

# **Exploring Martin Heidegger’s Conceptions of Phenomenology and Transcendence: Addressing the Problem of Religious Fundamentalist Violence**

*by*

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## **DECLARATION**

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## ABSTRACT

This research uses Martin Heidegger's phenomenological understanding of Dasein (human existence or being) as a frame for developing an improved understanding of why religious fundamentalist violence (RFV) occurs and why it is so pervasive and enduring. In other words, drawing on Heidegger's diagnosis of how Western philosophy 'forgets' what humans always already know about human being, the argument shows that RFV is one manifestation of the violence associated with this covering over or forgetfulness of the nature of human existence. At the same time, it shows that RFV is enduring, pervasive, or at least resonant with many people, since it responds to the same universal human question about the meaning of human existence to which Heidegger's philosophy, and arguably all (other) religious thinking also respond. It shows how the absolutisation of certain religious frameworks which present a misinterpretation of the true nature of human reality, may act as a driving force for RFV. In framing this form of violent terror in this way, new approaches to dealing with the phenomenon are suggested. Amongst other things, it becomes clear that the way to combat RFV is not through further secularisation or attempts at extinguishing religious thought and life forms altogether, because they respond to a legitimate, authentic and enduring human need for asking about the ultimate meaning of human existence. To simply try to quash the question to which religion attempts to present an answer, is equally to repeat the forgetfulness of the meaning of being and Dasein as revealed by Heidegger.

Instead then, drawing on Heidegger's insights into the nature of Dasein (that being in which the world of being/s constitutes or shows itself), universal philosophical training is proposed as one way to combat destructive fundamentalist thinking and acting. If this is the way to go, it at the same time becomes clear that Heidegger might become reductive on his own terms. The work of later philosophers is then used to show how a plurality of metaphysical investigations should be opened up instead of taking Heidegger's potentially 'absolutist phenomenology' as the only legitimate reading of the meaning of human being. However, this proliferation remains limited in principle, my thesis would argue, to engagements with the meaning of Dasein that renounce any final, ultimate or absolute positions. This is the case since first, final positions would go against the most enduring insight of Heidegger, which is the finitude and temporality of all meaning-making and second, such absolute interpretations reduce the very multiplicity which is

the direct result of the necessarily tentative and finite nature of every interpretation of the meaning of human being.

## OPSOMMING

Hierdie proefskrif behels 'n gedetailleerde ondersoek na Martin Heidegger se fenomenologiese verstaan van die syn en Dasein (menslike bestaan) as 'n moontlike raamwerk vir die ontwikkeling van 'n beter begrip van waarom godsdienstige fundamentalistiese geweld (GFG) voorkom, en waarom dit so 'n hardnekkige verskynsel is. Met ander woorde, deur gebruik te maak van die besonderhede van Heidegger se diagnose van hoe Westerse filosofie 'vergeet' wat mense altyd alreeds weet omtrent die menslike bestaan, wil die argument aantoon dat GFG een pertinente manifestasie is van die geweld geassosieer met hierdie verdoeseling of vergeetagtigheid rondom die betekenis van menslike bestaan. Terselfdertyd toon die studie aan dat GFG durend en wyd verspreid voorkom, of minstens met talle mense resoneer, omdat dit antwoorde verskaf op dieselfde universeel menslike vraag na die uiteindelijke betekenis van menslike bestaan waarop Heidegger se filosofie, en talle (ander) godsdienstige denkkonstrukte, ook probeer reageer. Daardeur word die spesifieke versoeking of dryfveer onderliggend aan GFG blootgelê as die verabsoluttering van sekere godsdienstige raamwerke wat die ware aard van die menslike realiteit wanvoorstel. Deur hierdie vorm van gewelddadige terreur op hierdie manier te raam, word nuwe benaderings tot die hantering van die verskynsel gesuggereer. Een implikasie wat hieruit voortvloei is dat GFG nie suksesvol bekamp kan word deur die intensifisering van sekularisasie of deur ander vorme van onderdrukking van godsdienstige denke of lewensvorme nie. Dit is die geval, omdat die godsdienste reageer op 'n legitieme, outentieke en durende menslike behoefte wat vra na die finale betekenis van die menslike bestaan. Deur gewoon te probeer om die vraag waarop godsdienstige metafisika 'n antwoord wil gee, dood te druk of te ignoreer, is om die vergeetagtigheid van sinsin wat Heidegger blootlê, te herhaal in 'n anti-metafisiese register.

Dus, met gebruikmaking van Heidegger se insigte in die aard van Dasein (daardie synde waarin die wêreld van syn(des) sigself aanmeld of konstitueer), word universele filosofiese onderrig voorgestel as 'n beter manier om vernietigende fundamentalistiese denke en optrede te bekamp. Indien hierdie voorstel water hou, dan word dit ook duidelik dat Heidegger self reduksionisties mag voorkom binne die verstaanshorison wat sy eie denke open. Die werk van latere kommentators word dan ingespan om aan te toon dat 'n

veelvoud van metafisiese ondersoekweë oopgemaak behoort te word in plaas daarvan om Heidegger se potensieel 'absolutistiese fenomenologie' te hanteer as die enigste legitieme poort tot die onthulling van die betekenis van die menslike bestaan. Terselfdertyd wil hierdie proefskrif egter ook aantoon dat hierdie vermenigvuldiging in beginsel beperk bly tot daardie benaderings tot die betekenis van Dasein wat enige finale, uiteindelijke of absolute posisies afwys. Dit is die geval omdat eerstens, finale posisies indruis teen die mees durende insig van Heidegger, naamlik die eindigheid en tydelikheid van alle betekenis-stigting, en tweedens, sodanige absolute interpretasies reduseer presies die veelvoud wat die direkte uitvloeisel is van die noodwendig tydelike en eindige aard van elke interpretasie van die betekenis van menslike bestaan. Op die finale vrae behoort daar paradoksaal dus nooit finale antwoorde gegee te word nie.

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## General Introduction

### 0.1 Introduction

The nature of human being or the meaning of human existence (Dasein)<sup>1</sup> is a topic philosophy has grappled with for centuries: why do human beings exist, what and/or who is the source of human existence, where do humans come from and where do they go to when they die and how does all this influence their everyday lives? Among the many responses to these questions is the religious proposal of a metaphysical reality (or realities) beyond the physical world as the explanation for reality. I will argue, however, that such a viewpoint risks ignoring the intrinsic value or meaning of being<sup>2</sup> and that it can sometimes legitimise the destruction of being. The traditional understanding of ‘metaphysics’<sup>3</sup> is that it entails an appeal to unknowable realities beyond the physical world, which are as such, inaccessible to human sensorial experience. This type of metaphysical religious outlook, I argue, leads to the forgetting<sup>4</sup> of the intrinsic value of being, which sometimes legitimises the destruction of beings, including human beings. In order to make my arguments clear I begin by presenting a propositional framework. I then propose Heidegger’s philosophy, especially his *Being and Time*<sup>5</sup> as an important source for better grasping the problem of religious fundamentalist violence. This type of understanding, I argue, should be incorporated into attempts to address this form of violence. As I will show, an important aspect of an adequate response to religious fundamentalist violence is a renewed

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<sup>1</sup> Dasein refers to ‘being-there’, a phrase which Heidegger uses to refer to human existence (Heidegger 1962:26). This will be further explained.

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that Heidegger distinguishes between beings (everything that exists; das Seiende) and being (das Sein) as such. The question about the meaning of being as such is the question that drives the whole project of *Being and Time*. Being is for Heidegger essentially different from beings, and he sees the forgetfulness of being or the history of metaphysical thinking in the west as indicative of the erasure of the difference between beings and being, with the result that being comes to be understood as a kind of being or a thing. Wheeler (2017) explains that many translators of Heidegger capitalise the word ‘Being’ (Sein) in order to emphasise this ontological difference between being as such and uniquely existing beings. However, in this dissertation the word will be left in small letters throughout, in order to avoid the presumption that being is something, some ultimate Being, existing beyond every Seiende. The link between traditional metaphysics and the forgetfulness of the true nature of being (as ontologically different from every existing thing) will be made clearer in the next section of the Introduction, as well as in the following two chapters.

<sup>3</sup> The etymology of the word ‘metaphysics’ originates from the Greek, *meta ta physika*. ‘Metaphysics’, loosely speaking, designates that which goes ‘beyond something’ (Heidegger 1959:17).

<sup>4</sup> This will be explained in detail in the first chapter. For now, it is to be understood as a lack of awareness regarding the questions and issues that pertain to the reality or meaning of being.

<sup>5</sup> It is important to note here that I will cite Heidegger’s *Being and Time* using the page numbers of the translations. The text was originally published during 1927, in German, as *Sein und Zeit*. For the purposes of this dissertation, the translation of John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (1962) and Joan Stambaugh (1996) will be used.

connection between Heidegger's phenomenology<sup>6</sup> and religious worldviews, more generally. In this General Introduction in what is to follow I will now first (section 0.2) explore the connection between religious fundamentalism and religious fundamentalist violence, then (section 0.3) I present Heidegger's stance on metaphysics, after which (section 0.4) I tentatively highlight what I consider limits and problems with Heidegger's philosophy which need to be overcome in order to employ his thinking for the struggle against religious fundamentalist violence. I then (section 0.5) conclude with the research methodology (section 0.6), chapter overview, and summary, where I also explain the original contribution made by this dissertation to Heidegger scholarship.

## **0.2 Religious Fundamentalism and Religious Fundamentalist Violence (RFV)**

Centuries-old discourses on the separation of 'church' and 'state' (religion and society), including on whether religion belongs to the private sphere or the public sphere, as well as on the proper relation between philosophy and religion/faith were re-ignited in the wake of the 9/11 attacks on the USA (Pape 2005:3). Although self-identified Islamic groups by no means have a monopoly on religious fundamentalist violence, they have arguably been the most pronounced in recent years. Since these attacks on the USA in 2001, religious, especially Islamic terrorism or terror<sup>7</sup> attacks have escalated in various countries (Murithi, 2015). Instances of such attacks in Africa include the continuing bombing, shooting and kidnapping in West Africa by the Islamist *Boko haram*, and the killing of university students and other attacks by *Al-shabab* in Eastern Africa (Murithi, 2015). This spread and escalation of religious fundamentalist violence questions and challenges the nature of religious tenets and the violence they seem to engender. We are also forced to question the effectiveness of the ways in which this issue has been handled in the past, for example, by "fighting terror with terror" (Brook and Journo 2009:89), by or 'waging a war on terror' (see <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/september11.usa13>).

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<sup>6</sup> According to Robert Sokolowski, phenomenology is "the study of human experience and the ways things present themselves to us in and through such experience" (Sokolowski 2000:2). This definition, and more particularly, Heidegger's own understanding of phenomenology, will be further analysed in the first chapter.

<sup>7</sup> Terrorism or terror according to Robert Pape "... involves the use of violence by an organisation other than a national government to intimidate or frighten a target audience", and the intended goal behind this is to "gain supporters and to coerce opponents" (Pape 2005:9).

‘Fundamentalism’, as it is used within the context of religion, has different meanings. Referring to Marty and Scott, Karen Armstrong (2004) offers an insightful view of fundamentalism. Firstly, Armstrong defines fundamentalism as “a cosmic war between the forces of good and evil” (Armstrong 2004:xi). When one analyses this definition, one realises firstly that Armstrong’s understanding of fundamentalism is that it is not only charged with an appeal to a metaphysical world, but it also relies on an understanding of the experienced, concrete world as being fully subordinate to the former. We thus see in fundamentalism the institution of a hierarchical dichotomy between two realms, i.e. the metaphysical world is the superior opposite of the experiential world, and gives it its meaning. The problem of fundamentalism thus lies in the attempt to sacralise<sup>8</sup> society (Armstrong 2004:xi) based on religious metaphysical truth claims from which dialogue with others, situated outside that specific metaphysical worldview or ideology, is seemingly necessarily excluded.

Secondly, Armstrong maintains that religious fundamentalists absorb “the pragmatic rationalism of modernity” (Armstrong 2004:xi), thus entailing a thoroughly modern dimension. Armstrong’s use of the phrase ‘pragmatic rationalism’ is interpreted here as the knowledge derived from the use of generally accessible methodologies in understanding reality. By this, Armstrong suggests that pragmatic rationalism refers to knowledge claims that are not merely based on belief originating from non-pragmatic frameworks. Related to fundamentalist affinity with modern rationalism and pragmatism, Armstrong furthermore highlights the historical background to the usage of the term ‘fundamentalism’, by pointing out that it is, in fact, a term of very recent origin. The term first emerged when liberal American Protestant Christians in the 1920s used it to describe some more conservative Christians of the same time who accused liberals of distorting the true tenets of the Christian faith (Armstrong 2004:x). For Armstrong, the current usage of the term ‘fundamentalism’ itself is problematic because it was initially an expression used to describe the reaction of a very specific group within a particular context and time. However, it is a term that has become generally accepted and is now widely used to describe the tendency among any religious groupings to impose their beliefs and practices on others (Armstrong 2004:x-xi). Pape, reflecting on the wide range of phenomena labelled religious fundamentalism, also warns against the equation of absolutism or Islamic fundamentalism with e.g. suicide terrorism (Pape 2005:3). This current project guards against

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<sup>8</sup> By sacralise, I refer to an attempt, mostly religious, to understand the world only from a divine, religious point of view.

such inflammatory generalisation or overly narrow usages of the term, in that it views all religious metaphysics as potentially leading to fundamentalist violence.

The third noteworthy aspect of Armstrong's understanding of fundamentalism is that fundamentalists typically avoid what they view as 'contamination', often through withdrawal from wider society. Placing a higher value on established truths viewed as timeless, they battle against secularist policies and beliefs that they consider 'inimical' to religion itself; and they fear 'annihilation' (Armstrong 2004:xi). This understanding resonates with the view espoused by Giovanna Borradori in her *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Borradori 2003:18), when she writes that "[a] belief attitude indicates the way in which we believe rather than what we believe in. Fundamentalism, thus, has less to do with any specific text or religious dogma and more to do with the modality of belief" (Borradori 2003:18). Both Borradori and Armstrong thus link religious fundamentalism less to the actual contents of beliefs and more to a certain way in those beliefs are held (typically viewed as both pure and fragile). Armstrong and Borradori are concerned not only with the influence of religious beliefs on believers, but also, and more especially, with the believer's approach to believing, i.e. the how rather than the what. By focusing on modality of belief, Borradori suggests that rather than the nature of written text or dogmas, the way religious beliefs are lived out, acted upon or expressed is what characterises or distinguishes fundamentalist tendencies, and these actions are typically motivated by a fear of the wider society. In line with her argument, my focus in this study is neither on the political aspirations that may be served by fundamentalist violence nor on the theological arguments used to justify the violence. I am rather concerned with those violent acts in the world that flow seemingly necessarily, or at least fairly easily, from a fundamentalist faith position and with the possibility of critically explaining them philosophically, ontologically, using Heidegger's analysis of the meaning of being.

As indicated above, according to Armstrong, the justification for religious fundamentalist violence (including terror) is partly hinged on the desire to sacralise society (Armstrong 2014) with the imposition of what could be referred to as other-worldly truth claims upon this world of shared human experience. Earlier than Armstrong, Roger Trigg similarly argued that religious fundamentalist violence is one possible response to secular societies that try to undermine religious claims. This understanding of the secular as undermining of religion, and of religion as undermining of the secular, public space, he argues, is often implied in the

pervasive political demand for religious claims to be transposed into a form compatible with the non-religious public sphere in order to make peaceful co-existence between faiths viable (Trigg 2007:33). However, according to Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan Vanantwerpen, religion is “neither merely private [...] nor purely irrational. And the public sphere is neither a realm of straight-forward rational deliberation nor a smooth space of unforced assent” (Mendieta and Vanantwerpen, 2011:1). I agree with Mendieta and Vanantwerpen’s position which views the public sphere as a limitless open space that ought to be receptive to all reason irrespective of their methods of inquiry (Mendieta and Vanantwerpen 2011:3). In other words, religious truth claims cannot be banned from public deliberation about how we ought to live, and secularisation of the public sphere will be incapable of ensuring peaceful coexistence, just as surely as will its sacralisation. They argue correctly, I would say, that society should always be that sphere where everyone is heard. In other words, the phenomenal, as the ground of human understanding, must not and should not be ignored in any attempt to understand human reality. And so my stance in this thesis will also be that the world is an open space which must be treated as such, and that all interpretative claims should in principle be allowed to surface in the public sphere. In other words, the common expectation that the public sphere would be purified of religious understandings in the name of peaceful coexistence, is for me both unrealistic and undesirable. The basis for my argument will become clearer in due course. This stance is also why ultimately I want to put Heidegger’s philosophy back into conversation with the various religious truth claims.

As explained, fundamentalist acts of terror have proliferated in contemporary times partly in response to secularising tendencies working to relegate religion to the private sphere (Armstrong 2014). In fact, monotheistic religions, in varying degrees, and seemingly in response to increasing secularisation, have assumed a new face, characterised by both violence and verbal promulgation, which is making religion gain renewed importance and prominence in society (Halsema 2008:824). Arguably, similar claims may be made about other non-monotheistic religions, but the scope of this thesis is restricted to monotheistic religions, because of their predominance, especially when it comes to religiously motivated violence (the possible correlations between monotheistic worldviews and religious intolerance and violence as discussed by Jan Assmann<sup>9</sup> for example, are seen as falling largely beyond the scope of my

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<sup>9</sup> See for example his 2009 book, *The Price of Monotheism* and more recently *From Akhenaten to Moses: Ancient Egypt and Religious Change* (2014).

research project.). Their predominance on the world scene is also why I will largely restrict my more detailed investigation into religious metaphysics to Christianity and Islam (in chapter two).

My argument is that religious fundamentalist truth claims conceptualise the meaning of being largely based on a strong appeal to the metaphysical or other-worldly. Within this framework, the understanding of the nature and meaning of being has to follow a certain conceptualised divine pattern. For instance, the believer must live his life and make his decisions based solely on the ‘will’ of the divine, as found in most religions. I will show how the understanding of being which underlies the religious metaphysics worldview, and thus also religious fundamentalism, as Armstrong and others indicate, harbors a great potential for violent acts in the world. I argue, therefore, that there is a need to re-visit the prevalent understandings of being, to move away from the ‘theoretical’ and ‘objectivizing’<sup>10</sup> way of understanding being (Safranski 2002:146), towards an interpretation of being which is truer to our shared, lived existence, in order to promote human sociality. I thus agree with Heidegger when he insists that the question about the meaning of being should be posed again, but what my study contributes is to place Heidegger’s ontological investigation into conversation with the issue of fundamentalist religious violence, in order to better explain exactly where proponents of the latter go wrong in their interpretation of the meaning of being. In a discussion that starts in the next section and continues in Chapter One, I carefully analyse the ways in which Heidegger critiques traditional metaphysical understandings of being in favour of an understanding that emerges from his phenomenological ontology. These terminologies will be explained. In Heidegger’s alternative understanding of being, I will argue, lie important clues for how we should collectively respond to religious fundamentalist violence.

### **0.3 Heidegger’s Critique of Traditional Metaphysics**

My study, as already highlighted, aims to investigate religious fundamentalist violence as an ontological problem, that is, it seeks to analyse critically the understanding of reality that underlies and informs religious violence. It is important for my reader to note that my main interest in religious fundamentalist violence is therefore ontological – I want to understand in detail how its proponents gloss over, neglect, or forget the true nature of being. I will therefore

not spend much time on analysing specific theatres of religious fundamentalist violence or conflict. I will also not delve into texts that explicitly attempt to rationalise or justify this form of violence. Neither am I interested in how religious differences are exploited for political gain, or to analyse in detail whether monotheisms and / or patriarchal religions are in principle more prone to violence than polytheisms and matriarchal religions. My focus on the ontological basis of fundamentalist religious violence means that I spend my attention in this dissertation on a Heideggerian critique of the ways in which religious-metaphysical constructs usually conceive of being, time and history, as indicative of a specific form of forgetfulness of being. I intend to argue in particular that a solid understanding of the nature of religious fundamentalism will continue to elude us as long as it remains conceptualised within the self-induced ignorance regarding our comprehension of being that also characterises fundamentalism, what Martin Heidegger refers to as “our forgetfulness of *Sein* [being]” (Heidegger 1962:2).

It is therefore important to already in the General Introduction give a brief overview of Heidegger’s critique of traditional metaphysics, with the more detailed discussion to follow in Chapter One. Here I will introduce some central notions and concepts of this critique mainly with the aim to clarify the Heideggerian terminology as understood and employed in this dissertation.

As I have already started to explain tentatively in footnote 2 above, Heidegger believes that the question about the meaning of being must be restated, or asked anew. This new inquiry into the nature of being is pursued right throughout his magnum opus, *Being and Time*. However, it is important to be very clear about what he sees as the novelty of his own inquiry. The question about the meaning of being has preoccupied western philosophy ever since the ancient Greeks. Yet, something went fundamentally wrong in this tradition since antiquity, claims Heidegger. Whereas Plato and Aristotle had still been haunted by the question of being, later thinkers started to presume that the meaning of being was obvious and thereby foreclosed the question in its original radicality. As he puts it,

On the basis of Greeks’ initial contributions toward an Interpretation of Being, a dogma has developed which not only declares the question about the meaning of Being to be superfluous, but sanctions its complete neglect (Heidegger 1962:2).

Thus, when Heidegger talks about the forgetfulness of the original question of the meaning of being, he refers to this erroneous view at the heart of the western philosophical tradition, which assumes the answer to the question to be obvious (and the question hence superfluous) and which thereby completely neglects to keep the question alive. In the lecture “What is Metaphysics?” (1929), presented two years after the publication of *Being and Time* in German, Heidegger explains that the tradition of western philosophy and metaphysics has forgotten being in quite specific ways. Firstly, this tradition presumes that “[w]hat should be examined are beings only, and besides that – nothing” (Heidegger 1929:2). For Heidegger, this stance, especially prevalent in the natural sciences (under the ‘objectivising’ and ‘theoretical’ attitude Safranski (2005) discusses in his work *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil*), means that the question about the meaning of being as such, together with the question about the nature and the meaning of the inquirer, is eclipsed, with both being relegated to ‘the nothing’. Thus, secondly, the nature of the inquirer who asks about the meaning of being – i.e. the human being who does the asking, who is called ‘Dasein’ by Heidegger – is equally forgotten. Thirdly, this double eclipse or erasure implies that when the western philosophical tradition does not ask about being as such, or asks the meta-physical question about the whole of everything that exists, it makes the mistake of conceiving of being (das Sein) as a special instance of a being (das Seiende). The identification of this mistake lies at the heart of Heidegger’s rejection of traditional metaphysics. Thus, where Heidegger’s renewed question about the meaning of being departs most significantly from the understanding of traditional metaphysics, is in his insistence that there is an ontological difference between being and beings. When I refer in this dissertation to ‘traditional metaphysics’ I will therefore be referring to this fundamentally flawed tradition which has not only forgotten being but also forgotten the forgetting, and which therefore lives within a fundamentally misconstrued understanding of being.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time, it is Heidegger’s belief that the crucial distinction between the ontic (beings) and the ontological (being) can only be properly unveiled or shown in what he calls the phenomenological analysis of Dasein. In other words, the key erasure and error of traditional metaphysics cannot be properly understood or grasped unless the nature of Dasein is properly

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<sup>11</sup> From the 1929 lecture, “What is Metaphysics?” it seems that Heidegger is not opposed to metaphysics as such in so far as metaphysics is understood as the “inquiry beyond and over beings, which aims to recover them as such and as a whole for our grasp” (Heidegger 1993:106). Under this description, Heidegger’s own question about the meaning of being as such is also a form of metaphysics. However, he believes that the history of western metaphysics has gone about this question in all the wrong ways, and thus when he critiques ‘metaphysics’, this is the specific tradition that he refers to.

analysed from the inside out. Heidegger says in the 1929 lecture that in traditional metaphysics (traditional assumptions about the nature of being) as *inter alia* expressed in scientific language, it is largely forgotten that “one being called ‘man’ [irrupts] into the whole of beings, indeed in such a way that in and through this irruption beings break open and show what they are and how they are” (Heidegger 1929:2). Dasein or the peculiar way of existence of the existent human being, as the only place where the question of the meaning of being arises, is therefore key to Heidegger’s restated question about the nature of being, since it is completely glossed over or forgotten in traditional metaphysics. Dasein shares being with everything else that exists, thus in their ontic nature, yet at the same time Dasein has the singular characteristic that it is a being who asks about the meaning of being, which gives it its unique ontological nature. Rather than merely ontic, human beings are also ontological because of curiosity, wonder and the recognition of not only one’s own existence but also the existence of other beings, both human and non-human (Safrański 2002:150). This self-consciousness is what distinguishes human Dasein from other, merely ontic realities (or things) and what gives Dasein a privileged place within Heidegger’s ontology. Because of this unique ontological dimension of Dasein, Heidegger explains that the question of the meaning of being should be contextualised within the nature of Dasein. For this, a phenomenological analysis of Dasein is needed.

In order to show the etymology of the word Dasein, Heidegger occasionally hyphenates it as Da-sein which means “being (sein) there (da)” (Heidegger 1962:27).<sup>12</sup> For Heidegger, “This entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term Dasein” (Heidegger 1962:27). To be sure, “Ontological inquiry is concerned primarily with Being; ontical inquiry is concerned primarily with entities and the facts about them” (Heidegger 1962:31). According to Heidegger, for us to understand the inquiry about the meaning of being we are about to engage in, we need to establish the nature of the enquirer, since the enquirer shares existence with all ontic beings, yet differs from them all in that it raises the question about the meaning of existence or being. Based on this position he establishes the enquirer as *Dasein*:

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<sup>12</sup> It is important to add that ‘[a] human being is Dasein because it is ‘there’, in-the-world not at some specific place, but there in a sense prior to and presupposed by the differentiation of place’ (Inwood 1999:9).

Thus to work out the question of Being adequately, we must make an entity - the inquirer-transparent in his own Being. The very asking of this question is an entity's mode of Being; and as such it gets its essential character from what is inquired about – namely, Being (Heidegger 1962:27).

Drawing on Heidegger's thinking, I want to show that forgetfulness of being, the nature and structure of existence as such, together with forgetfulness about the nature of that being for which being is a question, namely Dasein, central aspects of reality which have escaped us in the western philosophical tradition (Heidegger 1962:43; Safranski 2002:146), is a general problem relating to all metaphysical thinking, but as I will show, it takes a particularly pernicious turn with reference to religious fundamentalism.

It should now become clear what Heidegger means with his pursuit of a phenomenological ontology. His is an ontological inquiry because he is asking about the meaning of being, or existence. Yet at the same time, he insists that the only way to go about pursuing this question is through phenomenology (Heidegger 1996:31). That is, ontology should be pursued by analysing from the inside out, thus phenomenologically, the nature of that special or unique being who asks about the meaning of being as such, namely Dasein. He thus enquires into the meaning of being as far as both the question and the answer can only be understood as arising from the human encounter with phenomena in the world.

We should now explain in more detail what Heidegger means when he insists on following the method of phenomenology. As briefly indicated in footnote 6, phenomenology may be understood as “the study of human experience and the ways things present themselves to us and through such experience” (Safranski 2000:2). Heidegger therefore wants to break through the abstractions and misunderstandings around the meaning of being (for instance, that it is a type of being) by investigating the way in which being appears to us (presents itself to us) in and through our actual, concrete, experiences as Dasein. Heidegger commentator Miguel de Beistegui formulates Heidegger's project in *Being and Time*, as follows: he says Heidegger makes an earnest effort “... to return thought to the world whence it unfolds, to wrest it from the dangers of abstraction, or objective representation, and to return it to life” (Beistegui 2003:40-41). Heidegger's *Being and Time* is crucial because he opens up an anti-metaphysical understanding of being, or at least a new understanding of being which escapes the typical errors associated with the traditional metaphysics of western philosophy. This renewed

encounter with the meaning of being which Heidegger opens up in *Being and Time* is pertinent to philosophically address the question of religious fundamentalist violence, since the latter is similarly caught up in the kind of forgetfulness and traditional misconceptions that Heidegger critiques. I will link the forgetfulness of being and the adoption of traditional metaphysical misunderstandings to the propensity for violence that we see in fundamentalist religious positions. And I will also argue later that our religious understandings should be renewed through the kind of phenomenological ontology Heidegger pursues, i.e. we should test our religious understanding using his way of “returning thought to the world”. This position informs my decision to use Heidegger’s *Being and Time* for this philosophical project.

Furthermore, Heidegger insists that phenomenology is that which presents things as they are in contrast to *Scheinen*, which sees things as ‘seeming’ – things seem real but are not present as they really are – *phainomenon agathon* (Heidegger 1996:31). As he explains in *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1996:31ff), the term ‘phenomenon’ from the Greek ‘phainomenon’, refers to ‘what shows itself’ or what becomes visible or manifest as it is. It is important to note that Heidegger, therefore, aspires to an understanding of the phenomenological which is “... opposed to the naïveté of an accidental, ‘immediate’, and unreflective ‘beholding’” (Heidegger 1996:36). To return to the phenomenological is thus to return to the moment and the way in which beings manifest, reveal or disclose themselves to us in an original way. This is then also why Thomas Sheehan can claim that for Heidegger, “the forgetting of disclosure is metaphysics” (Sheehan 2005:364). Heidegger’s motive is to carry out a renewal of existence and thought, and he is focused on returning life to its deepest sources and resources in the world (Caputo 1993:39). For Heidegger, Dasein is the place where being is revealed, which is the reason why we should meticulously investigate Dasein’s actual experiences of the meaning of being in a way that takes phenomena or appearances of being seriously. Being always discloses itself only in Dasein, and to ignore this is to forget being’s capacity to disclose itself and thereby distorts the fundamental nature of being.

This return to the phenomena themselves in their living presence as appearance is the way in which Heidegger hopes to return to our lived experience of being, as opposed to the misrepresentations of being that have taken over our everyday, unreflective understanding and impose themselves in a secondary or derivative way upon each interpretation of the world. Thus, Heidegger is critiquing traditional philosophical metaphysics through this return to the appearance of the things, i.e. to the phenomenological domain. To emphasise, a return to

experience is not a return to our naïve, immediate or unreflective experiences of the world, contaminated as these are with western metaphysical delusions. Instead, the phenomenological-ontological return to the domain of the phenomenological must drill down through layers of naïve misrepresentation of being and beings, in order to arrive at a truer access to the manifestation of the things, to the phenomena themselves.

An overview of Heidegger's critique of traditional metaphysics will not be complete without reference to the other key term in the title of *Being and Time*, namely time. The forgetfulness of being which accompanied the western metaphysical tradition and which entailed the erasure of the difference between being and beings, as well as the importance of Dasein as the being who asks about the meaning of being and beings, has also crucially led to the forgetfulness of time. Every phenomenon is strictly temporal – it appears and disappears in time, and nothing is present to us in a timeless manner. This is why Heidegger says that the truth of being can only be determined in time (Heidegger 1962:385). It is within this temporal framework that being must be understood and without which it can never be grasped in its true nature. Dasein is not temporal in terms of the mere fact that it exists; its very nature is temporality. As will be explained in the second chapter, Heidegger presents an understanding of time that critiques the traditional understanding of time as a series of 'nows', meaning that Dasein's mode of existence takes place in a series of nows. Heidegger considers Dasein as the dynamic unity of past, present and future. To talk about being outside of time (clearly, one crucial aspect of traditional metaphysical thinking) is thus to fundamentally misconstrue being.

In the above discussion of fundamentalist religion, I show that the purity and fragility of fundamentalists' self-understanding is related to the idea that they are dealing in timeless truths that are threatened from the outside. For Heidegger, in contrast, "... 'eternal truths' will not be adequately proved until someone has succeeded in demonstrating that Dasein has been and will be for all eternity" (Heidegger 1962:269-70). Thus, since Dasein is thoroughly temporal, all its meanings and understandings must be thoroughly temporal too. Traditional metaphysical claims do not take seriously the actual structure and nature of Dasein, the one who poses the meaning of being, as it emerges from phenomenological analysis.

If we are to take the temporality of the inquirer seriously, we should equally take seriously the position from which Heidegger asked about the meaning of being. As Karl Löwith writes,

Heidegger's question of 'Being' has to do not simply with 'time' generally but also with the specific 'time' in which he posed the universal question of Being; that time was the 1920s, after the First World War, when the 'eternal values' and culture, and the traditional content of our so-called culture generally, had become threadbare and fragile ... (Löwith 1998:130).

This observation is pertinent, because Heidegger's own answer to the meaning of being can, on its own terms, not be taken as absolute and valid like an eternal truth. At the same time, this insight into the temporal nature of understanding forces us to realise that the thematisation of being in and for this current project is similarly not isolated from the reality of our time. We are specifically interested in restating the question about the nature of being under pressure from a pervasive phenomenon of our own time, the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, namely the renewed upsurge of religious fundamentalist violence. Moreover, Löwith implies that Heidegger's own understanding of being as temporal requires that we also read his understanding of being against the background of the time or era in which he writes, which designates a period of crisis for Europe in general and Germany more particularly.

#### **0.4 Limits/Problems with Heidegger's Philosophy**

Heidegger, as insightful as he is in his phenomenological-ontological method, is not without flaws. I am not referring to his political affiliation or any other aspects of Heidegger's personal life.<sup>13</sup> Some critiques, such as those of Hans Sluga (1993), are based on Heidegger's life and involvement with the Nazi Party. The critique of Heidegger's involvement with the Nazi regime is shared by Pierre Bourdieu, who refers to Heidegger's philosophy as a skewed presentation of reality, which is neither pure politics nor philosophy in its critique of neo-platonic and neo-Kantian philosophy (Bourdieu 1991:5). The claims here, although important, do not undermine the significance and uniqueness of Heidegger's philosophical insights. These

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<sup>13</sup> "In 1933 he [Heidegger] joined the Nazi Party, believing it to represent the 'revaluation of all values' the West so desperately needed. ... Heidegger sought to make his philosophy the guiding force in the politics of the dictator of Germany. He made many compromising speeches in support of Hitler and National Socialism. Eighteen months later, realising that he had radically misjudged the character of the Nazi movement and had foolishly overestimated the possibility of his own influence over it, he resigned as Rector [at the University of Freiburg] and returned to the duties of an ordinary professor. ... He became an ever more ardent critic of the reality of Nazi Germany which he saw taking shape around him" (Young 2003:107-108). My intention here is not in any way to exonerate Heidegger of his political flaws; his role in the Nazi regime remains abhorrent, to say the least. Nevertheless, this work is not planning to explore the roots of reading *Being and Time* in light of the personal life of Heidegger.

concerns may be valid when it comes to the person of Heidegger, but they do not undermine the ethical credibility, especially as a possible solution for religious fundamentalist violence, implicit in Heidegger's thematisation of ontological questions of being, i.e. they do not directly invalidate his philosophical thinking. Moreover, I take a separationist position in my reading of Heidegger where I focus on his work and not his personal life. The focus rather is on Heidegger's ontology understood within his phenomenological framework that prioritises the world as the ground of human existence, and on the potential of these understandings for addressing religious fundamentalist violence – a topic which Heidegger himself never explicitly wrote about. I will thus set out in the first three chapters the details of my argument that Heidegger's ontology provides us with a useful framework for both understanding and criticising religious fundamentalist violence on philosophical grounds. The final two chapters are however concerned with the limitations of Heidegger's framework for dealing productively with religious frameworks more generally. In order to introduce here briefly the terms of my criticisms of Heidegger's framework, it is important to explain his key terms of 'being-in-the-world' as a constitutive aspect of Dasein or human existence, and of 'projection'.

It is necessary to now explain what Heidegger means by 'world', and Dasein's constitutive state of 'being-in-the-world', since these obtain very specific meanings in his phenomenological ontology. For Heidegger, an analysis of being-in-the-world addresses issues that pertain to the internal difference between coming into existence (birth) and exiting from existence (death) (Heidegger 1962:276). It is within this difference, which is internal existence in the world, that the true nature and meaning of being can be understood (Beistegui 2003:9). In *Being and Time*, in the section on "Being-in-the-World in General as the Basic Structure of Being", Heidegger begins by establishing that being always comports itself towards its own being (Heidegger 1962:78). By this, Heidegger proposes an understanding of existence that does not look beyond Dasein's formal conception of existence, which is the fact that it exists. The fact of Dasein's existence is what Heidegger later refers to as "facticity" (Heidegger 1962:82). According to Heidegger, Dasein is an entity which is in every case mine ('mineness') (Heidegger 1962:79). Put differently, human beings are there in every instance. As such, for Heidegger, the 'there' in which Dasein is always situated is the world. Heidegger illustrates his point by addressing two main categories of his position, namely 'Being-in' and 'in-the-world' (Heidegger 1962:79).

Firstly, when Heidegger talks about the being-in of Dasein, he designates the type of being which is appropriate to the nature of Dasein. By this, he establishes the in-something (Heidegger 1962:78), meaning that Dasein has that nature of being that makes it possible for it to be in something. Dasein's *being-in* is fundamentally different from the way material things are in (e.g.) a box or are part of some other thing or the world. Heidegger goes on to add that, "Being-in is Being-with Others" (Heidegger 1975:155). By this, Heidegger establishes the relational understanding of Dasein's existence in the world as one that is not solitary but one that is with other beings. In fact for Heidegger, "Being-alone is a deficient mode of Being-with" (Heidegger, 1962:157). Based on this argument, Heidegger insists that human beings are always related and complete isolation is impossible; we are constitutively interpersonal and relational. This may seem contradictory, but Heidegger believes that the things around us, especially things made by others, which we use, are extensions of these people (Heidegger, 1962:157). For instance, the piece of furniture which I work on is an extension of the carpenter and all the people whose efforts made the furniture attain its current state of usability. Heidegger would argue that I am not only with the furniture; in a deficient way, I am also with the people whose efforts contributed to the making of the furniture. This deficient or indirect mode indicates that the piece of furniture does not represent or take the place of the person, rather it serves as a reminder, which makes the person present. From this, Heidegger maintains that solipsism is ontologically impossible because we are always in relation with people either directly or deficiently.

Secondly, using inductive argument, Heidegger argues that the being of a thing in something can be expanded until we refer to it as being "in world-space", which legitimises his use of the compound word "Being-in-the-world" for Dasein's existence (Heidegger 1962:79). He maintains that Dasein's "... Being-in-the-world gets its ontological understanding of itself in the first instance from the entities which it itself is *not* but which it encounters 'within' its world, and from the Being which they possess" (Heidegger 1987:85). Being-in-the-world as a fundamental category of Dasein gives it its foundation in the sense that the world and Dasein cannot be separated, but rather mutually constitute each other. Heidegger goes on to argue that the entities within-the-world in which Dasein is situated give Dasein its ontological status. We find in Heidegger's analysis two understandings of being's existence in the world: first, he talks about an ontological existence in Dasein, and second, he presents an understanding of ontic existence in things Dasein finds in the world. The entities that are within-the-world are

encountered purely in the way they appear; they do not have ontological status the same way Dasein does (Heidegger 1962:88).

Having briefly highlighted Heidegger's understanding of Dasein, especially as it pertains to its being-in-the-world, and being-with, which will be discussed in more detail in further chapters, I now proceed to consider a few loopholes in Heidegger's phenomenology. First, let us consider Heidegger's philosophical attempts at countering traditional metaphysical thinking through a return to an understanding of being, Dasein, understood within lived experience. I show in the first part of this project that Heidegger's philosophy helps us to unveil where and how proponents of religious fundamentalist violence derail in their thinking. By critically engaging Heidegger's philosophy, one finds that the ontological delusion of proponents of religious fundamentalist violence are shared by the whole tradition of western philosophical thinking, including the objectivist stance of modern western science. As will be further developed, Heidegger's stance helps us identify the potential violence rooted in absolutist thinking in the heart of western philosophy, with the result that in so far as fundamentalist religious violence is often conflated with Islam as a non-western religion, the latter is exposed as a fundamental fallacy and a cultural prejudice. Another advantage of connecting the phenomenon of religious fundamentalist violence with Heidegger's philosophical ontology, is that it illuminates this violence as a type of metaphysically deluded response to human concerns. Clearly, these are strengths offered by his thinking.

However, as I will argue in Chapter Four, Heidegger's proposal to return to the question of being might be taken up in ways that are themselves potentially absolutist and reductionist in unsupportable ways. This chapter is meant to indicate these potential pitfalls and to guard against them in my rendition of how Heidegger's philosophy may be used to take forward the debate on religious violence. I have explained above how Heidegger's concept of being-in-the-world points to his attempt to return our attention to Dasein's most original structure of being-in-the-world. The first potential problem I want to point to in my critical discussion is that Heidegger's ontology might be absolutized in a way that disqualifies all references to realities understood as belonging to the world in ways that are inaccessible to the senses and such that they can never appear to us as phenomena. Such a reading of Heidegger, even though it would allow for projection of possibilities in the world, wants to rule out all references to ostensibly 'purely spiritual' entities such as spirits, ancestor, and gods, and may thus become guilty of promulgating a purely physicalist understanding of 'the world' of Heidegger's

phenomenological ontology. Therefore, I will argue in Chapter Four that to discredit or disqualify any reference to an unseen or non-phenomenal lived reality on the basis of Heidegger's thinking would be a misconception, since such references are not necessarily metaphysical in character. The assumption that only beings that appear to us as physical, sensory phenomena may be allowed into a properly Heideggerian world of sense-making, is reductionist, Eurocentric (in the Cartesian sense) and overly restrictive. It is thus important to take on board Heidegger's acute insight into the nature of traditional metaphysics, and to show that non-sensory or spiritual entities are not necessarily metaphysical entities. To illustrate this point, I will revisit Heidegger's conceptions of being-in-the-world, care, and projection. The assumption that any postulation of an extra-sensory entity is necessarily a form of metaphysics in the inadmissible sense of the term, I will designate as the fallacy of phenomenological absolutism.

A second aspect I will touch on in Chapter Four, is the accusation by some scholars that Heidegger himself remains caught up in the traditional metaphysics which he sets out to overcome in *Being and Time*. Jacques Derrida, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jean-Luc Nancy, among others, argue that Heidegger was not successful in presenting an anti-metaphysical understanding of being, because he constantly reverted back to the traditional metaphysical understanding of being. They also argue that Heidegger's attempt at overcoming traditional metaphysics constitutes a problematic metaphysics of its own. Referring to Derrida's critique, Hent De Vries writes, "The same Heideggerian thinking often consists, notably in *Sein und Zeit*, in repeating on an ontological level Christian themes and text that have been 'de-Christianised'" (De Vries 1999:159-160). I will dispute this reading of Heidegger, which Caputo rightly considers a misconception of Heidegger's metaphysics (Caputo 1987:172).

In order to achieve my goal of obtaining a clearer understanding of the ontological roots of fundamentalist violence, Heidegger's *Being and Time* will be considered in great depth. Heidegger's philosophy, especially his enquiries into the meaning of being from an understanding of being-in-the-world, is considered a major component of this project. According to Löwith, "... Heidegger does not contemplate something that is ever-extant and everlasting, *Being and Time* remains the measure-giving title even for all the later writings ..." (Löwith 1998:133). Löwith rightly identifies the focus for Heidegger: by not contemplating everlasting realities, Heidegger in his *Being and Time*, restricts his ontology to the world, because the nature of reality should only be pursued through phenomenological analysis, that

is, from the perspective of lived experience in which the beings reveal themselves in and to Dasein. For him, it is only phenomenologically that the question of the meaning of being arises. Heidegger ensures that the analysis of being remains in and of the world. This is a very important point of departure for this research.

## 0.5 Research Methodology

My research method will be based on textual reading and analysis as proposed by Richards A. Ivor in his *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgement* (1960). These textual readings and analyses will be based on the following: (1) Reflection: At every stage, I will critically consider the issue in question: the question about the meaning of human existence, especially as it pertains to illuminating the problem of religious fundamentalist violence. (2) Literature Review: this will entail doing extensive analysis of relevant primary and secondary texts. The primary texts, mainly Heidegger's *Being and Time*, and *Introduction to Metaphysics*, will be used to allow the voice of the philosopher to be heard so that critical analyses and discussions about his ideas remain faithful to his original thoughts. The secondary texts like Karl Löwith's *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism*, Rüdiger Safranski's *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil*, David Woods' article 'Topographies of Transcendence', to mention but a few, will be relevant in order to acquaint myself with secondary sources voices on the topic, and to critically check my own interpretation of the primary texts. (3) Personal philosophical rumination: here I intend to present personal reflections on the various themes developed from my readings. My analyses of texts and personal philosophical reflections will inform the conclusion I arrive at in this thesis.

## 0.6 Chapter Overview and Summary

From the aforementioned, I advance the following major arguments in five main chapters:

Aware that the forgetfulness of being is not only a Western reality, as Löwith suggests (Löwith 1998:78-79), by presenting an overview of Heidegger's philosophical framework in the **first chapter**, I contend that Heidegger's insights are relevant for other parts of the world and may be used to address religious fundamentalist violence in non-western contexts. Heidegger's philosophy not only pens up the path to the recapturing of our original encounter of the world, but it also alerts us to the many ways in which Dasein or human existence tends to erase what

it knows about being. The point here is that Heidegger's philosophy aims to speak about the human condition as such, even if it may sometimes fail to do so, as can for instance be seen in feminist critiques of Dasein as being overly masculine in its resoluteness, for example (c.f. *Feminist Interpretations of Martin Heidegger*, 2001, eds. Holland and Huntington). However, it is still safe to claim that, "Heidegger is a philosopher of the world. His thought is the constant investigation of the problem of the world" (Vycinas 1961:21). Heidegger's philosophy of Dasein, as rightly observed by Vycinas "... is ontocentric, whereas traditional philosophy has been mainly anthropocentric" (Vycinas 1961:26). By 'ontocentric', Vycinas explicates Heidegger's prioritisation of the reality of Dasein and the being of other entities as they are experienced or encountered within the world and within their worldly being. This ontocentric disposition is entirely different from the 'anthropocentric' philosophical tradition which focused mainly on the human being as the most important being in the world, or put differently, as being an exception to the world. Heidegger considers the traditional western philosophical approach to being as inimical to an effective understanding of being and how the being of other beings helps us understand the reality of being, including human being. This is why Heidegger considers the human being "the place of meaning" (Sheehan 2005:354). I will demonstrate this point by critically engaging being as it relates to the world.

I will also begin to make the argument that Heidegger's phenomenological-ontological enquiry presents us with an accurate and radically productive starting point in the attempt to tackle religious fundamentalist violence. This is because it explores being and death, both of which he understands in temporal time, from a phenomenological and thus worldly point of departure instead of a metaphysical one, thereby breaking through cultural and religious differences that lie on the level of conflicting metaphysical claims. Against an understanding of the world derived from traditional metaphysical categories which impose an *a priori* meaning onto it from a place that is distinctly other-worldly or anti-worldly, Heidegger argues that "... the world itself is meaningful by virtue of its very practicality: the chair is 'meaningful' by virtue of the fact of that I can sit on it ..." (Beistegui 2003:23). Hence, he identifies the need to eradicate all tendencies to consider being from an other-worldly point of view (i.e., to see being mainly from a metaphysical lens) and instead to see being as situated in the world, and being inextricable from Dasein or human existence. By exteriorising the meaning of being in a metaphysical sense, one tries to comprehend being away from the world that is experienced by, and thus accessible to all.

The **second chapter** will critically analyse a number of religious metaphysical claims and concepts, especially insofar as they address, assume or respond to the question of being. This chapter will not present an extensive discussion on religion and theological justification for these beliefs. This is because in depth analyses are not necessary for the theme at issue here. I am aware that the theological aspect is important within the larger debate. However, the contribution that I seek to advance in this project is to look at the consequences of religious claims on religious fundamentalist violence as found in the Abrahamic religions. By referring to a number of religious writers, such as Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi (1978), I show how religious outlooks seek to justify their appeal to religious–metaphysical realities which consequently results in an otherworldly conceptualisation of human existence in the world. If Dasein or human existence is characterised by Heidegger as rooted in temporality, thrownness, care, and projection, then these types of religious claims attempt to completely divorce the basis of their validity from the structure of Dasein. Put differently: precisely insofar as religious metaphysical claims depend upon a timeless, a-historical, disembodied and decontextualised ‘understanding’ of things, and of the ultimate meaning of being, they cancel themselves out and prove to be essentially meaningless for human existence. I argue thus that all religious worldviews are potentially fundamentalist and dangerous for society to the extent that they rely on a metaphysical framework which opposes the human condition so fundamentally. I thus use an intensive reading of Heidegger to reveal the problematic ontological starting points of proponents of religious violence, in order to open up new ways of thinking about combating such violence. It is important to include a caveat here that I do not entirely rule out the positive contribution of religion to the world. Scholars like Joseph O’Leary assert that “[r]eligion never teaches the world from outside but is the emergence of the ultimacy secreted within the world” (O’Leary 2001:416). However, the nature of these religious metaphysical teachings is not grounded in the world. This is a major problem because of the potential for absolutist tendencies which may result in religious acts of violence/terrorism.

The **third chapter** will justify the position that the attempt, by religious worldviews, to connect religion with the phenomenological realm, leads to an extension of the world, which is to think of the world as a reality that is connected to a metaphysical world (for instance, Heaven and/or Paradise) as the real or ultimate ground of being. This in turn makes it difficult to evade an absolute imposition of religious positions on people who do not share a particular view. Using a Heideggerian framework, I advance the position that the typical metaphysical religious understanding of time, human beings, projection, and the world have to be rethought and re-

evaluated in order to eradicate their propensity for violence. Religious claims, I will advance in Chapter One, should only be taken seriously to the extent that their living roots in the shared human condition of temporality, thrownness, and morality, among others, can be demonstrated. In this chapter even more than the previous ones, it will become clear that I will not spend much space discussing particular instances of religious fundamentalist violence, or to give an empirical description of the phenomenon in general. Rather, my focus is exclusively philosophical in that it attempts to expose a fallacy at the heart of defences of such violence.

The crux of my thesis is to substantiate my rejection of the religious metaphysical starting point in the understanding of being, which tends to impose ultimate claims on phenomenological realities, our understanding of which for Heidegger is always necessarily tentative, partial, finite and temporal. Put rather crudely: the kind of metaphysics that Heidegger rejects is the kind that divorces truth from Dasein, or that forgets or denies, as Heidegger puts it, that “all truth is relative to Dasein’s Being” (Heidegger 1962:270). This kind of religious truth claim distorts truth by erasing its rootedness in Dasein’s constitutive structures of temporality, care, and projection. Moreover, once cut off from its roots in Dasein’s lived experience, such claims necessarily become absolutist, closed off from general scrutiny (because closed off from the experiential) and often get violently imposed on the lived context of others for whom they do not have existential value. This religious metaphysical position is what I consider, in this project, as being particularly problematic, forever tending towards violence, and as underlying religious fundamentalist violence. There is, as Heidegger would argue, a need to think about thinking; in this case, the thinking that feeds into and underlies fundamentalist acts of terrorism. Using Heidegger, I shall explain in detail why I consider any religious metaphysical claim as a problematic basis for addressing the question of being.

The **fourth chapter** maintains that Heidegger’s question about the meaning of being and its connection to the actualisation of immanent potentiality<sup>14</sup> is relevant for our time of terrorist violence fuelled by religious fundamentalism. Put differently, Heidegger’s critique of religious metaphysical worldviews, is relevant in an attempt to eradicate religious violence. However, there is the danger in Heidegger’s work that his ontology may seem to ignore or undermine the

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<sup>14</sup> By immanent potentiality, I refer to an understanding of potentiality (the possibility of an event) possible only within the lived world. In other words, immanent potentiality focuses on the world as the field of projection and actualisation.

possibility of self-actualisation through religious non-metaphysical projections.<sup>15</sup> This would amount to a failure to appreciate the multiple perspectives available within being-in-the-world. I assert that a Heideggerian limitation of all ontological inquiry to the purely phenomenological realm is itself potentially fundamentalist or at least reductionist in nature. As such, its method is restrictive in the sense that it favours a particular western (and I would argue metaphysical, in Heidegger's own sense of the word) worldview in the way being is understood. By drawing on the works of Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Luc Marion and Jean-Luc Nancy, among others, I show the possible flaws that can be identified in Heidegger's philosophy, or traps that might be fallen into with a certain reading of his work which leads to a restrictive physicalism.

Levinas is relevant for this chapter since he also talks about the significance of religion in the way we philosophically theorise about our being-in-the-world. This is noted in Michael Morgan's work, *Discovering Levinas*, where he says that, "Levinas, of course, is not about arguing for a theological or religious belief of any kind; his goal is to shed light on what role theological discourse plays in our lives and where God fits into philosophy, as he conceives of it" (Morgan 2007:206). Levinas's work is significant for this project as it proposes an alternative framework to Heidegger's philosophy. Levinas advances the position that Heidegger's philosophy does not effectively address ethics, especially as it relates to other people. Put differently, Levinas critiques Heidegger's philosophy because it limits the ways in which human beings can be experienced, which ties neatly with my own understanding of Heidegger's treatment of religious-metaphysical understandings as unnecessarily reductionist. Levinas proposes an open expanse<sup>16</sup> which demonstrates how the complex nature of human experiences cannot finally be restricted or bound by the limits set by Heidegger's phenomenology of the world (Levinas 1996:42). Along a similar strand of thought, Jean-Luc Marion (2007) and Jean-Luc Nancy (2003) critique Heidegger for lacking proper ethical consideration. What I find particularly insightful in Marion is his critique of Heidegger's underdeveloped analysis of the ethical implication of being-with. This is why Marion proposes an understanding of ontology as 'social ontology' and not merely as phenomenological ontology (Devisch 2000:243). Marion maintains that human reality plays out in its sociality. Contrary to Heidegger, Marion considers social ontology to be more important than ontology

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<sup>15</sup> Metaphysical projection is other-worldly; it is directed to a kind of projection that considers its goal as something only attainable beyond the world (in an afterlife). A religious non-metaphysical projection in contrast may include the projection of something like an extra-sensory ancestor, ghost, spirit or demon.

<sup>16</sup> Levinas uses the idea of open expanse to illustrate the complexity of human reality which makes it irreducible.

because sociality is a necessary basis for understanding ontology. Therefore, Marion prioritises the sociality within reality as opposed to the understanding of ontology. Finally, Nancy maintains that Heidegger's philosophy is problematically metaphysical in nature because it cannot finally be differentiated from the dualist, metaphysical philosophy of his predecessors. I will critically evaluate this argument and conclude that the proponents of the idea that Heidegger is himself metaphysical or remains stuck in traditional metaphysics are wrong. However, this mistaken claim should be clearly distinguished from the other, correct point of criticism discussed above, namely that Heidegger's work allows for a reading that is overly reductionist and even absolutist in terms of what it leaves out from its field of consideration, most notably constitutive sociality.

The **fifth chapter** is where I propose a possible solution to religious fundamentalist violence in light of the productive insights as well as limitations of Heidegger's project as discussed so far. Amidst the criticisms of Heidegger's philosophy, I maintain, throughout this project, that Heidegger's philosophical emphasis on the lived or experienced world, as the ground of existence, is a significant point of departure, and is important for thematising human realities. However, by critically engaging Heidegger's philosophical thoughts and intended goal, with the help of other critics, I nuance Heidegger's philosophical postulations by proposing a renewed understanding of ontology that considers religious metaphysics as important framework. By doing this, I avoid the tendency to simply secularise all religious metaphysical truth claims as is implicitly required by Heidegger's philosophy. Rather, I consider religious truth claims important aspects of the world, but they must not be considered as absolute truths which are necessarily binding in the world. Moreover, I argue that there is a need to recognise the phenomenological as the starting point, but it is also important to appreciate the religious metaphysics as an aspect of human existence, as pointing to, without being able to capture, something ungraspable or irreducible within human experience, without prioritising it. I plan to analyse Heidegger from the viewpoint of the interplay which can exist between his understanding of ontology from a purely phenomenological perspective and the understanding of ontology from a religious metaphysical lens.

As a final remark, it is important to state that the motivation of this thesis is derived from the religiously motivated acts of violence, and religious fundamentalist violence that plagues many countries in the world. While challenging Heidegger's philosophical position, I also use his ideas to propose a new guiding framework for the human disposition towards its own being

and the being of others. In other words, I propose an understanding of relationality driven by a renewed conception of ontology. The result of this proposition provides a new attitude towards religious beliefs, and a more critical conceptualisation of Heidegger's phenomenological ontology. Thus, in summary, what is novel about this work offered here, are the following points:

1. As far as I know, Heidegger's ontology has not been used before as a framework for engaging explicitly with 21<sup>st</sup> century manifestations of religious fundamentalist violence.
2. My suggestion that Heidegger's work allows us to appreciate the ontological and existential concerns that underlie religious fundamentalist violence, as well as to criticise them for a distortion of being and a willful erasure of what we always already know about the meaning of being, is a novel contribution to the literature.
3. The attempt to develop practical guidelines or insights for addressing religious fundamentalist violence from a framework derived from a conversation with Heidegger is novel.

## Chapter One

### Heidegger's Understanding of Historicity and Human Existence as Phenomenological-Ontological Being

'Why are there essents [something] rather than nothing?'

- Martin Heidegger [1929] (1959)

*An Introduction to Metaphysics*

"We have forgotten what Being is, and  
we have even forgotten this forgetting"

- Rüdiger Safranski (2002:148)

*Between Good and Evil*

#### 1.1 Introduction

'Why are there essents rather than nothing?' (Heidegger 1959:2). This question from *An Introduction to Metaphysics*<sup>17</sup> might be said to capture Heidegger's interrogation of the question of the meaning of Being, or the nature of existence, more fully executed in his *magnum opus*, *Being and Time* (originally published in 1927). The citation from Rüdiger Safranski's (2002:148) *Between Good and Evil* is a paraphrased articulation of Martin Heidegger's opening comments in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, with the original formulation reading as follows:

... if we consider the question of being in the sense of an inquiry into being as such, it becomes clear to anyone who follows our thinking that being *as such* is precisely hidden from metaphysics, and remains forgotten – and so radically that the forgetfulness of being, which itself falls into forgetfulness, is the

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<sup>17</sup> It is important to note that Heidegger's *An Introduction to Metaphysics* was a supplement to his *Being and Time*. The essay in this publication called "What is Metaphysics?" was also the text of his inaugural speech at the University of Freiburg in 1929.

unknown but enduring impetus of metaphysical questioning (Heidegger 1959: 19).

Reading Safranski together with Heidegger's own opening comments, allows the reader insight into the all-important starting point of Heidegger's philosophical investigation. Heidegger considers the meaning of being (including Dasein<sup>18</sup>) as essentially hidden from, and in opposition to, metaphysics. It is further clear that being hidden from metaphysics for Heidegger implies, in particular, that traditional metaphysics itself becomes complicit in the hiddenness of being, and moreover, that its being hidden must also be understood in the sense of being forgotten. As Safranski points out, even the forgetting of the meaning of being (and Dasein) is subsequently forgotten, and Heidegger seems to claim that this apparent complete loss (being both hidden and forgotten as forgotten) of the meaning of being is both caused by metaphysics and simultaneously remains the unknown but enduring impetus of metaphysical questioning. Clearly, then, if Heidegger sees metaphysics as effectively hiding from us our own knowledge of the nature of being, even if it prompts us to search for it every now and again, it is imperative that we should seek to better understand what he means by metaphysics.

For the purpose of this study, at least two meanings of the term 'metaphysics' should be distinguished in Heidegger's work. As hinted in the general introduction chapter, on the one hand, Heidegger uses the term, metaphysics, to refer to that which supposedly lies beyond the physical – a word derived from the Greek *meta ta physika* (Heidegger 1929:8), especially when such a supposition serves as an answer given to the question about the meaning of being. On the other hand, he entertains a broader understanding of the term, when he sees his own project of searching for the meaning of being as itself constituting a kind of metaphysical questioning. As he says in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, "metaphysics ... means ... an introduction to the asking of the fundamental question" (Heidegger 1959:19). In other words, as he also explains, metaphysical questioning as the asking of the fundamental question, such as 'why are there essents rather than nothing?' is propelled by the 'forgetting of being' caused by the tendency of the philosophical tradition to give meta-physical (in the first sense) answers to questions, thereby forever further hiding and forgetting the meaning of being. Although he sees what he does as metaphysical questioning, Heidegger refers to 'metaphysics' as a possible type

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<sup>18</sup> In this chapter, I use Dasein and human being interchangeably. As has been explained, Dasein is a word, which Heidegger uses to designate human existence (Heidegger 1962:27).

of metaphysical questioning, only in so far as he disproves its significance in the understanding of being. Not only is ‘metaphysics’ in the sense of beyond-physical answers not supplying us with an understanding of being; it in fact obscures and makes us forget the nature of being even further. It thus actively misleads us in our authentic quest.

Still on metaphysics, it is important to further nuance what metaphysics truly means for Heidegger. Heidegger claims that “[t]he essence of Dasein lies in its existence” (Heidegger 1962:67). This means that for him, the fundamental reality of human beings and things in the world (their essence, the essence of their being) is in the fact of their existence, and it is in existence that human beings and all other beings find the ground of their identity. It is this fundamental insight which is denied or erased within the type of meta-physics which separates out (rather than merely differentiating between) essence from existence.

Heidegger further illustrates the kind of metaphysics that he refutes when he addresses the notion of ‘ontotheology’. As can be noticed, the word ‘ontotheology’ results from a combination of words ‘ontology’ and ‘theology’. For Heidegger, “Theology is seeking a more primordial interpretation of man's being towards God, prescribed by the meaning of faith itself and remaining within it” (Heidegger 1962:30). “*Ontologie* is the study [logos] of being [onta], and *Theologie* the study of God [theos]” (Inwood 199:149). Inwood notes that Heidegger combines these Greek-derived words to form *Onto-Theo-Logie* (Inwood 1999:149). This idea, according to Inwood, is largely influenced by Aristotle’s ‘first philosophy’, which talked about being as such and being as the highest being (Inwood 199:149). He goes on to argue that the (onto-) theological understanding of being conceals and distorts ontological interpretation of being (Heidegger 1972:30). For this reason, in this thesis, I understand metaphysics as onto-theology because of the belief that ontology can be understood when we allude or refer to realms beyond the world.

It is important to note here that the type of metaphysics which Heidegger critiques is onto-theological metaphysics, by which I will designate a type of metaphysical thinking in which the nature of being is explained as derived from an other-worldly (theological) ground. What this suggests is that there are other types of questioning which Heidegger does not refute. Heidegger does not reduce traditional metaphysics to onto-theology. From the analysis thus far, Heidegger’s focus on traditional metaphysics is to critique onto-theology, a type of

metaphysics which presents a false representation of ontology. In fact this type proposes a metaphysical reality understood to be the true nature or origin of human beings.

In Heidegger's 1929 inaugural speech titled *What is Metaphysics* (1929), he develops an account of metaphysics and distinguishes it from the long tradition of metaphysical thinking in the west. It is clear from this text that Heidegger is not opposed to metaphysics as such, but rather to a certain way of doing, or conceiving of metaphysics. He explicates the difference by focusing on the question of 'the nothing'. In traditional western thinking, he explains, especially in the scientific enterprise, there was (still is) a widespread assumption that the questioner or investigator (scientist) relates himself directly to beings themselves. As he puts it, in science, "[w]hat should be examined are beings only, and besides that – nothing" (Heidegger 1929:2). In contrast with the scientific tradition, however, he now wants to interrogate that nothing which is paradoxically known by scientific understanding as that which the scientist '[wishes] to know nothing about' (Heidegger 1929:2). Hence the question, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" (Heidegger 1929:1). 'Nothing' here refers to the complete negation of the totality of human beings and things as understood ontologically (Heidegger 1929:4).

Whereas traditional metaphysics (especially that which underlies western science) attempts to say something about the whole of everything that exists, but largely fails to ask the question about the one who asks, that is, the questioner, who "is present together with the question" (since the questioner is one of the things that exist), Heidegger wants to rectify this as he insists that "the metaphysical inquiry must be posed as a whole and from the essential position of the existence [Dasein] that questions" (Heidegger 1929:1). In the everyday practice of science, it is largely forgotten that "one being called 'man' [irrupts] into the whole of beings, indeed in such a way that in and through this irruption beings break open and show what they are and how they are" (Heidegger 1929:2).

Heidegger gradually unveils the nature of Dasein in his elaboration of the question about this nothing which is disavowed by scientific research. He asserts firstly that one can only ask a question about anything at all if one has already anticipated "the being at hand of what [one] is looking for" (Heidegger 1929:3), in other words, we can only ask about the nothing because we have already somehow encountered it. Yet the nothing cannot be a something, because the nothing is precisely the complete negation of the totality of beings (Heidegger 1929:4). He then

explains that we experience the totality of being together with an overwhelming sense of the nothing in the everyday mood of anxiety.

Only in anxiety are we brought “before the nothing” as such. Whereas the mood of boredom levels all being/s into a kind of indifference, anxiety does not allow the ensemble of beings to slide into indifference merely; instead, “in this very receding things turn toward us ... [t]he receding of beings as a whole that closes in on us in anxiety oppresses us”, with the result that we “can get no hold on things”, and the nothing is revealed, partly in the loss of speech which accompanies anxiety.

In contrast with fear which has a definite object, anxiety is indeterminate and we feel ourselves to be generally “ill at ease”, i.e. it is an experience encompassing the whole of our situation in the world, and nothing can escape it. Not only all other beings, but our own being also, slips away from us. In this sense, the nothing “crowds around”, it is present, and encountered (Heidegger 1929:5); yet not as a being, and without the possibility for us to grasp it (Heidegger 1929:6). As Heidegger says, “we ‘hover’ in anxiety” (Heidegger 1929:5), because there is nothing stable, nothing to hold onto, and “pure Dasein is all that is still there” (Heidegger 1929:5). The mood of anxiety thus reveals to us the nothing, as “at one with beings as a whole” (Heidegger 1929:6). In the very experience of anxiety, the whole of the beings appears to us as superfluous and ourselves as impotent with regard to their superfluity and excess (Heidegger 1929:6). This nothingness does thus not appear as a result of something that we do or express; it rather “rises up to meet us” before we can consciously and willingly negate anything. Heidegger calls the action of this nothing that we encounter in anxiety, “nihilation”, which is neither annihilation nor negation. Nihilation is rather the “parting” or “repelling” gesture towards beings that are in retreat as a whole, in the experience of anxiety, and this gesture oppresses Dasein in the moment of anxiety (Heidegger 1929:6). According to Heidegger, nihilation as the action of the nothing which is encountered in anxiety does not negate or destroy the whole of beings, but instead “discloses [them] in their full but heretofore concealed strangeness as what is radically other – with respect to the nothing”. In the nothing of anxiety, the peculiar existence of beings as such is revealed to Dasein and Dasein for the first time encounters beings as such, and as they really are, in their original openness (Heidegger 1929:6).

Dasein should therefore be understood as “being held out into the nothing” (Heidegger 1929:7). Heidegger also calls Dasein the “placeholder of the nothing” (Heidegger 1929:8). It is because

of its being fundamentally related to the nothing that Dasein could ever be related to beings and even to itself (Heidegger 1929:7), and that it displays a constitutive openness towards being as such. The nothing is indispensable for existence understood as relation. As Heidegger puts it, “[f]or human existence [Dasein] the nothing makes possible the openness of beings as such ... it originally belongs to their essential unfolding as such”, and thus the occurrence of nothingness, its nihilation, belongs to the Being of beings (Heidegger 1929:7), instead of being purely opposed to existence.

As human beings, we do not and cannot live constantly within the mood of anxiety, which is for Heidegger why “the nothing is at first and for the most part distorted with respect to its originality” (Heidegger 1929:7). As humans we have a tendency to ‘lose ourselves altogether among beings’ and to turn away from the nothing (Heidegger 1929:7) by concealing our anxiety from ourselves (Heidegger 1929:8). Yet not even this turning away from the nothing is altogether alien to the nothing itself, because what the nothing points us toward is precisely the strange otherness of the existing things or beings. The hidden workings of nothingness are thus largely hidden and indirect in our everyday experience of the world of things, but nevertheless they are testified to by the ‘saturation of existence by nihilative behaviour’ such as antagonism, rebuke, failure, privation and prohibition (Heidegger 1929:7). Original anxiety which reveals the nothingness at the heart of being is therefore usually repressed and latent rather than overt (Heidegger 1929:8). Even when we know intellectually that the nothing is the only ground on which we can truly approach the beings, it is not within our power to ‘bring ourselves originally before the nothing’; instead, because of the nature of the nothing which rises up to meet us, it is only something that can overcome us ‘from outside’, as it were.

This helps us to understand Heidegger’s criticism of traditional metaphysics and what he wants to put in its place. The same question about the meaning of being haunts both traditional metaphysics and his phenomenological ontology. However, traditional metaphysics turns away from the anxiety caused when Dasein faces the oppressive nothing, pure or mere Dasein and the fundamental strangeness of being. This is also why it aims to comfort people by repressing and actively forgetting the question about the meaning of being. Traditional metaphysics understands the nothing “as the counter-concept to being proper, that is, as its negation” (Heidegger 1929:9). On Heidegger’s understanding, this implies however that ‘[t]he questions of Being and of the nothing as such are not posed’ at all by this tradition, or not posed properly. His own way of relating the nothing to the Being of beings means for Heidegger that the

metaphysical question about the Being of beings is posed correctly for the first time in his own work. Crucially, in his analysis, “[t]he nothing does not remain the indeterminate opposite of beings but reveals itself as belonging to the Being of beings” (Heidegger 1929:9). Instead of the traditional opposition of Being and nothingness, Heidegger posits that “Being and the nothing belong together, ... because Being itself is essentially finite and reveals itself only in the transcendence of Dasein which is held out into the nothing” (Heidegger 1929:9). The nothing of Dasein (expressed or encountered most clearly in the mood of anxiety) implies that Dasein is, ‘being held out into the nothing’, an original prerequisite for beings as a whole to appear ‘in accord with their most proper possibility – that is, in a finite way’ and thus to ‘come to themselves’. This introduction of Dasein as that which is held out into the nothing allows Heidegger to oppose his understanding of metaphysics to the western metaphysical tradition, which posits being as the opposite of nothingness, thus as necessary, stable and present. Traditional metaphysics, eschewing and largely ignoring the question of nothingness, errs in its understanding of the nature of being and thus of beings, and also of Dasein.

Heidegger is very insistent on the nature that philosophy must assume, when he argues that “[p]hilosophy is universal phenomenological ontology, and takes its departure from the hermeneutic of Dasein, which, as an analytic of *existence*, has made fast the guiding-line for all philosophical inquiry at the point where it *arises* and to which it *returns*” (Heidegger 1972:62). Hermeneutics of Dasein refers to the interpretation of the fundamental structure of Dasein. The starting point of ontological interpretation is for him thus necessarily rooted in Dasein’s being-in-the-world as the ground of analysis and the result or outcome must also be based on this ground. Ontology is a branch of philosophy which poses the question about the meaning of being. Phenomenology stems from a combination of the words *phainomena* and *logos*. The type of question about Dasein which is posed by phenomenology entails the nature of the ‘truth’, the *logos*, of human being or existence (Heidegger 1972:261; 262; 273). Heidegger embarks on an ontological analysis of being, and considers the interpretation of Dasein in this regard as the necessary point of departure and arrival. This is because for Heidegger, ontology is only to be investigated from within existence, human reality.

Heidegger considers it necessary to revisit the philosophical question once posed by the Greeks, about the nature of being, a (way of asking the) question which he thinks has since been forgotten and needs to be critically re-visited. This is because the traditional philosophical misrepresentation of Dasein, as maintained by Heidegger, is not to be understood as an

occasional forgetting of information slipping out of the memory, rather, it is a forgetting that characterises the oblivion of Dasein's presence. The question about the meaning of being is one which is constantly directed to us, but at the same time it is the most ignored. Through Heidegger's critiques of his predecessors' understanding of being, a new era dawns in the way being is understood – being assumes a new level of significance in the prioritisation of the phenomenological realities of human existence. Yet this new dawn is at the same time a harking back to, or rekindling of an ancient understanding (or at least questioning) into the nature of being. What Heidegger's renewed philosophical inquiry into the meaning of being does, as will be illustrated in this chapter, is to show a deficiency in traditional (metaphysical) ontology. Dostal maintains that Heidegger believes that this ignorance that he attributes to his predecessor's account of ontology is an ignorance of temporal reality (Dostal 1993:158). I have already introduced the centrality of time to Heidegger's conception of being in the general introduction.

In this chapter, I present an exposition of Heidegger's conception of Dasein, which can only be understood against the background of, and as a radically critical response to, the philosophical tradition's dominant conception of Dasein. Aware of objections directed at Heidegger's understanding of being, I will restrict my analysis for now to a largely uncritical exposition of Heidegger's understanding of the meaning of being as explicated in his *Being and Time*. The current exploration will be limited to the identification of certain aspects of Heidegger's perception of being which, I shall argue, speak most directly to the question of religious fundamentalist violence (RFV). A clear understanding of Heidegger's conceptualisation of being will serve as an important starting point for my project. My own interpretation will throughout be checked against the tradition of Heidegger reception. This chapter will consider five major themes related to the structure of Dasein. First, it explores Heidegger's justification for the prioritisation of phenomenological ontology as the only approach for addressing the question of human reality (ontology). Second, I critically explore the general meaning of Dasein (human being) in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Third, the understanding of being will be connected to Heidegger's philosophical understanding of *time* as temporality. Fourth, Heidegger's understanding of Dasein and time will be put side by side with his concept of *historicity* to comprehend how Heidegger's ontology is built on a phenomenological rendition of the reality of being. Fifth, aware of the different characteristics of being, I explicate further Heidegger's rejection of traditional metaphysical understandings of being.

## 1.2 Phenomenological Method of Ontological Inquiry

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger insists that phenomenological inquiry is the method which is most suitable for addressing the question about the meaning of Dasein. ‘Ontology’ is a philosophical inquiry about being, or existence, which, according to Heidegger, is only possible or can only be grasped through phenomenology (Heidegger 1996:35). It is the only method because for Heidegger, the finite nature of Dasein requires that it be addressed phenomenologically. Why is this? Consider that Caputo also defines ontology as “... the *logos* which lets Being itself be seen, that Being which is concealed is revealed in beings, which are what are primarily accessible” (Caputo 1987: 63); the unveiling<sup>19</sup> of the *logos* of the *ontos*. The *logos* of the *ontos* as used here refers to the knowledge of the ontological reality of Dasein. The ontological attributes of Dasein are based on the finite reality of human beings which Heidegger believes has been forgotten; put differently: human beings can only understand reality from within their always necessarily limited perspective or existential situation. As Thomas Sheehan writes, “The main thesis of *Being and Time* is that all worlds of meaning (all possibilities of being meaningful) are necessarily finite because Dasein, their source, is radically finite” (Sheehan 2005:355). Therefore, the knowledge (*logos*) of the finite reality of Dasein and thus the finitude of all meanings which has been forgotten or neglected by the tradition, is re-thematised by Heidegger. Heidegger proposes that we incorporate a radical finitude into our interpretation of Dasein as the place where being unfolds. What emerges here is that Heidegger considers an appropriate understanding of human existence an important task, and it is only through radically finite means, found in the everyday activities of Dasein, that we gain the appropriate tools for this ontological endeavour. This, I argue, is the justification for his use of phenomenology in addressing the question of being.

Heidegger uses phenomenology to refer to ‘the things themselves’ – advocating a return to the things as they are actually, concretely, experienced in the world (Heidegger 1972:50). Phenomenology is a philosophical method, promulgated first most explicitly by Edmund Husserl in the early twentieth century, which seeks to give an account of human experiences

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<sup>19</sup> The word ‘unveiling’ refers to what Heidegger calls “disclosedness” or *Aletheia*. Heidegger argues that to say that “an assertion ‘is true’ signifies that it uncovers the entity as it is in itself. Such a proposition asserts, points out, ‘lets’ the entity “be seen” in its uncoveredness” (Heidegger in Safranski 2001:261). Heidegger talks about *aletheia* as a kind of awareness that is true. He uses the word, ‘Being-true’ when he asserts that “The *Being-true* (truth) of the assertion must be understood as Being-uncovering” (Heidegger 1972:261). *Aletheia* is continuous in the sense that covering and uncovering never ends (Heidegger 1962:60) and nothing is ever fully or definitively uncovered.

(Keller 1999:1; Held 2003:3). Husserl insists that human experiences cannot be understood in abstraction (Keller 1999:2). Heidegger modifies, transforms and uses Husserl's phenomenology in order to make manifest the reality of Dasein, especially as it is experienced in the world (Heidegger 1972:51; Keller 1999:1). He thereby shows a commitment to an understanding of Dasein which is based on temporal perceptions. Different from Husserl, however, Heidegger maintains that the totality of phenomenology lies in the light of day in the sense that it can be experienced (Heidegger 1972:51). Phenomenology is, in other words, the only philosophical method, for Heidegger, that can clarify simultaneously the nature of human beings, and the meaning of all other beings whose only site of meaningful appearance is in Dasein's experience.

It is moreover important to note that phenomenology as a philosophy does not consider "... isolated significance without a referential totality" (Frede 1993:50), and that the referential totality of Dasein for Heidegger is what he calls 'the world', as discussed in the general introduction (Heidegger 1962:107). To consider a single aspect of Dasein, such as 'reason', in isolation, especially in order to show how human beings are qualitatively different from the world, is to misunderstand the total and integrated phenomenological reality of human existence, e.g. to misunderstand how thoroughly worldly our reason itself is. Part of the significance of phenomenology in this thesis is to point to the referential totality (the world) which makes every aspect of Dasein hermeneutically accessible. For instance, when a person or object is encountered, he is not understood as an isolated reality. The person shares a connectivity to the world to other people in the world, as well as to other objects or beings in the world, in a totality that is beyond the subject, which becomes a point of reference necessary for understanding any aspect of the person. Phenomenology thus prioritise the experiential as opposed to the conjecture of a non-experiential or traditional metaphysical reality as the ground of Dasein (Heidegger 1972:51).

Jean-Luc Marion<sup>20</sup> explains the domain of phenomenology as follows, arguing that one can talk about phenomenology

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<sup>20</sup> Jean-Luc Marion (b. 1946) is a French philosopher who has written extensively on contemporary philosophy and phenomenology. He is important for this project because of his useful commentaries and analyses of phenomenology.

... when and only when a statement allows a phenomenon to be seen; what does not appear in one fashion or another does not enter into consideration. To understand is ultimately to see. To speak is to speak in order to render visible, thus to speak in order to see. Otherwise, to speak means nothing (Marion 2007: 289).

The nature of appearance, as alluded to by Marion, points to Heidegger's use of the phenomenological enquiry. For Heidegger, the fashion of appearing which is investigated in phenomenology is summed up as follows: "'phenomena' are the totality of what lies in the light of day or can be brought to the light ..." (Heidegger 1972:51). This bringing to light must not be limited purely to literal seeing, rather it has to do with awareness and authentic self-realisation in the world, of how the world is disclosed to us. Heidegger goes on to differentiate phenomenology from a kind of showing which does not bring to light, and this he calls "semblance" (Heidegger 1972:51). We cannot talk, with certainty, about something which has not been made visible, and to talk about what we have not seen is to talk about that which is not accessible. The nature of the being which Heidegger analyses is the one which he believe exists in the world. Safranski puts it succinctly when he writes, "... one must start from the *In- Sein*, the Being-in, because 'phenomenologically' one neither first experiences oneself and then the world nor, the other way about, first the world and then oneself, but in experience the two are simultaneously present in indissoluble union" (Safranski 2002:154). Phenomenology takes into consideration the nature of human reality within the indissoluble union of Dasein and the world as fundamental.

Phenomenology in other words makes it possible for Heidegger to elucidate the tradition's forgetfulness of being. He sees this forgetfulness as occasioned by (onto-theological) metaphysical inquiry into the meaning of being which is typical of most philosophers after the Greeks. Heidegger refers to Plato, Aristotle, the medieval tradition (Thomist and Scotist schools) and Hegel, among others, to illustrate the religious metaphysical conception of being (Heidegger 1972:22-23). Metaphysical inquiry, for them, entails seeking to understand that which is beyond the ordinary, physical realities of everyday activity. In contrast the pre-Socratic Greeks, as argued by Dorothea Frede, conceived 'being' as 'what there is', which was merely understood in the sense of things, what she calls 'states of affairs' (Frede 1993: 43). Heidegger suggests a return to this earlier understanding of Dasein understood as 'this-worldly' rather than 'other-worldly' (Heidegger 1962:292). "The very fact", Heidegger writes, "that we

already live in an understanding of Being and that the meaning of Being is still veiled in darkness proves that it is necessary in principle to raise this question again” (Heidegger 1972:23). One way of understanding Heidegger’s thought here is that he deconstructs<sup>21</sup> the dominant understanding of being. He does this by facilitating the return of a special kind of metaphysics directed at phenomenological uncovering of the reality of human existence. What this idea presupposes is that such a return is phenomenologically *possible* as it seeks to reveal the reality of being.

It is noteworthy to indicate here that Heidegger uses new terminologies as a response to the need for a linguistic twist for his project.<sup>22</sup> Scholars like Richard Rorty (1991), argue that Heidegger introduces new words partly because he wants to wriggle free of the tradition of onto-theology. By creating a new vocabulary, Heidegger rebels against his predecessors’ theorisations on the question of being and seeks to displace them. If this is the case, on what ground does human beings stand in their search for another legitimate ground for being? In ‘The Preliminary Conception of Phenomenology’ of *Being and Time*, Heidegger argues that “‘behind’ the phenomena of the phenomenological there is essentially nothing else” (Heidegger 1962:60). Heidegger considers the phenomenological reality of human existence as itself constituting the primordial and ultimate ground for being, and thus he rejects any search for a more original grounding behind or beneath the whole of the world of appearance. Heidegger uses the word ‘primordial’ to refer to that which is closest to the essential nature of being (Heidegger 1962:190). Heidegger uses the term primordial to refer to ‘true’ and ‘real’.

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<sup>21</sup> Some thinkers do not see deconstruction in the thinking of Heidegger. Tom Rockmore for instance sees a continuity in Heidegger’s understanding of the subjective understanding of human existence (Rockmore 1999: 51). I would argue Rockmore’s position is potentially incoherent. This is because a deconstruction does not necessarily preclude a continuity, especially when one looks at the work of Heidegger which sought to look back and revive an aspect of Greek philosophy. It has a deconstructive agenda in the sense that it halts and draws attention to an important part of a philosophical tradition which eluded philosophers in the past. In fact, Heidegger explains: “... three basic components of phenomenological method – reduction, construction, destruction – belong together in their content and must receive grounding in their mutual pertinence. Construction in philosophy is necessarily destruction, that is to say, a de-constructing of traditional concepts carried out in a historical recursion to the tradition. And this is not a negation of the tradition or a condemnation of it as worthless; quite the reverse, it signifies precisely a positive appropriation of tradition. Because destruction belongs to construction, philosophical cognition is essentially at the same time, in a certain sense, historical cognition” (Heidegger 1982:23).

<sup>22</sup> Referring to his own writing, Heidegger maintains that “If we are here to introduce ponderous and perhaps inelegant expressions, it is not a matter of personal whim or a special fancy for my own terminology but the compulsion of the phenomena themselves ... if such formulations come up often, no offence should be taken. There is no such thing as the beautiful in the sciences, least of all perhaps in philosophy” (See Safranski 2002:155). The opacity of Heidegger’s work sometimes makes it difficult to understand the point he is trying to make. However, the intellectual engagement, which his new formulations force, is important for paying closer attention to the question which he addresses, and to enter into a fresh understanding of being.

In Heidegger's emphasis on human existence as the ground, one finds that he does not entertain any theorising about religious metaphysics. Theorising about religious metaphysics was what led to the forgetting of being, and this forgetting is due to the understanding of being in an other-worldly sense removed from its phenomenological ground. Heidegger investigates the nature of the being which is at issue in his phenomenological ontology. It is from this that he bases the ground of being on the world itself (Heidegger 1972:30). He makes this point clear when he states that his investigation is into Dasein "whose very Being is an issue for it" (Heidegger 1972:30). Thus, the fact that Dasein's being is an issue for it, "... is a constitutive state of Dasein's Being, and this implies that Dasein, in its Being, has a relationship towards that Being – a relationship which itself is one of Being" (Heidegger 1972:32). To buttress his point, Heidegger focuses on the verb 'is' as an attribute of Dasein. The moment we talk about being, we think within an understanding of 'is' (Heidegger 1972:25). We always live in an understanding of being. Even when we cannot grasp it at all, we already have a vague understanding which, for Heidegger, is also an understanding of being (Heidegger 1972:25). The point here is that Dasein is within the phenomenological reality that is the world and not within the category of religious metaphysics; thus, when we live in an understanding of being that is metaphysical, we live in a distorted understanding, undergirded by a more original and more authentic understanding which springs from our existence in the world.

To further emphasise Heidegger's decision to choose the phenomenological as the field in which to investigate being, as opposed to the metaphysical, let us recall the quote from Heidegger referred to in the introduction to this chapter: "why are there essents [something] rather than nothing?" (Heidegger 1959:2). Heidegger's question can be reformulated into another question, which can be read as, "why is there Being rather than non-Being?" Heidegger presents an understanding of the metaphysical question posed by the question: why are there essents rather than nothing?" Heidegger tries to point out that the early Greeks understood this question as a question of explaining why human beings exist (essents). He argues that it is not possible to attempt to respond to the question without looking at being (what *is*) because we cannot try to understand something from nothing; some thinkers have explored this question about the meaning of being by looking at non-being (what *is not*) – the 'nothing' referred to earlier. It is problematic to go beyond the context informing the rationale behind the question. To go beyond the question is to miss or even misunderstand the nature of the question. If going beyond the question is to miss the question, there is no questioning at all because the beginning, inspiration and ground of the question are all lost (Heidegger 1959:20). Even if the nature of

going beyond is in question form, it misses the initial question: the ‘why?’, and thus the ground of these question is hidden (Heidegger 1959:23). According to Vincent Vycinas, what Heidegger points to in his discussion of the questions, is that “[a] question always presupposes a certain knowledge of that which is being questioned. Questioning is pointing, hinting toward the answer” (Vycinas 1961:25; Feibleman 1951:75), and for Heidegger, the question about the meaning of being always arises within the rudimentary understanding, even misunderstanding, of being. However, this does not mean that the hint is the truth, but only that the answer is already to some extent presupposed in the question. The source and nature of the answer to the question of the meaning of being cannot be removed from the world as it is derived from the world as its ground, the context, of the question. In contrast, Heidegger claims that a metaphysical search for the meaning of being would be removing the nature of the question from the ground of the question, because it extracts being from its context by imposing abstract qualities (Heidegger 1962:30).

Heidegger inquires about being only in so far as it is understood within human experience, since this is the only context in which the question ever arises or can arise. Human experiences provide the necessary resources for addressing the question about the meaning of being as well as of Dasein or human existence. Heidegger’s philosophy provides a methodology for problem solving, which is that the solution can only be found in a genuine understanding of the nature of the problem. Sheehan maintains that “[t]he disclosure of the finite world of the human experiences is the crux of Heidegger’s philosophy – how it comes about, what structure it has, and what it makes possible – is the central topic of Heidegger’s thought” (Sheehan 2005:355). It is within this framework that Heidegger’s work can be understood as an enquiry about the nature of being as revealed in human existence. As we have seen, for Heidegger, the question of being can only approached from the point of view of the inquirer, i.e. Dasein for whom this is a question (Heidegger 1962:458). The nature of Dasein’s existence is therefore what is at issue here, and for Heidegger, all philosophical questions, questions of meaning, should always be grounded within this nature. In other words, existence is the nature of the type of being to be analysed: “the study of human experience and the ways things present themselves to us in and through such experience” (Sokolowski 2000:2). The situatedness of Dasein is always a given at any given time, a fact prior to the thematisation of location, and the context for the emergence of every question of meaning. Heidegger’s phenomenology, as a methodological preference for addressing the question of the meaning of Dasein is further clarified in the emphatic statement of Beistegui when he writes, “[t]he primary task of the analysis of Dasein

is thus to bring the human back to its concrete soil, back to existence, far away from the metaphysical constructions that have been grafted onto it” (Beistegui 2003:21). This captures the nature of metaphysical postulations which Heidegger opposes and which ensure that Dasein floats and is not in touch with its world, not rooted in the material world as its origin, and therefore living in a deception.

Safranski’s elegant description of ontology as a term that “designates the curious, astonished, alarmed thinking about the fact that I exist and that anything exists at all” (Safranski 2002: 150), implies that he interprets Heidegger to refute a passive conceptualisation of Dasein’s reality. Dasein possesses a double agency which is that it is not only aware of its being but, it is also aware of the being of other beings, and how those beings relate to its being. As such, phenomenological ontology can be roughly understood as an inquiry into the meaning of being as it appears to us in phenomena. This understanding finds expression in the definition of phenomenological ontology which Heidegger provides when he writes, “Being means: to stand in the light, to appear, to enter into unconcealment” (Heidegger 1959:139). Because of the nature of unconcealment, Heidegger envisages that “[p]henomenology is our way of access to what is to be the theme of ontology, and it is our way of giving it demonstrative precision. *Only as phenomenology, is ontology possible*” (Heidegger 1962:60; emphasis added). In other words, Heidegger rejects any attempts to answer the question of the meaning and nature of being (the most fundamental ontological question) that are not based on a close investigation into the phenomenology of the particular way of unconcealment of all existing things.

Heidegger’s phenomenological ontological method, as already argued, is a direct and alternative response to the investigations into ontology by his predecessors, such as the understanding of ontology in theological terms: onto-theology. For Heidegger, his “predecessors had fallen into the trap of thinking of the intentional agent as a substance that happened to have an odd range of properties: mental properties that involved thinking of things and itself, or being conscious and self-conscious” (Okrent 1988:7). This odd range of properties were considered the constitutive elements of human being. For Plato, for instance there was a stringent emphasis on the rational in such a way that he gave little attention to the concrete reality of being as an entity in the world. Recall that Dasein must always be understood against the referential totality which is the world. The world, for Heidegger, in contrast to Plato, is the foundation of all mental properties even if they appear to be independent of the world (Heidegger 1962:122-123). Heidegger has René Descartes’ (1596-1650) ‘methodological

doubt<sup>23</sup> particularly in mind when he alludes to his predecessors' prioritising of cognition in their thematisation of human existence (Heidegger 1962:44; Okrent 1988:7). Heidegger maintains that although the thinking of things and self is important, they must be interrogated within the structure and nature of their being-in-the-world (Heidegger 1962:44). For instance, one cannot know what a wooden table looks like without knowing what wood looks like. Heidegger considers the essence of things within their belonging to the world. Therefore, cognition cannot be conceived of as an isolated entity separated from concrete experiences and lived phenomena. Heidegger would argue that cognitive activities are derived from the collection of experiences, and the intended goal of understanding is always to effect a change within human reality, given the care structure of Dasein, as will be discussed below.

Heidegger's emphatic position on the world as the ground of truth and on belief in the world as the ground of human existence resists the abstraction of human existence into static essences. He shows, through preference for the phenomenological ontological method, a justification of truth (understanding, meaning) that is firmly grounded in the world in its constitutive relation with Dasein. This implies that Heidegger considers the world as the constitutive element for understanding human beings, the truth of human reality, and it is only in relation to the world that the subjective source of meaning is uncovered<sup>24</sup>: in Dasein's worldly existence par excellence. Heidegger's understanding of phenomenology does not go beyond the realities that are found in the world. The being which he seeks to understand, as already highlighted, is one which is aware of itself and the realities around it. This self-awareness which implies consciousness is only conceivable of in the world. In fact, the way Heidegger understands Dasein, implicitly or explicitly, guards against inauthentic<sup>25</sup> ways of trying to uncover human existence, especially religious and other metaphysical ways which might further pull being into concealment. Heidegger uses phenomenology in order to show that human experiences are

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<sup>23</sup> In Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* [1641] (2006), where he shows how the mind comes to the realisation of knowledge, he argues that an important point of departure is to 'doubt' – doubt everything. In his methodological doubt, he realises that there is need to believe in something, a thing which does the doubting. This led him to the claim that the person who doubts cannot be doubted. Therefore, there is a rational agent, the 'I' who cannot be doubted, but all the other things are doubted. It is on this basis that he builds his philosophy. This position is problematic for Heidegger's phenomenology because the point of departure for him is always the world. So Heidegger, contrary to the idea espoused by Descartes, would argue that the context which gave rise to doubt is the starting point. What this implies is that the world itself cannot be doubted, since without the world, no thinking or doubting is even conceivable.

<sup>24</sup> 'Uncovering' is the same as *Aletheia*.

<sup>25</sup> For Heidegger, "[i]nauthenticity characterises a kind of Being into which Dasein can divert itself and has for the most part always diverted itself" (Heidegger 1962:303). In other words, Heidegger maintains that in inauthenticity Dasein is a state in which Dasein is diverted from its true self. The concept is explained in more detail below.

modes of being-in-world. The understanding of the world as the ground of being influences everything about how Heidegger conceives of human existence as Dasein.

### 1.3 Being and Dasein

We have already discussed that the word Dasein means ‘being-there’ which implies that something exists, something is (Heidegger 1959:92). Rather than treating this ‘is’ as a mere predicate, Heidegger gives the word ‘is’ an ontological interpretation which renders being or existence active and alive in the world. It is from this viewpoint that he further argues that Dasein always understands itself in terms of its existence, that is, in terms of a possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself. Heidegger suggests Dasein has either chosen these possibilities itself, or got itself into them, or grown up in them already (Heidegger 1962:33). Thus, a crucial aspect of Dasein is that it never merely exists in a passive sense, but that instead it takes up an active stance with regard to its own existing.

I have already discussed in detail that world plays a significant role in Heidegger’s understanding of Dasein. This is also why he presents an account of Dasein as always more than consciousness only. He does this in direct opposition to the philosophical tradition, in which consciousness was understood as the cornerstone, hallmark and foundation of human existence. To return to the example above: Descartes “... provides a central illustration of the incorrect view of ontology that has arisen since the early Greeks and that still blocks our access to the problem of being” (Heidegger quoted in Rockmore 1999:7). Descartes’ ‘methodological doubt’<sup>26</sup> attempts to doubt everything, including that one has the ability to doubt, and also to doubt the basis on which one doubts. We have seen that Heidegger shows that Descartes violates the necessary ground of his own doubting, and “to attempt to violate this background condition” as Taylor argues, “is to fall into incoherence” (Taylor 1993:331). For Heidegger, “... the Cartesian position epitomizes a fallacious form of metaphysics arising out of a fateful turn away from the original Greek insights concerning being” (Rockmore 1999:7). This is because for Descartes the mind which refuses to doubt only itself, possesses truth(s) which he attributes to a ‘perfect being’ namely, God. It is this mind, influenced by God, which renders

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<sup>26</sup> Descartes’s project was to rethink knowledge (all that we claim to know). He maintains that the only way to arrive at true knowledge is to begin by doubting everything in order to provide a foundation for true assertion (See *Meditations on First Philosophy* 1647).

meaning to things and finally makes knowledge possible again – a clear example of onto-theological thinking.

Against Descartes' position, for Heidegger, "[m]eaning is supplied by Dasein when Dasein projects a horizon which gets filled by entities. Meaning is found only so long as there is Dasein" (Caputo 1987:71). Heidegger does not isolate Dasein from its being-in-the-world, an expression which he uses to designate the existential fact that Dasein is a being whose existence in the world is a necessary condition for its being. To talk about Dasein outside the world is to undermine its 'worldhood', and thus an indispensable and constitutive element. The result of separating Dasein and its constitutive world must therefore be obfuscation, erasure and forgetfulness. Safranski argues that when Heidegger reinstates the special priority of the world, he validates the claim that 'the wealth of life-worldly references disappears' when the world is objectivised. The objectivizing attitude "'de-experiences' experience and 'de-worlds' the world we encounter" (Safranski 2002:146). This objectivising and theoretical attitude towards the world is also what he describes in "What is Metaphysics?" as the stance of the scientist who believes he can relate himself directly to beings themselves. Such an attitude forgets that beings only appear as meaningful to Dasein, and within a constitutive web of relations called the world. The only way to make intelligible the existence of Dasein is to place it in the context of the kind of agency that is appropriate to it (Taylor 1993:328), which is the world of everyday, lived reality. It is within, and only within, the context of the world that the intelligibility of Dasein is made possible; the world is the interpretational surrounding of Dasein.

It is noteworthy to state here that Heidegger's position is different from positivism and empiricism. The distinction is explicit in Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism" (1947) where he states that "[t]hinking is not merely *l'engagement dans l'action* [engagement in the action] for and by beings, in the sense of the actuality of the present situation. Thinking is *l'engagement* by and for the truth of Being" (Heidegger 1947:240). This position, different from a positivist understanding of thinking for the purpose of action, is changed into a searching, questioning thinking-action for the sake of the truth of being; Heidegger rejects a purely instrumental understanding of thinking. Put differently, although for Heidegger understanding and thinking are always rooted in Dasein's situatedness in the world and therefore always involve care, thrownness and projection, proper thinking characteristic of the search for truth always allows more aspects of reality to appear than does merely positivist or instrumental thinking. Heidegger's focus is to dismantle traditional philosophical tendencies to prioritise thinking

over the world surrounding Dasein in the sense of assuming that thinking can proceed separately from the world. With this, Heidegger introduces an understanding of truth that considers the question about the meaning of being not merely as a theoretical and scientific endeavour, but as an endeavour into the truth of being within the horizon of its actual existence in the world. In other words, our initial encounter with the world is not primarily theoretical, objectivising and instrumental stances towards the world are all derivative of a more primordial orientation towards it. The aforementioned also brings clarity to how Heidegger's phenomenology differs from positivism and empiricism. While empiricism focuses merely on that which immediately appears based on scientific experimentation, phenomenology seeks to uncover the hidden (that which is not immediately apparent) within what appears to us, and as we have shown, phenomenology more than any other orientation, reveals the invisible within the visible and the nothingness within which beings appear as themselves. Heidegger's position is that science overlooks existence because of the onto-theological emphasis on the mind/reality dualistic distinctions and the primacy of mind over matter (Heidegger 1962:30).

As opposed to an understanding of existence within the framework of the mind/reality duality, Heidegger advances a comprehensive understanding of existence solely within the sphere of horizon. For Heidegger the horizon plays a significant role in understanding the question of being: "... Dasein's Being becomes ontologically transparent in a comprehensive way only within the horizon in which the Being of entities other than Dasein – and this means even of those which are neither ready-to-hand nor present-at-hand but just 'subsist' – has been clarified" (Heidegger 1962:382). The major position for Heidegger is that being-in-the-world is the horizon of Dasein. In the Preface of *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1962:19), the translators (Macquarrie and Robinson) in a footnote alerts us to the fact that for Heidegger in *Being and Time*, a horizon is not something "which we may widen or extend or go beyond"; instead, he seems "to think of it rather as something which we can neither widen nor go beyond, but which provides the limits for certain intellectual activities performed 'within' it". In the Preface itself, Heidegger refers to time "as the possible horizon for any understanding whatsoever of Being" (Heidegger 1962:19), and thus he sees time or the temporal as a necessary limit for any interpretation of being.

Even when Heidegger addresses transcendence, he presents it within the framework of Dasein's temporal horizon that is being-in-the-world. Heidegger refers to transcendence as Dasein's possibilities (Heidegger 1962:62). For Heidegger, transcendence depends on how the

real is ontologically grasped (Heidegger 1962:246). He also maintains that “[e]very disclosure of Being as the *transcendens* is transcendent knowledge. *Phenomenological truth (the disclosedness of Being) is veritas transcendentalis*” (Heidegger 1962:62; emphasis as in original). It is important to note here that ‘transcendence’ is not used much in *Being and Time*, but it appears more in Heidegger’s writings in the late 1920s and early 1930s (Moran 2014:499). However, I will draw on Dermot Moran’s article, “What Does Heidegger Mean by the Transcendence of Dasein?” (2014). Moran notes that Heidegger attempts to rethink an understanding of transcendence by disentangling it from a Platonic kind of understanding that focuses on a dualistic interpretation (Moran, 2014: 493). Heidegger does this in order to avoid the pitfalls associated with traditional metaphysics (Moran 2014:493). One of which is Husserl’s conception of “the human being as a layer of body soul and spirit” (Moran 2014:494). While appropriating Husserl’s understanding of transcendence as an event towards and in the world, Heidegger seeks a new, non-subjectivist, path in his philosophical rendition of transcendence. Heidegger also wrestles the thinking of transcendence away from the timeless and beyond the Christian-platonic realm (Moran 2014:495; 497) by proposing a phenomenologically grounded meaning.

The crux of the issue is that Heidegger seeks to understand how Dasein ontologically transcends (Moran 2014:497). In other words, Heidegger seeks to provide a response to the question, how can transcendence become part of ontology when we address the question of the being of Dasein? The very fact of this question shows that Heidegger strikes out on a different path from the traditional notions of transcendence. While referring to Heidegger’s 1925 *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs* lectures, Moran notes that for Heidegger “Dasein already transcends towards the world” (Moran 2014:506). Thus, by showing the temporal nature of Heidegger’s understanding of transcendence, Heidegger establishes a break from traditional understanding of transcendence as the horizon of temporality.

Heidegger recasts the problem of transcendence by emphasizing the question about the ontological meaning of being and thematising a transcendence with a horizontal foundation (Heidegger 1962:366). The world is the ground of transcendence that Heidegger considers an alternative to the traditional understanding. The world is the ground of that which Dasein wishes, and thus transcends itself towards its projections (Moran 2014:508). Heidegger maintains that “[t]he transcendence of the world has a temporal foundation; and by reason of this, the world-historical is, in every case, already ‘objectively’ there in the historicizing of

existing Being-in-the-world, *without being grasped historiologically*” (Heidegger 1962:441; emphasis in original). It is within temporal interpretation that transcendence as an ever-present horizon for human existence can be properly accessed. With this, one can conclude that transcendence for Heidegger “... cannot be understood in any religious-Christian-Platonic sense towards a non-sensory realm or involving any denial or renunciation of the world” (Moran 2014:509). Heidegger establishes a finite understanding of transcendence as projection, world, and thrownness.

Heidegger favours a phenomenology of lived experiences in the world, which are partly based on the correlates of Dasein’s concerned involvement with the world as part of the totality of the world (Taylor 1993:332). Dasein’s relationship with the world provides an understanding of what it is concerned with. It is the concerned connection or embeddedness of Dasein that forms the totality of the world that is experienced by human beings. The way Dasein always relates with things is largely based on its concerns, and it is in concern (e.g. desires and wants) that Dasein’s true self is revealed (Heidegger 1962:386). Heidegger introduces the theme of care or concern in *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1962:83) as follows:

Dasein’s facticity is such that its Being-in-the-world has always dispersed itself or even split itself up into definite ways of Being-in. The multiplicity of these is indicated by the following examples: having to do with something, producing something, attending to something and looking after it, making use of something, giving something up and letting it go, undertaking, accomplishing, evincing, interrogating, considering, discussing, determining. All these ways of Being-in have concern as their kind of Being.

Dasein, according to Heidegger, is constantly influenced by its concerns and cares/plans and desires for itself in the ways it relates to all other beings, inclusive of other humans. This makes the world of Dasein meaningful in a vivid and accessible way. To be sure, the being of Dasein is made visible as care, and Dasein exists in the world as care or concern, which implies multiple ways of being tied to the world and others in the world, and definitely not only or mainly in pragmatic and instrumental ways. Projects and projection are defined in the general Introduction as humans’ search for self-actualisation in the pursuit of desires. Human projects always determine how human beings relate to things in the world, and thus how things in the

world obtain meaning for Dasein. This is why for Heidegger, Dasein refers to 'human existence' (Inwood 1999:9) in the world.

It is safe to deduce from the above analysis that Dasein finds itself in and of the world, and it projects in the world and it is in projection that the world comes out of concealment and becomes intelligible. As already highlighted in the earlier analysis of projection, we find that Dasein does not project inwardly, in the sense that it seeks to get in touch with 'other-worldly' reality, it always projects outward – 'this-worldly' (Heidegger 1959:292). Internal projection is always in connection with outward projects. Heidegger understands projection as Dasein's way of pressing forward into possibilities. Heidegger writes, "... one's Being towards possibilities shows itself for the most part as *wishing*. In the wishing, Dasein projects its Being upon possibilities which not only have not been taken hold of in concern, but whose fulfilment has not been even been pondered over and expected" (Heidegger 1962:239). It is in Dasein's projection that being-with becomes an important theme. This is because in projection, Dasein is not restricted to its world, it opens itself to be encountered by others and for others to encounter it. As such, Dasein experiences its being-with other beings. This therefore suggests that being is constantly in relation with other beings – 'being-with'. "... Dasein is never merely an individual, for Being-in-the-world is always Being-with, and historicising is always cohistoricizing" (Caputo 1987:88). Historicising is always cohistoricising because history is always with others; history is never created in isolation. Every history is always a collection of Dasein; it meets and affects not only other Daseins but also entities in the world (Heidegger 1962:185).

Heidegger suggests that there is a relational nexus which exists among Daseins. This nexus, one might argue, necessarily implies relationships with others. This makes the existential reality of being-with-others nullify the possibility of solipsism as an ontological possibility. Solipsism is an ontological impossibility as it can only be understood or made sense of as a deficient mode of being-with (Scott 1990:108). To think of oneself as alone is considered unfathomable by Heidegger as presence does not necessarily mean the physical reality of other Daseins. The presence of other Daseins is not the sole determinant of presence. For Heidegger, the presence of things created by others, for instance, a piece of furniture, is a deficient presence of the other(s) in the form of the furniture (Heidegger 1967:21). The point Heidegger makes is well articulated by James Feibleman when he maintains that if one is to lock oneself in an internal world where s/he determines everything, this internal world cannot be isolated from

an external world from which the internal world is shut off (Feibleman 1951:75). The internal is always related to the external, which is why it seems to me internal projection is also possibility, because even that is worldly and in that sense external. This is why for Heidegger the use of things created by other Daseins, external to us, is important in the understanding of the internal. These things are extensions of those who created them.

Even when we talk about ‘Others’, Heidegger argues that “[b]y ‘Others’ we do not mean everyone else but me – those over against whom the ‘I’ stands out. They are rather those from whom, for the most part, one does not distinguish oneself – those among whom one is too” (Heidegger 1962:154). As Safranski puts it, “*Mit-sein-mit-anderen* (being-together-with others): Dasein always already finds itself in a joint situation with others” (Safranski 2002:154). Safranski brilliantly explains Heidegger’s point when he writes, “[m]an goes into himself and loses the world, and he goes into the world and loses himself” (Safranski 2002:160). Safranski’s understanding of Heidegger’s conceptualisation of Dasein as being-with proposes that Dasein’s relationship with the world and with others is mutually constitutive. It also refutes, one might argue, an other-worldly self-preoccupation that dispels relationship with other Daseins as trivial or external to human existence. As opposed to a self-sufficient understanding, Heidegger holds that Dasein is always in-the-world-with-others and this configuration is essential to its self-understanding. The nature of Dasein is one whose authenticity is not entirely dependent on itself; instead, it plays out in relation with other human beings.

The relationships that we have with other people play a significant role in the way we understand the world. Heidegger, throughout his philosophical enquiry asks: what is the meaning of being (Frede 1993:42)? Let us look at Heidegger’s own understanding of meaning in *Being and Time*: “Meaning is that wherein the understandability [Verstehbarkeit] of something maintains itself – even that of something which does not come into view explicitly and thematically” (Heidegger in Caputo 1987:172). The understanding of things is revealed in meaning. This understanding of meaning as a starting point presents a clear ground for engaging Dasein, especially from a Heideggerian perspective. Heidegger’s point of departure, implicit in his understanding of the meaning of human beings, differs in crucial ways from those of his predecessors in the traditional philosophical interpretation. The latter took as their point of departure an understanding of being as the ‘most universal and the emptiest of concepts’, ‘indefinable’, and ‘self-evident’ (Heidegger 1962:22). Heidegger considers these

categorisations as not adequate for the understanding of human existence. Heidegger refers to the understanding of existence as presented by Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Immanuel Kant, and Hegel (Heidegger 1962: 22-24). For Heidegger, according to Simon Critchley, ontology is not a contemplative theoretical endeavour, rather it is an undertaking that is grounded on the existential engagement of human realities in the world (Critchley 2004:9). According to Heidegger, Plato and Aristotle marked an intellectual period which plunged our philosophical tradition into the religious metaphysical oblivion of Dasein (Caputo 1993:278). By dismissing the need to rigorously thematise Dasein on the reason that everything around us points to its reality, Heidegger's predecessors eschewed the thought of making Dasein into an issue and an explicit question. In reaction to this tradition, Heidegger points to human beings' relationship with 'everydayness' as worthy of our sustained focus in the quest to understand the reality of human existence (Frede 1993:53-54). Things in the world do not tell us what they are and what role they play in the lives of human beings. Heidegger's philosophy seeks to present the structure of Dasein [human being] in such a way that it illuminates the reality of the things in the world. It is with this aim in mind that Heidegger embarks on the voyage of understanding human beings as situated in the world. In other words, Dasein (the structure and meaning of human existence) is the gateway to an understanding of being, because it is in and through Dasein that the world, and existence as such, is disclosed.

Heidegger refers to the question about the meaning of Dasein as a 'fundamental ontological' (Heidegger 1962:34) question because it is the most basic, yet most complex question about being (Dostal 2012:153). The question of Dasein is complex because the different structures of existence are not immediately apparent; they need to be critically engaged in order for one to understand their true nature – the task undertaken in *Being and Time*. The complexity of the question is the reason why thematising Dasein is a necessary endeavour. As already highlighted, Heidegger was critical of Edmund Husserl whose phenomenology was instrumental in crafting Heidegger's own phenomenological ontology. Heidegger argues that within Husserl's understanding, Husserl differentiates between human consciousness and human existence in such a way that they do not depend on each other. For Husserl, in contrast, human consciousness does not depend entirely on the world. Heidegger therefore criticizes Husserl for removing Dasein from being and from the world and turning human beings into (disinterested) spectators of some kind. Against this, Heidegger maintains that human being is always part of being more generally: "... we do not deal with Being as with an object faced by us as spectators" (Vycinas 1961: 7). Heidegger seeks to reawaken and to re-engage the

question about the meaning of Dasein in a way that human beings see themselves as belonging to this world and not as an abstract entity removed from, or standing over against, the world. Contrary to the opinions of his predecessors, Heidegger seeks to give definition to the being which was considered indefinable; to show the obscurity in that which was considered self-evident, and to eradicate the dogmas created in the understanding of the original character of being (Heidegger 1962: 21). He thus attempts to reach back through a historical tradition of forgetfulness and obfuscation of the meaning of being (through metaphysical and onto-theological thinking habits) in order to retrieve a lost or forgotten, truer understanding which did greater justice to the nature of being.

This is why Heidegger prioritises the world as the place of human existence and the only place where the interpretation of human reality can take place. The different modes of Dasein must be explored within its praxial situatedness. This appears to be implied in Heidegger's remark when he writes, "[t]he question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself" (Heidegger 1962:33). The implication of Heidegger's claim can be rearticulated as follows: the only way that one can unravel the complexities of the meaning of being, is to look at what it means to actively and practically exist.

The nature of being which is investigated in this project is that being which is not simply ontic, but one whose ontology is equally an issue: this being is Dasein and is ontico-ontological. 'Ontic' is a term Heidegger uses to designate everything that exists (Safranski 2002:150). However, rather than merely or only ontic, human beings are also 'ontological' because of the curiosity, wonder and the recognition of not only one's existence but also the existence of other human beings (Safranski 2002: 150). This self-consciousness is what distinguishes human Dasein from other ontic realities (things), and renders Dasein as the place where being unfolds. It is important to further emphasise that "[a] human being is Dasein because it is 'there', in-the-world not at some specific place, but there in a sense prior to and presupposed by the differentiation of place" (Inwood 1999: 9). In a sense, then, human existence opens up a space or clearing in the world (prior to any specific space) in which being may appear. As such, human beings are the custodians of being, for it is ostensibly only for human beings that being can be made present: "Man is Dasein" (Vycinas 1961:25). The nature of human being is similar to things because of their ontic nature, but different on an ontological level. Human beings are ontic like other things because they share similar attributes (such as taking up space, for instance), but human beings are ontological because they are conscious. Human being is thus

a special kind of entity, manifesting a special and unique type of existence. It is an existence which is aware of, and which inquiries into, existence itself. Yet, the ontic sheds light on the true nature of Dasein: “[w]ithout things [the ontic], Dasein can never be revealed as the giver of meanings; and without Dasein, things are void of meaning” (Vycinas 1961:27). The ontico-ontological structure of Dasein is essential to the analysis of its existence in the world.

The fundamental existence of Dasein is in its ‘thrownness’ [*Werfen*], an expression which Heidegger uses to designate Dasein’s facticity as a being that exists (Heidegger 1962:174). The phenomenological character of ‘being thrown into the world’, or of thrownness into a concrete situation, does not by and of itself point to, or presuppose, someone or something who does the throwing. Nonetheless, what is the nature of the Dasein which discovers its own nature as a being that is thrown? Heidegger’s notion of human thrownness is based purely on a phenomenological ontological conception of being as experienced in the world. He does not designate any metaphysical force or ‘Being’ as responsible for the existence of being. What Heidegger emphasises with his use of the term thrownness is that Dasein finds itself in existence without any *a priori* knowledge of its being or knowledge of what is going to be experienced in existence. It is simply thrown into existence and discovers itself in its thrownness, in the midst of coping with life and living. Heidegger does not allude here to any ahistorical or other-worldly understanding of Dasein. Dasein is simply thrown, in the sense of becoming aware of and through its always already being in and of the world.

This is why for Heidegger thrownness is ‘facticity’, which, according to William D. Blattner, is the name that Heidegger gives to Dasein’s existence (Heidegger 1962:174; Blattner 1999:36-37). Dasein’s facticity lies in the very reality of its existence. Heidegger’s phenomenology draws attention to the reality of being as understood in the world (Heidegger 1962:121). It is therefore only as phenomenon that the structure of Dasein can be grasped. It is important here to distinguish, as Heidegger does, between ‘earth’ and ‘world’ because it pertains to the thrownness of Dasein. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger presents earth as the ground within which the world of Dasein emerges (Heidegger 1962:242). In contrast, Heidegger understands the world as individual circumstance or situation of Dasein (Heidegger 1962:315). For instance, a family unit, job, career, group, qualify as a world of a person. The thrownness of Dasein plays a significant role in its projection and therefore, its nature can only be understood from within this thrownness, the context and mood in which it finds itself. The thrownness of Dasein plays

a significant role in its projection and therefore, its nature can only be understood from within this thrownness, the context and mood in which it finds itself.

If he were to talk about a thrower, Heidegger would be delving into speculative philosophy about the existence of God. The thrower, if there is one at all, is actually of no concern to Heidegger, because he prioritises a ‘this-worldly’ ontological interpretation of human existence as opposed to ‘other-worldly’ speculations (Heidegger 1962:292). Heidegger limits his conceptualisation to Dasein only insofar as it pertains to how it is experienced in the world. Heidegger maintains a phenomenological stance in his theorisation about Dasein and strongly refutes a religious position: “We understand ‘being’ not with regard to the ‘thou art,’” (Heidegger 1959:92). Heidegger focuses on being as Dasein – being-there. Heidegger’s analysis of being is limited to existence only in so far as existence is directed to the ‘things in themselves’ as they can be perceived phenomenologically. Cognition, although important in processing phenomena, can sometimes distort the reality of these phenomena. True cognition can only be attained through adequate understanding of the reality of the phenomena as they are experienced in the world. Heidegger is interested in birth and death only in a worldly sense, saying that “[e]verydayness is precisely that Being that is between birth and death” (Heidegger 1962:276). In other words, there is nothing for Heidegger to be said about the possibility of ‘human existence’ either before birth or after death, for such things will be unworldly and therefore no longer human. It is therefore only in this difference, i.e. between birth and death, that the true nature of Dasein can be understood (Beistegui 2003:9). This is because it is only in existence, within the situatedness in the world that human beings are accessible, and can be made sense of. The situatedness of Dasein in the world involves engaging with the world through projection.

Beistegui underscores two important dimensions in the understanding of Heidegger’s usage of the word ‘projection’:

Man is not an ob-ject, a thing thrown into the world in such a way that it stands opposite or before – an obstance. Nor does man stand within the world as a subject, as a being thrown under the world, sustaining it, underlying it. The stance of man is not that of a substance. Rather, if man is indeed thrown into the world, it is in the twofold sense of being thrown into the world, located and situated within it, in such a way that the world of existence is always a specific

concrete world, a concrete, and also, at the same time, throwing itself beyond itself, pro-jecting itself into a realm of possibilities and projects, in such a way that he is not simply here, but always out there, ahead of itself not in a different world, in the world of ideas or in the after-world, but at the horizon, where a world begins to take shape and a destiny to unfold – the horizon of pure possibility (Beistegui 2003:16).

The first important dimension that Beistegui addresses is the fact that Heidegger understands thrownness as a facticity that is inherent in projection. The second dimension Beistegui identifies is of projection as a reality that is always beyond itself as a realm of possibilities. The reality of human existence is such that in its facticity, it is always ahead of itself in its projections. It is as projection that Dasein is to be properly understood. This projection is one dimension of being thrown into the world, i.e. where Dasein finds itself at any point in time and space always profoundly limits and shapes, even while opening up, the nature of its projection, in search of possibilities. Safranski argues that "... this [projection] is a self-mystification of Dasein which, so long as it lives, is never finished, entire, or completed, as any object might be, but always remains open for the future, full of possibilities. Dasein (being here) implies being possible (*Möglich-sein*)" (Safranski 2002:150). Safranski further maintains that Heidegger's understanding is better expressed by Jean-Paul Sartre in the following words: "[m]ake something of what we were made into" (Sartre quoted in Safranski 2002:150). If it is the case that we are to make something of what we are made into, it is valid to argue that Heidegger presents an anti-metaphysical understanding of not only the coming into being of Dasein, but also the worldly (situated) comprehension of being which is arguably necessarily characterised by thrownness and projection together, i.e. by 'thrown projection'. The understanding of projection as presented by Heidegger is anti-metaphysical in nature as his understanding of projection is one that is purely phenomenological. Put differently, the world as the horizon of what is present is the only condition for projecting beyond oneself and the nature of projection is furthermore temporal. The temporal dimension will be discussed later in detail because it feeds into the way history and time are to be understood phenomenologically.

As already highlighted, it is within the world of human projection that human beings experience the inter-relational nexus which Heidegger alludes to in his use of the expression

‘Being-with’. I look at being-with as it illustrates authentic or inauthentic<sup>27</sup> co-relation in the world. Heidegger argues that inauthentic existence or inauthentic Dasein is one which does not take responsibility for itself; one which does not, in other words, own itself. He articulates this point when he writes, “*Gerede* is the everyday, inauthentic version of *Rede* precisely because of the failure to take personal responsibility that is its essence. To come into an authentic practical relation to one’s commitments is to take on responsibility for justifying them, rather than deferring it or evading it by appeal to what everyone (*das Man*) says” (Heidegger 1962:164; Mendieta 2007:109). As already highlighted, being-in-the-world is always in relation with other Daseins. This fundamentally relational attribute of human existence also reflects in the way human beings relate with the world. Dasein’s status of being-with makes “[i]ndividual closeness and individual moods require a public clearing and that they reveal the situation and the things in it under some public aspect, that is to say an aspect available to others too” (Caputo 1987:169). In other words, being-with as a dimension of being-in-the-world entails that our personal existence also always has some public dimension. Acknowledging the positive dimension of being-with, Heidegger also highlights a major disadvantage of this relation: Dasein has the tendency of interpreting itself from the viewpoint of other Daseins. Heidegger refers to this tendency as a certain kind of relationship in which one gives oneself over to the public, thereby tending towards inauthenticity.

Heidegger argues that anticipatory resoluteness plays a major role in the way death is understood in authentic existence. I interpret this to mean that in Dasein’s recognition of its being-towards-death, its projections are authentic and resolutely executed. The ‘they’ plays an important role in Heidegger’s conception of death. This is why for Heidegger, “... Dasein puts itself in the position of losing itself in ‘they’ as regards a distinctive potentiality-for-Being which belongs to Dasein’s ownmost Self” (Heidegger 1962:297). In the perspective of the ‘they’, death gets understood as actual and its character as a possibility gets concealed (Heidegger 1962:297). One finds here that the ‘they’ does not permit Dasein’s anxiety and resoluteness in the face of death; instead the ‘they’ covers over these aspects of death that mark it as one’s ownmost possibility and portray it as merely one fact amongst others. Considering the potential influence of the ‘they’, Heidegger goes on to argue that Dasein can only be authentic towards death when Dasein understands death away from the interpretation of the

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<sup>27</sup> Heidegger defines ‘inauthenticity’ as Dasein’s failure to stand on its own (Heidegger 1962:166). What is meant here is the lack of will or ability to decide for oneself. Authenticity is the opposite of this position.

‘they’, namely as its ownmost possibility, as the ever-present and constitutive horizon of its own being.

Heidegger also engages the ‘they’ in relation to Dasein’s resoluteness. Heidegger maintains that “When resolute, Dasein has brought itself back from falling, and has done so precisely in order to be more authentically ‘there’ in the ‘moment of *vision*’ as regards the Situation which has been disclosed” (Heidegger 1962:376). The world of Dasein is always in search of disclosure. Heidegger understands the ‘moment of vision’ only in so far as it is understood within temporality (Heidegger 1962:479).<sup>28</sup> When the world discloses itself to Dasein, Heidegger refers to this experience as a ‘moment of vision’, an awakening to self-authenticity. I consider it important here to refer to the relation between resoluteness and ‘fate’ because of the connection that exists between them. Heidegger writes that “Fate does not first arise from the clashing together of events and circumstances. Even one who is irresolute gets driven about by these - more so than one who has chosen; and yet he can ‘have’ no fate” (Heidegger 1962:436). Heidegger’s understanding of fate and resoluteness may not be interpreted as one of passiveness and activeness respectively. Resoluteness is an active engagement in finding oneself, self-authenticity, in events and circumstances. Just like Nietzsche, Heidegger sees fate as an authentic, free and resolute understanding of one’s history, submitting oneself to what is disclosed in a moment of vision (Heidegger 1962:438). To be sure, the emphasis here is that Heidegger challenges the influence that the ‘they’ (the public) has on the Dasein’s desire for self-realisation.

Heidegger refutes inauthentic publicness because Dasein must not remain passive in the world, but must engage actively in ensuring that publicness does not result in ‘tranquilisation’ (Heidegger 1962:222) within a changing being-in-the-world and its being-towards-death. Implicit in his argument is the assertion that individual human existence must not simply submit its will to the group; life, for Heidegger, must be lived with a significant degree of subjectivism. He refutes ‘publicness’ because it “proximally controls every way in which the world and Dasein get interpreted, and it is always right – not because ... it avails itself to some transparency on the part of Dasein which it has explicitly appropriated, but because it is insensitive ... to genuineness and thus never gets to the heart of the matter” (Heidegger 1962:165). I interpret Heidegger’s understanding of publicness as a part of the ‘theyself’ that

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<sup>28</sup> This nuance is important because of its potential religious interpretation.

undermines one's individuality. Theyself refers to anonymous groups of people, which cannot be identified. The impact that the public and its anonymous opinions has on an individual can be detrimental to self-understanding. For instance, a group's influence on an individual, can negatively affect his self-image. For Heidegger, this is not necessarily the case; however, he maintains that it must not be in such a way that it tranquilises a being. This is because a tranquilised existence leads to inauthentic being-with. In Chapter Three of this project, a conceptual link will be made between inauthentic existence (*das Man*, following the crowd) and religious fundamentalist violence.

Furthermore, Heidegger, in presenting the differences between solicitude (a kind of care and concern that reveals being-with) and *das Man* which means the anonymous 'they', argues that solicitous Being-with does not remove the individuality of a being but allows it to actualise its potentiality-for-being.<sup>29</sup> Solicitous being-with is a presence with others which attempts to understand what the collective is concerned with and to fully realise an understanding of this concern (Heidegger 1962:162). At the same time, however, solicitude for Heidegger is different from concern in that concern is a more personal relationship one has towards a thing (Heidegger 1962:237). In short, one may then say that solicitude is an authentically concerned stance towards the collective, in which the individuality of Dasein is nevertheless not compromised. In contrast with the attitude of solicitude, *das Man*, which in most cases does not have a subjective 'I' of responsibility, always supplies the answer to the question of the 'who' of everyday Dasein; *das Man* is in fact the 'nobody' to whom every Dasein has already to some extent surrendered itself in being-among-one-another (Safranski 2002:162). The anonymous 'They' or 'nobody' of *das Man* therefore represents an inauthentic aspect of being-with. "'Authenticity,' for Heidegger, means nothing outside the possibility of appropriating what is most proper to oneself, for being or existing this possibility to the full" (Beistegui 2003:29). The crux of the issue here is that Heidegger advances a strong sense of agency in his conception of authenticity. Put differently, he advocates for a situation where actions and decisions are not driven by prejudiced acts, which are marked by an inclination to follow the crowd. This position is explicit in Heidegger's assertion when he writes:

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<sup>29</sup>Heidegger uses this expression to refer to human being's ability to aspire and desire for things that will better the state of their existence in the world. *Potentiality-for-Being* has to do with that which is possible (out-standing) for Dasein but has not yet become actual (Beistegui 2003:27). Potentiality-for-being cannot be understood as removed from what Heidegger refers to as 'projection'. Projection is the ability to actualise potentiality-for-being, or what Karl Löwith refers to as 'capacity-for-being' (Löwith 1998:42).

The ‘they’ even hides the manner in which it has tacitly relieved Dasein of the burden of explicitly *choosing* these possibilities. It remains indefinite who has ‘really’ done the choosing. So Dasein make no choices, gets carried along by the nobody, and thus ensnares itself in inauthenticity. This process can be reversed only if Dasein specifically brings itself back to itself from its lostness in the ‘they’. But this bringing-back must have this kind of Being *by the neglect of which* Dasein has lost itself in inauthenticity. When Dasein thus brings itself back [Das Sichzurückholen] from the ‘they’, the they-self is modified in an existentiell manner so that it becomes *authentic* Being-one’s-Self (Heidegger 1962:312-313).

By appropriating the position of the they, Dasein yields to the views of the they thus ensnaring itself to the dictates of the they which leads to inauthenticity. It is important to note here that for Heidegger, Dasein does not lose or diminish in state/nature even when it is inauthentic. The ontological status of Dasein is not stripped off the moment it is considered inauthentic. It is only inauthentic in so far as its execution of agency is concerned. In fact, Heidegger maintains that this inauthentic state can be reversed when Dasein becomes itself.

A further aspect of inauthenticity might be noted in the attempt to use others to advance personal motives, or in allowing oneself to be used to advance other Daseins’ motives. Things in the world, as already explained, are viewed from the standpoint of ‘for-the-sake-of’; in other words, things are conceived from the mind frame of equipmentality for the purposes of Dasein’s project(s). As hinted earlier, Dasein does things to the extent that it allows or lets entities be encountered as ‘ready-to-hand’ (Heidegger 1962:199). What Heidegger calls the ‘oblivion of being’ (*Seinsvergessenheit*) is to inauthentically treat being (human being) as present-at-hand or to allow oneself to be treated as such. Ready-to-hand is an expression that Heidegger uses to refer to “objects that can be explored from a theoretical attitude” (Safranski 2002:156). For Heidegger, “Dasein itself, however, is neither something present-at-hand nor ready-to-hand but ‘existence.’ To exist means having a self-relation, having to adopt an attitude toward oneself and to one’s being. How does man become aware of his own being? Heidegger’s answer: ‘mood’” (Safranski 2002:158). For Heidegger, mood is the physical state of our feeling, a ‘state of mind’ (Inwood 1999:131; Safranski 2002:158). The response to individual state of mind is related to what Heidegger refers to when he talks about authenticity. Heidegger’s point is not to be read as advocating for strict subjectivism, which has no room for

others. Heidegger recognises the inescapability of intersubjective relations, but he bases authenticity on an individual's ability to make decisions for oneself (Heidegger 1962:313). Authentic existence thus emphasises ipseity (selfhood) amidst the 'They's' [*das Man*'s] insistence on tranquilising the 'self' and others (Heidegger 1962:297). Heidegger suggests here that it is important to maintain an individual, subjective stance in a world where people want you to be who they want you to be. Having now introduced Dasein or human existence in terms of the key notions of solicitude, an active stance, authenticity, worldliness, and thrown projection, in order to show how Dasein is for Heidegger the place or clearing where the meaning of being unfolds or is disclosed, it is now time to show how none of this can be properly understood without reference to the crucial aspect of time and temporality.

#### 1.4 Being in Time

Heidegger makes clear that being must be understood in terms of time. He says (Heidegger, 1962:38-9):

We shall point to temporality as the meaning of the Being of that entity which we call 'Dasein'. ... Time must be brought to light – and genuinely conceived – as the horizon for all understanding of Being and for any way of interpreting it. In order for us to discern this, time needs to be explicated primordially as the horizon for the understanding of Being, and in terms of temporality as the Being of Dasein, which understands Being. This task as a whole requires that the conception of time thus obtained shall be distinguished from the way in which it is ordinarily understood.

Heidegger develops his ontological account of time against the backdrop of Aristotle's understanding of time, which he relates to the 'ordinary' understanding of time as counting (Heidegger 1962:473). An important observation in Heidegger's analysis of the Aristotelian and Husserlian notions of time is the identification of the understanding of dating in terms of the heavenly body which sheds forth the day and the night as a way of designing time and cognition respectively (Heidegger 1962:466; 1962:457). This understanding, according to Heidegger, characterises philosophers' understanding of time since Aristotle (Heidegger 1962:466). In other words, time is viewed as independent from Dasein in the sense that it does not need the phenomenological world to reveal itself. Heidegger observes that "[w]here time

is taken as being in itself, it gets allotted pre-eminently to the ‘soul’” (Heidegger 1962:457). When the philosophical tradition anchors the nature of time in the soul rather than in the world, Heidegger accuses it of an onto-theological treatment of time. Heidegger critiques the traditional understanding of time which he refers to as an “ordinary understanding of time” (Heidegger 1962:379; 473), in two ways. First, he critiques an understanding of ordinary time which shows itself in a sequence of nows; here time is understood as a succession, a “flowing streams” of “nows” (Heidegger 1962:474). Secondly, Heidegger critiques an understanding of time that distinguishes between time and eternity. Here Heidegger challenges Plato who refers to time as the “image of eternity” which suggests that temporality is derived from a higher state of eternal time (Heidegger 1962:39). This understanding, according to Heidegger, dominated Greek philosophy up until early contemporary philosophy.

Against the tradition, Heidegger insists that time has a phenomenological character and must therefore be understood through phenomenological interpretation, experientially, and that this investigation will help to correct the ‘ordinary’ conception of time, which is fundamentally flawed. Two questions were particularly fascinating for Heidegger in his analysis of Aristotle’s view of time: “[d]oes time belong among beings or non-being?” and “[w]here and how is time?”. The second was the major preoccupation of Aristotle, and the first question, although significant, was largely ignored. According to Heidegger, Aristotle addresses the second question by equating time “... with the rotation of the heavens and with the *nous*. Time is not bound up in a single motion and a definite place. Time is in a certain way everywhere and yet it is in each instance only in the soul” (Heidegger 1988:236). The lack of clarity in the Aristotelian understanding of time certainly requires more probing. What correlation can there be or is there between the soul and time, and what is the nature of this correlation if there is any at all? But for Heidegger, who rejects the other-worldly notion of soul, the emphasis in our investigation of time should be on the world and how time entails *making-present* (Heidegger 1962:469) the realities in the world; he thus turns to the neglected first question. This is the case because Heidegger considers the nature of Dasein, which is at issue here, to be characterised by being-in-the-world, as discussed. Yet, he also makes clear that the temporal character of being as revealed in Dasein “can no longer mean simply ‘being in time’” (Heidegger 1962:40). For him, both pre-philosophical (ordinary) and philosophical understandings of the ‘temporal’ have been deeply deluded about the true nature of time (Heidegger 1962:40). As such, to understand or to interpret the “temporality of Being”

(Heidegger 1962:40) in metaphysical terms (such as soul) is to misplace its category and to distort its reality.

In relation to the world and how time is an experienced reality, Heidegger recalls Aristotle to have argued that the nature of time has to do with counting and the act of counting has nothing to do with that which has been counted. Heidegger's account of Aristotle's understanding of time is that "... it is something counted, it can exist only where a counting exists. But counting is an activity of the soul" (Heidegger 1988:236). This is why, for Aristotle, "time is only in the soul". The implication is that time, by nature, is subjective, and we cannot talk about objective time. Heidegger instead focuses on an objective, 'worldly' understanding of time: "what is received from an existential-ontological standpoint is not to be seen in the quantification of time but must be conceived more primordially in terms of the temporality of the Dasein which reckons with time" (Heidegger 1962:465). Therefore, crucially, time for Heidegger is not something that belongs to the soul but something that belongs to Dasein's disclosure of the world.

Aristotle also presents a causal link between time as counting and time as motion – time as counting also implies motion. Aristotle elucidates his point as follows, "for time is just this, something counted in connection with motion that is encountered in the horizon of the earlier and later (motion encountered with regard to the before and after)" (Heidegger 1988:238). Motion here is understood as change in place. Heidegger argues that Aristotle's understanding of time is nebulous and inaccessible as it does not make clear the issue in question (Heidegger 1988:238), which is the question about the meaning of Dasein in the world. Against this reduced understanding of time, Heidegger maintains that "the central problematic of all ontology is rooted in the phenomenon of time" (Heidegger 1962: 40). Heidegger contests the argument that "[t]ime [is] supposed to be something relating to the motion and not the moving thing" (Heidegger 1988:238), similar to the Aristotelian notion that time has to do with the soul's counting rather than with the things counted. According to Heidegger, Aristotle holds that, "[t]ime is what is counted in connection with motion" (Heidegger 1988:239). Thus for Aristotle, human activities determine the significance of time. Aristotle's conception of time is therefore arguably worldly in nature, but Heidegger insists that Aristotle's understanding of time is fundamentally wrong because it finally strays from the world which is the ground of time (Heidegger 1988:241).

Heidegger demystifies time by connecting time not only to the world but also to the nature of Dasein's temporality (Heidegger 1988:255). Heidegger does not refute Aristotle's effort to relate time to motion as an attempt to present an ontology of time, but the introduction of soul into the picture introduces a controversy in Aristotle's understanding of time (Heidegger 1988:255). This is because for Heidegger, the ontology of time can only be understood phenomenologically. What Heidegger finds particularly problematic in Aristotle's conception of time is the metaphysical connection of time to the soul. Aristotle's understanding of time is not sufficiently objective in that it does not take into consideration how time is a fundamental structure of human meaning-making. Conversely, while Heidegger maintains that time cannot be understood without Dasein, he notes that Aristotle does not give an analysis of how we are to understand 'being in time' (Heidegger 1988:254).

Heidegger's emphasis, as already highlighted, is on coming into existence and existence already implies *time* as a fundamental element. Hence, the title of his *magnum opus*, *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1962:456). Recall that the overarching project of this chapter is to illuminate Heidegger's understanding of Dasein. Time for Heidegger, is essential for addressing the ontological reality of Dasein (Heidegger 1962:39). Heidegger interprets Dasein primarily in its ontico-temporal dimension (Heidegger 1962:456). He notes that Dasein always allocates time to its projects (Heidegger 1962:456). The point here is that time helps determine whether the task will 'take time' in order for Dasein to assess whether it 'does not have the time', among others (Heidegger 1962:456). The implication of Heidegger's analysis is that time and Dasein co-exist mutually.

Dasein already encounters time and is always thrown into time, but the origin of time is primordially conceived (Heidegger 1962:457), such that Dasein uses time for organising and structuring its own activities. Heidegger maintains that time must be understood along with the character of Dasein, as being-in-the-world. The apprehension of time is intricately connected with the world and the existence of things in the world. The world cannot be understood outside of time and vice versa. Consequently, the world stands in an interwoven connection with time. The connection which Dasein has with time enables the disclosedness of the *there* (situatedness), in other words, place (space) and time imply and enable each other. Heidegger explicates this idea when he uses the expression 'now that...' and 'then when ...' to designate the ways in which time discloses situations (Heidegger 1962:463). The disclosure of situations

is a necessary component of the disclosure of Dasein and its different attributes as discussed in the previous section.

In his *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (1988),<sup>30</sup> Heidegger asks “What do we mean by time in natural experience and understanding?” (Heidegger 1988:229). He thus asks about the role of concrete experiences and interpretation in our understanding of time. This fundamental question shows the inherent difficulty in any attempt to grasp time: a concept that we know and yet cannot explain. If we cannot explain time, how then do we know time, and what do we mean when we talk about time? (Heidegger 1988:229). Heidegger considers the ordinary (or vulgar) understanding of time as time which shows itself as a sequence of “nows” which are constantly ‘present-at-hand’, simultaneously coming along and passing away. Time in this sense is understood as a succession, as a ‘flowing stream’ of ‘nows’, as the ‘course of time’ (Heidegger 1962:467). Heidegger characterises the understanding of ordinary understanding of time as ‘world-time’ because it represents a series of ‘nows’ in the world (Heidegger 1962:474). But as being-in the world Dasein uses time and operates in time (Heidegger 1962:381). It is from the structure of Dasein as care (concern) and the necessity to take time into account that the ordinary understanding of time evolves and becomes computing time, for which the traditional philosophical and scientific understanding of time has been further developed (Heidegger 1962:278). Thus, Heidegger provides an understanding of time that is derived from the everydayness of Dasein. The everyday experience of time is therefore different from and primordial to the ordinary and scientific understanding of time in the sense that it is tied up with Dasein’s existential orientation in the world, with its specific, praxial, thrown projections. In this experience, time does not appear as, and Dasein is not stuck in, a series of ‘nows’ in a flowing stream. Instead, time is understood in terms of an arc binding together past, present and future into the logic and coherence of the specific projection of concrete possibilities for Dasein.

In the different understanding of time advanced by Heidegger, he seeks to unravel this complexity by proposing a phenomenological apprehension of time – ‘world time’.<sup>31</sup> He explains that “world-time, in the rigorous sense of the existential-temporal conception of the world, belongs to temporality itself” (Heidegger 1962:457), and this is what needs to be more

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<sup>30</sup> *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* was originally published in German in 1972.

<sup>31</sup> ‘World time’ is the expression Heidegger uses to describe his attempt at exploring time phenomenologically (Heidegger 1962:457).

closely specified. Heidegger argues that in order to comprehend time from a ‘fundamental-ontological’ perspective, there is a need to look at time from its original structure (Heidegger 1988:230). The original structure of time for Heidegger is *world-time* and how it temporalises the temporality of the world (Heidegger 1962:467). ‘Temporalising the temporality of the world’ might be read as a tautology; in fact it does read as tautology. Nonetheless, this tautology carries a noteworthy emphasis on the temporal attributes of Dasein which Heidegger addresses. Heidegger seeks to present an understanding of time as determined and experienced in being-in-the-world. For a proper understanding, time must therefore not be abstractly conceived; instead, the proper phenomenological-ontological analysis of the temporality of being always points us back to the duration of the occurrence of things in the world. Heidegger’s example is to explain that time always appears to Dasein as “interpreted in concern”, and thus “already understood as a time for something”, in other words, when we think of time we think of it as being either appropriate or inappropriate for something, for some form of concerned engagement with the world (Heidegger, 1926:467). The existential significance of time is therefore always tied up with “a ‘for-the-sake-of-which’ of Dasein’s potentiality-for-Being” (Heidegger, 1962:467) and thus with “the worldhood of the world”. Time thus always appears to Dasein in this worldly manner: it is never “present-at-hand as an entity within-the-world”; instead, time “belongs to the world” (Heidegger, 1962: 467). As such, it is within time, that the ontological structure of thrownness, existence, and projection are situated. As thrown, Dasein always finds itself in a certain situation in the world. The very nature of Dasein establishes its existence in the sense that it is rooted in temporality. Then, as projection, Dasein is ahead of itself and comes towards itself in its potentiality-for-being. When Dasein’s potentiality-for-being is understood within the temporalisation of time, which Heidegger advances, we find that Dasein’s temporality is a combination of its past, present and future possibilities.

This is why Heidegger never looks at the meaning of time in isolation from the temporality of being. His understanding of time made him write, “[s]ignificance belongs to the structure of the ‘now’” (Heidegger 1962:474). Time plays a central role in Heidegger’s conception of Dasein. As earlier highlighted, Heidegger is totally against an understanding of metaphysics which points beyond the situatedness of Dasein’s temporality. Heidegger views Dasein from a phenomenological viewpoint, since he believes this is the only approach which remains true to the nature of Dasein itself. It is in the same light that he considers the notion of time, which he thinks is misunderstood if framed as eternal, or as a ‘something’ that exists independently of

the world and of being. Regarding Dasein and time, “Heidegger rejects eternal truths and asserts that we are to understand being only through temporality” (Dostal 1993:158). By temporality, Heidegger refers to time as a finite reality whose truth can only be ascertained in ontological analysis of how all of being appear as temporal.

One could infer from the above arguments that it will be fundamentally erroneous, at least in Heidegger’s analysis, to understand the meaning of being and the meaning of Dasein in terms of metaphysical construction of time. It is a tendency, as will be argued in the second chapter, which is common among religious ideas and beliefs which consider metaphysical understanding of human beings as the only way in which being can be ‘fully’ grasped, and central amongst their distorted understandings, is their treatment of time and temporality. “The existential analytic of *Being and Time* does not constitute a description of the nature and structure of human existence; it is already, in every sense, an interpretation, that is to say, a listening and a replying to what we ourselves are, while we are, and entirely from within” (Vattimo 1983:44). Gianni Vattimo<sup>32</sup> rightly observes that Heidegger’s account of human experience is not driven by mere speculation, rather it is an interpretative activity situated within lived human reality – it is in fact the meticulous analysis of human phenomenal-ontological experience, and as such, is meant as ultimately inter-subjectively accessible to all. By distorting the original and constitutive aspect of time in the way being manifests itself to Dasein, a metaphysical approach to being denies Dasein’s constitutive worldliness and erases the ‘world time’. These aspects of fundamentalist religious understandings of the nature of being will be analysed in detail in the next chapter.

Heidegger’s theorising about time is crucial because he presents an anti-metaphysical argument, especially on his understanding of Dasein, which I consider relevant in philosophically addressing the question of religious fundamentalist violence and its effects on existence. For Heidegger, “human time already lays out dimensions of existential projection and self-transcendence” (Wood 2007:173). He goes on to argue that “... the horizon of temporality is the ultimate condition of possibility of transcendence” (Heidegger 1962:416; Wood 2007:173). Therefore, also when he talks about ‘transcendence’, he sees it as temporal, a possibility strictly given within time and thus within human finitude. Even though it is to ‘go

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<sup>32</sup> Vattimo (1936) is an Italian philosopher and politician. His philosophy is influenced by Heidegger and other phenomenologists. I consider him important because of his commentary on Heidegger.

beyond', Heidegger considers transcendence here in terms of potentiality within the world, a finite transcendence, as it were, within the possibilities of the world, as opposed to geographical or metaphysical change in the nature of being. Effectively, Heidegger's philosophical postulations about the nature of Dasein attributes to Dasein an endless desire to be more than itself. Transcendence, simply put, is a self-projection within temporal reality. As already presented in the analysis of projection, we find that for Heidegger Dasein is always more than what is given, partly because of its temporal character. Thus transcendence does not primarily consist in a desire, but rather in Dasein's ontological structure. It is important to note (in conjunction with our discussion of thrown projection and authenticity in the previous section) that Dasein is never purely immanent, given or stable, but always dynamically becoming, and in that sense is forever transcending its situation. Heidegger is thus crucially concerned with a purely worldly and finite, purely human form of transcendence – one which never falls into impossible religious metaphysical attempts (characterised by the ordinary and mistaken understanding of time as a series of nows) to overcome human finitude and worldliness as such.

For Heidegger then, religious metaphysical conceptions of time are essentially other-worldly, and 'untimely', or atemporal, because static, ahistorical and unchanging. This is an idea which Heidegger conceives as phenomenologically inconceivable, or a negation of the very structure of Dasein as such. A speculative understanding of time as independent of human reality will lead to a misconception of the true nature of time. Heidegger's preoccupation with Dasein brings into focus centuries of intellectual delusion about the topic of time. What Heidegger aims at is to "... recapture a sense of what time was like before it fell under the spell of eternity, what we were like before we became obsessed by the need for an overarching context which would subsume and explain us – before we came to think of our relation to Being in terms of power" (Rorty 1991:34). Rorty's rendition of Heidegger's stance on time is accurate in that it captures important themes that run through Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Rorty identifies how religious metaphysics adulterates and undermines the fundamentally temporal nature of human existence. What Heidegger does, as rightly articulated by Rorty, is to bring to light the temporal nature of human existence in a new way. The emphasis for Heidegger was to free himself and other philosophers from being mere spectators of time, especially when characterised by a passive anticipation of an eternal reality, a notion peculiar to a metaphysical understanding of time. The emphasis for Heidegger is to temporalise time and he expresses his position as follows: "Temporality temporalises world-time, within the horizon of which 'history' can

‘appear’ as historicizing within-time. ‘Spirit’ does not fall into time; but factual existence ‘falls’ as falling from primordial authentic temporality” (Heidegger 1962:486). This section points to where the priority lies in Heidegger’s project. The understanding of time from an ethereal point of view is considered detrimental in the attempt to understand Dasein. In fact, it distorts the foundation of the question. A key aspect of Dasein’s constitutive temporality is captured in Heidegger’s notion of Dasein’s “being-towards-death”. This is a notion that requires more focused attention.

### **1.5 Being-Towards-Death**

Having observed that Dasein’s existence, according to Heidegger, can only be addressed within time and given that human existence is thus finite, it suffices at this point to address one of the major characteristics of Dasein, namely its death. Heidegger maintains that, “Dasein is dying as long as it exists” (Heidegger 1962:295). Dasein has always been ‘thrown’ into its own death as a possibility of its being, namely the “possibility of no-longer-being-able-to-be-there” (Heidegger 1962:294-295). Dasein has “always been delivered over to its death”, whether Dasein is consciously aware of this or not. In death, Dasein “faces the absolute impossibility of existence” (Heidegger 1962:299), but paradoxically only ever as a possibility rather than an actuality for itself, since once a person is dead, they are incapable of experiencing the loss of existence. Authentic existence entails projecting one’s life within the horizon of one’s death, that is, to confront one’s own death as a possibility that is always before one, since death is inevitable. Heidegger’s understanding of being-towards-death can be summarised in four different categories: death is individual (Heidegger 1962:297; 299), it is certain (Heidegger 1962:295, 301), it is indefinite, and it cannot be eclipsed (Heidegger 1962:299). Firstly, by showing that one’s death is ‘ownmost’, Heidegger shows that one’s death cannot be shared with anyone else. Heidegger argues that death is individual in the sense that it is “non-relational” (Heidegger 1962:299). In death one cuts ties with other people in the world. Heidegger argues that one can only comport oneself to death as an “ownmost” Self (Heidegger 1962:297). What Heidegger insists here is that the death of others is secondary to the ownmost primary individual experience of death, such that the experience of the death of others makes clear that we cannot share their experience of loss of being.

Secondly, for Heidegger, death is certain in the sense that it is inevitable. According to Heidegger, “one cannot flee in the face of it [death]” (Heidegger 1962:295); death is understood

as a reality that cannot be avoided. Heidegger refers to the role that the ‘They’ often plays in tranquilizing our disposition towards death by trying to make us believe that even in death one can be brought back into Dasein (Heidegger 1962:297). ). Through their ‘idle talk’ and through the ways in which we understand morality in the everyday, death is distorted into ‘a well-known event occurring within-the-world (Heidegger 1962: 297). However, Heidegger shows that this relationship with death and dying is an evasion and a fleeing in the face of death facilitated by ‘the they’. It is a way in which one’s ownmost being-towards-death as a certain possibility is evaded and denied; it is an inauthentic relation with death. As Heidegger puts this form of inauthenticity, ‘Dying, which is essentially mine in such a way that no one can be my representative, is perverted into an event of public occurrence which the “they” encounters’ (p.297). In these ways, the certainty and ownmost nature of death as ‘my death’ which remains a constant future possibility, are evaded.

Thirdly, death is indefinite (Heidegger 1962: 302) because of it is difficult to know exactly when one is going to die. In the definiteness of death lies an indefiniteness. Simply put, even though death as a possibility of being is certain, it is difficult to know when exactly it will happen. Even when one decided to commit suicide, the person still has to wait for death. There have been instances where people carry out actions with the intent of taking their life, in such scenarios, Heidegger would argue that Dasein is constantly faced with the indefiniteness of death.

Lastly, Heidegger maintains that death cannot be eclipsed or “outstripped” (Heidegger 1962:302-303). By this, Heidegger maintains that the nature of death is such that Dasein cannot avoid it. Dasein exists always as being towards its end in the sense that it has no control over the fact of its being-towards-death. Heidegger writes that Dasein is a “Being-towards-death, even when it is not explicitly engaged in ‘thinking about death’. Even in average everydayness, this ownmost potentiality-for-Being, which is non-relational and not to be outstripped, is constantly an issue for Dasein” (Heidegger 1962:299). To be sure, Heidegger maintains that the nature of death is one that cannot be changed in the sense that some is said to have fought against death. Heidegger considers death as the end that comes and cannot be overcome. Heidegger uses the following paradoxical statement to capture his point on death: “Death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein” (Heidegger 1962:294). Heidegger suggests that the nature of death is certain, and its certainty cannot be avoided.

From Heidegger's account of death flows a certain understanding of authentic existence. First, considers his statement that "Higher than actuality stands possibility. We can understand phenomenology only by seizing upon it as a possibility" (Heidegger 1962:62). From this one can deduce that death, for Heidegger, is a possibility that Dasein must attend to. Here, death as a possibility is anticipated, but importantly, it is anticipated as an ownmost, certain, always present and non-relational possibility. Thus, authentic Dasein relates itself actively to its own and certain death as a constant possibility of its being (Heidegger 1962:304). Moreover, Dasein's authenticity must be understood as an ever-present possibility rather than something 'far off'. Heidegger distinguishes between death as "anticipation" [Vorlaufen] and "expectation" (Heidegger 1962:306). As an anticipation, death, for Heidegger, is authentic being towards the possibility of Dasein's impossibility (Heidegger 1962:378), or the possibility that one's existence is no more unfolding. By this, the "anticipation" involved in being-towards-death, does not consist in "waiting for" death or "dwelling upon it" or: "actualizing" it before it normally comes; nor does it mean "running ahead into it" (Heidegger 1962:306). Rather, when I take full cognisance of my own possibility for not being, that is when by own 'being-able-to-be' appears to me most clearly (Wheeler 2017). By contrast, expectation "dwells upon" and "waits for" death. By expectation of death Heidegger thus means that Dasein is not authentically relating to, thus not living concretely within, its own death as a possibility.

The above analysis of death will be important in the section that deals with religious fundamentalist violence. For the moment, it is safe to conclude that, for Heidegger, death is the end of possibility and the end of time for Dasein, but Dasein must not initiate the end in the sense of bringing about its impossibility of possibility.

## **1.6 Being and Historicity**

Any understanding of time presupposes and anticipates history, or as Heidegger puts it, Dasein's historicity must be worked out ontologically as 'just a more concrete working out of [its] temporality' (Heidegger 1962:434). Just as anticipatory resoluteness is an authentic stance towards Dasein's temporality, it is also a key future of Dasein's authentic historicity (Heidegger, 1962:434). It is from the experience of time that we talk about a history as occurring in a tri-dimensional structure: past, present and future. Despite their distinct nature, there is an intrinsic complementarity and interconnection in the nature in which the past,

present and future are understood and described as the constitutive elements of temporality by Heidegger. Dostal argues that for Heidegger, “[t]he past is retained as past in the present, and the future is anticipated as future in the present” (Dostal 1993:147). The past informs the present (is part of what Heidegger denotes with ‘thrownness’, as discussed); and the understanding of the past in the present serves as guide for future projections and expectations. Heidegger shows how history is created in the active engagement with everydayness. This is a proposition contrary to an understanding of history as stagnation. The nature of the stagnation which I consider a danger here is the one that prioritises and fixates on an isolated part of this tri-partite conception of history. An authentic taking up of Dasein’s own historicity flows from authenticity towards its temporal being as a whole and towards its being-towards-death. When Dasein understands its ownmost possibility for death as a certain and ever-present possibility, as we have said, then its own being appears to it in its authentic finitude as well as in its ‘ownmost distinctive’ (1962:435) possibilities-for-being. Heidegger (1962: 437) formulates these connections as follows:

Only an entity which, in its Being, is essentially futural so that it is free for its death and can let itself be thrown back upon its factual “there” by shattering itself against death – that is to say, only an entity which, as futural, is equiprimordially in the process of having-been, can, by handing down to itself the possibility it has inherited, take over its own thrownness and be in the moment of vision for “its time”. Only authentic temporality which is at the same time finite, makes possible something like fate – that is to say, authentic historicity.

In other words, when Dasein relates authentically to its own historicity, it resolutely hands down to itself “the factual possibilities of authentic existing” which it discloses “in terms of the heritage which that resoluteness as thrown, takes over” (Heidegger 1962:435). Authentic Dasein therefore relates to its thrownness into history in an active way and with resolution, so that one’s ‘situation’ signifies ‘one which has been resolved upon’ (Heidegger 1962:434). In authentic historicizing, then, resolute Dasein “hands itself [its ownmost possibilities] down to itself, free for death, in a possibility which it has inherited and yet has chosen” (Heidegger 1962:434). Heidegger uses ‘fate’ in a peculiar way: because resolute Dasein has chosen its situation and handed down its ownmost possibilities to itself, it has a fate; irresolute Dasein however “can ‘have’ no fate” (Heidegger 1962:436). Having a fate or existing ‘in the mode of fate’, i.e. living historically authentic is only possible if Dasein lives existentially authentic,

that is, in readiness for anxiety, in the state of care and in temporal finitude (Heidegger 1962:437). He summarises his view as follows: “Authentic Being-towards-death – that is to say, the finitude of temporality – is the hidden basis of Dasein’s historicity” (Heidegger 1962:438).

The implication, one could argue, of this isolated prioritisation of a segment of history is that it risks a narrow understanding. It is in this way that a sense of history can stagnate. One example of such stagnation can be found in the relation with the past, which could be dangerous for Dasein in relation with other Daseins and even for Dasein itself. This stagnated relation to the past has an attribute of fixation which is always problematic for understanding and grasping the entire picture of a historical narrative. The understanding of history, as presented by Heidegger, focuses on the need to own oneself within and as part of the tripartite reality of history. Recall our discussion of authentic existence in the previous section. To be authentic for Heidegger is to actively appropriate what is most proper to oneself, and in terms of historicity, it would entail taking up an active stance towards past, present and future. According to Heidegger, the way we relate to the world and its historicity is by either ‘standing’ or ‘staggering’ (Heidegger 1959:202). Standing or staggering, are respectively equivalent to assuming an authentic or inauthentic stance toward history. Heidegger ties this understanding of history to the world in his critique of traditional metaphysics when he writes, “[f]rom a metaphysical point of view, we are *staggering*. We move about in all directions amid the essent, and no longer know how it stands with being. Least of all do we know that we no longer know” (Heidegger 1959:202). Heidegger’s use of the word ‘staggering’ illustrates uncertainty in Dasein’s self-understanding, caused by an unmooring from existence. This can be contrasted with standing which depicts certitude in Dasein’s relationship with ‘itself’ and the world. As staggering, Dasein is said to be inauthentic in an ontological sense, either because it has unburdened and tranquilised itself by conferring its power on the ‘they’, in an inauthentic understanding of history, and/or based on a metaphysical understanding of itself and its place in history.

Flowing from these insights one could also argue that there are two major problems with the understanding of being’s historicity from the view-point of metaphysics. In identifying the first problem, it is important to highlight the fact that the onus appears to be on human beings, as Heidegger seems to suggest and as Caputo argues, to reconstruct the true nature of history from the centuries long deafness and blindness to the genuine understanding of the meaning of

human being in its authentic present (Caputo 1987:162). Our stance towards history sometimes represents an attempt at "... unburdening [oneself], at any rate, is initially suspect to Heidegger as a manoeuvre of escape, evasion, or deteriorating – that is, of 'inauthenticity'" (Safranski 2002:160). Heidegger refutes an understanding of history that promotes escape and evasion from the burden of taking on the past as an active task. An inauthentic stance towards history promotes nostalgia characterised by a fixation on certain aspects of history, as a banner or sign under which we alleviate ourselves of our historical task. This happens when we objectify and tranquilise the past as a fixed meaning which at the same time provides an adequate response to needs and demands of the present, even though in actual fact, both the past and the present always require new responses, and present us with an infinite demand. In some cases, the present requires the knowledge of the past, but it also beckons the creativity of the present. Historical inauthenticity occurs when the creativity necessary for responding to the present is suppressed because past solutions have been considered the only solution or response to the present. Against such a stance, Heidegger's position on authentic temporality and historicity is three-dimensional: "it is being ahead of ourselves in the future, drawing on our past, while being concerned with the present that constitutes our being" (Frede 1993:64). Different from nostalgia, when history is instead understood as a different state of affairs that always needs to be critically reworked anew, then we take up an authentic stance in the face of history (Heidegger 1962:41). Such an authentic stance towards history entails that we carry the weighty past in our memories, but we exist in the present and we anticipate a desirable future. These three dimensions of understanding history are not to be considered independently of each other. Heidegger proposes that they are intertwined and they point to a holistic conceptualisation of the true nature of Dasein in relation to history.

In contrast with Heidegger's authentic historicity, religious metaphysics presents a reassuring world of inauthentic temporality because it legitimises the need to escape from temporality as understood in being-in-the-world, Heidegger would argue, into an ethereal realm. This will be properly unpacked in a later chapter. Simply put, it is within the world that we identify the connection that exists between the present, past and future, and how they form vital parts of Dasein's projection into the future. Effort must be made, Heidegger would insist, to ensure that the past is actively remembered, so that present decisions are partly based on an awareness of the past in order to open up and actualise the desired future potentiality-for-being. Heidegger's idea of historicity is framed in such a way that it explicates the understanding of Dasein. It is noteworthy to spell out the fact that Heidegger understands history as a whole (past, present

and future) and not as unrelated fragments. This claim is seen when he argues that “one’s existence is inauthentically historical, [if] it is loaded down with the legacy of a ‘past’ which has become unrecognisable, and it seeks the modern” (Heidegger 1962:444). Inauthentic history is characterised by a fixation on past narratives. Heidegger finds this critical reworking of historical narrative as a search for the modern without being interested in a real renewal of the past.

What is the nature of the ‘history’ which Heidegger alludes to, what characterises the history, and what are the anticipated expectations of the history which Heidegger desires his philosophy to project onto and make actual? In *Being and Time*, the emphasis is on a renewed understanding of being which is not distorted by inauthentic misconception of history. He proposes an investigation into the historical understanding of Dasein which is grounded on a temporal understanding of being’s reality. In temporality, as Heidegger would argue, Dasein is historically demystified. The analysis of being as Dasein requires interpretation, and it is noteworthy that “[i]n interpretation, understanding does not become something different. It becomes itself” (Heidegger 1962:188). Metaphysical constructs are thus typically inauthentic in terms of their stance towards both time and history. This inauthenticity might be viewed as rooted in their attempt to thwart the anxiety that accompanies authentic living, and precisely their promise that anxiety may be fully assuaged, might be one of the most important reasons for their success in the world. They feed into and encourage an inauthentic and thus comfortable existence for Dasein. As such, metaphysical constructs impose an interpretation of the history of human reality that does not relate with the actual nature of human existence, thereby making the present look less than itself due to an interpretation of the past or the future, which has been imposed on it (Heidegger 1962:188). Heidegger dismantles a metaphysical mentality which believes in a certain kind of historical monism, one might say. By historical monism, I mean an understanding when a particular part of history is absolutised and amplified. This approach to things would definitely erode the uniqueness of every context and the need to respond authentically, actively, and therefore, differently.

Heidegger maintains that “[t]he transcendence of the world has a temporal foundation; and by reason of this, the world-historical is, in every case, already ‘objectively’ there in the historicizing of existing Being-in-the-world, *without being grasped historiologically*” (Heidegger 1962:441). It is only through temporal interpretation that human historicity as an ever-present horizon for human existence can be properly accessed.

## 1.7 Summary of Chapter

I have dedicated this chapter to exploring Heidegger's reason for analysing the meaning of the nature of Dasein as a way of investigating the meaning of being, and how Dasein can only be understood through the use of the phenomenological-ontological method. The emphasis for Heidegger is that it will be dangerous and misleading to conceive of human being as a primordially timeless, and ahistorical reality. Heidegger ensures that the analysis of Dasein remains in the world that is within concrete human experience and therefore in principle accessible to all through phenomenological analysis. It is important to indicate here that Heidegger's focus on the world is very important for the intended goal of this project because of his prioritisation of human existence, which will be further emphasised in subsequent chapters. And Heidegger focuses on truth as experienced in the world. The nature of truth is not isolated from the reality of Dasein. As already highlighted, the word Dasein "... does not designate, as it does for Kant, the way of being of natural things. It does not designate a way of being at all, but rather a specific being which we ourselves are, the *human Dasein*" (Heidegger 1988:28).

As already highlighted, the world for Heidegger is always the point of departure and the world is also the point of arrival. To project outside the 'world' (the concrete, lived, empirical world) or to conceive of a Being outside the world is to miss the ground on which Dasein is phenomenologically situated. Heidegger recognises the fact that it is only in the world that one can accurately go about comprehending the meaning of Being. We already see this in Chapter One, in his *Introduction to Metaphysics* where he addresses the question, "[w]hy are there essents rather than nothing?". This question "is first in rank for us, first because it is the most far reaching, second because it is the deepest, and finally because it is the most fundamental of all questions" (Heidegger 1959:2). As I have underscored in this chapter, the question of Dasein is considered as fundamental for Heidegger. Recognising the broad nature of the question (why is there something rather than nothing?) and the different directions that it could sway because of the very fact that the question takes in everything that exists and will exist, Heidegger focuses on this question insofar as its *everydayness* is concerned (Heidegger 1959:2). Rorty similarly understands Heidegger's position as a thorough-going rejection of metaphysical thinking: "The limited whole which Heidegger tried to distance himself from was called 'metaphysics' ..." (Rorty 1991:338). Heidegger's phenomenological ontological method seeks to debunk all *onto-theological* understandings of Dasein, whether religious, scientific, or

philosophical. Does the limitation of projection to simply phenomenological self-transcendence limit or constrain the potentiality-for-Being of Dasein? These, among many other questions, linger in the mind as one critically scrutinises the question about the meaning of Being as presented by Heidegger.

The task of the next chapter is to present a non-phenomenological understanding of Dasein as is often proposed by religious fundamentalist groupings. Religion-related fundamentalist violence has become a pertinent issue in recent times as it has become prevalent in some parts of the world. I will begin by showing that the reality of the forgetfulness of being is not restricted to the West, as Löwith suggests in his interpretation of Heidegger's *Being and Time* (Löwith 1998:78-79). It is also an issue for other parts of the world. I will demonstrate this by critically engaging the understanding of human existence within the reality of religious fundamentalist violence.

## Chapter Two

### Being, Time and History in a Religious Metaphysical World View

“It is of God that we speak, so what is astonishing in that you did not understand? Because if you had understood, it would not be God”  
(Augustine in Marion 2001:404).

#### 2.1 Introduction

In the first chapter, I dwelt extensively on presenting an account of important Heideggerian concepts: ‘Being’, as understood through Dasein, time and ‘historicity’. Time is considered in phenomenology as the only reality within which a proper understanding of Dasein can be situated, and all meaning is seen as temporal in nature. Historicity and time are essential components of Heidegger’s discourse on the meaning of Dasein. As we have seen, in Heidegger’s phenomenological ontological perspective, there is a considerable emphasis on Dasein’s being-in-the-world. Consequently, it is only through a proper understanding of human beings (Dasein) that one can gain proper understanding of things in the world. This is why Heidegger embarked on an intellectual task which seeks to understand, by renewing the question, the meaning of being a Dasein (human existence). As already underscored in the first chapter, Heidegger finds in phenomenology a necessary and sufficient response to the question about the meaning of Dasein. We have also seen that Heidegger sees his own project of using a phenomenological ontological approach as constituting a radical critique of a long tradition of western philosophical (including theological and scientific) understanding that has forgotten the meaning of being and forgotten its importance.

In the current chapter, my aim is to explain in broad strokes some of the more salient aspects of the forgetfulness of being that most religious fundamentalists share. In contrast to Heidegger, when addressing human being, some thinkers like Al-Faruqi, Augustine and Aristotle, as presented in the first chapter, consider it important to think of human being as essence and not as existence. Heidegger reacts against the history of philosophical anthropology in which human being has been misconstrued. (Heidegger 1967:67). He

describes the difference between his own approach and that of the tradition as follows (Heidegger, 1962: 67):

The ‘essence’ of Dasein lies in its existence. Accordingly those characteristics which can be exhibited in this entity are not ‘properties’ present-at-hand of some entity which ‘looks’ so and so and is itself present-at-hand; they are in each case possible ways for it to be, and no more than that. All the Being-as-it-is [So-sein] which this entity possesses is primarily Being. So when we designate this entity with the term ‘Dasein’, we are expressing not its ‘what’ (as if it were a table, house or tree) but its Being.

Essence refers to the fundamental attributes of a being; something which is foundational to the existence of a thing, as cutting is fundamental to the being of a knife. When the question of essence is addressed, there is an inclination to look beyond a thing in search of a necessary and sufficient condition for the existence of the thing (something like a Platonic form). This disposition is largely due to the belief that the essence of a thing is more than and beyond the phenomenon of the physical thing. This conception informs the Christian formulation that God created out of nothing (Heidegger 1929:9). Thus, in this Platonic-Christian understanding, the idea/essence of a being precedes its existence, at least in the mind of God. This understanding of the human being as a being with properties ‘present-at-hand’ (such as ‘soul’ or ‘reason’) has thoroughly obscured not only the tradition’s understanding of Dasein or human existence, but finally of every meaningful phenomenon, which for Heidegger can only be properly brought to light through a proper phenomenological understanding of Dasein.

In Chapter One, we saw that Heidegger dismisses the religious essentialist claims that prioritise a timeless and worldless essence over temporal existence by proposing phenomenological analysis of being as an alternative. As already briefly alluded to in the first chapter, religious metaphysics presents a different perspective, and, importantly, it does not consider phenomenology, in the way Heidegger presents it, as a legitimate point of departure for comprehending Dasein. Moreover, this position takes a religious metaphysical stance in the consideration of being *qua* being, thereby rejecting Dasein as the privileged clearing in which the meaning of being is disclosed. Heidegger notes that “... Christian dogma denies the truth of the proposition *ex nihilo nihil fit* and therefore bestows on the nothing a transformed significance, in other words, the sense of the complete absence of being apart from God: *ex*

*nihilo fit - ens creatum* [from nothing comes - created being]” (Heidegger 1929:9). Heidegger maintains the position that *ex nihilo nihil fit* [from nothing, nothing comes to be] because he refutes the religious claim that human beings can be something that comes from nothing, through the interference of the religious-transcendent principle,<sup>33</sup> God. He goes on to maintain that this position is phenomenologically invalid, but from a religious metaphysical standpoint it is plausible to conceive of something originating from nothing (Heidegger 1929:9). This religious metaphysical point of departure is a position held by religious groupings like Islam, Christianity, Judaism and others.

This chapter will not prioritise any particular religion nor shall it attempt to unearth an entire historical period of a particular religion, but will instead explore how religious groupings typically respond to the question about the meaning of human existence, history and time. This has already been hinted at in the first chapter, nonetheless, an in-depth analysis is necessary in order to fully appreciate the contrast between the metaphysical and phenomenological understandings. This chapter, following roughly the same logic as Chapter One, will be divided into four sections: (a) Religious Metaphysical views of Human Existence, (b) Religious Time as Eternity (c) Historicity in Religious Metaphysics, and (d) Religious Metaphysics and Religious Violence. The point of this chapter is to provide an overview of pivotal religious-metaphysical concepts and understandings that provide the scaffolding for religious understandings of being in general, and human existence in particular. These understandings and the way they are held as religious beliefs, as I will contend and explain more in the final section, lend themselves easily to violent and destructive acts in the world.

The understanding of religion will play a pivotal role in this chapter. Therefore, I consider it important to first begin with a critical analysis of what is meant when the word ‘religion’ is used. Some scholars of religion have rightly noted that religion is resistant to definition and clearly there are a bewildering array of practices, life styles and experiences which are referred to by their adherents and others as religious in nature (Flood 1999:42). This resistance of the phenomenon to definition suggests the etymology of the word ‘religion’ as a potentially fruitful starting point. Religion stems from

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<sup>33</sup> By religious-transcendent principle, I refer to an understanding of transcendence that is based on religious frameworks that promote and favour otherworldly understanding of projection.

... the Latin *religio* which Cicero took to be from *relegere*, ‘to re-read’, with the implication of ‘tradition’ as that which is ‘re-read’ and so passed on; and with Lactantius from *religare*, ‘to bind fast’, with the implication of that which binds people to each other and to the gods in the Roman state (Flood 1999:44).

Some religion scholars like Karen Armstrong<sup>34</sup> only see the Latin *religio* as ‘obscure’ (Armstrong 2014:2), but nevertheless find it revealing that, from the etymology of the word ‘religion’, there is an element of history which people are expected to return to. The Lactantiusian definition of religion furthermore evokes the need to unite, to bring together and to form a unit, while Cicero proposes the need to re-read. These interpretations of the Latin *religio* and *relegere*, although different, may be seen to share three essential attributes: (a) call, (b) past, and (c) binding. Therefore, as opposed to Gavin Flood who focuses on differences in his reading of the two etymologies, I suggest that the two etymologies can be combined. This is because it makes sense to say that in the context of religion, the call to re-read is aimed at mentally recalling and passing on a certain stance towards the world. This promotes a type of binding fast of individuals to an existing and enduring community through the re-reading of certain events. What is implied here is that by responding to the mandate to re-read, re-tell and recall the past, religion represents a form of binding-fast in that it promotes an enduring self-understanding produced through self-conscious and often collective repetition of ritual acts, in the light of religious past narrative.

Within the context of religion, binding forces understood as a call to a certain kind of past, more often than not, entail either bypassing or overriding the experiential in the attempt to provide answers to questions arising from religious metaphysics which go beyond the empirical. Religion also typically imposes constraints upon human life, as captured in the binding aspect of the term. Flood argues, “[i]n exercising constraints upon human life, religions identified as prototypical are concerned about human limits and the possibility of their transcendence or transformation” (Flood 1999:48). Flood’s understanding portrays religion as an ideal state that identifies human weakness in the form of finitude and temporality and provides ways in which these weaknesses may be overcome. This flies in the face of Heidegger’s phenomenological analysis, which aims at exposing those limits and finitudes that

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<sup>34</sup> Karen Armstrong is a renowned British scholar of religion. She has written extensively on the Abrahamic religions (Islam, Christianity and Judaism). She addresses pertinent issues that pertain to religion and society.

belong irrevocably and ineradicably to the human condition, and moreover his conviction that all human understanding will always be contained within this temporal and worldly horizon. But not only that; consider also that the religious impulse to provide a way out of the human condition of finitude, mortality, temporality and historicity, on Heidegger's understanding would be the epitome of inauthenticity.

It should be noted that one could easily fall into the danger of misconstruing the uniqueness of different religious histories and the theological sophistication of individual religious groupings when all religions are simply looped into one essentialist interpretation. I will return to the definition of religion as it pertains to the understanding of history in the session where I discuss the historical outlook of particular religions. In the meantime, the hypothesis is that religion has an essentialist structure which emphasises its metaphysical outlook, by which is meant that an ideal other-worldly state or place is imaginatively evoked which (i) gives the lived reality of Dasein its truest meaning; (ii) removes Dasein's anxiety in the face of its own death and finitude and as we have already said in the general introduction, (iii) which is superior to this world of shared human existence and to which the latter should be subjected. The empirical question whether there are strictly non-metaphysical religions in the world is interesting, but beyond the scope of this dissertation. Since the intention is to focus here on the dominant monotheistic religions as already explained, that question does not concern us here directly, because they are all overtly metaphysical and supernatural.

With a considerable understanding of the etymology of the word 'religion', we proceed now to determine a more precise definition of religion, which justifies the above analyses and suits the task of this project. Karen Armstrong's (2014) and William James's (2014) respective understandings of religion are significant. Armstrong, in her *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence*, defines religion as "... a coherent system of obligatory beliefs, institutions and rituals, centring on a supernatural God whose practice is essentially private and hermeneutically sealed off from all secular activities" (Armstrong 2014:2). She touches on important aspects of religion, but by limiting her definition of religion to the private sphere, she undermines the complex outlook of religion in recent years. The fact that religion typically extends its beliefs and their implications beyond the private sphere calls for a need to rethink its meaning. In other words, the public-private distinction is alien to religion. For his part, James understands religion as "the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto" (James 2014:48). James's definition

echoes Armstrong's 'supernatural God' with less emphasis on an unseen order, and it is short and precise, but lacks details. Nevertheless, Armstrong and James's definitions of religion share a common component important for my purposes, which is that religion emphasises non-experiential reality as of the essence. Monica Toft also corroborates this rendition of religion, when she sees religion as taking the unseen nature of human reality into consideration, especially as it plays out in everyday reality. It is for this reason that the definition of religion as presented by Toft is considered to be more appropriate for this project:

Religion can be usefully seen as a system of practices and beliefs sharing most of the following elements: (1) a belief in a supernatural being or beings; (2) prayers or communication with those beings; (3) transcendent realities, including 'heaven,' 'paradise,' or 'enlightenment'; (4) a distinction between the sacred and the profane and between ritual acts and sacred objects; (5) a view that explains both the world as a whole and humanity's proper relation to it; (6) a code of conduct in line with that worldview; and (7) a temporal community bound by its adherence to these elements (Toft 2011: 115).

Toft's definition is important for two reasons: firstly, she highlights the existence of religion in both the private and public spheres of life, improving upon Armstrong. Toft presents an understanding of religion which is centred on the claim to understand the supernatural beings and religious-transcendent realities, and how the worldly phenomena should be conceived, by human beings, in order for them to act according to the precepts of these religious-transcendent realities; such conception includes both public and private concerns alike. Secondly, Toft emphasises the porosity that exists between the physical realm and the religious metaphysical realm. She does this when referring to religion as entailing a 'belief in a supernatural being' and linking this with 'a temporary community bound by its adherence to' such supernatural elements, with them they also regularly communicate. Thus, the supernatural world impacts upon the physical, temporary world in all possible ways and is prioritised over the latter. In this way religion might be construed as a solace for those lacking the ability or willingness to shoulder life's burdens, to actively determine for themselves the meaning of being; in short, as a collective practice and encouragement of inauthenticity to the extent that existential anxiety is removed. Toft's definition of religion goes beyond the superficial and sometimes simplistic understanding which only refers to religion as mere human appeal to a religious-transcendent

being. She acknowledges that religion importantly includes a stand of morality and the basis of true judgement as people rely on religion not only for asking fundamental questions about being, but also for discerning true or good action. Her view of religion is useful for my purposes here because it captures the metaphysical dimension where priority is given to the other-worldly, as well as the practical dimension, i.e. the reality that religious persons often decide on actions in the world based on such metaphysical understandings.

There has been discourse aimed at refuting and undermining the role of religion, but religion continues to play a dominant role in most societies. Toft highlights this point when she notes that religion is a belief in a supernatural being that “explains both the world as a whole and humanity’s proper relation to it” (Toft 2011:115). I also seek to present an account of religious metaphysical attempts to respond to the question of the meaning of being. In order to give an overview of the different ways religious positions impact on our understanding of human existence, I first look at the metaphysical view of human existence in religion.

## **2.2 Metaphysical View of Human Existence in Religion**

Despite the fact that this section explicitly investigates the religious metaphysical understanding of human existence, it is important to note that there are philosophical arguments which implicitly or explicitly support the claim that the understanding of human existence has to be based on a religious metaphysical starting point. We have noted in Chapter One that Heidegger speaks of onto-theology when he refers to the ‘remnants’ of Christian theology in the western philosophical tradition, which adversely affect this tradition’s capacity to deal with the fundamental question about the meaning of being (Heidegger, 1962:272). This metaphysical understanding of being is particularly evident in Plato<sup>35</sup> and Kant in this description by Richard Rorty,<sup>36</sup> “... the condition of the possibility of description must itself be indescribable. By way of parallel arguments, Plato concluded that the conditions of the possibility of the material world must be immaterial, and Kant that the conditions of the phenomenal world must be non-phenomenal” (Rorty 1991:344), thus might be called instances of onto-theology, following Heidegger. These arguments must not be removed from their context. Plato’s dualistic idea strongly influenced medieval philosophy, especially Augustine’s

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<sup>35</sup> Of course Plato is pre-Christian and cannot be called a ‘religious metaphysician’ in that sense, yet as we know his metaphysics was extremely influential in the formalisation of Christian ontology and anthropology.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Rorty (1931-2007) is an American philosopher. He enormously contributed to philosophy especially by rejecting the philosophical position according to which knowledge entails accurate representation of reality.

philosophy which will be considered shortly. These arguments must not be removed from their context. Plato's dualistic idea strongly influenced medieval philosophy, especially Augustine's philosophy which will be considered shortly. Plato's theory of Forms and Allegory of the Cave<sup>37</sup>, like the Kantian immaterial world<sup>38</sup>, suggests that the necessary condition for addressing human existence is not purely existential, and this claim might be viewed as in fact following the same logic as religious metaphysics (Rorty 1991:344).

Be that as it may. I will now look at how Islam and Christianity metaphysically frame the meaning of human existence. Al-Faruqi<sup>39</sup> maintains that "Islam's view of other faiths flows from the essence of its religious experience" (Al-Faruqi 1978:131), which is claimed to be applicable in the same way from generation to generation. This is because Islam is embedded in a language that is still used today – Arabic language. There is an apparent timelessness in this understanding of religious experience as enduring and as having an a-historical or timeless essence. Embedded in the supposed stasis and timelessness of the Arabic language, is the Islamic notion of *tawhid*, which means that there is no other god but God (Al-Faruqi 1978:131). *Tawhid* is the doctrine that recognises and acknowledges God's oneness and sameness over time and across space, and considers human origin and individuality to be necessarily connected to the power of this one God's creation (Al-Faruqi 1978:132). One could argue that *tawhid* is based on a historical reaction to polytheism; adherence to monotheism is the understanding of a single ultimate reality beyond the world as the source and cause of all things in the world. Monotheistic religions believe that every human existence is inextricably entangled with the One God. There is a belief that human beings rely on God's sustaining presence in the world first of all for their creation and, secondly, for God's continuous watch over human beings. This position presents an understanding of human existence which focuses

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<sup>37</sup> In Plato's theory of Forms, he draws a line between the things as they appear to us and the things as they truly exist in the Forms. The things as they appear are referred to as simulations, or better still replications of the Forms. In other words, the things as they appear are reduced and distorted shadows of the real. The real, Plato refers to as the form. Plato presents a similar argument in his allegory when he argues that the only cognition of the sun which those in the cave are aware of is through the shadows of themselves on the wall. A full understanding of the sun can only be reached if people come out of the cave, which may be understood as overcoming the very finitude that circumscribes our human condition.

<sup>38</sup> Immanuel Kant's bifurcation of the world into the noumenon and the phenomenon saw the hacking of an intellectual chainsaw through the world which gave it a dualist perspective.

<sup>39</sup> Al-Faruqi (1921-1986) originated from Palestine and did his philosophical studies at Harvard and Indiana University where he got his Masters and PhD respectively. He also did some Islamic Studies at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. Considering his ability to engage proficiently in religious issues, especially Islam, he was known by his peers as a religious scholar. From this background, one realises that Al-Faruqi has a deep knowledge of both philosophy and theology, and of two different traditions, Islam and the West. It is equally on this basis that I consider him a useful starting point for understanding the Islamic conceptualisation of being.

on extra-worldly and non-human attributes<sup>40</sup> (such as omnipresence and eternity) located in the supernatural Being. Human beings are not only created and sustained by God while they are in the world, they are also said to return to God in death. What is clear from this description, is that this view places the lived world of the phenomenological in a secondary or derivative position. Humans get their true (essential) nature from a realm that is distinctly anti- or other-worldly, namely timeless, unchanging and singular. Thus, as far as anthropology goes, humans have both their origin and their destiny in a strictly non-worldly principle.

This is a belief that is equally shared by Christians; it finds expression in the words of the famous medieval philosopher, Saint Augustine,<sup>41</sup> when he writes: “Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless, until they find rest in you” (Augustine 1992: Book 1 Para 1). This restlessness, one might argue, starts at conception when human beings enter the material world, and thereby part with their Creator. Contentment only returns when human beings, in death, reunite with their Maker, with the implication that the ultimate meaning of human existence lies outside of this life which plays out between ordinary human birth and death. Similarly, Augustine’s assertion resonates with Al-Faruqi’s notion of innate attributes in human beings which necessarily propel the desire for God. To come from God means to be godly in essence or nature and implies that one should disdain all that is ungodly. In the Christian tradition the ungodly or profane domain usually encompasses all of the temporal, physical reality which for Heidegger is constitutive of the human being. The restlessness of the Christian soul or timeless essence is caused by the endless desire to return to that which is its cause (Maker), and which can only finally be achieved outside of this life, in and through death.

Al-Faruqi opines that *din al-fitrah* or “natural religion” (1978:138), an Islamic concept which means that human beings are primordially configured to be Muslims, is the universal principle which may bring about the promotion of mutuality among religions. It can also bring about social, political, and economic stability. This is because *din al-fitrah*, in Al-Faruqi’s words, “consists of the unerring discoveries of the *sensus numinis* by which man recognises God as transcendent and holy, and hence worthy of adoration” (1978:138). Formulated differently, *din*

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<sup>40</sup> This position must be contrasted with Heidegger’s understanding of being as coming into existence and existing from existence, as stated in the first chapter. The religious framework does not present being in the Heideggerian approach, where being is independent of a supreme being.

<sup>41</sup> Saint Augustine is a Christian medieval philosopher and theologian renowned for presenting the Church as the new *City of God* distinguished from the material finite city of human being. He was greatly influenced by neo-platonic thinking.

*al-fitrah* is the instinctive, essential and a-historical ability of human beings to recognise the religious metaphysical nature of God and, at the same time, choose to revere and adhere to his precepts. This idea is derived from the verse in the Quran that states, “[a]ll men are born Muslims (in the sense in which Islam is equated with *din al-fitrah*)” (Al-Faruqi 1978:139). This primordial configuration makes it possible to infer that the very nature of human beings is godly because God’s nature which exists beyond the finite human state, flows also in human beings (said to manifest itself in the soul).

The primordial metaphysical idea that the human essence originates from a God (supernatural, ahistorical and timeless being) and human beings have a default disposition towards this essence, is not peculiar to Islam. Christianity also holds the belief that God created man in his own image and likeness, and human beings are meant to love and serve God and to do God’s will forever.

Let us further investigate this co-relation between human existence and the divine, from a Christian theological anthropological point of view. Anthropology concerns itself with the study of human experience, and theology is the study of the knowledge of God. Theological anthropology is defined by David Kelsey, a theologian, as the religious doctrine about human nature or the understanding of the human being in light of religious metaphysics (Kelsey 1994:167). The Christian understanding of human being is centred on the doctrine that humans are created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26). This is what makes human beings different from other creatures. Human beings are made by God and in his image, but they are contingent and dependent on God. Augustine, in giving importance to God’s image, argues that the image of God, i.e. the human being is not a static reality (Augustine 1992: Book 1 Para 1); it instead has a capacity to respond to God. Matthew Steenberg, a contemporary Christian anthropologist, corroborates this idea when he writes, “[t]he human person is first and foremost the Father’s unique creation, wrought of his two hands, formed through the immediate and personal action of his Son and Spirit” (Steenberg 2009:51). The deduction that can be made here is that from the very beginning of time, and in some sense outside of time, since God is eternal. God had a personal relationship with human beings. The fact that human beings are made in the image of God give them a certain ontological alignment with God, and a certain disposition to God, which may play out in either disobedience or obedience to God.

What is to be made of knowledge claims regarding immaterial entities allegedly encountered in religious revelation? A good example is the Biblical Moses (Exodus 3:1-17) and the burning bush. The fire in the bush may have been caused by anything, but Moses, as presented in the Bible, heard a voice which for him came from God. How can his claim be subjected to critical analysis? Religious metaphysical positions have been understood as based upon ‘beyond-worldly experiences’ (already a kind of contradiction in terms) which are uncommon, compared to normal experiences. The phenomenological impulse is to repudiate them, along with clairvoyance, telepathy, astrology and other supernatural knowledge claims, as dubious or simply preposterous. Yet for many scholars, like Augustine, Aquinas and Al-Faruqi, among others across historical epochs and world cultures, religious metaphysics have been a source of justification for religious beliefs and the understanding of human beings and for rendering their existence meaningful. Specific if rare human experiences such as that of Moses and the burning bush, seem to present at the very least a reasonable doubt concerning the attempt to reduce all meaning to the realm of the phenomenological.

As highlighted in the first chapter, whereas Heidegger rejects religious metaphysics as a reliable source for understanding the meaning of human existence, one of the wellsprings of philosophy is the contemplation of ‘what is first’, that is, the reflection upon the original state from which things arose and on the forces that initiate and govern their coming-to-be. The notion of ‘origins’ was a central theme in ancient philosophy from the Pre-Socratic to the Hellenistic schools. The first-cause is a philosophical conception that alludes to traditional metaphysics Cause, namely God and this Cause is believed to inform religious metaphysics worldviews.

As I draw to the end of this section it remains to be asked whether it is plausible to base a claim, such as the origin of human beings, on a Being (God) that is radically different from human beings in the attempt to understand human existence. An attempt at testing the validity of the question can be presented as follows: an inventor can invent a car, but the nature of the car is not the same as that of the inventor. However, they share a similar nature which is that they fall within verifiable situatedness or provability. It is within the context of experience that the relationship between God and human being is questioned and considered flawed by the phenomenologist, since God cannot be experienced as a phenomenon. If the inventor example is further explored, one might argue that there are attributes in the inventor that cannot be found in the invented car. For instance, the inventor has a non-mechanistic cognition that is different

from the electronic set up of the car. Furthermore, when one sees a car, the face of the manufacturer is not on it but it is known that someone assembled the car. Maxwell elaborates this point when he maintains that unobservability does not imply non-existence (Maxwell 1982:351). However, whereas an effort can be made to search for the manufacturer of the human being, it is impossible to physically verify its being. This dilemma is inevitable if one is to use reason to address metaphysical realities; the point here is that religious beliefs do not follow the laws of logic/rationality. Religious truths might have moral implications but they are not necessarily founded on existential logical principles or valid judgments.

Despite the unobservability of the referents of religious metaphysical claims they seek to (re-) instate the reign of a metaphysical reality over the phenomenal world. What informs this intention is the belief that the solution to the world's problems can only be remedied through (belief in) the powers of a supreme being whose attributes are unworldly. The reign of this supreme being will usually in religious understandings be through his representative(s) on earth. This endeavour is anthropocentric in nature inasmuch as it seeks to awaken the awareness of human beings to their inextricable connection to God, their creator and source of life. There is a call to a metaphysical consciousness at the expense of the intersubjectively shared, human lived world, and the power to disclose meaning seems to cease to be man's and instead becomes God's (although the cynic may argue it merely gets transferred to those who claim to speak on God's behalf). This superimposition of an other-worldly domain onto the worldly domain means that the religious understanding of the meaning of human existence frames it as a one-dimensional journey characterised by actions, intentions and wills aimed either toward, or away from, the 'dictates' of the Divine. The nature of human existence, understood in metaphysical religious terms, cannot be delinked from God; this is a position that advances an ahistorical and essentialist understanding. This we find in Al-Faruqi's attempt to freeze meaning through the use of the original language of the scriptures, through treating the text (Koran) as a single, given, and static meaning, and denying moments of active historical and perspectival interpretation. As we will later see in more detail, the fundamentalist religious treatment of the holy scriptures is a prime example of an inauthentic stance towards historicity, in Heidegger's understanding of the term. In the religious metaphysics of Augustine and Al-Faruqi, one consequently finds an emphasis on a given or intrinsic understanding of human existence that points to an essentialist and static conception of human beings.

### 2.3 Religious Time as Eternity

The desire to understand and grasp religious time as distinct from phenomenological time gives rise to questions such as phenomenologist John Sallis', who begins his article asking, "[w]hat would be required in order to suppose *another time*?" (Sallis 2000:175). "What could warrant setting aside the assumption – seldom challenged in the history of philosophy – that time is singular?" (Sallis 2000:175). Placing into question the singularity of time like this must be understood as an enquiry into the meaning of time *as such*. The centrality of the question of time in the religious metaphysical tradition is striking. It is interesting in light of my claim that religious metaphysics concerns itself with the same questions about the nature of being that occupy Heidegger. He shows in *Being and Time* that a key aspect of the western forgetfulness of being lies precisely in its forgetfulness of time, and attempts to reintegrate time into our understanding of being. It is however not the case that the question about the nature of time did not feature in metaphysics: in its denial of the constitutive role of temporality, the tradition in fact placed time central by denying its reality. This is why the distorted understanding of time is such a central aspect of the deluded sense of being that characterises the metaphysical tradition. The question, "what is time?", argues Sallis, recoils upon the question (Sallis 2000:176), which means that the true nature of time is difficult to fully grasp. Augustine, centuries before Sallis, was equally baffled by time in his *Confessions* as he sensed the complexity of the whole idea of time (see Augustine, 1631). The significance of the question about time stems from the tripartite nature of time as past, present and future. When one talks about time as past, it is evident that the time considered as past is no longer there, and to talk about the part of time called future is to talk about the not yet. In this sense, neither past nor future can be said to exist. Granted that neither the past nor future time exist, it is safe to conclude, in line with the religious metaphysical position, that time in a sense always eludes us, even in everyday existence and that it possesses a certain unreality or mystery. Even when the present is explored, it is understood as neither future nor present because it continually moves on to become the past.

I begin my investigation into religious time with a brief summary of the key elements of most dominant religions notions of time and how their understanding informs human self-perception, actions and reactions. This discussion is based mainly on the idea of how time, understood within the world, can also be said to have other worldly attributes. As we have seen in Chapter One, Aristotle defines time as "the number of before and after in motion" (Aristotle

in Fox 2006:11). Aristotle's definition is empirical in nature because his allusions to 'before', 'after', and most importantly, 'motion' imply a conception of time as experienced by human beings in the world. As one would expect, Aristotle's definition sparked debates among medieval thinkers on how best to understand time and whether his account of time presents an accurate comprehension (Fox 2006:11). The understanding of time by Aristotle, although first of its kind, was significant for sparking the debate about time, and was eventually considered to be inaccurate, especially from a religious metaphysical standpoint.

In the Medieval period, "God and His duration of eternity were often said to be 'infinitus' defined as lacking a beginning and an end, and were said to be 'simul' (simultaneous) with time" (Fox 2006:285). This is because of the belief that if eternal time is to begin and end, God will necessarily have a beginning and an end, which would detract from God's omnipotence. This immediately falsifies Aristotle's definition of time as the number of beginning and endings in motion as based on human experience. Aristotle's understanding of historical time is the number of the experiences that are accumulated in the before and after of motion. The emphasis here is *experiences* not on any other thing(s) that is not related to the social context of human beings. This is why Aristotle's understanding of time could not be retained by Christian philosophy.

If God were subjected to time He would be subject to change and becoming. Logically, this would mean that God was either changing from perfection into some less perfect or vice versa. The metaphysical concept of God viewed as the supreme being (which is also the meaning of all being) creates precisely this dilemma of time, and viewed against this concept of God, in order to preserve God as God (omnipotent, perfect, unchanging) time must ultimately become something unreal. Yet, even the religious metaphysical tradition must somehow account for time as a central aspect of human experience. The primary focus of the notion of 'eternal time' is to create an absolute schism between an infinite being and finite beings. God is considered as limitless and human beings considered limited because of their finite nature. However, this notion of 'eternal time' still needs further specification.

In Reinhart Koselleck's<sup>42</sup> *Future Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (2004), he alludes to an understanding of time which is beyond temporal understanding, in other words, he describes a metaphysical understanding of time. Koselleck himself rejects the metaphysical understanding of time. Koselleck's own understanding of time is not a metaphysical one, but that he gives a good description of what metaphysical time entails, which is why I will use his description to advance my argument.

In contrast with his own understanding of time (in the future mode) as related to planning, projection and anticipation as described above, Koselleck maintains that there are (metaphysical) ways of understanding and anticipating a future that preclude the temporal. "Apocalyptic prophetic (metaphysical) time for Koselleck is an understanding of time that is fixated on the end" (Koselleck 2004:19). By this, the everyday understanding of time is considered insignificant because there is a fixation on the end. I understand this to be related to aspect of metaphysical time that is driven by what I consider a nostalgic reference to past promises. Koselleck presents the future orientation of prophecy as a theme that helps to illuminate key aspects of a religious metaphysical view of time. There are instances where prophecy has transgressed the bounds of calculable experience, but these events have always referred to a future occurrence that is experiential in nature. The prediction is a conscious element of envisaged outcome (Koselleck 2004:19). Time, in this case, continually emanates from the recollection of a promise made in the past hoped to be fulfilled in the future (Koselleck 2004:19). Koselleck goes on to add that "[f]rom the point of view of prophecy, events are merely symbols of that which is already known. A disappointed prophet cannot doubt the truth of his own predictions ..." (Koselleck 2004:19). In other words, both nostalgia towards the past and prophecy towards the future depend upon stabilising existing meanings. Such metaphysical stabilisation of meaning runs counter to the mystical moment and essential openness captured by Koselleck's understanding of lived time (as also by Heidegger's notion of an authentic stance towards time and history).

The truth claim of a temporal prognosis as prophecy is thus in the occurrence of the event(s). Take for instance, I foresee myself finishing this thesis and submitting it in on the due date.

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<sup>42</sup> Reinhart Koselleck (1923-2006) is a German historian and a religion scholar. He is well known for theorising about history and historiography. I will investigate and use him extensively in this chapter because of the contribution he makes in the way we think of history and the events within time. I also consider him relevant for this project because of this insistence that time/history is always part of society.

The validation of this belief or forecast is in its occurrence. From a religious point of view, “[a]n erroneous prognosis, by contrast, cannot even be repeated as an error ...” (Koselleck 2004:19). The prognosis remains a futuristic occurrence that will always have been experienced even though it has not happened (as anticipated). A good example is the coming again of Jesus Christ. So many people have used words like ‘end time’, ‘millennium’, ‘rapture’, among others to try to capture the event of Jesus’ second coming. The fact that he has not come, as claimed, has not changed Christians’ preaching of his coming, or the relevance of that prophecy in their lives. A similar example is the ‘end of the world’ prognosis where people have been made to believe that the world will come to an end. It seems as if nothing in the world of lived experience can refute the truth contained in prophecy.

Nostalgia as one of the metaphysical stances toward the past that attempt to externally stabilise the past and to use such a stabilised, singular meaning in an attempt to control the present, is understood here as a sentimental longing for a past state or area. The nostalgia trip (as described by Smith 2001:23) entails enkindling a desire to return to an idealised past state. I consider this a paradox because it is believed that the only way to move forwards is to move backwards. This backward and forward gaze is mainly in order to emphasise the end. This backward gaze seeks to revalidate a state of affairs that is then used to inform response to present demands. The phenomenological point which must be acceded here is that the future must always be looked at from the standpoint of not only present hopes but also past experiences. As already highlighted in the first chapter, Heidegger’s understanding of time is one that unites the past, present and future without prioritising any dimension. However, a nostalgic gaze at the past must be avoided at all costs. When the past is not engaged critically, it will most likely lead to a radical disruption of, or an imposition on, present time. The dangerous gaze which I refer to here entails uncritically appropriating and utilising aspects of the past in the present and then projecting this into the future. Religious metaphysical nostalgia is driven by the desire to decide on how to act based on how people have acted or have been told to act in the past, in other words, by the desire to escape the demands of authenticity in one’s relation to time.

Much more than just an understanding of human existence and reality, the metaphysical, nostalgic gaze at the past promises a rewarding eternal future beyond finite reality. This brings us to another attribute of religious metaphysical understanding of time to be addressed in this chapter, namely *eschaton*. Richard Kearney refers to “*eschaton* as an end without end – an end that escapes and surprises us, like a thief in the night rather than as the closing completion of

some immanent teleological striving” (Kearney 2001:372). Kearney differentiates between two types of ends – an end understood as a physical culmination of a series of actions, and then an end which never arrives but might be revealed at any time, an end that irrupts within and radically interrupts our lives – eschatological time. Radically different from Aristotle’s understanding of time (as the number of beginning and ending in motion), the eschatological understanding views time as ‘anti-clockwise’. Kearney explains: “Or if one prefers, post-clockwise. It cannot be accounted for in terms of prediction or prevision” (Kearney 2001:377). The point here is that the nature of time, when analysed from the perspective of the *eschaton* cannot be accounted for, and so it must be granted that metaphysical time understood as *eschaton* does not freeze a given meaning in time as do nostalgia and prophecy. Instead, viewed eschatologically, time becomes radically mysterious and unknowable and refers to that which cannot be accounted for and cannot be reduced to a function of counting in the soul. Kearney thus draws our attention to a type of metaphysical time which is not necessarily eternal time (thus a time beyond time) but rather radically disruptive of temporal, lived, phenomenological time. Eschatological time is important for my project because of explain the religious understanding of time which, as I have argued thus far, hinders a phenomenological comprehension of the nature of time. Eschatological time breaks into the temporality of human existence from the outside and radically disrupts it. Clearly, then, the notion of eschatology demonstrates and reinforces the religious metaphysical choice to prioritise the other-worldly domain (outside of human and worldly time altogether) over the worldly, and to take precedence over it. There is something violent about eschatology which seems to finally render manifest both the existence and the superiority of the extra-worldly over the worldly domain in which human existence has its being.

Thus, in its function of subjugating the experiential world and affirming the extra-sensory ‘reality’ beyond this world, eschatological time as finally something unreal, an illusion, may also be used to deny and erase the intrinsically problematic nature of time and thus gives rise to an inauthentic stance towards time and historicity. Walter Benjamin describes eschatological time as follows: “... the future does not correspond to homogeneous empty time; because at the heart of every moment of the time is contained the little door through which the Messiah may enter” (Walter Benjamin in Kearney 2001:383). The anticipation of a Messiah presupposes a religious metaphysical ontology because this Messiah does not only influence the way human beings understand themselves, it also informs their understanding of time. It influences their understanding of time because of the belief that the coming of the Messiah will

put an end to the tripartite notion of time and all time will be eternal; something humans can barely imagine. Safranski considers the expectation of a Messiah an ‘evasion’ and ‘unburdening’ of oneself from the ‘mystery’ (complexities) in the world (Safranski 2002:160). In other words, to live with an eschatological understanding of time may also be a way of denying time’s lived openness, intrinsic finitude, and unpredictability.

Augustine notes a similar unknowability or uncertainty about the nature of time when he writes, “[h]ow can we say that even the present is, when the reason why it *is* is that it is not to be? In other words, we cannot say that time *is*, except by reason of its impending state of *not being*” (Augustine in Sallis 2000:176). Augustine goes on to add that “[a]s for the present, if it were always present and never moved on to become the past, it would not be time but eternity” (Augustine in Sallis 2000:177). Augustine thus tries to understand the enigma of time against the backdrop of a metaphysical notion of eternity (a hypothetical existence beyond time). It is important to note once again that the past, as rightly observed by Augustine, belongs to the ‘was’ – a distant occurrence, and we are not sure of time’s future occurrence. The future has the attribute of a merely anticipatory occurrence which is expected because of human agency. Augustine’s argument suggests that it is erroneous to attribute the present to either the past or the future as they have the character of ‘having being’ and ‘not yet’ respectively. Hence, he maintains that “[i]n eternity nothing moves into the past but all is present ... Time, on the other hand, is never present at once” (Augustine in Sallis 2000:177). What this implies is that in eternity, nothing moves into the past, nothing is anticipated from the future, things remain present and static and so time is eternal. The present of eternal time never recedes into the past nor can the present be seen as anticipatory; it is thus an absolute present (Sallis 2000:177) and an absolute co-existence of past, present and future in the now. It is only when the future and past are present that we can really know that they are. To make both (past and future) present puts us in the danger of effacing the tripartite nature of time (Sallis 2000:178). Augustine’s metaphysical position suggests that the tripartite understanding of time is in fact misguided, when measured against the real nature of time, which for him is embedded in eternity or timelessness. Clearly, for Heidegger, such an attempt to grasp the meaning of time and temporality from the perspective of eternity, would be to destroy the ground out of which the question about the meaning of time emerges, and thus the only context in which the question is even meaningful.

The question to be posed now is about the *where* of the time which is considered as present since the arguments thus far suggest that the elusive present cannot be talked about. For Augustine, the soul is the place where time is sheltered (Sallis 2000:179). The past and the future have their place in memory (Sallis 2000:179). If memory is the place of past and anticipated future events, is it safe to argue that the place of time is the soul? It is in the soul that time is sheltered from not being (Sallis 2000:180). Yet, as explained before, the importation of the metaphysical notion of a human soul cannot be experientially justified. It is therefore an unsatisfactory tool with which to attempt to reduce the intrinsic mystery of time.

A common theme runs through the arguments presented thus far, and it is that human beings have an innate reality (sometimes equated with the notion of soul) that binds and draws them to something absolutely beyond human existence. This understanding from the religious metaphysical perspective informs human self-conception in and of time. If one is to argue from a religious point of view that time is eternal and it influences the way a human understands itself, it is plausible to further argue that it directly affects our understanding of history. For this reason, I now explore historicity from a religious metaphysical viewpoint.

## 2.4 Historicity in Religious Metaphysics

Regardless of the effects of globalisation and secularisation, the significance of religion remains unaltered as there is a return to religious authority at the same time that there is withdrawal from religion (Flood 1999:53). Karl Jaspers (1971) considers the role authority has to play in any world view, including the religious one. Jaspers maintains that,

[a]uthority is based upon transcendence. Because all appearances at all the modes of the encompassing are symbols of transcendence, they have authority for men. An example of authority is the cultural tradition in which every person lives and matures. Without this tradition he would be nothing but an aggregate of purely biological and psychological drives. His tradition gives him substance and form – in short his *human* being (Jaspers 1971:xxiv).

For Jaspers, then, the authority of one's tradition is a transcendent principle which, through its discipline, bestows a truly human existence on people. The authority of one's tradition, that is therefore at the same time part and parcel of what Heidegger calls our 'thrownness', and a good

example of an enabling, humanising kind of finitude. In the twenty first century, the return to the authority of God found in religious metaphysical traditions is still a driving force. The dictates of religious authority have been and still are, influenced not only by what is understood as adherence to past religious ideas/ideals, but also how these religions, faced with the demands of the present, gaze back at the past for answers. As will be highlighted in Chapter Five, reference to past religious experiences, such as a resounding voice of admonishment, is not a mere appeal to the historical past, and not necessarily a delusional embarking on what Smith refers to as a ‘nostalgia trip’ (Smith 2001:23). However, references to the religious past of a tradition may also function as an authentic connection to oneself, through active connection (a re-binding) with a cultural tradition that defines one as an individual. Sam Harris rightly observes that “[f]aith is offered as a means by which the truth of this proposition can be savoured in the present and secured in the future” (Harris 2005:70). It is thus through faith that past religious experiences remain undetachable parts of human history and serve to inform the question about the meaning of being in general.

Religious adherers look at fundamental questions about being (human beings) from the angle of faith (religious faith to be specific). Their religious projections are not limited to temporal realities alone, which is converse to a phenomenological ontological perspective where future prospects are restricted to the phenomenological domain. Conversely, they focus on metaphysical entities which are completely free from the limitations inherent to the spatio-temporal world. As opposed to the phenomenological disposition to achieve a sufficient understanding of the meaning of existence from an investigation into existential givens, Smith argues that “... the finitude of mundane existence cannot satisfy the human heart completely. Built into the human makeup is a longing for ‘more’ that the world of everyday experience cannot requite” (Smith 2001:3). The insatiability, the endless longing for more which seemingly characterises all human desires keeps human beings in restless and endless search for satisfaction. The nature of these desires is empirical, one might argue, but there is more (a religious-transcendent dimension) to that which man seeks –something beyond what man *is*. This search often seems to legitimise the backward gaze at history in search for answers that may lie beyond present confines. Religion looks at the past with an eye of hope that the present will be better understood in anticipation for the future; typically, religious believers refer to a future that is not only temporal but also eternal. The past provides important tools with which to weather the challenges of the present and reach the eternal truth at the end of the tunnel. Viewed from a phenomenological lens, this approach to historicity is misguided because

history, for Heidegger, is understood within a tripartite framework, such that the present is connected to the past and the future.

Furthermore, within religious framework, there is a strong desire for an idealised past – a nostalgia – as described earlier in a way that is not present in the scope of Heidegger’s phenomenology. This disposition towards the past informs the way people react and respond to the realities of the present. Smith argues that the anti-religious forces of globalisation and secularisation have an effect on religion. In the face of these forces, religious leadership “... signal moments of change and transition, calling individuals and societies to connect with the symbolic roots in their past in order to prepare themselves to take the next – often frightening – step into the future” (Smith 2001:2). Religion, by stabilising past, present and future meanings, makes this important step into the future less frightening as there is an anticipatory promise of a ‘happy ending’, a claim that arguably informs what Koselleck considers as apocalyptic prophetic understanding of time as a desire for and focus on the ‘end’:

The traditional worldview points toward a *happy ending*; the scientific worldview does not. In the Abrahamic family (which is more invested in history than tribal and Asian religions are) both individual soul and history as a whole end happily. History climaxes in the coming of the Messiah (Judaism), the Second Coming of Christ (Christianity), and the coming of *al-Mahdi*, the Rightly Guided, who appears before the end of time and restores the ties between heaven and earth until time shuts down (Islam) (Smith 2001:35).

Smith identifies the significance of this waiting and pious anticipation of heavenly rewards – this promise is not a passive one; it is one that is accompanied with good work for it is by these works that one is found worthy of the happy end that has been promised. Smith points to the curiosity in the human consciousness to understand not only the beginning but also the end. Religion becomes a catharsis, an outlet which provides answers to human perplexity. Further, religion provides a platform for a consoling anticipation of a happy end after living a life characterised by a disturbing uncertainty of its origin and its destination. This consolation is sometimes derived from stories which grow and condense into myths that impregnate societies with epistemologies and interpretations (Smith 2001:29). The religious myths give a message of hope, which does not only challenge in the direction of good living, but also points to a teleological conception of reality. As such, myths assure a happy end in death (the springing

forth of a new life). The belief in this teleological conception of the world falls into an understanding of the world as an enigma with people knowing nothing but only fragments. A very good example of this expectation of a future when all finitude and uncertainty will be dispelled, is found in the Christian scriptures, in 1 Corinthians 13 verse 12: “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known”. Could all these features be a mere false anticipatory conception of an eternal happiness, where sorrow, pain, dissatisfaction, ignorance and uncertainty, and all other problems cease to exist? Of course, from a religious lens, faith makes the unimaginable possible. For instance, ‘the reward of fourteen virgins in Paradise’, or the thought of ‘singing Hosanna with the Angels in Heaven’. Focusing on a rational understanding is deliberately ignored, and to staggering become as choice when one has the option to hold, standing, onto the obtuse stance recommended in matters of the divine. In other words, religious metaphysics inverts Heidegger’s notions of staggering and standing, by depicting a metaphysical stance as the only viable attitude to be taken up towards history. For “[i]t is of God that we speak, so what is astonishing in that you did not understand? Because if you had understood, it would not be God” (Augustine in Marion 2001:404). What Augustine suggests here is that human accessibility to matters of the divine must be that of a recognition of human epistemological deficiency. This could be partly because, as earlier highlighted, the contingent nature of human beings, makes accessibility to the divine realm an impossible task in principle. The existential experience of human finitude which properly (for Heidegger) leads to anxiety and authenticity, in religious metaphysics is taken as a token of the existence of its opposite, namely an otherworldly sphere in which human finitude will be finally and lastingly dispelled – the sphere of divine perfection where all limitations are finally overcome. The doubts that are sometimes entertained when matters of the divine are addressed do nothing to the epistemic worth of the claims, rather they show the myopic state of the human mind. Thus, there is another interesting parallel between Heidegger’s anti-metaphysical and the religious metaphysical orientation in that both insist on the finitude of human understanding, if with very different implications.

When one thinks of the different religious metaphysical ahistorical conceptualisations of human existence, time and history, two deductions can be made. First, the result is that the world becomes more or less insignificant because of the emphasis on a religious-transcendent eternal world that is believed to be the true (if removed, hidden) origin and end of human beings. Second, violence as a means to the other-worldly end becomes a possibility. I seek

therefore to illustrate how the discussion thus far justifies the position that violence is a potential outcome of religious metaphysics.

## **2.5 Religious Metaphysics and Religious Violence**

Most organised religions today are based on strong religious metaphysical claims. In most cases these metaphysical claims, remain limited to a particular religious narrative. Yet a widely shared claim found in religious metaphysics is the belief in a Supreme Being and the assurance of an experience of this divine reality both in this temporal world and in the timeless after-world. These beliefs have sometimes informed the essentialist positions in religion. By essentialist positions, I refer here to religious assertions and frameworks that are imposed on the world as necessary and sufficient explanation for the reality in the world; i.e. notions that would finally attribute the meaning of all beings and of being as such to the existence of an other-worldly, or anti-worldly being. It is a position that accounts for the view that to be in the world is to engage in an endless search for a substance beyond the world, beyond time and beyond history, i.e. God, which serves as a reference point for all the realities in the world. This substance, although also present in the world, as well as beyond, remains hidden. Within these metaphysical understandings, as we have seen, the invisibility of God and the divine domain is key, because they are the other side of the coin of human finitude. This hiddenness is attributed primarily to the finite nature of the human being which veils humans from fully seeing and sensing the divine nature of God. However, whereas phenomenology also emphasises the inescapable finitude of human perception and understanding, religious metaphysics differs from the phenomenological insight with respect to what it does with this insight into human finitude. For the religious mind, the awareness of human limitation is a necessary condition for arriving at the understanding of God, or at least for suspending reason and turning to faith, which makes a ceaseless search for the will of God necessary in a contingent world. The contingency of the world is perceived as a deficient state of unawareness which only the divine can remedy – only the divine can remove the veil. Thus, the limitations intrinsic to human existence point necessarily toward a ‘beyond’ where those limitations drop away. For the religious mind, there must be a sufficient and necessary, other-worldly or outer-worldly Being from which all contingent beings emanate. Searching for God is not a necessary determinant for his existence. The existence of God is already considered a given (given beyond or outside the everydayness of phenomenology) which legitimates the search and makes it possible. It is as though that which is sought is already known. This seeking does not

change the status of that which is sought – another affirmation that Dasein is not regarded as the privileged site for the disclosure of being.

The reason for the search for God is based largely on the desire to know his will, his command. Steve Clarke, a scholar of religion and violence, puts it succinctly when he observes that

[t]he religious are able to appeal, among other things, to God's wishes, God's commands, the benefits of going to heaven, the benefits of avoiding hell, the benefits of being reincarnated as a superior being, and the benefits of escaping from the cycle of reincarnation, as well as all of the justificatory sources that are appealed to by the secular (Clarke 2014:7).

Clarke maintains that religion provides the avenue for human beings to attain heaven through good works and total submission to God. The other alternative to heaven, according to Clarke, is hell, a place of condemnation, or a cycle of reincarnation believed to be an arduous task. We see here that metaphysics is a dimension which entails adherence to certain beliefs, and these beliefs inform actions and spiritualities. In fact, if taken seriously, a metaphysical religious worldview influences the way of being of the believer, as the purported 'will of God' becomes the will of human beings, steering and directing their active stance towards their situation. Metaphysics (religion) makes manifest the transcendent in the experiential in such a way that there is little distinction between the two: whatever is experienced, is interpreted in light of the extra-sensorial metaphysical domain and essentially made to fit the metaphysical and essentialist worldview, which as we have seen is the opposite of the context in which the question about meaning arises. Recall Toft's definition of religion as discussed above. The metaphysical is not only said to be part of the experiential, it is, in fact, considered the source of the experiential, and thus also enjoys priority over the experiential; it is the final and highest source of authority when it comes to the meaning of whatever is experienced in human life. This disposition toward the world, directed by a relation with what is beyond the world, can and has given rise to different responses to the world. If the world is considered as having its source in a metaphysical reality, it becomes a religious mandate to protect and promote what is considered holy or divine. And then obviously, in the effort to protect and promote their understanding of the divine, people who draw closer to the divine source may also carry out actions that endanger or destroy aspects of the temporal (phenomenal) world. Seeing that an essentially other- and anti-worldly, i.e. an a-temporal, a-historical, unchanging and absolute

reality is used to explain what is worldly, temporal, historical, changing and finite, there are bound to be extreme tensions and contradictions in the whole exercise of living in the everyday within the ‘truth’ of a metaphysical religious framework. Since every human experience, viewed phenomenologically, in a sense contradicts these metaphysical concepts and principles, the metaphysical view is easily threatened. Recall that we said that religious fundamentalists view their own beliefs as both pure and fragile, as threatened by the ‘secular’ or worldly state of affairs. Heidegger gives us insight into why these views are on the one hand so fragile (they contradict our most basic phenomenal experiences in every dimension) and on the other hand so important for believers. Their importance for believers must at least partly lie in their ability to counter the anxiety which accompanies in an enduring (if often hidden) manner our phenomenal existence in the world. As Heidegger explains and as we have discussed, anxiety in the face of existence (finitude, mortality, uncertainty, etc.) is the hallmark of authentic existence. Religious metaphysics on Heidegger’s understanding provides an answer or solution to existential anxiety which is essentially inauthentic. It is safe to conclude that the potential responses, driven by a belief in divine mandates, can for these reasons – deep psychological, emotional and existential investment combined with the fragility of the beliefs, easily result in interpersonal violence aimed at proving the super power of the metaphysical domain (of God) over the shared world of human experience.

Jan Assmann (2008), in his analysis of monotheistic religions, draws attention to the historical narratives of such religions which point to violence. As already stated in the introduction, in this dissertation I am investigating monotheistic metaphysics in particular, as the three dominant monotheisms of Judaism, Christianity and Islam are globally predominant and by far the greatest culprits world-wide when it comes to violence based on religious fundamentalist claims. Religious metaphysics, one could argue, bases its claims on the idea of ‘revealed truth’, which is supposedly directly conveyed to trustworthy person by the divine. Arguments, speculation and truth values, on a single body sub-divided into religious texts, laws, historical values and theology are all grouped together under the concept of reveal truth. On Assmann’s understanding, monotheistic religions came as a reaction to the polytheism which existed prior to monotheistic ones, in a time when “nobody contested the reality of foreign gods” (Assmann, 1997:3) In other words, under the polytheistic worldview there was a general understanding that there are multiple gods and goddesses, and that different people’s worshipped different ones. The emergence of monotheism within a polytheistic context imports a distinction that Assmann refers to as the ‘mosaic distinction’ after the figure of the biblical Moses. The mosaic

distinction is the cut that monotheism makes between the only true God and all other faiths and religious practices thereafter called ‘paganism’ or ‘idolatry’. The mosaic distinction as a historical occurrence for the first time refuted and rejected all religions which existed before and outside of itself, by terming them as paganism and idolatry (Bernstein 2013:130). This is clearly very different from a polytheistic stance which in principle acknowledges different religions and different gods associated with different peoples and places. Through the mosaic distinction which is about two millennia old in the west, the so called ‘pagan’ religions lost credibility and their ascribed epistemic values and intercultural translations were eliminated as it was held that “[f]alse gods cannot be translated” (Bernstein 2013:130). In other words, monotheism was seeking to establish what is believed to be true. As such, polytheistic beliefs were considered untrue and irrelevant, thus rendered meaningless and unworthy of translation (in the sense of making accessible). Monotheistic religious metaphysics started as rebellion against the belief in multiple, polytheistic positions that view the gods as existing on a more worldly plane. Monotheism sought to provide a single primary cause in the place of the many different gods that are found in polytheism. According to Assmann,

Monotheism means exodus that is enlightenment. It means the liberation of mankind from the constraints of the power of this world, of the given. It means the discovery of an alternative realm of human commitment and investment beyond the traditional realms of state, society, and nature. As a final consequence, the distinction between true and false means the distinction between God and world (Assmann in Bernstein 2013:147).

Assmann presents the initial disposition of monotheism toward the world. Monotheism marked the beginning of a new response to the world; in the light of monotheism, the world became a realm of falsehood and God the source of eternal and other-worldly truth. Assmann therefore links the birth of metaphysics in the strong sense of the word (as Heidegger views it) to the birth of monotheism. The truth becomes desiring to become one with God; God becomes analogous with the truth. In fact, faith in God is not strictly viewed as one alternative amongst others; instead, it is in monotheism considered as the only commitment that human beings must invest in as it is the only way to the only truth, namely the transcendent God as revealed to the chosen ones. For Assmann, monotheism in this way inaugurates a radical intolerance through its insistence on the existence of only one, a-historical and other-worldly truth, and is thus necessarily undergirded by the potential for violence.

Assmann has been criticised for his overly generalised conceptualisation of monotheism and his refusal to see the explicit distinctions between different monotheistic religions. Some scholars argue that he wants to return religion back to polytheism or cosmotheism (Bernstein 2013:140). Assmann responded to these criticisms by directing his readers to two monotheistic movements: revolutionary and evolutionary. Addressing the revolutionary movement of monotheistic religion, Assmann maintains that this is a monotheism that is attained through an exclusive path, which entails a radical break with all that went before it. Different from revolutionary monotheism, the evolutionary version, according to Assmann, is like a mature polytheism. This is because it simply allows for changes to occur based on the change in human actions and reactions to life. It is an inclusive monotheism (Assmann in Bernstein 2013:141). Despite the qualification of Assmann's initial claims and his move towards a more tolerant and inclusive monotheism, it does not fully address the objections raised, at least in as much as there is a delicate difference between the three Abrahamic religions, considering their monotheistic attribute, and the revolutionary tendency described by Assmann. The fact remains that revolutionary monotheism is widespread in the world today, and it is fundamentally intolerant, and thus both potentially and inherently violent, on Assmann's understanding (Bernstein 2013:145).

Assmann further explains that “[m]onotheism always appears as a counter-religion. There is no natural or evolutionary way leading from the error of idolatry to the truth of monotheism. This truth can come only from outside, by way of revelation” (Assmann in Bernstein 2013:131), which reinforces his idea that the Abrahamic religions are revolutionary, oppositional, counter-intuitive or counter-phenomenal (one might want to say) and thus potentially violent. Assmann presents a clear instance of the Egyptians and the Israelites: the Egyptians represented the old and the Israelites the new. This is not just a mere new reality that is only passive, or which could evolve out of what went before; rather it is one that is there to completely uproot and replace the old and impose its new mandates, its singular truth (Assmann in Bernstein 2013:131). The highlighted religious dispositions remain a reality in our world today. The desire to refute and eradicate the prevailing state of affairs considered to be ‘undesirable’ continues to incite acts of violent actions committed in the name of God and against the enemies (pagans, idolaters) of this one true God and his associated truth claims. This violent disposition should not be considered as a surprise, especially when one thinks about religion in line with its metaphysical assertions. Religious violence is not an arbitrary

violence; it has always had a religious tag, a purpose, which serves as a justification as absolute inaccessible and untouchable as God self.

In the same vein, Walter Benjamin in his article, “Critique of Violence (Reflections)” writes, “Its [monotheistic religious] purpose is not to punish the infringement of law, but to establish new law. For in the exercise of violence over life and death, more than in any other legal act, the law reaffirms itself. But in this very violence something rotten in the law is revealed” (Benjamin, 2007). According to Benjamin, the establishment of new laws is driven by a desire to abolish the old often considered as a defect in the law. Religious violence, as rightly observed by Benjamin, is aimed at validating, reinstating and authenticating religious world views and eradicating what they consider to be religiously unacceptable (rotten) in the world. It validates ‘the rule of law’ only on the condition that it resonates with the rule of God. Violence is a potential response when there is a desire to change the system that is considered rotten. Violence as a response has been central in monotheistic and metaphysical religious responses since the existence of religion.

Understanding the form that religious violence takes, is of great significance for this project. Assmann’s defines religious violence as “... a kind of violence that ... stems from the distinction of friend and foe in a religious sense” (Assmann quoted in Bernstein 2013:153). The religious meaning of this distinction rests on the distinction of true and false “ Religious violence ... is directed against pagans, non-believers, and heretics, who either would not convert to the truth or have defected from it and are therefore regarded as enemies of God, who alone is the truth” (Assman quoted in Bernstein 2013:151; Clarke 2014:6). The strange paradox relating to the confessed belief in an omnipotent and fully transcendent God on the one hand and the need to defend the truth of this God using violence against unbelievers on the other hand, is again revealed in this passage by Assmann. Again and again we see that metaphysical religious truth claims have something intrinsically fragile that calls for their protection against all destabilising forces in the world, which get conveniently clustered together and labelled as pagan, heretic or secular.

Over the years there have been numerous specific attempts to justify violence in and for the sake of religion. Steve Clarke (2014) in his book, *The Justification for Religious Violence*, refers to religiously incentivised killing. Clarke talks about ways in which acts of religious violence can be motivated. He refers to three important appeals, which are simultaneously

empirical and metaphysical in nature. He highlights the following as justifications: “cosmic war,” appeals to the afterlife, and appeals to sacred values. Clarke notes that it is easy to show that “religiously based justifications for violence are as acceptable as rigorous secular justifications for violence, provided believers are able to incorporate premises, grounded in the metaphysics of religious worldviews, in arguments for the conclusion that this or that violent act is justified” (Clarke 2014:ix). Clarke points to the fact that religious violence is often unable to justify the need for violence. Clarke also appears to suggest that we can only understand the nature of religiously incited violence when it is contrasted with secular justifications for violence. Religious methods of validation are different from secular. In a case where an action is punishable, secular validations explore the nature of the crime and its effects and these will be the determinant for punishment. By contrast, Brigham Young, Second President of The Church of Jesus of Latter-Day Saints, presents a religious justification for violence as follows:

There are sins that men commit for which they cannot receive forgiveness in this world, or in that which is to come, and if they had their eyes open to see their true condition, they would be perfectly willing to have their blood spilt upon the ground, that the smoke might ascend to heaven as an offering for their sins; and the smoking incense would atone for their sins, whereas, if such is not the case, they would stick to them and remain upon them in the spirit world (Young quoted in Clarke 2014:4).

Blood atonement is to be carried out by those who commit adultery, kill the innocent, those who commit acts of heresy, among others (Clarke 2014:4). The point here is that “[t]he doctrine of blood atonement justifies the killing of particular people by appeal to improvements in the quality of the afterlife that people can be expected to experience” (Clarke 2014:4). The only way to erase certain crimes entails the loss of one’s life; death. Death becomes a more everyday reality in religious metaphysical understandings, since it is seen as ‘merely’ physical death; recall that for this type of metaphysics the reality of the world, including death, is strictly derivative and superseded by a reality fully external to this world and its finitude, inclusive of physical death. It is important to add here that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints has since developed its doctrines and they have repudiated the doctrine of blood atonement (Clarke 2014:5).

History is saturated with examples of religiously motivated violence, perpetrated almost exclusively by monotheistic believers against perceived pagans or idolaters. There is the Lisbon massacre of 1506 in which mainly Catholics tortured and killed hundreds of people accused of being Jews. Sometimes (quite often, actually) the religious violence happens within a monotheistic grouping such as the Christian religion, where one group of Christians is accused of being the enemies of the real faith by other Christians: “The 1572 St. Bartholomew's day massacre of Huguenots in Paris by Catholic mobs led to at least 5,000 deaths. The Wadda Ghalughara - a massacre of Sikhs by Muslims - which took place in 1764, led to the death of 25,000-30,000 Sikhs” (Clarke 2014:5). In recent times, the world has witnessed a series of acts of religious violence. The September 11, 2001 bombing of the World Trade Centre, led to the death of 3,000 people. West African countries, especially Nigeria, have remained the hub of international terrorism and it has seen killing and bombing by *Boko Haram*<sup>43</sup> which has led to thousands of deaths, abductions and massacres. Kenya *Al Shabaab* and other parts of the world. The 2016 Islamic State (IS) truck drivers who ploughed through crowd in Nice left many dead and injured. Most of these attacks have been justified using the logic of the mosaic distinction to kill enemies of the only true God and faith.

Absolutising a religious metaphysical postulation and generalising it is a major cause of religious violence. Jihad,<sup>44</sup> for instance, is an ideology widely used in the twenty first century. It has become a religious tool for advancing political agendas of either retaliation or propaganda. This is evident in the argument presented by Bin Laden for the justification of the 9/11 attack:

The United States and their allies are killing us in Palestine, Chechnya, Kashmir and Iraq. That's why Muslims have the right to carry out revenge attacks on the US ... The American people should remember that they pay taxes to their government and that they voted for their president. Their government makes weapons and provides them to Israel, which they use to kill Palestinian Muslims. Given that the American Congress is a committee that represents the people, the fact that it agrees with the actions of the

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<sup>43</sup> Boko Haram is not only a pseudo name, it is a name which shows the nature of the activity and the intended goal of the sect. The actual name of the sect is *Jama'atul Ahlus Sunna Lid Da'awatis Jihad* which meaning ‘Group of the People of Sunnah for Preaching and Jihad’. The *Boko Haram* sect is Islamic and said to have links with *Al Qaeda* and, in recent times, they have declared allegiance to the Islamic State (ISIS). The term *Boko Haram* has to do with their ideological framework rather than their religion.

<sup>44</sup> Jihad is used here as ‘holy war’ (Pape 2005:64) in the sense that it is a war legitimised by a divine force.

American government proves that America in its entirety is responsible for the atrocities that it is committing against Muslims. I demand the American people to take note of their government's policy against Muslims [...]. The onus is on Americans to prevent Muslims from being killed at the hands of their government (Quoted by English 2009:97).

Thus far, the understanding of religion presented in this project is that embedded in its framework is a desire for and towards religious-transcendent (God) which is different from a focus on the world. Contrary to this deduction, one might argue that there is nothing in Bin Laden's statement that evokes God. It seems to be more about perceived injustices towards Muslims. However, Bin Laden's mandate that insists that the fight for justice is a duty strictly for Muslims denotes a religious underpinning. This makes "[t]he jihad today ... an appointed duty, for if one inch of Muslim land is occupied, it is the duty of the Muslims to save that inch. And now the religion of God is under assault and all the Islamic countries are occupied by rulers who do not govern by the revealed word of God" (Benjamin & Simon 2002:8). Similarly, in the Bible, Deuteronomy 13:7-10, the Judaic God is said to give a mandate to kill whoever tries to worship other gods. There are many other biblical instances of zeal and religious mandates to kill in the name of God (Assmann in Bernstein 2013:146).

## **2.6 Conclusion**

In the analysis of religious metaphysics in this chapter we saw that metaphysical religion, especially monotheistic religion, with the backing of faith, holds essentialist claims about being (human beings), history and time. Even though scholars like Flood argue that one cannot conceive of an essentialist understanding of religion (Flood 1999:43), he does not juxtapose his assertion with faith, a religious essentialist position which is often held as a legitimising force. Flood believes that religion is not necessarily about faith as it is often essentially conceived. Belief, in a religious sense, is not the outcome of rational logical deductions, and 'revealed truths' instead takes the centre stage. One form such truths take is a part of historical doctrines passed on from one generation to another. These doctrines are said to have been revealed to man by God. These revealed truths have taken different forms (dogmas and doctrines) and are now not only the basis for understanding one's essence, but also the ground on which certain actions are carried out.

I have also highlighted the role that religious metaphysics plays in inciting religious violence. Drawing on the insights of thinkers like Assmann and Clarke, I maintain that the absolute conceptions of religious truth serve as justification for religious violence. The intended aim of religion is to introduce a new world order influenced and controlled by God. Assmann shows how monotheistic religions introduced an understanding of 'One God' and how this notion of God as one sought and still seeks to put an end to polytheism in the different ways it reveals itself in the world. Recent decades have seen some monotheistic religions carrying out the mandate of instating their version of metaphysical enlightenment in the world. The shocking reality of this is that religiously motivated violence, arising from the link between religious worldview and violence, has seen the death of so many people and my analysis here implies that it would be naïve to not foresee the end of this kind of religious attacks anywhere in the near future.

## Chapter Three

### A Heideggerian Critique of Religious Fundamentalist Violence as a Particular Form of Forgetfulness of Being

“... the truth does not imply that the biblical [or koranic] in the beginning God created heaven and earth is an answer to our question ... From the standpoint of faith our question is ‘foolishness’” (Heidegger 1959:7).

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“Everything that is not simply nothing *is*, and for us even nothing ‘belongs’ to ‘being’” (Heidegger 1959:85)

#### 3.1 Introduction

The basis for this chapter can be drawn from Heidegger’s assertion: “It is important to adequately scrutinise what holds us captive and makes us undisposed in our experience in the quest to determine the ‘things’” (Heidegger 1967:50-51). This is pertinent because for Heidegger, there is something that holds human beings captive and prevents us from critically engaging our existence, in the search for the meaning of being as revealed to us within human existence (Dasein). As will be shown in this chapter, religious metaphysical positions in particular hinder active scrutiny of things within the world of phenomena. In this chapter, I use the critical lens of Heidegger’s understanding of Dasein in his *Being and Time* to evaluate religious metaphysics more closely. The presupposition here is that religious violence comes out of a specific treatment of religious metaphysical claims. This does not mean that religion is not self-critical: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). Discernment is an important part of religion, but the understanding of discernment in religion is different from that of hermeneutics. To test the spirits to see whether they are from God is a metaphysical exercise and this is different from philosophical hermeneutics which discerns truth and falsehood through an engagement with lived realities in the world. In the first chapter, we saw that Heidegger suggests that the inquiry about a thing should not be different from its nature,

from the ground from which the question about that thing emerges. Put differently, the nature of the solution must not be different from the basis of the problem.

In the first two chapters, I analysed the presuppositions which inform Heideggerian phenomenological ontology and metaphysical thought processes respectively. This chapter will draw on both the first and second chapter in order to illustrate the significance of Heidegger's phenomenological-ontological account of human beings in relation to religious metaphysics. I will show that the belief in extra-terrestrial or other-worldly realities, especially insofar as they are held to provide the essential truth about the meaning of worldly existence, is conducive to a situation where religious epistemic justifications inform violent actions perpetrated by perpetrators of religious violence. This position is informed by some religious beliefs that promote the need to envisage a world that is beyond and above human experiences, and which also takes priority over this world in all respects. This does not mean that religious metaphysics is synonymous with religious fundamentalism and violence. These beliefs are instead often accompanied by mandates that sometimes incite acts of violence. Heidegger's phenomenology draws human reasoning back to the source of all questioning, that is, the world. As opposed to the other-worldly (metaphysical) argumentation that often underlies a religious world-view, Heidegger's paradigm shift limits itself to the lived realities of the world which, he believes, have often been ignored in humans' search for the meaning of existence. Lee Braver presents Heidegger's position succinctly when he writes, "Heidegger dismisses any notion of being 'inside' ourselves and then having to exit an inner sphere to make contact with the outside world. I am always outside myself, out there with the things that I'm interacting with" (Braver 2015:42). Braver's reading of Heidegger suggests that human beings cannot exist in isolation from the world; even their so-called 'inner' lives are 'out there' in the world and constituted by the world. This means that for Heidegger human existence cannot meaningfully withdraw from the world (either by transcending it in the direction of the supernatural or by plunging underneath it into the self, subject or spirit) without losing itself or dissolving into something we will no longer recognise as human.

As explained in detail in Chapter One, human beings, according to Heidegger, are always and necessarily embedded in relations with the world and other people in the world. Thus, the nature of life and living is strictly worldly and temporal. This temporal understanding runs directly counter to the divine existence considered innate in humans, often in the form of an eternal soul which would supposedly link them to their origin and end-goal in the divine

spheres, and which serves to render worldly existence a mere secondary or derivative interlude. In religious metaphysical worldviews, these innate characteristics have been the justification for a metaphysical understanding of the meaning of Dasein. As opposed to an other-worldly perspective, Heidegger proposes an outward (worldly, objective) understanding of human beings. Heidegger turns the table in order to show how the anticipation of transcendent rewards is unreal and irrelevant. Heidegger's emphasis on the world shows everything that is achieved is in fact attainable through temporal projections; everything past, present and future are nothing more nor less than spatio-temporal phenomena.

This chapter seeks to set out key moments in a Heideggerian critique of religious fundamentalist violence as a particular form of forgetfulness of being. I will show how the forgetfulness of being Dasein is one of the major causes of religious fundamentalist violence. This chapter is divided into six sections: (i) contesting the ground of human existence; (ii) the ground for Heidegger; (iii) Centring the nature of time and history; (iv) escaping as a phenomenological ontology of being; (v) the danger of religious escaping; (vi) a Heideggerian ontological critique of religious and finally, (vii) Heidegger's notion of truth as a critique of religious metaphysical truth. In the section on the ground of human existence, I explore how Heidegger considers the world as the only space for addressing existence. By this, Heidegger critiques other ways of understanding of existence, especially ways that do not consider the nature of human existence in the world. In light of this, religious views are driven by the need to extend the human ground for addressing human existence beyond the world. Heidegger critiques this extension as misguided because it results in an impossible, hopeless and distorting attempt to escape from the phenomenological reality of human existence. This escape, as shall be argued, is potentially dangerous in that it can easily incite and help to justify religious fundamentalist violence.

### **3.2 Contesting the Ground of Human Existence**

In this section, I explore the two opposing positions about the ground of human existence represented by Heideggerian phenomenological ontology and religion metaphysics respectively. The ground of Dasein is for Heidegger found within the temporal reality of the world, time and history. Contrary to this, religious metaphysics presents a different understanding of this ground that looks beyond the temporal phenomenological understanding of human existence.

#### 3.2.1 The Ground for Heidegger

It should be evident from what was discussed the first and second chapter that the ‘ground’ for Heidegger is entirely different from the ‘ground’ of human existence in a religious world view. I will only discuss the notion of the ground of being in Heidegger’s thought, and for this discussion I need to illuminate all the following related concepts: phenomenology, disclosure, ground, truth, interpretation, worldliness, nothing, and escape. Heidegger uses the term ‘ground’ in *Being and Time*, when he talks about the nature of phenomenology as the only method with which to approach the question about the meaning of being (Heidegger 1962: 58ff). He says there that phenomenology means “to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself”, which also means “To the things themselves”. In other words, for Heidegger, the meaning of existence and being should be sought on the very ground of their appearance as phenomena. He explains that phenomenology does not designate a field of investigation but instead an approach, a how rather than a what (Heidegger 1962: 59). To have a science “of phenomena means to grasp its objects in such a way that everything about them which is up for discussion must be treated by exhibiting it directly and demonstrating it directly and this is also why ‘descriptive phenomenology’ is strictly speaking a tautology. Phenomenology is the method by which appearances are described as they appear to us, as they let themselves be seen; it is the art or method of “any exhibiting of an entity as it shows itself in itself” (Heidegger 1962: 59). We thus see in Heidegger that for him the phenomenological approach aims to be as true to the phenomena themselves as possible.

At the same time, however, the phenomenological approach should not be confused with taking naïve experience seriously. Heidegger shows throughout *Being and Time* how our ordinary understandings of the world constantly tend to fall away from truthfulness towards the ‘things themselves’ and away from the meaning of their original appearance or showing of themselves. This is why phenomenological investigation and in particular a phenomenological unveiling of the meaning of beings and of being as such requires a specific method. Phenomenology is necessary, is required, because ordinary conceptions, often produced through the ‘idle talk’ of the ‘they’, that is, the everyday ‘truths’ that we pick up from talk that we overhear and repeat without returning to the phenomena themselves (Heidegger 1962:211f), this kind of understanding typically hides the phenomena themselves from us, or disguises them in ways that distort them. At the very least, idle talk is groundless and passes along such groundless understandings with the result, says Heidegger, that ‘the act of disclosing’ is perverted into an ‘act of closing off’ or covering (Heidegger 1962:213). He puts it very well when he says, “Idle

talk is the possibility of understanding everything without previously making the thing one's own" (Heidegger 1962:213). The most important way in which idle talk therefore succeeds in disguising, covering or hiding our original confrontation with the phenomena themselves, is by convincing us that everything can be understood and in fact has already been understood and expressed in language. In other words, idle talk erases the need for raising the question about the meaning of being, and for searching for the answer through a return to the phenomena themselves in their concrete appearance within and to Dasein.

By covering over the way in which the things show themselves to Dasein, these ordinary understandings not only prohibit us from explicitly exhibiting things in their phenomenal nature. What is also and most essentially hidden from us in the process is "something that lies hidden ... but at the same time it is something that belongs to what thus shows itself, and it belongs to it so essentially as to constitute its meaning and its ground" (Heidegger 1962:59), namely the being of entities or beings, or being as such. Thus, for Heidegger, being is the ground and meaning of beings and its manifestation and hiddenness are both tied up with the manifestation and hiddenness of the phenomena themselves. In a final dismissal of any metaphysical (extra-worldly) understanding of the meaning and ground of beings, Heidegger says: "Least of all can the Being of entities ever be anything such that "behind it" stands something else 'which does not appear'" (Heidegger 1962:60).

Similarly, then, Heidegger conceives of the ground of human existence only accessible through the phenomena themselves. And since the showing or appearance of the phenomena is always temporal, the ground of human existence or Dasein is also a fluid reality that is never fixed, a reality that is always changing and evolving, non-static. As he says in this essay "What is a Thing", "[w]here are we to get a foothold? The ground slips away under us. Perhaps we are already close to falling into the well" (Heidegger 1967:27). And in *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1962:152-3) he says about Dasein,

If the "I" is an Essential characteristic of Dasein, then it is one which must be Interpreted existentially... If in each case Dasein is its Self only in existing, then the constancy of the Self no less than the possibility of its "failure to stand by itself" requires that we formulate the question existentially and ontologically as the sole appropriate way of access to its problematic.

Thus a proper understanding of the ground of being and of Dasein is an essential starting point in unearthing the complexities that underlie human realities; and: “Only as phenomenology, is ontology possible” (Heidegger 1962:60), and therefore similarly, only as phenomenology is an understanding of the being of Dasein possible. Heidegger’s understanding of ontology as only accessible via phenomenology means that he must undertake a structured investigation into Dasein or human existence as the place and manner where being/s appear/s as meaningful. This investigation he designates as an analytic of Dasein in its structural being-in-the-world. With this, Heidegger refutes, as Kovacs notes, the whole traditional metaphysical conceptualisation of the ground of *beings*, because the traditional metaphysical position obscures and evades an accurate understanding of the question about the meaning of being because it rejects Dasein as the place where being is made manifest, where it appears as meaningful (Kovacs 1990:9). Heidegger’s investigation does not only reveal the ontological structure of Dasein, it also shows how Dasein is an epistemic agent. As an epistemic agent, Dasein makes meaning of its world; Dasein actively engages with its world and Dasein’s ontological structure plays a role in how and why phenomena appear to it as meaningful. It is safe, therefore, to argue that the understanding of all things is based on the interpretation of the understanding (Heidegger 1962:188ff) that Dasein provides because, “[t]here is no information about the thingness of the thing without knowledge of the kind of truth in which the thing stands” (Heidegger 1967:27). It is only in the world which Dasein inhabits and in the way that Dasein inhabits this world that the truth of its experience can be made manifest. Put differently, when knowledge about a thing is sought, there is always an idea of the nature of that which we seek. For Heidegger the question, the idea and the response are all equally irrefutably worldly, which equally means that Dasein is not the other-worldly origin of the meaning of things in the world. Dasein, things, and their meanings, are all irrefutably worldly. The nature of the answer is not far removed from the question. This is why when the answer presents itself, we immediately identify it. As he says:

In interpreting, we do not, so to speak, throw a ‘signification’ over some naked thing which is present-at-hand, we do not stick a value on it; but when something within-the-world is encountered as such, the thing in question already has an involvement which is disclosed in our understanding of the world, and this involvement is one which gets laid out by the interpretation (Heidegger 1962:190-1).

The knowledge of things as they are experienced can only be attained in the very reality that for which the inquiry arises. To move away from this phenomenological method of questioning is to lose the foundational preconditions for answering the question which returns always to how the beings manifest themselves to Dasein, is to lose the foundational preconditions for answering the question. Heidegger maintains that everyday objects and activities conceal human beings, time (the character of time) and the ways Dasein is understood in the world (Faulconer 2000:3). In Chapter Two, we saw that concealment occurs when Dasein is not authentic in the face of things in the world. This inauthenticity results when Dasein is not active in its engagement with the world, but instead takes over the ready-made understandings of others as sedimented in everyday language. For this reason, Heidegger returns human beings to the ground, which is given with the concrete world, and he understands Dasein only in relation to this ground. Figuratively speaking, Heidegger clears the fog which covers our vision, so that human beings can see, for themselves, that a ground does exist, but that it is not other-worldly.

What Heidegger does is to refute any type of metaphysical ground, because "... metaphysics can change our sense of everything simply by changing our understanding of what 'is-ness' is ..." (Lain 2011:107). In the first chapter, I briefly addressed Heidegger's understanding of 'is' as a verb that represents existence. Religious metaphysics' attribution of divinity to human existence eliminates the temporality implied in the verb 'is'. Therefore, religious metaphysics changes our understanding of human existence as temporal. Heidegger strongly emphasises the contingent nature of Dasein. By doing this, he dismisses the traditional conceptualisation of ontological questions which finds expression in what he calls onto-theology. He moves away from an age driven by metaphysical intelligibility. Heidegger's argument, in the words of Faulconer, is that metaphysics makes the character of our involvement with the world (things) less visible. In fact, "[i]t [metaphysics] conceals human existence and how the world, an 'envirning world,' ... is constituted. It conceals the character of time and the temporality of being. It conceals what it means to be a person, a people, and to be in relation to others" (Faulconer 2000:3). Chapter Two shows how metaphysical positions stretch the understanding of Dasein and time beyond the temporal and the worldly into an other-worldly, eternal domain. In religious metaphysics, there is always an attempt to understand the world in relation to a divine being as a necessary origin. Heidegger refutes this kind of thinking. According to Vincent Vycinas, Heidegger opines that traditional metaphysics has a dual logic, meaning that we relate to things with the mindset that they have an ultimate beginning. Conversely, for

Heidegger, logic means *logos* in the sense of that which ‘grounds’ and ‘founds’. “Logic as onto-logic considers being as ground in which everything else is grounded” (Vycinas 1961: 319). I interpret this to mean that the world is the ground of existence and it is impossible, according to Heidegger, to think beyond the phenomenological ground of existence (Heidegger 1962:60). The understanding of anything depends entirely on the understanding of Dasein. The ground of being is always and should remain, Heidegger would argue, the base for addressing questions about the meaning of being.

Heidegger’s arguments suggest that the extension of an understanding of Dasein beyond temporality is a misunderstanding and a distortion of the true nature of existence as Dasein.

The history of philosophy shows that the nature of what truth entails has taken different dimensions. Metaphysics sees the understanding of truth as very different from the truth as understood by phenomenological ontologists like Heidegger. Heidegger, arguing from a phenomenological perspective, maintains that “[t]he true [truth] is what is valid; what is valid corresponds to the facts. Something corresponds to the facts when it is directed to them, i.e., when it fits itself to what the things themselves are” (Heidegger 1967:35). Implicit in Heidegger’s argument is the idea that in every enquiry there is always a presupposition and this presupposition must be informed by the nature of the enquiry. This is the understanding of Heidegger’s methodological enquiry: the “truth” is not removed from the context which seeks knowledge. The final section of this chapter will be dedicated to presenting an account of how the question of truth as understood by Heidegger differs from the traditional metaphysical conception of truth.

For Heidegger, the question about the meaning of human existence requires that we

[c]onsider Being, what is Being? It is itself. To experience and articulate this is what future thought has to learn. ‘Being’: that is not God and not foundational to the world. Being is further from and at the same time closer to humans than everything which exists (Heidegger in Hampson 2009:66).

In other words, Heidegger brings the understanding of the meaning of human being back into the world of existence. Metaphysics, especially religious metaphysics, often mystifies the understanding of being-in-the-world, which, in most cases, obfuscates, obliterates, and

sometimes thwarts the possibility of an accurate conceptualisation of the true reality of Dasein. Heidegger argues that “[w]hen Being-in-the-world is exhibited phenomenologically, disguises and concealments are rejected because this phenomenon itself always gets ‘seen’ in a certain way in every Dasein” (Heidegger 1962:85). Heidegger is emphatic in his understanding of the philosophical enquiry into the nature of human existence when he affirms that “even though Being-in-the-world is something of which one has pre-phenomenological experience and acquaintance ..., it becomes *invisible* if one interprets it in a way which is ontologically inappropriate” (Heidegger 1962:86). Here, Heidegger implicitly alludes to the traditional metaphysical misinterpretation of ontology as one of the ways in which the question of the meaning of being is answered in an ontologically inappropriate way. This traditional metaphysical ontological misinterpretation compounds the existing basic aspect of the way in which Dasein is already fallen in the world, and caught up in misunderstandings and distortions of the meaning of being. The only way the existence of Dasein can be sustained is when it is understood in its ontological status of being-in-the-world, which is the ground on which time, projection and other structures of existence find their root.

The phenomenological approach to the interpretation of the meaning of being is thematised in Heidegger’s consideration of time. Heidegger’s prioritisation of time, understood phenomenologically, is seen in his understanding of temporality: “*significance* belongs to the structure of the now” (Heidegger 1962:474). This insight is for him what distinguishes a phenomenological understanding of time from the ordinary understanding of time as “a sequence of ‘nows’ which are constantly ‘present-at-hand’, simultaneously passing away and coming along” (Heidegger 1962:474). Phenomenological analysis reveals our lived experience of time to be fully caught up in the care structure of Dasein; time matters to us and has significance in that ‘now’ is always either an appropriate or inappropriate time in terms of our specific and concrete engagements with the world. This phenomenological understanding of time Heidegger calls, as discussed, ‘world time’ (Heidegger 1962:474). The now is understood here as temporality, the reality of things as they are experienced in the flow of time. This, as we already saw in the second chapter, is a position markedly different from a religious-metaphysical futurists’ teleological understanding of the ‘significance’ of the now as often found in the anticipation of an eternal or timeless world beyond this world. Koselleck presents an account of how the religious notion of time is futuristic in a metaphysical sense: “[t]his self-accelerating temporality robs the present of the possibility of being experienced as the present, and escapes into a future within which the currently unapprehendable present has to be captured

...” (Koselleck 2004:22). The religious metaphysical understanding of time as essentially unreal (because of the timeless nature of the superior and opposite metaphysical domain) results in adherents adopting an inauthentic and escapist attitude towards the present. As Koselleck captures in this quote, the metaphysical treatment of time means that the experienced finitude of the present is suspended through an escape into a pre-determined future which guarantees the meaning of the present from ahead. This attitude effectively cancels the present and makes it unavailable for authentic anticipatory resolve and action on the part of Dasein. The nature of the escape referred to here is endless; this is because of the insatiability of human desires, viewed together with the relentless nature of human finitude. This endless yet fruitless attempt to escape<sup>45</sup> the temporal existence in which Dasein is constituted, leads to a distorted and obscure conception of time; a metaphysical staggering in the world. Heidegger’s *Being and Time* shows that much of everyday human activity can be described without recourse to deliberate, self-referential consciousness, and to show how such every-day activity can disclose the world and discover things in it without containing any explicit or implicit experience of the separation of the mental from the world of bodies and things (Dreyfus 1997:58-59). By every-day activity, Heidegger refers to the activities in the world as the source of human cognition. Put differently, the complexities of human life are not removed from every-day existence and the prioritisation of cognition is a negation of realities as experienced in every activity. As such, the world is the only ground for enquiring about the nature of the being-in-the-world. However as explained before, although our ‘ordinary’ and everyday experience of the world is for Heidegger always the starting point, his phenomenological analysis attempts to delve underneath clichéd understandings imposed upon these experiences in order to view them afresh and to bring to light the meaning of their being in an ontological sense.

The ontological sense which Heidegger proposed, as already discussed in chapter one, is to revisit what he considers a traditional conception of ontology in order to phenomenologically revive ontology. Let us dwell on this in order to emphasise Heidegger’s position. In *Being and Time*, and in some of the other writings, Heidegger uses the term ‘onto-theology’ to refer to the metaphysical attempt to grapple with the questions surrounding Dasein. (Heidegger 1962:74). In Chapter One, we saw that “onto-theologies *ground* and *guide* their epochs by establishing a historical understanding of the being of entities; ontotheologies supply the ‘ground’ from which an age takes its ‘essential forms’” (Lain 2011:108). The problem which

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<sup>45</sup> The whole idea of escape as a mode of being will be investigated in greater details as this chapter unfolds.

Heidegger has with ontotheologies as we had indicated is that they seem to establish an ahistorical understanding of human existence that is not grounded on human reality. Kearney makes Heidegger's interpretation of onto-theology clearer when he observes that "[t]he term onto-theology was brought into common parlance by Heidegger to refer to the metaphysical concept of a highest and most general being abstracted from the lived world" (Kearney 2001:14). In Chapter One, we saw that onto-theology stems from two words, 'ontology' and 'theology'. Heidegger combines the prefix of ontology (onto) with theology to give onto-theology, which he uses to designate the theological (knowledge about God) understanding of ontology (question about the meaning of human being). Heidegger disapproves of this commensuration because of the incompatibility of ontology and theology. The incompatibility referred to here arises from the position that ontology addresses being from the view point of human reality, while theology considers it possible to address being away from the world. One might add that the nature of ontology is not the same as theology, thus to use one at the service of the other is to misplace categories. According to thinkers like George Kovacs, the destruction of the onto-theological tradition was crucial in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. This destruction is marked by the "overcoming of the old metaphysics and the discovery of a new metaphysics, of a new understanding of Being" (Kovacs 1990:9). This new metaphysics entails embracing ontology as understood in phenomenology. For Heidegger, the very foundation which constitutes the presuppositions of theology is not in any way connected to the philosophical postulations of ontology. To merge them or consider one as potentially or actually capable of explaining the other is phenomenologically inconceivable (Heidegger 1962:74-75). Heidegger seeks to present an understanding of the ground of Dasein as the reality which accounts for the restlessness, insatiability, helplessness, confusion, dissatisfaction, pain among others which Dasein experiences in the world. The world has the answers to all its questions because these questions are worldly. Hence, to search elsewhere for solutions and answers is to lose the ground from where these questions emerge.

The answers are not in some historical mythology of the distant past, as religious metaphysics would have it. As discussed above, this would also entail an inauthentic stance towards time, most specifically towards the past. The answers are in the reality of the now: "... we do not ask about opinions, viewpoints and propositions which appeared in earlier times about the thing in order to arrange them one after another, as in a museum of weapons where the javelins are ordered by particular centuries" (Heidegger 1967:44). The way the past is understood by religious positions is different from the way Heidegger presents it. For Heidegger, effective

and active ontological rumination is a necessity in the way we think about the past. The past must not be considered as a given in all cases. The past, for Heidegger, is always and should always be subjected to scrutiny in order to access its relevance for the present; it is not a temporal frozen meaning with limitless response to human problems. In other words, the past must not be engaged with a passive disposition. Heidegger critiques a passive understanding of the past because of the way it influences religious epistemic values (Heidegger, 1962). There is a growing call to return to the past religious foundation (what Heidegger refers to as ‘ontotheology’) in the search for answers. This disposition towards the past can be likened to a return to that is not in the search for what is. Heidegger considers this return as an understanding of ontology based on dogma which does nothing other than veil human reality (Heidegger 1962:6). Simply put, a return to the past which does not consider the changes in the present is a return to nothing. By nothing, I mean turning to something that does not provide real solution.

Does Heidegger plunge into a contradiction when he argues, in his *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (1959), that “everything that is not simply nothing *is*, and for us even nothing ‘belongs’ to ‘being’” (Heidegger 1959:85)? What does it mean for there to be something in the nothing? This is important in order to differentiate Heidegger’s understanding of ‘nothing’ from traditional metaphysical understanding of the term. Heidegger presents an understanding of nothing that suggests the presence of something in the sense that nothing belongs to existence. Heidegger’s position is in fact not self-contradicting. According to Heidegger, when addressing nothing we invariably address something because the *is* signals an antecedent upon which nothing ceases to be the absence of something. From this follows, quite consistently, the argument that nothing by its fundamental nature is something because nothing is always referred to when something is at stake. For instance, if someone were to ask, “is there something in the drawer?” and I say, in response, that there is nothing. I am referring to the things that are not in the drawer. Heidegger’s argument differs in scope when compared to religious metaphysical claims that the absence of a thing does not mean its non-existence. Heidegger talks about ‘nothing’ on the condition that something, existential, is the point of reference. In Chapter One, we saw that Heidegger refers to nothing as reality that emerges in a moment of anxiety. Heidegger’s viewpoint is different from the something in the ‘nothing’ of religious metaphysics [onto-theology]. He looks at things always as something, and how nothing points to something that is temporal. This chapter is not dedicated to tackling this

issue, but this point is important because it re-emphasises Heidegger's temporal understanding of Dasein.

Heidegger's philosophy seeks to draw attention to the problematic ontological positions of metaphysicians in their account of how one might arrive at an accurate judgement of Dasein. Religious metaphysical approach does not provide substantial ground for talking about Dasein as it focuses on human being as a religious metaphysical reality because of the claim that human existence is not entirely temporal. The light, in religious parlance, is God. Light is seen; its self-unfolding allows the nature of other things to be seen. The analogy of God and light is in itself problematic as the arguments about the existence of God are largely based on an opaque and speculative picture of what God really is, if at all he exists.

Religious metaphysics (onto-theologies) hold contrary to Heidegger's phenomenological views about the essence of this ground, which therefore results in the postulation of a human beings beyond this world. The views held by religious metaphysics impose the need to think beyond human experience and ground in the search for answers. Thus resulting in the extension of the human ground. Now I turn to the different ways religious views have sought other grounds in the search to understanding ontology

### **3.2.2 Extending the ground**

Michel Henry, in his seminal work, *I am the Truth: Toward Philosophy of Christianity* (2003), presents a worthy account of the possibility of merging phenomenology and theology. Henry appropriates phenomenological positions, but he attempts to apply phenomenology to a religious framework, namely Christianity. He does this by challenging the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger in his presentation of what he considers a radical phenomenology of life, as both interiority and exteriority (Henry 2003:33-47). By interiority and exteriority, Henry argues that phenomenology is not restricted to mere everyday existence; for him it also pertains to realities that are not based on human reality. By this, Henry maintains that human existence cannot be disassociated from religious non-phenomenological realities, especially human relationship with a divine reality, God. Henry remains 'true to the world' as Heidegger urges, but he considers truth as revelation. Henry attempts to extend the ground of (human) existence towards the divine manifestation but not beyond the world itself. This is an idea which is not different from Joseph O'Leary's position that "[r]eligion never teaches the world

from outside but is the emergence of the ultimacy secreted within the world” (O’Leary 2001:416). By this he means that religious ideas do not formulate insights independent from human experiences; religious ideas instead always emerge from human experiences. This argument by Henry (and O’Leary) maintains that religion does not necessarily go against the phenomenological ontological prerequisites for ascertaining the meaning of human existence. Consider, for instance, the religious commandment, ‘thou shalt not steal’. Its mandate, although religious, is also a moral obligation. Important for my purposes here, is that Henry is not a religious metaphysician of the type originally implicitly criticised by Heidegger. He does not posit a metaphysical world that is fully external to the phenomenal world and its superior opposite. Instead, he takes on board Heidegger’s critique of metaphysics and attempts to develop a thoroughly phenomenological understanding of religion. In the process however he still challenges (extends) the ground that Heidegger proposes for the analysis of being and Dasein. Let us consider Henry’s arguments further.

As a precursor to his main arguments, Henry presents in the introductory part of his work a portrayal of how Christian history is factual by which he means religious metaphysics is not entirely removed from the world (Henry 2003:5). He advances two main arguments to emphasise his line of thought: first, he argues that rather than consider the validity or invalidity of Christianity on the basis of the natural sciences, a suitable starting point in the desire to know the truth of Christianity is in its history (Henry 2003:1). Henry does not explain why he deliberately refuses to engage Christianity in so far as its epistemic truth claims are concerned; he simply considers epistemic justifications insignificant for his enquiry. Second, Henry distinguishes between history and reality by arguing that historical texts, in this case the Bible (one can say the same about the Koran), are often considered as a representation of reality (Henry 2003:5). Put differently, scriptural texts held as historical narratives are situated in the field of appearance, i.e. the field of phenomenology. What is at issue here is that Henry aims to abide by the phenomenological method in his attempt at validating metaphysical realities. What Henry does is to draw metaphysical conclusions from phenomenological worldviews. In other words, he claims that phenomenological positions are not disentangled from metaphysical views. He links the two domains through his idea of Scripture as a phenomenological-ontological reality which gives an account of some historical past. The existence of something in the world, texts in particular, is not only self-referential, it also has outward referential attributes. “Scripture”, writes Henry, “... is referential, meaning that it relates to a reality other than that of the text itself, in such a way that the reality targeted in this

text is never posited through it” (Henry 2003:7). texts are not about themselves only; they are the record of human responses to their lived, historical experiences. Texts used to designate meaning beyond the text which the words never fully represent. In this sense, the text as phenomenon points beyond itself. The argument here is that there is more to religious events and experiences than human words can accurately or fully account for; this insight is clearly in in with Heidegger’s insights about how nothing is ever fully present or fully absent. How then do we understand experience, and what is the true nature of experience if we cannot properly account for its occurrence?

In answer to this question, Henry raises a linguistic problem. He argues that philosophy (including phenomenological ontology) shows the powerlessness of language because its account of human reality and the world is limited in that it is only able to focus on the world. In contrast with the inadequate position of philosophy, as Henry would call it, Christianity shows the ability to account for that which other language forms cannot posit (Henry 2003:8; 1 Corinthian 4:20). Henry goes on to argue that because of the deceptive nature of language, in matters of Christian truth, it cannot account for the whole of reality (Henry 2003:9). He thus argues that Christian truth transcends the limits of language (Henry 2003:11), while philosophical truth remains within the limits of language. Henry therefore conceives of an account of truth about the world without or beyond the aid of language. Two approaches to understanding the concept of truth are identified by Henry: ‘what shows itself’ and ‘the fact of self-showing’. For him, the truth of what shows itself is entirely independent of the fact of self-showing of the thing. In this, clearly, he moves beyond Heidegger for whom ‘only as phenomenology, is ontology possible’ (Heidegger 1962:60), as we have seen. The self-showing accounts for the essence of what shows itself (Henry 2003:13). As opposed to existence, the essence is of utmost importance. As such, the fact and nature of self-showing (the phenomenal domain) is understood as truth in its secondary sense; this is different from the manifestation or revelation that is found in the essence of what shows itself, which Henry prioritises as the truth *par excellence*. He maintains that phenomenology only refers to things as true, but does not give an account of the ‘truth’ itself. Henry extends his investigation about truth by postulating the verification of truth beyond things as they appear in the world.

In fact, Henry seeks to overturn the understanding of phenomenology as the reality of things that (as they) show themselves to us. He argues that “it is precisely this 'being-there-before-us' that makes things phenomena, but this “being-before’ is nothing other than the 'outsideness'

that the world as such, its truth” (Henry 2003:15). The truth is thus ‘the world as such’, which may only be hinted at, but cannot be captured by, the phenomena as they appear to Dasein. The world has an exteriority from which things show themselves to us. And in most cases, “[w]hat shows itself is never explained by the mode of revealing specific to the world. What shows itself in the world's truth is shown in that truth as is other than itself, as forsaken by it, uncovered as this or that, but a ‘that’ which may be different from what is shown, a content that is contingent, abandoned to itself, lost” (Henry 2003:16). The idea here is that there must of necessity be much more to existence than what phenomenology can capture about the world. The ‘true’ reality of the world is routinely inaccessible to the epistemic investigations and validations even of phenomenology, which makes it problematic to ascribe exclusive access to truth to the phenomenological ontological method. Put differently, Henry goes one step further than Heidegger: where Heidegger also postulates that the world is routinely hidden from us in everyday and ordinary understandings and in ‘idle talk’, Henry disagrees when Heidegger posits the phenomenological method as the necessary and sufficient remedy for this forgetfulness towards the world. This does not mean that Henry rules out this method; instead, he points to its inherent limitations and thus questions the claim that it is the only valid method through which to approach the meaning of existence. Moreover, Henry proposes an understanding of the world influenced by what he considers a valid understanding of truth itself, and, for this reason, he takes his understanding of truth away from human existence, and the limitations of human meaning-making, because language is inadequate in arriving at the kind of truth he proposes.

Amidst Henry’s apparent exterior conception of the world, he considers the world as fundamentally temporal, which shows that he does not succumb to the typical metaphysical mistake of thinking about time from an eternal (timeless) perspective. He maintains that “[t]ime and the world are identical; they designate that single process in which the ‘outside’ is constantly self-externalized” (Henry 2003:17). In this, he remains thoroughly worldly and close to Heidegger. Henry examines this process on two levels: first, he identifies the coming forth of human being in the present, and second the hollowing out of human being in the future (Henry 2003:17). Acknowledging the Heideggerian tripartite notion (flux or process) of time where the future, present and past slide into each other in a non-linear fashion, Henry argues that it is within this reality that world truth is revealed in its temporal and visible dimensions (Henry 2003:18). Different from the Heideggerian understanding of temporality as a contingent reality within which human being is conceptualised, however, Henry argues that “[i]t is

because its [contingent] power to make manifest resides in the ‘outside-itself’ that time annihilates everything it exhibits. But time’s way of making manifest is the world. It is the world’s way of making seen, the truth of the world, that destroys” (Henry 2003:18). I interpret this to mean that the world presents phenomena in a way that destroys the true sense of reality. Time removes the truth of the outside, and thus destroys the true nature of the truth. Put differently, by temporalising truth, truth is believed to be destroyed. It is worth our while to take a close look at Henry’s phrasing, especially where he is talking about ‘... the truth of the world...’ There are two ways of interpreting his remark: first, implicit in Henry’s work are two kinds of truth: ‘truth of the world’ and ‘the truth of external world’. Henry refers to “outside-side” as the essence of things and this can be referred to as the second truth - ‘the truth of external world’. Second, time understood as temporal is the focus because it leads to the truth of reality. One can safely deduce from the two observations that Henry acknowledges temporality only as a destruction of religious metaphysical truth – the ultimate truth.

Furthermore, for Henry, “In time there is no present, there never has been one, and there never will be one. In time, things come into appearance, but since this coming-into-appearance, consists in coming-outside, things do not rise into the light of this ‘outside’ except as torn from themselves, emptied of their being, already dead” (Henry 2003:19). Henry critiques the lack of the present and of presence (of the things) in time that is presented in the phenomenological tripartite understanding of time. This is because by interweaving the past and the future in the understanding of the present, they inevitably lead to the destruction of the truth in reality, according to Henry, since the present is destroyed, and can ultimately never exist. Rather than endorsing the phenomenological conception of the truth of things in the way they appear to us, Henry advances a position which carefully considers the law of their appearance. He then shows that the reality that is ‘outside’ us never reveals itself fully; it is only ever revealed as images of the real (Henry 2003:19).

I argue that Henry advances a neo-platonic understanding of reality; his rendition of reality is presented dualistically. There is the world of things as they ‘really are’ and a world of simulations (the appearing of the real in its simultaneous disappearance / destruction through time). Simulations or representations arise from human attempts to replicate the ‘real’. One can deduce that religious simulation is a consequence of an attempt to temporalise the ‘real’. In other words, simulation is based on a desire to replicate a reality removed from our worldview. This dualism is evident in Henry’s account of the truth of Christianity when he maintains that,

even from a phenomenological perspective, his idea of phenomenality is considered to be more plausible than the truth which phenomenologists ascribe to reality. Simply put, the way the truth of Christianity appears is ‘pure manifestation’ [‘phenomenality’] and not phenomenology (Henry 2003:23). As phenomenality, the truth of Christianity “manifests itself in manifestation itself” (Henry 2003:25). Phenomenality is therefore the understanding of religious and Christian philosophy based on phenomenology. Contained in this postulation of Henry is the argument that phenomenological prioritisations of the ‘seen’ is a manipulation or distortion of true manifestation.

If phenomenality is different from phenomenology and phenomenality is inaccessible in the same way phenomenology focuses, as already discussed, on the world as the ground of being, fundamental questions emerge. How does phenomenality (revelation, manifestation through phenomenology) show itself, how do we arrive at an epistemic awareness of the truth of phenomenality? Referring to the Gospel of Matthew, “I praise you, Father ... because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children” (Matthew 11:25), Henry argues that “access to God, understood as his self-revelation according to a phenomenality proper to Him, is not susceptible of being produced except where this self-revelation is produced ...” (Henry 2003:26-27). What is suggested here is that the self-manifestation or self-revelation of the vision of truth is a voluntary divine action, a divine initiative which cannot be induced or summoned by phenomenology. Henry makes this claim based on the ‘truth’ from the Bible. Therefore, it can be inferred that the Bible is the ‘self-manifestation’ of God. The crux of the issue is that the self-revelation of God, according to Henry, is found in every ‘life’; wherever there is a life, in its essence, there we find God’s self-revelation (Henry 2003:27). This is an argument which disproves the phenomenological ground of the experiential and phenomenological world, as the exclusive point of departure for all truth-seeking. God’s self-revelation is prioritised over the ground provided by Dasein. Through his introduction of God’s self-revelation, Henry through the notion of phenomenality extends the ground of phenomenology. He maintains that phenomenality as the self-manifestation of God, is an indispensable part of the ground of human existence. He stretches the understanding of Dasein beyond its phenomenological conceptualisation by introducing a divine idea which goes beyond human language and comprehension (Henry 2003:28-29). As such, human life, argues Henry, is equally a self-manifestation of life itself, a life that is not based on the world (Henry 2003:34), in other words, Dasein resolutely points beyond both its own existence and beyond the world as the ground for its existence, which means that

ultimately Henry abandons his worldly position. Henry would argue contrary to Heidegger's position that human existence originates from a divine and other-worldly agent.

Henry's magnum opus, *Essence of Manifestation*, presents a clearer understanding of how the phenomenological ground is extended towards phenomenality, which this section addresses. According to Michael O'Sullivan,

Henry speaks of this foundational space of the manifestation and the essence as an *immanent* revelation which is a presence to itself and as an internal experience understood as an original revelation which is accomplished in a sphere of radical immanence [that] exists by itself, without any context, [and] without the support of any exterior and 'real' Being (O'Sullivan 2013:30).

Thus, as O'Sullivan points out, for Henry, the foundational space of manifestation has its essence in that which has been revealed in the world. The world is also considered the place of manifestation and importantly, there is no direct influence from an other-worldly realm or being. We see here that contrary to the arguments presented in the previous chapter about the other-worldly nature of religious metaphysical realities postulated as the origin of human beings, there are theologians<sup>46</sup> who argue that the world is in fact the essence and source of revelation. Furthermore, the idea that Henry's work promotes a 'radical immanence', when compared with Heidegger understanding of temporality, reveal an immediate contrast. While Heidegger understands the world as the ground for understanding temporality and existence, in a way that promotes finite transcendence, Henry imposes religious frameworks on the the world.

Henry opined that phenomenological postulations have yielded to the illusion of truth because they fail to consider phenomenality. O'Sullivan also maintains that for Henry, the "making-itself-explicit of transcendent life as self-objectification' is the *logos* of such a phenomenology, and to believe that such a logos is the primordial phenomenon, is also a necessary illusion of Western philosophy" (O'Sullivan 2006: 68). O'Sullivan considers the logos of phenomenology a replication of metaphysics and, consequently, an illusion in philosophy. Amidst the illusion

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<sup>46</sup> Theologians, like Michel Henry, argue that the world is the place of revelation. See his *Essence of Manifestation* (1963).

which Henry attributes to philosophy, he advances an alternative conceptualisation in order to advance a position that he considers most appropriate to the nature of phenomenology. He sees the phenomenon as that which has a primordial foundation: “primordial appearance in the *pathētik* immediacy of its auto-appearance as that which founds every possible appearance and therefore every phenomenon” (Henry in O’Sullivan 2006:68). Different from Heidegger’s phenomenological ontology, which prioritises the world as the only investigation space of the meaning of being, Henry stretches phenomenology beyond the world, claiming that ontology can only be understood within the framework of phenomenality. With phenomenality, Henry argues for the position that religion is the most appropriate source of ontology. This is a position that I contend in this thesis. In the section that follows, I will show how Heidegger’s philosophy provides a less restrictive approach to the question surrounding ontology and how escape, understood as projection, has a phenomenological structure.

### **3.3 Centring the Nature of Time and History**

Human beings have a desire to actualise more, to aspire for more than they are within any given moment. For instance, as I write here and now, the aspirations are beyond the goal I have achieved thus far. I want to get to a state where I am done with this project and submit the final draft to the examiners. As discussed, for Heidegger, Dasein reveals itself in human projections within phenomenology. Contrary to Heidegger’s position, religious metaphysics considers human escape as necessarily requiring an account that exceeds the limits of the phenomenological. In this section, what I will look at is the idea that informs the need to escape a phenomenological understanding of the world. This section is divided in two parts, the first part addresses Levinas’s use of the word ‘escape’ as a kind of phenomenological ontology of being, and the second explores the dangers of the kind of escape that informs religious outlooks. I explain this positions, I will put Heidegger’s understanding of projection and time in conversation with Levinas’s notion of escape. I will also draw on the works Vycinas’s interpretation of Heidegger’s projection. This will form the basis for making the conclusion that the understanding of escape and projection depends on how time and history is conceived in the world.

### 3.3.1 Escaping as a Phenomenological Ontology of Being

A major theme implicitly runs through the forgoing analyses and it is the issue of escape. By escape, I refer to a desire to move to, or envisage, a reality beyond the immediate one. Taking the above into account, one finds in the comparative analysis between religious and phenomenologically motivated comprehension of human existence that there exists transcendence to other-worldly views in the ideas postulated by religious ontology and phenomenological, especially in Henry's 'phenomenality'. In this section, I explore another form of transcendence that Levinas's refers to as 'escape'. I do this in order to examine the connection, if any, exists between Heidegger's understanding of 'transcendence' and Levinas's 'escape'. This is what I refer to in this section as 'escaping'. In this section, I will extensively draw on Levinas's *On Escape: De l'évasion* (2003).

As discussed in Heidegger's conception of Being-toward-the-future, he uses the expression 'projection' as a mode of being which shows an endless desire for human beings to actualise their goals in the world, through their caring involvement with things in the world, through their 'potentiality-for-Being'. Vincent Vycinas puts it aptly when he writes, "... he is constantly beyond himself in the sense that he stands out into the openness of Being; he understands and approaches himself from this beyondness" (Vycinas 1961: 4). In human projections and potentialities, they stretch beyond the immediate. It is in this forward looking that human beings, in projection, re-create themselves from within the possibilities opened up to them in their situation, in their concrete thrownness. This action of projection inevitably leads to endless escaping. The word 'escaping' is not used in a negative sense, rather it refers to a mode of being-in-the-world. Levinas defines escape as "the need to get out of oneself, that is, to break that most radical and unalterably binding of chains, the fact that the I [*moi*] is oneself [*soi-même*]" (Levinas 2003:55). For Levinas, human beings are always breaking from situations in order to move into what they considered as a better state of existence. For instance, in writing this section, I am already escaping towards the next section, chapters, and above all, the full thesis. There is always an escape from and an escape towards. Phenomenologists like Heidegger see transcendence experienced in projection, even in its uncertainty, as a natural inclination of being-in-the-world. The existential reality of uncertainty brings to the fore the confusion that arises in the way the outcome of projection is theorised. And most importantly, the endless desire to escape from and toward, has made theologians and some religious scholars, like Henry envisage eschatology, which can be likened to a beckoning

to submit to divine certainty. Levinas further unpacks Heidegger's temporal understanding of transcendence when he argues that "... the satisfaction of a need does not destroy it. Not only are needs reborn, but disappointment also follows their satisfaction" (Levinas 2003:59). Levinas does not deny the fact that satisfaction appeases needs, but the coming along of any appeasement opens room for further dissatisfaction or discontentment. Therefore, desire constantly exists and this Levinas refers to as 'dead weight', which satisfaction never gets rid of entirely (Levinas 2003:60).

While Levinas accepts Heidegger's understanding of transcendence as the projection of human experience in the world, Levinas revisits the understanding of transcendence in Heidegger's philosophy in order to consider transcendence in light of the embodiment of human being, as well as human failed and endless desire to escape the nature of its being. Heidegger's preoccupation, as already highlighted, with the question of transcendence is in light of being's ability to go ahead of itself, and in the process meet the possibility of its impossibility, which is death. Levinas, on the contrary, considers transcendence in view of addressing the 'ahead of itself', which he believes was not adequately thematised in Heidegger's rendition of human transcendence. What Levinas does, therefore, is to criticise the understanding of Heidegger that transcendence emerges in the facticity of Dasein's world. Levinas reads the understanding of Heidegger transcendence in Dasein as projection arising from the deficiency which makes transcendence necessary (Levinas 2003:56). On the contrary, Levinas argues that it is the very nature of finite beings to escape (Levinas 2003:56). Thus, transcendence does not arise from privation but by abundance. In other words, it is the abundance that human beings experience that propels the need to desire for transcendence. What Levinas does is to reconsider Heidegger's transcendence as a need for escape.

In fact, transcendence and existence in Heidegger is a position that portrays the constant self-transcending projection of Dasein. The signs of projection are verifiable and ascertained in everyday human activities. Put differently, Dasein does not transcend towards that which is not of its nature. The point here is that transcendence is understood here as an active horitation that is always in the world. Dasein escapes when it explores its potentiality-for-Being. As already highlighted in Chapter Two, the 'they', arguably, prevents authentic projection. Heidegger maintains that Dasein, in the state of being lost in the 'they', must find itself in its possible authenticity (Heidegger 1962:313). I interpret Heidegger's understanding of transcendence as

that which must not be seen as a projection beyond the ‘from’ and ‘toward’ of existential realities. For Heidegger, the only reality that human beings are unable to escape in their projection is death (Heidegger 1962:297). Death becomes the culmination of all projection, the end of all possibilities, the ultimate rest. Rest must not be understood in terms of religious conception of rest from the endless craving of ‘worldly’ things. Dasein is always projecting towards its death – Being-towards-death. Heidegger considers death as the end of being and he considers it a necessity. Different from eschatology, Heidegger does not attribute any eschatology, which is necessarily metaphysical, to his understanding of death. It is as though he imposes a kind of silence after the death of being. Death is the absence of existence and Heidegger only considers this absence as it helps us understand the nature of existence. Heidegger insists that Dasein must embrace death in order for it to be perceived or understood as authentic existence (Heidegger 1962:442).

As already explained, for Heidegger, “Dasein is always ‘beyond itself’ [‘über sich hinaus’], not as a way of behaving towards other entities, but as Being towards the potentiality-for-Being which it is itself” (Heidegger 1962:236). This structure of being, which reveals the world as the essence is the focus for Heidegger. Therefore, when he addresses Dasein as ‘Being-ahead-of-itself’ he considers this attribute only within the phenomenological sense of projection (Heidegger 1962:236). Even in projection, Heidegger insists that the Dasein must be itself (Being-one’s-Self). By this, Heidegger argues that it is only when Dasein is itself that it can authentically project towards a potentiality-for-Being can be actualised (Heidegger 1962:313). Dasein is driven by its needs and concerns (care, or *Sorge*<sup>47</sup>) and its needs often inform the nature of projection from its current state. This desire to project beyond human existence, as already highlighted in Chapter One, is a tendency peculiar to the mode of Dasein, which is driven by a desire to actualise its potentiality in time related to temporality of existence. Similarly, Levinas argues that transcendence is based on a desire to fulfil oneself. Levinas puts it succinctly when he observes that “... need seems to aspire only to its own satisfaction. The search for satisfaction becomes the search for the object able to procure it. Need thus turns us toward something other than ourselves. Therefore, it appears upon initial analysis like an insufficiency in our being, impelled to seek refuge in something other than itself” (Levinas 2003: 58). Levinas maintains that upon closer scrutiny, one realises that being escapes because

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<sup>47</sup> Heidegger uses ‘care’ [*Sorge*] to designate concern, interestedness, to worry about something or someone; it always has to do about the desire for understanding which has not yet been achieved (Heidegger 1962:237).

of the contentment that it experiences in the prospects that are assured in projection. What is suggested in Levinas's postulation is that there is a full realisation which Dasein craves for and this escape is the sign of the longing to be more than what human being is currently; to be one with the ultimate self.<sup>48</sup> For Levinas, escape is an unending event.

As Levinas rightly observes, the reality of escape that is often intimated in the understanding of the insufficiency of need, as contingent to the insufficiency of human reality, is a religious metaphysical assumption used to advance the claim that there is an emptiness in the world which means that the needs of human beings can in principle never be satisfied (Levinas 2003:58). The emptiness in the world is an idea which often informs religious conceptualisation of projection – as we have seen before, when we said that religious metaphysics also takes as its starting point the fundamental finitude and epistemological limitation of human existence. Religious understanding of escaping presents a different dimension to the phenomenological understanding of escaping. As opposed to the association of escaping with the natural and purely worldly inclination of human beings to always become more and different from what they currently are, religious metaphysics, as already highlighted in this chapter, conceives of escape as an other-worldly restlessness in the nature of Dasein. As already highlighted in this section, Heidegger considers projection an important character of Dasein. In projection, Dasein risks losing itself in the 'they'. The call of conscience is the appeal to the they-self, Dasein gets called to the Self (Heidegger 1962:318). According to Heidegger, "Conscience summons Dasein's Self from its lostness in the 'they'" (Heidegger 1962:319). When Dasein finds itself, it decides to disentangle itself from the ensnarement of the 'they', thus choosing to listen to the 'call of conscience'.

The call is to the Self, especially as the Self disentangles itself from the they-self. The question that now follows pertains to the nature of this call. For Heidegger, the moment of entanglement to the they-self prevents it from listening to itself (Heidegger 1962:315). The getting back to one's-self constitutes the ability to listen to oneself. The nature of the call is a summon to Dasein's potentiality-for-Being-its-Self that does not instrumentalise (Heidegger 1962:319),

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<sup>48</sup> In his later work Levinas makes a distinction between need (*besoin*), which is directed to oneself and desire (*désir*), which transcends oneself by submitting to the absolute other. *De l'élevation* was written before World War II. It is important to note that in *Totalité et Infini*, Levinas turns the metaphysical idea of the infinite against ontology, which, as a form of totalisation, does not submit itself to the ethical command, coming from the face of the other, from the other as higher than me.

rather it pushes Dasein into significance (Heidegger 1962:317). In other words, the call of conscience does not beckon on an individual to instrumentalise itself. The call of conscience “does not give this phenomenon the indefiniteness of a mysterious voice, but merely indicates that our understanding of what is ‘called’ is not to be tied up with an expectation of anything like a communication” (Heidegger 1962:318). “Discourse gives information about something, and does so in some definite regard. [...] In discourse as communication, that [what is being talked about] becomes accessible to the Dasein-with of Others, for the most part by way of uttering it in language” (Heidegger 1962:317). But, according to Heidegger, conscience does not talk in conversation, it calls in silence. One sees here that Heidegger does not restrict the call to any particular reality or event; it is open and unique.. In its uncertain nature, however, it is not removed from the nature of Dasein. The call of conscience does not say anything, but calls up, and it is this “nothing is said” and uncertainty, which is the ground of Dasein’s restlessness in its ordinary understanding of the call of conscience. It is also the restlessness in the call of conscience which promotes discourse. The nature of the call of conscience may appear as a subjective action, but one observes that it is a subjective act that enables and promotes a continuous collective search for definiteness. In breaking this continuous discourse, one finds that there is a deeper call to be authentic.

A similar restlessness is seen by some metaphysical thinkers as inductive of an inherent religious disposition to crave for more than the phenomenological can satisfy. Levinas is clear in his understanding of need when he writes, “... need does not foreshadow the end. It clings fiercely to the present, which then appears at the threshold of a possible future” (Levinas 2003:59). The understanding of transcendence for Levinas considers the world as an important part of human projection, and it does not foreshadow any end. In other words, we talk about transcendence only in as much as it reveals a possible future. With this, Levinas counters Heidegger’s understanding of transcendence as self-projection towards concerns in the world, which has being-towards-death as a significant part of this projection. Levinas’s interpretation of need as an ever present phenomenon that does not foresee the future is an important understanding of the complexity of the determinability of need. Levinas’s idea also refutes the assumption that by the mere fact of the insatiability of desire, human desires are aimed towards an other-worldly end. Contrary to the mode of thinking that human craving ultimately aims towards the timeless/eternal, the future is not clear, but with religion exists clarity within eternity. The connection of the natural inclination of human needs to religious postulations is

a misconception, as Heidegger would argue, of the true characteristics of human being's projection.

Levinas is emphatic and even clearer than Heidegger in his understanding of transcendent nature of projection. Levinas illuminates Heidegger's conception of projection with his understanding of escape. He points to the ontological nature of escaping as a temporal act, rather than the transcendent connotation that is often pinned to it. For instance, let us consider the whole idea of fasting, that is abstinence from food and drink for religious purposes. Even though some religions recommend fasting, Levinas points to the fact that this seemingly religious metaphysical projection is precisely a sign of the temporal inadequacy epitomised in the lack of satisfaction - this is why there are ascetic tendencies in religious worldviews which help to satisfy or assure human beings of satisfaction (Levinas 2003:60). Most religious actions point to the fact that "the mortifications of fasting", Levinas writes, "are not only agreeable to God; they bring us closer to the situation that is the fundamental event of our being: the need for escape" (Levinas 2003:60). What he means by this is that human beings are always in search for a better state of affairs, and they are always open to whatever promotes this escape. Heidegger seeks to limit the understanding of escape within the temporal reality of being. He directs being to its essential attribute which is finite. Heidegger's position is thus different from Levinas's; Levinas notes that "[t]he urge toward the Creator expressed a taking leave of being" (Levinas 2003: 72). By this Levinas suggests that human disposition towards the creator inform the need to take leave of human existence. On the contrary, Levinas argues that this disposition brings us to the reality of human desire to escape. What Levinas does is to draw from religious frame work in the formulation of his phenomenological understanding to ontology. Heidegger's account is that this taking leave of Dasein leads to nothing other than an oblivion of human reality. Hence Heidegger awakens man to the ontological reality necessary for its journey in its being-in-the-world: "Ontic understanding is a challenge to man – it calls for exploration and hints the direction in which man has to go for an explicit answer of Being" (Vycinas 1961:25).

In projection, Dasein is reminded of the need to consider the nature of its existence in relation to its potentiality. In fact, it is only "in its temporality [that] Dasein discovers itself from its future and finds thus its past which together with its future sets Dasein in the present" (Vycinas 1961:24). The tripartite notion of historicity is a temporal reality greatly determined by the actions of human beings in the world. By this, human actions are considered temporal and they

necessarily determine the ways being is conceived within the world. The desire to find Dasein by searching for a reality beyond human existence, in a religious metaphysical way, is detrimental to the nature of that which is sought. This is the danger which Heidegger avoids in his call to return human existence to its finite, temporal, worldly understanding and, above all, in his criticism of religious metaphysics (onto-theology).

Having established that Heidegger's notions of transcendence is similar to Levinas's philosophy of escape, it is important to illustrate two important differences between Levinas's philosophy from Heidegger's transcendence. I consider this important because it paves the way for implicit deductions that I go on to make in the next section. Heidegger's understanding of transcendence reveals a temporal understanding of being which has being-towards-death as ultimate structure of projection. Different from this, while acknowledging the significance of Heidegger's understanding of phenomenology and transcendence in relation to projection, Levinas reinterprets transcendence as 'escape'. He does this by drawing on religious frameworks into temporary understanding of human reality. As such, Levinas accords an infinite structure to human beings based on the insatiability of needs revealed in human desire to escape. Levinas also considers escape as transcendence to the future in a way that does not foreshadow the death/end of being as Heidegger proposes. Levinas's position will be further engaged in Chapter Four where I address the limitations of Heidegger's phenomenological understanding of ontology. Taking Heidegger's and Levinas's philosophical positions into consideration, I now proceed to address what I consider the danger of religious escaping that is implicit in their understanding of transcendence and escape respectively. I will also draw on the Sam Harris's *The End of Faith* (2004).

### **3.3.2 The Danger of Religious Escaping**

Heidegger and Levinas, as noted in the above analysis share a common understanding of temporality as the ground of human projection. However, Levinas's immanent-escape and Heidegger's transcendence as projection diverge in different ways. To be sure, Heidegger's philosophical phenomenology conceives of transcendence which foreshadows the end, and Levinas's philosophy retains an immanent understanding of escape that does not foreshadow the end of being in the ways Heidegger does. When one engages Heidegger's and Levinas's philosophy in light of the postulations of religious scholars like Michel Henry, one

finds a glaring contrast. Based on these contrasts, I will develop what I consider the danger of religious escaping.

As extensively discussed in **Section 3.2.1**, Henry argues that ontology cannot be disentangled from religious viewpoints. With the term, ‘phenomenality’, Henry maintains that human existence points to other-worldly realities. Ultimately, Henry uses phenomenological realities to develop a Christian framework. Henry argues that the truth, which emanates from ‘outside-world’, is the ‘ultimate truth’ and not the truth that is manifested through phenomenological enquiry. This position arguably legitimises the desire to escape beyond human reality in search of an ultimate truth. Drawing on the work of Sam Harris, I establish the danger of a position such as Henry’s on the understanding of human reality.

The metaphysical belief that Dasein’s desire for escape points towards the existence of another transcendent realm beyond the world is, in the words of Sam Harris, “... not a private matter; it has never been merely private. In fact, beliefs are scarcely more private than actions are, for every belief is a fount of action *in potential*” (Harris 2005:44). Recall that Harris and Toft, in their definition of religion discussed in Chapter Two, consider religious beliefs not to be private in nature because of the direct impact they have on the public. It is important to understand the context within which Harris uses the word ‘belief’; he discusses belief from a religious perspective and, as an American atheist, he takes a strong stance on the detrimental effects of religion on society. Harris makes a point, which is equally implicit in Heidegger’s criticism of traditional metaphysics, and it is that the belief in ultimate truth, that is other worldly, is a necessary and sufficient justification for metaphysical escape. He centres his argument on the assertion that “... religious faith is simply unjustified belief in matters of ultimate concern – specifically in propositions that promise some mechanism by which human life can be spared the ravages of time and death” (Harris 2005:65). Harris argues that the religion is of no particular significance to human beings; all that it assures is a pacification of human uncertainty and anxiety of life after death.

In opposition to the phenomenological view point, religion conceives of the self as actions influenced and informed by a religious-transcendent impetus. The question ‘Who am I?’ has been understood based on belief, and the faith in this belief has given rise to truth claims which are not accessible, and that refer beyond human existence. Through belief and faith, religious people attribute a metaphysical status to an unseen reality (God) and conjecture claims believed

to be the fruit of self-manifestation of God (revelation), which are then considered as truisms. The point is that the religious ontological status of Dasein is always tagged to the metaphysical as one would find in the response, ‘God created me’ in response to the question ‘What is your origin?’ One could argue that to question the source of these inspired thoughts and beliefs is to question and ‘threaten’ the existence of a divine being. In Chapter Two, we saw an instance where projecting into metaphysical realms, as a mode of escaping, was empirically problematic because of conflicting truth claims and worldviews. Conflicting religious metaphysical positions have led to both inter-religious and intra-religious wars and other forms of violence and bloodshed; these have often been at the expense of lived empirical realities. Harris maintains that “[i]gnorance is the true coinage of this realm: ‘blessed are those who have not seen and have believed’” (Harris 2005:65), and religious beliefs, as a mode of escape, in a religious sense, only enables people to submit to greater ignorance. The point here is that religion is potentially dangerous because it signals a metaphysical understanding of the temporal world. This disposition toward reality, I have been arguing throughout, is potentially dangerous for human beings. Harris, as already presented, argues that the response to religion must be total in order to eradicate the violent tendency it has. This is a position I do not agree with because it advances another extreme of the spectrum. I will discuss my position in more detail in Chapter Four.

### **3.4 A Heideggerian Phenomenological Critique of Religion Ontology**

In this section, I draw out the various ways in which Heidegger’s phenomenology is a critique of religious ontology. Heidegger’s critique of traditional metaphysics is not an explicit rejection of religion. However, embedded in his argumentation is the desire to keep our understanding of the meaning of Dasein purely within the given limitations and boundaries of human existence. Here, I reveal the flaws of religious ontology. An emphasis on Heidegger’s critique of traditional metaphysics, understood as onto-theology, is important. Onto-theology, as explained in the first chapter, is the understanding of ontology from a theological point of view. This position is unique to traditional metaphysical thematisation of ontology. As explained in previous chapters, Heidegger phenomenological ontology is a direct rebuttal of the historical misgivings which he believed characterised the western philosophical understanding of ontology. What is it about traditional western ontology that lends itself to Heidegger’s critique as ontotheology? Heidegger provides a historical analysis to support his claim that “since the earliest days of Western thought, being has been interpreted as the ground

in which every being as a being is grounded” (Thomson 2000:311). Most importantly, how did Western metaphysics come to have this onto-theological characteristic? The question about the meaning of being, as already highlighted, is not an intellectual endeavour unique to Heidegger; philosophers from Thales grappled with the question. Heidegger maintains that philosophers from Thales to the contemporaries still grappled with the question and they struggled to understanding the true nature of being.

Iain Thomas notes that, for Heidegger, “All metaphysical systems attempted a ‘ground-laying’, but they determined the onto-theological duality differently” (Thomson, 2000:308). By this Thomson notes that the grounding-lay of metaphysical systems differ in that religious metaphysical ground laying focuses on absolute/otherworldly ground, whereas phenomenological understanding of metaphysics considers the world/temporality as the ground for addressing the question about the meaning of being. The duality that Thomson refers to here pertains to the nature in which being is understood. Heidegger's main point here is that metaphysics thinks theologically when it “thinks of the totality of beings as such ... with regard to the supreme, all-founding being” (Thomson, 2000:308). What this means is that theology has influenced the way in which being is considered, because the focus was on being as the being of all-founding beings. One of the deepest problems of Western interpretation of being is to consider being in a dualistic sense, this led to the emergence of a two-fold understanding of being: the ‘what’ and the ‘that’ of ontology. The ‘what’ of being refers here to the essence and the ‘that’ refers to the existence. When referring to the essence or the ‘what’ of being, the being of being was often considered as the ‘ground’ of being (Thomson 2000:307). This position gave rise to the essence/existence dualisms, which Heidegger later interpreted as ontotheology. Heidegger embarks on a critique of this dualistic Western understanding of ontology. Heidegger writes that in “the early days of Western thought, Being has been interpreted as the ground or foundation [*Grund*] in which every being as a being is grounded” (Thomson 2000:303). Here Heidegger identifies a flaw in the ontological and theological way in which metaphysics grounds being (Thomson 2000:303).

The motivation of Heidegger's critique is informed by the fact that despite different attempts by metaphysicians to name the original phenomenological revealing, they were not exhausted (Thomson 2000:309). Traditional metaphysicians focused on one side of being without engage the temporal nature of being. Dasein for Heidegger is not metaphysical in nature because of its worldly, temporal nature. In most cases, the questions about the idea of God are guided by non-

philosophical considerations. The fact that these questions exist today calls for a phenomenological ontology reflection. The hypothesis in this chapter is that religious violence, as a mode of religious beliefs and response, is a particular way of forgetting human existence. Religious presuppositions, as I have highlighted in this project, can be summed up as follows: the existence that is revealed when one thematises human reality is one which does not possess a theoretical form. Rather it is one which has to be contemplated: it is a divine existence. As opposed to this understanding of human beings, we find Heidegger's account of human existence as Dasein when he maintains that the structure of Dasein can only be explicated on the basis of its being-in-the-world; human reality is the only condition for understanding human beings (Levinas 2003:8). It is in the everydayness, i.e. the everyday activities of human beings, that the ground for existential understanding of Dasein – both in its authentic and inauthentic form – must be brought to light. Removed from the world, our understanding of human existence gets obscured, veiled over. Heidegger maintains that traditional metaphysics draws and retains the veil between human being and its existence in the world, while phenomenology removes the veil in its attempt to reveal Dasein. George Kovacs, a Heidegger commentator, maintains that “[c]loseness, familiarity, and self-evidence belong to the phenomenological presentation of thinking. In the phenomenology of Heidegger thinking is understood as the thinking of Being” (Kovacs, 1990:4). This means that this mode of understanding human reality is not driven by speculations about the possible existence of things that are not within the scope of human existence. To conceive of the possibility of non-existence, in a traditional metaphysical way, does not belong to thinking because the very act of thinking is temporal. To think of a religious metaphysical relation when addressing the nature of human existence is to misconstrue its ontological reality.

The very foundation of human existence, for Heidegger, is the fact that it is in and of the world and it is only in and through the world that it can be rightly understood. Heidegger changes the metaphysical vertical gaze into a horizontal gaze. In other words, he focuses on the world as opposed to other-worldly realities. He banishes the abstract by embracing the experiential. Kovacs makes Heidegger's idea a lot clearer when he writes, “[a]pparently, nothing is closer, more familiar, or more obvious for us than the fact that we say of something that it *is*” (Kovacs, 1990:4). Kovacs rightly observes that Heidegger philosophy seeks to engage that which is closest, our very existence in the world. Similarly, Aldo Gargani observes that the nature of religion should not be a mere leap into metaphysical transcendence (Gargani 1998: 114), which only obscures and blurs the understanding of human beings. In the attempt to understand and

re-appropriate the phenomenological, which is evident in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Gargani argues that we need to move away from the unreality that religion is shaded with and begin a phenomenology of religion that is aware of the present realities of the people that religion seeks to address (Gargani 1998: 117). What Gargani does is to make a case for how reflection on religious experiences falls within the horizon of phenomenological discourses (Gargani 1998: 122). Gargani is therefore attempting to approach religion as a phenomenon in the world, using phenomenological analysis; in this, he attempts to square Heidegger's insights with religious experience in a way in which a simplistic reading of Heidegger's phenomenological ontology may lead one to believe would be impossible. By attempting to square Heidegger's phenomenology and religious experience, Gargani introduces a new dimension to the understanding of ontology that is different from Levinas's position. Gargani does not interpret religious framework phenomenologically nor does he formulate a religious view with phenomenology. What he does is to recognise religious experiences as part of the world. He shows some receptivity towards religion which we do not find in Heidegger's argumentations. Gargani's stance is implicit in Levinas's immanent transcendence, but Levinas's philosophy retains a temporal understanding of ontology. Different from Gargani's desire to illustrate how religious experiences fall within the horizon of phenomenological analysis, Heidegger reinterprets metaphysics as it pertains to human existence, and Levinas only draws on religious views to substantiate his position on temporality. Heidegger's rejection of traditional metaphysics seeks to ensure that traditional postulations about beings are replaced with new ideas that stress the need to focus on the finite reality, rather than the delusion about eternity that is sometimes instilled by metaphysical assertions.

Heidegger challenges what Kovacs observes as the endless concern of human beings with the question of God which has been the basic fact of universal history; the human craving for answers to the questions about the religious metaphysical dimension of existence and reality, about the sacred, gods, immortality, the good and the bad and related issues (Kovacs 1990:14). For Heidegger, the ground for the endless search for God is the world, and the hope for a solution outside the world distorts ontology at a human level (Heidegger 1962:330). Armstrong also identifies a major driver of religious thought when she observes that "[m]yth looked back to the origins of life, to the foundations of culture, and to the deepest levels of the human mind. Myth was not concerned with practical matters, but with meaning. Unless we find some significance in our lives, we mortal men would fall very easily into despair" (Armstrong 2004: xiii). As I have also been arguing, our search for meaning and significance

which is also Heidegger's main concern, is what leads to religious and mythical thinking about origins and foundations. The human desire for meaning has been one of the reasons for its nostalgic gaze towards the past or a prophetic gaze towards the future, but in any case for some form of an escape into religious metaphysics which would guarantee and safeguard an ultimate meaning for human existence as such. The early Greeks never thought highly of man; all that man seems to have created was considered as creations of the gods. Without the gods, it was believed, man is only "a shadow of a dream", as Pindar says in his eighth Pythian ode (Pindar in Vycinas 1961:218). This disposition is not different from what is found in the world today, especially in the religious world where human beings are said to be nothing without God. For Heidegger, espousing or advocating views like those peculiar to religious metaphysics does not give an account of things as experienced in the world (Heidegger 1959:104). These are mere *doxa* – opinion or appearance (Heidegger 1959:104), which are not concomitant with human existence, and therefore he maintains that metaphysics can never be the answer or solution to the human search for the meaning of being.

Strange as it may seem, Heidegger's Catholic background did not deter his dismissal of religious beliefs in the inquiry into the meaning of Dasein. According to Rockmore, Heidegger "... clearly insists that philosophy must in principle be atheistic whatever one's personal religious beliefs. And as Beaufret points out, Heidegger's philosophical atheism is founded on a non-identity of God and being ..." (Rockmore 1999:98). This means that non-identity of God is important in Heidegger's phenomenological enquiry into the question of being. Heidegger seeks to correct the mistakes of traditional philosophical and onto-theological conceptualisations of Dasein. Caputo puts Heidegger's position aptly when he writes,

The history of metaphysics is the story of so many failures to get beyond beings and to see the difference between Being and beings. Every time metaphysics takes a stab at determining 'Being', it comes up with some sort of being (substance, form, will, mind, etc.). But in *Being and Time*, work was begun to come up with the determination of the meaning of Being which will really hit the mark, which will truly get beyond entities, which will succeed in determining Being as Being and not as some entity or another. It is all a matter of onto-hermeneutic penetration, of getting beyond the sphere which heretofore has held metaphysicians captive, in order to get access to the Being which is truly different from beings (Caputo 1987:178).

The captivity which Caputo refers to in his account of religious metaphysicians might be referred to as the “simple assertions” (Heidegger 1967:36) which for Heidegger close the door to further scrutiny and questioning. The religious metaphysics position is mostly driven by faith and beliefs that are not phenomenologically accessible; hence they close the door for the kind of ontological engagement that furthers an authentic existence. Heidegger opens the door in order to engage *Being qua Being*. He moves away from the understanding of religious metaphysicians who often interpreted the ground on the basis of the actual, that is the determination of human existence by its essence, as opined by Marion that there is “no pure act without any potentiality for Aquinas; ‘self-caused cause [*causa sui*]’ Descartes; ‘sufficient Reason for the universe,’ with Leibniz” (Marion 2001: 287). These are all postulations that gear toward a search for an uncaused Cause. Metaphysicians, one might argue, ignore the very first step, the ground on which they stand; they only consider and thematise an invisible ground beyond the empirical world. Metaphysicians must not be mistaken to have no accounts of Dasein; for Heidegger, metaphysicians and all other people always live within some or other understanding of being. According to Caputo,

[Heidegger] does not propose a superior theory-of-Being which will surpass its competitors just because they invariably speak of beings and hence never succeed in crossing the line, the slash between Being/beings. On the contrary, he is after the slash itself, the way the line is drawn in metaphysics between Being and beings, the rule which all metaphysics follows in distinguishing Being/beings (Caputo 1987: 174).

Caputo rightly observes that traditional metaphysics maintained a line (slash) that made it impossible to talk about Being in relation to beings. This slash signifies the dualism that has already been emphasised in this thesis. The focus for Heidegger is to cross this line. The problem is that the history of metaphysics partly lies in failing to take the second step which is in fact the first step. Religious metaphysics fails to realise that the empirical world - the world of human existence – is a necessary condition for understanding human beings. Hence, religious metaphysics functions without an understanding of necessary factors needed for addressing the question of human beings. Thus religious metaphysics misses the fundamental basis upon which any talking about the nature and meaning of Dasein can be possible. This, according to Heidegger, leads to the alienation of being which has its roots in the forgetfulness

of being (Heidegger 1962:69). One could argue that the forgetting of the nature of human existence which Heidegger attributes to past thematisation of human beings is in fact false. By this, I mean that the outcome of religious metaphysical conception of being is where the problem lies and not the forgetfulness of being. Religious metaphysical claims are also interested in human existence, but it is not analysed only as it pertains to existence; religious metaphysics also focuses on what happens after human worldly existence.

Amidst the metaphysical postulations about life after death, Heidegger does not create room for a metaphysical God in his understanding of 'being-towards-death'; Heidegger considers the wonder of the world a reality that must be investigated and addressed. For Heidegger, the priority is not in the factual dying of Dasein, what matters instead is Dasein's attitude towards death in life (Inwood 1999: 45). Heidegger does not discuss how human beings are brought into existence other than the biological justification proven by copulation; with regards to death, he focuses on life and how death is the end of life. As Rorty indicates, "The limited whole which Heidegger tried to distance himself from was called metaphysics ..." (Rorty 1991:338). By the 'limited whole', Rorty refers to the absolutist tendencies within religious metaphysical positions that present an understanding of the world without a clear account of the world. The moment Heidegger allows room for the existence of a metaphysical God at any instance of his enquiry about human beings, his phenomenological ontological enquiry falls apart. For Heidegger, to engage with being is to speak about the world and not to address metaphysical speculations. Heidegger focuses on what he calls the 'essent' – "The essent means first *that* which is at any time, in particular this greyish white, so-and-so, light, brittle mass. But 'the essent' also means that which 'brings it about,' so to speak, that this thing is an essent rather than a nonessent, that which constitutes its being if *it is*" (Heidegger 1959: 30-31). The essent, as it represents human beings and human reality, understood phenomenologically, is different from religious metaphysical frameworks.

Religious metaphysics is the search for this absolute, a-temporal, a-historical, and essential understanding found in religious metaphysical ontological enquiry potentially informs acts of religious fundamentalist violence. Phenomenology, as has been presented, does not simply take as true what it considers a given, it engages in a critical analysis of that which is also not immediately apparent. Assmann articulates this forceful religious disposition in the following words; "The time is over when religion could be viewed as the 'opium of the people'. Nowadays, in the hands and minds of certain movements, religion appears as the 'dynamite of

the people” (Assmann in Bernstein 2013:155). The best way of talking about the enormity and danger of religious fundamentalist violence is to engage with the way the world legitimises or disproves of violence. Assmann shows the shift in religious discourses and how religion has evolved and transformed, over the years, into a potentially violent tool. There have been religious and political reasons behind the use of religion as a hinge for violence. I am arguing that apart from the political reasons, the nature of religious metaphysical beliefs and also how these beliefs are held, play a key role in inspiring violence and the imposition of absolute claims on the world. This is not to say that religion does not play positive role in the life of people, but the belief in life outside the lived world can easily be translated into a justification to carry out acts of violence in the name of God, in ways that are much more difficult if one were to attempt to justify the same violence in purely worldly terms.

### **3.5 Heidegger’s Notion of Truth as a Critique of Religious Metaphysical Truth**

In this section, I briefly recapitulated Heidegger’s understanding of truth as unconcealment, and I then move on to put Heidegger’s philosophical conception of truth in conversation with the religious metaphysical view point. Having thematised the different ways Heidegger’s phenomenology ontology (temporality) engages with the world and how religious metaphysics (for instance, Henry’s ‘phenomenality’) conceives of human relationship with the world and the divine, this section seeks to trace and establish the distinction between Heidegger’s understanding of truth and religious metaphysical understanding of truth. This is important because it will bring to light the reasons underlying the justification for the foregoing positions on religious viewpoints and Heidegger’s phenomenological ontology. The search for truth is at the centre of Heidegger’s philosophy. According to Walter Biemel (1977:25), the core of Heidegger’s philosophy is a twofold analysis of ontology, first, it seeks to address the question about the meaning of being, and second, it engages with truth understood as *aletheia*. I will conclude by stating that although different, the conception of truth lies at centre of both Heidegger’s phenomenological ontology and the religious metaphysics advanced by religious scholars.

Heidegger conceptualises his understanding of truth in light of historical misconceptions of truth. Traditional philosophy, from Plato consider *aletheia* as correspondence. For them, the essence of truth lies in the “agreement of the judgment with its object” (Heidegger 1962:257).

This implies that truth is structured in a way that the knowledge of an object necessarily corresponds with the judgment of the subject. Heidegger argues that a primordial understanding of truth has been covered up because of traditional understanding of being at the time. However, Heidegger maintains that

[a]t the time, however, we must not overlook the fact that while this way of understanding Being (the way which is closest to us) is one which the Greeks were the first to develop as a branch of knowledge and to master the primordial understanding of truth was simultaneously alive among them, even if pre-ontologically, and it even held its own against the concealment implicit in their ontology - at least in Aristotle (Heidegger 1962:268).

Heidegger acknowledges traditional understanding of truth, but he critiques the traditional forgetfulness of being and insists that forgetfulness informed traditional inability to understand the primordial conception of truth as unconcealment. Platonic and neo-platonic conceptions of truth as conformity of things to the intellect (Inwood 1999: 228; Fritsch & Gosetti-Ferencei 2013:124). He opposes the correspondence theory, that the world must be a representation of something outside the world, by proposing an understanding of the nature of things inspired by their correspondence, especially as it points to reality. Put differently, truth has to be based on present-at-hand. Take for instance the statement, “the dog is on the table”. The truth of this statement entails verifying the actual facticity of the statement; the truth of the statement is in the actuality. The truth about something is in the thing and not dependent on the intellect, which easily slides into metaphysical transcendent realities, which are based on the agreement theory of truth or representative theory of perception. According to Inwood’s interpretation of Heidegger’s position, he maintains that “[t]he agreement theory of truth, like the representative theory of perception, highlights a mental, logical or purely sensory entity intervening between ourselves and reality - a meaning, proposition, sensation, representation - when even if there are such entities we do not usually notice or attend to them” (Inwood 1999: 229). Focusing on propositions, mentioned earlier, as conveyer of truth claims, Heidegger maintains that the truth of a proposition lies in the agreement it has with the fact that, in reality, something is the case. The implication of this is that the world is the ground of all truth. I believe that Heidegger’s understanding of truth provides an important dimension on how we should think about the ground and transcendence. Thus, Heidegger’s philosophical framework opens up an aspect of

truth that is not visible in religious metaphysical understanding of human transcendence, and critique its understanding of ground that is removed from temporality.

As already discussed in Chapter Two, this is elaborated in Heidegger's understanding of truth as *aletheia*; a kind of showing; bringing to light; coming out of darkness. It is about that which shows itself in itself (Heidegger 1962: 51). This is against traditional understanding of truth which considers agreement of a thing and the intellect as the locus and essence of truth (Heidegger 1962:257). Heidegger's understanding of truth as unconcealment challenges an implicit presupposition in traditional understanding of truth. This presupposition is in the assumption that reality has been brought out of concealment. Heidegger contends this understanding of truth by reinterpreting truth as drawing things out of darkness into 'light' and it is in being-in-the-world that all things draw its light (Heidegger 1962:51). Heidegger's understanding of 'light' describes a disclosure of being. It is as such that being assumes the attribute of "Being-in-the-truth" (Heidegger 1962:415).

By virtue of being-in-the-world, Heidegger considers an understanding of truth that is not rooted in religious metaphysical claims. On the contrary, he highlights a conception of truth that is open in a temporal sense of the word. Heidegger does not consider *aletheia* as an unveiling which is attained at a particular time and considered final. Rather, this bringing into light is a continuous task/search and thus is unending; and each *aletheia* is accompanied by aspects that remain in the dark, veiled or hidden. What Heidegger suggests here is that we can never at any point consider ourselves to have fully arrived at the end of the journey, because there is always more to uncover and bring into light, and every particular showing covers over something else which remains unseen. *Aletheia* seeks to show or bring into light but at the same time is open to further illumination/showing that may have been ignored or taken for granted during our search. In fact, there is never disclosure without closure; all disclosure is therefore limited, partial, temporary and incomplete. This is due to the way in which the meaning of being is always a function of Dasein's specific total involvement with the world.

This showing cannot and must not be likened to the form of the 'Seeming' (Heidegger 1962: 264). When being presents itself in seeming, it does not present its true self. This bringing to light is not the same as a transcendent notion of 'light', rather it is a phenomenological conceptualisation of light which entails a relationship between the Self and the world. It is the understanding of life as it really is experienced from a situated and embodied perspective of a

living human being and not from some speculative idealistic conjecture with a religious lining. Letting see is very important for the truth about the world, in the world. This means that truth has to be accessible. Heidegger argues that “[b]eing with one another is based proximally and exclusively upon what is a matter of common concern in such Being” (Heidegger 1962:159). By this he means that the search for truth requires a ground, the world, which is the only space on which the truth of being can be realised.

In *The Essence of Truth*, translated by Krell, D. F, Heidegger makes his understanding of truth very explicit without rejecting the conclusion he make in *Being and Time*. For Heidegger, truth always refers to a ‘what?’. Heidegger argues that truth of being must be posed in view of responding to the question, ‘what?’. For instance, when someone claims that something is true, the person always refers to something, which responds to the question ‘what?’. The essence of truth is always known as a proposition waiting to be enunciated (Heidegger 2002:2). Essence here is understood as the universal, that which is common. The essence of the thing is in the existence, things *as such*. This position goes against the essence/existence dualism that he associates to traditional understanding of being. To better understand Heidegger’s critique of traditional understanding of truth, he refers to medieval conception of truth as the correspondence as the thing to intellect. The intellect refers to divine intellect. With this idea, Heidegger argues that medieval philosophers consider the correspondence of the thing to the intellect as a divine act. This means that things are created in accordance with God’s idea. Heidegger extends his analysis of truth beyond proposition, understood as ideas, by focusing on the world as the place where true positions are formulated. Heidegger writes,

The *intellectum humanus* too is an ens creatum. As a capacity bestowed upon man by God, it must satisfy its *idea*. But the understanding measures up to the idea only in accomplishing in its propositions the correspondence of what is thought to the matter, which in its turn must be in conformity with the *idea*. If all beings are ‘created’, the possibility of the truth of human knowledge is grounded in the fact that matter and proposition measure up to the idea in the same way and therefore are fitted to each other on the basis of the unity of the plan of creation (Heidegger 1993:118).

Different from Heidegger’s understanding of *aletheia*, which advances an understanding of truth that is unconcealment, religious metaphysical positions provide a total and complete

meaning in the search for truth that is in conformity with the idea of God. The focus for Heidegger is made more explicit in his rendition of the whole question of how we arrive at truth and how his investigation of the question of human being ties neatly with the phenomenological enquiry about the truth of human reality. With this, Heidegger reconceptualises an understanding of truth by means of “worldly meaning which supplies the law for itself and thus also claims that its procedure is immediately intelligible” (Heidegger 1993:119).

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger introduces another dimension, which is quite contrary to the traditional understanding and religious metaphysics, in his understanding of truth. He maintains that the pathway to truth is through “letting be” (Heidegger 1962:117). By this Heidegger does not suggest a neglect of being, rather it entails letting a being be what it is. Heidegger writes, “letting something ‘be’ does not mean that we must first bring it into Being and produce it; it means rather that something which is already there in terms of its Being must be freed in there ready-to-hand and discovered by our circumspectful concern” (Heidegger 1962:117). Here, Heidegger critiques the imposition of meaning or any attempt to mould our sense of what it means for something to be (Thomas 2011:106), a tendency that is peculiar to traditional understanding of truth and religious metaphysical understanding ground, transcendence and ultimately the conception of truth. Heidegger position establishes the nature of Dasein’s being in relation to beings.

Let us now return to the understanding of religious truth, which Henry refers to as ‘revealed truth’. Revealed truth is arguably similar to the traditional understanding of truth which Heidegger critiques. Revealed truth focuses on a conception of truth that prioritises divine truth over worldly truth. Revealed truth, as Henry argues, is after all still a response to the realities of the world, even though the solutions are not necessarily worldly. Despite the plausibility of that claim, it remains inherently problematic, at least from a phenomenological standpoint. For Heidegger to state anything about something, the thing must reveal itself. Heidegger rejects the traditional understanding of truth as correspondence by insisting on an understanding of truth as an standing in the open (Heidegger 1962:102). According to Iain Thomas, what differentiates onto-theology from ontology is the fact that onto-theology seeks to understand ontology through theology: “The ‘great metaphysicians’ implicitly answer the question of reality’s ultimate foundation twice-over by understanding the being of entities ontologically and theologically at the same time” (Thomas 2011:109). In other words, the world, considered

as the context of human beings, is the fundamental ground for seeking the truth, the hiddenness, solutions and self-concealment<sup>49</sup> of Dasein (Heidegger 2002:9). As such, it informs the way we should think about our understanding the ground and transcendence of being.

The absolutising of religious truths and the imposition of these truths on those who do not share them has been a significant factor in the instigation of religiously motivated violence in the world today. O’Leary puts this aptly when he maintains that “[a]ll formulated religious or philosophical truths are conventional truths, not ultimate truths” (O’Leary 2001:418). This means that what is often considered absolute truth claims in religion are in fact not. Heidegger’s conception of truth as *aletheia* in contrast does not consider truth as final; the desire to uncover and bring to light is a continuous task without end. To make certain ideas absolute does nothing other than to disrupt the philosophical search for authentic validation, real bringing into light which is always temporal and limited. It is noteworthy here to highlight that Heidegger seeks, at least from the discussion in this chapter, to provide necessary epistemic tools for addressing the question about the meaning of human existence. Kovacs writes, “[T]hinking is a movement toward the ‘to-be-thought-of,’ a responding-obeying to an intimation. Thinking is always under way; it is always undergoing a new crisis. This is the key to understanding Heidegger’s philosophy” (Kovacs 1990:12). The process of thinking, which is implicit in the use of the phrase “thinking is always under way”, points to the non-essentialist and non-absolutist position of Heidegger’s philosophy. Moreover, Heidegger’s methodology is a thorough criticism of traditional metaphysics.

Vycinas draws attention to Heidegger’s admonishment in the following words, “[S]ince Being has not been thought and all throughout history has kept itself in forgottenness, it is the problem of the future; a problem which is yet to be thought” (Vycinas 1961:11). This means that we have to engage the problem of being and the world now and not leave it for the future since it is a question that has to be addressed at some point. Vycinas considers Heidegger’s work as a stage where he deals with the basic problems of ‘Gods and the earth’ (Vycinas 1961:12). Being-in-the-world and human existence is often threatened by the desire to conceptualise a Being-outside-the-world. In the discussion thus far, we see that Heidegger distances himself from the understanding of the truth of a Supreme reality. Müller argues that Heidegger’s silence in

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<sup>49</sup> Heidegger draws from Heraclitus who asserts that “The holding sway of beings, i.e. beings in their being, loves to conceal itself” (sic) (Heidegger 2002:9).

matters of the divine "... does not indicate a negation of God, nor a rejection of God, but simply indicates that on his passage from beings to that which is closer to the foundation of Being, the thinker did not encounter God" (Müller in Vycinas 1961: 315). The affirmation or negation of God will rather be based on metaphysical findings because the nature of God is not based on Heidegger's conception of Dasein. To experience, for Heidegger, has to do purely with the comprehension of 'intra-world' being under which God, per definition, does not fall (Vycinas 1961:316). Müller suggests that Heidegger's inability to encounter God does not necessarily negate God. In Heidegger's analysis of coming into existence (birth), he should have hinted at the possibility of a God, but this did not feature in his thought process. Heidegger's prioritisation of the phenomenological world, is a clear indication that he refutes the metaphysical world as a possible source of meaning. Heidegger believes that the traditional understanding of truth is inaccessible (Vycinas 1961: 317). The religious metaphysical world as a location outside of time and world is inaccessible to those who are only conceivable in the world and in time. Heidegger considers the mystery of human being within the world. Safranski maintains that, for Heidegger, projection "... is a self-mystification of Dasein which, so long as it lives, is never finished, entire, or completed, as any object might be, but always remains open for the future, full of possibilities. Dasein (being here) implies being possible" (*Möglich-sein*) (Safranski 2002:150). The unending nature of Dasein's projection is purely phenomenological in nature.

### 3.6 Conclusion

Heidegger clears the ground in order to guard against human ability to listen to the realities of being-in-the-world. He draws attention to the reality of existence as the only the ground of meaning and their understanding. Heidegger challenges religious metaphysics "... [which] has very often made itself the absolute to which it would bear witness" (O'Leary 2001:415). The ultimate perspective which religion often introduced into the world is considered a fundamental distortion of the very nature of human being and of the world. "Things are changing in the passing of time is not only a saying, it is equally a fact" (Heidegger 1967:22). Thus any truth claim that pretends to be based on anything eternal or absolute, must be ruled out as a distortion. The response to religious fundamentalist violence in our time requires a new turn, a search for a lasting solution which only human beings, the cause of the dangers in the world, can resolve with the tools in the world. This is why, for Heidegger, "The question of existence never gets

straightened out except through existing itself” (Heidegger 1962:33). Religious metaphysics (onto-theology) has resulted in the distortion of the early traditional heritage of the questions surrounding the nature of Dasein as it has only succeeded in taking human beings away from the question of being by creating a misconception of ontology by promoting oblivion in matters which pertain to phenomena (Kovacs 1990:8). With traditional metaphysics, the path to truth has been thwarted and everything is driven into obscurity.

The crux of the matter in this chapter has been to show, using Heidegger’s criticisms of traditional metaphysics, how religious metaphysical beliefs and worldviews, namely the understanding of the ground and transcendence, may underlie religious fundamentalist violence. Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, shows the danger of absolute religious claims and the threat they pose to any attempt at a substantial comprehension of the true nature of human beings. The argument here is not that religious tendencies are per definition absolutist. On the contrary, I argue that a certain disposition towards religious beliefs is absolutist. The themes in this chapter show how religious beliefs propel a *potential* for action and reaction. The actions and reactions are inspired by the very nature of metaphysics: “... metaphysics moulds our very sense of what it means for something – anything – to *be*” (Thomas 2011:106). This moulding deprives us of the actual reality. Religion always directs the vertical to the horizontal, the phenomenon to the noumenon [phenomenality], which in turn distorts presence by proposing escaping, and thus it affects the phenomenology of truth by instating a religious absolutist understanding of truth. A religious absolutist understanding of truth refers to a presentation of truth that is believed to be remain perpetually valid. It is these religious tendencies that Heidegger refutes in his returning of human essence to the world.

If one is to consider the understanding of politics as phenomenological, Gagani argues that politics can be equally dangerous as in the same way religious metaphysics in fuelling hate, bifurcation, animosity, and other kinds of frictions that can result in violence:

The fundamental fact in consideration here is that, like metaphysics, politics too has been a discourse at times enclosed in the terms of its own totalising vocabulary, entertaining practico-theoretical links only with the positive finality of its own project, of its own programme, and taking evil and negativity as external factors personified in rival social and political elements. ... the authentic and substantial anti-metaphysical core of politics consists in a

philosophical reflection and a religious impulse ready to hearken to evil, to deception, to that vague and obscure setting to reality that hangs over individuals, cities, societies and states, enveloping and silently corroding them, like humidity and rust (Gagani 1998:123).

Gagani observes that the totalising vocabulary that characterises the religious metaphysical position is in fact potentially obtainable in secular ideas, especially when the secular advances positions that undermine or ignore other viewpoints. Amidst the significance attached to the criticisms earlier explored in this chapter, Gagani presents a fascinating critique of non-metaphysical positions when he draws attention to the horrors that can be orchestrated in societies, cities and states. Horrors that are not based on religious metaphysical claims, but on the fixation and absolutisation of a particular worldview and, even worse, the imposition of this worldview on others who do not share the same experience. Karl Jaspers puts it succinctly when he highlights how religious tenets are imposed on society as the ultimate framework.

Each religion recognises as adequate only its own representation of transcendence; it sets forth one ideal of humanity, one set of truths and rules for action, to which all men must conform. In this process of objectifying what lies beyond all objectivity, religion destroys human freedom and transcendence just as science does when its objective conceptions of reality are absolutised into a philosophical dogma (Jaspers 1971:xv).

Jaspers' position resonates with Gagani's take on the possibility of absolutism in non-religious positions. Science, as Jaspers observes, limits freedom because of its claim on absolute truths. It is in this way that religious views are considered absolutist in nature. The absolute imposition of religious and secular worldviews, based on self-acclaimed objective conception of reality, as Jaspers maintains, can have damaging effects on society.

There is a possible narrowness in Heidegger's phenomenology, and it leaves out some aspects of lived existence that are expressed in religion. As I have presented in this section, there are scholars like Levinas who try to address religious concerns without being unfaithful to Heidegger's best insights, i.e. without falling back into metaphysical positions. In the next chapter, I seek to engage some of the limitations of Heidegger's philosophical position, especially critique of religious understanding of ground.

## Chapter Four

### Investigating the Limitations of Heidegger's Phenomenological Ontology

“[W]ho thinks in a grand manner,  
also errs in a grand manner”  
(Vycinas 1961:321).

#### 4.1 Introduction

In the previous three chapters, the Heideggerian critique of western metaphysics from the perspective of his phenomenological ontology, was employed to critically analyse the basic tenets of religious metaphysics as it usually influences the kind of fundamentalist belief system which I have claimed lends itself to justifications of religious violence, including the killing of others. In Chapter Three, the question has emerged of whether the Heideggerian frame is intolerant towards all religious claims and expressions, or only those that are of a metaphysical kind, according to his understanding of metaphysics. This question was explored more closely with the help of some thinkers who have tried explicitly to apply Heideggerian phenomenology to the sphere of religious experience, which is an almost universal human phenomenon. In this chapter, Chapter Four, I explore the plausibility of different critiques of Heidegger's philosophical framework, with the question about Heideggerian phenomenology and religious experience firmly in mind. I will introduce different critical readings of Heidegger, focusing in particular on the charge that Heidegger himself, in spite of his best intentions, is reductionist, with the result that he is guilty himself of making absolute truth claims. I argue against this charge, but argue that Heidegger's insistence on phenomenology as the only path to ontology necessarily implies that he is advancing an absolutist stance. It is against this backdrop that this chapter seeks to expose an absolutist dimension in Heidegger's work and at the same time to rethink certain aspects of his phenomenology. In other words, by presenting a critical re-evaluation of Heidegger's work, I seek to engage his philosophical postulations in order to identify areas where his ideas are limited or reductionist. I will also critique Heidegger's methodological monism. By methodological monism, I refer to Heidegger's insistence on

phenomenology as the only method for addressing the question about the meaning of being; Heidegger writes, “Only as phenomenology, is ontology possible” (Heidegger 1962:60). While acknowledging the contribution of Heidegger’s philosophy to the problem of religious fundamentalist violence, I will also explain how his ideas create a problem.

I consider it important to state from the onset that I engage two distinguishable sets of criticism, and they need distinct responses from defenders of Heidegger. The first criticism is that Heidegger’s philosophy has an implicit metaphysical element of its own, and the second criticism is that Heidegger’s insistence on phenomenology entails an arbitrary or artificial reduction of the existential reality of Dasein, a charge we already started to engage in the previous chapters. To achieve the intended goal in this chapter, I will discuss Jean-Luc Nancy’s,<sup>50</sup> and Emmanuel Levinas’s<sup>51</sup> criticism of Heidegger’s philosophical framework. I will focus mainly on these philosophers because of their contributions to the reception of Heidegger’s philosophy. I will include the critiques of other scholars only insofar as they augment the critiques advanced by Nancy, and Levinas. In section 4.2, I explore the Levinasian de-thematisation of Heidegger’s ontology as phenomenology. I consider this relevant because it attempts to identify the lack of ethics and instances of essentialist claims within Heidegger’s postulations. On that score, it is important to note here that “[f]or Levinas, the basic advance and advantage of Heideggerian ontology over Husserlian phenomenology is that it begins from an analysis of the factual situation of the human being in everyday life, what Heidegger after Wilhelm Dilthey calls ‘facticity’” (Critchley 2004:9). This implies that Levinas does in fact recognise Heidegger’s contribution to the philosophical discourse on ontology and critique of intellectualism, expressed in the position that any enquiry into the nature of being cannot be based on presuppositions removed from everyday life. Levinas thus appreciates Heidegger’s fundamental phenomenological stance and his focus on facticity.

However, for our purposes it is important to explore Levinas’s critique of Heidegger’s philosophical position, because it problematises the claim that it is free from the essentialist stance. In section 4.3 (Levinas’s and Nancy’s Critique of Heidegger’s Phenomenology), I engage the position advanced by Emmanuel Levinas and Jean-Luc Nancy that Heidegger’s

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<sup>50</sup> Jean Luc-Nancy (1940) is a French philosopher renowned for his interest in continental philosophy and deconstruction. Jacques Derrida and Martin Heidegger influenced Nancy’s philosophical theorisation.

<sup>51</sup> Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) is a Jewish philosopher whose philosophy was influenced by the phenomenological tradition but who later introduced a religious twist, influenced by his Judaism, to his phenomenological framework. He specialised in phenomenology, ethics, ontology and existentialism.

ethics is based on an afterthought, by which they mean that Heidegger undermines the role of ethics in his phenomenological ontology. Hence, Heidegger's philosophy does not have any foundational ethical component. By this, I mean that Heidegger does not find within the innate structure of being a foundation for ethical action. This criticism relates to the second form of criticism that Heidegger's philosophy is reductionist. Drawing on Herman Philipse's idea, section 4.4 (Heidegger's Implicit Metaphysical Dasein: Philipse's Critique) explores the possibility of an implicit essentialist understanding of Dasein in Heidegger's philosophy. Finally, the fifth section 4.5 (Absolutism in Heidegger's Phenomenology) I present a critique of Heidegger's insistence on phenomenology as the only method for addressing ontology a methodological monism because of its restrictive nature. I also show how the different criticisms of Heidegger's philosophy hang together, and I reach the conclusion that embedded in Heidegger's philosophy is a new form of absolutism. This is because of Heidegger's absolutist rejection of traditional metaphysics. *Dasein* 4.2 Levinas's De-thematisation of Heidegger's Ontology as Phenomenology

#### **4.2 Levinas's De-thematisation of Heidegger's Ontology as Phenomenology**

Levinas's values aspects of criticism of Heidegger's philosophy such as his focus on facticity and concrete situatedness, as we have seen. On the other hand, Levinas is critical of Heidegger's arbitrary conception of ontology as phenomenology. It is also important to note here that Levinas was devastated by Heidegger's political commitment to Nazi National Socialism or Nazism, a move which Levinas thinks compromises Heidegger's philosophical postulations (Critchley, 2004:8; Morgan, 2007: 53). Levinas argues that, "Western philosophy struggled for a better being, for a harmony between us and the world, or for the perfection of our own being. Its ideal of peace and equilibrium presupposed the sufficiency of being" (Levinas, 2003:51). Levinas presents an understanding within Western philosophy that sought to remain within the world in the search for something perfect. He says in Western philosophy there has been attempt to create harmony between humans and world and to perfect human being, in other words, the tradition has been concerned with ideality or even perfection in a purely worldly sense. Levinas considers the Western philosophical approach to be distorted because they consider addressed being in view of establishing a being outside the world

This is why Levinas, as we have seen shows his preference for Heidegger's philosophy. Levinas' own philosophical approach and style remained, in spite of all his criticisms of

Heidegger, much closer to Heidegger's than to those of Husserl or any other phenomenologist (Peperzak 1993: 11). In Levinas's 1930 thesis on intentionality, which for Husserl was the essential principle, "Levinas showed his preference for Heidegger's existential ontology over and above Husserl's transcendent phenomenology of consciousness" (Peperzak 1993: 11).

However, Levinas had been initiated very early to Jewish orthodoxy (Peperzak 1993:2) which partly resulted in his stern critique of Heidegger's phenomenology. The greatest shock for Levinas was "Heidegger's collaboration with the Nazis and his rectoral address of 1933" (Peperzak 1993:4). Levinas's Jewish background contributed to his antagonism towards Heidegger's philosophy. As Peperzak notes, "Initially still mild, his [Levinas's] criticism developed slowly into a sharper polemic against the 'pagan' inspiration of Heidegger's thinking" (Peperzak 1993: 4).

Before we proceed, let us return, briefly, to Levinas's work *On Escape: De l'évasion*. I already investigated Levinas's work in Chapter Three, but it is important to return to this *oeuvre* in order to further analyse the argument that legitimised religious metaphysics as an escape. The endless projection of human being suggests only one thing, that is human desires are insatiable. If this is the case, then the nature of Dasein is to be better than its current state. Simply put, human being wants to be better. In third chapter, I looked at Levinas's work only as it illuminates Heidegger's phenomenological projection. However, implicit to Levinas's work is a religious dimension which he considers primordial to the existence of being. The caveat, however, is that "... the context in which God and religion arise for Levinas is ethical, and even more precisely it concerns our interest in justice and benevolence" (Morgan, 2007:206). This implies that Levinas's philosophy can rightly be interpreted as a phenomenological exposition of human being, but it has an ethical twist, that is worth considering. He says in Western philosophy there has been attempt to create harmony between humans and world and to perfect human being, in other words, the tradition has been concerned with ideality or even perfection in a purely worldly sense. The point here is that, for Levinas, ethical relation comes first, and he arrives at his conclusions in a way that Heidegger does not. For Levinas, the ethical appeal coming from the encounter with the other is independent of any philosophical presuppositions or religious narratives.

Further exploring the above position that Levinas's philosophy, Levinas bases his phenomenological analysis on the concrete, lived experience of the finite human within the

world, as Heidegger did. However, he reformulates “transcendence as the need for escape” (Bergo, 2006), and maintains that the desire to escape is intrinsic in the experience of human beings:

[y]et is the need for escape not the exclusive matter of a finite being? Does this being not aspire to cross the limits of being rather than to flee being as being? Would an infinite being have the need to take leave of itself? Is this infinite being not precisely the ideal of self-sufficiency and the promise of eternal contentment? (Levinas 2003:56).

The finite in man always seeks an escape to the infinite: for Levinas, “transcendence [relates to] humans’ irreducible urge to get past the limits of their physical and social situations, that is, transcendence is less transcendence-in-the-world than transcendence through and because of sensibility” (Bergo 2006). Yet, the momentary satisfaction attained in every achievement of some kind of transcendence makes human beings’ desire for infinite reality endless. Levinas is thus concerned about how as humans we know that we are finite or that our being is not perfect. As opposed to the finite tendencies of man, the infinite, is self-sufficiency. The being of the absolute is perfection:

What is, is. The fact of being is always already perfect. It is already inscribed in the absolute. That there might have been a birth or a death in no way affects the absolute character of an assertion that refers only to itself (Levinas 2003:57).

This may come across as a limitation on the part of finite reality but the experience of privation, which is tied to the very make-up of human being live as finitude, is, in fact, not a deficiency or limitation, rather it is a purification of the very fact of being, which is already escaping (Levinas 2003:57). Implicit in the argument presented by Levinas, is the belief that human beings’ craving to better themselves is not a disadvantage. It is in fact a desire to purify their existence in the search for a stable state that breaks away from finite constraints. This is why, for Levinas, the pleasure attained by finite beings is nothing other than a concentration in the instant (Levinas 2003:57). According to Levinas, the focus on pleasure and satisfaction is a way of living in the present. It is only in the disruption of pleasure that human being, shocked by the temporal nature of its ecstasies, becomes completely disappointed by its finite nature. Escape then becomes inevitable. Levinas brings us to the realisation that it is in pleasure that

we realise the human desire to flee its finite state and embrace the infinite, which is temporarily experienced in ecstasy and illusion (Levinas 2003:61). One might liken soberness after intoxication to the dissatisfaction that comes with the realisation that one is finite after a release or an interruption from the ecstasy of infinity. What Levinas suggests is that "... need is not a nostalgia for being; it is the liberation from being ..." (Levinas 2003:62). The fleeing that Levinas attributes to human beings is the desire for infinity, which he also considers innate in human experience. Levinas thus detects in his own phenomenological analysis of the lived experience of Dasein a desire on the part of Dasein to flee or escape from its own finitude into something infinite and perfect, which is different from the Heideggerian conception of projection which always takes place within temporality and within the confines of the worldly and of mortality. If the acceptance of one's finitude and mortality is crucial for Heidegger's understanding of authentic human existence, Levinas instead detects a desire to escape or transcend these aspects at the heart of every human experience and mood. As Bergo explains, 'transcendence, in Levinas's understanding of it, is continually directed toward "something other than ourselves" (Levinas 2003:58), and thus aims at "getting out of the being that we ourselves are – our situation and our embodiment" (Bergo 2006). This does not however mean that Levinas believes that such escape is possible. Rather, in our analysis of human existence, what we discover is "both the need to escape ourselves and the futility of getting out of existence" (Bergo 2006).

Levinas's understanding of infinity, different from Heidegger's temporality, is driven by an attempt to critique a totalising understanding of being. To explain what this means it is important to turn to *Totality and Infinity* (1961), Levinas's first major work. In this book, Levinas describes how infinity is realised in the relationship, and totality is a term Levinas uses to refute any attempt to merge the self with the Other. With this Levinas critiques an understanding of the other as a material being of other worldly reality. Thus, he advances a position that let other be in their otherness (Levinas 1961:51). Against the constant attacks of contemporary philosophy on 'Platonism' and their attempts to overcome 'metaphysics' *Totality and Infinity* tries to rehabilitate simultaneously a new form of metaphysics and the most profound inspiration of Plato's philosophy (Peperzak 1993:13). Levinas proposes a radical revolution not only in phenomenology, but also in the history of European philosophy. This line of thought is characterised by the return to things as they appear to us. He considers this a mark driven by a striving for totalisation in which the universe is reduced to an original and

ultimate unity.<sup>52</sup> Against this Western philosophical background, Levinas maintains that “human and the divine Other cannot be reduced to a totality of which they would only be elements” (Levinas 1996:x). It is in fact glaring that Levinas’s work on escape builds on his understanding of human complexity, a position that he develops in his conception of “face-to-face”.<sup>53</sup> This intricacy is what drives being’s escape and makes the ‘Other’ attain its irreducibility. The ‘Other’ [‘face’], according to Levinas, stands for the human being I encounter; he also uses the Other when referring to God (Levinas 1996:x). The infinite names the incomprehensibility and ungraspable character of the Other.

The question that has to be raised in the attempt to fully come to terms with what Levinas seeks to achieve is, how must we conceptualise the Other? Heidegger’s philosophy is largely based on ontology understood phenomenologically and, as already alluded to in the first chapter of this project, Heidegger addresses the encounter with Others only in Dasein-with in the world (Heidegger 1962:156). The ontological structure of existence is retained in Heidegger’s exposition, but he focuses on an understanding of ontology only as phenomenology. Levinas appreciates the exceptional character of Heidegger’s ontological analysis of human reality as it focuses on concrete situations, or the existential realities of human beings not only from the intellectual perspective, but also through Heidegger’s appropriation of a variety of intentional life – “emotional, practical, and theoretical – through which we relate to Being of various beings” (Levinas 1996:1). Levinas sums up Heidegger’s contribution as follows,

the essential contribution of Heideggerian ontology is its critique of intellectualism: the fact that ontology is not simply a contemplative science but is grounded in fundamental ontology of the existential engagement of human beings in the world which forms the ‘anthropological’ preparation for the elaboration of the question of Being (Levinas 1996:1).

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<sup>52</sup> It should be noted that Levinas’s critique of totalization refers to metaphysical systems that aim at explaining every aspect of reality and leaving nothing out, but also to political systems and states that absolutise themselves and thereby absorb all individuals and institutions into themselves. This latter meaning must be understood against the backdrop of Levinas’s personal experience of the Shoah and Nazi Germany, and his reaction against Heidegger’s ontology as embedded in a certain political climate (see Bergo 2006).

<sup>53</sup> The ‘face’ as understood by Levinas will be later discussed in this section. To being understanding what Levinas understands by the face; for him “The face of the other is not the appearance of that person. The face means what it is: imporing, a plea of the weak to the power of the poor to the rich” (Morgan 2007:66).

Despite the fact that Levinas's philosophy is largely hinged on Heidegger's ontology, Levinas over time develops a considerable distance from Heidegger's style of philosophy, due, as he says to "the profound need to leave the climate of that philosophy" (Levinas 1996:1). Levinas departs most significantly from Heidegger's philosophy when he ascribes first philosophy to ethics and not ontology, that is, he gives ethics priority over ontology, metaphysics, epistemology, and theology:

[Ethics]... is the question of the meaning of being: not the ontology of the understanding of that extraordinary verb, but the ethics of its justice. The question par excellence or the question of philosophy. Not 'Why being rather than nothing?' , but how being justifies itself (Levinas 1989:86).

In his essay *Is Ontology Fundamental?*, Levinas also presents an argument to substantiate and validate his reasons for proposing this radical departure from the Heideggerian climate of philosophising (Levinas 1996:1). It is also in *Is Ontology Fundamental?* that Levinas presents a critique of Heidegger's ontology, based on his ethical stance. He centres his philosophical rebuttal of Heidegger's ontology by claiming that a proper (Levinasian) fundamental ontology entails the irreducibility of the ontological comprehension of the Other. This is importantly different from the Heideggerian understanding of the Other, which is characterised by the unwitting reduction of the horizon of human existence, especially when it comes to Dasein's relationships with others. According to Levinas, Heidegger's treatment of the Other in his understanding of Dasein as being-in-the-world-with-the-other is a Heideggerian replication of the Platonic conception of Western philosophy where the particular is always and readily understood only in relation to the universal (Levinas 1996:1). Such a reduction of the Other entails a form of totalisation not very different from the logic of metaphysical systems. Against this, Levinas proposes a new kind of ethics which "speaks out of particularity about the first human particularity: the face-to-face relationship" (Bergo 2006).

Based on his phenomenological analysis of the face-to-face, Levinas maintains that the relation with Others goes beyond comprehension, which makes reducibility ontologically unacceptable. For Levinas, "Ontology is not accomplished in the triumph of human beings over their condition but in the very tension where this condition is assumed" (Levinas 1996: 3). The argument here is that the prioritisation of Dasein, as we find in Heidegger's work, is not the solution to the forgetting of being and Dasein which Heidegger problematizes; rather

ethics is the understanding of the context within which the prioritisation of being is a necessary requisite to the solution. The condition of being is a significant element of the understanding of being. As already highlighted, Levinas acknowledges the general novelty of Heidegger's phenomenology as he maintains that with phenomenology philosophy ceases to fall prey to the errancy of intellectualisation, its contribution will henceforth consider the whole of human comportment in its ontological enquiry. However, Levinas insists that Heidegger's philosophy, like other Western philosophy focuses more on the triumph of the ontological over the transcendent. This is a position that Levinas is weary of because he considers its totalitising (Morgan 2007:96). Heidegger focusing mainly on advancing an phenomenological understanding of being and this understanding permeate its other relation in the world without addressing the tension that emerges in the being's relation with its being-in-the-world and with Other. Conversely, Levinas proposes that the tension that arises between ontological and the transcendence (relation with other) needs to be engaged. In other words, every action and reaction are moments to be considered as they spell out the nature of human reality. Levinas unsettles our minds in the detrimental reductive tendencies of intellectualism in order to provide room for the mystery that he believes is part of the ontological questions. Levinas understands transcendence as 'trans-ascendence', or a rising towards the other, in response to the call, demand and resistance coming pre-verbally from the facial presence of the other. Trans-ascendence contains infinity which disrupts all the attempts at totalisation typical both of traditional metaphysics and of human beings in their everyday lives in which they set goals and aim at mastery. Infinity "refers to the unmasterable quality of human expression" (Bergo 2006).

The prominence of the divine and religion are dimensions which can be traced in Levinas's philosophical framework. The religious twist to Levinas's philosophy, one might argue, has its foundation in the Judaic tradition of Levinas, which forms an essential fabric of his philosophy. This is a position that is not entirely wrong because when Levinas's ideas are critically engaged, one cannot but see the Judaic influence in his writing even though he thinks otherwise (Levinas 1996:4). The point here is not to present Levinas as a strong religious metaphysician, rather it is to show Levinas pulls metaphysical positions into his phenomenological.

In order to foster his ethical position understanding of the Other, Levinas repeatedly highlights the danger of Heidegger's phenomenology. Levinas does this by highlighting the fact that Heidegger's philosophical postulation on ontology as phenomenology, does not overcome

Western idealism (Morgan, 2007:96). This is because for Heidegger, the emphasis is on how ontology is encountered phenomenological. Heidegger's understanding of tool-being is another instance where Levinas identifies a totalisation in Heidegger's thinking where he focuses on the encounter and not on the relational or ethical dimension of this encounter. Levinas maintains, "[t]o comprehend the tool is not to look at it but to know how to handle it. To comprehend our situation in reality is not to define it but to find ourselves in an affective disposition. To comprehend being is to exist" (Levinas 1996: 4). Levinas recognises the role of existence in the comprehension of Dasein as Heidegger would recommend. However, Levinas's philosophical postulation seeks to see more than *mere* existence in the way Heidegger thinks of Dasein. To think of Dasein is not to contemplate but to commit oneself, to be encapsulated by the subject of individual reflection, to be actively engaged. "This is the dramatic event of being-in-the-world" (Levinas 1996:4). Levinas approaches ontology from an ethical perspective, he does not reduce existence to mere ontology. This is because to exist for Levinas is to engage in an ethical exchange with the Other, a position that goes beyond mere ontology. This coexistence is, for Levinas, characterised by an irreducibility of the Other.

Similarly, Levinas recognises the fact that, for Heidegger, letting human beings be is the only way one can comprehend being. As extensively discussed in Chapter Three, letting be, for Heidegger, entails not imposing view point on being, and as such not understanding being in the way it reveals itself. This letting be is independent of human perception that grasps and uncovers being. "It is precisely through such comprehension that it gives itself as being ... and not as a mere object. Being-in-the-Other (*Miteinandersein*) thus remains for Heidegger on the ontological relation" (Levinas 1996:6). Thus, it is clear that Levinas maintains that Heidegger reduces existence to mere ontological relations, a position which Levinas considers inadequate. For Levinas, it is only when we let human beings exist in the best way possible, without trying to understand them by limiting their potentials, that human existence can be understood. However, Levinas maintains that the Other is not an object of comprehension, meaning, "The relation with the other (*autrui*) is not therefore ontology" (Levinas 1996: 7). The implication of this assertion is that, again, Heidegger's ontology is reductionist in nature, especially as it seeks to capture human existence in its entirety.

The encounter of the other (*autrui*) consists in the fact that despite the extent of my domination and his slavery, I do not possess him. He does not enter entirely into the opening of being where I already stand, as a field of my freedom. It is

not starting from being in general that he comes to meet me. Everything which comes to me from the other (*autrui*), starting from being in general, certainly offers itself to my comprehension and possession. I understand him in the framework of his history, his surroundings and habits. That which escapes comprehension is the other (*autrui*), is him, a being (Levinas 1996: 9).

The absence of comprehensibility is the only way the Other can come to our horizon. For Levinas, it is precisely when we stop understanding the Other, that the Other really exists, or appears to us. Levinas's position is therefore very different from the relationality that Heidegger's understanding of being-with assumes in *Being and Time*. In chapter two, by arguing that one of the structure of Dasein is being-with, and as such, Dasein is always in relation with other beings in the world. A position that made Heidegger arrive at the conclusion that "Being-alone is a deficient mode of Being-with" (Heidegger 1962:157). This is why in *Meaning and Sense*, published in 1964, Levinas identifies the deficiency of perception by alluding to the beyond (not in a traditional metaphysical sense), which he claims leads to the other contents which is limited to the field of perception as found in phenomenology, "the content of the given" (Levinas 1996:34-35). Levinas takes his argument further when he states that "those absent contents confer a meaning on the given. But this recourse to absence would indicate that perception failed in its mission, which is to render present, to represent" (Levinas 1996:35). One finds that for Levinas understanding is not equivalent to perceiving and thus the meaning of being cannot finally be reduced to the phenomenal, to appearance. We are still faced with the challenge of affirming the position that the absent contents in human beings still confer meaning on the given. How does one consider the existence of absent contents in the given? (Levinas 1996:34-35). Attempting a response, one might argue that this contents in the given is innate. They are only absent because they has not been revealed.

Levinas presents an understanding of phenomenology in such a way that one marvels at his phenomenology; it is a philosophy which is inseparable from transcendence and the corporeal movements of human beings (Levinas 1996:39). Levinas opens the mind, in a way that Heidegger does not, to the ethical dimension inherent in the discourses of ontology. He acknowledges the light of the world as important in illuminating the very nature of human reality. At the same time, he sees beyond what the world presents about human reality and detects something infinite in the encounter with the Other. He strongly holds that "nothing can be reflected in a thought before the footlights are turned on and a curtain raised on the side of

being” (Levinas 1996:39). Levinas uses the metaphor to critique traditional metaphysics/intellectualist’s stance on being by advancing a position that favours an encounter with being. Levinas does not ignore the temporal as a headlight for seeing the nature of human reality because he acknowledges the fact that it is in the body that we realise that thought is immersed in the world. Levinas contrasts his position with Heidegger’s when he writes, “And in Heidegger being is revealed out of the hiddenness and mystery of the unsaid, which the poets and philosophers bring to speech, without ever saying everything” (Levinas 1996:42). Here he presents the limitation of Heidegger’s attempt to reduce human beings because he seeks to free human beings from preconceived ideas. Levinas suggests that there is always an infinite dimension, which is hidden when the phenomenological worldview is prioritised. Phenomenology, Levinas would argue, seeks to restrain human beings within the finite scope to the detriment of the infinite dimension that is a significant part of its existence. It is important to note that this infinite dimension is not to be understood in the sense of traditional metaphysics.

In *Enigma and Phenomenon*, Levinas explains the nature of the infinite more. There he suggests that phenomenological analysis alerts us precisely and paradoxically to the non-appearance of the Other: “The infinite is an inassimilable alterity, a difference and absolute past with respect to everything that is shown, signalled, symbolised, announced, remembered, and thereby ‘contemporised’ with him who understands” (Levinas 1996:75). Levinas’s philosophy is deeply paradoxical, because it attempts to ‘phenomenologically describe the indescribable’, which for him is the only way to break out of totality and Being, which still characterise Heidegger’s philosophy. Levinas’s terminology is often difficult to ascertain, especially when viewed in line with his notion of the ‘Other’ in the same way he refers to God<sup>54</sup>. He talks about the ‘signifyingness’ of the trace of transcendence in the immanent without signifying. This is a disposition, according to Levinas, which cannot be fully conceptualised; in fact the trace of transcendence does not belong to the purview of phenomenology (Levinas, 1996:10); yet phenomenology is the means by which to show that which transcends the phenomenological. This also means that the ethical *appeal* from the Other cannot be understood ontologically; it disrupts any such approach, be it dialectical or phenomenological. The ethical appeal is per definition beyond intellectual and subjective grasp, in that it interrupts

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<sup>54</sup> As Bergo makes clear, Levinas stands in the tradition of ‘negative theology’ from Maimonides onwards, thus he does not have a positive conception of God. Since God is also transcendent (similar to the moment of transcendence experienced in the encounter in the face-to-face), “whatever we attribute to God must be subject to the conditions Levinas already placed on transcendence: non-thematizable, it is an experience of assignation and command” (Bergo 2006).

the everyday self or 'I'. Levinas's phenomenology stumbles at a point of 'signifying what cannot be signified or saying what cannot be said' because it escapes the horizon of understanding and phenomenal appearance. Levinas's phenomenology thus always leaves traces of what lies beyond itself. Heidegger's philosophical prioritisation of the seen is debunked by Levinas's philosophy. Levinas maintains that "Being and not-being illuminate one another and unfold a speculative dialectic, which is a determination of being" (Levinas 1996: 110). Heidegger avoids this speculative dialectics and focuses on the everydayness of human existence. Heidegger's approach is where the problem lies for Levinas; this is because for Levinas the encounter with the Other can not be understood either phenomenologically nor ontologically.

Levinas's disruption of dominant forms of conceiving of human being is captivating and worthy of consideration. The Other (whether in divine form) does not appear as phenomena, according to Levinas. That is the reason why he speaks of a trace: his phenomenology falters at a point of 'signifying what cannot be signified or saying what cannot be said' because it escapes the horizon of understanding. A recapitulation of the discussion thus far will make this point a lot clearer. In Chapter Three, we saw that for Heidegger the ontological question cannot be answered from a metaphysical point of view, but only from within the context in which the question arises – the lived reality of Dasein. This is why he dubbed traditional ontology as onto-theology. What this means is that theology has the tendency to conjecture metaphysical epistemic truth claims away from the immanent realities of human beings. By refuting onto-theology, Heidegger makes Dasein, in its being-in-the-world, custodian of epistemic validation. In the unveiling act of each Dasein, in line with Heidegger's account of *everydayness*, the nature of beings and being come to light. Religious metaphysics for Heidegger has no role in illuminating the existence of Dasein, but instead contributes to the obscuring of being. This is because of the position that nothing cannot be the source of something. Put differently, the derivative of something must be a thing itself.

Phenomenological-ontology excludes God from its ontological discourse because God, for phenomenologists like Heidegger, does not illuminate our understanding of ontology (to be). Levinas argues that "We must ask if beyond the intelligibility and rationalism of identity, consciousness, the present and being – beyond the intelligibility of immanence – the signifierness, rationality, and rationalism of transcendence are not understood" (Levinas 1996: 131). For Levinas, beyond intelligibility, immanence points to the transcendent. As can be seen,

Levinas's phenomenology goes beyond the intelligibility of the world, and this differs from Heidegger's account of being which does not go beyond the intelligible immanent world, because he detects within his phenomenological analysis of identity, consciousness, presence and being, traces of a transcendence which escapes this realm and cannot be captured within it. Clearly, Levinas's argument comes down to a position that it is only through the transcendence significance of being that the ontological significance is appreciated.

### **4.3 Levinas's and Nancy's Critique of Heidegger's Ethics: An After-Thought**

Levinas's philosophy unsettles and interrupts Heidegger's phenomenological endeavour; Levinas does not only disrupt Heidegger's phenomenological project, he parts with Heidegger phenomenological framework. In addressing the complexities of human realities, Levinas critiques Heidegger's reductionism as an inadequate methodological approach for fully understanding or attempting to synthesise the reality of the face-to-face encounter. There is an element of infinity (transcendence) that characterises every encounter with the other, which means that the other finally escapes every attempt at grasping or understanding. Ontology is not the first philosophy for Levinas, ethics is (Hand 2009:37). Levinas maintains that the first philosophical question has an ethical prioritisation and not an ontological one. Therefore, for Levinas, we must return to the pre-Western period where the understanding of being is not yet adulterated by ontology, an adulteration which for him often results in the 'defacing' of (the face of) the Other through the confinement and reduction of the face to what it is not. Thus, like Heidegger, he detects a fundamental distortion and blindness in the western ontological tradition. Unlike Heidegger, however, he does not limit himself to the domain of the ontological itself in order to address the problem, because he sees that as a way to remain stuck (like Heidegger) in the same problems. He proposes a return to an original understanding of human being which exists before historical and ontological totalisation that he detects in the western philosophical tradition. As Séan Hand rightly observes, and as already highlighted, the problem of Levinas's approach reverts to the use of words like 'transcendence', 'infinity', and 'revelation' (Hand 2009:37). Even though the idea of infinity, according to Levinas, is one which goes beyond objective thought, he refers to infinity as "more objective than objectivity" (Levinas in Hand 2009:38). Thus, what the trace of infinity within the finite experience of Dasein points to, is for him more objective than (human) objectivity. These formulations remind strongly of the language of (religious metaphysics), yet for Levinas they should not be read that way. His overriding concern is always to counter Heidegger's reductionist account of

human existence and the phenomenological with notions of transcendence and infinity that break open this totalising view and point us beyond the phenomenal and comprehensible to something else or something more, that can nevertheless never be known or expressed in language.

Another point which Levinas explores is the egoistic tendency in phenomenology which he brings to our attention : everything is understood from within the perspective of the Self or 'I'. He argues that the phenomenological approach which bases truth on that which is seen often does this by suspending or nullifying the view of the Other (Hand 2009:39). The ethical implication of Levinas's understanding of the Other is lacking in Heidegger's philosophy, because in Heidegger's thinker the Other never radically interrupts the world of comprehension established by Dasein. Indeed, Dasein is most authentic (maybe the closest Heidegger approaches a fundamental ethics) when most resistant to the perspectives of others, especially in the form of 'the they'. Therefore, in as much as we think of ethics, Heidegger's ontology is deficient. To remedy this situation, we must think of ethics first, not ontology for it is only then that we can do justice to the presence of the Other, and only then, Levinas thinks, can we also do justice to what a phenomenology of the face-to-face reveals.<sup>55</sup> Levinas seeks to eliminate the categorisation of the Other in the way ontology does. Levinas's philosophy plays a significant role in the understanding of ethics as a starting point for ontology. However, Levinas's idea "... can produce basic difficulties for ... [his] own language and exposition, of course, and the way in which he led to appeal to a wide range of intellectual and spiritual categories, while simultaneously seeking to resist the effect of categorisation, can be just confusing on occasions" (Hand 2009:40). Again, here, Hand alerts us to the risk Levinas runs when he couches so much of his anti-ontological language in categories that he on a different level attempts to resist. One may say that Levinas as much as Heidegger before him, struggles with the conceptual baggage of western metaphysical and ontological thinking, from and within which he attempts to wrest something new.

Behind Levinas's resilient dismissal of categorisation is his ethics. "He emphasises how I am ethically called upon to respond in the linguistic relation with the other, and how the absolute

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<sup>55</sup> When we think of religious fundamentalist violence, then, Levinas, just as much as Heidegger, would locate its roots in western thinking which systematically fails to do justice to the living presence of the Other. Yet, as we are seeing in this section, Levinas thinks that Heidegger perpetuates rather than addresses the problem, because Heidegger fails to detect the moment of transcendence and infinity in the face of the Other and remains locked up in the perspective and 'world' of the Self or I.

experience of a true face-to-face conversation breaks open the closed monologue of the same, and so introduces transcendence” (Hand 2009:40-41). Levinas breaks from the Western idea of the Other as ontology to an understanding of the other beyond all Western categorisation. The key to this irruption and for the possibility to break with a stale tradition which tends to do a grave injustice to the Other, remains the face-to-face situation. The face for him epitomises the horizon of the ethical image of infinity.

The face evoked is rather the concrete appearance of the idea of infinity that exists within me. Once again, Levinas develops this ethical image against a background of Western philosophy, which he claims has given a largely negative or presupposed significance to infinity. The idea of infinity which the face encapsulates is for Levinas the key means to which thought is brought into relation with what goes beyond its capacity (Hand 2009:42).

For Levinas, it is in the face of the Other, the concrete and proximal presence of another, that one glimpses to infinity. Yet this notion of infinity is not the same as the ‘largely negative or presupposed significance’ that the western metaphysical and ontological tradition has attributed to the concept. Traditional understandings assumed that the infinite could be comprehended, for instance, it could be aligned with an idea of ‘eternity’ which would fundamentally oppose the temporality of human existence. In marked contrast with this traditional understanding, for Levinas the idea of infinity only arises in the concrete experience of the Other, and points beyond the confines of the human intellect. This is because the face encapsulates the idea of infinity, and infinity is found only in the midst of the complexities of reality. Hand maintains that one might argue that “... transcendence is actually inherently social and plural in Levinas, rather than something isolated or sacred, and indeed, it can be quite intimately related to the establishment and maintenance of justice” (Hand 2009:41). Important to note from this quote is the very worldly context of transcendence for Levinas. The notion for him arises always in the midst of human phenomenal (concrete, everyday) experience, which makes it thoroughly worldly. It arises not where Dasein stands in isolation, but where the self is confronted and indeed interrupted by the Other, which makes it something inherently social and plural – it is in a sense always different, and unique precisely because it escapes human understanding and categorisation. The second aspect emphasised by Hand in this quote is that for Levinas, this experience of transcendence can never be divorced from some kind of ethical appeal or command. The critique of transcendence by Western philosophy

is challenged by Levinas as he maintains that transcendence is inevitable, especially in the way we treat and relate with the Other. The belief that the reality of the Other can be summed up as a mere ontological experience is a position which Levinas's philosophy recoils from. Even when we analyse Heidegger's philosophy of being-in-the-world, in Levinas's view, we find nothing but a philosophy of anonymous reality and a solitary self-establishment and possession delinked from the collective, whereas for Levinas, reality from the onset involves conviviality characterised by opening up to the Other (Hand 2009:41); an opening up or rising towards the Other which constitutes the moment of human transcendence.

Levinas talks about human beings only in relation to the primordial moral responsibility that it has towards the other – it is a moral mandate – which he describes as being-for-the-other. This is a direct refutation of the Heideggerian solitary conception of Being, which tries to figure itself out in its confines, through self-uncovering. Implicit in Levinas's argument is that every human being has a moral obligation towards the other (Peperzak 1993:28). For Peperzak, Levinas considers it an imperative for the Other to recognise his moral responsibility towards me (Peperzak 1993:28). As Peperzak rightly observes, Heidegger's work is a lot more empirical than the works of philosophers like Levinas.

Levinas's ethics is built on the presupposition of God's existence. The assumption of the existence of a divine being plays a significant role in his philosophical postulations. Levinas holds that "Our language about or to God should be in agreement with the relation of me to the Other, who is the only 'place' where God is revealed" (Peperzak 1993:34). I interpret this to mean that for Levinas, religion [God] is not a whole of concepts of being, but speaking to and doing justice to a person. This is different from talking about or *understanding* 'the Other': the way in which the other or the Idea of the Infinite *affects* me "must be described otherwise than as an appearance [...] or a comprehension" (Levinas 1996:157). When the Other is the face of God in the immanent, it is very difficult to disassociate ontology from metaphysics. Moreover, the religious transcendent perspective which Levinas imposes on the face makes it difficult to understand how the face, which does not reveal itself, suddenly becomes seen. Jean Luc Marion attempts to correct this perception by maintaining the position that the face becomes visible to me only through 'self-giving' (Marion in Hand 2009:113). This position suggests an attempt, on the part of Marion, to revive what he considers the necessary phenomenological dimension which is de-emphasised in Levinas's philosophical framework. The proof for the enigma of the possibility of God's existence is via the human Other. This is why the attempted discourse

surrounding the existence of God is inevitably characterised by uncertainty and guessing (Peperzak 1993:35). The transcendent ascendancy over phenomenology makes it difficult to name transcendence (religious metaphysics) as knowledge. For Western philosophy, “meaning or intelligibility coincide with the manifestation of being, as if the very business of being led to clarity, in the form of intelligibility, and then became an international thematisation in an experience” (Levinas 1996:131). The question about the meaning of existence finds understanding in the thematisation of Dasein. Amidst the complexities/hiddenness of human beings, the world remains that place for engaging human beings.

However, Levinas argues that if religious metaphysics attaches itself to human being, it will always remain a movement of knowledge and truth. This movement can only be found between the clear and the obscure. Levinas’s appropriation of exteriority as an inner forum of being refutes the Western philosophical understanding of knowledge as clear (Levinas 1996:132). Levinas’ position can be summed up as follows: “The bearers of religious experience do not conceive of any other signification of meaning” (Levinas 1996:135). The essential focal point for religious metaphysics is not the crux of Levinas’s philosophy; he is more interested in the ways justice emerges from religious framework. Contrary to this position, Heidegger sticks to the world as an important point of departure and a significant space for addressing human reality. In addition, true meaning is found in the world and not in the meaninglessness, Heidegger would argue, of metaphysical speculations. Heidegger, as we already saw, does not explore how the utopia of space is threatened in such a way that the phenomenological understanding of being-in-the-world is challenged (Levinas 1989:82).

In the same way that Husserl points to the fact that the solid rock on which phenomenology must be established is the world, Heidegger treads a similar path. Heidegger’s philosophy seeks to teach us that consciousness is rooted in the depth of being-in-the-world that precedes all presuppositions (Peperzak 1993:16). It is in everyday activities that we locate self-consciousness. But, Peperzak argues that Levinas maintains that, “Self-consciousness discovers itself as an original and irreducible relation to some ‘other’ that it can neither absorb nor posit by its own, a priori capacities. The origin is not to be found in a transcendent I; it is an absoluteness of an ultimate relation” (Peperzak 1993:15).

In my reading of Levinas’s philosophy, it is hard not to think of the theological implications of the idea of infinity. Even though Levinas tries to play down the metaphysical echoes of these

concepts, the theological resonance of his ideas remains evident (Hand 2009:43). Levinas sometimes alludes to the divine idea within human being. For instance, when he refers to Descartes's *Third Meditation* where he argues that "... there is a being more perfect than myself, within me, [which] can make me know my imperfections"; Hand goes on to argue that "Levinas describes the text's contemplation of the Divine majesty as 'the expression of this transformation of the idea of infinity conveyed by knowledge into Majesty approached as a face'" (Hand 2009:43). If this is the case, what is strongly implied is a reading of the face as a visible presence of a religious metaphysical reality. Consequently, we must see within us that which is greater than we are. However, under those circumstances, our relation with the divine for Levinas is not one which overwhelms us in a numinous essentialist way as in Søren Kierkegaard's<sup>56</sup> *Fear and Trembling*, rather it commits us to human fraternity (Hand 2009: 44). By numinous essentialism, Hand refers to an understanding of existence that focuses on moral value. The role of the divine in Levinas's philosophy is a propelling force for human agency. It must not be understood as that which numbs or stagnates, rather it is a force which, in its infinity, invites human beings to appreciate and seeks its presence in the world in the Other, with the emphasis on the latter.

From the above, a question arises: as active agents in the world, how then must we think of the Other ethically? For Levinas, "Ethics is not a moment of being; it is otherwise and better than being, the very possibility of the beyond" (Levinas 1996:141). And God is the Other with an alterity prior to that of the Other (Levinas 1996:141). Levinas goes further to argue, "The exposition of the ethical signification of transcendence and of the Infinite beyond being can be worked out beginning with the proximity of the neighbour and my responsibility for the other (*autrui*)" (Levinas 1996:141). The infinite responsibility for the Other is rooted in the 'proximity of the neighbour', thus in the phenomenal, but it meets us within the phenomenal precisely as that which transcends the phenomenal, being, and normal understandings of otherness or difference. Although human beings are finite, in the encounter with the Other they are faced with something that goes beyond being and finitude, and that testifies to infinity and transcendence. For Levinas, the finite world of Dasein contains pointers, traces and openings that point beyond this finite world, without his philosophy ever turning into a full-blown religious metaphysics. On his own understanding, a religious metaphysics is completely untenable, precisely because what transcends the world of lived experience is ungraspable and

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<sup>56</sup> Refer to Søren Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* (1843).

beyond human understanding. According to Levinas, it is not the task of ontology to prove the validity of religious metaphysics. What Levinas maintains in his philosophical postulations is that subjectivity, as it is centred in the phenomenological ontology, has no ethical implication because of the deliberate omission of the moment of transcendence. He maintains that the subjectivity of the Self must be shaken and stirred up by "... the 'in' of the infinity which devastates presence and awakens subjectivity to the proximity of the other (*autrui*)" (Levinas 1996:142). Levinas does not advocate for an outright eradication of human subjectivity, he looks at the question of subjectivity only as it responds to the proximity of the other (the infinity within the other). The way in which the overwhelming human realities in the world shocks us beyond comprehension is what Levinas addresses, and he believes that it calls for an ethical response.

It should briefly be noted that, counter to Levinas's criticism which sees a lack of ethical concern in Heidegger, some commentators judge him less harshly and do detect ethical moments in Heidegger's philosophical rendition of ontology. An example is Safranski, who states, "Heidegger uses the term [Care] in the meaning of providing, planning, looking after, calculating, foreseeing" (Safranski 2002:157). In talking about being-present-at-hand, Heidegger argues that its nature which is that of 'serviceability', 'conduciveness', 'usability', and 'manipulation' must be avoided when relating to others as one seeks to satisfy concerns and care (Heidegger 1962:97). In other words, one has to project with respect towards oneself and to Others and avoid turning others into mere instruments. "Dasein itself, however, is neither something present-at-hand nor ready-to-hand but existence (Heidegger 1962:157-158) For Heidegger, what distinguishes human existence from other beings is that human existence is never a mere present-at-handness or a mere instrumentality, because Dasein does not have an essence. Dasein is in its being an existing thing, which means that it relates actively with its environment and is concerned about its own existence in its existence. Moreover, "By 'Other's' we do not mean everyone else but me – those over against whom the "I" stands out. [For Heidegger,] They are rather those from whom, for the most part, one does not distinguish oneself – those among whom one is too" (Heidegger 1962:154). This makes the existential reality of Being-with-others nullify the possibility of solipsism emerging as an ontological possibility. Solipsism, on the contrary, is an ontological impossibility as it is only a deficient mode of being-with (Scott 1990:108), as discussed previously.

Jean-Luc Nancy also presents a systematic argumentation which points to the fact that some scholars are wrong in their reading of Heidegger's philosophy as excluding ethical implications. Two points are particularly important in Nancy's analysis of Heideggerian ethics. First, he talks about the professional intellectual conduct of Heidegger, which he believes contains moral errors. Second, Nancy goes on to assert that the question of being has a moral ethos, which must not be ignored or considered insignificant. Heidegger's personal life, in particular his early Nazi sympathies, to my mind, is what Nancy refers to when he talks about 'professional intellectual conduct'. However, personal errors do not necessarily obliterate the ethical implications in Heidegger's philosophy. Like me in this dissertation, Nancy takes a separationist stance by distinguishing the personal life of the author from his works. The second point, which is relevant because it engages with the substance of his thinking, is the idea that Heidegger's philosophical analysis of Dasein carries a moral ethos, which directs our gaze to the reality that we are.

Nancy maintains, implicitly against Levinas, "[o]nly those who have read Heidegger blindly, or not at all, could think him a stranger to ethical preoccupations. Moreover, there are already enough works in existence to refute this prejudice" (Nancy 2003:173). In the following words, Frederick A. Olafson clearly states Heidegger's position:

Instead of searching for something mysteriously remote from the common business of life we need to look more deeply into human sociality itself and to do so in a way that is informed by a more adequate philosophical anthropology than the one current in the social science at the present time (Olafson 1998:13).

Olafson thus also, like Nancy, detects a concern in Heidegger not only with the concrete reality of the individual Dasein, but also with illuminating human existence through a deeper investigation of 'human sociality itself'. The search for truth should be considered from within the reality within which the question is first formulated. This informs the desire, in Heidegger, to seek the truth from within the phenomenological framework (search for *aletheia*). Nancy maintains that for Heidegger, especially in his 'Letter on Humanism', ontological pragmatism is central to his idea: "It is very clear that the question of humanism is, for Heidegger, the question of what man is ... insofar as he has to act or to 'conduct himself'" (Nancy 2003:174). Human conduct is a priority in Heidegger's philosophy. It is safe, therefore, to argue that Heidegger's philosophy has ethical implications.

The difference between Dasein and existence in the world is not a religious metaphysical absolute understanding of Dasein, rather it is an understanding of Dasein in its openness to an active involved relation with its reality (Nancy 2003:175). This is why, as presented in Chapter One of this project, Heidegger focuses only on existence, the time between birth and death because to lose sight of ontology, the immanent, being is lost and so are all other things. This is why Heidegger opines that “the sense of being can never be contrasted with beings, or with being as the supporting ‘ground’ of beings, for a ‘ground’ becomes accessible only as sense, even if it is itself the abyss of senselessness” (Heidegger 1962:194) The nature of Dasein entails the making sense of beings (ontic) and the world within which Dasein finds itself. For instance, if one is to thematise the complexities of the being of a child, making-sense of this endeavour cannot be delinked from the other Dasein and the world of empirical realities surrounding the child, as all of these appear meaningfully to the child. This information will guide the nature of our investigation about the truth of the child.

For Nancy, the very fact that Heidegger thematises human existence is in itself already ethical. By asking the question about the meaning of being, Heidegger announces nothing other than the ethics of existence (Nancy 2003:179). Heidegger’s identification and declaration of everyday experience as the ground for addressing the question of how being should be addressed, at the same time identifies and rejects the religious metaphysical impulses (onto-theologies) found in the philosophical discourse which preceded his. Nancy writes,

No ‘value’, no ‘ideal’ floating above concrete and everyday existence provides it in advance with a norm and significance. But this everyday existence finds itself asked to make sense. This request, in turn, stems neither from heaven nor from an authority of sense: it comes from existence, being the proper request of its being (Nancy 2003:179-180).

Heidegger puts an end to a vertical gaze by drawing attention to immanent realities found in the world, within the horizontal. In fact, by asking that we thematise the reality of being, Heidegger advocates for a renewed attention to ontological questions. In Nancy’s words, “Only on the basis of this original request will it be possible for beings, in their action, to give themselves ideas or values – and, what’s more, this will make *sense* only according to the original action which is at issue in the request” (Nancy 2003:180). The context of human being

is the place of sense and ethics, on Nancy's reading of Heidegger. This then propels the zeal, in Heidegger, to venture into enquiring about a phenomenological understanding of ontological hermeneutic (search for *aletheia*). It is only within ontology that human sociality can be looked at in depth. To look at something in depth does not imply looking beyond the thing, rather it entails looking at the thing, as it is, and to consider the complexities of the thing which make a thing what it is.

It is only in existence that the value which must be accorded being can be found. "Ek-sistence, then, is the way in which Dasein *is* as Dasein, its way of being. This way of being is immediately a conduct: the conduct of being-open to making sense, a being-open that is itself opened by (or whose opening consists in) the desire/ability of sense" (Nancy 2003:180). Sense is the structure of the opening (Nancy 2003:181); Dasein is open towards the world and existence means this openness towards the world. 'Sense' is here understood in the double meaning of the bodily senses that open Dasein towards the world and sense-making which is Dasein's way of being open towards the world. Dasein is the place where the meaning of being becomes an issue and at issue: The *Da* [there] is "... the open in which, right at an existence *hic et nunc*, making-sense is at issue. The *there* is the place in which on the basis of it, on the basis of its opening, something can take place: a conduct of sense" (Nancy 2003:181). Dasein becomes the clearing of space for the conduct of sense. If "the being of sense is the sense of being, then it is safe to say that sense is the principle of human conduct and action. Hence, conduct is the proper transcendence of the immanence that is" (Nancy 2003:181). The understanding of transcendence, in its proper sense, is immanent because of the priority which Heidegger allocates to human reality, and more so because of the fact that the nature of the subject is phenomenological. For Heidegger, the human being is constantly transcending itself and its present situation, its thrownness, on its way towards the world, the future, and new possibilities for itself. However, this transcendence, as we know, never takes the form of leaving behind human finitude as such.

Heidegger's thinking about the question of the meaning of Dasein does not provide any ethics or propose a new conception of ontology, rather in not providing any "guiding conduct, it conducts itself toward the thinking of conduct in general – not as something to be normalised or finalised, but as what constitutes dignity itself, namely, having, in one's own being, to make sense of being" (Nancy 2003: 189). To talk about dignity requires only a subject whose very nature is existence, sense, to fully understand the reality of the sense at issue. Nancy draws

attention to the fact that in Heidegger's philosophy, he points in the direction of the subject,<sup>57</sup> Dasein, whose agency is necessary for understanding and making sense. Heidegger grants agency and restores the dignity of Dasein, by taking Dasein's meaning-making capacity seriously. On his own understanding, Heidegger cannot provide Dasein with ready-made interpretations, including ethical interpretations, because it is precisely the nature of Dasein that it can and must (and inevitably does) interpret the world for itself. According to Nancy, Heidegger's restoration of the dignity of Dasein is a desire to engage in the objectivity of being (Nancy 2003:182). In agency, human beings cease to be the signified of the sense, but the signifier; as signifier, man designates its concepts (Nancy 2003:183). Nothing other than the truth of existence should inform our understanding of truth and action (Nancy 2003:183). It is only then that human dignity can reach its finitude in its desire of making-sense (Nancy 2003: 188).

Amidst the appreciation of Heidegger's work which we find in Nancy's interpretation, and his defence of Heidegger against Levinas's charge, Nancy is equally antagonistic and critical of Heidegger's ethics in a way that is worth highlighting. Nancy's antagonism is largely based on Heidegger's hesitation in his consideration of Dasein's ethical relations with Others. Put differently, Heidegger does not address ethics from the very beginning of his *Being and Time* even though it is implicit in his thematisation of being, and thus Nancy sees Heidegger as treating ethics as a kind of afterthought to his ontological analysis. According to Ignaas Devisch, the prioritisation of the community as a component of human beings is vivid in Nancy's investigation of Heidegger's notion of Being-with. The ontological question posed by Heidegger ceases to be merely a question about the meaning of human being, but also a quest toward an adequate comprehension of the relationality, the with-ness, the complexities of existence in everydayness, which is primary to the question of ontology (Devisch 2000:239). Nancy addresses the oddity that he identifies in the delayed priority which Being-with receives in Heidegger's work. This inevitably serves as a criticism of Heidegger's methodology as it shows a deficiency in the attempt to ascribe ethics to Heidegger's work. The point that is made by Nancy is that the potentiality of being-in-the-world calls for an immediate ethical consideration of Dasein as *Mitsein* [Being-with]. Nancy maintains that in Heidegger's *Being*

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<sup>57</sup> It is important to note here that Heidegger actively avoided the term 'subject' because of the subject and object discourses that dominated the philosophical postulations of his predecessors. For his predecessors, the subject is abstracted from the lived world. Heidegger disentangles the subject from the division of internal and external understanding of the world. Thus a justification of his use of the world Dasein.

*and Time*, "... *with* has been hidden, lost or suppressed between the *Anyone* and the *people*" (Nancy 2008:5). Nancy argues that it is noticeable in Heidegger's work that he does not attempt a rigorous examination of what he refers to as *Mitdasein* and *Miteinandersein* ('Being-with-one-another') (Nancy 2008:5) in the way Levinas does. To the extent that Heidegger is reticent about introducing and exploring in-depth the constitutive aspect of being-with for Dasein, specifically in *Being and Time*, Nancy may thus be said to share much of Levinas's concerns about Heidegger's philosophy.

The crux of Nancy's objection of Heidegger's work is that it gives limited attention to the question of 'Being-with'. For Nancy, Heidegger does not sufficiently establish the kind of relationship which should exist between human beings (Nancy 2008:7). Heidegger does not, as Nancy argues, present a satisfactory analysis of the complexities that exist between Daseins in their relationships *with* each other, and as such, solitary Dasein takes centre-stage. As presented in the first chapter, Heidegger alludes to the Being-with only in so far as it explicates the identity and authenticity of singularity. Plurality is important only as it enhances singularity. It comes across as though Heidegger warns us against the Other and views the latter mainly as a threat to the integrity of the self. For instance, Heidegger's analysis of *das-Man* identifies a detrimental mode of Being-with others; he warns against the 'They' because he considers it an obscure nobody which should be avoided (Heidegger 1962:162) and which leads Dasein astray as often as not. This reading of *das-Man* is not, of course, not the only thing that Heidegger communicates. For Heidegger, the relationship with *das-Man* which subsumes the subjectivity of the other is what he warns against. In general, Heidegger maintains that "Dasein is essentially Being-with" (Heidegger 1962:156). The problem is that Heidegger does not quite substantiate this position even though he presents a rudimentary understanding of intersubjectivity in his analysis of Dasein as a concept which acknowledges the Being-there of other Beings. On his own terms, Heidegger does not do justice to the Being-with which is constitutive of Dasein. Thus, Heidegger's insistence on exploring the relationship between Daseins only as it addresses a subjective understanding of being as a singular entity is considered problematic by Nancy. Nancy's position is similar to Levinas's position on Heidegger's ethics. While Levinas denies any ethical implication in Heidegger's thinking, Nancy maintains that it only appears as an afterthought.

The above critique by Nancy is not entirely convincing for a number of reasons, and there are scholars who try to defend Heidegger against these charges. I will now discuss some of these

arguments. First, as already indicated above. Heidegger presents an understanding of being-present-at-hand as things which can be used towards ensuring the satisfaction of Dasein (Heidegger 1962:97). As such, things, which are present-at-hand, do not possess the same nature as Dasein. Implicit in Heidegger's understanding is an emphasis on the dignity of the Other. This makes the existential reality of Being-with-others nullify the possibility of solipsism emerging as an ontological possibility. On this reading, for Heidegger, solipsism is an ontological impossibility as it is only a deficient mode of being-with (Scott 1990:108). By interpreting Heidegger's concept of care, Dreyfus argues, "There is a common structure to all ways of being human. Every culture has a different self-interpretation, but any self-interpreting way of being has the disclosedness structure called care" (Dreyfus 1997:239). Care is the common denominator when one address the relationship between human beings, but for Heidegger care is not in the first place care for the Other, it is rather a concern with one's own existence. In addition, Heidegger does not adequately thematise the complexity that may arise when there are conflicting notions of care. This can also be said about diverse world views. Within the framework of the diverse Self-based conflicting world views, Heidegger does not provide a substantial mechanism for addressing these potential relationship conflicts.

From the above, one sees that it is very difficult to decipher how Heidegger addresses the potential problem of concerns and care. This is not because Heidegger does not address the issues of being-with at all, but, as Nancy maintains, he does not address it sufficiently. One might argue that Heidegger attempts to address the problem of difference when he addresses the question of the world as the ground of human reality. The potential conflicts that might erupt when addressing cares and concerns, Heidegger would argue, emerge from the world which is the ground of human reality. Nancy's criticism, which is similar to Levinas's position, posits that even within the ground there exists complexity. One of the complexities is religious metaphysical presence that is considered part of the ground by religious adherents. This metaphysical presence is not only in the ground but also in death (the end of being part of a ground). Even in death, there is a sense in which Heidegger's philosophy depicts an abandonment in the face of death; death is an experience that is mine and no one can take my place, a state which Nancy refers to as an 'absolute solitude' (Nancy 2008:8). It is important to note here, as we saw in Chapter One of this project, that Heidegger refers to death only in so far as it helps Dasein's resoluteness in its finitude.<sup>58</sup> This is also seen in Heidegger's

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<sup>58</sup> Resoluteness promotes determination in Dasein to follow through in its search for self-realisation.

philosophical postulation, as presented in Chapter Three, on resoluteness as a beckoning towards authentic living. Even though Heidegger describes death in this way, he does not sufficiently address the complexities that might inform other interpretations of death, or one's experience of the death of the Other, which becomes a major theme in Levinas's description of the place of the Other in the life of a person.

Let us return to Nancy's reference to Heidegger's delay in addressing the ethics that is explicit in Being-with. A possible, not necessarily sufficient, response to Nancy's critique of Heidegger's delay in addressing Being-with is that Heidegger considers individuality fundamental to any collective discourse. Put differently, Heidegger seeks to make sense of the 'I' and he considers it a necessary point of departure for thematising the Other or the 'We'. To my mind, implicit in Heidegger's approach is the belief that the Other cannot be understood if I do not understand myself; or, the Other is inevitably always understood in terms of Dasein's own projects and concerns in the world. In Heidegger's philosophy, he does seem to ask the question: what is the nature of my existence? The understanding of Dasein becomes necessary, one might argue, for talking about the possibility of being-with. For Heidegger between birth and death, human being is constantly faced with the problem of authenticity. There is a question which runs through Heidegger's phenomenology and it can be summed up as follows: what is the place of 'I' in the world of 'We'? This fundamental question guides Heidegger's philosophical phenomenological ontology. Heidegger only begins to talk about 'We' after establishing the nature of the 'I'.

Given Heidegger's delay in addressing the ethics of human beings, Nancy, in Devisch's understanding, proposes a re-writing of Heidegger's *Being and Time*, which will focus on thematising the forgetting of Being-with as opposed to the misrepresentation of the true category of being as Dasein which Heidegger prioritises (Nancy in Devisch 2000:241). Devisch's critical reading of Heidegger follows Nancy's in that it sees Heidegger as presenting Dasein as a free and self-sufficient being detached from the Other; in fact, the relationship that Dasein has with others is only a secondary category which Heidegger accords to Dasein (Devisch 2000:241). Devisch is in agreement with Levinas's critique, which is identical to Jean-Luc Nancy's rejection of Heidegger's ontology. The missing link, as it were, is the lack of an ethical ontology in the early discussion of Dasein in Heidegger's *Being and Time*.

According to Nancy, being (Dasein) must assume a social outlook in order for it to serve its intended purpose: “Heidegger’s ontological project must therefore become a ‘social ontology’, an ontology in which the question of the *socius*, the question of our being-with-each-other, has primary status” (Nancy in Devisch 2000:243). Heidegger does not fully engage with the inter-relational nexus which Nancy believes is an important ontological structure fundamental to the nature of being. Nancy argues that being always has the primordial structure of being-with. Devisch also asserts that “The primal ontological conditions of our community are not conceived as the One, the Other or the We, but as the ‘with’, ‘relationality’, and the ‘between’ . The question of being ... is therefore the question of being-with ...” (Devisch 2000:244). As noted by Nancy, the question of being cannot be delinked from the question of being-with. Put differently, the ontological cannot be separated from the ethical, in ways that the Heidegger of *Being and Time* did not appreciate. The interconnective nexus is thus not to be considered as the qualification of being, rather it is the constitution.

Nancy would argue that being thrown in the world is understood as being thrown into sense, and this does not mean that there is an absolute understanding of sense in the world, one characterised by a single sense of the world. Rather, the understanding of sense is always plural – “Sense stays in the singular multiplicity of shared voices. We do not own sense. It is given to us, in a multiple and each time singular way. In other words, sense is not common but in-common to us” (Devisch 2000:247). It is this singular sense of the world, concentrated in the interpretations of singular Dasein, as presented by Heidegger that Nancy refuses. When Heidegger talks about thrownness, he does not account for the plurality of voices in the singular act of thrownness. The point here it that we exist in multiple voices and this plurality is what we share in common as being-in-the-world (Devisch 2000:248). This plurality in multiplicity accounts for the complexities of Dasein and the world in general.

From the analysis in this section, it is plausible to argue that Levinas’s and Nancy’s critique of Heidegger’s after-thought thematisation of the ethics is indeed valid. Whereas Heidegger centred his philosophy around ontology, his delay in addressing the inherent ethical implications in ontology is a puzzle. However, it is important to note that Heidegger seeks to establish the nature of ontology as a foundation for establishing an ethical claim, but he ends up reverting to a singular narrative in his understanding of Dasein’s being-towards-death.

#### 4.4 Heidegger's Implicit Metaphysical Dasein: Herman Philipse's Critique

This section will deal in detail with Philipse's<sup>59</sup> criticism of Heidegger as a metaphysician. We see that in Heidegger's philosophy, especially in his *Being and Time*, he presents a stringent critique of a dualist representation of reality. Heidegger disagrees with "... the assumptions that inform Husserl's notion of phenomenology. Human being does not consist of two substances, matter and consciousness, and it is nonsensical to doubt the existence of the external world" (Philipse 1998:318). For Heidegger, "... the question of *being*, not the problem of consciousness and its intentional correlates, is the fundamental issue of phenomenology, and, indeed, of philosophy" (Philipse 1998:318). Ontology is considered more fundamental and more urgent than any other discipline in philosophy as it "consists in a hermeneutical investigation of the phenomenon of being, and the phenomenon of being is concealed by the philosophical tradition" (Philipse 1998:318). What Heidegger's ontology seeks to eradicate is the imposition of religious metaphysical unverifiable presuppositions (onto-theology) in the understanding of human existence because the nature of the verification must be of the same category of the reality that is being verified.

Let us first refer to different scholars' bibliography on Heidegger in order to establish his involvements with religion. This will serve as a base for implicit religious position that Philipse attributes to Heidegger's philosophy. According to John Van Buren's (1994) account, we find that Heidegger initially trained as a Catholic Priest, and studied theology in Freiburg. According to Theodore Kisiel (1993) and Van Buren, Heidegger considered himself a Catholic philosopher and held metaphysical postulations until around 1919 after he returned from the war (Kisiel 1993:69; Van Buren 1994:179). "Heidegger was ... still a Christian theologian in the 1920s, although in a different sense than the speculative theology of his habilitation writing" (Van Buren 1994:179). In the early twenties, Heidegger "engaged in demythologizing the very theological-speculations which he had sketched out in his habilitation writing, in order to explore the meaning of Christianity rather in factual life" (Van Buren 1994:182). At this point, Heidegger was attempting to remove the fundamental question of the meaning of being from the Christian dogmas and theological-speculations. In other words, Heidegger sought to end the convolution between philosophy and theology, what he called 'ontotheology' (Van Buren 1994:182).

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<sup>59</sup> Herman Philipse is a Dutch philosopher born 1951, and a professor of philosophy at the Utrecht University in the Netherlands. He has written extensively on Descartes, Husserl, and Heidegger.

Heidegger's dedication to his critique of ontotheology became clearer in 1923 when Heidegger took part in a discussion during a lecture by the theologian Eduard Thurneysen. During the lecture, Thurneysen concluded by referring to the Christian scepticism of Franz Overbeck, which I paraphrase as follows: it is the task of theology to find once again, the word that is capable of calling one to faith and preserving one in faith (Van Buren 1994:183-184). Arguable, this discussion played a significant role in Heidegger's decision to take up the task of presenting a critique of traditional understanding of ontology. In 1924, Heidegger presented a lecture titled, 'The Concept of Time'. The Marburg theologians were among his audience which according to Buren, Hans Georg Gadamer considers the original of the Heidegger's later *Being and Time* (Van Buren, 1994:183). This lecture manuscript became part of Heidegger's *Being and Time*, where he reveals that the crisis and problematic of theology is due to the attempt to seek the foundation of man from God and towards God (Van Buren 1994:183). Leading unto *Being and Time*, Heidegger presented lectures, notably the lecture titled 'Phenomenology and Theology', which he presented to a Protestant theological community in 1923. During this lecture, Van Buren notes, Heidegger gradually disentangled himself from the Christian approach and appeared to grapple with the fact that he was a Christian theologian (Van Buren 1994:183). In other words, Heidegger needed to free himself from the prevailing theological position, in which he too was immersed as a thinker, in order to embark on the task of re-thinking not only Christian theology but more importantly, ontology as such. Heidegger sought a new beginning of ontology removed from the theological thinking which had dominated all ontological concerns and concepts within the western tradition.

It is important to note here that scholars like Augustine, Luther, and Kierkegaard, among others, had all also attempted to introduce a new beginning. One could in fact argue that Heidegger follows in the methodological path of these scholars. However, for Heidegger, Luther and Kierkegaard like other philosophers and theologians of their time, finally succumbed to the fundamental misinterpretation of ontology (Van Buren 1994:200). At the heart of Heidegger's philosophy is the intention to disentangle the prevailing discourses that inform the deeply intertwined relationship between philosophy and theology. Theodore Kisiel observes that Heidegger critiqued the theorizing and dogmatic positions of the church authorities by exploring the mystical reality of the subject in order to free it from the mystical system, thus bringing out an entirely different motivational context in the factual subject (Kisiel, 1993:74). What Heidegger did was to retrieve what he considered the original understanding of ontology by disentangling the Christian dogmatic position. According to Van

Buren, “Heidegger's great contribution was that of taking up these counter-traditions, developing them, and providing an explicit philosophical language from what was only implicit in them” (Van Buren 1994:200-201). Ultimately, Heidegger’s philosophy seeks to destroy the abstract understanding of being of Greek and western metaphysics and to resurrect an understanding of being in a factual world (Van Buren 1994:203).

Despite affirming the credibility of Heidegger’s criticisms of Husserl and traditional dualist philosophers, Philipse observes that there are two dubious aspect of Heidegger’s criticism of traditional philosophy. First, Philipse identifies that Heidegger provides no convincing justification for holding to his key position that Dasein’s being is primary in working out the project of phenomenological ontology (Philipse 1998: 318). In fact, Philipse draws attention to Heidegger’s radical position when he argues that for Heidegger “... other traditional philosophical caterogies are inadequate if we want to elaborate an ontology of human existence” (Philipse 1998:319). Philipse asks whether the philosophers of the seventeenth century who rejected the ideas (essences and final causes) of Aristotle, remain within the Aristotelian and Platonic tradition (Philipse 1998: 319-320). He is thus critical of Heidegger’s claim that all of his predecessors’ understandings of being are misguided and that instead, a phenomenology of Dasein would provide the only correct alternative. It would have been very interesting to see how Philipse engages this very important question, which he does not address any further. This absolutist argumentation for the prioritisation of being is a major problem in Heidegger’s philosophy, which I will explore in depth when I look at absolutist tendencies in Heidegger’s philosophy in the final section of the current chapter. In the meantime, I will investigate further the second dubious aspect that Philipse identifies, namely his claim that Heidegger’s own philosophy in fact contains some metaphysical components, and thus, that it is not as novel as Heidegger thinks it is, and even repeats some of the most problematic aspects of the tradition that Heidegger himself critiques and attempts to overcome.

Philipse claims that Heidegger’s philosophy is in fact a replacement of the old religious metaphysical (or onto-theological) categories with new ones. By refuting past philosophical categories, Heidegger in his *Being and Time*, undertakes the task of formulating new categories. Philipse argues that Heidegger presents a rejection of one category only to replace it with another. In the case of Heidegger, he engages with Dasein in such a way that he plunges into a similar type of absolutist tendencies that he finds and diagnoses as the problem of historical philosophy. Philipse argues, “Heidegger’s conviction is that Dasein is entirely *sui*

*generis*, so that no categories derived from other domains can possibly apply to Dasein. For Christianity holds that only man was created ‘in God’s own image’” (Philipse 1998:320). Philipse argues that Heidegger’s approach is both arbitrary (why Dasein) and too narrow. It may not be entirely wrong to hold this argument, but it would be wrong, however, to maintain that it is Christian. This is because Heidegger critiques the application of a priori categories as they lack potency in addressing the phenomenological reality of Dasein.

Furthermore, Philipse maintains, “The transcendent philosopher must hold that the transcendent conditions for the possibility of x have an ontological status different from x’s ontological status. This is indeed what Heidegger claims” (Philipse 1998:322). Here Philipse argues that Heidegger assumes that the transcendent philosopher (whom H criticises) must hold a certain position, but I think Philipse is arguing that is not necessarily the case. Heidegger’s philosophy is not entirely delinked from the theological discourses which gave birth to his philosophical methodology. Even though Heidegger introduces new terminologies, he ends up within a similar epistemic structure of his predecessors. However, this must not be understood as a replication of the ideas of his predecessors, rather Heidegger engages with the past only as it relates to the new dimension or the new path which he thinks philosophy should take on. One also finds that in *The Phenomenology of Religious Life* (1995), where important lecture of Heidegger on religion were published, Heidegger maintains, “The problem of philosophy has always been taken too lightly. If one grasps this problem radically, one finds that philosophy arises from factual life experience. And within factual life experience philosophy returns back into factual life experience” (Heidegger 2004:6). This is a position that runs through Heidegger’s philosophical framework. Heidegger argues that the world is the facticity of human reality in the sense that it is the starting point and the point of return. However, Philipse considers Heidegger’s phenomenology similar to theology/religious metaphysical frameworks. This is what Philipse misconstrues in his analysis of Heidegger’s agenda. The understanding of truth by Philipse will provide a clearer picture of Philipse’s position.

As has been presented thus far, implicit in Heidegger’s philosophy is an understanding of truth (as *aletheia*) which is not metaphysical in nature, but instead tied up with the manifestation or appearance of beings. Philipse critiques the phenomenological ontological understanding of truth in Heidegger’s philosophy; Philipse writes, “Dasein’s being-discovering as a transcendent condition for the possibility of propositional truth. He [Heidegger] says, for instance, that ‘there is’ truth only in so far as Dasein *is* and so long as Dasein *is*” (Philipse 1998:328). The point

here is that truth only exists in so far as it is accessible to Dasein. In other words, truth is dependent on the realities of Dasein. Philippe is critical of Heidegger's position that the truth attributed to Dasein cannot be disassociated from the transcendent condition of the possibility of propositional truths which Dasein shares. If this is not the case, what then are the status of things before they are discovered or uncovered; are they not in themselves true before they are uncovered? If truth depends on Dasein, it is safe, as Philippe argues, to corroborate that "Heidegger concludes that all truth is relative to Dasein" (Philippe 1998:328). This position is only because,

[c]onceptual structures are dependent on Dasein, and we need conceptual structures for formulating propositions that may be true or false. But it is misleading to say that, therefore, truth in the sense of propositional truth depends on Dasein, because whether an empirical proposition is true or not depends on the world only, even though human beings may discover whether it is indeed true or not (Philippe 1998:329).

For Philippe, "Clearly, Heidegger's transcendental notion of truth was confusing even to himself, because he was unable to keep it separate from the ordinary notion of propositional truth" (Philippe 1998:329). This is a problem which comes with a misreading of Heidegger's philosophy. By formulating a propositional structure, Heidegger dismantles existing structures, especially metaphysical ones, so as to set the ground for thematising being. Philippe misunderstands the methodological justification behind Heidegger's philosophy when he considers it transcendent and relativistic. Even when we address the question about the hiddenness of being, its truth is talked about only insofar as it is hidden. In other words, hiddenness is truth only as hidden, but it is only in its being uncovered that it emerges from hiddenness to the light of phenomenology. Philippe maintains that Heidegger's phenomenological method is built on a false assumption characterised by an illusory presupposition of the hiddenness of being (Philippe 1998:335). This assumption is often based on the observation of the reality of the phenomena. The illusory presupposition which Philippe talks about is not necessarily situated in the reality of human existence.

Philippe also refutes Heidegger's use of the verb *is* to mean existence. Heidegger talks of *is* as a justification of his phenomenological interpretation of Dasein. Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1959) spells out the need to consider *is* as an indicator of a phenomenological

category as opposed to a metaphysical one. Contrary to this position, Philippe argues that *is* is only a referring expression rather than an expression of the features that this entity poses (Philippe 1998:334). Philippe thereby calls into question the basis of Heidegger's ontology. Philippe argues here that the fact that *is* has the attribute of a thing does not necessarily refer to a thing in the world. Philippe draws our attention to Heidegger's misinterpretation of reference and features. Philippe argues that 'is' has two different functions, namely (i) to say of a thing that it exists in the world, and (ii) to attribute features to a thing, and that Heidegger confuses these two meanings of 'is' (Philippe 1998:336). In response to Philippe, for Heidegger talks about the existence of Dasein as *is* only as it refers to the phenomenological reality of human beings. For instance, when one says 'That *is* a Table': this statement 'is' not only referential, it also designates the attribute of the subject, Table. The point here is that it is inevitable to address attributes in any attempt to validate reference. The understanding of essence for Heidegger is experience. We cannot understand essence outside of experience. Heidegger's understanding of essence is a point which I think Philippe grapples with in his reading of Heidegger, but the understanding of essence as phenomenology entails that reality is the location of essence.

Having addressed some of the criticisms that arise from various conceptual analysis of Heidegger's philosophical framework, I now proceed to elaborate on the implication of these criticisms of Heidegger's philosophical framework. It is important to note that implicit in Philippe's critique of Heidegger phenomenological ontology is a certain kind of absolutism which he ascribes to Heidegger's philosophy. The next section seeks to show how it is arguably the case that Heidegger's philosophy advances a new kind of absolutism.

#### **4.5 Absolutism in Heidegger's Philosophy**

Thus far one might argue that Heidegger's philosophical method falls prey to some the criticisms of Levinas and Marion, among others because of the solitary nature of Dasein. This leaves us with the second major point of critique against Heidegger's work, namely his absolutism/reductionism of Being. To advance this point of criticism, I rely on Levinas's philosophy. I already hinted that, when compared to Levinas, Heidegger does not take the complex nature of human understanding into consideration, especially when one critically analyses Heidegger's disassociation from ethics and the constitutive relation with the Other. Devisch describes the problem already discussed above in an illuminating way: he

observes that while Heidegger seeks to open the question about the meaning of being, Heidegger also closes down the essential plural structure of Dasein's being-in-the-world (Devisch 2000:241). John Martis corroborates this idea, and at the same time broadens the criticism against Heidegger's neglect of the Other when he observes that if Heidegger fails in his philosophical endeavour, it is because his phenomenological ontology does not approach religion in its facticity (Martis 2016:245). Martis considers religion as a reality that is experienced in the world and should be approached in way Levinas conceived of the Other.

The complexity that emerges in the interplay between singularity and plurality is not adequately resolved in Heidegger's philosophy, and this, as rightly observed by Devisch and Martis, weakens Heidegger's phenomenological endeavour. In other words, by prioritising singularity, Heidegger closes down the possibilities of radical plurality within human singularity. Philipse corroborates Devisch's position when he notes that "[t]he phenomenon of being allegedly is the phenomenon *par excellence*, the phenomenon of phenomenology, and this phenomenon is said to be hidden in all empirical phenomena" (Philipse 1998:331). For Heidegger, being is the condition for the possibility of beings. This Philipse interprets as a transcendent notion implying that without being, beings do not exist (Philipse 1998:330).

Heidegger's philosophy can be likened to what I refer to as an intellectual weeding out of religious metaphysical (onto-theological) claims from the understanding of human reality because of what he considers the ideological presuppositions, speculations and illusory conceptions, among others, that constitute onto-theological reasoning. Granted that Heidegger's philosophy can be considered anti-metaphysics, does it imply that phenomenology entails atheism (Kovacs 1990:15)? For instance, Augustine, who is known to have remarked that he has no interest in the world but only in the relationship of his soul to God (Löwith 1998:134), is in direct opposition to Heidegger who focuses on the reality of Dasein as experienced in the world. Does Heidegger's philosophical thematisation of Dasein as understood in the world serve as an indication of his neglect of any religious interpretation of the human beings and the world? This is not explicit in Heidegger's *Being and Time* in the same way as Augustine presents it. However, if one is to judge based on his philosophy, Heidegger's philosophy is atheistic in nature. Heidegger's philosophy attempts to re-pose the question of the meaning of being from a different perspective, being as 'Being-in-the-world'. Levinas corroborates Heidegger's understanding of traditional ontology when he writes, "...'ontologism' is the fundamental dogma of all philosophical thoughts". He goes on to add

that “Despite all its subtlety, it remained a prisoner of an elementary and simple principle, according to which one could think and feel only that which exists or is supposed to exist” (Levinas, 2003:71). Levinas analyses Heidegger’s emphasis on ontology because, for Levinas, it leaves us with nothing other than understanding of things as they exist. Heidegger maintains, as seen in the first chapter, that the simple and elementary has eluded us and it is important to return to them. This is the reason behind the certitude with which phenomenologists hold the world as the only ground for validating reality. Levinas’s argumentation aims at validating transcendent and infinity as components of human experience. Heidegger’s phenomenological ontology reveals the complexity within the elementary and seemingly simple principles of ontology, yet he forecloses the question about the meaning of transcendence, Levinas would say, because he does not take seriously the experience of the infinity within the encounter with the Other.

In the third chapter of this project, we saw that within Levinas’s philosophy lies an appeal to traditional religious-metaphysical concepts such as infinity and transcendence in order to do justice to the question of being. There, I reached the conclusion that although Levinas’s philosophy is not necessarily religious, and definitely not in the metaphysical sense of the word, his reference to transcendence and God do pose problems for his phenomenology because it is confronted with the paradox of ‘signifying what cannot be signified or saying what cannot be said’ because it escapes the horizon of understanding. His claim that our experience of transcendence is rooted in the everyday encounter with the other, means that he discerns traces of the non-phenomenal and incomprehensible within the phenomenal and comprehensible. This does expose his philosophy to misreadings that may try to return his thinking into the fold of traditional metaphysics.

Let us recall the fundamental point of Heidegger’s philosophical postulation. For Heidegger, phenomenology is the essential ground for addressing the problem of being. One could argue, in line with Gagani, presented in Chapter Three, Section 3.6, that Heidegger’s position can have an absolute and damaging effect on society. Can one then extend this argument to the other spectrum – non-metaphysical side – that Heidegger’s obsession with ontology, as phenomenology, is equally dangerous? Heidegger says the direct opposite of what Levinas presents. For Levinas, human beings cannot be isolated from ethics and transcendence, understood as doing justice to the Other because, for him, there is a beyond within the immanent reality which is ruled out by Heidegger’s resolute focus on the worldly and being.

As has been observed earlier, Heidegger's position is radical: "[h]e held also that all other traditional philosophical categories are inadequate if we want to elaborate an ontology of human existence" (Philipse 1998:319). The radical nature of Heidegger's philosophy can be considered extremist in nature. Heidegger talks about the world as the only ground for talking about being. By thematising the world, and especially in the way in his centres solitary Dasein, Heidegger ignores important aspects of Being-with and of transcendence and infinity, aspects of what is not to be incorporated into Dasein's meaning-making abilities. As such, Heidegger insists on the world as the platform for addressing the problem of being. This assertion sees the debasement of those aspects of human experience that transcend our ability to interpret, and that Levinas links with God and religion. Thus, Levinas resists the confines imposed upon phenomenological analysis by Heidegger and opens up the possibility for thinking religious experiences differently.

The insistence on the world as the only place of being is presented by Heidegger as an absolute position without which being cannot be understood. The problem with Heidegger's philosophy is that he does not delve deeply enough specifically in Dasein's sociality. Arguably, the sociality in being-in-the-world is the reason behind Nancy's thematisation of the world as social-ontology: "[f]or Nancy the 'with' has to be thought as the only possible condition or structure of our being-in-the-world" (Devisch 2000:245). One can argue that "[a] totalitarian immanence is based on the effacement of every transcendence, the effacement of everything that slips out of the enclosure of immanence" (Devisch 2000:247). To my mind, Heidegger falls into this totalitarian immanence, which Devisch describes, in his conception of Dasein only as being-in-the-world. By eradicating the possibility of non-metaphysical transcendence beyond being in the complex reality of Dasein, Heidegger falls prey to absolutism and imposes his phenomenological ontological understanding of Dasein as the only lens within which human realities can be addressed. In other words, Heidegger replaces one absolute position and one of totalization (metaphysics) with another (ontology).

Another absolutist dimension in Heidegger's philosophy is its Euro-centric twist: "This is why we have related the question of being to the destiny of Europe, where the destiny of the earth is being decided – while our own historic being-there proves to be the centre for Europe itself" (Heidegger 1959:42). This is a point which touches on Bourdieu's concern on appreciation and

recognition which is obscurely presented in Heidegger's philosophy. Even more concern is found in the whole discourse of Heidegger's absolutism as has been argued earlier.

We have seen towards the end of Chapter Three, that there are elements in traditional religious metaphysics that easily lead adherents to violence in the world, inclusive of killing other humans. It would be too much to claim that Heidegger's form of absolutism as criticised by Levinas, Nancy and others, is equally prone to lead to this kind of overt violence in the world. Nevertheless, insofar as Heidegger's philosophy is absolutist in that he insists on a worldly interpretation of being and rules out the possibility of transcendence in Levinas's sense of the word, he shares with the religious metaphysicians an intolerance towards other positions, or at the very least, his work may be employed by others to bolster intolerant anti-religious worldviews. In this lies the radical character of Heidegger's philosophical project, which for himself counts as a resolute, daring, and even violent venture to break with the inauthenticity of our ordinary understanding of worldliness and time with their ordinary existential choices: "Existential analysis constantly has the character of *doing violence*" (Heidegger 1962:359). The resolute and solitary nature which characterises Heidegger's idea of authentic Dasein, is potentially violent and destructive. We have seen how he neglects the social nature of Dasein, and thus his philosophy or moments in it, may be used to bolster violence in the world, even or maybe especially if the violence is not metaphysically inspired.

To be sure, let us return to Heidegger's understanding of "Being-towards-death", especially as it illuminates our understanding of his philosophy as doing violence to inauthentic existence of the ordinary understanding of worldliness. In chapter two of this thesis, I presented Heidegger's understanding of death. I showed that for Heidegger death is individual (in the sense that it is non-relational), certain, indefinite (in the sense that we do not know how or when we shall die), and it cannot be eclipsed (that is, it cannot be outstripped). In the end, Heidegger proposes that authentic existence must be viewed in light of Dasein's Being-towards-death. By this he means that Being-towards-death is to have an authentic understanding of one's own death as certain and as potentially always present – an understanding that is likely to cast one's unique existence in a new light, and make one's existent more pertinent and urgent. It does not however tell us how to live our lives, except to live them with authentic awareness and to act within that awareness. However, Heidegger's emphasis on solitary Dasein and on resoluteness may in practice mean that an individual may disregard the people around them, their opinions and even their lives in the attempt to be

authentic and true to their own insights and meanings. This stance does not sit well with religious metaphysics, which places authority in texts and persons in ways authentic Dasein would not tolerate. On the other hand, because Dasein is not strongly fleshed out in terms of co-existence and sociality (as Levinas and Nancy show), Dasein's actions may also neglect the existence of Others or even threaten them, without going against the insights of *Being and Time*.

Levinas also considers the nonrelational understanding of death by Heidegger a misunderstanding of relationality as the ethical foundation of ontology. The nonrelational understanding of death advanced by Heidegger is false and morally incoherent. The death of others may not be our death, but the death of others is for Levinas primary, because that *is* my experience of death, since I will not experience by own. In other words, one might not have a direct experience of death in the other's death, but their deaths are for Levinas the deaths that matter to us. In this way death comes to my world through the death of others. Hence, the first relation that one has with death is that of those around us, and thus from the start death is relational.

Abraham Olivier also addresses the same question, namely the distortion that flow from Heidegger's neglect of sociality in his analysis of Dasein, but from a different angle. Olivier argues that even Heidegger's notion ready-to-hand is problematic as not all entities are ready-to-hand; in fact, they are more un-ready-to-hand than Heidegger would concede (Olivier 2015:243). The notion of ready-to-hand in the world is in fact not really-to-hand in the simplistic way in which Heidegger conceives it. Heidegger's understanding of being-in-the-world is therefore very reductive in nature; because of an impoverished understanding of being-in-the-world with others, Heidegger's phenomenology is therefore ill-equipped to illuminate for example the South African township experience. Olivier observes that "instead of being an enabling place or space that equips us to fulfil our possibilities to be, the township [world] signifies a disabling environment" (Olivier 2015:243). Heidegger evaluates a functional society, while ignoring the possibility of a dysfunctional society as described in Olivier's article. The supporting networks necessary for actualising potentiality are sometimes not available to the actualisation of potentialities. This means that once again, Heidegger's neglect of sociality blinds him to aspects of lived reality that his framework fails to do justice to. This is a major setback in Heidegger's philosophical conceptualisation of Dasein as understood in the world. The critiques of Heidegger's lack of dedication to the ethical dimension of human

existence, as considered in this chapter, point to an essential point which is that Heidegger's philosophy is potentially dangerous in its neglect of critically thematising necessary conditions for human ethical coexistence.

#### 4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, various points of philosophical critique of Heidegger's phenomenological ontology were presented. From the oblivion of the significance of social relation in Levinas to Nancy's critiques, Heidegger's conception of Dasein was questioned and found wanting as it fails to substantially address the complexities of human reality. These criticisms are balanced in that they also identify the significant aspects of Heidegger's philosophy, and take on board some of them, even showing how Heidegger in some respects fails in terms of his own framework. The desired goal of Heidegger's philosophy is to bring all religious metaphysics (onto-theology) into immanence; that is, traditional religious concerns must be either translated into worldly affairs or eliminated as legitimate topics of concern. This is why, despite Heidegger's insistence on Dasein's subjectivity, Levinas is "convinced that Heidegger *in the end* does not escape from the totalitarian and egological tendencies of the Western tradition" (Peperzak 1993:16). The totalitarian understanding Levinas ascribes to Heidegger's phenomenology renders the interpretation of human reality as reductionist and absolutist in nature. This is because Heidegger's phenomenological ontological approach reduces the complexity within human reality to a single investigative lens and leaves out important aspects related to sociality, ethics and transcendence. Philipse maintains that Heidegger's reduction of Dasein to ontology is a misconception and an untenable evaluation of the everyday state of Dasein (Philipse 1998:321).

Taking Heidegger's understanding of potentiality for example, Heidegger's blind spots that he does not fully engage in the complex realities that make potentiality either possible and/or unavailable (Olivier 2015:250). The enabling factor of spaces is a contributing factor in the way human potentialities are determined. Enabling factors can be complex, and how to deal with the complexities of these factors is not adequately accounted for in Heidegger's understanding of potentiality. Dasein is presented by Heidegger as a reality that is open and to continuous discovery. Heidegger, in his account of ontology, does not present a single or wholistic understanding of truth or anything else for that matter. Heidegger often avails the human mind to innumerable possibilities because for him when we arrive at a possibility, other

possibilities are opened up. This is Heidegger's disposition to the world – being-in-the-world can be interpreted as an being open to unending contingent possibilities. Heidegger's insistence on the phenomenological method shows that one may be absolutist and violent without being metaphysical in religious sense.

Despite the fact that Heidegger's philosophy is insufficient in addressing the problem of religious fundamentalist violence because of his methodological monism and reductionism, it will be inappropriate to undermine the relevance and significance that his thematisation of Dasein adds to our understanding of the world and how human beings should address epistemic enquiries. In the next chapter, while maintaining the position that Heidegger's philosophy presents an important approach in his phenomenological enquiry into the understanding of Dasein, attempts will be made to augment Heidegger's work with arguments which may help serve the intended purpose of addressing religious fundamentalist violence.

## Chapter Five

### **Phenomenological-Transcendent-Ontology: Supplementing Heidegger's Phenomenological Ontology in Addressing Religious Fundamentalist Violence**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter is to address the absolutist position implicit in the argument presented in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Heidegger's philosophy, especially his phenomenological ontological argument, presents a significant starting point in the understanding of Dasein; yet, as has been shown in the previous chapter, it also runs the risk of absolutism. My aim in this chapter is to provide an alternative to both Heideggerian phenomenological ontological absolutism and religious metaphysical absolutism. Heidegger's position, as we saw in Chapter Four, is similar to the religious worldview that is based on understanding human existence mainly from an other-worldly perspective. The focus of phenomenological ontology is on the given, the immanent, in Heidegger's philosophy. As already highlighted in the first chapter, Heidegger opposes metaphysical positions by maintaining that there is no discursive world outside the reality of Dasein, human being (Cooper 2002:254); in this sense, one may see that he responds to the metaphysical dualism of the tradition by choosing absolutely for one pole over the other. The arguments so far suggest that such a solution to metaphysical dualism is reductive. The argument here is that the chances of erring are limited if we focus on an engagement with Dasein from the perspective of *everydayness* - the world. Even when in the conviction, which lays the seduction of fallenness, Heidegger insists on a continuous search for authentic understanding of Dasein, which ultimately leads existence to its demise. This Heideggerian position is important for the later part of this chapter.

This chapter seeks to advance the position that neither Heideggerian phenomenological ontology nor religious metaphysical world views, in themselves, proffer a sufficient account of human existence, because both tend to absolutise their own starting points in different manner. To my mind, it is plausible to rethink both positions in terms of their reductionist tendencies. Having established, in Chapter Four, what is lacking in Heidegger's philosophy, only one question informs the intended goal of this chapter. This question pertains how we can

advance a universal philosophical training in the attempt to address the problems associated with religious fundamentalist violence? This current chapter will focus on distilling the propositions on human reality advanced in both religious metaphysical and Heideggerian postulations. The intended aim here is to formulate an alternative solution, drawing extensively on. Drawing on Emmanuel Levinas's immanent and infinite and David Cooper's comparative analysis of absolutists' and a humanists' position on the representation of reality, I will argue that their ideas come close to the solution I proffer as a response to the problem of religious fundamentalist violence. This chapter will therefore be divided into five sections. The first section (5.2), I present a brief summary of being beyond the scope of phenomenological ontology. Here, I explore the ideas of various theorists who address the point that it is possible to conceptualise human reality beyond phenomenological ontology. The second section (5.3) deduces from the first section that embedded in our understanding of being are infinite truth claims. By this, I mean that the metaphysical aspect of the world must be considered when thematising human existence in the world. The fourth section (5.4) presents the implications of infinite phenomenological disposition in our understanding of being. Here, I show how a new disposition towards ontology entails appreciating not only phenomenological positions but also infinite claims. The final section (5.6) seeks to merge both religious and phenomenological truth claims in the attempt to address religious fundamentalist violence. In section 5.7, I reach the conclusion that Heidegger's philosophy, although important in addressing the question about the meaning of being, does not fully address the issue in its entirety, and I consider Levinas's philosophy a suitable supplement in this project's attempt to address the problem of religious fundamentalist violence.

## **5.2 Being in Retrospect**

Exploring Heidegger's phenomenological understanding of ontology, I present a summary of two main points: the ground, and space. The ground of Dasein and beings captures the essence of Heidegger's philosophy. For Heidegger, In other to do this, I will draw on the work of John Russon and Kirsten Jacobson "Space: the Open in which we Sojourn" (2013). Russon and Jacobson establish the position that Heidegger's position on Dasein is that it cannot be understood as removed from the very reality that it is in. In other words, the reality of Dasein is in its 'groundedness' in the world. By virtue of being in the world, Dasein is said to exist. The fundamental epistemic reality is validated only when perceived as phenomenon. Heidegger's *Being and Time* maintains that the world is the only space of effective actuality.

This means that we do not first encounter discrete things, the way intellectualists and idealists think, and discrete other subjects and then gradually ‘build up’ to an experience of reality as a whole. “On the contrary, we begin with an experience of a meaningful world as a whole, within which or out of which discrete figures emerge” (Russon & Jacobson 2012:348). The point here is that temporality is Heidegger’s clue for investigating the question and nature of human being (Russon & Jacobson 2012:348). Heidegger’s temporality has its origin in the world, and it remains in the world. This shows that the world is the limit of Dasein. This position is explicit in Heidegger claim that it is only within phenomenological framework that ontology can be understood (Heidegger, 1962:60). As such, the world is the space and limit of Dasein.

According to Russon and Jacobson write, “The experience of space is always the experience of being exposed to our limits, and here, in this engagement with the deepest sense (or absence of sense) of space, we similarly engage this exposure at its most extreme level” (Russon & Jacobson 2012:349). This position implicitly points to the difference between Heidegger and Levinas. For Heidegger, we should remain resolutely within the limits that we become aware of, and for Levinas, as discussed in Chapter Three, there is a constant human need or desire to escape those limits, which is an important aspect of human experience that we need to take seriously without, obviously, claiming that these limits can be escaped in any way. A need arises when one looks at the tension that assists between Heidegger and Levinas, and this entails rethink or revisiting Heidegger’s conception of Dasein.

### **5.3 Re-thinking Dasein as other than Being-There**

This section explores the possibility of rethinking the nature of being different from the philosophical ontological framework which Heidegger confines us to. Granted that the world, for Heidegger, is the place of hermeneutics, might one err to think that Dasein can conceive of things which are beyond its finite nature? We do not dispute the fact that Heidegger acknowledges the temporality of human existence in his exposition of Dasein, however, can one conceive of a reality removed from the finite (temporal and spatial, embodied) state of Dasein? One might argue that the very fact of the question already implies conceivability.

The dilemma of metaphysical discourses is the problem of verifiability. The conflicting ways in which metaphysical realities are presented makes it difficult to fully comprehend what the truth or its true nature entails. For instance, there are religious beliefs that legitimise the use of

violence (*jihad*<sup>60</sup>) and others that consider acts of peace as the only response that the divine demands of human beings. This position about the divine demands is difficult to understand because its truth is not immediately accessible as it is based on revelation that is not accessible to all. Thinkers like A. W Moore argue that “‘there is no unknowable beyond’ our cognitive reach, and the idea of one is incoherent” (Moore quoted in Cooper 2002:204). Bernard Williams also believes that “physics just as it is constitutes an absolute account” (Cooper 2002:188), with the implication that no truths can in principle be discovered beyond the laws of physics, or that defy those laws. As we have seen thus far in this project, metaphysics has a contrary opinion to those presented by Williams and Moore. John Caputo identifies a middle ground in the way metaphysical presentation of ontology is formulated. Caputo writes,

The problem with the history of metaphysics, then is not that it has no theories of Being – indeed, that is all one ever finds there – but it neglects to take the second step. Metaphysics fails to realise that the step-back is a two-step – first, from being to Being and, then, from Being to the upon-which of its projection. Hence, metaphysics functions naively, missing the hidden upon-which, even though that is what the understanding of Being feeds and nourishes itself upon (*sich nährt*) (Caputo 1987:173).

Caputo recognises that within traditional metaphysical attempts to present an understanding of being, we find ontological discourse. However, he identifies that there is a misconception in their approach. He blames this on their inability to explore the nature of existence in their attempt to understand Dasein. It is in world that the upon-which of projection lies. This approach, as Caputo reckons, will only result in naïve ontology. In *Being and Time*, “[t]he ‘understanding of Being’ is more or less obvious, but what is not so obvious, and what needs to be worked up, is the ‘upon-which’ that nourishes the understanding of Being” (Caputo 1987:173). Caputo presents an understanding of being that is dependent on an external force responsible for nourishing being. Caputo captures Heidegger’s understanding of the ground for laying bare the disclosure of being. Heidegger insists that the nature of projection reveals the “upon-which”, which in turn unveils the nature of Dasein (Heidegger 1962:371). The task, for Heidegger, is not to formulate an understanding of projection through and within Dasein

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<sup>60</sup> *Jihad* is an Islamic name for what we now call ‘holy war’. There are numerous theories about this concept, but I will not go into much detail because the generic meaning is all that is needed for this illustration.

ontological everydayness. This is because to search for the ‘upon-which’ of Dasein makes their existence phenomenologically accessible and comprehensible. The point made thus far is not that religious metaphysics lacks an understanding of Dasein, but it ignores the nature of the upon-which of projection which provides furnishes us with an understanding of the nature of Dasein’s projection.

In addition to the above argument, there are scholars, like Philipse, who maintain that Heidegger’s *Being and Time* has a transcendent component. This is a finite transcendence, taking place within the temporal confines of the world. This is “because Heidegger holds that a global framework of referential relations, the *world* in his special sense, is a transcendent condition both of understanding entities as tools or as objects of science and for the very *being* of tools or that of objects of science” (Philipse 1998:322). The transcendent condition which Philipse ascribes to Heidegger’s philosophy is a temporal one. The world transcends being in its stretching away from the immediate facticity of human reality. It is against this backdrop that Heidegger’s account, in *Being and Time*, of the ‘call of conscience’ and ‘resoluteness’, is a form of relating to the transcendent reality of temporality. However, it is still difficult to adequately comprehend how Heidegger’s perception ‘calls’ for authenticity, or the ‘threat’ to which the authentic person responds (Cooper 2002:231). In other words, Heidegger does not clearly show what informs the authentic actions or the desire for authentic living.

In order to make the above point clear, let us return to Heidegger’s understanding of being-in-the-world. For Heidegger, true authenticity arises when Dasein responds, actively, to the realities of its being-in-the-world. What Heidegger does is to insist on authenticity as a quality which can only be achieved in Dasein’s engagement with the call of conscience as it challenges our response to the events in the world. Put simply, authenticity is not a commitment to metaphysics, rather it is committed to working towards appropriate responses to the realities of the world around us. The nature of the world around us becomes the determinant of authentic living. In fact, we become answerable to the world and people around us. The call of conscience is not a transcendent notion, at least not in the metaphysical sense of the world; it is an immanent call to be attentive, in an answerable way, to the realities and importantly, the potentialities of Dasein.

Metaphysics, understood in the traditional and immanent way, plays a major role in this project. For this reason, I will like to return to the ideas advanced by Cooper. Cooper maintains that

human beings are answerable to a reality far removed from the world (Cooper 2002:257). I interpret Cooper to mean that human existence is dependent on an other-worldly force for its sustenance. Once again, we are brought back to the possibility of the existence of an aspect of Dasein (e.g. the soul) which is beyond the purely worldly nature of human beings. This, as has been argued, is against the phenomenological ethos: “To the things themselves as they appear” (Husserl 2001:168). Religious metaphysics conceives of the beyond as the place where ‘things in themselves’ are located. This metaphysical reality or what might be referred to as the ‘really-real’ is far removed from phenomenological reality, and in fact, as we have shown, opposes it in every respect. This external understanding of knowledge is arguably the basis of Platonic dualism where the world of forms is the reality and the experiential world contains merely replications of the real which can only be found in the world of forms. It is difficult to plausibly argue that there is a reality, beyond human conventions, to which we are answerable. If, for the sake of argument, one is to subscribe to the position that indeed there is a reality out there which human beings are or should be answerable to, two questions become inevitable. First, what is the nature of the transcendent being or reality? Second, what is the measure of this answerability? The first question draws attention to nature because when the nature of a thing is understood, its accessibility is possible. The second question explores the measure for ascertaining the validity of the postulations allegedly derived from this transcendent being. What most thinkers do is theorise based on a presupposition of the existence of something transcendent and then base their findings on this unverified assumption. Cooper falls in this category of thinkers as his point of departure is based on the presupposition of the existence of God or a transcendent reality to which answerability can be ascribed. It is very difficult to arrive at a conclusion based on an unverifiable claim. In fact, what is the nature of this answerability? Cooper poses an important question:

Must we regard human life as answerable to something beyond itself - to 'source' independent of human perspective, commitment, and choice - if our activities and projects, and the beliefs and conceptions they presuppose, are to be answerable? Should we, that is, move from the centrality in our lives of a need for answerability and measure to the embrace of a source 'beyond human life itself'? (Cooper 2002:267).

Again, Cooper’s questions are not without presupposition, and the presupposition which can be deduced from his questions is that there is a beyond to which human beings can be

answerable. There is a serious contention, especially in the phenomenological discourse, on the existence of this ‘beyond human’ world and the human ability to decipher what action(s) is appropriate or inappropriate within the schema of this divine answerability. For instance, when a criminal is caught and brought to law, the expected measure of justice is often based on the propositional balance between the punishment and the crime. It is in this way that the person is said to be answerable to the laws of that society. How can we think about divine answerability without erring in our judgment? The socio-religious factors informing any particular divine postulation determine the nature of its disposition not only to the divine, but also to realities in the world. Nonetheless, social dispositions are sometimes influenced by religious world views. Acts of terrorism and religious fundamentalist acts of violence are often driven by religious conceptions that they are induced and sometimes feel answerable to a certain divine purpose. As argued in Chapter Three, religious world views are often not shared by everyone and, as such, there is little or no common ground for deliberation.

This brings us again to the issue of the ‘ground’ and I will review it in relation to how the ground points to an understanding of answerability to the divine. We already established that the ground for thematising being is within the phenomenological reality of being. Søren Kierkegaard writes, “... the person without ‘ground projects’ is in despair because he is not a genuine self. In order for there to be a ‘collecting of oneself’, an ‘emergence of concrete personality in continuity’, that person must become engaged in projects of ‘ethical’ practice” (Kierkegaard in Cooper 2002:263). It may not necessarily be a search for ‘genuine self’ that drives one’s engagement in projects, rather it is the collection of self, as Cooper maintains, that propels the desire for projects (Cooper 2002:263). Nonetheless, the ground is very important for the realisation of a ‘genuine self’, and this does not mean that the ground is a phase leading to this realisation; the ground is always the case whenever we address the reality of Dasein. It is, in fact, part of being a genuine self. The ‘collection of selves’, which makes possible the genuine self, is realised on the ground. Put differently, to refer to oneself as ‘genuine’ is to possess, or rather occupy, a ground inhabited by ‘other selves’, other genuine selves. The ground serves as the litmus for measuring selves and genuineness. As such, the ground of other selves goes simultaneously with the self. The ground here means the world. The point here is that, a genuine self is not an achievement realised in isolation, it requires the judgment of other selves. Cooper puts it succinctly when he writes,

... it is not so much that our inveterately teleological existence 'inspires' a need for answerability and measure as that this need is internal to such an existence. Our kind of teleo[lo]gical (sic) existence, incorporating a requirement to view ourselves as projective, as constantly 'on the way' towards goals set by 'ground projects', is ipso facto one that stands in need of measure (Cooper 2002:263).

The nature of the project of Dasein is one which phenomenologists refer to, in the words of Cooper, 'ground projects'. This is why interpreted Heidegger to have insisted that "... that it is 'from Being' that there comes 'the assignment of those directives that must become law and rule for man'" (Cooper 2002:268). The laws and rules of man are hinged on phenomena and not on traditional understanding of metaphysics (onto-theology). For Heidegger, the laws and rules that must direct our understanding of human existence is found in the world. Directly linked to Heidegger's debunking and untightening of the metaphysical grip on being, Robert Nozick maintains that "To see something's limits is to question its meaning" (Robert Nozick quoted in Cooper 2002:268). In the phenomenologists' attempt to respond to the question of metaphysics, they find a number of limitations, among which are the problems of verifiability and imperceptibility. This is to say that meaningfulness finds its ground on human reality and it is the antidote to metaphysical epistemic validation.

The argument advanced by phenomenology, according to Cooper, is that "an activity is typically regarded as devoid of significance when perceived as so limited and enclosed as to fail appropriately to connect up with anything beyond itself" (Cooper 2002:270). Here Cooper refer to human activities and the way propositions influence significance. Where does the chain of significance begin and end when religious and phenomenological grounds are considered without rendering pointless the activities and importance of each? What is the significance of Dasein when it is at issue? Must one explore beyond the realities surrounding the reason for posing the question, or should one rather stick with the reality of human existence in the phenomenological sense? In order to respond to these questions, it is important to further engage Cooper's ideas, especially his three lines of resistance to the 'beyond the human' thesis. The phrase 'beyond the human' refers to religious metaphysical position which projects beyond finite existence.

First, Cooper maintains that "if our need for answerability inspires a search for a source that does not invite another 'And then what?', the discovery that this search *could* never succeed is

hardly comforting” (Cooper 2002:273). Second, he adds that “the movement rejects the thought that in order for something to be significant, it must connect up with something further or wider whose own significance can in turn be questioned” (Cooper 2002:273). Here, Cooper presents a typical religious metaphysical instance, which searches for an ultimate source of significance. Lastly, “[t]he thesis of ‘the human world’, once ‘deeply cultivated’, turns out to be one with which human beings cannot live. If our need for answerability is to be satisfied, human life must indeed answer to something beyond itself” (Cooper 2002:276). Answerability to a world beyond the human world, as rightly observed by Cooper, implies a halt to human activities; human beings will stop living in freedom which goes with responsibility. This is because to every question, a reality, to which human beings are answerable to, will be the dictate of moral actions. Must we then refer to the proposition established by Sam Harris in his book *The End of Faith* (2004) How do we address the potential of violence in religious metaphysics without ending up in liberal extremism?

Cooper tries to find a middle ground to the situation described above. He identifies the implicit strength and weakness of answerability as a discursable world as it relates to answerability in absolutist terms (Cooper uses absolutist in a metaphysical sense). For humanists, the discursable world is a human world in the sense that it is accessible. This is unlike the answerability provided by religious absolutists which is not accessible but believed to be plausible in its unfathomability. Cooper maintains, by way of conclusion, that

Humanists are right to say that any discursable world is a human one, but wrong to equate reality with the discursable world. Absolutists are right to say that reality is independent of 'the human contribution', but wrong to suppose that it is discursable. Humanists are wrong to suppose that our beliefs and commitments can answer only to what is within the precincts of the human (Cooper 2002:279).

Let us engage Cooper’s last statement carefully because it is of utmost significance for understanding the line of argument that is to be made here. Humanists, according to Cooper, conflate reality with discursability, in other words, for them, only what can be explained, existence. The fact that something can be explained moreover does not necessarily imply that it exists in reality. In the case of absolutists, they conflate reality with discursability, which suggests that their understanding of reality is inaccessible. The underlying point here is that the

absolutist stance is considered different and incompatible with humanists' positions. If this is the case, it is plausible to argue that both humanists and religious metaphysicians (whom Cooper refers to as 'absolutists') are potentially, or are in fact, absolutist in nature because they are prone to extreme frameworks which are not open to dialogue. The absolute tendency that I deduce in both can be summed up as follows: "[t]here is no 'solution' to, no 'explanation' of, what is mysterious, since the terms of solutions and the categories of explanation are applicable only to that form from which the human contribution has *not* been weeded" (Cooper 2002:280).

It is noted that absolutist and humanist explanations and conceptualisations of what reality means or should mean differ, and they are only in dialogue as they advance their differences; nevertheless as explained, they share absolutist approaches to ontology. This fundamental tension marked by absolutist stance on both sides, makes it difficult to provide a substantial framework for practically addressing the problem of terrorism and religious fundamentalist violence. In fact, one might err because of misplaced categories, especially when secular positions are used to analyse religious ideas and vice versa. If we insist that we can only live with a position which has been given logical and ontological verification and clearance, "then no rational creatures could subscribe to beliefs without giving 'the last word' to 'impersonal' reasons: if they did, they would not be rational" (Cooper 2002:258). To what degree are 'rational creatures' conceptualised, by humanists, in such a way that they do not find themselves advancing similar absolutist positions that have been ascribed to the kind of absolutism that is found in religious fundamentalism? To my mind, it is plausible to argue that to take a dismissive position against religion, the way a pure phenomenological outlook does, is extremist in the same way the reverse is the case. As highlighted in the fourth chapter, Heidegger falls into the absolutist trap in his methodological embrace of phenomenology and total dismissal of metaphysical claims.

Still on Heidegger's phenomenological absolutism, it is important to engage a quote which may suggest otherwise. Heidegger holds that "in the ontological analysis of Being-towards-the-end [nothing is] decided ontically about the 'other-worldly' and its possibility, any more than about the 'this-worldly'" (Heidegger 1962:292). Heidegger goes on to add that "But our analysis of death remains purely 'this-worldly' in so far as it interprets that phenomenon merely in the way in which it *enters into* any particular Dasein as a possibility of its Being" (Heidegger 1962:292). Heidegger appears to be inconclusive, but one finds that Heidegger does in fact take a stance, especially when he asserts that "[o]nly when death is conceived in its full

ontological essence can we have any methodological assurance in even *asking* what *may be after death*; only then can we do so with meaning and justification” (Heidegger 1962:292). Heidegger limits methodological assurance to the phenomenological engagement of the question of ontology. This position is even more explicit when Heidegger states clearly that “... this-worldly ontological interpretation of death takes precedence over any ontical other-worldly speculation” (Heidegger 1962:292). Heidegger does not rule out ontical other-worldly speculation or questions about the time after death – he only claims that these must come after and on the basis of the properly ontological analysis. Methodologically, then, this world takes clear precedence, and must form the basis of any attempts to move beyond the world. Otherworldly speculation is not rule out altogether.

We already highlighted that Heidegger’s philosophy does not explicitly ignore speculations or the possibility about otherworldly claims, but he insists that they must have their origin in the world, which he argues is the origin of any question about the meaning of being. Might one deduce from this that being-in-the-world have a traditional metaphysical attribute? Let us now proceed to respond to this question in the next section.

#### 5.4 Traditional Metaphysics: An Attribute of Being-in-the-World

In light of Coopers understanding of Heidegger's agenda, let us consider the following statement, "... *any world* we can discursively encounter is a human world, one that is how it is only in relation to 'the human contribution ...'" (Cooper 2009:52; emphasis added). If we are to emphasise 'any world' as used by Cooper, it becomes possible to include the metaphysical world as a part of these possible encounterable worlds implicit in the phrase 'any world'. The same way the task of phenomenology is to lay bare the complexities of human realities, so is religious metaphysics, one might argue, an attempt to make sense of the transcendent realm.

How do we sustain the claim that the metaphysical world is part of human making, knowing fully well that not even the human world is the making of human beings? For Cooper, "The human world is not something that we, standing before it, can make, with our hands or with anything else. For apart from the way we 'always already' find ourselves in the world, there is no we to make anything" (Cooper 2009:57). If we always already find ourselves in the world, might it not be a misconception that the world is purely phenomenological in nature? What Heidegger does is to distance himself from questions of this nature. He avoids the infinite regression that may ensue if one is to engage with metaphysical questions, like the question of the existence of God, the creation of the world, the role of God in all he has created and other related questions. However, is it possible to give an accurate account of being without accounting for being's relation to the metaphysical realm? The word, 'God', already implies a possibility of existence of this Supreme reality. As Levinas puts it,

The 'narrative' of religious experience does not shake philosophy and cannot break with presence and immanence, of which philosophy is the emphatic completion. It is possible that the word God has come to philosophy out of religious discourse. But even if philosophy refuses this discourse, it understands it as a language made of propositions bearing on a theme, that is, as having a meaning which refers to a disclosure, a manifestation of presence (Levinas 1996:135).

Paradoxically, the expression of the ineffable is an indication that God, although a mystery, belongs to the human world (Cooper 2009:59). Religion plays a huge role in the world and to undermine or ignore it is to lose a significant part of the world's narrative. The manifestation

of God as a metaphysical disclosure and a manifestation of the presence of an idea in the world demands attention.

If we agree, based on the arguments above, that God exists in the world in this manner, i.e., through human experiences of that which transcends them, then in what way might one describe this existence, and what is the significance of this existence for the world? Cooper maintains, “The real implication of Heidegger’s attack on the God of onto-theology is ‘the unknowability of the God beyond being’” (Cooper 2009:60). The point here is that God does not fall under the category of being reality in the way many religious metaphysical philosophers have claimed in the past Heidegger is right to say that the meaning of being cannot be conceived as a being. As already argued, the very fact that the name God is mentioned implies a conception. However, sometimes “... to eff the allegedly ineffable God and to render him utterly transcendent of the world – both have the effect, in their different ways, of disqualifying God from providing the type of measure that mystery is intended to be” (Cooper 2009:60). This also requires proof which has cannot be provided; it implies that God is treated as some special kind of being. As both Heidegger and Levinas have convincingly shown, this is incorrect. What Heidegger does is to render discourses about God irrelevant to the ontological enquiry about the nature of human existence. We see in the first chapter that Heidegger refers to ‘non-being’ as ‘nothing’ – which is a direct attack on Plato’s reference to divine being implicit in the Forms. If the answer about metaphysics is nothing, then we must focus on the world (Hampson 2009:63). This is Heidegger’s take on phenomenology as it relates to the world and to metaphysics.

What is evident in the above argument is that Heidegger is true to the principle of non-presupposition. The ground of pre-givenness, roughly understood as the basis of any idea, for Heidegger, is the world. All other forms of pre-givenness is inconsistent with Heidegger’s notion of the world as *everydayness*. The problematic is that Heidegger plunges into, yet again, absolutism, because he leaves no room for transcendence as understood in religious metaphysics. If religion is part of the world, which Heidegger rigorously thematised, to my mind, it is difficult to grasp the reason behind his decision to conceive of this part of life as irrelevant or not worthy of apt consideration in the same way he focused a phenomenological understanding of ontology. Plato, as already hinted, and Aristotle also fall within the category of distorted presenters of the nature of reality. Consider the following quote:

Plato and Aristotle had different views of reality, but they agreed that human beings, if sufficiently rational, could come to know the conceptualised reality, one that did not depend on their coming to do so. In holding this, Plato and Aristotle saw themselves as criticising some Sophist thinkers. Protagoras had stated that ‘of all things man is the measure, of things that are that they are and of things that are not they are not’ (Cooper 2002:2).

Plato and Aristotle’s position on reality is abstract in nature; this is mainly because they both consider reality as something that is independent of human beings the same way they considered rationality as an elevation from the sensory world. Contrary to this, Heidegger’s position is not entirely different from the assertion of Protagoras that man is the measure of all things; the only difference is that human beings are answerable to the measure only as it pertains to phenomenology. This is where the issue of religion or metaphysical postulations is considered redundant. When metaphysical assertions are considered as truism, one runs into the danger of community becoming “... the production and the appropriation of a pre-given identity” (Devisch 2000:246-247). Religious or metaphysical production and appropriation of pre-given identity was addressed extensively in Chapter Two when I explored *din al fitrah* and other related ideas. But even on a secular level, can pre-given ideas be fully eliminated?

Can sense be made of the idea of a world, accessible in principle to conceptual articulation, which is independent of human perspectives? Do concepts and descriptions truly apply to the world irrespective of the actual availability to, and exercise by, human beings of the appropriate conceptual and descriptive resources? (Cooper 2002:1)

Cooper touches on the fact that pre-giveness is only validated in the human experiential realm – reality in so far as it is experienced. Outside the human perspective, pre-giveness is inaccessible. It is only in the human world where appropriate conceptual and descriptive resources are available that pre-giveness makes sense.

This chapter attempts to provide a guide for addressing religious fundamentalist violence, let us draw on Levinas’s ideas. Levinas’s philosophy provides a suitable supplement to Heidegger’s phenomenological ontological analysis. I consider Levinas’s article, *Essence and Disinterestedness*, published in 1974, important and worth our while for understanding his

critique of Heidegger. Levinas's position is important in this section because he provides an understanding of transcendence that begins to pave the path in the direction that addresses religious fundamentalist violence. For Levinas, "The *otherwise than being* cannot be situated in any eternal order extracted from time that would somehow command the temporal series" (Levinas 1996:115). What this means is that God, which Levinas refers to as 'other than being' is situated in the world of being in an ethical way. He thus attempts to conceptualise an 'otherwise than being' of which traces are to be found within being, but which is definitely not metaphysical in the traditional sense, i.e. the 'otherwise than being' is not situated in and does not belong to 'any eternal order', which denotes an other-worldly or extra-terrestrial domain outside of time. Recall that the religious metaphysical attitude not only postulates an order which is fundamentally different from the worldly, human situation (i.e. outside of time and space, and limitless) but that it also gives strict priority to that metaphysical realm over the worldly one, which is secondary and derivative. This is what Levinas refers to when he says such an eternal order 'would somehow command the temporal series'. For Levinas, by contrast, the 'otherwise than being' manifests itself within being first and foremost as an ethical command and appeal, and not as an ontology.

In the expression God as *otherwise than being*, Levinas argues that human beings and God are realities that we meet within the world in a form of confrontation which cannot be explained by ontological categories. This postulation cannot be delinked from Levinas's Judaic tradition which is based on the presupposition that the world cannot but point to a divine cause: "... the God of the Bible", according to Levinas, "signifies the beyond being, transcendence" (Levinas 1996:130). Levinas recognises the fact that the nature of God is one that is absent from the nature of being. The phenomenological twist to his idea is when he presents a circumspensive stance in the relationship between God and human beings: "The idea of God is not God in me, but God already breaking up the consciousness which aims at ideas, and unlike any content" (Levinas 1996:136). Levinas's postulation cannot but leave one confused because he does not explain how he comes to the awareness of what God can or cannot do. It is plausible to draw the conclusion that, for Levinas, religion plays an implicit role in his philosophy..

The justification for the above conclusion is one which has been previously discussed in this chapter. It is difficult to fully comprehend, phenomenologically speaking, how a divine, invisible reality, can be talked about with such certitude. However, Levinas is convinced that his ideas are valid. The method used by phenomenologists, one might argue, is that they

persistently hold onto the world in such a way that it prevents them from fully understanding the content of the world. Levinas has the following to say, “The non-present is incomprehensible by reason of its immensity or its ‘superlative’ humility or, for example, its goodness, which is the superlative itself” (Levinas 1996:117). The limitation of reason, in relation to the divine realm, is fundamental to Levinas’s critique of philosophical/phenomenological monopoly on the nature of rationality. By presenting what could be considered as ‘the other side’, Levinas establishes the nature of phenomenology by contrasting it with the divine realm. This deduction is valid, especially in Levinas’ 1975 article, *God and Philosophy*, where he maintains that the intelligibility of transcendence lies beyond ontological structures, but they bear ethical sense and direction (Levinas 1996:129).

Levinas does not undermine or refute the phenomenological approach as an intellectual discourse that is capable of giving an account of human reality, rather he provides ‘another phenomenology’ centred on post-Kantian conceptions of transcendence (Levinas 1996:149). For Levinas, “The *in* of the Infinite designates the depth of the affecting by which subjectivity is affected through this ‘putting’ of the Infinite into it, without prehension or comprehension” (Levinas 1996:139). Levinas argues here that human subjectivity is affected by the infinite, and this relationship between the finite and infinite is beyond human knowledge; in fact, the infinite as ‘otherwise than being’ disrupts all knowledge and understanding. This confirms the initial interpretation that Levinas sees the beyond within actuality – human beings are not mere ontological beings, they have attributes because of the infinite which breaks into finite existence.

Levinas’s explores the ‘other human’ (*autrui*) first from an ethical perspective before he then considered the ontological perspective. Levinas’s philosophy counters Western philosophical understanding of the ‘other’ by modelling it on ethic driven by justice. He maintains that phenomenology must consider the irreducibility of thoughts, ontological, and objects when addressing the alleged complexity which he attributes to the other. For Levinas, human beings, human experiences so to speak, cannot be reduced to mere phenomenological ontology. Levinas critiques Heidegger’s identification of ontology and phenomenology. For Levinas, “the formal structure of transcendence as found in the idea of the infinite is accomplished *concretely* in the ethical relation to the other human (*autrui*)” (Levinas 1996:150). The structure of transcendence intrinsic to human beings is indicative of an ethical relation which is irreducible to mere ontology. The ethical demand which the fact of the other makes on the self

cannot be reduced to an instance of knowledge, but it is in itself always an infinite demand that breaks through human finitude. This transcendence is the incomprehensible which upgrades human beings beyond ontological reducibility. Levinas engages a new dimension of phenomenology, one might say, as an alternative philosophy, which can be roughly understood as the search for the human beyond the human world. Put differently, the thinking about human is the ‘unthought’ or ‘non-being’ of phenomenological traditions (Levinas 1996:150). Levinas is fully aware that “It is in terms of knowledge and consciousness that philosophy looks into the mind” (Levinas 1996:150), but he also holds that there is more to consciousness which philosophy ignores. Within the everyday reality of encountering another human being, something happens which breaks through the phenomenological realm and challenges all purely immanent understandings of the world, others and ourselves. It is also in light of human experiences that philosophy looks at reality.

In view of the last sentence, it is difficult to subscribe to Levinas’s metaphysical phenomenology. We are still left with the question of how to comprehend the underlying assertion which Levinas makes about the phenomenological relation to Other [which includes God]. Levinas writes,

The philosopher’s attention is directed to human lived experience which is recognised and acknowledged as experience, that is, which lets itself legitimately be converted into teaching, into object lessons of discovery or presence. But even beneath our relations with other men and the social group and even beneath what is called the ‘relation to God’ or revelation of God, one would like to perceive or suppose experiences which are termed collective or religious (Levinas 1996:150).

For Levinas, our understanding of the Other and the obligation we have towards the Other is a characteristic of what he refers to as the ‘revelation of God’. The understanding of religion for Levinas is found in the aware of ethical aware of present Other in the absent God. This is position is absolutely different from Heidegger’s philosophy of the Other as ‘Being-with’. Heidegger even goes further to say that being and non-being are not commensurable. This is a clear subscription to the principle of non-contradiction: a thing cannot not exist and exist at the same time. Levinas’s finds within ontology a transcendence that is revealed in the face-to-face encounter.

For Levinas, the responsibility to the Other is a commitment, a decision which he considers to be unlimited because human beings always find themselves responding to freedom. He writes, “The unlimited responsibility [to the Other] which I find myself comes from the hither side of my freedom, from an ‘anterior to every memory,’ an ‘ulterior to every accomplishment,’ from the nonpresent par excellence, nonoriginal, the anarchical, prior to or beyond essence” (Levinas 1996:117). For Levinas, our responsibility to the other is innate such that, he believes, it is beyond any origin; it is on this basis that Levinas considers the responsibility to Others an imperative. Furthermore, one finds in Levinas’s philosophy that responsibility is not only based on free will, it is also religious in nature. There is an attempt to de-emphasise the religious components of Levinas’s understanding of the Other, but it is also important to identify how the religious metaphysical component forms an essential part of Levinas’s entire work. Levinas makes responsibility for and towards the Other an infinite obligation. This obligation is not deterred by differences in religious/metaphysical worldviews, or indeed undergirded by any worldview whatsoever, it is independent of ontology. The dignity of the Other is irreducible and there is an explicit moral mandate in what Levinas propounds. Levinas’s approach portrays a radical shift away from the Western philosophical paradigm. He writes,

The dignity of being as the ultimate and royal discourse belongs to Western philosophy because of the strict coinciding of thought, in which philosophy resides, and the idea of reality in which this thought thinks. For thought, this coinciding means not having to think beyond what belongs to ‘being’s move’ [*geste d’être*], or at least not beyond what modifies the previous belongingness to ‘being’s move’ such as formal or ideal notions (Levinas 1996:130).

Levinas maintains that the nature of Western philosophy is such that being is understood within the framework of thought and the reality that emerges from these thoughts. Being, in Western philosophy, remains within the confines of an understanding that is limited to thought. According to Levinas, the self-limiting tendency in Western philosophical analysis of ontology is considered a danger hindering a full grasp of the true nature of being. The ontological restriction which Levinas spots in Western philosophy is one which is equally evident in Heidegger’s philosophical interpretation of being focuses on an understanding of being mainly from a phenomenological perspective. According to Levinas, this restriction is detrimental to a full comprehension of the reality of human beings because it wilfully ignores human experiences of transcendence within immanence. He writes, “The putting into us of an

unincludable idea overturns that presence to self which consciousness is, forcing its way through the barrier and checkpoint, eluding the obligation of accept or adopt all that enters from the outside” (Levinas 1996: 137). The overturning of the presence of self is, one might argue, precisely the transcendent moment which breaks into human immanence in a way that cannot simply be absorbed by human understandings of being.

Levinas breaks away from this restriction imposed by Western philosophy by appropriating an infinite, a limitless, approach to the way he views the analysis of being. Levinas also breaks out of the self-limitation which Heidegger imports, in opposition to the onto-theological tradition, which has always been concerned with what is eternal and infinite, but in a metaphysical way. Keep the different positions apart conceptually. This results in a recourse to an understanding of empirical reality which draws its source from a belief in an infinite innate structure in being:

What then is the plot of meaning, other than that of re-presentation and of empirical experience, which is hatched in the idea of the Infinite – in the monstrosity of the Infinite *put* in me – an idea which in its passivity over and beyond all receptivity is no longer an idea (Levinas 1996:138).

It is worth noting that for Levinas, the meaning of empirical experience is ‘hatched’ or reborn in the idea of the infinite. Put differently, the empirical is subservient to or dependent upon the infinite. One way of interpreting Levinas’s assertion here is that empirical experiences emanate from the infinite beyond or otherwise than being, and being is at the same time independent of the finite nature of being. Therefore, the Other is a complex being entailing always both infinite and finite elements. The relationship of the infinite to the finite is an active one, since the finite is passive towards the infinite. As Hand observes, “... Levinas repeatedly rejects the synthesising of phenomena in favour of a way of thinking that supposedly remains open to the other” (Hand 2009:38). The infinite in human beings points to the irreducibility of being, while the finite shows the empirical experiential dimension of human reality. The empirical does not imply accessibility, rather it points to the incomprehensibility, irreducibility and complexity of being, which finds privileged expression or manifestation in the relation with the Other.

Levinas addresses the religious dimension of thoughts in his article, *Transcendence and Intelligibility* (Levinas 1996:156). In a rather indecisive style, he poses rhetorical questions

about the understanding of knowledge as a divine gift to the human mind – a manifestation of transcendence in the immanent, where the meaning of the immanent is a supreme grace of a divine disclosure. However, in a very significant and novel way Levinas incorporates the central notion of sociality. He maintains that the excellence of love, namely responsibility for the others, and sociality ceases to be anxiety for my death, *mineness* in Heidegger's terms. Levinas critiques Heidegger solitary disposition by proposing a metaphysics built on the ethics of sociality and relationality. For Levinas, transcendence is not a failed immanence. He writes, "In sociality – which is no longer a simple aim but responsibility for the neighbour – it [i.e. transcendence] would have the excellence proper to the mind, which is precisely perfection or the Good" (Levinas 1996:158). The ultimate goal for Levinas is not one driven by autonomy, rather it is found in recognition, appreciation and responsibility towards alterity. Had he stopped at these, it would have been less complex to comprehend his work, but he goes on to add God as the author of the innate disposition towards the Other.

Nonetheless, it is safe to say that Levinas's fundamental ethical position is emphasised by him when he evaluates the face of the other (Hand 2009:38). One would think that the face has a phenomenologically assessable structure, but Levinas "... presents the face not simply as a physical detail, but as a moment of infinity that goes beyond any *idea* which I can produce of the other" (Hand 2009:38). This is very important. The face of the Other is not a mere phenomenon, and definitely not a phenomenon whose meaning can be readily ascertained by the self. The face is representative of 'a moment of infinity' which interrupts the world of Heideggerian Dasein and also radically opens Dasein's ability to make sense of all its experiences. The meaning which appears in the face of the other is ungraspable and represents a trace of the infinite within finite, embodied and sensorial experience. In this way, the face of the other cannot be reduced to a purely immanent or phenomenal given. Levinas uses verbalisation to further illustrate his point. "... Levinas insists that verbalisation does not exhaust the *signifyingness* of saying. Instead, a philosophy of otherwise than being can raise the game, precisely by elaborating a new 'saying that must also be unsaid'" (Levinas in Hand 2009:52). The significant contribution of Levinas's postulation is that he talks about the unsaid as a significant other side of being in its meaning of ontologically present. The philosophy of the 'otherwise than being', which Levinas promotes, focuses on the advancement of an ontology of transcendence that is experienced in the face-to-face encounter, yet remains unsaid because in principle unsayable.

What is the significance of Levinasian ethical being and absolute answerability and how are they relevant factors in our understanding of human reality? Inevitably, although sometimes vaguely, Levinas's philosophy plays a huge role in the reconstruction of the phenomenological formulation of ontological questions. Amidst this affirmation, two points remain yet to be fully unpacked when the conceptual analyses of Levinas's philosophy are closely evaluated. First, Levinas juxtaposes the infinite with the finite in such a way that they are inseparable because the one depends entirely on the other.

Levinas's philosophy incorporates an understanding of being within the framework of innate disposition towards the Other and an awareness of the infinity in the Other. This ethical moment exposes us to some 'thing' or moment of transcendence which Levinas calls God, but he gives no more content than that to God, and therefore he does not postulate a knowable metaphysical order of existence. On the contrary, Heidegger stuck with his restricted phenomenological ontology. Rockmore observes that Heidegger "...is especially careful to distance himself from philosophical or other forms of atheism – he mentions God no less than twenty-nine times in this essay [*Letter on Humanism*] – by taking a reassuring stance toward religion, clearly at odds with his own deeply held conviction" (Rockmore 1999:98). Although, reassuring in his position on God, Heidegger never took an explicit stance on religion in general or the metaphysical God in particular when compared to the way he addressed the ontological question. He dwelt mainly on how being is understood in *everydayness*. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger's philosophy shows a radical emphasis on the world as the ground of epistemic enquiry. By doing this, he deviates from the traditional metaphysical philosophical postulations of his predecessors.

The point thus far is that Heidegger's *Being and Time* provides an extreme contrast to the extreme found in proponents of religious metaphysics (onto-theology). We are faced with a battle of extreme positions in engagement with philosophical enquiry into the nature of being. Rather than this extremist implication, I argue that Heidegger's philosophy needs to undergo a phenomenological ontological nuance. By this, I suggest that the Heideggerian bias or negligence of certain phenomenological realities of being-in-the-world needs to be identified, evaluated and considered in the schema of world. Put differently, the place of religious metaphysics, as an epistemic reality in the world, needs to remain a discourse worth exploring when considering the phenomenological ontological enquiry into the nature of existence in general. The strong emphasis on being as understood in the world puts Heidegger's philosophy

in a precarious situation. This is because it ends up assuming fundamentalist similarly absolutist tendency which his critique of religious metaphysics sought to eradicate. One might argue even further that, in our engagement with the world, we see the realities of human beings going beyond the mere fact of their being-in-the-world. The attempt at understanding the ‘non-being-in-the-world’ is equally one of the preoccupations of being-in-the-world. Otherwise put, because of religious beliefs, people make a conscious effort to understand how they came into the world, how they live in the world, and how they will exit this world. Regardless of the immense complexity of non-being, the role it plays in shaping our understanding in the world must not be taken for granted because it also points to the reality of existence.

For Heidegger, we make the world an explicit subject of interrogation or investigation because we are part of it. Put differently, it is in the world that we make things a ‘subject of interrogation’ as a derivative way of understanding Dasein. To engage with the ‘thereness’ of the world, it is important to realise that one is the subject of this engagement and reflection. This is a necessary prerequisite for reaching a substantial understanding of the character of human experience in the world as part of the world. When human beings own their place in the world and engage with the world meaningfully they can then authentically own the realities of their spaces. Explaining further, the world is near us in our facticity and far away as potentiality. For instance, it is a fact that I am in my office working on my project, but the space of the world, although close, stretches beyond my office, thus the world provides potentialities waiting to become facticity. When I depart from my office, which is my facticity, and move to my room, my room becomes a facticity. The reason for this illustration is to understand the nature of phenomenological actuality and potentiality. They are not delinked from the temporary realities of Being-in-the-world.

Russon maintains that, for Heidegger, “Authenticity is the distinctive stance in which I own up to this, my role as ‘caregiver,’ ...it is uniquely *up to me* to take my world up in a meaningful way” (Russon 2008:99). Heidegger suggests that human beings, by taking up the world in a meaningful way, become active subjects in search of authentic responses to the questions that pertain to Being-in-the-world. The argument here is that the world is a hermeneutical space in need of critical engagement; the world is an invitation which Dasein must engage with. The complexities of the world require human engagement, and to look beyond or away from these complexities is to misjudge the urgency of the situation of that context.

It is only by engaging with the world that we come to an understanding of what Heidegger refers to as the ‘call of conscience’. Russon highlights the temporal nature of this call: “Conscience is the experience of the fundamental imperative to be answerable to the call of value, to the call of care. The call of conscience does not demand this or that, but demands that one be responsive to how one’s situation calls” (Russon 2008:100). Heidegger also makes a connection between the call of conscience and anticipatory resoluteness. When we think of ‘anticipatory resoluteness’, we immediately think of anticipation. According to Russon, “Anticipation means holding oneself open to the transformative possibilities of the future-insofar as it is undecidable, is committed to the *possibility* of one’s situation, not the actuality. Being open to what can show itself means not closing off possibilities in the situation” (Russon 2008:101-102). It is in the call of conscience and anticipatory resoluteness that facticity and potentiality meet. Heidegger argues that anticipatory resoluteness occurs because of the call of conscience (Heidegger 1962:357). By engaging with present realities, the desired future, space which stretches, beyond the immediate, becomes closer in anticipatory resolution.

### **5.5 Phenomenological-Transcendent-Ontology and its Implication**

It is safe to argue that Heidegger’s philosophy, in his *Being and Time*, is not entirely irrelevant and his understanding of Dasein is not a misconception. As Kovacs validly observes, Heidegger “... goes back to these great thinkers of the West in order to learn from their experience of the world, from their pre-metaphysical interpretation of Dasein. He examines their original way of thinking and shows that which has remained unthought and thus unsaid by them” (Kovacs 1990:8). The unthought for Heidegger is the question about the meaning of Dasein when situated in the world. No doubt, he provides new insights into the philosophical enquires about the meaning of Dasein. However, the emphasis on ontology in its pure form is a misconception of being-in-the-world. By phenomenology in its ‘pure form’, I refer to the fact that the religious metaphysical questions which preoccupy Dasein cannot be ignored as a component which adulterates, disrupts, and even challenges phenomenology. If Heidegger considers being-in-the-world an important hermeneutical ground for understanding being, then he falters, in so far as this project is concerned, in the characteristics which he considers important in his engagement with the world as the ground of Dasein.

Levinas was equally emphatic about phenomenological tendencies becoming a melting pot of transmutation of the Other into sameness when he critiques the various reductionist terms used

by his predecessors: the ego, the self, consciousness, self-consciousness, mind, or Dasein (Levinas 1996:147). For Levinas, "... the central tradition in modern European philosophy has no place for, or interest in, the Other qua Other, that is, as that which resists or refuses the ego's powers of conceptualisation and thematisation" (Levinas 1996:149). Heidegger's persistence on a phenomenological interpretation of ontology as the only way to fully understand the world is detrimental to co-existence and is a prime example of the lack of interest in the Other qua Other for which Levinas criticises the 'modern European' tradition of philosophy. Other experiences in the world must not be reduced to phenomenological description. Levinas maintains that for phenomenologists "Knowledge is a relation of the *Same* with the Other in which the Other is reduced to the Same and divested of its strangeness" (Levinas 1996:151). By reducing the Other to the same, for Levinas Heidegger loses sight of the unique reality of the Other and the way in which that effable reality tends to (or should) shatter the sense-making of the self.

Heidegger's philosophy, on the other hand, as we have already discussed in detail, refers to the world from an existentialist perspective as opposed to an essentialist viewpoint. The world as the ground, the playground, so to speak, of hermeneutical interpretation of Dasein is very important and essential for the understanding the fundamental nature of being. The world assumes an essential role in the comprehension of the very nature of Dasein. This transparency on the part of Heidegger is largely due to his persistence on uncovering the immanent complexity surrounding being-in-the-world. He considers metaphysical claims as one of the major components of the obscurantism which he finds in previous attempts to understand the world. He sought to resolve this problem by eliminating the role religious metaphysics has played in ontological discourses. Religious metaphysical positions may not be verifiable, but they are in the world as ideas and they play a significant role in the way the world is perceived. To turn a blind eye to it is to plunge into a new kind of oblivion.

Levinas is emphatic about the role religion must play in philosophical discourse. He maintains, "Philosophical discourse therefore should be able to include God – of whom the Bible speaks – if this God does have a meaning. But as soon as he is conceived, this God is situated within 'being's movement. He is situated there as the being (*étant*) par excellence" (Levinas 1996: 130). Levinas presents an understanding of God as the Other which is irreducible and found within being's existence. Heidegger's philosophy refuses such understanding of ontology.

Heidegger does not engage the complexities of non-being the way Levinas does. As one would expect, Levinas had reasons for his position:

If the intellectual understanding of the biblical God, theology, does not reach to (sic) the level of philosophical thought, this is not because it thinks of God as a *being* without first explicating the ‘being of this being’, but because in thematising God it brings God into the discourse of being (Levinas 1996:130).

Levinas maintains that the very nature of the Other [God] does not allow for any reducibility – God cannot be reduced to the discourse of ontology. The problem which arises then is, how do we understand God without bringing God into ontological discourse? If God plays a role in existence, what role is it? We probably cannot even pose that question. For Levinas, God is within being as the infinite within the finite structure of being. Put differently, God is the unseen in the visible reality of the world. It is of course not as easy as Levinas presents it. The multiple narratives surrounding the discourses about God within the monotheistic religions, and other religions, make it difficult to render one view as an authentic and irrefutable account of God. The diverse and conflicting accounts of God and the role he plays in the world has often been one of the reasons, among others, for the use of violence in order to promote religious belief.

Peter Sloterdijk<sup>61</sup> maintains, “... expansion through missionary activity and through the Holy War, show a clearly offensive approach, one that also encompassed such means as persuasion, coercion and subjugation, even open blackmail (‘Baptism or death!’, Qur’an or death!’)” (Sloterdijk 2009:51). He goes on to say, “What we call history is the campaign of the human race to achieve consenting unity under a god common to all” (Sloterdijk 2009:56-57). The struggle to impose absolute claims on the world remains an ongoing battle between phenomenology and religious metaphysical positions. History has it that this struggle is not entirely a fight for God, but also a desire to assert human control on the world in the name of God. “The physiognomy of the offensive universality of monotheism is characterised by the determination of the preachers to make themselves fearsome in the name of the Lord”

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<sup>61</sup> Peter Sloterdijk is a German philosopher, born in 1941. Scholars like Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Friedrich Nietzsche, among others, influenced him and he has written extensively on these thinkers. He has also written about religion. I am going to draw on his book, *God Zeal: The Battle of the Three Monotheisms* (2009).

(Sloterdijk 2009:59). However, it is important to note that the desire to be feared is driven by the belief in a feared God who in turn ‘confers’ power on whomever he has chosen.

Sloterdijk refers to this fear of God as a ‘metaphysical terror’ and he ascribes this to religious thought like Augustine’s theology of ‘predestination’ translated into psychological and, ultimately, also physical terror, and this type of thinking, he claims, raised the level of cruelty in the Christian world (Sloterdijk 2009:62). The potential danger of religious worldviews is unfortunately not limited to the medieval period, it is also a reality in our time. The twentieth century saw the inevitable foil in Christian universalist agenda arising from the need to coexist with other creeds – and “the charitable weakening of the churches through the development of self-confidently secular forms of life” (Sloterdijk 2009:69) in traditionally Christian communities. This is not entirely true as there are still inter-religious tension and conflict between the monotheistic religions. There have been cases of fundamentalist Christian attacks on Muslims. However, the intensity of Christian attacks in the twenty first century is not anywhere near that of fundamentalist Islamic attacks. Jihad legitimises militancy in a way that no other religion does, as Sloterdijk maintains there is a strong desire for God within the kind of militancy that is promoted in Jihad:

‘striving on the path of God’ through which Islam seeks to train its believers, generally without exception, as zealots for the kingdom of God. This tradition makes militantism a part of Muslim life from the outset, and the only reason it is not officially included among the famous five ‘pillars’ of Islam is that it is implicitly understood in all of them (Sloterdijk 2009:76).

It will be blatantly erroneous to make a general claim about Islam in the way Sloterdijk does because Jihad has been interpreted in different ways. Rather than an outward battle against infidels, it has also been interpreted as an inward struggle against aspects of the self that deter us from doing the will of God (Pape 2005:64). The point here is that Jihad has received diverse responses and interpretations from both extremists and moderates. Thus, an across the board interpretation is a misconception of the diverging conceptions within Islamic understanding of Jihad. Nevertheless, this does not undermine my initial argument that metaphysical religion is

potentially dangerous and can, as it has in recent past, incite violence.<sup>62</sup> The violence which is often instigated by religion is mostly based on the desire to impose metaphysical truths upon the world – claims whose basis lies in revelation, which is generally inaccessible.

Heidegger's philosophy provides a significant point of departure for the evaluation of human reality. However, it does not consider two important aspects. First, Heidegger does not consider the role of metaphysical/religious claims and positions in the understanding of Dasein. As we saw in the first chapter, Heidegger limits Dasein to a being that is only aware of its existence and the existence of other beings' (ontic) realities. This points to the fact that Heidegger talks about human beings in the world only as they understand themselves and the things around them. With this, Heidegger provides his audience with a concrete understanding of his philosophical endeavour, but this reductionist approach, argues Levinas, does not fully capture the entire reality of Dasein. Human beings do not understand themselves in purely phenomenological terms. By analysing Dasein as understood in the world, Heidegger draws attention to the complexities within human everyday realities. What he misses is the fact that everyday complexities may not necessarily be based on everyday activities in the world or being-in-the-world and contingent solutions. The point is that human beings, although in the world, are sometimes preoccupied with metaphysical questions like existences, God, non-existence and death, among others.

Second, Heidegger does not consider the effects of these religious metaphysical claims and beliefs on Dasein (and Dasein's actions in the world). He only insists on prioritising the world because the world, in its ontological nature, is the only hermeneutical space for addressing the question of Dasein. The world may be a hermeneutical space, but the epistemic outcomes vary according to the experiences within every religious hermeneutical space. This is the justification for the different religious outlooks in the world today. Being-in-the-world should and must consider non-being in different ways as it affects and influences human reason as being-in-the-world. As indicated in the first chapter, Heidegger argues that the appeal to

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<sup>62</sup> Despite the monolithic nature of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, we find that the wars and antagonism between them point to the striving for legitimacy and supremacy. Sloterdijk observes that "In fact, an emphatic distancing from Judaism can be traced back to Mohammed's Medina period. Not only was Jerusalem replaced by Mecca as the direction of prayer; there were also 'cleansings and massacres' of Jewish citizens" (Sloterdijk 2009:43).

metaphysics is not because of the complexities, so to speak, of metaphysics, rather it is because of the complexities in the world. Therefore, the problems within the world should be solved within the world. For instance, in countries where people die of starvation as a result of war, Heidegger would argue that the problem is not God. The problem is political policies, economic policies, poor governance, human beings and maybe the use of manipulation of conceptions of the divine within these countries which lead to war and death. What Heidegger constantly does is to direct attention to the world as the point of departure, and this is significant. However, there are issues that go beyond phenomenological interpretations. The questions about God, birth, death, eternity, religious ethics, and others may have a phenomenological point of departure, but the moment we try to respond to these questions, we inevitably look beyond phenomenology. Various religious experiences will determine the metaphysically 'revealed' responses to these religious questions. The religious experiences are then turned into mandates which then play out in the phenomenological world. As critically evaluated in the second chapter, religious fundamentalist violence is partly due to the responses derived from religious metaphysical experience, which metamorphosed into mandates and religious claims to be carried out in the world. Religious metaphysical claims become absolutised and then imposed on the society. This disposition is detrimental to being-in-the-world.

Heidegger's philosophy provides a significant starting point when he considers the world as important in our enquiry into the reality of Dasein. For Heidegger the 'ground' is always purely worldly, and therefore can have no metaphysical components – these are per definition excluded from the world and opposed to the worldly conditions that make Dasein what it is. They therefore inevitably lead to distortions in understanding. Heidegger absolutises Dasein by insisting that the world is the only point of departure for understanding human reality. Heidegger's philosophy is similar to the absolute claims which have been attributed to religious fundamentalist violence in the sense that it is equally potentially violent in nature. However, it is different in the sense that Heidegger's philosophy espouses a starting point which has a higher level of accessibility than religious ones. It is on this basis that I seek to reformulate a phenomenological ontological conception of the world by introducing the metaphysical dimension. The aim here is to avoid absolutising either the phenomenological or the metaphysical by introducing phenomenological-transcendent-ontology.

Phenomenological-transcendent-ontology is hypenated because it is a reality that resonates with the singularity of being-in-the-world. Put differently, phenomenological-transcendent-ontology is part of the world as perceived by Dasein. This may or may not be the constitutive composition of Dasein, but it is a reality within the world whether it is accepted or not. It is indubitable that there are people who are religious and those who are not. The fact that people are not religious does not eliminate the existence of religion in the world. As a side note, let us look again at what was highlighted in the first chapter. In the first chapter phenomenology is defined as a direction to things in themselves; this was linked to the principle of non-presupposition in that things are seen or perceived independent of any preconception. Phenomenology is used by Heidegger as a tool for understanding ontology, and ontology seeks to understand the nature of human reality. Transcendent refers to that which goes beyond the physical, the metaphysical. From this understanding, it is safe to define phenomenological-transcendent-ontology as the phenomenological and metaphysical understanding of reality. Two important things are noteworthy when one looks at this definition. First, the phenomenological comes before any other reality because I remain true to the fact that phenomenology is an important point of departure due to the fact that the events in the world are the reason for Dasein's appeal to a metaphysical realm. Second, metaphysical claims and experiences are only important in so far as they relate to the world of Dasein. However, religious experiences are not considered inferior when juxtaposed with the phenomenological realities. This is because they are part of existence, or put differently, part of beings' attempt to understand its human reality.

What phenomenological-transcendent-ontology does is to consider the different facets of Dasein's attempt to understand its being without prioritising one or the other. However, it considers the world as an important component of the attempt to understand Dasein because the world is the structure of Dasein. The world is the only constant in the dualism implicit in the idea which I propose. By this, I argue that religious postulations about human existence must consider the world as the nature of being. It is the only constant in the sense that human beings have access to either verify or falsify the realities within the world. The multiple experiences, although important, do not make the dialectic which we find in phenomenology possible. However, religious experiences do translate into phenomenological realities when they become mandates which have moral, psychological and social implications on Dasein and being-in-the-world.

When religious experiences translate into moral, social, and psychological form, the priority should be the world as opposed to an ardent and sometimes rigorous inclination to carry out religious metaphysical mandates. The lived world must become the priority when religious claims are included. What I propose here is that certain religious imposition on human existence be inverted in order to emphasize the world as an important dimension of religion. This does not mean that religion is not part of the lived world, rather it points to the fact that the ways in which religious epistemic methodologies come about require that they are critically evaluated before they are considered in society. The accessibility of these metaphysical realities is essential in their being-in-the-world. Phenomenology is, so to speak, the ground of verification and uncovering of human intellectual and metaphysical findings. It is only when dialogue with the world is prioritised, as opposed to the imposition of absolute claims about the world, that religious fundamentalist violence can be alleviated. It takes an understanding of complexity and fluidity to comprehend and accept the possibility of religion and assertion like that of Richard Kearney: “[l]istening philosophically to the world of existence may thus help us listen theologically to the world of God, without confounding the two” (Kearney 2001:16).

## **5.6 The Alleviation of Religious Fundamentalist Violence**

In Chapter Three, we saw that one of the major reasons for the use of violence is to impose a certain world view or have control over the other. In most, cases acts of religious violence are executed by people who are religious absolutists. There are lots of debates about the credibility of absolutist claims. Cooper, among others, argues, “Absolutists ... are right to insist that reality is independent of the human contribution, but wrong to suppose that this reality can be articulated. Humanists, correspondingly, are right to maintain that any discursable world is a human one, but wrong to equate reality with this world” (Cooper 2009:54). Cooper identifies a potentially absolutist tendency in both religious claims and phenomenological positions. He does not undermine the fact that they are both realities in the world and they play active roles in our understanding of the world. Nonetheless, he makes it explicit that both religious and humanists’ claims have to know how they directly or indirectly affect the world. This is an important contribution to the discourse. I find a link in Cooper’s philosophy with Heidegger’s emphasis on the world. However, one must consider the nuance that has been spotted in the attempt to eradicate the absolutist implicit connotation in Heidegger’s phenomenology. Nevertheless, Heidegger’s philosophy does provide an essential ground for addressing the problem of religious fundamentalist violence in the world. The point that I advance is one

which promotes a greater level of complementarity between religious claims and phenomenological position on the question of ontology. In every instance of both religious and phenomenological hermeneutical enquiry, the eyes must and should remain fixed on the world. Spirituality must be grounded in a certain way of being in the world (Hampson 2009:73).

The alleviation of religious fundamentalist violence in the world is already implicit in the aforementioned argument. However, they need to be reemphasised. The search for truth about the nature of things is a search common to metaphysical and phenomenological investigation. Smith notes that “The integral truth of our being, from which it springs, envelops and inspires everything we consciously and unconsciously do, giving our lives their form and style, and seeing to it that each action and decision reflects that style” (Smith 2001:259). Our search for truth should not undermine or obliterate the ground of our questioning. Our world loses its form and style when we postulate beyond human reality in such a way that they become detrimental to our world.

The absolute nature of religious truth can make the acknowledgement or recognition of other forms of truths difficult. As Tariq Ramadan rightly observes, and as already highlighted in the earlier definition of religion, the nature of religions like Islam permeates every facet of life, and the love of God and His Prophet takes precedence before the love of the world (Ramadan 2009:295). Ramadan also maintains that “In this process, reason receives, reads, understands, and interprets in a way that is not wholly autonomous” (Ramadan 2009:296). There is an awakening of the inner dimension, which is characterised by an enlightenment that reason cannot comprehend. Phenomenological-transcendent-ontology proposes a disenchantment characterised by an openness and an analytic engagement with the various epistemic realities in our world. Hampson emphasises this position clearly when he writes, “Placing ourselves at the centre of the world, we should exercise that autonomy which Kant considered the hallmark of human maturity” (Hampson 2009:76). However, it resonates too strongly with Heidegger’s ontology which seems to think reality is reducible to what Dasein can understand. The potential danger here is that the religious mandates might be eroded in any attempt to prioritise one outlook over the other. As I have argued in Chapter Three, this is one of the reasons why violent resistance has been one of the responses to religious alienation. Ramadan maintains that this fear has been one of the reasons for the exclusive normalisation of religious texts and practices (Ramadan 2009:296).

The relationship between phenomenology and religious metaphysics is one that can be characterised as a constant attempt to eclipse each other. If one is to go to the root of phenomenology, it would entail subscribing to Smith's position that "Reason performs logical operations on information that is in full view and can be described and defined" (Smith 2001:257)." It is safe to infer that things that are not in plain sight lack the characteristics necessary for rational engagement. This will definitely induce fear in religious people. And as Ramadan rightly observes, a forceful normalisation through acts of violence is a potential response to secular relegation of religious beliefs to insignificance. Phenomenological-transcendent-ontology is not a question of rational concordance, it is more about a mutual understanding of the ground of ontological discourse and dialectic engagement with this in the world - the space of human reality.

Phenomenology and religious metaphysics should not be in an unending situation of ideological eclipsing of the other, especially when considered in view of being-in-the-world. These realities of being-in-the-world are uneclipsable because of the immanent hold they both have on ontological questions. By this, I mean that being's existence in the world can not be prevented from revealing itself as such. Levinas maintains that phenomenology "is to search for the human or interhuman intrigue as the fabric of ultimate intelligibility. And perhaps it is also the way for the wisdom of heaven to return to earth" (Levinas 1996:158), and the zest to unravel the interhuman complex relationship with the concreteness of the 'unthought'. Phenomenology should not necessarily entail atheism (Kovacs 1990:15). As a side note, what is proposed here is not a state of anarchy. The state of anarchy may appear to be an inevitable outcome of not legitimising phenomenology or metaphysics. Contrary to this position, I maintain that there be a continuous dialectic between phenomenology and religious metaphysical understanding of ontology. This, in my view, will advance the intended aim of the phenomenological-transcendent-ontological task of eradicating the type of absolutism that informs religious fundamentalist violence, which is found in religious metaphysics.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I advance a phenomenological-transcendent-ontology in the search for a more accurate understanding of the world. This chapter draws on important strands of phenomenology and religious metaphysics in its attempt to devise a new path for comprehending Heidegger's being-in-the-world. Levinas's understanding of ethics as the first philosophy, as already highlighted in this chapter, does not only critique the understanding as

mere Heidegger's ontological postulation, it also expands on the ethical implications of existence that does not promote sameness. For Levinas, the relationship with the other disrupts sameness, thus inviting an ethical response that reveals the transcendence of the Other [God]. The break in sameness is initiated by the face-to-face encounter which is incongruent with the being that one experiences in the world. According to Levinas, the face-to-face experience calls individual being into question, and ethical obligation is ignited. As highlighted in this chapter, Levinas's focus on ethics is of greater depth when compared to the ethical implications that can be derived from Heidegger's philosophy. It is in the same way that Nancy tries to work out a relational understanding of our being as the essential structure (Nancy in Devisch 2000:245-246). What Levinas and Nancy share is their critical engagement with the connective nexus which they both consider intrinsic in human relationships. This is a dimension which was not adequately explored in Heidegger's philosophy – a neglect which can ultimately be said to point to a fundamental lack in his very ontology. Nancy discusses this relationship between beings and says “The ‘with’ is this structure, the condition of being, of our being as the act of being-with” (Nancy in Devisch 2000:245-246). Heidegger considers Being-with, but his reductionist and absolutist conception of being-in-the-world dilutes the intended significance which he wanted to give to Being-with. Moreover, Heidegger's insistence on phenomenology as the only way to engage with the ontological question also undermines his understanding of being-with, especially when one considers the different hermeneutical methods in the world.

Like Heidegger, I believe that the conception of Dasein must begin in and from the world, but unlike Heidegger's notion of the world, I maintain that the world must be viewed in its entirety in order to avoid absolutising Dasein as the only path to comprehending being-in-the-world in the way Levinas does. Thus leaving room for the revelation that opens in the face-to-face encounter with the Other [God]. By this, I argue that fundamentalist acts of violence are not potentially only unique to facets of society with religious outlooks. Phenomenology, which is arguably secular, can be absolutist and potentially violent. Phenomenological-transcendent-ontology remedies the situation as it considers both phenomenology and religious metaphysics as realities in the world, and sets the parameters within which they can both operate in the world.

## General Conclusion

“In the end, those very phenomena which will be exhibited under the heading of 'Temporality' in our analysis are precisely those most covert judgments of the 'common reason' ...” (Heidegger, 1962:42)

### 6.1 Introduction

The task of this project has been to engage religious fundamentalist claims, especially as they instigate violence. By imploring Heidegger’s phenomenological ontological method as a suitable litmus test for analysing religious metaphysical positions, I argue that religious metaphysical claims are potentially violent because inherent in them is the tendency not only to exteriorise ontology, but also to absolutise religious metaphysical positions by imposing it on other forms of ontology. This concluding chapter presents a synopsis of the preceding five chapters; a deduction will be highlighted based on the arguments presented in the chapters. Deductions made from this synopsis will also be summarised and the limitation of the project, as well as its implications for further research, will be explained.

### 6.2 A Synopsis

Focusing on Heidegger’s *Being and Time* as the major text, while referring to other important literatures on Heidegger’s conception of ontology, the first chapter presented an overview of Heidegger’s phenomenological ontological framework. Heidegger’s philosophy seeks to critically engage his predecessors’ rendition of ontology. He maintains that since Plato and Aristotle, a dogma had been created in the understanding of Dasein; this dogma did not only consider Dasein (being) to be superfluous, it had also completely ignored the ontological nature of Dasein (Heidegger 1962:2). Heidegger considers the ontological question important for addressing things in the world. In other words, the understanding or lack of understanding of ontology influences how we acquire knowledge of the world around us. Hence the question, ‘why is there something rather than nothing?’ This question forms the crux of Heidegger’s

ontological enquiry. Against the traditional metaphysics, which I later refer to as religious metaphysical and somewhat intellectualist understanding of ontology, Heidegger advances a phenomenological approach as the only path to understanding ontology – “*Only as phenomenology, is ontology possible*” (Heidegger 1962:60; italics in main text). Phenomenology, understood as the knowledge of things as they are experienced, becomes the measure for accessing human reality (Dasein) and things in the world. Implicit in Heidegger’s phenomenology is the position that the world is the ground of ontological discourse. The everyday (everydayness) (Heidegger 1962:69) activities of human beings in the world reveals the nature of human existence. This makes being-in-the-world a structure of Dasein’s existence.

Having established the need to thematise ontology, and maintaining that the world is the place of ontological discourse, Heidegger presents different ways in which Dasein reveals itself in the world. He argues that Dasein is a being-in-the-world (Heidegger 1962:181); being-with (Heidegger 1962:181), thrown into the world (Heidegger 1962:174), projection, among others. Heidegger’s understanding of being-in-the-world marks the basis of his temporality. According to Heidegger, Dasein’s accessibility is within the ground of temporality, within time and history. Human beings, from a phenomenological perspective, as presented in Chapter One, can only be investigated within spatiality, time, existence and history (past present and future) – in the world. One cannot think of Dasein away from the world. This necessarily justifies the position that Dasein is relation. It is a being with other beings. A position Heidegger emphasises with the following phrase, “Even Dasein’s Being-alone is Being-with” (Heidegger 1962:156). Dasein is thrown into a world in birth and, as such, it is always with beings (things) and other Daseins in the world. It is in relation with the world that Dasein comes to an awareness of its desires and concerns, which then informs its projections (aspirations and desires). In concerned relations with things in the world, Dasein reveals itself (Heidegger 1962:161). The projection of Dasein is always within temporality. In other words, the world is the horizon of projection.

Even though things and Dasein exist in the same world, Heidegger makes a clear distinction between Dasein and things in the world. Dasein, according to Heidegger, is aware of its existence and the existence of other things and Dasein cannot be instrumentalised the way things are used as means to an end. For instance, a human being always knows that s/he is a human being and knows that if there is a table, in the room it is not a human being. Conversely,

a table does not know that it is a table neither does it know that there is a human being in the room. The ontological distinction between things and Dasein has an ethical implication based on the imperative that human beings cannot be instrumentalised or equipmentalised (Heidegger 1962:97). Heidegger's implicit ethical position and his understanding of ontology are based purely on his phenomenological approach.

Heidegger refutes religious metaphysical claims by arguing that it advances and absolutises a misconceived understanding of ontology. He expresses this position as follows: "Both the contention that there are 'eternal truths' and the jumbling together of Dasein's phenomenally grounded 'ideality' with an idealised absolute subject, belong to those residues of Christian theology within philosophical problematics which have not as yet been radically extruded" (Heidegger 1962:272). Heidegger maintains that the task of philosophy is to understand Dasein in the world and not to entertain any religious metaphysical claims as is obtainable in Christianity in particular and religions in general. It is important to note here that I focused mainly on the Abrahamic religions because it best suits the goal of this project. However, it is plausible, one might argue, that Heidegger's objection of religious metaphysics is directed at religious understanding of ontology.

Contrary to the above, Chapter Two explores religious metaphysical proponents like Al-Faruqi who maintain that ontology cannot be understood away from religious metaphysical understanding of primordial divine configuration. Representing Islam, Al-Faruqi argues that human beings are primordially Muslims. One can say the same of Christianity, extrapolating from the creation story in the Bible that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. There is also a part in the Bible that says those human beings were known even before they were conceived. Referring to religious scholars like Michel Henry, I also illustrate how this divine knowledge is considered as an ineffaceable attribute of human beings because it permeates every aspect of human existence and things in the world. God, as we find in the Bible, is the creator of all things and all things return to God. Augustine attributes human restlessness to the desire to return to the creator of all things (Augustine 1992: Book 1 Para 1). Different from Heidegger's phenomenological conception of the unending human projection, religious metaphysics maintain that human projection is based on the desire for that which cannot be satisfied within temporality. What this non-temporal position implies is that there is an experience beyond human experience, time beyond spatial time – eternal time; there is more than what the phenomenological alone offers. Therefore, while acknowledging that not all

religious views are intrinsically violent or absolutist, in Chapter Three, I concluded that the other-worldly outlook of religious stance can potentially promote acts of religious fundamentalist violence. I used Heidegger's philosophical postulation to proffer a possible solution to the potential violence in religious positions.

However, in Chapter Four, I argue that Heidegger's philosophical positions, especially as presented in his *Being and Time*, provide us with necessary but insufficient ways of addressing the religious fundamentalist violence. There are scholars, like Emmanuel Levinas, who juxtaposed an ethical framework with phenomenology. Implicit in their argument is the position that focus on ontology is a misconception of the significance of ethics as the first philosophy when being is face-to-face with Others in the world. Levinas also critiques Heidegger's reductionism, and Nancy's critique of Heidegger's after-thought ethical interpretation of Dasein's in the world with other beings. Heidegger favours the 'this-worldly' analyses of human reality as opposed to what he considers 'other-worldly speculation' (Heidegger, 1962:292). This is what makes Heidegger's phenomenology different from the religious metaphysical stance on ontology. While religious metaphysics focuses on other-worldly speculations, Heidegger's phenomenological ontology focuses on this-worldly reality.

Levinas presents a different approach to ontology that gives room to infinity in the way the beings are understood in the world. Levinas maintains that in confrontation with the totalising trend of ontology there is an infinite ethical mandate towards Others. In other words, human relationships cannot be reduced to phenomenology. The mystery within human beings makes it impossible to conceive of human beings from a phenomenological approach alone. In the attempt to understand human reality, there is more than what ontology and phenomenology present (Levinas 1996:9). There is more to human existence than ontology and phenomenology can account for. Levinas's position emphasises the irreducibility of human existence to a single account of reality. Marion, like Levinas, acknowledged the significance of Heidegger's philosophical framework, but Marion also saw in Heidegger's philosophy a problem with his ethical postulations in his understanding of Being-with. Nancy argues that Heidegger's ethics emerge as an afterthought. Contrary to Heidegger's ethics which only surfaces after the thematisation of ontology, Nancy argues that Heidegger's *Being and Time* needs to be rewritten as a social ontology (Nancy in Devisch 2000:243). Nancy considers ethical relationships between beings as a primary mode of human existence. We saw that for Nancy, Heidegger does not sufficiently establish the kind of relationship which should exist between human

beings (Nancy 2008:7). Heidegger does not, as Nancy argues, present a satisfactory analysis of the complexities that exist between Daseins in their relationships *with* each other.

Nancy's criticism is similar to the criticisms presented by John Martis, but his critique is directed at Heidegger's critique of religious metaphysical positions. Referring to Heidegger's *The Phenomenology of Religious Experience*, Martis writes, "Heidegger's separation of Thessalonians' Christian facticity from their worldly facticity, in a move that renders the Christian facticity secondary, is beset with internal contradictions, one root cause being his refusal ontologically to recognise spirit" (Martis, 2016:247). Martis considers this separation as problematic and misleading.

Martis corroborates the position advanced by Nancy when he notes, "The transcendence (of the sense) of being is a transcendence of and for immanence: it is nothing other than the desire/ability of making-sense, and this desire/ability *as* making-sense (Nancy 2003:188)." Human beings are constantly trying to make sense of their desires and abilities in the world. Therefore, to undermine religious metaphysical positions is to undermine one of the many ways human beings try to make sense of the world. This justifies the position that

No 'value,' no 'ideal' floating above concrete and everyday existence provides it in advance with a norm and significance. But this everyday existence finds itself asked to make sense. This request, in turn, stems neither from heaven nor from an authority of sense: it comes from existence, being the proper request of its being (Nancy 2003: 179-180).

Nancy argues that human existence is the source of the different forms of sense making and it is important to consider human existence as capable of this diverse imaginations. Heidegger considers any thematisation of non-experiential reality irrelevant in the understanding of the world and things in the world. He made a clear distinction between a religious metaphysical (ontotheological) understanding and a phenomenological investigation of human beings and he subscribes to the latter as the only way ontology can be addressed. We saw that "where Augustine contemplates the nature of searching for God, Heidegger appears to be moving in the direction of concern, or care, and therefore of ethics and the good life ..." (Fritsch and Gosetti-Ferencei, 2013:124-125).

Considering the above, Martis argues that if Heidegger fails in his philosophical endeavour, it is because Heidegger's phenomenological ontology does not approach religion in its facticity (Martis 2016:245). Put differently, within the phenomenology is religion and Heidegger's lack of sensitivity to religious metaphysical positions creates a problem in Heidegger's phenomenological account of ontology. Martis argues that "phenomenology fails itself by disregarding religious experience" (Martis 2016:246). Martis notices an interior contradiction in Heidegger's separation of religious experience from phenomenology (Martis 2016:245). Religious metaphysical positions cannot be delinked from phenomenology because it is part of human existence.

### **6.3 Deductions from the Synopsis**

A major deduction can be made when one analyses Heidegger's phenomenological ontology and religious metaphysical positions. Beginning with religious metaphysical ontology, I argued that the understanding of ontology advanced by religious metaphysics is potentially violent. The absolute claims inherent in religious metaphysics partly informs fundamentalist acts of violence experienced in the world today. In Chapter Five, we also saw absolutist tendencies in Heidegger's phenomenological ontology. As major problematic that is spotted in Heidegger's philosophy is in what I referred to as a methodological monism. Heidegger insists that the only way Dasein can be understood is through phenomenology. With this, Heidegger closes the door to other alternatives – other ways of accounting for human existence.

Without entirely discarding Heidegger's philosophy, I argued that the ground of human existence is very important and it is sufficiently thematised in Heidegger's 'Being-in-the-world'. For Heidegger, the world is the ground of human beings and it is impossible to think of human reality without first thinking about it in relation to the world.

However, religious metaphysics, implicitly and explicitly, consider human reality to represent something more than phenomenology can account for. Augustine attributes humans' endless desires for projection partly to the innate desire for divine satisfaction. In other words, human restlessness is because of the desire for rest – a rest that can only be achieved in death. Al-Faruqi also maintains that human beings have a primordial configuration towards God, and this justifies their disposition towards God.

Similarly the argument of Martis, which represents the other voices in Chapter Two, I argue that it is important to consider religious metaphysics in ontological discourse. I consider this position important for three main reasons: first, religious metaphysics is part of the human narrative and must be considered within phenomenology. Second, the understanding of religious metaphysics provides an avenue for addressing religious fundamentalist violence. Third, the rejection of religious metaphysical positions inevitably leads to absolutism.

By proposing a phenomenological-transcendent-ontology, I argue that Heidegger's phenomenology and the religious metaphysical position are complementary when addressing human reality. A major weakness that both strands of ontology share is that they are extremes and can be absolutist. Most importantly, religious metaphysics and phenomenology are both potentially violent when essentialised. Phenomenological-transcendent-ontology, while prioritising the world as the starting point, considers both strands important for understanding human existence and things in the world. This is because it is only when phenomenology begins to appreciate the role of the religious in society without imposing absolute claims and vice versa that potential acts of religious fundamentalist violence, or any violence, can be minimised.

#### **6.4 Limitations of the Work**

First, I relied extensively on the translated versions of Heidegger's main text, *Being and Time*, which I used in most of the chapters. Second, I think fieldwork would have enriched this research because it would have created the avenue to get important accounts of different understandings of the world and violence from different religious communities. However, this is a research in philosophy and not in social science. As can be observed, I used a descriptive and normative approach in this research.

#### **6.5 Implications of this Project for Future Research**

This project sets a significant theoretical precedence for future research on how we should think about human beings in the world and about religious views, and how we should begin to engage actively in the eradication of violence perpetrated in the world today. Further research work calls for an inter-disciplinary approach like fieldwork on a similar topic. This thesis engages the problems of religious fundamentalist violence from a philosophical point of view.

It does this by addressing the issue from an ontological perspective. Heidegger's philosophy is used to propose a new guiding framework for human disposition towards their being and the being of others. In other words, I proposed an understanding of relationality driven by a renewed conception of the fundamental nature of ontology. The result of this proposition provides a new attitude towards religious beliefs, and a more critical conceptualisation of Heidegger's phenomenological ontology.

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