

Article

“Being-Placed before God”: Reading the Early Heidegger’s Phenomenology of Liturgy with Jean-Yves Lacoste

Jorge Luis Roggero

Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, University of Buenos Aires, Puán 480, Argentina; jorgeluisroggero@gmail.com

Abstract: This article aims to demonstrate, by means of a comparison with Lacoste’s proposal, that we can find a particular phenomenology of liturgy in the early Heidegger’s phenomenology of religion, centered in the structure of “being-placed before God”. His examination of this structure manages to go deeper than Lacoste in order to account for the essence of human existence. With this purpose in mind, in the first section of the article I will present the basic features of the liturgical experience, as it is introduced in *Experience and the Absolute*. In the second section, I will analyze the early Heidegger’s phenomenology of religion and its interpretation of Christian factual life experience. Finally, in the third section, I will bring the insights from both sections together to establish the particularities of Heidegger’s phenomenology of liturgy.

Keywords: being-before-God; liturgy; phenomenology of religion; Martin Heidegger; Jean-Yves Lacoste



Citation: Roggero, Jorge Luis. 2021. “Being-Placed before God”: Reading the Early Heidegger’s Phenomenology of Liturgy with Jean-Yves Lacoste. *Religions* 12: 716. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12090716>

Academic Editor: Christina M. Gschwandtner

Received: 8 August 2021

Accepted: 29 August 2021

Published: 2 September 2021

Publisher’s Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2021 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

What could philosophy learn by studying religion? Is it possible to comprehend existence in a better way by paying attention to religious phenomena? Could religious experience teach us something about factual life experience? Additionally, what about “liturgical experience”? Would an analysis of the essence of ritual practices illuminate what philosophy and religious studies can say about religion and its significance for human life?

In “Jean-Yves Lacoste: A Phenomenology of Liturgy”, Joeri Schrijvers argues that Lacoste’s principal adversary is Martin Heidegger: the project of *Experience and Absolute* should be understood as a corps-à-corps (hand-to-hand combat) against Heidegger’s in *Being and Time*. Not only can anxiety be put into question as the basic state-of-mind and as a basic experience (*Grunderfahrung*), but we should also be suspicious of the notion of projection centered in the future as the privileged temporal ecstasis. Additionally, although Lacoste’s investigation, in a broad sense, has a similar goal to Heidegger’s—they both want to think the existentiality of *Dasein* or the “humanity of man” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 1)—¹ Lacoste will strongly criticize Heidegger’s account of human experience as being too poor (Schrijvers 2005, p. 315). Nevertheless, at the end of the article, Schrijvers suggests that one could find significant analogies between the formal structures of *Experience and the Absolute* and those of *Being and Time*.² It is, in fact, no secret that, for Lacoste, Heidegger’s thought constitutes not only a proposal to overcome, but also the principal source of his philosophy. In his own words, Heidegger is “from the very outset the contemporary philosopher who has given me a little more to think than others” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 1). Considering Schrijvers’ final suggestion, I would like to advance the hypothesis that not only a clearer parallel between Lacoste and Heidegger could be drawn with the early Heidegger’s phenomenology of religion, but we can actually find some sort of phenomenology of liturgy in these early lectures in Freiburg. Lacoste defines “liturgy” as referring to “the logic that presides over the encounter between man and God” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 2). The structure of “being-before-God” is the core of the liturgical experience. I propose that we can find this same structure as the center of the early Heidegger’s analysis on religion. Deeply influenced by Luther, the German philosopher examines the structure

of “being-placed before God” (*Gestelltsein vor Gott*) in Saint Paul and in Saint Augustin, searching for a model of an authentic factual life experience. Lacoste’s *Experience and the Absolute* project has a similar purpose to Heidegger’s; the liturgical non-experience reveals the ultimate essence of human being: “man takes hold of what is most proper to him when he chooses to encounter God” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 194). Or: “Liturgy, understood in its broadest sense, is the most human mode in which we can exist in the world or on the earth” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 98). The liturgical transgression opens the most proper dimension of “the humanity of man”, by showing him that he is not confined to the limits of the world and the earth. Nevertheless, there are certain important differences that should be pointed out, that permit to assess the importance of the early Heidegger’s proposal concerning its productive exchange between philosophy and religion.

With this purpose on mind, in the Section 1 of this article I will present the wide variety of characterizations of the liturgical experience that is centered in the structure of “being-before-God”, as it is introduced in *Experience and the Absolute*. Although I will not examine in detail every one of the themes presented by Lacoste, I would like to present every feature of the “liturgical experience” in order to show the points he shares in common with Heidegger’s analysis. First, Lacoste characterizes liturgy as a transgression of our belonging to the world and the earth. In the figures of the recluse monk and the pilgrim, the liturgical experience shows its ability to subvert our relationship to place. This idea can be traced in the Heideggerian analysis of the Lutheran category of “being-placed before God” and its relationship with the world. Second, the liturgical transgression also constitutes a transgression of temporality. Lacoste introduces an analysis of the *parousia* and the *eschaton* as the “hidden present of our prayers” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 61). Additionally, although he establishes a strict distinction between ethics and religion, with the category of “inoperativity” and the basic attitude of “patience” he encounters some features of Heidegger’s examination of the Paulinian “as if not”. Third, Lacoste speaks of abnegation as an original passivity that takes place in the liturgical experience when consciousness submits its place to the soul. This passivity can also be found in the Heideggerian “factual life” as a subjectivity that is constituted in its “being-placed” before other (God, the community, the awaiting of the Messiah). Finally, Lacoste affirms an essential poverty, proper to human nature, that challenges any appropriation. This gesture is assumed by Heidegger as a feature of “factual life” in his reading on the Paulinian “as if not”.

In the Section 2, I will analyze the early Heidegger’s phenomenology of religion and its interpretation of Christian factual life experience that has at its core the structure of “being-placed before God”. I will examine some phenomena, presented by Heidegger, that show the relationship between Christian factual life experience, that stands for authentic factual life experience in general, and this liturgical structure. The first one is the phenomenon of “accepting the proclamation” as “having-become”. It implies a world shared with the Christian community and a “how” proper to Christian comportment. This “how”, in turn, implies a reversal of the sense of enactment in two directions. One is related to the phenomenon of weakness as a humble attitude, which has to do with a particular “being-placed before God”. The second one is related to the phenomenon of the awaiting of the *parousia* and its way of living under the category of the “as if not”.

Finally, in the Section 3, I will bring the insights from both sections together to establish the particularities of Heidegger’s phenomenology of liturgy and how he manages to go deeper than Lacoste in his examination of the structure of “being-placed before God” in order to account for the essence of human existence.

2. “Being-before-God” in Lacoste

Lacoste’s philosophical project is usually identified as a phenomenology of liturgy, and that is exactly what is introduced in *Experience and the Absolute*. Notwithstanding, this phenomenology of liturgy represents Lacoste’s position about “disputed question on the humanity of man” (the subtitle of the book). The book proposes an investigation of the

“humanity of man”. The liturgy, understood as “the encounter between man and God,” that is, as the human experience of “being-before-God”, shows the ultimate constitution of the human being. In this sense, it is important to point out that this wide use of the term “liturgy” is directed not to the different aspects of ritual practices, but to one particular basic structure. Christina M. Gschwandtner’s reading of Lacoste’s proposal is accurate: “Although he acknowledges that this may well include concrete liturgical practices, he focuses instead on more fundamental religious structures or experiences” (Gschwandtner 2019, p. 5). She understands that Lacoste does not investigate concrete liturgical practices in order to avoid an exercise of anthropology or sociology of religion. A phenomenological approach should reduce its scope to the analysis of basic structures of human being before God. However, is it possible to describe an experience of the Absolute without referring to the content of actual religious practices? In fact, as Gschwandtner rightly notes, Lacoste resorts to some ascetic practices, and not only as mere illustration, but to put into question various aspects of Heidegger’s ontological account of human being.³ She is right to point out that the division between the basic structure of “being-before-God” and actual practices is not sufficiently clear. Additionally, this issue is important because it is reflected in some difficulties in establishing the difference between religion and ethics (I will return to this issue below). Nevertheless, I believe that although Lacoste’s phenomenology of liturgy may have that problem and does not offer an extended description of concrete liturgical practices, he does examine the essence of liturgy deeply. Additionally, in this way, it constitutes undoubtedly a valuable contribution to the field. Nevertheless, it is true that in his account of liturgy there is a lack of analysis of a basic dimension of it: the communal one (Gschwandtner 2019, p. xiii). I will return to this point emphasizing the fact that this aspect is not ignored in Heidegger’s reading of Paul. Let us analyze it. Lacoste defines human being as “the liturgist in the world with the power to face God” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 185): every time someone attempts to pray, he or she is showing “the ultimate characteristic” of his or her humanity. However, how should we understand this “being-before-God” as the most peculiar feature of our being?

In the following part of this section, I will present the features that characterizes this central structure of the liturgical experience as they are introduced in *Experience and the Absolute*. In the first part of the book, Lacoste presents liturgical experience as a transgression. Liturgy puts into question our belonging to the world and the earth. The boundaries of the experience of *Dasein*’s “being-in-the-world” are transgressed by liturgy: “the experiential practice of liturgy can open up a space where neither world nor earth is interposed between man and God” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 28). This new space, which is also identified as a “corporeal existence that simultaneously and essentially is tantamount to being a being-before-God” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 29), is characterized as a nonplace, a nonexperience and a nonevent. In order to explain these notions, Lacoste presents two extreme figures or modes of inhabiting a place that challenge our inherence in the world, represented by monasticism and Christian asceticism: (1) the recluse monk (*reclusion*) and (2) the pilgrim (*dépaysement*).

(1) In a liminal way, by choosing to be only in one particular place, the recluse disposes of place in order to be almost nowhere. In this ascetic gesture, place and topology are subordinated to liturgy by showing that the dialectic of world and earth does not explain the whole logic of the place: “In impoverishing his relation to place to the limit, and by subverting the meaning of his location, the ascetic does not deny the existence of place. On the contrary, he affirms the right and freedom to transfigure (albeit precariously) the logic of being-in-the-world in the name of a liturgical logic, and desires the eschatological establishment of this transfiguration” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 29). The emphasis on staying in just one place, paradoxically, puts into question the relevance of place and its logic of immanence that denies transcendence.

(2) The radical figure of the pilgrim is similar to the one of the recluse monk. He also questions the logic of place as reduced to a belonging to the world. The *xeniteia* should be

thought not as some sort of cosmopolitanism, but as “the exact paradigm of an experience conceived as a passage and as nonbelonging” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 29).

These two figures help Lacoste to show how liturgy implies a subversion of the relation to place that make place for a nonplace. This nonplace denies that the logic of “inherence” to the world stands for all of what we are. There is a desire of the Absolute, a desire of existing before God, proper to our human nature, that generates a rupture of the limits of “being-in-the-world”.

However, how should we conceive of an experience of existing before God? Lacoste insists that we cannot compare the presence of God with the presence of things or of people, or of the world as a horizon. The experience of “being-before-God” should be thought of in terms of nonexperience and nonevent. Lacoste says: “We will therefore first qualify liturgy as the *expectation or desire for Parousia in the certitude of the nonparousiacal presence of God*” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 45). We cannot talk about an experience because there is no actual presence of God, no *parousia* in our present. However, it is precisely because of and from this inexperience of God—which stays in the margin of experience—that we are allowed “to criticize every theory in which experience governs knowledge [*connaissance*] of God, or in which the relation of man to God reaches its culmination in the field of conscious experience” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 49). Human experience cannot be confined to the limits of conscious experience, where some givens can attest the present presence of a phenomenon. In this sense, we should talk about an experience that constitutes a nonexperience and a nonevent. Not only the expectation of God can be frustrated, as Lacoste rightly points out, but his eventual coming to present will not take the form of givens of consciousness.

The *parousia* and the *eschaton* themes introduce the historical and temporal dimension. Liturgy transfigures not only space but also time: “The space and the time it opens up are, however, those of a disinterestedness [*désintéressement*], of leave taken from the play of the world [. . .] However, for those who turn to face God during the time of being-in-the-world, time loses its essential power to organize itself historically and to derive meaning from this ordered relation” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 52). This expectation of the *Parousia* shows the temporal dimension of the structure of “being-before-God”.

At this point, Lacoste starts to display an argumentation that seeks to separate religion from ethics and politics. In contrast to Heidegger, he states that “being-towards-death” should be distinguished from, what we can call, a “being-towards-*parousia*”. “Liturgy does not, of course, bring about the *Parousia*. It does, however, represent a certain power to consign to irrelevance everything that separates man from the *Parousia* or, to put it another way, to live in a presence as if—but only as if—this presence were the *Parousia*. It is important, therefore, to note that liturgical temporalization, at bottom, loses interest in every future that takes our being-toward-death as its measure” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 58). Lacoste argues that even if the present of the liturgy is the present of a mortal being, it is a present that denies any temporalization that gives the last word to death. In this sense, “the *eschaton* is, not the horizon in which the man who prays lives, but already the hidden present of our prayers” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 61).

However, how is the *eschaton* the hidden present? How does the expectation of the *parousia* operate in our way of living? Lacoste is not clear about this. He does not give an account of the transformation that the idea of a “hidden present” suggests. On the one hand, he affirms that only liturgy permits us “to rigorously ground the ethical meaning of our facticity” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 70). On the other hand—as the liturgy is secondary in relationship to the being-in-the-world that is primary—he also says that “moral and political exigency, after all, maintain in their genesis no obvious link with liturgical experience” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 70). Lacoste criticizes Levinas for situating ethics in an original dimension: “By granting to ethics the status of first philosophy and to its exigencies the status of immediate givens of consciousness, Levinas is condemned to passing over in silence everything that does not constitute our being-in-the-world as moral obligation [. . .] One should not concede too hastily that the phenomenological morning of experience lets moral exigency

shine forth for all to see. One readily concedes to Levinas, against Hume and his followers, that moral prescription does not superimpose itself on the order of fact as though they were two distinct universes" (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 71). Therefore, neither religion nor ethics can be found in our initial experience. However, how is it possible then that liturgy could "rigorously ground the ethical meaning of facticity"? Lacoste answers that, paradoxically, the di-version that liturgy produces concerning urgent tasks introduces the necessary distance that allow us to see "the injunctions of the good" that the world keeps veiled over. In this sense, Lacoste is asserting that the liturgical experience opens at once the ethical dimension of our facticity and the most proper signification of the humanity of man.

Nevertheless, liturgy can and should be distinguished from the ethical and political exigences, because the liturgical experience is useless in its essence. Liturgy is not a work and is not an action; it is "inoperativity", that is, Blanchotian *désœuvrement* (78). It is remarkable that Lacoste does not seem to notice that this ontological position can be understood as an ethical and political one, as Maurice Blanchot himself (Blanchot [1983] 1988), Jean-Luc (Nancy [1986] 1991) and Giorgio (Agamben [1990] 1993) propose. Even more, the liturgical time of the expectation of the *parousia* is characterized by Lacoste as a vigil in the night. "Sleep" can be thought as a "figure of being-less in general, of nonexistence" (79). When we are sleeping, "life" has power over "existence". Human being is the being that is capable of keeping vigil. Lacoste says: "We can set ourselves up against the exigencies of 'life' so as to 'exist' a little longer: the time of the vigil is truly our time, that time which we gain at the expense of nonfreedom and nonconsciousness, or in other words, pure biological necessities [. . .] The act of keeping vigil appears to us then as the purest form of the self positing itself, as the epitome of an affirmation of our freedom" (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 79). The human being exercises his or her freedom in vigil. However, the paroxysm of this exercise is liturgy, for liturgy is a vigil with no work; the liturgical vigil exhibits freedom as inoperativity and as an essential patience. Inoperativity implies "a critique of 'doing' [*du faire*] and of 'work' [*de l'œuvre*]", and it should not be interpreted as "uselessness but as a beyond-to-utility" (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 80). Inoperativity shows freedom and possibility as the most proper ontological dimension of the human being, where any political or ethical proposal should be grounded. One might relate Lacoste's thought in this regard to the impolitical reflection as presented by Roberto Esposito [1988] (Esposito [1988] 2015). Notwithstanding, based on this inoperativity, Lacoste establishes the difference between ethics and liturgy by pointing out that the former implies a "position of power" and the latter is "not a position of strength" (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 80). Additionally, I would add, according to Lacoste, liturgy does not refer to a possession of any kind. He prevents any attempt to identify the absolute future (*parousia*) with the present reality (ethics) as any kind of possession. That is why he criticizes Bultmannian faith and Hegelian knowledge as eschatological events that present an "absolute present": "Reconciled existence takes place therefore in an *interim between the eschatological blessings [biens] already granted and the eschatological blessings that still remain within an economy of the promise*" (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 139). The site of the human is a preeschatological one. However, Lacoste argues that peace is a "primordial mark" of liturgical experience (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 69). This peace could be attained in the exercise of patience while awaiting the *parousia*.

In the second part of the book, Lacoste mentions some final features proper to the structure of "being-before-God". The first one is the inversion of intentionality that takes place in the liturgical experience: ". . . the life of intentionality, when man faces God, is in fact subordinate to God's intentions for man" (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 150). Before God, according to Lacoste, we should talk about a "liturgical disorientation of consciousness" (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 152), because it loses all initiative. Consciousness submits its place to the soul, which constitutes an original passivity "more essential than all intentional activity" characterized as "pure exposition to God" (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 152). This passivity should be related to patience as the "major liturgical virtue" (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 91) and not be confused with any affective dimension. Lacoste asserts: "Passivity can

assume the form of an affect (and, by implication, conscious activity), but does not have to assume it. (One can resolutely side with Hegel against Schleiermacher and note that knowledge here occupies a position of strength that no ‘feeling of absolute dependence’ could ever occupy). There is good reason to recognize in patience, whose semantic links with suffering [*le pâtir*] are strong, the privileged mode, perhaps temporally insuperable, in which man enters into a relation with the Absolute. The hypothesis of a perpetual patience tells us thus that passivity [*passivité*], in the specific and undoubtedly unique case of liturgical (in)experience, is not assimilated into the logic of affective life” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, pp. 156–57).

This position concerning emotions and affects in its relationship with the Absolute depends on Lacoste’s conception of religion as not related to the sphere of feeling (Schleiermacher), but to some sort of logic that grounds the liturgy. In any case, Lacoste insists that before the Absolute “it is a question of dislodging the I from every position of centrality” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 151). As long as the human being is thought as a subject, he cannot face the Absolute because from the subjective point of view, everything is the product of his action. Liturgy is the inoperativity that dismantles any constitution of a subject: “Liturgy compels me to exist objectively before God, and it compels me to recognize in this objectivity a making available. Action is subordinate to passivity—or, more exactly, to its possibility. Man fundamentally exists only within the dimension of exteriority; according to an anthropomorphism that should not escape our notice, he is ‘in God’s hands’” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 156). Although he argues that his intention is not “to represent a postmodern position”, with this original passivity and exteriority, that receives the name of “abnegation”, Lacoste assumes the contemporary critique of the modern subject and its self-positing: “Abnegation therefore accepts that the Absolute, once man is liturgically turned toward it, takes away its right to embody the figures of humanity afforded him in modernity” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 162).

Connected with this last characteristic, Lacoste emphasizes the human capability of “challenging the game of appropriation”, for “he describes who he is more precisely when he thinks of himself as poor than when he avails himself of his right to property” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 172). The fact of our death reveals our essential poverty. However, in order to take that step, certain madness is required: “poverty and ‘holy madness’ manifest a real secret of the humanity of man” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 187). Madness is not the passive lunatic’s experience. Madness implies a decision: “the fool showed himself to us as one who removes the mask each of us wears to leave visible the true face of man” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 189). This true face of man accounts for an *anthropologia crucis*: the humiliated humanity of the fool is the reflection of the humiliated humanity of God in the cross: “man says who he is most precisely when he accepts an existence in the image of a God who has taken humiliation upon himself—when he accepts a kenotic existence” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 194).

As we have analyzed, Lacoste offers a deep examination of the core of liturgical experience, centered on the structure of “being-before-God”. By doing this, he manages to exhibit some basic features of “the humanity of man”.

3. “Being-Placed before God” in Heidegger

It is striking that we can find a similar analysis to Lacoste’s in the early Heidegger’s phenomenology of religion. In the following paragraphs, I will present the Heideggerian reading of the letters of Paul. His analysis gives account of the basic features of “Christian factual life” in its relationship with the structure of “being-placed before God”.

From 1918 until 1923, as is well known, the young Martin Heidegger worked as an assistant professor at the University of Freiburg. As he developed the hermeneutical transformation of phenomenology, he also elaborated a phenomenology of religion. His most important philosophical ideas of this period are the product of a dialogue between these two projects.

In the winter semester of 1920–1921, Heidegger lectured on the letters of the apostle Paul. The first part is about methodological considerations. The second part focuses on the examination of various passages of the Pauline epistolary. The first chapter is dedicated to the presentation of some fundamental features that permit him to characterize the Pauline attitude. The “Letter to the Galatians” allows us to notice the fundamental comportment (*Grundhaltung*) proper to Pauline Christianity. The struggle (*Kampf*) between law (*Gesetz*) and faith (*Glaube*), the religious passion (*religiöse Leidenschaft*) in which Paul finds himself, accounts for the tension inherent to the experience of Christian factual life (Heidegger [1987] 2000, p. 48). In the lectures of the winter semester of 1921–1922, Heidegger argued that this same comportment: “passion” (*Leidenschaft*) is necessary in philosophy. “The genuine principle [in philosophy] is to be acquired existentially philosophically only in the basic experience of passion [*Leidenschaft*]” (Heidegger [1985] 2001, p. 20). Paul’s passion manifests itself in a constant struggle because “the aim is ‘salvation’ (*hé sotería*), finally ‘life’ (*hé zoé*). The fundamental comportment [*Grundhaltung*] of Christian consciousness is to be understood out of this, according to the sense of its content, relation, and enactment [*Gehalts-, Bezugs- und Vollzugssinn*]” (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 48). In these early lectures, Heidegger radicalizes intentionality, placing it in the pre-theoretical realm. This intentionality is unfolded in three senses: a sense of content (*Gehaltssinn*), a sense of relation (*Bezugssinn*) and a sense of enactment (*Vollzugssinn*). The sense of content is the “what” towards which I am directed, is the object, the correlate of the intention. The sense of relation indicates the correlation structure insofar as *sich-richten-auf*, as a pure “refer to”, as a pure “address to”. The sense of relation responds to the “how” in which the phenomenon occurs. Finally, the sense of enactment indicates the various possible modalities in which this correlation structure can be made effective, it responds to the “how” in which the sense of relation is accomplished. This last sense implies the rupture with the theoretical attitude because it requires a concrete appropriation that can no longer be characterized as the neutrality of a theoretical act, but as a behavior that involves us individually on each occasion. The Pauline problem does not lie in a mere theoretical discussion on doctrine, but what is at stake is life itself. We can find here a first difference between Heidegger and Lacoste: the experience of Christian factual life has to do with a passivity that can be translated as a passion. Religion implies a letting be affected. Additionally, this shows a more basic disagreement: religious experience gives an account of the permanent struggle proper to factual life and not of some sort of peace.

The study of religion leaves an important mark on the early Heidegger’s phenomenology. Philosophy has to realize that what is put into question is not a theoretical matter, but the “how” of living our existence. That is why the approach that seeks to find a Pauline theological system is wrong. In order to understand Paul, it is crucial to gain access to his fundamental religious experience (*religiöse Grunderfahrung*). In Heidegger’s words: “In studying the religious world of Paul, one must free oneself from drawing out certain concepts (such as *pistis*, *dikaiosyne*, *sarx*, etc. [faith, righteousness, flesh]) and putting together their meaning from out of a heap of singular passages of the Pauline writings, so that one has a catalogue of fundamental concepts that say nothing. Equally mistaken is the thought of a theological system in Paul. Rather, the fundamental religious experience must be explicated, and, remaining in this fundamental experience, one must seek to understand the connection to it of all original religious phenomena” (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 51). Phenomenological understanding seeks to reach an experience of its *Sache* in its originality. This fundamental experience is a liturgical one, as proposed by Lacoste: the basic structure of this experience also takes in Heidegger the form of a “being-before-God”. In February 1924, newly arrived at the University of Marburg, Heidegger was invited to lecture on Luther in a seminar on Pauline ethics, given by the renowned Protestant theologian Rudolf Bultmann. Although the text (Heidegger [1996] 2002b)—reconstructed through the notes of two students—has not been included in the *Gesamtausgabe*, I consider it to be of the utmost relevance to the question at hand. In a scarce five pages, Heidegger gives an account of the decisive influence of Luther on the development of his early thought and presents

the structure of “being-placed before God” (*Gestelltsein vor Gott*), that will serve us as a guiding thread to read the early Heidegger’s proposal as a phenomenology of liturgy in Lacoste’s terms. In the following paragraphs I will outline some phenomena that show how Christian factual life experience, which stands for authentic factual life experience in general, is centered in this structure of “being-placed before”.

The first phenomenon is proclamation. Heidegger understands that the phenomenon of proclamation (*Verkündigung*) is a central phenomenon, since “in it the immediate life-relation of the world of self of Paul to the surrounding world and to the communal world of the community is able to be comprehended” (Heidegger [1995] 2010, pp. 55–56). However, understanding this phenomenon implies gaining access to the “how” of the proclamation. Heidegger states that: “the proclamation has made a turn in regard to, or is stuck on, the problem of *hodos* [path]” (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 94), is stuck on the problem of the “how”. To reach an understanding of “how”, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the Pauline situation (*paulinische Situation*). However, is this possible? Can one gain access to his situation two thousand years later? From the epistemological position of the empathy problem the conclusion is that the Pauline environment is today entirely foreign to us. Heidegger answers this objection by pointing out that this characterization of the problem corresponds to a false representational and theoretical conception of the world. The sense of the surrounding world is not primarily revealed in a theoretical position, but responds to a performative appropriation (a sense of enactment). That is why Heidegger affirms that the sense of the surrounding world is reached only from the understanding of the situation: understanding the situation is updating it, realizing it, appropriating it. Heidegger proposes “no longer [to] observe the object-historical complex, but rather [to] see the situation such that we write the letter along with Paul. We perform the letter writing, or its dictation, with him” (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 61).

“Writing with Paul” implies an “enactmental understanding” (*vollzugsmäßiges Verstehen*), entails an implementation of the “complex of enactment” (*Vollzugszusammenhang*) of the situation. However, how is this implementation possible? Heidegger answers: “The understanding is made difficult in its enactment itself; this difficulty grows constantly the nearer it approaches the concrete phenomenon. It is the difficulty of putting-oneself-into-another’s-place, which cannot be supplanted by a fantasizing-oneself-into or a ‘vicarious understanding’; what is required is an authentic enactment” (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 70).

The “First Letter to the Thessalonians” may allow a first approach to this authentic enactment, because it accounts for the relationship between Paul and the community. Heidegger affirms that there is a kind of overlap between the two: “The Thessalonians are those who fell to him. In them, he necessarily co-experiences himself” (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 65). Paul identifies himself with the Thessalonians’ experience. This manifests itself mainly in two experiences: the “having-become” (*Gewordensein*) and the knowledge about that “having-become”. Heidegger explains that this knowledge “is entirely different from any other knowledge and memory. It arises only out of the situational context of Christian life experience” (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 65). It is a knowledge that is reached in the enactment itself of “having-become”. On the other hand, the having-become “is not, in life, [just] any incident you like. Rather, it is incessantly co-experienced, and indeed such that their Being [*Sein*] now is their having-become [*Gewordensein*]. Their having-become is their Being now” (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 66).

Having-become does not depend on a “what”, but on a “how”. Having-become, somehow, consists of assuming becoming oneself as being, that is, in accepting that being means being always “becoming”. Being a Christian is being always on the way to becoming a Christian. This is what implies the Heideggerian thesis that affirms that “Christian religiosity lives temporality as such” (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 55). The Christian does not resolve existential tension, but lives it as such. Heidegger points out that Paul “sees the Thessalonians as *on the way*; the having-become—being [is] a new becoming; they have become—and absolute becoming” (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 104). Moreover, this “become” (*geworden*), passive participle of the verb “to become” (*werden*), indicates that

this character is not obtained by one's own work, but by an *opus alienum*: "The Christian is conscious that this facticity cannot be won out of his own strength, but rather originates from God—the phenomenon of the effects of grace" (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 87).

However, having-become consists of "accepting the proclamation" (*Annehmen der Verkündigung*). Accepting the proclamation involves two fundamental questions. On the one hand, this acceptance updates the world shared with the Christian community. Having-become is always having-become with others. This is Paul's way of co-experiencing himself in the Thessalonians. His own having-become is constitutively linked to the having-become of the Thessalonians: "their having-become is also Paul's having-become" (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 65). His own life is risked in the joint destiny with the community: "he [Paul] and they [the community] are linked to each other in their having-become" (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 65). Having-become is becoming jointly, in the "unique encounter with others" (*einmalige Begegnung mit anderen*) (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 101), in mutual love who takes responsibility for the other. Heidegger argues that in Paul "existence grounds itself in this encounter" (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 101) with the other. The "having himself" is crossed, in this lecture, by the presence of the other. "Having oneself" is having oneself as part of the community, in it, from it, with it. This communal dimension present in Heidegger is absent in Lacoste's book.⁴

On the other hand, what is accepted when accepting the proclamation is a "how", the "how" of the fundamental Christian comportment: "That which is accepted is the how of self-conduct" (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 66). This "how" involves an "absolute turning-around" (*absolute Umwendung*): a conversion, a "turning-towards" (*Hinwendung*) God, and an aversion, a "turning-away" (*Wegwendung*) from idol-images (*Götzenbildern*). This reversal of the sense of enactment of factual life is produced in two directions: (1) as *douleuein* (to serve, to be a slave, a servant, to be subject), as a transformation before God (*Wandeln vor Gott*), (2) as *anamenein* (wait, wait, endure, endure), as a waiting (*Erharren*). Both directions imply the absolute distress (*absolute Bedrängnis*) proper to Christian life.

(1) The first direction is related to weakness. Paul particularly values weakness. In Heidegger's words: "Only when he is weak, when he withstands the anguish of his life, can he enter into a close connection with God. This fundamental requirement of having-God is the opposite of all bad mysticism. Not mystical absorption and special exertion; rather withstanding the weakness of life is decisive" (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 70). Additionally, this humble attitude has to do with a transformation before God, with a way of "being-placed before God". Heidegger's reading of Paul is deeply influenced by Luther. In his lecture in Bultmann's seminar, Heidegger gives an account of the problem of sin.

What is the Lutheran conception of sin? Based on an analysis of "The Question of Man's capacity and Will without Grace", Heidegger emphasizes that Luther does not see sin as an accumulation of faults, but rather as an *affectus*, as an affect, as a manner of "being-placed" (*Gestelltsein*) of man in relation to things, in relation to the world. That is why theology must start from an interpretation of the being of man in the world. It is about understanding what this particular "being-placed" of man consists of. In the "Disputation against Scholastic Theology", Luther formulates a definition of human sin. This consists of *velle se esse deum et deum non esse deum* (to want himself to be God and God not be God). Finally, in the "Heidelberg Disputation", Heidegger reaches the sharpest formulation of the Lutheran position on sin. This "wanting himself to be God and not letting God be God" is manifested in a theological attitude that makes man proud. This attitude is that of a scholastic "theology of glory" which claims to say *id quod res est* (what the matter actually is) without first going to the cross, which pretends to determine the divine being without noticing his suffering manifestation on the cross. As Heidegger puts it: "The Scholastic takes cognizance of Christ only subsequently, after having defined the being of God and the world. This Greek point of view of the Scholastic makes man proud; he must first go to the cross before he can say *id quod res est*" (Heidegger [1996] 2002b, p. 107). To face the paradox of the cross, to accept the mysterious manifestation of a God who had hidden himself, which shows itself under the guise of concealment, is the real

task that theology must undertake according to Luther. This *theologia crucis* constitutes a model for the hermeneutical phenomenology of the early Heidegger that, as a sort of “phenomenology *crucis*”, must also face the manifestation of a phenomenon (factual life) that is hidden under the mode of masking.

In the second part of his presentation, Heidegger begins by analyzing the difference between the approach to the problem of sin in Luther and scholasticism. The work of the scholastics implies the assumption that human nature remains whole after the fall. Scholasticism admits that, because of original sin, man loses the higher knowledge of God that is the product of the *donum superadditum* of the theological virtues, but he does not lose his “natural being-placed before God”. Luther’s position—that part of the *experiential*—is diametrically opposed. According to Luther, the nature of man it is absolutely corrupt. Heidegger explains: “The being of man as such is itself sin. Sin is nothing other than the antithesis to faith, where faith means: standing (being placed) before God. Thus, sin is not an affixing of moral attributes to man but rather his real core. In Luther, sin is a concept of existence, something that his emphasis on *affectus* already points to” (Heidegger [1996] 2002b, p. 108). Sin characterizes the being of man; his movement (*Bewegtheit*) is identified with the movement of factual life. Each sin sets off a chain of sins more and more serious: *fuga, odium, desperatio, impenitentia*. Heidegger insists that these Lutheran conclusions come from his methodology—in a sense proto-phenomenological, we might say—that seeks to start from experience. Heidegger quotes Luther: “*fugiamus deliria ista . . . et sequamur potius experientiam* [let us shun those ravings . . . and rather follow experience]. *Experientia . . . docet nos de his calamitatibus . . .* [experience teaches us about this calamity]” (Heidegger [1996] 2002b, p. 108). Yet, as Heidegger reminds us, Luther himself warns that in sin, “ . . . the situation of man in which he distances himself from God is a relation to God” (Heidegger [1996] 2002b, p. 109). “*An non enim extrema stultitia est . . . Deum fugere, quem non possunt fugere?* [Or is it not the height of folly... to flee from God, from whom they are unable to flee?]” (Heidegger [1996] 2002b, p. 109). This relationship with God in the flight from God leaves its mark on the modality of “outside of itself” (*Aus-sich-Hinaus*) of life with which Heidegger describes the movement of factual life. The flight of life with respect to itself it is a way of appearing before him, from whom one also cannot flee.

(2) The “waiting”, the second direction of the sense of enactment of factual life, is related to the central phenomenon of the *parousia* and Christian temporality. In the second part of the lectures on Paul, Heidegger analyzes the two epistles to the Thessalonians. In the first letter, the *parousia* is presented as a decisive experience. What is at stake in it is the experience of “an absolute distress [*absolute Bedrängnis*] (*thlipsis*) which belongs to the life of the Christian himself” (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 67). That is why saint Paul refuses to answer the question in “gnoseological” terms: “when will the *parousia* take place?”. Heidegger argues: “Paul does not say ‘when’, because this expression is inadequate to what is to be expressed, because it does not suffice” (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 72). As can be read in 1 Thessalonians 5: 1–2: “Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night”. Saint Paul refers to the knowledge that the Thessalonians possess for “having-become”. The “when” of the *parousia* cannot be transmitted as an objective content, but this knowledge is reached in the experience in each individual occasion, in the appropriation of the sense of enactment of the phenomenon. What they “know very well” has to do with an existential decision that is reflected in the choice between two different ways of life. On the one hand, there is the possibility of becoming attached to this world, seeking “peace and security” (*Friede und Sicherheit*). In this case, awaiting turns into a speculative expectation that is absorbed in what life brings. Those who live in this way, live in darkness (*im Dunkel*) (*en skotei*), “they cannot save themselves, because they do not have themselves, because they have forgotten their own self” (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 72).

On the other hand, there are those who live in the day (*Tag*) (*hemera*), that is, those who live in clarity (*Klarheit*) and in the *parousia*, on the “Lord’s day” (*Tag des Herrn*). When

one lives in the *parousia*, as Heidegger puts it: “the question of the ‘when’ leads back to my comportment. How the *parousia* stands in my life, that refers back to the enactment of life itself. The meaning of the ‘when’ of the time in which the Christian lives, has an entirely special character. Earlier we formally characterized: ‘Christian religiosity lives temporality’. It is a time without its own order and demarcations. One cannot encounter this temporality in some sort of objective concept of time. The when is in no way objectively graspable” (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 73). Heidegger emphasizes that the knowledge of “when” is not theoretical, but it is updated in a “how” of a comportment. Those who “know very well” do not wonder about the “when” because they already live in the *parousia*, because they understand that it does not refer to an historical-objective event in the future, but to a way of assuming the temporality of existence.

The sense of self-enactment and temporality are indissolubly united. Living in the modality of one’s own “how” is consistent with an understanding of the temporality that shifts from the concern about “when” to a question about the “how”, which moves from an objectifying chronological understanding to a kairological enacted one. The *kairos* is not a measure of time, but its density, its qualitatively decisive value. In *kairos* our existence is at stake. However, how can we access this understanding? Heidegger proposes that authentic comprehension, the enacted comprehension (*vollzugsmäßiges Verstehen*) of the event of the *parousia* is the one that gives back to temporality its original meaning, that is, its kairological feature: “From this complex of enactment with God arises something like temporality to begin with” (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 81). Authentic temporality (*eigentliche Zeitlichkeit*) arises from an enactment connection with God, that is, from a particular being-placed before God (*Gestelltsein vor Gott*) while awaiting the *parousia*. We can compare this Heideggerian kairological temporality with the Lacostian liturgical one which thinks the *eschaton* as its “hidden present”. Nevertheless, we should note a difference: in Heidegger’s account the emphasis is placed on the way we can experience a transformation of the “how” of our existence in the present, “how the *parousia* stands in our life” (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 73), while in Lacoste’s account we can only gain access to a preeschatological instance hoping that the promise of the definitive kingdom be fulfilled; “the plenary present, where it tries to live as though the Absolute were present to it in the mode of *Parousia*” should not be confused with “the eternal present of a realized eschatology” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 68).

However, not only the theme of the *parousia*, but also the issue of “disappropriation” and “dispossession” is shared by Lacoste and Heidegger. The essential poverty that characterizes the human beings who “liturgically face the Absolute” as beings who “neither have anything nor can take possession of anything” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 174) is assumed by Heidegger in his reading of the Paulinian “as if not” (*hos me*).

Heidegger affirms that in accepting the proclamation “something remains unchanged, and yet it is radically changed” (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 85). What remains unchanged? What is radically changed? The Christian transformation is not exercised with respect to the content, but with respect to the “how” of the enactment itself. The meaning proper to the surrounding world loses relevance for the Christian, and yet this does not imply “leaving the world” precisely because the link with it is not broken. “The relational sense is not changed, and still less the content” (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 85). The facticity of the Christian is not defined by these two senses, but by the sense of enactment. However, this does not mean that the other senses disappear. On the contrary, the meanings of the surrounding world are maintained and appropriated as “temporal goods” (*zeitliche Güter*), as goods that show their meaning from temporalization. 1 Cor. 7, 29–31 is decisive for the ultimate understanding of Christian facticity: “What I mean, brothers and sisters, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they do not; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away”.

This “as if not” fully accounts for Christian facticity centered on the sense of enactment. That is why Heidegger insists that this “as if not” should not be equated with an “as if” (*als ob*). “This *hos* means, positively, a new sense that is added. The *me* concerns the complex of enactment of the Christian life. [. . .] Christian life is not straightforward, but is rather broken up: all surrounding-world relations must pass through the complex of enactment of having-become, so that this complex is then co-present, but the relations themselves, and that to which they refer, are in no way touched” (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 86). While poverty and disappropriation in Lacoste implies a rupture with the world, Heidegger’s reading of the “as if not” introduces a facticity that, without separating itself of the world, establishes a “being-placed before God” with a relationship of essential disappropriation concerning any factual or juridical condition.

4. Conclusions

As we have demonstrated, the early Heidegger’s phenomenology of religion can be read as a phenomenology of liturgy, in Lacoste’s terms, centered in the structure of “being-placed before God”. This interpretation is relevant because it shows the scope of the productive dialogue that Heidegger establishes between philosophy and religion in his early work. In this sense, I believe that his proposal is more effective in achieving his goal of showing the essence of human existence and may offer a way to solve some problems present in Lacoste’s treatment.

Gschwandtner points out an important tension in *Experience and the Absolute*: “Being before the Absolute is a rupture with ordinary being; it challenges us and dispossesses us of our preoccupation with being. It thus confronts us with another possible dimension of being, another mode of existence. Such being before the Absolute is always optional; it is a surplus. Additionally, yet, to exist ‘kenotically,’ to exist ‘in the image of God’ is to access a dimension of human existence that is closed to ‘ordinary’ Dasein and reveals something about it, which it would not have discovered otherwise” (Gschwandtner 2019, p. 5). Lacoste is aware of this tension that traverses his book. He explicitly gives an account of the conflict in the § 26: “The *quaestio de homine* must [. . .] reckon with conflicting significations, which is to say, with a conflict of dimensions. [. . .] Neither the provisional nor the definitive nor being-in-the-world nor being-before-God suffices to tell us what we are. At the beginning of experience, at the initial, lies the possibility of their difference. We are defined, in other words, by a facticity and by a vocation, by being and by an ability-to-be inextricable from it” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 65). Additionally, then, in § 40, Lacoste poses the question: “Is man initially nothing but his own beginning? Additionally, is what is most proper to him concealed from him? As a corollary, can we conceive of an existence that, strictly abiding by the laws of facticity, would remain foreign to what is ultimately at stake for man?” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 105). Additionally, in § 60: “Does man accede to what is most proper to him (pre-eschatologically) by ridding himself of what is (natively) most proper to him?” (Lacoste [1994] 2004, p. 167). If the liturgical experience constitutes an optional surplus, and ability-to-be inextricable from being, how could it represent the core of human essence? If we do not experience a religious conversion, the core of human essence, does the whole structure of “being-before” someone or something remain inaccessible?

Heidegger’s phenomenology of liturgy offers a solution. It does not have this problem because the starting point is not the atheism of the “being-in-the-world”, but the model of the Christian factual life experience. The structure of “being-placed before” someone or something is not optional and does not represent a surplus, but is the center of the constitution of subjectivity and the fundamental feature of the essence of any human existent. What remains optional is the religious or ethical content of the someone or something before whom this subjectivity stands.

As we have established, Heidegger’s reflections on religion deeply influence his philosophical project. In the lectures from the 1921–1922 winter semester, Heidegger distinguishes four characteristics of the relationality of life that allow us to begin to glimpse the

phenomenon of movement. Those are: inclination (*Neigung*), distance (*Abstand*), sequestration (*Abriegelung*), the “easy” (*das “Leichte”*). The second one, distance, is related to the idea of a “being-placed before”. In caring, life has the significant “objects” of the world “before” (*vor*) it. However, as distance is a category that manifests itself in a co-original way together with inclination, it remains covert. Inclination rejects and conceals the distance. For this reason, it finds itself as dispersed in the world, as a “suppression of distance” (*Abstandstilgung*). This oversight (*Versehen*) of the distance entails a mistake when measuring (*Vermessen*) life. Mismeasuring implies that life is measured in the terms that the world imposes. In this way, life implements a distancing in proclivity (*Abständigkeit der Geneigtheit*) within the meaningful world, a distancing that distorts the meaning of “before” manifesting itself as a search for rank, success, position in life and the world, superiority, advantage, calculation, bustle, clamor and ostentation, according to the criteria of what is “imposed” on it externally. Its radical incalculability causes a certain overflow that manifests itself as “the hyperbolic” (*Hyperbolische*). In this way, a new categorical network is determined from distance: the suppression of distance, oversight, mismeasuring, distantiation in proclivity, in the hyperbolic.

Distance, the *vor* (before) is the key that allows us to understand the Heideggerian alternative in the constitution of subjectivity. “The ‘before’ means: I comport myself explicitly to something in care. I live explicitly on the basis of something, and, in the ‘explicitly before’ me, the ‘me’, the ‘I myself’ (factually speaking, my own world) is thereby experienced” (Heidegger [1985] 2001, p. 79). Assuming oneself as oneself always implies a “being-placed before” (*Gestelltsein vor*), whether before God, the community, otherness, the awaiting of the Messiah or even death, which cannot be suppressed. Heidegger wonders: “if death, following II Cor. 5:8 and Phil. 1:21, is an immediate transition to community with Christ, why is the motif of consolation first sought in the future *Parousia*? Is not death already equivalent?” (Heidegger [1995] 2010, p. 106). The consequences of this parallel between *parousia* and death are already beginning to be extracted in his Introduction to the book on Aristotle of 1922. There Heidegger, like Paul, draws a distinction between two modes of factual life that emerge from the mode of facing death. Like the *parousia*, death should not be objectified, it should not be considered as a representable future event that comes to interrupt the process of life, but it is presented as the event of imminence, as the possibility always present that prompts us to assume our authentic temporality. In Heidegger’s words: “Since death as imminently before one characteristically makes the present and past of one’s life visible, it is as such a constituent moment of facticity at the same time the key phenomenon in which the specific kind of “temporality” belonging to human *Dasein* is to be brought into relief and explicated” (Heidegger [1996] 2002a, p. 119). In this sense, I think that Dario Vicari’s thesis is correct. It is not only possible to find a religious genealogy for the “being towards death” (*Sein zum Tode*), but still in its “secularized” version, a religious motivation continues to operate in the acceptance of the death as “acceptance of life in pain, in imitation of Christ” (Vicari 1996, p. 97). The Heideggerian reading of Christianity is clearly oriented in that direction. Being a Christian means accepting the utter tribulation of existence, rather than take comfort in speculation of a glorious future life: “The hope [*Hoffnung*] that the Christians have is not simply faith in immortality [*Unsterlichkeitsglaube*], but a faithful resilience [*Durchhalten*] grounded in Christian factual life” (107). Pauline Christianity is, certainly, a “Christianity of finitude” (*Christentum der Endlichkeit*), according to the expression of Marta Zaccagnini, a Christianity “exclusively directed to the worldly dimension of the experience of life and not to the superterrestrial dimension of his transcendence” (Zaccagnini 2003, p. 64). Needless to say, Lacoste does not approve this reduction of eschatology to death: “Man can face death as the only eschatology, or he can face it by trusting in the promises made at Easter (or in yet other ways, by grounding it in other reasons for hope), but the difference between them is great” (170).

In Heidegger’s account one can only “have oneself” in some sort of a “being-placed before”. The “being-before-God” can be formalized as a simple “being-placed before”

other. This other can be God or not. In this sense, the essence of human existence remains attainable to the Christian and also to the atheist.

To conclude, it is also important to note once again that the early Heidegger's account of the structure of "being-placed before" does not forget a communal dimension. As is suggested in Heidegger's reading of Paul, "having oneself," at least in this early lecture, is always an event co-experienced with a community, that implies being part of a "we".

Funding: This research was funded by the National Scientific and Technological Research Council (CONICET).

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

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

Notes

- ¹ In this point, I agree with Derrida's reading on Heidegger. Although the *Dasein* is certainly an attempt to overcome the modern subject and in some aspects it manage to do it, it does not overcome the ultimate logic of metaphysical humanism and its relationship with the animal (Derrida [1987] 1989). In this sense, I think it is not problematic to compare Lacoste's research on the "humanity of man" with Heidegger's research on the existentiality of *Dasein*.
- ² Schrijvers affirms: "where *Sein und Zeit*'s 'being-in-the-world' consists of existentials that have their antidotes in existentiell modes. Lacoste's 'being-in-the-Church' is constituted in the same formal way: it has existentials, e.g., ontological restlessness, and its modes, e.g., mission, imitation. Additionally, the analogy not only holds at this formal level. Where in *Sein und Zeit* the confrontation with one's own death is the occasion to assume one's authenticity, in the liturgical experience the confrontation with the events surrounding the death of Christ is the *kairos* in which authentic being human begins to appear. Where in *Sein und Zeit* the confrontation with finitude takes place in angst, the liturgical person has to reckon with the terror of the non-experience. Where in *Sein und Zeit* this anxious relation to death singularizes *Dasein*, the believer experiences a solipsism analogous to Heidegger's 'existential solipsism': in the liturgical non-experience one remains alone with one's faith. Where in *Sein und Zeit* death discloses *Dasein*'s temporality, the liturgical person's historicity, i.e., history's grip on human existence, is revealed (EA, 62; 153). When Heidegger's book states time and again that 'the They' interposes itself between *Dasein* and its authenticity, this structural element also found its way into the liturgical experience, albeit that therein 'world' interposes itself between God and the individual. Finally, where in *Sein und Zeit* angst removes the veils with which 'the They' covers up *Dasein* and leaves *Dasein* with the naked fact that it has to be its being, there seems to be little difference with Lacoste's liturgical experience in which God kairologically removes all masks with which human beings cover themselves up, to leave them with the humiliation of their nudity and poverty" (Schrijvers 2005, pp. 329–30).
- ³ "Lacoste [. . .] consider[s] an examination of 'religious experience' in the sense of Friedrich Schleiermacher, Rudolf Otto, or Mircea Eliade an exercise of anthropology or sociology of religion and not genuinely phenomenological. This is precisely why Lacoste does not investigate actual liturgical practices or what he calls 'the cult' but the basic structures of human being before the Absolute. A concern with more concrete religious practices or experiences would no longer be phenomenological. Yet, it is hard to see how this neat division can be fully maintained. On the one hand, is it possible to speak about something like an experience of the 'Absolute' without the religious structures and practices that give some content to what that might mean? Without some reference to how the Absolute actually has been or currently is encountered, how is this any more than a purely abstract thought experiment rather than the examination of 'the thing itself as it shows itself'? The constant references to the parousia and the eschaton in Lacoste's work, which provide for him the means for positing 'liturgical' being as complete rupture with 'ordinary' being, pose a similar problem. How can we know anything about the nature of this parousia or eschaton apart from the religious texts that refer to it, albeit in very tentative and elusive fashion? Neither 'absolute' nor 'eschaton' seem accessible on purely phenomenological grounds. Why should we assume that an exposure before a 'God' or an 'Absolute' is an important dimension of humanity, unless such a phenomenon is manifested through mystical experience, spiritual affectivity, or religious practices? Additionally, indeed Lacoste has recourse to such experience by pointing to various sorts of monastic traditions (especially asceticism), to the tradition of the holy fool, and to recognizably 'Christian' structures of prayer. Even his fairly abstract analysis of human being 'coram dei' still implies, or even requires, recourse to concrete religious experiences, at least as examples or illustrations. Additionally, at times they go beyond mere illustration. He explicitly claims throughout his treatment that various aspects of monastic or ascetic experience 'undo' or 'challenge' Heidegger's descriptions of human being. These presumably 'ontic' phenomena are thus taken to challenge ontological presuppositions, at least in certain contexts" (Gschwandtner 2019, p. 10).
- ⁴ It should be noted that Lacoste later changes his position. In "Liturgy and Coaffection", he says: "The liturgy is a brotherly work in common—it is a pure case of existence as coexistence, of *Dasein* as *Mitdasein*" (Lacoste 2005, p. 98).

References

- Agamben, Giorgio. 1993. *The Coming Community*. Minneapolis and Oxford: Minnesota University Press. First published 1990.
- Blanchot, Maurice. 1988. *The Unavowable Community*. New York: Station Hill Press. First published 1983.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1989. *Of Spirit. Heidegger and the Question*. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press. First published 1987.
- Esposito, Roberto. 2015. *Categories of the Impolitical*. New York: Fordham University Press. First published 1988.
- Gschwandtner, Christina M. 2019. *Welcoming Finitude. Toward a Phenomenology of Orthodox Liturgy*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Heidegger, Martin. 2000. The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of the Worldview. In *Towards a Definition of Philosophy*. New York: Athlone Press, pp. 3–99. First published 1987.
- Heidegger, Martin. 2001. *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle. Initiation into Phenomenological Research*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. First published 1985.
- Heidegger, Martin. 2002a. Phenomenological Interpretations in Connection with Aristotle: An Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation. In *Supplements. From the Earliest Essays to Being and Time and Beyond*. Albany: SUNY Press. First published 1996.
- Heidegger, Martin. 2002b. The problem of sin by Luther. In *Supplements. From the Earliest essays to Being and Time and Beyond*. Albany: SUNY Press. First published 1996.
- Heidegger, Martin. 2010. *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. First published 1995.
- Lacoste, Jean-Yves. 2004. *Experience and the Absolute. Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man*. New York: Fordham University Press. First published 1994.
- Lacoste, Jean-Yves. 2005. Liturgy and Coaffection. In *The Experience of God. A Postmodern Response*. Edited by Hart Kevin and Barbara E. Wall. New York: Fordham University Press, pp. 93–103.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. 1991. *The Inoperative Community*. Minneapolis and Oxford: Minnesota University Press. First published 1986.
- Schrijvers, Joeri. 2005. Jean-Yves Lacoste. A Phenomenology of Liturgy. *The Heythrop Journal* XLVI: 314–33. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Vicari, Dario. 1996. *Ontologia Dell'esserci. La Riproposizione Della "Questione Dell'uomo" Nello Heidegger del Primo Periodo Friburghese*. Torino: Zamorani.
- Zaccagnini, Marta. 2003. *Christentum der Endlichkeit. Heideggers Vorlesungen: Einleitung in die Phänomenologie der Religion*. Münster: LIT Verlag.