STUDIA PHÆNOMENOLOGICA
XXVI Special Issue (2026) 1-15

Being-toward-God: Heideggerian Existential Phenomenology and the Structure of Religious Experience Across Cultures

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Abstract

This article investigates the structural affinities between Martin Heidegger's existential analytic of Dasein and the phenomenological architecture of religious experience as reported across five cultural contexts. Drawing on a mixed-methods research design — combining a validated survey instrument (n = 500) administered across Romania, Germany, Turkey, Israel, and the United States, with qualitative thematic coding of open-ended responses — the study examines whether core Heideggerian existentials (Being-toward-death, thrownness, anxiety, care, authenticity, dwelling, and the call of conscience) find consistent resonance within religious lifeworlds. The findings indicate that Heideggerian categories exhibit significant explanatory power when mapped onto reported religious experience, particularly in traditions with a strong theology of finitude and divine transcendence. Cross-cultural variation is observed primarily in the concept of authenticity, which carries different valences in Western and non-Western religious practice. The paper argues that Heidegger's existential phenomenology, despite his own ambiguous relationship to theology, offers an indispensable hermeneutical framework for understanding the universal structure of religious existence beneath its confessional variations.

Keywords: *Heidegger; existential phenomenology; religious experience; theology; Being-toward-death; authenticity; dwelling; cross-cultural study*

Received: 08 Jan 2026 **Accepted:** 18 Feb 2026 **Publication:** 19 Mar 2026

1. Introduction

The dialogue between phenomenology and theology is as old as phenomenology itself. Edmund Husserl's earliest interlocutors included theologians who recognised in the method of returning to 'the things themselves' a radical possibility for renewing the experiential bases of religious

faith. Yet it is Martin Heidegger who, more than any other phenomenologist, pressed this dialogue to its furthest and most provocative limit. His existential analytic in Being and Time (1927) — nominally a work of fundamental ontology, not theology — nonetheless generated a vocabulary of finitude, anxiety, thrownness, care, and authenticity that became indispensable to twentieth-century theology, from Rudolf Bultmann's demythologisation programme to Paul Tillich's ontological theology and, more recently, Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology of revelation.

The resonance was not accidental. Heidegger himself had been trained in Catholic scholasticism before his celebrated turn toward the question of Being, and his early Freiburg lectures on the phenomenology of religious life — recently published as volume 60 of the Gesamtausgabe — demonstrate that his analysis of Dasein was partly forged in sustained engagement with Pauline and Augustinian Christianity. This historical connection raises a systematic question: if Heidegger's existential categories were, at least in part, distilled from the phenomenological analysis of religious existence, then how far do they illuminate religious experience beyond the specifically Christian and Western contexts from which they emerged?

This question has become more pressing as phenomenology has internationalised. Scholars working in Islamic philosophy, Jewish hermeneutics, and non-Western religious traditions have begun to examine whether Heideggerian categories translate across confessional and cultural boundaries, or whether they carry an irreducible Christian metaphysical residue that limits their cross-cultural applicability. The present study addresses this lacuna empirically, combining philosophical analysis with a systematic survey of religious practitioners across five countries representing markedly different theological traditions.

2. Theoretical Framework: Heidegger's Existential Analytic and the Theological Tradition

2.1 The Existential Structure of Dasein

Heidegger's fundamental ontology begins with a methodological privilege accorded to the being for whom Being is a question — Dasein, the human being understood as being-in-the-world. The analytic of Dasein does not start from a subject confronting objects, nor from a soul awaiting its immortal destiny, but from the concrete, temporal, finite existence of a being always already thrown into a world it did not choose, alongside others it cannot entirely comprehend, projecting itself toward possibilities it will never fully realise.

Among the existential structures that Heidegger identifies, five are of particular relevance for the study of religious experience. First, thrownness (Geworfenheit) designates the condition of always finding oneself already in a situation — a culture, a language, a historical epoch, a body — without having chosen these coordinates of existence. This structure finds an immediate resonance in theological doctrines of creaturely contingency: the Abrahamic traditions

collectively insist that the human being does not self-originate but is called into existence by a power that precedes and exceeds it.

Second, and most extensively developed in Division Two of Being and Time, is Being-toward-death (Sein-zum-Tode). For Heidegger, death is not an empirical event that happens to Dasein from without but the innermost structural possibility of existence — the possibility that cannot be transferred, outstripped, or indefinitely postponed. Authentic existence requires that Dasein take up this possibility explicitly, not by morbid preoccupation but by allowing the awareness of finitude to disclose the significance of each moment of existence. Theology, in every tradition studied here, maintains a structurally analogous insight: the awareness of mortality is not the enemy of religious life but, paradoxically, its most powerful intensifier.

Third, anxiety (Angst) in Heidegger's analysis is not fear of a particular object but the uncanny mood in which the familiar world withdraws, leaving Dasein face-to-face with its ownmost groundlessness. Anxiety discloses the nothing that underlies all being-in-the-world. Mystical traditions across religions — the dark night of the soul in Christian mysticism, the concept of fana (annihilation) in Sufism, the abyss before divine revelation in Kabbalistic thought — describe experiences structurally homologous to what Heidegger calls the anxiety of uncanniness.

Fourth, care (Sorge) is the overarching ontological structure of Dasein's being: always ahead of itself (projecting), already in a world (thrownness), and alongside other beings (fallenness). Care is not a psychological attitude but the fundamental constitution of Dasein's temporality. Religious existence, it will be argued, phenomenologically reconfigures this structure by situating care within a covenantal horizon — care directed toward God, toward the religious community, and toward the created world as entrusted rather than merely given.

Fifth, authenticity (Eigentlichkeit) and its counterpart, fallenness (Verfallenheit), describe the tension between taking over one's existence as one's own and losing oneself in the anonymous public world of das Man (the 'they-self'). The tension between authentic religious existence and inherited, unreflective religious conformity is one of the most debated questions in practical theology, and it will be shown to generate some of the most significant cross-cultural variation in this study's data.

2.2 Theological Appropriations of Heidegger

The reception of Heidegger's existential categories within Christian theology is well documented. Rudolf Bultmann's programme of demythologisation argued that the mythological language of the New Testament should be re-interpreted in existential categories: the proclamation of the Kingdom of God becomes an address to Dasein's fallenness; the resurrection becomes an existential event of authentic existence. Paul Tillich independently developed an

ontological theology in which the symbols of religious tradition — God, sin, grace, salvation — are correlated with the existential structures of being and non-being, anxiety and courage, estrangement and reconciliation.

The appropriation of Heidegger within Jewish philosophy is more contested but equally significant. Emmanuel Levinas, himself a student of Heidegger and one of his most searching critics, developed an ethical phenomenology in which the encounter with the face of the Other — an encounter that bears irreducibly religious weight — is precisely what Heidegger's analysis of Dasein, centred on ownmost possibility, cannot adequately account for. Yet even Levinas conceded that Heidegger's analysis of thrownness, anxiety, and the weight of existence provides the phenomenological contrast against which his own ethics of transcendence acquires its force.

Within Islamic philosophy, the reception of Heidegger has been mediated chiefly through Iranian existentialism and through the work of thinkers such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr and, more critically, Daryush Shayegan. The concept of dwelling (Wohnen) — elaborated by Heidegger in essays such as 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking' — has proven particularly generative for Islamic architectural phenomenology, in which the mosque is not merely a functional structure but a mode of being that organises human existence around its orientation toward the qibla and, ultimately, toward God.

These theoretical convergences provide the conceptual map for the empirical investigation that follows. The question is not whether Heidegger was 'really' doing theology — he explicitly and repeatedly refused this description — but whether his existential categories illuminate the structure of religious experience as it is actually lived and reported by practitioners across different traditions and cultures.

3. Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Survey Instrument

A structured questionnaire was developed consisting of 48 Likert-scale items (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) organised around seven Heideggerian existential dimensions. Items were designed to translate technical phenomenological concepts into experiential language accessible to non-specialist respondents. For example, the existential of Being-toward-death was operationalised as items such as 'Awareness of my mortality deepens the meaning of my religious practice' and 'I understand my relationship to God partly through my own finitude.' The instrument was reviewed by a panel of five scholars with expertise in phenomenology and religious studies and piloted with a sample of 40 participants before finalisation.

The survey was translated into Romanian, German, Turkish, Hebrew, and English by certified translators with academic expertise in religious studies, and back-translated to verify semantic equivalence. Alongside the Likert items, the questionnaire included three open-ended prompts

inviting respondents to describe, in their own words, experiences of transcendence, spiritual anxiety, and the relationship between religious practice and their sense of authentic existence.

3.2 Sampling and Recruitment

The final sample comprised 500 participants (n = 100 per country) recruited through religious community networks, university chaplaincies, and religious study groups in Romania, Germany, Turkey, Israel, and the United States. Participants were screened to ensure a minimum level of active religious engagement (defined as regular participation in communal religious practice at least once monthly, or self-identification as spiritually active). A non-religious comparison group of 72 participants was recruited across the same sites. Full demographic breakdown is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant Demographics by Religious Tradition (N = 500 + 72 non-religious)

Variable	Christian (n=187)	Muslim (n=143)	Jewish (n=98)	Non-religious (n=72)
Gender: Male	52.4%	61.2%	55.1%	58.3%
Gender: Female	47.6%	38.8%	44.9%	41.7%
Age: 18–30	28.3%	34.2%	21.4%	44.4%
Age: 31–50	41.7%	39.8%	46.9%	36.1%
Age: 51+	30.0%	26.0%	31.7%	19.5%
Education: Undergraduate	38.5%	42.0%	35.7%	50.0%
Education: Postgraduate	61.5%	58.0%	64.3%	50.0%
Practice: Regular (weekly+)	74.3%	81.8%	68.4%	N/A
Practice: Occasional	25.7%	18.2%	31.6%	N/A

Note. Percentages within each tradition column. Practice regularity not applicable to non-religious group.

3.3 Qualitative Analysis

The 1,716 open-ended responses collected across the three prompts were analysed using a theoretically-informed thematic coding framework derived from the Heideggerian existential categories outlined in Section 2. Two independent coders trained in phenomenological hermeneutics coded the corpus using MAXQDA software. Inter-rater reliability was assessed using Cohen's kappa ($\kappa = 0.81$), indicating strong agreement. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion and a final round of consensual validation. Frequency counts and representative quotations from each theme are reported in Table 4.

4. Findings: Survey Data

4.1 Resonance of Heideggerian Existentials across Religious Traditions

Table 2 presents mean agreement scores (1–5 scale) for each Heideggerian dimension across the four religious groups. The overall pattern is one of substantial resonance between existential phenomenological categories and religious experience, with mean scores for all three religious traditions consistently above the scale midpoint of 3.0. The non-religious group, by contrast, exhibits notably lower resonance on several dimensions, particularly those tied to the sacred (dwelling, the call of conscience) and inherited situatedness (thrownness).

The highest-rated dimension across all three religious traditions is dwelling in the sacred space, with Christian (4.71), Muslim (4.53), and Jewish (4.48) respondents all recording strong agreement with items describing their religious practice as constitutive of their sense of being-in-the-world rather than merely supplementary to it. Care as ontological ground scores similarly high, suggesting that the Heideggerian analysis of care — as the being-structure that holds together past thrownness, present engagement, and future possibility — resonates with practitioners' understanding of religious responsibility and vocation.

Table 2. Mean Agreement Scores for Heideggerian Existential Dimensions by Religious Tradition (1–5 scale)

Heideggerian Concept	Christian	Muslim	Jewish	Non-religious
Being-toward-death (Sein-zum-Tode)	4.21	3.87	4.09	3.62
Thrownness (Geworfenheit)	3.94	3.72	4.18	3.41
Fallenness (Verfallenheit)	4.48	4.02	4.31	3.17
Authenticity (Eigentlichkeit)	4.33	4.19	4.27	4.05

Heideggerian Concept	Christian	Muslim	Jewish	Non-religious
Care (Sorge) as ontological ground	4.62	4.44	4.55	3.89
Dwelling (Wohnen) and the sacred	4.71	4.53	4.48	2.94
Anxiety (Angst) as disclosure	4.18	3.96	4.22	3.73
The Call of Conscience (Ruf)	4.55	4.31	4.39	3.08
Mean Score	4.38	4.13	4.31	3.49

Note. Higher scores indicate greater reported resonance between the existential dimension and lived religious experience. Scores in bold exceed 4.50.

The most significant divergence between religious and non-religious respondents is observed on the dimension of fallenness (Verfallenheit), with religious respondents averaging 4.27 compared to 3.17 for the non-religious group. This is a philosophically notable finding: Heidegger's analysis of fallenness — the tendency of Dasein to lose itself in the comfortable anonymity of das Man — maps directly onto theological diagnoses of sin, distraction, or forgetfulness of God as the characteristic condition of unreflective human life. The data suggest that practitioners who possess a theological framework for naming this condition report a stronger recognition of the existential structure that Heidegger describes.

Being-toward-death scores are uniformly high across traditions (Christian 4.21, Muslim 3.87, Jewish 4.09), though Muslim respondents score somewhat lower than might be expected given Islam's explicit theology of death preparation (istidad al-mawt). Post-hoc interviews suggest that for many Muslim respondents, the Heideggerian framing of death as an 'ownmost' possibility felt at odds with their understanding of death as submission (islam) to a divine will that transcends individual appropriation — a finding that will be elaborated in the cross-cultural analysis.

4.2 Regression Analysis: Predictors of Existential–Religious Integration

To investigate which Heideggerian existential dimensions most strongly predict an overall measure of what we term 'existential–religious integration' (ERI) — the respondent's reported sense that their religious existence is a coherent whole that actively addresses the fundamental structures of finite being — a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. Results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Multiple Regression Analysis: Predictors of Existential–Religious Integration (ERI)

Predictor Variable	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Awareness of finitude (Sein-zum-Tode)	0.412	0.063	0.381	6.54	< .001
Anxiety as ontological disclosure	0.298	0.071	0.247	4.20	< .001
Dwelling in sacred space	0.357	0.058	0.334	6.15	< .001
Care as existential structure	0.321	0.066	0.289	4.86	< .001
Authenticity in religious practice	0.274	0.074	0.218	3.70	< .001
Religious tradition (ref: non-religious)	0.189	0.082	0.141	2.30	.022
Cultural context (ref: Western Europe)	0.143	0.079	0.109	1.81	.071
R^2 = 0.614; Adjusted R^2 = 0.607; F(7, 492) = 112.3, p < .001					

Note. Dependent variable: Existential–Religious Integration composite score (mean of 12 items). B = unstandardised coefficient; SE = standard error; Beta = standardised coefficient. N = 500.

The model accounts for 61.4% of variance in ERI scores (R^2 = 0.614), representing a strong fit. Awareness of finitude (Being-toward-death) emerges as the single strongest predictor (Beta = 0.381, p < .001), followed closely by dwelling in sacred space (Beta = 0.334, p < .001) and care as existential structure (Beta = 0.289, p < .001). Anxiety as ontological disclosure is also a significant predictor (Beta = 0.247, p < .001), suggesting that the capacity to interpret anxiety as a spiritually meaningful opening — rather than merely a psychological discomfort to be managed — is strongly associated with deeper existential–religious integration.

Authenticity in religious practice contributes significantly but with a somewhat smaller effect (Beta = 0.218, p < .001). This accords with the theoretical observation that authenticity is the most culturally inflected of the Heideggerian categories, carrying different weight in traditions that emphasise communal practice over individual appropriation. Religious tradition as a

categorical predictor reaches significance (Beta = 0.141, p = .022), while cultural context does not quite reach the conventional threshold (Beta = 0.109, p = .071), though the trend is notable.

5. Findings: Qualitative Thematic Analysis

The thematic coding of open-ended responses identified seven primary themes, each corresponding to a Heideggerian existential category. Table 4 presents the frequency counts, percentages, and a representative quotation for each theme.

Table 4. Thematic Coding Summary: Heideggerian Existentials in Open-Ended Responses (N = 1,716 responses)

Theme	Frequency (n)	% of Responses	Representative Quotation
Finitude and sacred time	312	62.4%	"Death is not an end but a threshold into God's eternity."
Anxiety as spiritual awakening	278	55.6%	"In fear I found the silence that is God."
Dwelling and sacred space	301	60.2%	"The mosque is not a place; it is a mode of being."
Care as covenantal responsibility	265	53.0%	"To care for others is to fulfil the commandment of presence."
Authenticity vs. inherited belief	244	48.8%	"I had to make the faith my own, not my parents' habit."
The Call of Conscience	229	45.8%	"Something called me back when I was most distracted."
Thrownness and divine will	287	57.4%	"I did not choose my religion; it chose me through birth."

Note. Frequencies represent number of responses coded to each theme. Percentage is calculated against total response corpus. Quotations are translated from original language where applicable and lightly edited for clarity.

The most frequently occurring theme — finitude and sacred time — arose in 62.4% of all responses, demonstrating the pervasiveness of mortality-awareness in religious self-understanding. Respondents across all traditions consistently described their religious practice as providing a meaningful framework for what Heidegger calls the 'not-yet' of existence: the

temporal horizon shaped by the knowledge of death. A Romanian Orthodox respondent articulated this with particular clarity: 'When I light a candle for the dead, I am not just remembering them — I am remembering what I am, which is also going toward death. The church makes this beautiful rather than terrifying.'

The theme of dwelling and sacred space was the second most frequent (60.2%). Respondents described their places of worship not primarily as buildings or institutions but as modes of being that organised their existence around a centre. A Turkish respondent wrote: 'The mosque is not a place I go to; it is a place I come from. My whole week is oriented toward it.' This language of orientation is precisely what Heidegger's analysis of dwelling attempts to capture: the human being does not merely inhabit space but gathers the fourfold of earth, sky, mortals, and divinities in the act of dwelling.

Anxiety as spiritual awakening appeared in 55.6% of responses, often described as an experience of unexplained desolation that preceded a renewed sense of religious commitment. Several respondents explicitly distinguished this from clinical depression or fear: 'It was not that I was afraid of something specific,' wrote one Israeli respondent. 'It was that everything I usually relied on suddenly seemed hollow, and in that hollowness I found something I can only call God.' This phenomenology of anxiety as disclosive — as stripping away the comfortable securities of das Man and leaving Dasein face to face with what matters most — is almost exactly what Heidegger describes in section 40 of Being and Time.

The theme of authenticity versus inherited belief generated the most diverse responses and the most explicit cross-cultural variation. Western European (primarily German) respondents were far more likely than Turkish or Romanian respondents to frame their religious journey in terms of individual appropriation: 'I had to decide for myself what I believed, rather than simply inheriting my parents' Lutheranism.' Turkish and Romanian respondents were more likely to describe authenticity within community: 'To be truly Muslim is not to invent your own Islam but to deepen your participation in the tradition that was given to you.' This divergence, as will be argued in Section 6, reflects a genuine structural ambiguity in Heidegger's concept of authenticity rather than a deficiency in either tradition's religious self-understanding.

6. Cross-Cultural Comparative Analysis

Table 3 presents mean scores on eight experiential dimensions across the five national–cultural contexts, irrespective of religious tradition. The data reveal a pattern of substantial cross-cultural convergence on several dimensions, alongside meaningful divergence on others.

Table 3. Cross-Cultural Comparison of Experiential Resonance with Heideggerian Dimensions (Mean scores, 1–5 scale, N = 100 per country)

Experiential Dimension	Romania	Germany	Turkey	Israel	USA
Sense of transcendence in daily life	4.52	3.81	4.67	4.44	4.09
Finitude awareness in prayer/ritual	4.37	3.64	4.71	4.28	3.97
Anxiety as spiritual opening	3.98	4.12	3.83	4.01	3.74
Dwelling in sacred space	4.61	3.77	4.58	4.53	4.22
Temporal disruption in mystical exp.	3.84	3.91	4.23	4.17	3.65
Care as religious vocation	4.49	4.02	4.61	4.38	4.31
Authenticity vs. conformity in faith	4.11	4.38	3.76	4.22	4.44
Overall Existential Resonance (mean)	4.27	3.95	4.34	4.29	4.06

Note. Scores represent mean agreement on dimension-specific survey items. Overall Existential Resonance is the mean of all dimension scores per country.

The most striking cross-cultural finding is the relative consistency of dwelling and sacred space scores across Romania (4.61), Turkey (4.58), and Israel (4.53) — three countries with quite different religious traditions but comparable socio-cultural contexts in which religion remains a primary organising principle of public and private life. Germany (3.77) and, to a lesser extent, the United States (4.22) score lower, which may reflect the more privatised and individualised character of religious practice in secularised Western contexts.

Turkey scores highest on several dimensions related to finitude and divine submission: awareness of finitude in prayer/ritual (4.71), sense of transcendence in daily life (4.67), and care as religious vocation (4.61). This pattern is consistent with the Heideggerian reading of Islamic devotion as a practice that systematically integrates the awareness of finitude — ritualised in

the five daily prayers with their orientation toward Mecca and their invocation of divine greatness before human smallness — into the fabric of everyday existence.

Germany shows the highest score on authenticity versus conformity in faith (4.38), consistent with the Protestant theological tradition's emphasis on personal faith and individual conscience, and also on anxiety as spiritual opening (4.12). The latter may reflect the well-documented cultural familiarity of German-speaking populations with existentialist discourse, but it also points to a genuine theological tradition — running from Luther's anxious conscience to Kierkegaard's anxiety before God — in which existential Angst has been religiously valorised.

The overall existential resonance scores show a range from 3.95 (Germany) to 4.34 (Turkey), with all five countries above the scale midpoint. The relatively lower German score is paradoxical given the country's intellectual proximity to the Heideggerian tradition, but it may be explained by the secularisation of mainstream Protestantism in Germany, which has progressively detached theological discourse from the language of existential urgency. Turkish respondents, practising within a tradition that has historically maintained a more continuous integration of ontological and devotional categories, report a more vivid experiential match.

7. Philosophical Implications: Toward a Phenomenology of Religious Existence

7.1 The Universal and the Particular in Religious Existence

The empirical findings reported in this study support a philosophical thesis that has been advanced by several phenomenologists but rarely tested empirically: that there exists a universal structural grammar of religious existence that maps closely onto the existential categories Heidegger identifies as constitutive of finite human being. This grammar — articulated around the poles of thrownness and projection, anxiety and care, fallenness and authenticity, finitude and transcendence — is not the exclusive property of any single tradition but constitutes what might be called the existential a priori of religious life.

This thesis must be carefully distinguished from the reductive claim that all religious experience is 'really' just existential self-understanding in symbolic dress. Heidegger himself was sensitive to this danger, and his distinction between the ontological and the ontic — between the structural analysis of existence and the content of particular beliefs — provides the necessary safeguard. The existential categories disclose the formal conditions under which religious experience is possible; they do not determine its content. Being-toward-death does not tell us whether death is followed by resurrection, reincarnation, or dissolution; it tells us that any meaningful religious engagement with death must take up the finitude of existence rather than evading it.

The cross-cultural data complicate this picture in productive ways. The finding that authenticity is understood differently across traditions — as individual appropriation in Western Protestant

contexts, as deepened communal participation in more collectively-oriented traditions — suggests that even the formal Heideggerian categories require contextual interpretation when applied to religious life. This does not invalidate their universal scope but suggests that the phenomenology of religious existence must be attentive to what we might call the communal constitution of authenticity: the possibility that Dasein's ownmost possibilities are not always achieved in solitary decision but in the deepened participation in a tradition that genuinely calls one to oneself.

7.2 Heidegger's Ambiguous Legacy for Theology

Heidegger's own relationship to theology was deliberately ambiguous. His 1927 lecture 'Phenomenology and Theology' drew a sharp methodological boundary between phenomenological ontology, which addresses the Being of beings, and theology, which addresses the mode of being of faith (Glaube) as an ontic reality constituted by the Dasein of the Christian. Phenomenology, he argued, can serve theology only as a formal corrective, offering a conceptual clarification of the structures of existence within which faith is lived, but it cannot replace or ground theology's own first-person commitment.

The present findings suggest that this methodological boundary, while philosophically important, is less hermetically sealed in practice than Heidegger's lecture implies. Respondents across all traditions did not experience the Heideggerian categories as external philosophical frameworks being applied to their experience; they recognised them as articulations of something already implicit in their practice. The survey item 'Awareness of my mortality deepens the meaning of my religious practice,' for example, was not heard as a philosophical imposition but as an accurate description of something that their tradition had always taught and that they had always, at some level, known.

This suggests a revision of the standard account of the phenomenology–theology relationship. Rather than understanding phenomenology as providing a philosophical scaffolding that supports theological content from outside, we might understand the relationship as one of mutual illumination: theology has always been, in part, a first-order phenomenology of religious existence, articulating in confessional and narrative language the structural features that philosophy articulates in formal ontological terms. Heidegger's existential analytic, on this reading, does not secularise religious experience but translates it into a philosophical register that reveals its universal human significance.

7.3 Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations of the present study warrant acknowledgment. The survey instrument, despite careful translation and validation, necessarily loses some of the phenomenological

precision of Heidegger's concepts in rendering them accessible to non-specialist respondents. The five-country design, while providing meaningful cross-cultural variation, is not globally representative: the absence of East Asian, South Asian, and Sub-Saharan African religious contexts limits the generalisability of the cross-cultural findings. Future research should extend the design to include Buddhist, Hindu, and indigenous religious traditions, and should supplement the quantitative instrument with more extensive ethnographic observation of religious practice.

The study also focuses on adult practitioners who are already reflectively engaged with their tradition. The existential resonance scores reported here may therefore overestimate the degree to which Heideggerian categories are operatively present in unreflective or habitual religious practice. A longitudinal design tracking changes in existential–religious integration over major life transitions — bereavement, illness, conversion, religious crisis — would offer valuable insight into the dynamic relationship between existential structures and religious development.

8. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated, through a combination of cross-cultural survey data and qualitative thematic analysis, that Martin Heidegger's existential phenomenology provides a robust and widely resonant framework for understanding the structure of religious experience. Across Christian, Muslim, and Jewish traditions, and across five national–cultural contexts, the core Heideggerian existentials — Being-toward-death, thrownness, anxiety, care, dwelling, fallenness, authenticity, and the call of conscience — find consistent recognition in the reported experience of religious practitioners.

The quantitative data (Table 2) show that all three religious traditions score significantly higher than the non-religious comparison group on most existential dimensions, particularly those concerning finitude, sacred dwelling, and the call of conscience — dimensions most directly connected to the theological categories of mortality, sacred space, and divine address. The regression analysis (Table 5) identifies awareness of finitude and dwelling in sacred space as the strongest predictors of existential–religious integration, suggesting that these two dimensions form the phenomenological core of religious existence across traditions.

The cross-cultural comparison (Table 3) reveals that Turkey exhibits the highest overall existential resonance, while Germany exhibits the lowest — a finding that complicates any simple assumption that cultural proximity to the Heideggerian intellectual tradition translates into greater experiential recognition of its categories. The qualitative data (Table 4) enrich this picture by showing that the language of finitude, dwelling, anxiety, and authentic existence arises spontaneously in respondents' descriptions of their religious life, often without any prompting by the philosophical vocabulary of phenomenology.

The philosophical implication of these findings is significant: Heidegger's existential analytic, whatever its historical origins in Christian scholasticism and Protestant theology, discloses structures of finite existence that are recognisable across confessional boundaries. This does not collapse the differences between religious traditions; it identifies the common existential ground on which their differing responses to finitude, transcendence, and divine address are built. The project of a phenomenology of religious existence — one that is genuinely cross-cultural in scope while attentive to the irreducible particularity of each tradition — remains an urgent and unfinished task.

Studia Phaenomenologica is committed to advancing this dialogue between phenomenological philosophy and the full diversity of religious life. The present contribution is offered in that spirit: as an invitation to further inquiry, not a final word.

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