experience, either explicitly or implicitly, and thus makes God an illegitimate object of inquiry for philosophy (Husserl [1913] 1982, pp. 116–17; Kant [1787] 1966, pp. 628–36).[2]

If the secular turn is initiated by thinkers like Kant and Husserl excluding God from the philosophy's legitimate realm of inquiry due to God's transcendence vis à vis experience, then the theological turn is initiated by Levinas placing transcendence as a definitive moment *in* experience. The radical gesture of Levinasian philosophy is precisely to assert that terms like 'the Absolute', 'transcendence' and 'the Most High' refer to features of our experience, namely our ethical relation to other human beings. Moreover, he does so not through asserting that, e.g., 'the Absolute' is implicit in the structure of experience as a transcendental that renders it intelligible, but rather that 'the Absolute' features in experience through being absolutely exterior within it, rupturing rather than structuring it. Finally, this rupture is present not in the negation of this structure but in the positivity of transcendence itself. One could perhaps say that Levinas reinterprets the Cartesian idea of infinity in a post-Kantian way, that is, as an experienced encounter.

There are reasons both for approving and objecting to this theological turn, and those reasons can be both philosophical and theological. A phenomenologist might appreciate how terms like 'Commandment' and 'the Absolute' seem to illuminate certain moments of human experience, as in the case of the ethical structure of intersubjectivity, which Levinas makes a convincing argument for. A theologian might in turn appreciate seeing such theological notions rejuvenated within phenomenology, no longer referring to abstract, metaphysical situations absent in human life, but in fact revealing themselves as implicated in it.

On the other hand, phenomenologists like Janicaud might object that seeing the relation to the Other as an encounter with absolute transcendence requires the suspension of our critical faculties. In Levinas' philosophy, Janicaud argues, "All is acquired and imposed from the outset" (Janicaud 2000, p. 27), for the idea that the Other expresses an inviolable command against murder must literally be taken at face value. Rather than a thoughtful interrogation of experience, Levinas seemingly demands obedience to the Commandment that the Other supposedly reveals.

Theologians, on their end, might object to the 'rejuvenation' phenomenology supposedly brings to theology through re-discovering it in experience. This assumes, after all, not only that theology is a dying discipline but, furthermore, that it depends on experience in order to be resurrected. In order to defend the legitimacy of their concepts, theologians must demonstrate how they refer to experience, but this selfsame experience is, argue the philosophers, the legitimate field of inquiry of philosophy. In other words, if the theological turn in phenomenology rejuvenates theology, it does so through wresting authority over theological questions away from theologians themselves, who now have to rely on philosophical argumentation for the demonstration of their own value. In other words, the ground for their own discipline has been moved outside it.

If 'The theological turn in French phenomenology' entails a return of theology to philosophy, then this return has an ambiguous sense, for all parties involved. This ambiguity follows from the way in which theology returns, namely through its potential to illuminate the horizon of experience. I believe Derrida is correct when noting that Levinas' project is not a case of building philosophy on the authority of theology: "it is but a question of designating a space or a hollow within naked experience where [messianic] eschatology can be understood and must resonate" (Derrida 2001, p. 103). Reading Levinas' philosophy, one never finds him quoting scripture in order to *justify* his claims, through, for example, arguing that our indebtedness to the Other is true because scripture reveals it to be so. Rather, references to scripture are made in order to *illuminate* this or that aspect of experience, giving these references their ambiguous duplicity; for while scripture is thus rejuvenated through being brought back to life in a philosophically secular age, the experience they illuminate simultaneously become the court authority to which theology must now appeal for its legitimacy.[3]

3. Fallenness and Worldliness in Heidegger

In order to approach this ambiguity, however, we will not inquire into the status of the theological in Levinas. Instead, we will turn to how theology informs the work of Levinas' predecessor and teacher and ask: what is the *status* of the theological in Heidegger?

First of all, however, what 'theology' in Heidegger am I referring to? In recent years, there have been great advances made towards understanding the role played by the young Heidegger's interpretations of Paul and Augustine for the analytic of Dasein in *Being and Time*. One clear example is Heidegger's notion of *Verfallen*, translated by Joan Stambaugh as either falling-prey or entanglement. Before turning to how we ought to understand this influence, let us look at what role this notion plays in *Being and Time* in the first place.

Heidegger's analysis of *Verfallen* concerns the everyday modality of Dasein's being-in-the-world. This means that initially and for the most part, Dasein inhabits the world in the mode of entanglement, where it falls prey to the world. Why does Heidegger elect to use the term 'falling', and why is that which Dasein falls prey to the 'world'? Heidegger is sure to make clear that it is not talk of Dasein having fallen from somewhere, that is, as if Dasein had fallen from a prior, other-worldly form of existence into the world, as in the Platonic myth of the soul. In contrast, 'falling' is a particular mode of comporting oneself in the world, and more precisely one in which Dasein is falling-away-from itself: "Dasein, falling prey, has already fallen away from itself" (Heidegger [1927] 2010, p. 169). To 'fall away' means here for Dasein to interpret itself inauthentically rather than authentically, and an inauthentic interpretation consists of Dasein disclosing itself in terms of the world: "Dasein tends to understand its own being (*Sein*) in terms of the being (*Seienden*) to which it is essentially, continually, and most closely related—the 'world'" (Heidegger [1927] 2010, pp. 15–16). Such a self-disclosure is inauthentic because Dasein is not simply a being of the world. Rather, Dasein is a being (*Seienden*) that in its being (*Sein*) is concerned with its own being, and which therefore is characterized in terms of having an open potentiality with regard to its own disclosure. In contrast to the determinate contents of innerworldly beings, therefore, Dasein is, argues Heidegger, not at home in the world (Heidegger [1927] 2010, p. 176).

Why does Dasein, for the most part, disclose itself inauthentically in terms of the world rather than authentically in view of its homelessness? This relates to the reason why Heidegger sees the attunement of anxiety as the proper mood to disclose Dasein authentically, for "In anxiety, the things at hand in the surrounding world sink away" (Heidegger [1927] 2010, p. 181). Anxiety reveals Dasein in its undetermined, open potentiality. Likewise, anxiety answers why Dasein tends in this direction, away from itself and towards the world. In losing itself in the world, Dasein seeks to avoid a confrontation with its indeterminacy, seeking instead the comfort and security which inauthenticity promises: "Entangled being-in-the-world, tempting itself, is at the same time tranquilizing" (Heidegger [1927] 2010, p. 171). Entangled being-in-the-world promises comfort through busying itself with ontic determinate contents without ever having to confront the ontological adventure of being. Dasein becomes entangled in an endless pursuit of novelties and curiosities which do nothing but distract, and thus loses the possibility of an authentic confrontation with itself (Heidegger [1927] 2010, p. 166).

Turning towards the young Heidegger's interpretations of Paul and Augustine, it will not be difficult to show that these analyses influenced the above explicated notion of entanglement. In the 1920/21 lectures titled *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, Heidegger argues that debates regarding the dogmatic content of the Pauline letters fails to understand that what Paul is communicating in these letters are not, first of all, theories and doctrines regarding God and salvation, but a certain experience of being in the world, and more importantly, of how to comport oneself with regard to this experience. In regard to the second coming of Christ (Parousia), Paul's assertion that it will come like a thief in the night (1 Thes 5:2) means, for Heidegger, that Paul is not interested in making a theoretical prediction: "the question of the 'When' leads back to my comportment" (Heidegger 2004,

p. 73). To experience a Christian life entails orienting oneself to an arrival that could come at any moment, and to comport oneself towards that frightful expectation.

This coming-at-any-moment entails a non-accidental anxiety: "rather, it is necessary" (Heidegger 2004, p. 73). Having to orient oneself to a sudden arrival which can come at any moment means that you can never relax your attentive expectation, and for that very reason, the Christian life is demarcated by holding onto anxiety and not letting it be comforted. It is here that Heidegger identifies the true meaning of the Christian idea of falling prey to the world:

> That which encounters me in my worldly comportment carries no reason for disturbance. Those who find rest and security in this world are those who cling to this world because it provides peace and security. (Heidegger 2004, p. 72)

The comforts of the world tranquilize the essential anxiety that defines the Christian life. Through occupying oneself with familiar tasks, practicing predictable habits and enjoying comfortable goods, the Christian loses sight of the fundamental coming which will turn everything that we know on its head.

Falling-prey plays the same role in the young Heidegger's reading of Augustine. Heidegger follows Augustine's search for God in book ten of *Confessions*, in which Augustine is no longer recounting his past conversion as an example for others, but critically confronting his relation to God in the present (Heidegger 2004, pp. 128–29). Augustine yearns to confess his love for God, but this yearning search has difficulty finding its proper object, so that the search for the greatest happiness (God) turns into anxious uncertainty. As Heidegger quotes Augustine, "He wants to confess that too. (Quaestio mihi factus sum. [I have become a question to myself])" (Heidegger 2004, p. 130), for he refuses to let this restless search be tranquilized. Augustine maintains himself in the struggle, for only in such a struggle is there a genuine turning-towards God. Others, however, choose to let their yearning for God be substituted by worldly comforts: "They fall back upon what is in their power to do, what is at their disposal in the moment, what is conveniently attainable for them of the surrounding-worldly and other significances of the world and of the self" (Heidegger 2004, p. 145). These comforts are not only earthly pleasures (wine, food, etc.), but also, e.g., easy answers to difficult questions. In fact, in this search, the 'what' is not as important as the 'how'. The genuine search for God for Augustine, according to Heidegger, depends not so much on acquiring a correct object as it does comporting oneself in a certain way in the world. What sort of comportment? One that does not fall prey to the alluring temptations at tranquilization that the world promises and instead holds itself in the struggle to love God.

4. The Status of the Theological in Heidegger

Explicating these two analyses side by side, it becomes clear that there is a strong thematic overlap between the fallenness experienced by Paul and Augustine in *The Phenomenology of Religious Life* and the structure of entanglement in *Being and Time*. In fact, is it not right to say that in both cases, Heidegger is talking about the same phenomenon, the same experience? Heidegger refers to Augustine's anxiety when introducing the authentic/inauthentic distinction and the notion of entanglement in *Being and Time* (Heidegger [1927] 2010, p. 43), and in *On the Essence of Ground*, first written in 1928 and later published in *Wegmarken*, Paul and Augustine are both invoked in order to give an account of the varying meanings given to the concept of 'world' in the Western philosophical tradition (Heidegger 1998a, pp. 111–14). In other words, it is beyond doubt that for Heidegger, the struggles experienced by Paul and Augustine, their attempts to turn away from the world and turn towards God, reveal something decisive about Dasein, namely the nature of its worldliness: "Accordingly, world means: beings as a whole, namely, as the decisive 'how' in accordance with which human Dasein assumes a stance and maintains itself in relation to beings" (Heidegger 1998a, p. 114). The name 'world' does not simply designate an object or a container, but an orientation or comportment that involves turning-away-from

or turning-towards something decisive, something a phenomenological interpretation of theological writings is able to reveal.

This is thus very clearly an example of the phenomenological use of theological themes characteristic of the theological turn; for Heidegger, the theological writings of Paul and Augustine reveal something about the human condition. It is, however, precisely the status of this illumination that we are trying to figure out in this article, and which remains ambiguous. What does it mean for the theological theme of fallenness to illuminate Heidegger's explication of the ontological structure of Dasein? What, in general, does it mean for phenomenology that theology can reveal something about its horizon, and what does it mean for theology to be revealed within it?

The first thing we can note is that for the young Heidegger, a return to experience is not only a necessity, but in fact spells out the return to a more authentic Christian theology. Reading Paul and Augustine, Heidegger does not identify theoretical propositions about detached doctrine but certain structures of experience in the facticity of life. As he says himself in regard to the Pauline letters:

> The dogma as detached content of doctrine in an objective, epistemological emphasis could never have been guiding for Christian religiosity. On the contrary, the genesis of dogma can only be understood from out of the enactment of Christian life experience. (Heidegger 2004, p. 79)

What Heidegger draws out from these texts are not dogmatic doctrines that designate metaphysical entities beyond our sensuous world but existential positions, orientations and situations in which humanity comports itself either towards God or towards the world. It is a Christian experience, and moreover, Christianity itself as emerging out of an experience. That is, against a certain type of theology which reduces, e.g., the Pauline letters to a theoretical discussion of dogmatic questions (e.g., the status of marriage versus celibacy), Heidegger seeks to return to an original experience out of which Christianity as a belief system is born.

In one sense, therefore, the 1920/21 lectures testifies to Heidegger's desire to be more theological than his contemporary theologians. As Judith Wolfe explains in her work *Heidegger and Theology*, Heidegger's attempt is born out of a deep dissatisfaction with the Neo-Scholasticism that dominated Catholic theology in his own Catholic youth (1889–1915) (Wolfe 2014, pp. 9–24). What Heidegger found lacking in the Catholic theology of his time was the incessant drive towards metaphysical systematization and the inability to approach the lived experience of Christian life. Wolfe describes it as a "double call" to both return to an "aboriginal experience" of Christian life and to give this "experience expression from within" (Wolfe 2014, pp. 22–23). Heidegger was moved to develop his phenomenological readings of Paul and Augustine because he felt contemporary theology did not authentically account for the Christian life experience these authors testified to. Wolfe thus argues against those who see Heidegger's engagement with theology in the 1920/21 lectures as an accidental interest through which Heidegger could explore his more authentic passion for phenomenology. In contrast, "Heidegger discovered the phenomenological method . . . in large part as a means to adequately describing religious experience" (Wolfe 2014, p. 33). Heidegger moved to phenomenology precisely to be a better theologian.

The need to return to factical life experience through the phenomenological method in order to be a better theologian is a very ambiguous movement. It signifies, on the one hand, the Kantian turn in philosophy, which requires a limiting of legitimate discourse to the realm of experience. As Wolfe explains it, Heidegger's frustration with the Neo-Scholasticism of his contemporary theologians came in part "with the perceived Catholic failure to engage with modern philosophy" (Wolfe 2014, p. 17), especially German Idealism. Heidegger was in tune with the general secular trajectory of modern philosophy, which saw the need to ground metaphysics in the immanence of the human condition, rejecting that which would wholly transcend it. At the same time, however, Heidegger's turn is also made with reference to a more authentic Christianity belonging to and emerging out from factical life experience itself. How to resolve this ambiguity?

Falque credits this surprising turn of events to the historical changing-of-places of theology and philosophy. In terms of the topics of finitude, suffering and death, Falque sees a surprising historical reversal: "Such topics, which once be-longed exclusively to the domain of Christian experience, have, by a paradoxical re-versal, recently been caught up in the nets of philosophy" (Falque 2019, p. 1). Whereas Greek philosophy originally directed itself to the eternal, supra-sensuous realm of Ideas and the intelligence of the soul, Christianity, in its origin, centers on the pierced and suffering body of Christ on the cross and the anxiety he lived through. In Heidegger's time, however, Christian theology had become a system categorizing metaphysical entities beyond human experience, while philosophers like Kierkegaard and Nietzsche where engaging questions regarding finitude, the body and suffering. Phenomenology, likewise, promises a return to experience, a path Heidegger willingly went down in a search for a more authentic Christianity.

Perhaps, then, the secular turn in modern philosophy, which entails the exclusion of theology due to the turn to experience, finds itself reversed in the young Heidegger's writings; the turn to experience is in fact a *return* to a more authentic Christianity. However, does Christian theology not also and more importantly refer to transcendence, that is, what is beyond? Wolfe is probably correct that the young Heidegger is authentically trying to formulate a faithful Christian theology, but this does not necessarily entail that these lectures are theological. In fact, both Wolfe and Falque note that Heidegger, in his interpretations of Paul and Augustine, excludes the transcendent theological notions that do not fit his project (hope in Paul and the eternal in Augustine) (Wolfe 2014, pp. 50–53; Falque 2020, p. 15). Heidegger himself claims that "the Christian does not step out of this world" (Heidegger 2004, p. 85). In his analyses, he fruitfully explores the affliction and anxiety of the believer but not the redemption or salvation which God, according to Christian theology, promises.

Perhaps one could say that Heidegger illuminates the horizon within which such a Christian hope resonates, where it can have sense. As Falque writes with regard to these lectures, "What matters is less the end itself than the *mode* of relating oneself to this end" (Falque 2020, p. 14). Falque, who describes the 1920/21 lectures as having had a profound and decisive influence on his own work (Falque 2020, p. 6), has a peculiar way of weighing the theological and philosophical dimensions of these lectures against each other. Falque makes clear that Heidegger's phenomenology of religious life (or religious 'experience', Falque's preferred term) is an approach that situates itself within the experience of the believer. The young Heidegger tries to study the works of Paul and Augustine based on the distinctly religious experiences that gave birth to them, and thus seeks to explicate them from within the position of faith. Nevertheless, Falque's point is that the experience of a believer can and should be approached philosophically in its faithfulness without this necessarily entailing a confessional belonging: "the specific character of what is studied will be described on the basis of their experience, or of inserting oneself within it—nevertheless without necessarily adhering to it confessionally" (Falque 2016, p. 107). Phenomenologically describing faith beginning from the experience of faith itself does not amount to a theological proof for or against faith, but simply illuminates the horizon within which faith makes sense. As we quoted Derrida saying earlier, "it is but a question of designating a space of a hollow within naked experience where this eschatology can be understood and where it must resonate" (Derrida 2001, p. 103). In other words, a phenomenology of religious life/experience analyzes the general human horizon within which religiosity resonates, where it 'makes sense'.

If this is the case, then *The Phenomenology of Religious Life* is already on track to reach the same conclusion which Heidegger would draw later in *Phenomenology and Theology*, namely that phenomenology has as its proper object the pre-Christian ontological structure of Dasein which Christian theology, as a positive science, presupposes (Heidegger 1998b, pp. 50–54). If Christianity purports to bear witness to a transformative event in human existence, then it presupposes an understanding of this human existence in the first place. It is therefore because of the fact that the ontic promise of Christianity resonates within a

given horizon of affliction that it can serve as an entry point for the young Heidegger into the ontological structure of Dasein.

This is in fact what Falque argues. According to Falque, the young Heidegger discovers in early Christianity an original outpouring of the human condition that was historically new at its time. Nevertheless, even if an original experience is first uncovered by Christianity, Falque contends, the experience so revealed no longer belongs exclusively to Christendom: "What determines factical life experience is, precisely, what determines all life—Christianity in an originary way for sure, but all life in an ordinary way, namely 'concern' or 'insecurity' as such" (Falque 2020, p. 13). Falque thus argues that the primary insight gained in these lectures is philosophical, namely a delineation of the universal condition of humanity not exclusive to any religious confession. As Wolfe writes, the development from *The Phenomenology of Religious Life* to *Being and Time* consists of Heidegger attempting to free the ontological structure of 'concern' and 'insecurity' itself from its original manifestation in Christianity: "the Christian sense of anxiety as related to sin is merely one ontic manifestation of—indeed one religious attempt to answer the question posed by—that anxiety which is an ontological moment of man" (Wolfe 2014, p. 74). Early Christianity was the original, ontic expression of an ontological structure which now, with the advent of modern philosophy, and phenomenology in particular, is coming into view.

Falque sees this as a historical development reaching its conclusion: "If the ideas of 'turning-around' and 'transformation' originate or come from theology, their true place and true meaning belong today to philosophy, even atheism as such" (Falque 2020, p. 20). It would seem this is true in terms of the development of Heidegger's notion of fallenness as well. While Heidegger first discovers this notion and what it reveals about the human condition from theologians, its analysis is fulfilled in the pre-theistic realm of philosophy. As he says himself with regard to the analysis of falling prey:

> Our existential, ontological interpretation thus does not make any ontic statement about the 'corruption of human nature', not because the necessary evidence is lacking but because its problematic is prior to any statement about corruption or incorruption . . . faith and 'worldview', when they state such and such a thing and when they speak about Dasein as being-in-the-world, must come back to the existential structures set forth, provided that their statements at the same time claim to be conceptually comprehensible. (Heidegger [1927] 2010, p. 173)

Any ontic claim as to whether humanity is corrupt or not must first delineate the horizon within which these options are intelligible. To say, for example, that Dasein is sinful because it is corrupted by the world presupposes that Dasein has a world, and that it has it in the way which Heidegger's analysis reveals, that is, as a struggle between authenticity and inauthenticity. It is because Dasein's worldliness manifests as a conflict between different comportments that a Christian revelation can demand of humans that they 'turn around', and this pre-theistic field which Christian theology reveals itself within is the field belonging to philosophy.

What does this tell us about the theological turn? As we noted previously, it seems that theological themes lend themselves amiably to phenomenology. Might this not be because of their particular resonance as ontic expressions of an ontological structure? The possibility of someone like Paul holding himself in a comportment turning-towards something decisive and turning-away from that which tempts him away from that which is decisive—this says something about human worldliness, namely that it does not simply exist in the world like a block inside a box, but rather finds itself always-already underway, headed in a certain direction. Furthermore, the possibility of being always-already-oriented in a *certain* direction entails that holding this direction involved a struggle between the path you are headed down and its alternatives. Paul's struggle reveals something about this fundamental ontology of the human condition because it presupposes it and thus resonates within it.

But what is this resonance—a revelation or an echo slowly dying inside a hollow? One might interpret the theological turn as a rejuvenation for theology, where new life is

breathed into its metaphysical systems through demonstrating that these systems are far from abstract but in fact illuminate human experience. A phenomenological analysis can convincingly show that the themes with which theology has occupied itself indeed concern the concrete condition of humanity. For Heidegger's sake, there is no doubt that the anxiety experienced by Paul and Augustine is the same anxiety he himself analyzes. But does this not then simultaneously, and for the same reason, threaten to be the possible death of theology? After all, theology was supposed to regard that which transcends the human condition. Does its resonance in experience then not also possibly entail its exhaustion in this selfsame experience? Through making theological concepts more familiar and recognizable, the theological turn in phenomenology also threatens to locate their origin in the mundane experience of worldly life.

5. Levinas Secularizing Heidegger

What, however, is meant by the mundane experience of worldly life? Is it correct to say of experience in general that it is secular, or does this pertain to a certain dimension of experience? Turning to Levinas' secularization of Heidegger, we will see Levinas make an argument for why the second option is the case.

It might be surprising that secularism features as such a prominent theme in the writings of the thinker credited as the first mover of the theological turn, but it is in fact important both in his philosophical and theological writings.[4] Furthermore, the notions of 'the secular' and 'atheism' are, for Levinas, not simply methodological or sociological notions, but also phenomenological and theological ones. Finally, when secularism appears as a theme in Levinas, it is almost always accompanied by another theme, namely that of *enjoyment*. This last part is especially important in reference to Levinas' secularizing critique of Heidegger.

Discussions about the secular, the profane and atheism pop up in multiple places in Levinas' oeuvre, and in an interconnected way. In *Existence and Existents*, Levinas uses the terms to describe the nature of the world: "The world is profane and secular [profane et laic]" (Levinas [1947] 1988, p. 41), and consistently refers to the world as secular (*laic/laïcité/laïque*) throughout the work (Levinas [1947] 1988, pp. 42, 90). In *Totality and Infinity*, the notion of atheism is used to define an important aspect of subjectivity, namely its independence: "By atheism we thus understand a position prior to both the negation and the affirmation of the divine, the breaking with participation by which the I posits itself as the same and as I" (Levinas [1961] 2015, p. 58, see also pp. 60, 62, 77, 88–89, 142, 148, 299). Levinas also discusses secularization and disenchantment extensively in the article *Secularization and Hunger* and in two of the lectures present in *God, Death, and Time* (Levinas 2000, pp. 163–71). These themes also feature prominently in Levinas' Talmudic writings (e.g., Levinas 1990a, pp. 14, 233; 1990b, pp. 136–60), and, as we shall see, in an interconnected way.[5]

It should be made clear from the beginning that secularism, for Levinas, has its place within a grander theological universe, both in his philosophical and Talmudic writings. Falque is fond of quoting Levinas' statement that "To be I, atheist, at home with oneself, separated, created—these are synonyms" (see Falque 2016, pp. 91–92; 2020, pp. 11–12) as a testimony to the fact that the first mover in the theological turn also recognized an atheistic dimension to life, but it should then be remembered what the term 'created' signifies for Levinas in this context: "It is certainly a great glory for the creator to have set up a being capable of atheism" (Levinas [1961] 2015, p. 58). The atheistic and secular dimension of life does not, for Levinas, exclude the co-existence of a religious dimension but is in fact, through his peculiar interpretation of creation *ex nihilo*, presupposed by it (Levinas [1961] 2015, pp. 89 & 104–5). Nevertheless, this does not take away from the fact that Falque correctly observes, namely that there is, for Levinas, a distinctly secular and atheistic dimension to the human condition.

This furthermore points to the peculiar way in which these themes feature in Levinas' oeuvre. Levinas does not discuss secularism and atheism in order to methodologically sep-

arate philosophy from theology, nor does he exclusively use them to describe sociological and historical developments. Importantly for this article and for the debate surrounding the theological turn, Levinas uses these terms to describe the experience of the human condition itself. In a similar way to how theological themes might illuminate our shared horizon, therefore, Levinas believes the themes of secularism and atheism illuminate the horizon of life-in-the-world. Even more to the point, the dimension of the human condition that these themes illuminate are those of enjoyment and worldliness, and it is in virtue of these themes that Levinas' discourse on the secular is also, importantly, a critique of Heidegger.

We concluded in the last section with how Heidegger's interpretation of the theological notion of fallenness in Paul and Augustine leads him to a pre-theistic analysis of entanglement that comes before theology. The lived struggle of an orientation between God and the world that Paul's and Augustine's writings bear witness to are ontic expressions conditioned on the ontological structure of Dasein, which is caught in the struggle between authenticity and inauthenticity. While inspired by interpretations of theology, therefore, Heidegger moves his analysis to a point that is pre-theological.

Nevertheless, even if Heidegger's analysis is 'pre-theological' and atheistic in one sense, it remains theological in another sense, that is, open to Levinas' secularization. For Levinas' critique of Heidegger's interpretation of worldliness is precisely that Heidegger "has thereby failed to recognize the essentially secular nature of being in the world and the sincerity of intentions" (Levinas [1947] 1988, p. 42). Is this because Heidegger has been unable to detach properly from the theological roots of his analysis? Not at all—Levinas does not invoke any improper references to theological authorities in his critique nor argue in any way that Heidegger's analysis suffers from religious remnants he was not able to expunge. Beginning with Levinas' *philosophical* discourse on the secular, we will see that Levinas remains fully within the realm of phenomenology in his secularization of Heidegger's theological phenomenology. In other words, it is as a *phenomenologist* that Heidegger, according to Levinas, has missed 'the essentially secular nature of being in the world'. This possibility is of course very interesting and relevant for the aim of this article.

What is it Heidegger has missed in his philosophical analysis? Levinas follows Heidegger in the most essential insights gained in the above, that is, in terms of understanding the world not as an object aimed at or containing a subject, but as a structure of comportment, orientation, etc., which Levinas describes as "one of the most profound discoveries of Heideggerian philosophy" (Levinas [1947] 1988, p. 42). Through determining this comportment in terms of falling, however, Heidegger has, according to Levinas, misunderstood a crucial element of our worldliness, namely *the sincerity of enjoyment*.

While enjoyment and pleasure are not themes Heidegger frequently discusses, when they do occur, they are interpreted in terms of fallenness, both in his earlier lectures and in *Being and Time*. Heidegger interprets Augustine's struggle with *malitiae diei* [the evils of the day] in terms of pleasures that promise to tranquilize the struggle Augustine attempts to maintain in his search for God: "They are present and tempting as *deliciae* [delights] and *suavitates* [loveliness], and one turns them into enjoyment, whereas they are really *the* danger for me" (Heidegger 2004, p. 189). In *Being and Time*, in the same breath that he mentions Augustine's anxiety, Heidegger mentions enjoyment as an expression of Dasein's inauthenticity: "inauthenticity can determine Dasein even in its fullest concretion, when it is busy, excited, interested, and capable of pleasure" (Heidegger [1927] 2010, p. 42). The reason why pleasure determines Dasein in its inauthenticity is, again, because it entangles Dasein in the world rather than confronting it with its open potentiality. Enjoyment is one of the ways in which the world tempts Dasein with the promise of distracting it from its authentic anxiety. Its alluring promise is to provide comfort and tranquility to the anxious insecurity which authentically determines the Being of Dasein, a promise it will always fail to keep: "Tempting tranquillization *increases* entanglement" (Heidegger [1927] 2010, p. 171). Nevertheless, enjoyment must be determined in this way, namely as distraction.

To determine enjoyment primordially as distraction is, however, to interpret it as insincere. Enjoyment becomes here a secondary phenomenon determined in view of what it promises an escape from; the turn-towards enjoyment is, fundamentally, a turning-away from Dasein's confrontation with its authentic structure. It is precisely in this way that pleasure is false and inauthentic.

It is here that Levinas enters to challenge his teacher, and purely on phenomenological grounds. For is enjoyment correctly understood as a distraction? Levinas begs to differ: there is no more obvious fulfilling of a promised intention than that we find in enjoyment: "What characterizes this relationship is a complete correspondence between desire and its satisfaction. Desire knows perfectly well what it wants" (Levinas [1947] 1988, p. 43). What constitutes the enjoyment of something is simply that it is to your liking; it is for an ego to sense something as a pleasing 'yes'. This pleasure of the pleasant is not inferred from its potential to distract from my anxiety but draws its energy from itself: "Enjoyment is precisely this way the act nourishes itself with its own activity" (Levinas [1961] 2015, p. 111). Enjoyment is not a secondary phenomenon that gains its significance from that which it distracts from but has its own self-referential meaning, namely pleasure.

Levinas' analysis of enjoyment is not only a critique of Heidegger's analysis of fallenness but also of *Zuhandenheit* and *Umsicht*. According to Heidegger, we relate to objects in the world in terms of their circumspection (*Umsicht*), which entails that we comprehend the worldly things around always already in terms of their belonging to our habits, projects, etc. (Heidegger [1927] 2010, pp. 66–71). This, however, shows Levinas, fails to appreciate the simple satisfaction these innerworldly objects bring: "We breathe for the sake of breathing, eat and drink for the sake of eating and drinking, we take shelter for the sake of taking shelter, we study to satisfy our curiosity, we take a walk for the walk" (Levinas [1947] 1988, p. 44). These activities cannot only be measured in their belonging to the entirety of our life projects, being finally oriented by our being-towards-death, as Heidegger would have it, for they refer primarily, and in a simple manner, to themselves and the pleasure they bring. The 'bustling activity' that the world provides is not simply a distraction, but valuable in itself—and the possibility of it becoming a distraction is in fact what is the secondary modification, not the other way around![6]

It is in view of this phenomenological insight that Levinas turns against Heidegger and identifies the need to secularize the latter's account of being-in-the-world. We do not 'fall into the world', neither from 'elsewhere' (pre-Kantian meaning, e.g., 'the heavens', 'world of ideas', etc.) nor from ourselves (Heideggerian meaning) but are rather turned towards the world in our natural desire for pleasure. This is why it must be appreciated in its *secular and profane* nature, that is, as independently sought after on its basis alone:

> in the ontological adventure the world is an episode which, far from deserving to be called a fall, has its own equilibrium, harmony and positive ontological function . . . To call it everyday and condemn it as inauthentic is to fail to recognize the sincerity of hunger and thirst. (Levinas [1947] 1988, p. 45)

What Levinas intends to say through calling the world secular and profane is precisely that it is sought after on its own. Life in the world is desirable and valuable on its own terms and cannot be understood only in virtue of its relation to the 'decisive adventure' in human existence, whether this is a theological or atheistic adventure. Life-in-the-world has a mundane meaning, that is, a meaning bestowed upon life by the world (*Mundus*) itself.

The juxtaposition of the themes of enjoyment and the secular also appear in two of Levinas' lectures in *God, Death, and Time* and in 'Secularization and Hunger', which is no wonder, seeing as there is a lot of overlap between them because the latter publication is based on the former lectures. In both places, Levinas argues that the archaic worship of stars makes up a sort of proto-transcendence, because the immense distance separating us from them places them outside the scope of our needs (Levinas 1998, p. 4; 2000, p. 163).[7] This dispels the ancient bond between the hand and the eye which ordinarily, argues Levinas, designates a traversable distance, where the hand seeks to grasp that which the eye covets.[8] Levinas argues that philosophy, historically, seeks to overcome this distance

to the stars via mastering them through knowledge. Crucially to this article, however, Levinas argues that this need for knowledge does not follow, as Aristotle believed, from a pure desire for knowledge for its own sake, but rather from 'Messer Gaster' (i.e., 'master stomach') and the university of economic life, that is enjoyment (Levinas 1998, p. 7; 2000, p. 166).[9] Enjoyment secularizes due to the bond between hunger and curiosity, which drives humanity to trespass the apparent sacred boundaries of nature and to 'steal from the gods' as in the myth of Prometheus and the fire, which Levinas likes to invoke in this context (e.g., Levinas [1961] 2015, p. 160).

In both *Existence and Existents*, *Totality and Infinity God, Death, and Time* and 'Secularization and Hunger', therefore, the secular, the profane and the atheistic is determined in terms of enjoyment and the self-referential value it confers on everyday life: "Enjoyment accomplishes the atheist separation" (Levinas [1961] 2015, p. 115). It is the sincerity of this dimension that Heidegger has missed, and in missing it, he wrongly ends up determining Dasein's worldliness in terms of its relation to its essential destiny, which it, according to Heidegger, is falling away from.

What, then, does it mean that Levinas secularizes Heidegger's account of being-in-the-world, when this account, as previously established, is already pre-theistic? It means, on the one hand, that precisely because Heidegger is able to import an originally theological theme into a purely phenomenological analysis, that analysis inherits the same problematics that theology has previously dealt with. Heidegger can without contradiction interpret the struggle between turning-towards-God and turning-towards-the-world in a purely philosophical manner, e.g., as turning-towards or turning-away-from authenticity/inauthenticity, but in doing so, inauthentic worldliness inevitably ends up holding the same position that 'the world' has had in the derogative sense theology sometimes has conferred upon it. Even in a pre-theistic sense, Heideggerian philosophy ends up inheriting the contempt for the world that has historically plagued theology, even as it has attempted to rid itself of Gnosticism. It therefore remains open to Levinas' secularizing critique, which here consists of seeing everyday life in the world not as determined by fallenness, but by its own mundane and self-satisfactory meaning.

If we agree with Levinas' critique of Heidegger, what does it mean for the debate regarding the theological turn? It means, on the one hand, that not only theological themes are brought into phenomenology in order to illuminate the horizon of the human condition; more importantly, perhaps, the distinction itself between a secular and a religious dimension of life is shown to reveal something about the structure of experience, even when this happens in a pre-theistic sense. There is, both in the philosophical writings of Heidegger and Levinas, a distinction between the ordinary/mundane and the extra-ordinary/decisive. Humanity lives in between the ordinary, everyday existence of worldliness and that which, for whatever reason, requires a unique or special sort of comportment. They disagree with reference to the status of the everyday and mundane, with Heidegger determining it in view of fallenness and Levinas determining it in view of its own, secular meaning (enjoyment). Nevertheless, the distinction between the secular and religious dimensions of life can apply to both of them, a fact we can observe without deciding in favor of the two possible explanations for why this might be, that is, either (a) experience is theological or (b) theology originates from experience.

Perhaps even more interesting, however, is the new thematic status gained by 'the secular' itself through this discussion. The notions of the secular, the profane and the atheistic cannot be treated exclusively as ideological or sociological descriptors, nor simply as methodological terms that would delineate the correct borders between philosophy and theology. Rather, 'the mundane' and 'the secular' also refer to the everydayness of life in the world. Does this upend the conclusions we drew after interrogating Heidegger's use of Paul and Augustine? We said at that time that the resonance of theological themes in experience might very well entail their exhaustion and thus death in experience, for this resonance entails perhaps that these theological themes originate from mundane experience. What are we to say, however, when it is the distinction between mundanity and the extra-

ordinary itself that resonates in experience? Can experience then be deemed as something purely secular?

6. The Theological Secularization of Philosophy

Finally, we will see what happens when theology itself determines the secular dimension of life. In Levinas' Talmudic writings, the notion that Judaism is a disenchanting religion is brought up repeatedly. While it might seem strange from a modern perspective for a religion to operate as a disenchanting and secularizing force, this is in fact what Levinas argues, which corresponds with the over-arching title given to the last five Talmudic readings collected in *Nine Talmudic Readings*, namely 'From the Sacred to the Holy'. For Levinas, the distinction between the Sacred and the Holy concerns the difference between false and True religion, between mysterious superstition and the Spirit of Ethics borne witness to in Judaism. Judaism must therefore be understood not only as a religion bearing witness to the one and true God but also one which has consistently worked to determine where God is *not* to be found and which therefore has also been a secularizing force in history: "Judaism has decharmed the world" (Levinas 1990a, p. 14). In its obedience to the One True God, Judaism dispels the sacred and numinous gods of the unknown elements, in view of which he defends the numerous references to the burning of sacred groves in the Bible (Levinas 1990a, p. 232). Judaism is the religion of Abraham, who, according to one Jewish folk tale, was the son of an idol maker who, after having smashed all but one of his father's idols, put the hammer in the hand of the remaining one in obvious mockery of its powerlessness (Levinas 1990a, p. 14).

Levinas' Talmudic analysis of secularism corresponds on many points with his philosophical analysis. First and foremost, it is yet again with reference to enjoyment that Levinas argues for this secularity of worldly life. The Talmud teaches that the worship of elemental divinity must be replaced by human mastery, for the earth serves nothing more than to satisfy our needs:

> Oh! tamarisk planted by Abraham at Beer-sheba! . . . take care! The Talmud is perhaps afraid that we will let ourselves be carried away . . . It wrests us from our dreams: Tamarisk is an acronym; the three letters needed to write the word in Hebrew are the initials used for Food, Drink and Shelter . . . The earth is for that . . . Let us remain masters of the mystery that the earth breathes. (Levinas 1990a, p. 233)

The earth is not to be worshipped, and the tamarisk planted should not be misunderstood as an idol set up for such worship. Rather, it should remind us that the earth is for serving human needs. This Talmudic teaching thus corresponds with Levinas' philosophical claim that our worldliness is determined primarily in terms of our needs and their satisfaction and corresponds furthermore with two yet unmentioned parts of Levinas' philosophical analysis, namely the elemental and its overcoming through mastery.

According to Levinas, while the world gives itself positively to human beings in enjoyment, it also installs humanity in a precarious and uncertain situation where the unpredictability of nature means that you never know where your next meal is going to come from, something Levinas argues lies at the bottom of pagan superstition: "The future of the element as insecurity is lived concretely as the mythical divinity of the element" (Levinas [1961] 2015, p. 142). This insecurity is overcome through labor, possession, domination and mastery over nature (Levinas [1961] 2015, p. 161). This philosophical insight is then re-affirmed by the Talmud, teaching us that we ought to remain masters over the mystery of earth, and that the sacred status of these natural deities ought not to be respected, but burned.

Once again, therefore, Levinas delineates a properly secular dimension of life that is characterized by its mundane, atheistic meaning, namely the enjoyment and mastery over the earth. What, however, does it matter that this same analysis is given this time as a teaching of the Talmud?

In terms of what Falque calls the possibility of a theological backlash on philosophy, things have been strangely turned around. According to Falque, both phenomenology

and theology must begin from the 'below', that is, the finite condition of humanity, even if theology has as its own proper methodology to assume and receive a revelation coming from 'above', the reason for this being that the 'above' only ever reveals itself to someone who started out 'below' (Falque 2016, p. 124). This then means that theology must accept its 'grounding' in phenomenology, that is, the ground of the finite human condition. However, this does not prevent the possibility of a theological backlash, where what is revealed from 'above' comes to radically transform the condition of this 'below'.

In the case of Levinas' theology, however, the movement is reversed; it is the revelation from 'above' that comes to teach us, precisely, about the atheism of the human condition of the 'below'. Of course, it comes not only to teach us this, but it is, according to Levinas, one of its most important teachings. This adds another important layer to Falque's observation regarding the relation between atheism and theism: "The one 'without God' (*atheoi*) or the 'atheist' is not the one 'against God': the era of paganism precedes and is even the foundation of the Christian epoch" (Falque 2016, p. 90). Certainly, but it is only from the viewpoint of the Christian epoch that the preceding epoch is determined as paganism.

For the sake of theologians, then, the Talmudic teachings on secularism explicated by Levinas could teach theologians that they do not need to retreat back from Falque's challenge that theology, just like philosophy, must accept the finitude of the human condition as the only possible point of departure for any and every inquiry. In contrast, they might very well find theological grounds for asserting that there is a secular and atheistic dimension to human life. Life is not lived only for the sake of God, but includes elements that, per God's design, are lived for their own sake. God has created the world for more than worship, for the goodness of creation is to be enjoyed for its own sake. The fact that we can experience the absence of God can thus make perfect theological sense.

7. Conclusions

Theology can thus provide its own interpretation as to why there is both a religious and secular dimension to human life. Of course, this interpretation is just one amongst others. The distinction between the atheistic and religious dimensions of life might still have a very 'mundane' origin, in that it might only designate the everydayness of life vis à vis that which breaks up this everydayness, with this break-up not taking us beyond the human condition but simply comporting us differently within it. The fact that the theological distinction between a secular and religious dimension of life resonates in experience might therefore, yet again, be phenomenologically interpreted as the expression of the pre-theistic structure of human experience itself.

Whichever may be the case, turning the theological turn on its head through a Levinasian secularization of Heidegger teaches us something important about what is going on with the theological turn itself. It shows us that it is not only theological themes which resonate ambiguously in experience in this turn but also the notion of the secular itself. Furthermore, it shows that the distinction itself between these two dimensions of life—the religious and mundane—resonates in experience and that this distinction bears the same ambiguous duplicity. The difference between the theological and the atheistic refers to certain facets of experience which would seem difficult to ignore. In Heidegger, it refers to the distinction between everyday, inauthentic fallenness and the authentic and decisive confrontation with oneself. In Levinas, it refers to the distinction between the ordinary worldliness of enjoyment and the extra-ordinary summon of the Other. Both operate, therefore, with some distinction between the mundane/everyday/ordinary and the decisive/extra-ordinary/religious, and it is because both do this that Levinas can criticize Heidegger for having misunderstood the secular dimension of life.

What I hope to have shown in this article, therefore, is both that the distinction between a secular and religious dimension of life seems insuperable when seeking to explicate the horizon of the human condition, and that the facticity of this distinction is open to both a secular and theological interpretation. This distinction resonates both in experience and

with regard to two different answers to the question at the heart of the theological turn, namely what it entails that the theological and secular can resonate in experience.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

1 The decisive difference between them on this issue is whether the categories that structure experience are products of reason's judgement (Kant) or belong to experience already and are intuited in the way experience primordially gives itself (Husserl).

2 This, of course, only reflects one aspect of Kantian philosophy, and one only needs to turn to his practical philosophy to find an example of Kant deeming God as a legitimate object of philosophical inquiry. Nevertheless, Kant's delimitation of metaphysics remains, I believe, his most important contribution to philosophy, and the one most important to this article.

3 In the following, the term 'philosophy' will be used as synonymous with phenomenology. This is not due to the absence of other philosophical traditions, but simply to (a) limit the scope of the article and (b) because the relation between phenomenology and theology nevertheless remains one instance through which philosophy's relation to theology might be explored

4 I use the term 'theology' to describe Levinas' Talmudic readings and his writings on Judaism in general, knowing that he sometimes protests against "a theological approach to the Talmud altogether" (Levinas 1990b, p. 8), while he in other places accepts Talmudic readings as belonging to a more general category: "Theologies: the search for a theo-logic, for a rational way of speaking of God" (Levinas 2007, p. xvii).

5 Throughout this article, I use the terms 'the secular/secularization' as umbrella terms for the wide range of terms used by Levinas himself ('atheism', 'profane', 'disenchantment' and 'the secular' both as a translation of the French *laic* and *sécularisation*). I do this (a) because, as I intend to show, I believe Levinas is describing the same phenomenon when using these terms, and (b) I prefer the specific term 'the secular' because it etymologically designates a particular and distinct realm of reality, whereas a term such as 'atheism' more bespeaks a certain position. In this article, I argue that Levinas' analysis of this phenomenon shows that 'the secular' makes up a distinguishable dimension of life, and for this reason, I prefer this as the umbrella term.

6 This critique of Heidegger's analysis of *Zuhandenheit* appears also in *Totality and Infinity*, and in precisely the same way: "The things we live from are not tools, nor even implements, in the Heideggerian sense of the term. Their existence is not exhausted by utilitarian schematism . . . They are always . . . objects of enjoyment" (Levinas [1961] 2015, p. 110). The way these critiques of *Zuhandenheit* in view of enjoyment mirror each other in *Existence and Existents* and *Totality and Infinity* is one of the reasons why I believe the discussion of the world as secular and profane, in the former, and of life in the world as separated and atheistic, in the latter, should be seen as overlapping. It should also be noted that the notion of separation also appears in *Existence and Existents* in terms of a discussion of *creatio ex nihilo* (Levinas [1947] 1988, p. 18).

7 When Levinas uses the term 'need' in this context, it is quite clear, I believe, that he is referring to enjoyment. In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas juxtaposes 'need' with 'desire' in order to delineate needs that can be satisfied (enjoyment) versus the insatiable desire for the Other (transcendence) (Levinas [1961] 2015, pp. 33–34), and the positivity of need becomes a key reference for Levinas' definition of enjoyment (Levinas [1961] 2015, pp. 115–17).

8 Levinas also identifies this bond in *Totality and Infinity*, yet again with reference to enjoyment (Levinas [1961] 2015, p. 191).

9 Levinas also invokes the name of 'Master Gaster' in *Existence and Existents* for similar reasons, providing more evidence, I believe, that we should consider these thematics as interconnected (Levinas [1947] 1988, p. 44).

References

Derrida, Jacques. 2001. Violence and Metaphysics. In *Writing and Difference*. Translated by Alan Bass. London and New York: Routledge Classics, pp. 97–192.

Derrida, Jacques. 2016. *Heidegger: The Question of Being and History*. Translated by Geoffrey Bennington. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Falque, Emmanuel. 2016. *Crossing the Rubicon: The Borderlands of Philosophy and Theology*. Translated by Reuben Shank. New York: Fordham University Press.

Falque, Emmanuel. 2019. *The Guide to Gethsemane: Anxiety, Suffering, Death*. Translated by George Hughes. New York: Fordham University Press.

Falque, Emmanuel. 2020. For a Phenomenology of Religious Life. *Journal of the Oxford Graduate Theological Society* 1: 5–24.

Heidegger, Martin. 1998a. On the Essence of Ground. In *Pathmarks*. Translated by William McNeill. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 97–135.

Heidegger, Martin. 1998b. Phenomenology and Theology. In *Pathmarks*. Translated by James G. Hart, and John C. Maraldo. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 39–62.
Heidegger, Martin. 2004. *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*. Translated by Matthias Fritsch, and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
Heidegger, Martin. 2010. *Being and Time*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh. Albany: State University of New York Press. First published 1927.
Husserl, Edmund. 1982. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book*. Translated by Fred Kersten. London: Kluwer Academic Publishers. First published 1913.
Janicaud, Dominique. 2000. The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology. In *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn*. Translated by Bernard G. Prusak. New York: Fordham University Press, pp. 3–103.
Kant, Immanuel. 1966. *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft*. Stuttgart: Reclams Universal-Bibliothek. First published 1787.
Levinas, Emmanuel. 1988. *Existence and Existents*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. London: Kluwer Academic Publishers. First published 1947.
Levinas, Emmanuel. 1990a. *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*. Translated by Seán Hand. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.
Levinas, Emmanuel. 1990b. *Nine Talmudic Readings*. Translated by Annette Aronowicz. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
Levinas, Emmanuel. 1998. Secularization and Hunger. *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal 20/21: 3–12.* Available online: https://www.pdcnet.org/collection-anonymous/browse?fp=gfpj&fq=gfpj%2FVolume%2F8980%7C20%252F21%2F (accessed on 1 September 2023).
Levinas, Emmanuel. 2000. *God, Death and Time*. Translated by Bettina Bergo. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Levinas, Emmanuel. 2007. *Beyond the Verse*. Translated by Gary D. Mole. London: Continuum.
Levinas, Emmanuel. 2015. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press. First published 1961.
Wolfe, Judith. 2014. *Heidegger and Theology*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.