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God as “The Highest and Most Elevated Thing”: Contributions to the Theological, Phenomenological Interpretations of God-Experiences in Heidegger, Conrad-Martius, and Stein

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Abstract: Maybe the most divisive topic of the Heideggerian reception is whether the question of God is part of the disclosure of being in Heidegger’s thinking, or if Heidegger rather obscures the phenomenological inquiry on God by way of his questions on being and his reinterpretation of the meaning of being as historical being. It is not accidental that Hedwig Conrad-Martius, the contemporary of Heidegger, writes in her critique on *Being and Time* that it is “like when, with tremendous force of wise prudence and unflagging tenacity, a door that has been closed for a long time and is almost impossible to open is blown open and then immediately slammed shut again, locked, and barricaded so tightly that it seems impossible to open it again.” (Cf. Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit*). Unfortunately, the different stages of Heidegger’s thinking do not help further clarify the question of whether it is a conscious program of Heideggerian thinking to involve theological questions into the fundamental ontological analysis of being, if it follows from his theological background and from the relation to theology (as a positivistic science in Heidegger’s sense), or if that he includes theological knowledges into his thinking and shows a critical turn against the theological statements. Heidegger’s reflections on his own thinking in relation to theological questions and his influence on the Munich–Göttingen Phenomenology raises the present argumentation for the common phenomenological interpretation of God-Experiences.

Keywords: being; historicity; theology; onto-theology; fourfold; analogia entis; finitude; eternity; God



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1. Introduction

In the present essay, I would like to highlight the correlation between Heidegger’s basically “atheistic philosophical thinking” and his arguments in the fourfold theory for the new beginning of the thinking of the historical being in the 1950s, and the contemporaries’ reflections on Heidegger’s arguments against the traditional metaphysics. Although Hedwig Conrad-Martius and Edith Stein were belonging to the, so to speak, real phenomenological circle of Husserl’s Munich–Göttingen Studentship, and this way they were the initiators of the phenomenological traditions around Husserl, the increasing influence of Heidegger on the contemporaries, during Husserl’s Freiburg period, developed his thinking to the leading phenomenological stream of the time, beside Husserl’s. Not only Hedwig Conrad-Martius, but also Edith Stein, reflected on Heidegger’s interpretation of being in *Being and Time*. While the whole oeuvre of Heidegger is based on the deconstruction of traditional metaphysics on the one hand, Stein’s and Conrad-Martius’s approach to the phenomenology of being is also constituted on the preconception that the phenomenological analysis is fundamentally based on metaphysical realisms. Stein elaborates this insight in her latest philosophical work, *Finite and Eternal Being*, on the verge of the Aeterni Patris encyclical published by Pope Leo XIII, which contributed to the new scholastic stream of the 20th century. The main question of the present paper is, how religious phenomenological

insights lead, in the three approaches and in the reception of Heidegger's interpretation to the question of being, and how this contributes to the reformulation of phenomenological interpretation of God-Experiences.

2. Phenomenological Concept of God-Experiences in Heidegger, Conrad-Martius, and Stein: Coincidences and Differences

2.1. Heidegger's Arguments for and Against the Onto-Theological Analyses of God-Experiences

In the *Phenomenological Aristoteles Interpretations* (in its popular name, *Natorp-Report*) in 1922, Heidegger introduces the fundamental characteristic of ontology, which in the phenomenological interpretation discloses the hermeneutical situation of the ecstatic-existential being. This reduction of the question of being to the ecstatic-existential character of Dasein is pivotal in *Being and Time*; however, it also holds a special meaning in Heidegger's whole conception of the historical interpretation of being. In this sense, it is remarkable to notice that Heidegger found it important to reflect on his theological origin during his whole life, and that he deduced his philosophical way from his theological studies.¹ Exactly in this sense, it is important to notice that he sharply separates the theological and the philosophical interpretation of being from each other, and he reflects on the scientific differences between philosophy and theology in several occasions (cf. e.g., Heidegger (1998, 1971, 2007a, 2002, 1994, 1978b, 2012a)). In the *Phenomenological Aristoteles Interpretations*, which Heidegger considered as his first step to the concept of *Being and Time*, Heidegger introduces the notions of the hermeneutical situation, the facticity, and the care. All these notions have an important role in the analysis of being in *Being and Time* regarding the temporal determination of the ecstatic-existential of Dasein. However, there are several indications that Heidegger focuses in the *Natorp-Report* more on the methodological clarification of the contemporary philosophical question of being, and one of these signs appears in the following declaration:

[...] if philosophy has resolved to make the decisive existential potentiality of factual life visible and graspable, i.e. if philosophy has radically and unequivocally decided to do so, without any ideological enthusiasm, to set factual life on its own footing from its own factual possibilities, i.e. if philosophy is fundamentally atheistic and understands this, then it has made a decisive choice and has won factual life as its object in terms of its facticity. (Heidegger 2005, p. 363.)

Let me stop here for a while and interpret this multiple compound sentence. Heidegger's early reflections on the methodological separation of philosophy and theology were influenced by his personal acceptance from Husserl in the early 1920s. As he writes to Karl Löwith in 1920, he was for Husserl "actually still a theologian" (Cf. in (Pöggeler 1999, 252)). Though he declares himself one year later as a "Christian theologian", he means this in a broader sense, in the break from the "System of Catholicism"². While Heidegger tried to reconcile contemporary philosophical tendencies with theological and dogmatical insights during his theological studies, and we find his endeavors in the controversial analysis of classical metaphysics of scholastic philosophy and the contemporary philosophical approaches of the neo-Kantianism and the phenomenology (Cf. (Heidegger 1978a)), we find a more and more critical attitude against the dogmatical facts of Christianity in the early 1920s and later. In 1917, Heidegger read Schleiermacher's *Speeches on Religion* and gave a private lecture about his insights at the University of Freiburg. According to Schleiermacher, religion is not comprehensible through certain and preconceived concepts, but the religious dimension of life becomes open in the factual experience of life.³ In his notes from 1918–1919, Heidegger determines the religious phenomenon as an "Urgegenstand" or "Absolutum", whose perception depends on the basic position of the person. It is remarkable that Rudolf Otto's book *The Holy* had a definitive influence on Heidegger's thinking, which disclosed the possibility of the common development of the phenomenological methodology and the analysis of religious experiences.

The religious desire of experience, and the strive for the presence of Jesus as genuine, is only possible as a result of a basic experience. Such experiences are not freely available by following the regulations of church law. The ‘knowledge’ about them, and their essence, arises only from the real experience. Such an experience is only truly effective in a closed context of experience (stream of experience), it is not transferable and evocable by description. (Cf. Heidegger (1995, GA 60, p. 334))

In the notes on Bernard of Clairvaux (Cf. Heidegger (1995, GA 60, pp. 334–39)), Heidegger understands the realization of the religious life in religious acts, in concentration, meditation and rest, and these three depend on the historical phenomenon of religion. With a reflection on the religious notes of Adolf Reinach, Heidegger interprets the experience of God as a phenomenological fact of the interpretation.⁴ “Our experiential behavior towards God—the primary one, because it swells up in us gracefully—is directional for the specific religious constitution of ‘God’ as a ‘phenomenological object’.” (Cf. Heidegger (1995, HGA 60, p. 324)).

Exactly at the time when Heidegger worked on the elaboration of the phenomenology of religious experiences, he wrote in a letter to Elisabeth Blochmann about the narrow co-working with Edmund Husserl on the serious methodology of the phenomenology.⁵ What it concretely means will be clear from his statement in his early Freiburg lecture, *Phenomenology of Imagination and Expression* in 1919, where he emphasizes the principal need of confrontation with the Greek philosophy, and with “the true idea of Christian Philosophy”⁶. According to this note on the methodology of the Christian philosophy, it is remarkable that Heidegger does not explicitly exclude the possibility of Christian philosophy, but urges the reinterpretation of the meaning of it in the Husserlian phenomenological sense of “back to the things”. In my opinion, “back to the things” means primarily not the transition from the transcendental phenomenological thinking to the question of life in its factual situation, as it is interpreted in István M. Fehér’s paper⁷, but the interpretation of life is based on the historical fundament of religious experiences as the primary experiences of being. Heidegger declared his plan for the phenomenon of historicity in the lectures to the *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, where he interprets the factual being as an “object-excerpt” from the whole large object of historicity, “the entire, objective, historical event”⁸.

In this sense, if we now turn back to the original statement of the *atheistic* status of philosophy, it is remarkable that a previous—pre-theoretical—attitude determines the atheistic position of the philosophy in the sense that the philosophical thinking cannot be influenced by any other world views [*Weltanschauungen*], but that it should be rooted in original religious life. In response to the quotation about the radical atheism of the philosophy, cited from the *Natorp-Report*, belongs a previous explanation in the lectures on Aristoteles in the Winter semester of 1921/22, where Heidegger says:

Questionability is not religious, but rather it may really lead into a situation of religious decision for the first time. I do not behave religiously in philosophizing, even if I as a philosopher can be a religious man. “But here is the art”: to philosophize and thereby to be genuinely religious, i.e., to take up factually its wordly, historical task in philosophizing, in action, and a world of action, not in religious ideology and phantasy.

Philosophy, in its radical questionability—a questionability depending upon itself alone—must be in principle atheistic. In virtue of its fundamental tendency, philosophy may not have the daring [of claiming] to possess God and to be able to define Him. The more radical philosophy is, the more decisively it is an “away” from Him, that is to say, precisely in radically carrying out the “away”, it is a specifically difficult [being] “with” him.⁹

In the *Natorp-Report*, Heidegger completes his note with the explanation of the meaning of “atheism” in a footnote:

Atheistic not in the sense of a theory as materialism or the like. Every philosophy, which understands itself in what it is, must know as the factual how of the interpretation of life just then, if it still has a “suspicion” of God, that the pulling back of life to itself, religiously spoken, is a lifting of the hand against God. But with this alone it stands honestly, i.e., according to the possibility available to it as such before God; atheistically means here: keeping free of seductive, religiousness merely eloquent concern. Whether the very idea of a philosophy of religion, and even if it makes its calculation without the facticity of man, is not a pure absurdity? (Cf. [Heidegger \(2005, HGA 62, p. 363\)](#))

These two hints of Heidegger designate the tendency of Heideggerian thinking, which appears also in the lecture, “Phenomenology and Theology”, from 1928, where Heidegger explicitly declares the ontic-ontological differences between the science of philosophy and theology. In the sense of the lecture from 1928, theology is a positive science, and the core or the posited of it is Christianity, which is based on Christ, the crucified God.¹⁰ However, the common methodology of the *Natorp-Report* and the lecture on “Phenomenology and Theology” originates from the Husserlian thesis, “back to the things”. This philosophical attitude can be decoded both in the *Natorp-Report* in the way of the understanding of philosophy as an atheistic methodology, and in “Phenomenology and Theology”, where Heidegger argues for the pre-theoretical position of philosophical thinking. “Back to the things” means in both senses “back to the origin”; however, in different ways. While Heidegger accepts the possibility of the Christian philosophy in early Aristoteles interpretations and interprets it as an “art” of philosophizing, he argues, one semester later, for the radical atheistic version of philosophizing everything, where philosophy is gleaned from all historical world views. The historical world view of Christianity leads back to Christ’s Crucifixion, to one point of history, which fills Socratic thinking with Christian insights.¹¹ In Heidegger’s opinion, the philosophical problem, with the historical event of the Christianity, can be coded in the transformation of philosophical notions, though philosophical thinking already existed before Christianity. This way, the philosophy must be the ontological correction of the ontic interpretation of the theological notions.¹²

Similarly to Heidegger’s lecture on *The Concept of Time* ([Heidegger 1985b](#)), where he wrote that “the philosopher does not believe”¹³, the claim on the atheism of philosophy does not mean that the philosopher, if it will be consequent in his thinking, must be atheistic or would deny the existence of God, but it rather means that the philosopher must give up all of his preconceptions in his philosophical thinking, or more over in his questioning. Philosophy is atheistic in this sense, if it is able to deliver the factual life over to itself and put its questionability into question.¹⁴

The philosophical question of the existence of God, i.e., the question of the methodological differences between philosophy and theology returns again in the 1950s by the analysis of Hölderlin’s hymns, though in a different way, as in the lecture on “Phenomenology and Theology”. The historical meaning of the sciences is revealed here by the possibility of the expression of historical events in the present situation. The meaning of the “escaped Gods” manifests here not only in the phenomenological interpretation of the factual presence, but also in the irrelevance of the name of God in this godless world. In his paper, “Heidegger’s Understanding of the Atheism of Philosophy”, Fehér outlines the thesis that this description of Heidegger signals the “new beginning” of his philosophical thinking in the transition from the thinking of the historical being to the being as a fourfold:

To begin speaking of God does not necessarily mean beginning to speak about Him as soon as He is there, as soon as He is present, but may very well be taken to mean beginning to speak about Him by preparing for his presence and thereby outlining His (as yet empty) place—the place He will fill in as soon as He comes. For, lacking such a place, He would have, as it were, nowhere to arrive. (Cf. ([Fehér 1996, p. 40](#)))

As the Gods have escaped, and nothing is there from the passed times which still would have the same sense in the present, Heidegger reinterprets the historical meaning of being, which generates the new interpretation of it in the sense of the fourfold. Both in the lecture on *The Thing* and in *Building Dwelling Thinking*, Heidegger introduces the schematization of being as presence or as the structural determination of the question of being and its onto-theological meaning. This complicated present, which includes the being of Dasein in a historical situation and in historicity itself, transforms the traditional onto-theological metaphysics to the ontic-ontological problem of being, that is, to the problem of the ontological difference (Cf. (Backmann 2015)). The transformation opens up in the introduction of the other beginning, the truth of being, and in the transition to the other beginning. “The ‘other beginning’ of thought is so named not because it is simply different in form from all other previous philosophies but because it must be the only other beginning arising in relation to the one and only first beginning.” (Heidegger 2012b, p. 7). The connection between Heidegger’s fundamental ontology and the being-historical thinking is revealed in Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann’s interpretation of the continuous analysis of the truth of being, in the disclosure of the fundamental ontological concept of Dasein in *Being and Time*, as thrown-into-the-world on the one hand, and in being-historical thinking in the uncovering of being the disclosing-letting-itself-be-sheltered on the other hand.¹⁵ Heidegger outlines six ways (*resonating, interplay, leap, grounding, future ones, last god*) in which the transition becomes the other beginning. In his lecture on *The Thing* from 1951, Heidegger continues with the reflection on the Kantian transcendentalism, which he already introduced in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* in 1928, regarding the possibility of the question of being, and in the lectures of the Winter semester, “Basic questions on metaphysics”, in 1935/36, which published with the title *The Question Concerning the Thing*. The lecture on *The Thing* from 1951 deals with the thingness of the thing, where Heidegger—parallel to the Kantian analysis of the thing, which interprets being as the unrealistic predicat in the dimension of temporality, i.e., in the ecstatic-existential condition of being-historical thinking—introduces also the thinking of God as the central question of being-historical thinking.

The same thing that happens with the word *res* happens with the name corresponding to *res*, *dinc*; for *dinc* means every single thing that somehow is. Accordingly Meister Eckhart uses the word *dinc* as much for God as for the soul. God is to him “the highest and most elevated thing [*dinc*]”. The soul is a “great thing”. With this, this Meister of thinking by no means wishes to say that God and the soul would be the same as a block of stone, a material object; *dinc* is here a careful and unassuming name for anything that is at all. (Heidegger 2012c, p. 14)

In this sense, in being-historical thinking, the thinking of God is similar to the thinking of the thing in the present-at-hand situation. The thinking of the thing means the thinking of the present-at-hand, i.e., the thinking of the thing, which is present, the meaning of which is at that moment and at that time present. This description is similar to the lecture *Building Dwelling Thinking*, in the sense that the intellectual building is, at the same time, keeping safe of the fourfold, and “a staying with things,” (Heidegger 1993, p. 360) where building “takes over from the fourfold the standard for all the traversing and measuring of the spaces that in each case are provided for by the locales that have been founded.” (Heidegger 1993, p. 360). Building, dwelling, thinking are the three elements of being-historical thinking that characterize the fourfold schema in the relationship between being as meaningful presence and the meaning context of this presence, and the ontological difference between these two.

To compare the thesis of Heidegger’s thinking in the 1950s with that in the early 1920s, it is remarkable that Heidegger still avoids taking God into the center of philosophical thinking; however, he does it in different ways. While he denies the question of God in the 1920s, the fourfold thinking makes the question of God possible. The “lifting of the hand against God” theory remains in this thinking, though on the way to being-historical thinking. From the 1950s, in the center of Heidegger’s thinking, is the interpretation of the permanent origin of being-historical thinking and the hermeneutical definition of it.

From the previous analysis, it became clear that the question of God is present in parallel to the Heideggerian thinking of the question of being-historical thinking, and in the 1950s Heidegger focusses on the historical determination of being-historical thinking, which centers on the question of God. In the following, I would like to show the other way to the historical thinking of God by Hedwig Conrad-Martius and Edith Stein.

2.2. Hedwig Conrad-Martius and Edith Stein, the Critique of Heidegger's Interpretation, On the Possibility for the Philosophical Analysis of God

2.2.1. Hedwig Conrad-Martius Critique

The starting point of the question of onto-theology leads back to the 1910s of the Husserlian phenomenology, when it characterized two parallel directions of phenomenological thinking, which finally connected with each other in the question of onto-theology or, moreover, in the problem of *analogia entis* in the philosophical thinking. The one direction was given by the two pioneers of Adolf Reinach and Max Scheler in the question of the phenomenological interpretation of religious experiences (cf. [Jani \(2017\)](#)), while the other originated from methodological inquiries on the phenomenological methodology and concluded in the questions on being and reality.¹⁶ Both directions are important in the relation to onto-theology as in the senses of Heidegger and in Stein and Conrad-Martius, although in different ways. While we find the continuous departure from, and a conscious argumentation against, the traditional metaphysical thinking in the early Heidegger's thinking, Edith Stein and Hedwig Conrad-Martius approached onto-theological tradition from the opposite direction and inserted the religious phenomenological question into traditional metaphysical context.

Hedwig Conrad-Martius's question of being originates from the debate on reality in the Husserlian thinking. At the beginning of *Realontologie*, Conrad-Martius clarifies exactly what she understands by the notion of reality, and she connects it immediately with the question of God and the question of nothingness. The linkage between reality and God is clear from the definition of spatiality and temporality in relation to reality and God. While the ideal thing does not possess any material or temporal quality, it carries some realistic character in itself. The fact that the ideal thing becomes real by mental constitution proves the reality of God in the atemporal dimension.

A timelessness, as such, includes the indifference and thus the absolute autonomy of existence. But apart from the fact that the temporal mode of existence—let alone the spatial—is a constituent characteristic everywhere, since God as the most real of all real beings must be thought of as super-spatial and super-temporal (but this idea by no means includes an objective re-meaning)—apart from this, temporality or spatiality cannot be cited as a moment that affects the essence of the thing in itself, because their presence is always only the objective consequence of a specifically designed real existence, but not the precondition for it: something is not real because it exists spatially or temporally, but it exists spatially and temporally because it essentially belongs to a certain mode of reality. Or more generally: it can only come to a spatiotemporal positing because it is constituted in itself as reality and thus fulfills the preconditions that are necessary for the possibility of a spatio-temporal positing. (Cf. [Conrad-Martius \(1923, p. 164\)](#))

The main question Conrad-Martius's is how to understand the reality of God, whose existence exceeds the spatial-temporal dimension. Although the spatial-temporal dimension is not the precondition of life, reality is revealed in the spatial-temporal dimension. The question of how God's reality is manifested by spatial-temporality, when his existence is not determined by it, appears on this point. Regarding reality, Conrad-Martius's investigation brings two problems to our attention. While on the one hand, she contrasts reality with nothingness, and asserts that reality is independent and is itself founded on nothingness, on the other hand, the nothingness is inherently independent and gives the illusion of reality.

Therefore, the revelation of God is at the same time born of reality by the creation, as the precondition of phenomenological thinking. In this sense, the existence of God discloses itself, as the reality in itself, in the real existential being. This is the gate of being, which is not the precondition but the main possibility of being. (Conrad-Martius 1923, p. 182)

At this methodological point, Conrad-Martius's view crosses Martin Heidegger's concept about reality in *Being and Time* §43, and this is the point on which Conrad-Martius's critique against his concept is founded. In *Realontologie*, which was published four years before the publication of *Being and Time*, Conrad-Martius argues against the ontological equivalency between being and time. The equivalency of being and time leads to the material determination of real existence, because the temporality must be one of the consequences of existence in reality, and while reality manifests in the spatial-temporal dimension. However, the coincidence of these two in the spatial temporality of reality, does not prove the sameness of being and time. By posing temporality and being to the same level, Conrad-Martius argues, the real existence of the transcendental world degrades to the position of the "present-at-hand" and prepares the confrontation of Dasein with his finitude life.

Conrad-Martius accepts the Heideggerian thesis about the groundlessness of Dasein as the ownmost possibility of Dasein, which is based on "being thrown into the world": however, she argues for the precondition of the real existence of God that gives sense for the final being of the real existential life in the world.

But how does Heidegger evaluate this ontological position, which almost inevitably leads to—metaphysics? Do we not have a proof of God in our hands? Doesn't one's own inner dialectic of this existential finitude and nullity lead to existential eternity? Or better still [and in order to tie in with the deepest proofs of God of all philosophical mystics up to Descartes]: can we at all in the intuitive conception of this creatural I, which is temporally finite from its deepest ground, which is unfounded and unfounded in itself, without at the same time realizing the conception of God? Heidegger not only does not draw this conclusion, he simply cuts it off with emphatic philosophical intention. (Conrad-Martius 1963b, p. 193)

In the paper "Dasein, Substantialität, Seele" (cf. (Conrad-Martius 1963a, pp. 194–228)), Conrad-Martius argues for the theological creature form of Dasein, whose existence is a moment-to-moment changing being in the permanent transition from non-being to being. This transition is fulfilling in the pure actuality of the eternal being that bestows the potential existence of final being with the momentary actuality of being. The actuality of the temporary being is revealed in the reflection on one's own real existence, which hails from nothingness and which is nothing in itself.

There is a clear divergence between Heideggerian thinking and Conrad-Martius's interpretation of being and its relation to God, in the sense that there is definitely a place for the philosophical thinking of God's being as an existential being, and in the scholastic sense of being as a creator, in Conrad-Martius's thinking, and by contrast to the Heideggerian interpretation, the thinking of God fulfills on a practical level of the personal experience of God as a person.

2.2.2. Edith Stein's Approaches

Similarly to Conrad-Martius, Edith Stein's starting point was the question of being, which surfaced first by the phenomenological question of reality in the context of the methodological interpretations of Husserlian phenomenology.¹⁷ The question of the methodology of the transcendental idealism focused on constitution, reduction, and idealism, and Stein's studies on the scholastic philosophy pushes her thinking to the fundamental question of being, which was first analyzed in her habilitation thesis. In *Potency and Act*, Stein divides the reality of being into the reality of material existence constituted

by material ontology, and the reality of pure being, of which I am aware by its revelation in the transcendent sphere as the formal ontological relation of material existence. In this sense, Stein divides the spheres of being into three ontological fields.¹⁸ These three spheres of being reveal themselves by the transition from the actual experiencing to the potentiality of it, i.e., from the experience of the thing to the memorial recalling of it as a past situation.

In *Finite and Eternal Being*, Stein criticizes the Heideggerian problem of temporality, while she draw a sharp distinction between the temporal being and the experience of temporality in the existence of the finite being. In the establishment of her thesis, she refers to the Husserlian interpretation of the *epoché* and of the theological doctrine of eternal being, and argues for the finite being to be a temporal being and an eternal being over the eternity of the individual memory. In §6 of the second chapter of *Finite and Eternal Being*, Stein confronted the Husserlian and Heideggerian problems of time constitution for the first time: “The ego knows itself as a living, actually present existent and simultaneously as one that emerges from a past and lives into a future; *itself and its being are inescapably there: It is a being thrown into existence [ins Dasein geworfen].*” (Stein 2002, p. 54). This difference between finitude and temporality highlights Edith Stein through the punctual actuality of existential being. “The ontic birth of time” constitutes the identical connection between past and future “in the fully actualized present,” which is the identical linearity of the ego’s pure actuality. Therefore, the present is the threefold source of temporal being, finitude, and eternity. Stein’s thesis definitely leans on Hedwig Conrad-Martius’s interpretation of temporality, namely that temporality is the mental constitution of final existence from its existential moving in punctual actuality. While finitude becomes available to us by the punctual actuality of being, Stein interprets temporality as the transcendental realization of finitude, i.e., temporality means the extension of the present moment to the past or future situation. “They are not containers in which something could be preserved or from which something could emerge; no enduring being can be concealed in them.” (Stein 2002, p. 40). The past experiences and the expectations of the future receive their meaning in the present realization of being and constitute an identical stream of personal being in relation to the absolute present being of eternity.

According to Stein’s thesis, temporality is constituted by the memorial reflection of the present actuality, while, for Heidegger, temporal being is the pre-ontological condition of human existence. In the conclusion of *Finite and Eternal Being*, Stein continued to analyze Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, where she criticized Heidegger’s thesis about temporality as the pre-condition of finite being. Namely, that finite being of humans is a consequence of the fact of being thrown into the world of *Dasein*. Quite the contrary for Stein, the temporality of *Dasein* is only one side of a human being, constituted by material experiences, and the actuality of being presupposes an atemporal dimension of life. Stein’s aim is to show by the phenomenological notion of memory that, even though individual life is a finite life, the individual has a direct connection to eternity by virtue of her memory that is not affected by time. In the third chapter and in the essay about “Martin Heidegger’s Existential Philosophy”, Stein expounded her thesis about the experience of eternity in the individual memory, and argued that Heidegger missed this chance to interpret the connection between finitude and eternity by virtue of the conclusions of eternal memory.

Exactly at this point, the questioning of the problem of the person in relation to the divine Hypostasis begins to unfold. Through the phenomenological and scholastic analyses of the concepts of being, essence, form, substance, and reality, Stein arrives at the circle of thought of the *analogia entis* in *Finite and Eternal Being*, which leads her directly to the problem of the person and Hypostasis. The hypostatic aspect of eternal existence makes sense through the insight that the individual uniqueness of finite human existence gains its uniqueness and personality through the momentary nature of the actual experience of existence, whereas in the pure actuality of divine existence, personhood is ever-present. In Stein’s interpretation of finite being as partaking of eternal being, eternal being is understood as the ancestor and archetype of creation:

It was revealed to us as being in person, as being in three persons. If the Creator is the archetype of creation, is it not necessary to find in creation an image, however distant, of the triune unity of primordial-original being? Historically, it is shown that the effort to grasp the doctrine of revelation from the concept of the most holy Trinity gave rise to the philosophical concepts of 'hypostasis' and 'person'. (Stein 2010, p. 306)

The substantive unity of the Trinity is revealed to us in the Hypostasis of divine revelation in such a way that "the incorporation of human nature into the unity of the person of Christ presupposes the separation of the divine Persons." (Stein 2010, p. 306). Stein connects the hypostatic nature of the Trinity with the notion of the "pure ego" because of its incomparable nature. Wrestling with the immeasurable distance between archetype and image, Stein finds in spiritual beings the link in which personal human existence is linked to the spiritual Hypostasis of God.

The whole interpretation of the temporal being of intellect, which still opens the connection to eternal being, and the actuality of experiences—which constitute temporality in relation of eternity—reveals the relationship between finitude and eternity by virtue of the theological interpretation of Creation. (Cf. Stein (2009, p. 20)) The last two chapters of *Finite and Eternal Being* are dedicated to the theological relationship between the human individual being and divine being on virtue of the theory of Creation. According to the final paragraph of the last chapter in the book, the connection between the final human being and eternal being is constituted by the embodiment of the Son in logos, as the Logos. The whole mystery of Jesus' historical being forms in the original meaning of Genesis that the human being as a finite being obtains sense through the participation in eternal Creation (Cf. (Stein 2010, p. 527)).

The revelation of the divine Hypostasis through the human personhood proceeds through the stages of the experience of the human personhood. On the one hand, we can talk about the dogmatic background of the history of creation and the appearance of the second divine Person in creation. On the other hand, however, the createdness of the human person unfolds gradually in the mystical layers of contemplative prayer, the first phase of which Stein does not distinguish in any way from the material experience of the external world.

3. Conclusions

In the present paper I wanted to highlight parallels and divergencies in the two generations of Husserl's students, in the thinking of Heidegger, Hedwig Conrad-Martius, and Edith Stein, regarding the phenomenological question of God and the relationship between phenomenology and theology. The main concept of the paper was based on the precondition of the Heideggerian influence on the previous generation of Husserl's students, which gradually disclosed the interpretation and the critique on Heidegger's phenomenological-hermeneutical theory of being. The starting point of the paper was aimed at the linearity in the phenomenological concept of God-Experiences, while the first part of the paper described Heidegger's early reflections on the phenomenological analyses of religious experiences, that of the God-Experiences, and his interpretation of the relation between phenomenology and theology, in the action of Heidegger's gradual confrontation with theology as a science. The critique on Heidegger, in the second part of the paper, fulfilled by Conrad-Martius and Stein on two stages: On the first stage, the critique appeared in the interpretation of the finite being in relation to eternal being in *Being and Time*, where Stein and Conrad-Martius represented the traditional metaphysical interpretation of finite being in the sense of *analogia entis*.

In the second stage, Heidegger's existential interpretation of being was completed by the two other thinkers with the question of God in the sense of the well-documented traditional metaphysics of the contemporary new-scholastic interpretation of the encyclical *Aeterni Patris*. Though it seems to be delineating an absolute opposite direction between the three thinkers regarding the possibility of the being-phenomenological interpretation of

God-Experiences, on the verge of the phenomenological interpretation of temporality and historicity, all the three senses disclose the possibility for the phenomenological analysis of God. In Heidegger's sense, the philosophical interpretation of God is "a lifting hand against God", and his approach shows the temporally determined and close interpretation of the phenomenon of presence in his later thinking too, where the experience of God is the presence of God in the very beginning of thinking. Conrad-Martius and Edith Stein extended the temporal interpretation of the historical God, as a being-phenomenological issue, to the philosophical problem of the person as a transcendent person, which thus makes room from a theological point of view for a phenomenological interpretation of the experience of God.

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Notes

- ¹ Cf. Heidegger (1985a, p. 91): "Without that theological origin I would never have arrived to the path of thinking." [Ohne diese theologische Herkunft wäre ich nie auf dem Weg des Denkens gelangt.]; Cf. also: (Pöggeler 1990, p. 28f.): "[...] I must say that I am not a philosopher. I do not even claim to be doing anything of the sort; I have no intention to do that either. [...] I work concretely and factically out of my 'I am', out of my intellectual and wholly factic origin [...] To this facticity of mine belongs what I briefly call the fact that I am a 'Christian theologian'".
- ² "The past two years, in which I have taken pains to reach a fundamental clarification of my philosophical standpoint and so have laid aside all specialised scholastic tasks, have led me to results for which, had I any ties beyond philosophical ones, I could not have preserved the freedom of conviction and of what I have taught. Epistemological insights, extending as far as the theory of historical knowledge, have made me the *system* of Catholicism problematic and unacceptable to me—but not Christianity and metaphysics (the latter, to be sure, in a new sense). [...] I believe that I have an inner call to philosophy and that by answering in research and teaching I can do what lies within my powers for the internal vocation of the inner man—and only for this—and thus justify my existence and work itself before God". Cf. Casper (1980, p. 536). For more phenomenological interpretations precisely in this topic Cf.: van Buren and Kisiel (1994).
- ³ Cf. Heidegger's notes on Schleiermacher's "Rede" In Heidegger (1995), pp. 319–22.
- ⁴ For more about this, cf. Jani (2020).
- ⁵ Cf. Joachim W. Störck (1989, Nr. 8.): "My own work is very concentrated, principled and concrete: basic problems of phenomenological methodology, getting free from the last dross of learned points of view—constant new penetration to the real origins, preliminary work for the Phenomenology of Religious Consciousness—tight setting for intensive, high quality academic effectiveness, constant learning in the community with Husserl".
- ⁶ Cf. Heidegger (2007b): "There is a need for a principled confrontation with Greek philosophy and the defacement of Christian existence by it. The true idea of Christian philosophy; Christian not a label for a bad and epigone Greek. The way to an original Christian—Greek-free—theology".
- ⁷ Cf. Fehér (1996, p. 38): "Heidegger takes up Husserl's password 'Back to the things themselves' and soon turns it against Husserl. He does so by interpreting the subject matter of philosophy, i.e., the 'thing itself', in terms of life rather than transcendental consciousness".
- ⁸ Cf. Heidegger (1995, HGA 60, p. 53). In *Phenomenology of Religious Life—Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens* (HGA 60), Heidegger sought to interpret the Christian life in phenomenological terms, while also discussing the question whether Christianity should be construed as historically defined. Heidegger thus connected the philosophical discussion of religion as a phenomenon with the character of the religious life taken in the context of factual life. According to Heidegger, every philosophical question originates from the latter, which determines such questions pre-theoretically, while the tradition of early Christianity can also only be understood historically in such terms. For more to this topic, Cf. (Theodore Kisiel 1993; Holger Zaborowski 2004; Johannes Schaber 2004; Philippe Capelle 2004; Anna Jani 2016).
- ⁹ Cf. Heidegger (1994, HGA 61, p. 197). I have partly adopted Fehér's translation in "Heidegger's Understanding of the Atheism of Philosophy", 51, and his adoption of John D. Caputo's translation in his *Heidegger and Theology. The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 278.

- ¹⁰ Cf. Heidegger (2004): “The relationship of faith to the cross, thus determined by Christ, is a Christian one. But the crucifixion and everything that belongs to it is a historical event, and indeed this event is witnessed as such in its specific historicity only for faith in the Scriptures”.
- ¹¹ Cf. here: Heidegger (2004, HGA 9, p. 63): “All the theological concepts of existence centered on faith mean a specific transition of existence, in which pre-Christian and Christian existence are united in their own way. This transitional character motivates the characteristic multidimensionality of the theological term, which cannot be discussed in detail here”.
- ¹² Cf. Heidegger (2004, HGA 9, p. 65): “Philosophy is the formally indicating ontological corrective of the ontic, and namely pre-Christian content of the basic theological concepts”.
- ¹³ Cf. (Heidegger 1985b, p. 4): “Theology wishes to go forward from a revival of belief, its basic relationship to the reality which it thematizes, so that it may arrive at an original explication of the being of man toward God, which involves the disengagement of the fundamental question of man from the traditional systematic approach of dogmatics. For this systematic approach is based upon a philosophical and conceptual system which has created confusion in both the question of man and the question of God and all the more in the question of the relationship of man to God”.
- ¹⁴ Cf. to this also Fehér M.’s remarkable note, Fehér (1996, p. 57): “Heidegger’s notion of philosophy’s “atheism” is thus not atheistic in any usual sense of the term, but it is rather, conversely, inspired very much by a religious-theological motivation or attitude or comportment. The latter is labelled “atheistic” precisely by another, alternatively or differently religious attitude. It is, in other words, “atheistic” only if we tacitly orient religiously toward *one* among many possible religious comportments, the one namely, for which questioning is impious, which prohibits questioning, for which radical questioning is audacity, presumptuousness.”
- ¹⁵ Cf. von Herrmann (2001, p. 119): “Whereas in fundamental-ontological thinking uncovering of a being is made possible by a disclosing-thrown projecting-open of the truth of being, in being-historical thinking, disclosing-letting-itself-be-sheltered (*entbergende Sichbergenlassen*) of the throwing-projecting truth of being belongs to the full essential swaying of the truth of being. This is to say that through en-grounding-projecting-opening and through letting-itself-be-sheltered of what is projected-open in disclosing a being, there occurs a restoration of a being ‘from within the truth of being’ (GA 65, 11; CP, 8)—after a being has been abandoned for so long by being, i.e., abandoned by such a sheltering”.
- ¹⁶ Detailed and extended analysis of the topic can be found in Jani (2022).
- ¹⁷ Cf. to it in details (Jani 2015).
- ¹⁸ Cf. Stein (2009, p. 20): “Starting from the simple, immediately certain fact of being, we have come to distinguish three spheres of being: [1] the immanent sphere, which is immediately and inseparably close to us and of which we are conscious, [2] a transcendent sphere, which heralds itself in immanence, and [3] a third sphere radically different in its being from the immanent sphere as well as from this transparent sphere. Of this pure being we have said so far that it discloses itself in immanent being only “in our idea”, whereas we should take the evincing of finite substances in immanence as evidence of their existence [*Existenzbekundung*]. But what we have said does not rule out that the existence of this pure being may also be evinced in immanence”.

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