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Heidegger's Concept of God*

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1. Introduction

Without doubt questions about God are integral to the history of human thought. These questions are shaped by cultural contexts and the exigencies of any given historical moment. Intimately connected with human self-understanding, the God-question is remarkable in both its conceptual complexity and diversity of formulations. As a consequence, any treatise on the existence of the divine must first deal

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with a myriad of conflicting discussions in order to begin building conceptual clarity.¹

Indeed, these discussions, given their inherent historically contingent diversity, demand an entirely different hermeneutical framework which pushes human thinking to its limits. The absolute transcendence of divine existence collides with the contingent and partial limits of human thinking and language. Clearly, the absolute limits of human knowledge can only offer a partial and fragmentary understanding according to each context of history and culture. The complexity of this problem is not caused by divine characteristics, rather by the finitude of human knowledge. In other words, in the face of critiquing an argument for the existence of God, we are faced with not only untangling numerous historically constrained discussions but also inherent ambiguities and biases.

Without doubt Martin Heidegger's (1889-1976) philosophical discussion of the concept of God contains all these limitations, ambiguities, and biases. These *a priori* questions are, however, far beyond the scope of this paper which will instead concentrate on the question of the existence of God within the European cultural context and Heidegger's work in particular.

As Wilhelm Weischedel (1905-1975) has rightly pointed out, the question of God permeates the history of philosophical endeavour and is both its ultimate ground and essence.² Nevertheless, from the per-

¹ The equivocality of the word God, as well as the polysemy of understanding on divinity, is an issue in this debate. In addition, there are many pre-existing issues, such as the polysemy and exactness of many themes and concepts, such as the discussion of religion and religiosity, the concept of transcendence, which is one of the characteristics of human nature.

² Aristoteles, *Metaphysik*, Book 6, 1026a; 김진성 역주, 『형이상학』 (이제이북스, 2007). By the way what kind of God is this? The Polysemy of the concept is also a problem even here. This God is by no means the supreme being of personality.

spective of philosophical theism, we must ask today whether the question of God is still a valid proposition even if, historically, God has been posited as ultimate existence, the ground of all being, and the definitive meaning of human existence. As can be seen in the works of Nietzsche and Heidegger, nihilism deeply permeates European intellectual history, governing not only the direction of metaphysical enquiry but also, depending on the inherent existential claim, the legitimacy and efficacy of its theories.

The early natural philosophers, in asking questions about the ultimate cause of the world and of matter, were already implicitly posing questions about God. In stipulating philosophy as metaphysics, Aristotle makes clear that in asking questions about being is ultimately asking questions about God.³

In his “First Philosophy” (“Metaphysics”), Aristotle in inquiring into the question of “the principles and causes of the things” (1025 b) asserts that the Divine “must be the first and most fundamental principle” (1064a) and thus philosophy is theological philosophy or theology (1064b). Consequently, in his treatise on knowing, Aristotle asserts that “knowledge of the divine” is the most precious of knowledge (983a). Philosophy, as a fundamental study of knowing, inevitably encompasses questions about the nature of God.

As is well attested, Heidegger’s fundamental philosophical enquiry centres on the reason for existence. In order to critique (European) philosophy for its confusion over the philosophy of being, he employs the concept of *Seinsvergessenheit* (the oblivion of being) and high-

³ Gerd Haeffner, “Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)”, in *Klassiker der Philosophie, Bd. II.*, hrsg. von Otfried Höffe, Verlag C.H. Beck 1985, Korean trans. Sang-Hee, Shin (Paju: Hangilsa, 2001), 328-329.

lights the general failure to inquire into the metaphysical distinction between “a being” and “Being (existence).”⁴

Thus, the assertion, “God exists (is),” invites a distinction between God as being and the being of God. That is, an ontological distinction between the being of God and the beingness (prescencing) of God. However, in the act of conceptualization God, even as the ultimate ground or source of all being, God cannot exist because this God has been objectified as a predicate. God is no longer a subject but has being as a copula. By focusing on God as subject, we linguistically confuse being with Being and fall into the trap of obliterating being (*Seinsvergessenheit*). Talking about God as being does not mean talking about the existence of God. In making the statement “God exists (is)” we must distinguish between the existence and the being of God. Failure to clearly distinguish this distinction inevitably leads to misunderstanding Heidegger's conception of God.

2. Heidegger and Catholic Theology

1) From his early years Heidegger studied Catholic theology and was especially interested in issues of ontology. He toyed with the idea of priesthood and even spent two weeks as a Jesuit novice. Given his ontological bent, it is not surprising that questions about God are a constant focus of his intellectual endeavours.⁵

⁴ M. Heidegger. *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen, 1927). 5.

⁵ G. Haeffner. “From the darkness to the lightness of being: Martin Heidegger.” 『철학의 거장들 4 — 현대편』, 오트프리트 회페 엮음, 신상희 옮김 (한길사, 2001), 328-329.

It is worth noting that Heidegger, in his *Seinsvergessenheit* critique, outlines five pressing contemporary problems and delves into their philosophical roots and characteristics. Among these is the concept of *Entgötterung*, variously translated as the “loss of the gods,” “flight of the gods,” “absences of the gods,” and “the death of God.”⁶ In his posthumously published *Der Spiegel* Interview (1966/1976), Heidegger remarked: “Where danger grows, the saving power also does. [...] Only a god can still save us.” This prophetic remark reflects his concern on *Entgötterung*. Consciousness of this crisis is a questioning not of the god who disappears in the depths of philosophy but an anticipation of an emerging god.⁷ And such a god would be revealed outside of the crisis of our times. Perhaps, reflecting the fruits of his philosophical struggle to investigate the ultimate ground of being, a philosophical task which is naturally close to theology, Heidegger was led to confess, “Had it not been for theology, I could never have begun this path of thought. The origin is always close to its cause.”⁸

Nevertheless, or probably because of this confession, Heidegger’s relationship with Catholicism remained estranged or at least ambiguous. Clearly, his elucidation of the divinity is not compatible with the Catholic system. Intimately connected with individual contingency, the historical limitations of our understanding of the divine is always revealed through historical and finite existential enquiry. Throughout his writings, Heidegger constantly averts to, and struggles with, the meaning of divine being. Notwithstanding, his contentions were neither Christian nor dogmatic. His enquiry into being was, as he makes

⁶ M. Heidegger, “Die Zeit des Weltbildes,” in *Holzwege*, 73-74.

⁷ “Spiegel-Gespräch mit Martin Heidegger am 23. Sept. 1966,” *Der Spiegel*, Nr.23, 30. Jahrgang, 31. Mai 1976, 193-219.

⁸ M. Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen, 1959), 96.

clear, never about God: "Being is not God."⁹ Nowhere in his philosophy is there to be found an explanation of God but, at the same time, it is possible, especially if we are cognizant of his ontological distinction about divine being which lies at the heart of his philosophy, to establish the meaning of divine existence. It is obvious that his understanding of God is not drawn from a Catholic theological perspective, but his assertion of the future god cannot be understood without theological enquiry and rationality. Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), for one, believed that Heidegger's quest to dismantle and rebuild Western philosophy was ultimately linked to the Christian gospel.¹⁰ Heidegger clearly distanced himself from the official Church doctrine of the time but, also equally clear, his philosophy created the possibilities of a new understanding of the divinity outside the traditional parameters.¹¹

In line with Gadamer, the Christian tradition inherent in Heidegger's philosophy is self-evidently inextricably linked to the question of being and enquiry into the nature of the divinity.¹² The connection becomes obvious when considering the early Heidegger and his lectures

⁹ M. Heidegger, "Brief über den Humanismus," in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt/M 1978), 328.

¹⁰ H.-G. Gadamer, "Die religiöse Dimension," in *Heideggers Wege* (Tübingen, 1983), 140-151.

¹¹ There is much testimony about the relationship between Heidegger's philosophy and Christianity. I don't have to mention all of this, but especially Macquarrie, *J. Heidegger and Christianity* (New York: Continuum, 1994). J. Macquarrie said, as Karl Löwith claimed (Mein Leben in Deutschland vor und nach 1933, *Ein Bericht* (1940), Stuttgart 1986, S. 30), Heidegger was a "Christian theologian" rather than a philosopher, and quoted Heidegger's word "my philosophy is to wait for God." And H.-G. Gadamer's word, "It was Christianity that encouraged Heidegger's thoughts and kept them alive. What was said through him was an ancient transcendence, not a modern secularity" ["Anrufung des verschwundenen Gottes," in *Evangelische Kommentare*, Vol. 10 (1977), 204-208].

¹² The Christian tradition is writ large in the Heideggerian corpus: from his commentary on the Pauline letters and in his analysis of the poetry of the early Romantics, Hölderlin and Rilke. See, for example, N. Fischer / F.-W. v. Herrmann (Hg.), *Heidegger und die christliche Tradition* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2007).

on the phenomenology of religion in which he drew heavily from the philosophy of St Augustine and the theology of the medieval mystic, Meister Eckhart; following his *Kehre* (turn), the influence is also obvious in his promotion of *Gelassenheit* (releasement) and the idea of listening to being.¹³ Reiner Schürmann (1941-1993), for example, accepts the Heideggerian specificity of the idea of being but, nevertheless, points to the underlying influence of Eckhart and adoption of the Meister's historicocritical ontology.¹⁴ Likewise, in his analysis of the poetry of Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843), Heidegger detects an ongoing theme of divine holiness. Although neither directly nor clearly connected to the Christian understanding of God, the "silent fundamental question" of his philosophy revolves around the issue of the mystery of the divinity.¹⁵ Perhaps it is possible that Heidegger, in his desire to both dissolve and ameliorate the questions and parameters of traditional metaphysics and constantly explore new avenues of thought, fundamentally obscures the Christian dimension of Dasein and questions about the living God? Thus, the question becomes why did Heidegger avoid this issue and, instead, focus on questions of being? In other words, we move much closer to the heart of Heidegger's existential question and understanding of the divine by focusing on the historical conditioning of his motives and critical thinking.

¹³ On the relevance of Heidegger's philosophy to M. Eckhart, see Jean Greisch, "Warum denn das Warum? Heidegger und Meister Eckhart: Von der Phänomenologie zum Ereignisdenken," in *Heidegger und die christliche Tradition*, 129-147.

¹⁴ Schürmann said, that Heidegger's main concepts, lets beings be (*Gelassenheit*), the thinging of the thing (*dinc*), understood as the nearing thinking as thanking (*Gedanc*), the unspoken speech (*ungesprochene Sprache*), and life without why (*ohne Warum*) cannot be thought of without the influence of M. Eckhart, in *Heidegger Reexamined, vol. 3. Art, Poetry, and Technology*, edit. H. Dreyfus / M. Wrathall (New York/London: Routledge, 2002), 295-319, especially, 296.

¹⁵ N. Fischer / F-W. v. Herrmann, "die christliche Botschaft und das Denken Heideggers," in *Heidegger und die christliche Tradition*, 9-20.

2) While faith is often cited for the differences between philosophical and theological discourses on the world and life, Heidegger posits that the essential divergence lies in the distinction between *Being* and *being*. This distinction holds that academic disciplines can be divided between empirical existentialism and transcendental ontology. Theology, along with all the other disciplines, is a positivistic science which relates to the present being. Even though perhaps supplying the best explanation of absolute being, theology does not answer the question of being-in-itself. In other words, theology is study of being, only philosophy is ontological.¹⁶

Theology is, in essence, the study related to faith in Jesus Christ, the crucified God (PhTh 52). Namely, an historical study of an historical being (PhTh 55-56). Academic theology, as the study of being, is a discussion of the Christian specificity of being thrown into the world. This thrownness entails “creating a new connection” (PhTh 63). The specificity of this theology, even though ontotheology, is necessarily grounded in the limits of existential existence. In other words, “philosophy determines the idea of theology” (PhTh 64). However, theology is neither a prop nor inferior to philosophy. Rather, the role of the philosophy of being precedes Christianity and acts as corrective to ontotheology. It is existentialism which separates philosophy and theology. Thus, for Heidegger “Christian philosophy” is an oxy-

¹⁶ This distinction is not an assertion of a qualitative difference. M. Heidegger, “Phänomenologie und Theologie,” in *Wegmarken*, 2. Aufl. (Frankfurt/M, 1978), 67, also 48-49. This distinction does not in any way indicate a qualitative difference in quality. Henceforth, PhTh in the text.

moronic, akin to “wooden iron.”¹⁷ In the end, it is not difficult to predict that existentialist philosophy would not discuss the being of God.

The fundamental task of a philosophy of being is to provide, both theoretically and conceptually, a systematic investigation of the structure and possibilities of existential existence.¹⁸ By comparison, all other academic disciplines other than philosophy posit a subject/object relationship in understanding existence. Philosophy, alone, is concerned with the reason for existence, of being concerned with itself, rather than being as an objectified abstraction. Philosophical enquiry seeks the underlying relationship, the existential foundation which is prior to the process of objectification inherent in the natural sciences. Reason is being disclosing (speaking) itself, a response to what is being disclosed. As such, “Language speaks” incorporates both ‘logos’ and reason (PhTh 75). Linguistically, the nature of this philosophy is “poetic speech” and this speech is to the presencing (*Anwesen*) of god. This presencing is a radiant self-showing (PhTh 78). Ontological philosophy does not discuss the Being of god, but rather the divine presencing of what is present. This presencing appears in diverse ways in the here and now. However, there is no suggestion here that this presencing is either an object or a being.

¹⁷ Ph Th 66; Furthermore Heidegger criticizes the concept, as like the eternal truth, in the discussion horizon of philosophy as a remnant of Christian theology that has yet to be expelled to the extreme.

¹⁸ M. Heidegger, *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, GA 24 (Frankfurt/M, 1989), 15-16.

3. Critiquing Ontological Difference and the Existential Concept of God

1) Heidegger characterizes philosophy as essentially a step back (*Schritt zurück*) whose necessity is to be found in the gap between Being and being. As a consequence of Western rationality, this step back is a turn from metaphysics and “and a return to the essence of metaphysics” which, in avoiding essentialism and symbolic objectification, is a movement towards recollecting being-in-itself.¹⁹ This recollecting of the being grounded within being is a retrieval of what is obscured and forgotten by the present state of ontology. This retreat goes beyond academic ontology and seeks to retrieve being-in-itself (ID 42). Contemporary academics is technocratic and annihilates the difference between Being and being. Philosophy, on the other hand, must reclaim the essence of a thing. Likewise, thinking which only sees God fails to see being. It is only possible to retrieve the essence by abandoning the path of ontological thinking about God.

Ultimately, ontology and theology are the same thing because “the Being of beings knows itself as this knowledge, and thus it is in truth.” Since the time of the Greeks, metaphysics has been the science about God, hence theology. Western metaphysics is “onto-theo-logy” (ID 45). This theology, however, needs to be distinguished from the dogma and catechesis of the Church. Even though almost universally understood as onto-theology, metaphysics need not exclusively be defined as reasoning for the existence of God. On the contrary, insight tells us that the proof for God is but one topic within metaphysics. Hence, Heidegger’s intention becomes a task to rethink the grounds

¹⁹ “Die Onto-Theo-Logische Verfassung der Metaphysik,” in *Identität und Different* (Pfullingen, 1957), S. 40-41. Henceforth, ID in the text.

by which we think about the divine. Thus, because onto-theology is essentially flawed, he proposes that anyone who seeks a radical experience of this theology should be silent about God. That is to say, the reason for this step back is that the fundamental grounds of being have been obscured and forgotten. This new thinking aims to reconnect Western metaphysics with its shrouded roots.

As its universal attribute, metaphysics considers Being not only as the first but also the universal common ground of all beings. This ground is the basis on which philosophy is established (ID 49-50) and expressed in terms such as the cause (*Ur-Sache*), the main reason (*causa prima*), and cause of itself (*causa sui*). In other words, “the metaphysical concept of God” (ID 52). Western philosophy has, perhaps axiomatically, regarded God as the first and ultimate cause of all being, the inherent primal sense of being. Philosophically, the path is opened to declaring God as the supreme value and being. Paradoxically, this declaration is the very moment when the philosophical god obfuscates the nature of God and ultimately leads to the death of God. Namely, to appraise the value of being is nothing more than an act that is most contrary to its existence. It is the greatest insult to Being.

This kind of thinking conceals the Being of beings. If the Being of beings is the “*genitivus subjectivus*,” then we must think of being in the difference with Being. This is nothing short of thinking about being in its context and at its source (ID 54). Maybe the true philosophy of God is to think about God in the difference between the being of the deity and its ultimate characteristics? Thus, Heidegger surmises that real ontological thinking is “Being thought about in terms of the difference” (ID 55). Our ontology is determined by these differences. Thinking, which begins with the differences, reveals the proper meaning of Being (ID 57).

And yet, if being is thought of as the ultimate being or its totality, then we are unable to see the difference between Being and being (ID 62-63). Within these bounds, the onto-theological God, having obliterated the difference which enables us to think about being, buries the existence of god within a representative *causa sui*. "Man can neither pray nor sacrifice" to this god of philosophy. "Before the causa sui, man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before this god" (ID 64). Heidegger's concept of god-less thinking (*gott-los*) is an expression of abandoning the "god of philosophy, god as *causa sui*." He concludes that this "god-less thinking" is closer to the "divine God" (ID 65). Therefore, rather than protecting the idea of god as the *causa prima* of all things or justifying the onto-theological god, a more appropriate philosophical theory for the existence of God is to be found in the retreat into god-less thinking.

Heidegger believes the difficulty with stepping back into the forgotten "withdrawing concealment of perdurance" lies in (Western European) languages (IS 65-66). For him, the problem lies in whether these languages, with their metaphysical nature, are too closely bound (*Geschick*) to "an exclusive brand of metaphysics." In other words, the metaphysical paucity of these languages will clearly have grave difficulty in giving thoughtful utterance to god-less thinking: a fact which the Christian mystical tradition bears constant witness. If, ultimately, all that can be said about God is the fact that nothing can be said, we are left to ponder whether these languages have been so captured and ontically flawed as to be unable to utter that which arises in itself (*Ereignis: enowning*). It is self-evident that such difficulty applies to the utterance of god-lessness.

2) By the 1930s, Heidegger, through his critical engagement with Nietzsche's death of God philosophy, was trying to re-envision the God question in the light of the history of philosophy. According to Heidegger, Nietzsche's nihilism is the ultimate impulse built into Western philosophy and is captured in the succinct proposition, "God is dead." He hastened to add that this proposition is not a result of Nietzsche's personal experience or conclusion, but rather the result of the Western metaphysical project.²⁰ The God whom Nietzsche criticizes is from "the super-sensory world in general." Namely, God is "the name for the realm of ideas and the ideal" which points to the Platonic conceit of "the world of essence." Heidegger understands the idea of "God is dead" to mean that "the super-sensory world has no effective power" (NW 212).

Nihilism implies an atheistic denial of the God of Christianity: a fundamental movement of the history of the West (NW 214-215). In this sense, Nihilism is a declaration that the traditional metaphysical system with its ideas of "super-sensory world, ideologies, gods, moral and ethical laws, authority of reason, progress, the happiness of the majority, culture and civilization" no longer has effective power (NW 219, 249). In this, Christian theology, too, which posits God — its highest value — as "the supreme being," is no exception (NW 223). Consequently, in order to replace the collapsing traditional order, Nihilism is now announced as the ultimate value. When this collapse happens, the new touchstone will be "complete nihilism" (NW 220). In this sense, the declaration of the "death of God" is an announcement that the empty place of the vanished God must be replaced, and

²⁰ Despite the numerous works on Nietzsche, here I will discuss Heidegger's concept of God, focusing on the article below. "Nietzsches Wort 'Gott ist tot'," in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt/M, 1950), 205-263, 208; Henceforth, NW in the text.

the empty seat replaced by another (NW 221). The empty seat requires a new principle which in the journey beyond incomplete nihilism and its discredited values towards a new realm (NW 222).

Nihilism is the attempt to create a new process of fulfilment and ultimate value by moving beyond the platonic essentialism of Western metaphysics. This philosophy does not attempt at all to replace the seat of God with humans. Such an attempt is, to paraphrase Heidegger, the folly of those who have never thought about the “holy” or the “essence of God.” Nihilism, because “the essences of man cannot, in any case, reach the realm of God,” is not an attempt to replace God with humans. Such foolishness is a mistake which arises from the subjectivity of contemporary philosophy (NW 250-1). Moreover, this foolishness springs from the arrogance of modern civilization which, having deposed God, sets humans as the masters of the world.

It is the concept of value which lies at the heart of this philosophy. Borrowing the words of Nietzsche, Heidegger describes value as the viewpoint of “the *conditions for preservation-increase* in regard to the complex structures, relatively enduring, of life in the midst of becoming” (NW 223). The concept of value is established from the viewpoint of deciding what is essential for life (NW 225). Modern metaphysics sets the being of Being as its value and thus eliminates all other paths by which the truth of Being can experience self-knowing. Such metaphysics deludes itself by looking at being and mistaking the reason for existence. Metaphysics denigrates itself by both failing to properly think about beingness of beings and reducing all being to a single value.²¹ Epistemologically, Western metaphysics requires this

²¹ Here Heidegger evaluates Nietzsche's “will to power” as metaphysics that attempts to convert all values by valuing the best value. It attempts to overcome nihilism. NW 254-255.

dispensation of value be given expression as subjectivity (NW 240). Thus, the nature of God, reduced to the beingness of being and its highest value, cannot be seen. Ultimately, this absolutism becomes the final blow, an absolute blasphemy, before God. The death of God is the proclamation that God is annihilated “as a living presence” (NW 255-6).

The murder of God, it becomes clear, is the human desire to “secure duration,” an act “which secures bodily, material, spiritual, and intellectual durables.” That is, the desire of humanity to procure its “own security, which wills the mastery over beings” (NW 257).

Consequently, modernity, with the declaration of God’s death and the objectification of being, has through the dispensation of value reduced being to a market commodity defined by its technological utility.²² Nihilism is the final blow to the value of being, a history where the “truth of beings stays absent” (NW 259). Those who cannot think are no longer able to seek God. “They can seek no longer because they can no longer think.” Profound thinking is not the search for some deeply hidden meaning, “but rather something lying close by: something that is lying most closely, which we, because that is all it is, have therefore continually already passed over.” Thinking is renewed by those who are “no longer able to see the default of God as a default” and consequently “reach into the abyss.” This thinking comes with the knowledge of the fact “that the reason that has been extolled for centuries is the most stubborn adversary of thinking” (NW 262-3).

²² NW 254; Zimmerman, in his critique, calls this “productionist metaphysics.” M. Zimmerman, *Heidegger’s Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, Art* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana Univ. Press, 1990), xiii-xxi.

4. The Revelation of Being and the Conception of God

1) The paradox is that ontology, which philosophy asserts is the best path for reflecting on being, may actually make us blind to understanding the nature of being. As a scientific study of existence, “ontology renounces philosophy and philosophy is now put to death. On the other hand, ontology is the study of being talking itself.”²³ When this happens, philosophy becomes “‘standing out’ into the truth of being,” where standing out carries the meaning of “ek-sistence” (BH 323). Within such a framing, the being of God and the world is revealed to exist. As Heidegger notes, “beings might appear in the light of being.” Being, however, is “not God and not a cosmic ground.” Rather, they stand in the light of being. In this respect, being itself is revealed in the relationship of being with beings. Therefore, it is, perhaps, better to say that being is relationship and in itself a relationship (BH 328-329). Humans, he asserts are “the shepherd of being” who, “as ek-sisting,” are “to guard the truth of being” (BH 338-9). As such, the true existence of human beings is to reveal and protect the being of God. *Ek-sisting* human beings are the guardians of being. Furthermore, this guardianship not only requires “care” for the being of God but also this care is defining of human existence.

This philosophical approach does not create a subject/object relationship with being but, rather, thinks towards revealing the truth of being. This thinking provides the connection by which we can begin to reason towards the being of God (BH 345-6). As we follow this line of thinking, the divinity can only be thought from the essence of the holy. Namely, the divine can only be known by reasoning from the

²³ M. Heidegger, “Brief über den Humanismus,” in *Wegmarken*, 2. Aufl. (Frankfurt/M 1978), 315-316; henceforth, BH in the text.

essence of the holy. However, the question remains begging, “what is the holy?” For Heidegger, Dasein thinking is connected to our existential experience, out of which it is possible to reason to the truth of our existence (BH 347-8). The nature of the divinity, whether the highest value or first-of-all beings, cannot be understood within the horizon of being. The divine essence, revealed in the human experience of the holy, is possible only in the opening of being created by the light of the clearing (*Lichtung*). In this regard, Heidegger claims that the truth of being cannot be discussed within the parameters of either theism or atheism (BH 348). *Ek-sistence* dwells in the truth of being and provides not only much more efficacious grounds to think about being but also to overcome the legacy of Western metaphysics. In this manner, therefore, thinking about the truth of being outside the boundaries of Western metaphysical humanism is a service in thinking about the *humanitas* of the human being (BH 349). That is, thinking about the essence of *humanitas* belongs to thinking about *Ek-sistence*. Such thinking is neither theoretical nor practical but, rather, the recollection of being itself (BH 354).

For Heidegger, this thinking about the emergence of being is a response to the nihilation (*Nichten*) which lies in the veiled essence of being (BH 355). Thinking about the link between being and “the nothing” (*Nichts*) is possible because existence and being are not the same thing. The absence of God is another aspect of this kind of thinking. He equates existence with “the nothing” because “Nihilation unfolds essentially in being itself” (BH 357).

As can be seen, thinking of the nothing is existentially thinking about being and nothing, that is ontology that is not thinking about the horizon of being but out of the horizon of being. Heidegger asserts that this thinking which is to come is not philosophy in the traditional

sense “because it thinks more originally than metaphysics — a name identical to philosophy [...]. Thinking gathers language into simple saying [...]. With its saying, thinking lays inconspicuous furrows in language” (BH 360).

2) Heidegger's philosophy dealing with the question of being orients itself toward Being which has not yet come. This thinking, more original than that of traditional metaphysics, also moves beyond the traditional philosophy of meaning. This thinking orientates towards the emptiness of being. This emptiness is the nothing: the language of being.²⁴ Whilst not signifying God, it is also true that this emptiness gives rise to original thinking which draws near to the essence of God.

Heidegger, mindful of the default or flight of God, defines the contemporary moment as impoverished and in need of thinking at a fundamental level.²⁵ The age of “God's default” is an impoverished age not only because God no longer dwells amongst humans “but the radiance of divinity is extinguished in world-history.” In this age, “The ‘absence’ of the god is the ground for the lack of ‘holy names.’ However, since the find is near, although in a reserved manner, the absent god extends his greeting in the nearing of the heavenly ones.”²⁶ Through this initial pronouncement, Heidegger seeks to find a way back to the primordial beginning which, beyond the thinking of the age, is the advent of being in the two-fold default found in the non-existence of the original being of God who is yet to come close (GA 4 47).

²⁴ M. Heidegger, “Brief über den Humanismus,” in *Wegmarken*, 360.

²⁵ M. Heidegger, “Wozu Dichter,” in *Holzwege*, 265. Henceforth, Wozu in the text.

²⁶ M. Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*, Gesamtausgabe Bd. 4 (Frankfurt/M 1981), 28.

It is the essence of poetry to speak of a new era, singing of the time between the departed God and the yet-to-be-coming God. It is poetry which recognizes the impoverishment of the age (*dürftige Zeit*) and its two-fold loss of the absent God who no longer exists and the not-yet advent of the God who is to come. Being is hidden in this impoverished age which ponders the *destruktion* of being. It is precisely to this impoverished place that the poet is called “to attend, singing, to the trace of the fugitive gods. This is why the poet in the time of the world’s night utters the holy” (Wozu 268-269). This place is the original dwelling of humanity, the place where being manifests its own existence. The realization of the nature of the impoverishment of the age is not the death of God but, rather, that humans neither know nor overcome their own death (Wozu 270). Death remains a riddle and consequently, “this desolation is itself desolate because the essential realm in which pain and death and love belong together is withdrawn” (Wozu 271).

Already in *Being and Time*, Heidegger, through his philosophical enquiries into the reality of human beings facing the truth of their existence and the intimate immediacy of death, had begun to think about the absence of God and the alienation of human existence.²⁷ The absence of God is intimately related to the spirit of the age and its inability to reveal the meaning of Being. In an age of desolation, the poet reveals the existence of Being by singing of the absence. Poetry gives voice to the holy which is concealed by being. It is a song about veiled holiness in an age when technology, capital, and technics objectify and commodify Being.²⁸ Nature, of which the poet sings, is not used

²⁷ M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, §§46-53.

²⁸ Modern studies are technical in its nature and are also the result of technology. This technological dominance puts forward that all beings can be produced, and further dis-

in the sense of a subject in the natural sciences, but rather the origin and source of history and art; nor is its truth to be found in the distinction made by the ancient Greeks between *physis* and *zoe*, between nature and life. Nature is the representation of life in its entirety.²⁹

Expounding on a verse from the poetry of Hölderlin, "But where the danger lies, there also grows that which saves," Heidegger notes that salvation comes not from the "empty sham" of religion "but where there is a turn among mortals in their essence." That is, these true mortals accept the death that comes in letting go of the total desolation of the age in order to face the meaning of existence (Wozu 291-292). This turn, which neither denies death nor conceals its meaning, is an openness (*Offenheit*) that "lets beings as such come to presence" (Wozu 299-300). Developing the idea further, Heidegger asserts that coming to presence is ultimately where the holy is manifest: "The holy binds the divine. The divine brings God closer" (Wozu 315). The meaning of this era is, in the words of Heidegger's commentary on the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), "neither decay nor decline. As destiny it lies in being and lays claim to man" (Wozu 316).

5. Understanding the God of Postmetaphysics

1) The coming God must be understood within the context of post-metaphysics. That is, metaphysics in the traditional sense is no longer

solves such manufactured goods into exchange value through the market. The world is enveloped in a marketable world. Wozu 286, 288, 309-311.

²⁹ Wozu 273; "Here, Nature, life indicate being in the sense of beings in their entirety." Wozu 275. The ancient Greeks defined life by differentiating between *zoe* and *bios*. P. Hadot, *Leben*, in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, hrsg. J. Ritter u.a., Bd 5 (Basel/Stuttgart 1980), 52-53.

valid and we must rethink our contemporary experience of God against a different horizon of being. If the nothing of nihilation is the space of coming into being, then philosophy is the thinking about being and nothing, it is the interpretation of being in the absence of being. If God is understood in absence or default rather than as ultimate, absolute or perfect being, then we are forced to think of the “ungodly god.” Here we begin to catch a glimpse of the thinking behind Being revealed in the experience of the nothing and postmetaphysical understanding of God.³⁰ Namely, no longer conceived of as the perfect being, God, like being, is linked to the understanding of being in its absence and transcendence. Such thinking is only possible by moving into a space beyond Western metaphysics. Postmetaphysics is not just important for understanding Heidegger’s understanding of God but, more importantly, through his understanding of God we can begin to construct the philosophical framework of postmetaphysics.³¹

Heidegger observes that positivism, in its arrogance, is either unwilling or unable to see the nothing and consequently dismisses the idea. Nevertheless, it is possible for those who “dwell in the nothing” to be able to study Dasein. Indeed, only with this dwelling can there be questions of the nothing. It is only when “the nothing is revealed” that the investigation of existence becomes possible and its parameters established. Thus, “only by existing on the basis of metaphysics can science renew and fulfil its essential task.” That task, Heidegger believes, is to disclose, in ever fresh ways, “the whole realm of truth in

³⁰ Syng-Hwan Shin, “The Hermeneutics for the Concept of ‘God’ in the Postmetaphysical Era,” in *Studies in Philosophy East-West*, vol. 54 (Korean Society for Philosophy East-West, 2009): 29-53.

³¹ On the postmetaphysical thought, see Syng-Hwan Shin, *Metaphysics and Postmetaphysics* (Paju: Seokwangsa, 2018), 179-289.

both nature and history."³² Disclosure also implies that empirical science, if it is to be valid, must find its meaning within the horizon of being. As being, humans can only relate to individual beings if they are able "to enter into and dwell in the nothing."³³

The postmetaphysical concept of God is closely related to the novelty to be found in the world of early Romanticism.³⁴ This novelty was a philosophical effort to free the history of Western thought from one of its worst guests — what Nietzsche defined as nihilism. If we are to overcome the existential darkness of the 21st century, then perhaps, it is Heidegger's philosophy, which seeks to move beyond metaphysical fatalism (*Geschick*) by uncovering the hidden depths of fundamental existential questions, that offers an intellectual path forward.

For Heidegger, the becoming is the moment in history when the essence of being stands in its own essence (GA 4 76). This moment is when truth is determined in its originary essence. Humans, through their thinking, bring this moment closer. The concept of the coming God implies that human beings, who cannot live without God, will establish a new existence of god. Likewise, God, who is revealed through humanity, needs humans for his own existence. Therefore, humanity and God cannot live without each other (GA 4 69).

The coming gods are the "power that gives life to everything living," and they also maintain themselves within "the power which keeps life alive" (GA 4 65). Heidegger thinks that this becoming, this

³² M. Heidegger, "Was ist Metaphysik," in *Wegmarken*, 2. Aufl. (Frankfurt/M 1978), 119-120. Henceforth, WiM in the text.

³³ WiM 210. Heidegger refers this study as metaphysics that explains this meaning. In this context the metaphysics is postmetaphysical that it goes beyond traditional metaphysics, and it is also an ontological philosophy that thinks Being as nothing. Metaphysics in this sense is a fundamental ontological event of Dasein.

³⁴ M. Frank, *Der kommende Gott, Vorlesungen über die Neue Mythologie* (Suhrkamp Frankfurt/M, 1982).

advent, is a great beginning (*Anfang*) (GA 4 171). Ultimately, this becoming is the new advent and renewed beginning of the world and its history, of thinking and its origins. This becoming is the overcoming of the absence: “The time of god-lessness contains what is indecisive about what is yet to be decided” (GA 4 110). Through establishing a concept of the coming God grounded in thinking about being, Heidegger’s thinking moves beyond philosophical argument and flows into the intuitive and mystical. There seems no point in trying to rationalize this kind of thinking. On the contrary, it seems more appropriate to accept Heidegger’s work as prophetically laying the groundwork of a new kind of thinking.

Often, Heidegger seems to name God as the being of beings. “But when the gods are originally named and the essence of things comes to expression so that the things first shine forth, when this occurs, man’s existence is brought into a firm relation and placed on a ground” (GA 4 41). This proposition can, by no means, be taken as a philosophical argument. Namely, this proposition is not a thesis for a supreme being even though the being of being is connected with the divine, rather, just as with the world, nature, and language, the intention is to encapsulate the nature of God as revealed according to the acts of being. These concepts speak to the wider characteristics of Heidegger’s philosophy. His thinking, which also applies to the concept of God, expands into the world, nature, language, and things (*Ding*) by concentrating on the ontological difference between being and Being. Thus, the setting of the world, nature, and language belong to the primal event of being (*Ereignis*). In this vein, the authenticity of language is that: “the gods have come to expression and a world has appeared.” Nevertheless, “it is important to see that the presence of the gods and the appearance of the world are not merely a consequence of

the occurrence of language; rather, they are simultaneous with it" (GA4 38-40). In this context, the holy of which the poet sings "merely opens the time for an appearing of the gods and points into the location of the dwelling of historical man upon this earth" (GA4 114). In this regard, reason and poetry appear to be two primal events of becoming which define both God and humans.

The being of things dwells in the fourfold (*Geviert*). By fourfold, Heidegger is speaking of the world where earth, sky, the divinities, and mortals co-exist. In classical German, the thing means a gathering — appropriating the fourfold in its becoming. For Heidegger, therefore, "Appropriating the fourfold, it gathers the fourfold's stay, its while, into something that stays for a while: into this thing, that thing."³⁵ Nevertheless, it needs to be emphasised, he does not equate the divine thing with God. "The divinities are the beckoning messengers of the godhead. Out of the hidden sway of the divinities the god emerges as what he is, which removes him from any comparison with beings that are present."³⁶ The divinities, it could be said, are one of the grounds that give shape to the world. What "we call the world" becomes in the "appropriating mirror-play of the simple onefold of earth and sky, divinities and mortals."³⁷

The question of God cannot be avoided within the Western philosophical tradition with its metaphysical musings on the existence of being and the transcendence of human beings. Before Heidegger, philosophy was preoccupied with the question of being and the accident of existence. This philosophy, with its focus on the ontological

³⁵ M. Heidegger, "Das Ding," in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen, 1954), 163-181. Das Ding dingt. S. 171-172. He refers Meister Eckhart's thought as an important authority in his ontological analysis of things, 175.

³⁶ M. Heidegger, "Das Ding," 177.

³⁷ M. Heidegger, "Das Ding," 178.

difference between Being and beings, ultimately results in the abandonment or forgetting of Being (*Seinsvergessenheit*). This ontological approach is given expression in a wide variety of fields and propositions including the existential analysis of the world, linguistics and reason, art and poetry (*Dichtung*). While not directly engaging in the question of God, Heidegger's work does have, as a little analysis will confirm, many references to God. Ready examples abound, including his reflections on the fourfold and the releasement, his interpretation of Hölderlin's poetry, and his elucidation of the holy which emanates from true thinking. There is, for the theologically literate, an almost immediate sense of thinking about God.

Heidegger, however, does not engage in earnest with the Christian theological perspective on God and, furthermore, rejects and actively criticises theological thinking. Consequently, overstating the imminence of God leads to a distortion of the whole of his philosophy. To avoid this pitfall, this paper has concentrated on expounding only on those passages where Heidegger directly speaks of the divine. Nonetheless, even within these boundaries, we cannot but confront the greater Heideggerian philosophical project which intimately informs the particular contexts.

2) All academic enquiry is both intimately related to the individual scholar with their personal goals and ultimately grounded in the study of being. For Heidegger, the essential characteristic of metaphysics derives from its relation-to-the-world (*Weltbezug*).³⁸ That is, the whatever-is might come to appear as what it is. Nevertheless, modern science, since its inception, has only sought to investigate being. Science

³⁸ "Was ist die Metaphysik," in *Wegmarken*, 104.

and the modern academy are inherently empirical, if not positivistic. As such, the sciences do not see Being nor want to know anything about the nothing. "Yet it is equally certain that when science tries to express its own essence, it appeals to the nothing for help" (WiM 106). The reason why empirical science is unable or unwilling to see the nothing is because it is just nothing. "The nothing is the negation of everything that is: it is non-being pure and simple" (WiM 108). The nothing reveals itself in the negation.

Heidegger is explicit: "Dread reveals the nothing" (WiM 111). Namely, we become caught up in a basic mood which, through a dreaded encounter with the negation of being, pushes us to confront our very finitude. Fundamental dread comes to human beings in the experience of the existence of the negation of being: the what-is is not. But, we must pause to ask, what is this nothing? Despite being revealed in the midst of dread, the nothing is not being nor empirically grasped (WiM 112). The essence of the nothing is the nihilation of being. For Heidegger, however, this nihilation is neither the negation nor the annihilation of what-is. Rather, the nihilation is the action of the nothing which radically discloses being, bringing us to "the very is-ness of what-is" (WiM 113). Specifically, the original disclosure of the nothing allows human beings to "approach and gain access to beings." Moreover, the essence of this is-ness is realized in "the revealed nothing" (WiM 114).

Human beings are, thus, "held out into nothing." It is the experience of "being beyond what-is as a whole." This experience, Heidegger defines as transcendence.³⁹ Crucially, transcendence is not possible

³⁹ WiM 114, 117. Heidegger understands transcendence as an essential characteristic and basic theme of metaphysics. "Being and the structure of Being lie beyond every entity and every possible character which an entity may possess. Being is the transcend-

without the “revelation of the nothing.” Moreover, without being held out into the nothing we “could never relate to what-is, not even to itself.” Likewise, “Without the original revelation of the nothing, there is no selfhood (*Selbstsein*) and no freedom.” The nothing not only enables human beings to reveal themselves but is indispensable for the advent of humanity. The nothing is “not just the opposite of beings.” That is to say, simply non-being. Rather, “The action of the nothing takes place in the very is-ness of what-is” (WiM 114). Through the nothing, Heidegger establishes the existence of being. Therefore, the nothing “ceases to be the vague opposite of what-is; instead, it is seen to belong to the very being of what-is. ‘Pure being and pure nothing are therefore the same’.” The nothing makes possible what-is.

Heidegger frames the idea more specifically in talking about how being, the what-is, holds a place for the nothing (*Platzhalter des Nichts*). Thus, the questioning about the nothing is an event which goes “beyond beings as such and in the unity of a whole” (WiM 117). The realization is that the question of the nothing is revealed in the mood of originary dread embedded in the experience of finitude.

Heidegger understands the being of being is only possible in the transcendence of what-is (WiM 119). Traditionally, metaphysics expresses the nothing “in the thesis *ex nihilo nihil fit*, ‘From nothing comes nothing’.” Christianity, on the other hand, emphasizes the idea of *creatio ex nihilo*, “creation out of nothing.” Subsequently, Christian theology modifies the ancient thesis by proposing, *ex nihilo fit ens creatum*: “Out of that complete absence come all created beings” (WiM 118). Here, both the relationship of God and of all that-is to the nothing is not thoroughly investigated. Rather, the nothing is not only

ence pure and simple.” *Sein und Zeit*, 38.

“conceived as the opposite of really existing beings” but its existence is also denied in one sense, the traditional shortcomings inherent in the questioning of the relationship between God and the nothing are overcome and being is revealed as the transcendence of what is beyond the nothing. For this interpretation to be possible, the proposition *ex nihilo nihil fit* has to be transformed into *ex nihilo omne ens qua ens fit*. That is, from *nothing, nothing comes to be* shifts to become, *From the nothing all beings as beings come to be*. “Beings as-a-whole, in keeping with their own most possibility—that is, finitely-become what they are only within the nothing of openness” (WiM 119).

6. Concluding Remarks

The scholar of religion, Karen Armstrong (1944-) argues that the reason for God lies in the depths of the origins of humanity. Regardless of the form and even though the divine may not exist in substance, God has been most important for human beings.⁴⁰ This reality we call God transcends all human expressions and concepts. Modernity demands a new understanding of God which aligns more coherently with contemporary culture, context, and the horizon of languages. God “lives” when the divine image mirrors the human existential experience and its deepest desire. Conversely, God is thought to disappear, at best, when circumstances change and the aspirational coherence stutters. For example, the difference between the traditional Hebrew understanding of God and the Christian representation of God cannot be understood without reference to generational change. Likewise, the

⁴⁰ Karen Armstrong, *A History of God, The 4000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), xx-xxii.

difference between the Eastern and Western Churches in their understanding of Jesus cannot be fully grasped without considering cultural differences. Buddhism tends to illuminate the Eastern Churches conception of the divinity and humanity of the Christ. The divinity, as opposed to an alien visitor, is not conceived as being outside the human condition but one with, and realized in, human nature. Jesus' divinity is not trapped within the human condition but the divine possibility being realized within humanity.⁴¹

Paul Tillich (1886-1965) was convinced of the need to evict the traditional personal God of Western theism. He affirmed that religion and faith were essential in terms of the human existential situation but decried the reification of the traditional personifications of God. The personal God becomes: "a natural object beside others, an object among others, a being among beings, maybe the highest, but nevertheless *a* being. This indeed is not only the destruction of the physical system but even more the destruction of any meaningful idea of God."⁴² Responding to Tillich's observation, Armstrong emphasizes that, because the concept of naming and speaking of God does not adequately address the reality and circumstances of peoples' lives and likely to fall into the gaps, the personal God is no longer acceptable in the contemporary world. Rightly, if no longer valid we should reject the contemporary concept of God. The task for those who are religiously aware is to create a renewed sense of faith which delves deeply into the mystery and awe of unconditional being in order to discover ultimate meaning in our contemporary world. As Armstrong notes: "The aimlessness, alienation, anomie and violence that charac-

⁴¹ Armstrong, *A History of God*, 129.

⁴² P. Tillich, *Theology and Culture* (New York/Oxford, 1964), 129; Armstrong, *A History of God*, 382-383.

terize so much of modern life seem to indicate that now that they are not deliberately creating a faith in 'God' or anything else-it matters little what-many people are falling into despair."⁴³ What we need today is not only a new language for a revitalized sense of God but also a profound appreciation of the imminent transcendence operative within human beings.

Within this context, Heidegger's understanding of the coming God and is-ness of creation has important implications. The Kairos character of the decisive moment is vividly revealed in contemporary experience and the event of experiencing existential being.⁴⁴ A renewed articulation of God's existence will depend on how we conceptualize the otherness (*Ganzanderheit*) that is preserved deep within human existence. While it remains an open question whether this otherness is a total other, a trait of personality, or an immanent transcendence, Heidegger is clear about its connection to being and the truth of existence.

Our enthusiasm, notwithstanding, needs to be tempered. The image of God upheld in Christian tradition is, no matter how much we might try to explain the existence of a deity through this new understanding of being, difficult to detect. Heidegger's God is all too vague and mystical. There is no hint of a Gospel of salvation and liberation, a distinct lack of any sense of a personal God who walks with us, and is present and active in history. Nevertheless, it is true that the postmetaphysical understanding of God offers a wealth of insights with which our thinking is to be stimulated.

⁴³ Armstrong, *A History of God*, 396-398.

⁴⁴ His article, which discussed the ontological event in connection with this existential experience, leads to criticism that the early Christian life experience was overshadowed by the Platonic substantialism. See, for example, M. Heidegger, *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*, GA 60, 24-29, 78, 169-178 et al.

At the same time, it is necessary to explain the new concept of God through both the reality of the present moment and the concept of spirituality. The contemporary world craves spirituality yet, at the same time, experiences the extremes of nihilism driven by the excesses of technological civilization and capitalism.

Heidegger, in his reinterpretation of the concept of *logos*, places much emphasis on the characteristics of *poiesis* (bringing-forth) and the coming of being.⁴⁵ While not explicitly tied to a concept of God, there is an ample scope to read his ontological thinking and articulation of *logos* in the light of Christian understanding of God.⁴⁶ Down through the ages, the mystical tradition never refers to God as an absolute other divorced from humanity. On the contrary, the nature of the absolute is revealed from out of the depths of human existence. Heidegger suggests that self-existence, the transcendence of being which leads to unity, is the unveiling of the absolute: that is, as he often said: “Out of that complete absence come all created beings.” Of course, Heidegger’s interpretation is commensurate with neither the Christian revelation of *Logos* as found in John’s Gospel nor, most crucially, the personal being found at the heart of Christian faith. Moreover, Heidegger’s *logos* does not concur with the concept of cre-

⁴⁵ Heidegger explains the *logos* concept, which was traditionally understood by words and reason, by linking it to the characteristic of gathering as reveal of Being. A new explanation for the *logos* concept is one of the key concepts of his ontological thought that penetrates in his entire philosophy, even though it has already been elucidated in *Being and Time* (1927). On an article that analyzed this reason from a theoretical point of view, see: M. Roesner, “*Logos und Anfang. Zur Johanneischen Dimension in Heideggers Denken*,” in N. Fischer/F.-W. v. Herrmann, 33-54.

⁴⁶ On Discuss the possibility of new understanding on divinity through the concept of *logos* and understanding of spirituality, see Syng-Hwan Shin, “How to Understand Spirituality in Contemporary Philosophy,” in *The Catholic Philosophy*, No. 25 (The Korean Association of Catholic Philosophers, 2015): 97-128. In this article Shin argues that the concepts of *Logos* and Spirituality open up new opportunities for an understanding of God.

ation.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the similarities and differences to be found between these two distinct viewpoints force us to speak of a deeper connection. Namely, the idea of becoming, the poiesis which pushes us beyond ontology and towards thinking about being as being. Our philosophical task is to lead our post-metaphysical era to think about God as the coming God unveiled in the absence of duality.

⁴⁷ M. Roesner, "Logis und Anfang," S. 46-47; Cf., M. Heidegger, *Heraklit. 1. Der Anfang des abendländischen Denkens*, 2. *Logik. Heraklits Lehre vom Logos*, GA 55 (Frankfurt/M, 1979); *Logos. Heraklit, Fragment 50*, in *Wegmarken*, 199-221.

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■ Abstract ■

□

This paper seeks to shed light on Heidegger's concept of God. Heidegger's philosophy, while clearly an attempt to move beyond the confines of the dominant Catholic theology of his era, is more clearly understood in conjunction with Christian thought. Although not commensurate with the Christian God, Heidegger's thinking about God, though not to the fore, is to be found scattered through several of his works. Accordingly, this paper will attempt to trace those references which speak to his conception of the divinity.

To this end, we will start with a discussion of theology and philosophy and then move to a critique of the concepts of ontological difference and the existential God. Building on the concept of the disclosure or unconcealment of being, we look at his ontology and its connections with his conception of God. This focus provides building blocks for analysing the horizon of the postmetaphysical understanding of God. Namely, and perhaps one of the causes of present-day atheism, by forgetting about ontological difference, contemporary culture is unable to grasp the specificity of divine being.

Heidegger's thinking, in giving expression to this specificity through linking the Nothing with the divine and his thinking about the coming gods, provides fruitful grounds for new thinking which address our contemporary world. Not the least of which is the providing the possibility of thinking which might move us beyond the nihilism of contemporary culture. The paper concludes with an analysis of Heidegger's *logos* which, it is hoped, provides a clue towards thinking

about the underlying spirituality being disclosed in Heideggerian thought.

- ▶ Key Words: Ontological Difference, The Coming God, Ek-sistence, The Nothing and Transcendence, Postmetaphysical Concept of God.

 ■ 국문 초록 ■

□

하이데거의 신 개념

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이 글은 하이데거의 신 개념을 밝히는 논의를 담고 있다. 하이데거는 분명 가톨릭 신학의 유래를 딛고 있으며, 그의 철학 역시 그리스도교 신학과의 연관하에서 보다 명확히 이해할 수 있다. 그는 자신의 작품 여러 곳에서 신에 대한 사유를 전개하고 있지만 그럼에도 이것이 그리스도교 신학적 신 이해와 상응하는 것은 아니다. 또한 신에 대한 논의가 그의 철학 전면에 나타나는 것도 아니다. 따라서 이 글에서는 신에 대해 언급하는 하이데거의 저서 몇몇을 중심으로 그의 신 개념을 추적해볼 것이다.

이를 위해 신학과 철학을 논의한 글을 시작으로 존재론적 차이 개념과 실체론적 신 개념 비판을 고찰한다. 이어 그의 존재 드러남을 중심으로 한 그의 존재론과 신 개념의 연관성을 논의한 뒤, 이를 바탕으로 탈형이상학적 신 이해의 지평에 대해 해명한다. 존재론적 차이를 망각함으로써 존재자만을 바라보는 현대 문화는 신의 존재적 특성을 보지 못한다. 이러한 오류가 현대의 무신론을 초래한 원인 가운데 하나일 것이다.

그러기에 신 이해의 무(無)적 특성과 함께, 도래하는 신을 말하는 하이데거 사유를 바탕으로 해서 우리 시대를 해명할 새로운 사유의 가능성은 이런 논의에서 풍부한 영감을 받을 수 있을 것

이다. 그런 사유의 가능성이 현대 문화의 니힐리즘적 현상을 극복할 계기도 작동할 수 있을 것이다. 이런 논의를 이 글은 로고스(logos) 해명과 그에 근거한 영성적 사유를 위한 단초로 제시하고자 한다.

▶ 주제어: 존재론적 차이, 다가오는 신, 탈존, 무(無)와 초월, 탈형이상학적 신 이해.