

ON THE QUESTION OF BEING AND HUMAN SELF-TRANSCENDENCE: A HERMENEUTICO-PHENOMENOLOGICAL DISCOURSE ON HEIDEGGER

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Abstract

This paper probes the very difficult and unique question of *being*; the question of our inner possibility, of our understanding of *being* and the temporal meaning enclosed in this idea; the question of *being as being*. Using a triple filtered approach the discourse shall; 1. Investigate into the 'being' structure of man. This shall be an exposition of the unique character of man's being as finitely free being in contrast to the Being (reality) of things; *the what- and how- being*, something, nothing and notness. 2. Discuss the ontological structure of the world as an irreducible constituent of man's way of existing; man's being as being- in - the world. 3. Inquire into the being of self in relation to the being of other selves, and also articulate the repercussion on one's own self of being together with others in the world. This articulations of being thus unveils a philosophy of man that uncovers his man's self-transcendence which not only gives him man, access to other beings but also the chance to show themselves in why, what and how they are. The methodology in use here is hermeneutic phenomenology, first developed by Heidegger's friend and teacher, Edmund Husserl. In doing this however, a distinction shall be made between Husserl's phenomenological reduction and Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology which seeks to describe the transcendental self as the first order of our consciousness by which we are made aware of ourselves as the free and determining factor in our own existence and in our comprehension of the existential world. We conclude that, the transcendental philosophy of Heidegger conceives the term *Dasein* as *a way of life*; a distinctive kind of *entity* that human beings as such are though, not to be understood as the biological human being or the person, and that, the essence of human life is founded in the *facticity*,

or objectivity of Dasein.

The Problem of Being Restated

The question of being is as old as man himself. The pre-Socratics pondered on this question and concluded that everything real belongs to the category of being as the only possible object of thought. As Parmenides attempts an answer, ... *you will not find thinking without being to which it refers ... being or reality, is what it is and not something else ... being is not divisible ... all is full of being.*¹ Clearly stated, the very important question of being; the transcendental self results from Kant's critical analysis of the functions and procedures of reason. He calls this act of philosophical cogitation as *transcendental idealism*. For Kant, philosophy is not only a critical examination of the object of science, but the procedures of the mind that produces scientific knowledge. This mode of thinking started with Plato who realised that the ultimate justification of mathematics cannot be within the realm of mathematics itself but must be resolved by a higher level of wisdom- the forms. In Descartes' philosophy, we find the thinking being (*Cogito*) assured of its own existence, and this assurance constituting his rationalism. However, real light came with Kant who redefined the problem and gave it the peculiar form that so attracted the idealists. Heidegger inherited this tradition though, he does not consider morality to constitute the transcendental perspective, but agreed with Kant that it is freedom that gives man the ability to reflect and hence transcend his activities. G.W.F. Hegel similarly developed a philosophy known as phenomenology of mind in which he argued that the spirit is a single force from which acts of cognition and freedom were but variances of the mind coming to recognise itself. Friedrich Nietzsche also developed the transcendental philosophy of the self by emphasising the will as being aware of itself as a source of power.

In what appears as a compromise philosophy of being, Aristotle thinks of being as the essence of things. It is eternal itself only in change, in so far

¹ E.S. Stump, Philosophy: History and Problems, New York, Oxford University Press, 1993, p20

as idea or form have no existence independent of or transcendent to the reality of things or mind. These varied attempts not only establish the basis for free and responsible self-awareness, they also debunk the philosophical views of the Neo-Kantians. This, Aristotle calls the philosophy of human existence in which human thought is directed towards the problem of the self, and in particular the problem of human freedom and self awareness. It is in the light of this tradition that Heidegger developed what he calls a “first” or “primary” philosophy –the reflection of the self upon the totality of the ways in which it exists. Heidegger insist on this note that, prior to any theoretical speculation about beings, a concerned existence that makes it possible to theorize in the first place. According to Heidegger, “the existential nature of man is the reason why man can represent being as such, and why he can be conscious of them. All consciousness presupposes...existence as the essential of man”.² Primarily therefore, Heidegger turns his attention to a way of being more primordial than detached theorizing which is disclosed in our average everyday practices, our being-in-the-world.

The “Being” of Man

A journey into Heidegger's examination of the existing transcendental self reveals instead an analysis of the human self. He seemed to have engaged in philosophical anthropology instead of his promise to talk about “Being”. This overtime has been the complaints heard from many of Heidegger's critics. He emphatically denies that his interest is in developing of philosophy of man, rather it is an analysis of what it means to be- Being. Thus, the German term 'Sein (Being) read between the context of Heidegger's thought (which is the infinitive “to be) and rendered in German the “Seinsfrage” is to question what it means to be.

It means therefore that Heidegger's analysis of human existence (hereinafter referred to as the philosophy of the being of man) means, to question what it means to be. It is an ontology which seek to articulate a position that, only man can reflect upon what it means to be; hence 'to be' or *being* can only be analysed through the self reflective consciousness

² M. Heidegger: Being and Time, Oxford, Blackwell, 1968, p37

of man. This is itself a part of ontology. Thus, a study of man reveals the structure of ontology, so too does the investigation of ontology reflect much of what is man. Heidegger convincingly states the position thus:

Every philosophical – that is thoughtful doctrine of man's essential nature, is in itself alone a doctrine of the Being of beings (i.e. what it means for a being to be) every doctrine of being is in itself alone a doctrine of man's essential nature.³

This more properly understood is the philosophy of man in the context of the possibilities of his own existence. This philosophy which identified the theory of man with the theory of being enunciated in Heidegger's work *Being and Time* reveals a great deal about what we, as men conscious of our own existence, really are. Understandably, Heidegger's philosophy of the being of man reflects the profound revolution of the modern age. His MAN is:

... a man acutely aware of his responsibilities, for whom the responsibility falls directly on his own shoulders. It is a man whose spirit can be stifled by inauthenticity, by emasculation by machines and by the failure to achieve a proper understanding of his finitude.⁴

Most obviously, Heidegger's man is a man whose essence escapes the thick calculus of the technocrats. It is not a man whose basis is found in emotion or in the commitment of a cause. It is a man whose deepest and most worth-while characteristics can, through profound and disciplined reasoning, be exposed by philosophical (and not mere psychological) inquiry. This essentially, is both an analysis of man and an inquiry into the meaning of being i.e. an enquiry into the being of being which makes *Dasein* what it is. Posited against this philosophy, Heidegger talks about authenticity and inauthenticity of man.

To live authentically is to discover oneself in direct relation to the thing –

³. M. Heidegger: *Being and Time*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1968, p79

⁴. M. Gelven, op. cit. p14

that – are; it is to be capable of thinking; and it is to be capable of genuine discourse. To be inauthentic is to be characterised by a kind of ambiguity in which one's relation to the crowd and the requirements of daily life rather than to oneself on substitute curiosity and cognitive thinking for genuine understanding. According to Heidegger for anyone to be a candidate of authenticity, one has to pay attention to the distracting cares of every – day life – things; people. One should not be a follower. To be a follower is an inauthentic life. He says, “If I echo public opinion or If I do an action because they do it, I am not a candidate of authenticity. I am terribly fallen”.⁵ Arguably by authentic, Heidegger means the awareness of oneself founded on the principles of hermeneutic self – reflection. On the other hand, inauthentic means the awareness of the self merely as others see it, or perhaps to see oneself as having a meaning or essence that is prior to and hence “other” than one's existence.

It thus means for Heidegger that authenticity is possible only for one who has the attitude of surge, i.e. care – which is possible only for one who throws his being into question through Angst; through which one discovers his radical nothingness. Then one is able to accept himself as being destined to die; as being – towards – death. As he put it:

*The end of being – in – the world is death. This end . . . determines in every case whatever totality is possible for Dasein . . . but as something of the character of Dasein, death is only in an existential being. The existential structure of such being proves to be the ontologically constructive state of Dasein's potentiality for – being – a – whole.*⁶

Quite clearly, Heidegger's underlying Philosophy here is that the essence of Dasein lies in its existence. Man's finitude is an essential factor in his freedom. Although his thought is associated with the scholastics and existentialists due to the similarity of many terms and phrases. Heidegger clearly stands out as a unique philosopher of a different school

⁵. M. Heidegger: Being and Time, Oxford, Blackwell 1973, p219)

⁶ Ibid pp 276 - 277

of thought. For instance, in his inquiry, Heidegger's point is not to urge that man is characterised by dread, anxiety and boredom; but rather, he wishes to point out that one can significantly examine and inquire about existence, and that this ability of man's reason to reflect upon itself is its most amazing function. In what seems to be a concession of this view, Michael Gelven says,

*Heidegger's use of such moods as dread and fear does not constitute a brooding or nihilistic view of man, they are simple factual moods that do occur in man, and thus can be analysed as descriptive of his existence. But then, so too can such moods as joy and ecstasy*⁷

Human being, then, in its totality, its authentic being – is being – to – death. This according to him is an “ontological possibility”, Using two logically consistent argument to justify this conclusion, Heidegger says:

*If human being is to be a unity, it can be so only as a whole, that is in relation to its ending, death. If human being is to rise from forfeiture to authenticity, it can do so only in isolation from the seductive “they”. Only death or the relation to death, brings such isolation for my death is the only event in my life which is uniquely mine: it is authentic because it is my own.*⁸

Here, Heidegger clearly indicates that the idea of being as such is to be articulated into what and how being, something, nothing and notness. The idea of being, he says, formulates the demand that ontology must start from the widest and deepest of all distinction: the difference between something and nothing. Hence to say “man exists” is interpreted as man's ability-to-be, i.e. man understands himself in his being from the constant possibility that he can also not be. To inquire into the idea of being is to search and discover all the essential structures of man's existence which in itself enables man to understand the possibilities of

⁷. M. Gelven: A commentary of Heidegger's Being and Time; New York, Harper & Row publishers, 1970

⁸. M. Heidegger: Being and Time, Oxford, Blackwell 1973, p.1.

his own being and those of other beings.

Thus, the totality of Heidegger's philosophy is the study of what it means to be, i.e. the mode of existence which connotes every day experience. This according to Heidegger starts from the vague awareness and proceeds through analysis to an explicit and thematic account. It is the everyday self reflection at itself in a world. The “world” understood by Heidegger does not necessarily mean the sophisticated view of the scientist, who imagines, the earth as a sphere or ball hurtling through the vast eons of limitless space. Rather, it is a world in the existential sense; the self – reflective, consciousness, even of a rather primitive awareness, for which the limits of the world may well be the limits of a village or country. It is, in this sense, the most general of concepts about existence: the place in which one is. This is what Heidegger calls “being – in – a – world” or perhaps better “to be – in – a – world” as ably elaborated in his concept of “factual life”, or human life as it is lived concretely in relation to the world, a relation he calls “caring”.

Being, other beings and Being Oneself.

To exist as a self is man's own most possibility, but not by any means the only one fundamental to him. The most fundamental existential constitution of man could be said to be what Heidegger calls “to-be-in-a-world”. This opens up the possibility for him (man) to relate himself to other being. This is what Heidegger calls being-in-a-world ontologically as against being – in-a-world ontically. To be-in-a-world must be seen not ontically but ontologically, the ontic meaning of in-a – world is not a priority, because the ontic world is discovered through experience. According to Heidegger:

“In” in an ontological sense is that which makes possible the feeling of familiarity we have with the world which makes the world our home. . . . being in the ontological sense is the priority, 'ability' to have things that we relate to, care about, and concern ourselves with⁹. (Ibid p.54).

⁹. Ibid p.54.

The point in question behind this existential is that, my surroundings are not simply there, but they affect me and me them I cannot think of myself as existing simply as a space – time locus, it is a real connection of real beings, the worldishness of the world in which relational complex forms the coherence structure of the world. Magda King more cognitively renders the point thus:

The way in which man fore-goingly refers himself to . . . directs himself toward . . . , is the condition of the possibility that in his factual existence he never finds himself in a vacuum as an isolated self, but in the midst of other being in the coherent whole of a world. The original disclosure of man's own being in a relational structure of his being as being – in – the – world.¹⁰

Clearly, the “world” in Heidegger's thesis is not and cannot consist of things, nor of things and people added together, because understanding ourselves in a world is the condition of the possibility that we can meet any kind of being at all. Man himself, according to Heidegger is worldish: he is, at the bottom of his being, world disclosing, world forming, he understands his own being in a relation – whole, in which and from which he can meet other beings, understand them in their being.

We may further appraise this section by restating that, the world is not a thing nor does it consist of things. The coherent whole of a world cannot be explained from the real connection of real beings but only from the way, in which man a priori, understands his own being in the whole of its possibilities. These possibilities belong to a finite and dependent being and are hence necessarily relational. They are disclosed by attuned understanding in anticipation of possible other beings. The articulated reference – whole in which and from which man in advance refers himself to any possible being he might meet, constitute the ontological structures, the worldishness of the world. This, according to Magda King, enables man a priori to understand the being of others being and is

¹⁰. Ibid pp.459 - 460

disclosed in co-original unity – which man's own being is the primary for the sake of. Thus, for Heidegger, the world in which man exist is not a New World buoyancy of pragmatism, able to remake our lives by sheer force of common sense, that support it, but a deeply European sense of historical dependence and entanglement, said he: “I am cast into a world not of my own making, though it is mine to appropriate and assimilate freely, yet within the inescapable limits of contingency”.¹¹

Certainly, in its interpretation of objects, Heidegger theory is markedly pragmatic. According to him, nothing (no being) exist independent of the human person; beings are “stuff” for “use” beings are at “hand” for our “handling”. He thus understands man as maker (*Homo Faber*) before he is *Homo sapiens*; it is materials, tools, opportunities, by which he finds himself surrounded.

Essentially, human being exists as anticipation of its own possibilities; it exists in advance of itself and grasp its situation as a challenge to its own power of becoming what it may, rather than being what it must be. As its inseparable characteristic, human being is always searching out of itself, aiming at what it is not yet. It is what Marjorie Grene calls a projection in and of, and with the world, i.e. the anticipation of human being by itself and therewith of its world. Through this act of self – projection and self transcendence, the human being at once understand its world and becomes itself; the state of being with others and being with oneself.

It is important to note that, human being understood in the Heideggerian theory is not only in the world and shapes its world in its creative endeavour, it become forfeit to the world: that is, the human being “ontologically” forget “being” for particular beings. It means the scattering of the essential forwards drive through attention to the distracting and disturbing cares of every day and of the things and people that surrounded us every day. Marjorie Grene succinctly captures this mood more correctly, “Inevitably and continuously, the forward driving “I” is sacrificed to the persisting and pressing “they”...The indifferent

¹¹. Magda King 1961:91

and anonymous crowd – Das man...promiscuously public.¹²

Therefore, the fundamental attribute of human being is forfeiture which entails life with others and for others in alienation from the central task of becoming itself; the flight of the self from itself.

Having gone thus far, there arises the question of whether any phenomenon in human existence (can) or actually realises the possibility of a return to authenticity; “ontological possibility”. According to Heidegger, there is the voice by which human being, speaking in secrecy and silence, calls itself out of the distraction of self – forget fullness to the lonely avowal of its own responsibility for being itself. It is the call of the self to itself out of forfeiture to authenticity. Thus, in conscience, the self bids itself transcend the facticity. Thus, in conscience, the self bids itself transcend the facticity which it yet inalienably is. It challenges human being to escape from enslavement into freedom and by the same act to transform historical necessity into resolution. Conscience tells the self (1) to be itself (1), as for instance, I ought resolutely to face my own inner capability instead of forgetting myself in this and that. I ought to make my situation virtually mine, rather than let it inflict itself upon me. This is authentic life; in this way, the human being is said you become a whole, to possess a destiny understood in the context of essential time; my time, the span of my life which is the ontological ground of human being. This, human being most truly and deeply is. Existential time according to Heidegger is future, it moves from past through present. Similarly, essential time is finite. Thus, human being, as time is being to death.

Thus, to live in the mode of destiny is to historically. For according to Heidegger, destiny is possible only when in being of being death, guilt, conscience, freedom and finitude dwell together at its very source. It is achieved only by the rare individual who in dread and silence has come face to face with his own nothingness and has shaped his life in the light or darkness, of that encounter. Hence the dominant theme of being and

¹². M. Grene, “Martin Heidegger” in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* p460

time remains the vision of the lonely will driven by dread to face the prospects of its own dissolution, in retrospect its guilt, and yet to realise in this twin terror its proper freedom. This is captured in what Heidegger calls the double tension (double nature bondage) constituting human being. For him, like Leibniz, Spinoze and Kant, man is bound yet free:

*Man is determined yet free, free yet enslaved. If I am here now, what heredity and environment have made me, so are these conversely what I make of them. But that is not all. This driving integral, all-essential I is hidden, almost all my life, by the daily round, the daily crisis, the daily moods which could not add up to an I, to a life, to a person, unless they were somehow bound to the centre they circumnavigate unless they expressed somehow the very being they betray.*¹³

Indeed, man is bound yet free. Freedom lies in the tension of history, in the challenge of my situation, my body, my family, my city, my country. But freedom equally lives in the tension of the unhistorical, the purely present – the passing mood, the gossiping neighbour, the chores of office or kitchen, the escape of travel or television, the flight of the self from itself.

Ending this section on a positive note, we may say that guilt and conscience, as balance of our philosophy of being. Focus, then upon authentic existence which has been phenomenologically interpreted as “anticipatory resolution”, as discussed above. It is a form of existence which is aware of what it means to be.

The Phenomenological Method

Our discussion concerning the philosophy of being clearly brings to the fore the paradox of human being; the truth of existence which has to be wrestled from the covering over which characterises the everyday and the disowned way of existing. Hence the urgency of finding the right approach and the proper method whereby the existential analysis can

¹³. Ibid. p461

proceed. In Heidegger's works, but in particular those on being, the phenomenological method is very clearly evident on every page (see *Sein Und Zeit*) Being and Time. It is therefore no exaggeration on Heidegger's part when he writes that his investigations “have become possible only on the ground that had been laid by Edmund Husserl”, an accomplished phenomenologist. Heidegger's quest for being, consist principally of a massive analysis, in the phenomenological tradition, of man – Dasein or human being, who alone, among being, seeks being. But what is phenomenology? How is it used by Heidegger as a method, distinguished from all other methods or disciplines that bear the same name? These and other issues shall form the corpus of this section.

Phenomenology as a concept is coined by Kant to distinguish phenomenon and noumenon i.e. things as they appear and things – in – themselves respectively. Hegel also used the term as a method of investigation into the development of the human spirit, described on the title page as “a system of science, part I: the phenomenology of mind”. However, he denied the absolute dichotomy between Kant's two worlds. The term phenomenology was also used by Husserl to refer to his own methodology of “eidetic reduction”. Heidegger too used the term to describe his methodology; hermeneutic phenomenology.

In a general sense, phenomenology means the study of the forms in which, something appears or manifest itself, in contrast to studies that seek to explain things say, from their causal relations or from evolutionary processes etc. In the contextual usage, Heidegger interpreted phenomenology simply as a method which prescribes how an investigation is to be carried out but not what is to be investigated. Thus, Heidegger introduces his discussion of phenomenology by explaining Husserl's well known maxim “to the things themselves” i.e. to let the facts appear for themselves, as it was. But Heidegger's phenomenology is hermeneutic – i.e. it is interpretive. It is a method that strives to reveal the structure of the transcendental self meant to apply only to the question of existence. Michael Gelven reports thus:

Heidegger believes that to question what it means to be

*can proceed only through a methodology that in turn proceed from an interpretive phenomenology of the immediate awareness of existence – that to apply metaphysical systematic methods to the question of being is to overlook the peculiar nature of the existence question.*¹⁴

Obviously, Heidegger adopts phenomenological hermeneutic as a procedure in which the implicit meaning of an existential fact is made implicit. Phenomenology for Heidegger is an attempt to describe how things initially show themselves immediately and directly in the course of our *lived experience*. This methodology according to Heidegger is not an explanation, it rather signifies a method that describes the way human beings encounter things proximally and for the most part, as they are revealed in everyday, concrete situations. In his words,

*We must choose such a way of access and such a kind of interpretation that this entity can show itself in itself and from itself. And this means that it is to be shown as it is proximally and for the most part in its average everydayness*¹⁵

Thus, through the hermeneutic procedure, Heidegger is able to harmonise the seeming contradiction in terms resulting from his history of hermeneutic phenomenology, - he carries out his analysis of being, and remains true to his principles, namely, to *let the facts speak for themselves* and that, *there are no such things as bare, uninterrupted facts*.

Thus, phenomenology, Heidegger says, is different from other sciences to which it bears an outward resemblance, such as theology, biology, sociology: the science of God, of life, of human community, respectively rather, it is a method, the way, in which being, the subject matter of ontology, can be approached and brought to self – showing. Magda King

¹⁴. M. Gelven, A Commentary of Heidegger's, Being and Time; New York, Harper & Row publishers, 1970:35

¹⁵. M. Heidegger, Being and Time, pp37-38

here attempts to speak out Heidegger's mind when he says things that are brought to self-showing

... are not the real things we meet within the world, which are always directly accessible to us and do not need a difficult and intricate method to bring them to light. The phenomena of phenomenology must be such that they are usually half – hidden, disguised or forgotten, so that they in themselves demands a special approach. These phenomenology shows is always “being” its structures and characters, its meaning, its possible modifications and derivations . . . those ossified concepts within a system which claim to be crystal – clear self – evident and requiring no further justification¹⁶

The meaning of phenomenology in the Heideggerian style is here understood in its foundational matrix as, “to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it show itself from itself”. This procedure, Heidegger very generously employed in his analysis of being; his interpretation of time (above and sec. 63 of being and time). Understandably, phenomenology for Heidegger means that analysis by which the meaning of the various ways in which we exist can be translated from the vague language of ontology without destroying the way in which these meaning manifest themselves to us in our everyday lives. Simply put, the most crucial point in question here is that, the meeting of being can be known only through a special kind of procedure: the hermeneutic process.

Critics of Heidegger view this conclusion as too exclusive, philosophically insignificant and share ontological autobiography. William Earle, the main challenger of this position says that the works of such fundamental ontologists (like Heidegger) are “infact ontological confessions by their authors” and that thus their work is ontological autobiography” in a more radical manner Earle states;

¹⁶. Magda King, 1964:155-156)

*Heidegger's writings are merely profound statements of his own individual human existence, not human existence as such, and that their value is that they offers us a possible manner and way of existence . . . there is no way in which that which is so terribly important for each of us – namely our existence – can be described or revealed by any universal or certain principles.*¹⁷

Although Heidegger provides sufficient argumentation to debunk Earl's objection. Such are outside of the province of this work. However, a journey into Kant's "critique of pure reason reveals that Earle's argument overlooks: reason is not limited to the cognitive functions of logical and scientific analysis. Reason, operating transcendently, can reflect upon itself achieving through this reflection not only the very roots of its freedom, but also the respect and awe that it must have for itself, thereby yielding the principles of ethical judgement. Very clearly, reason, that common basis by which one recognises the shared bond among men, is by no means limited to that which is "thinnest" or has" least determination.

We may further add that the whole purpose and impact of Heidegger's philosophy of being is to show that it is indeed possible for reason, through the hermeneutic analysis, to render an understanding of the meaning of being. That the methodology employed is not similar to that of the sciences is only to be expected. Although such a methodology does not reveal what is merely private or particular to one individual Dasein, it all the same reveals those insights and principles that are true of every individual who reflect upon his own existence. Hence according to Heidegger, it is possible for my reason – that function of my consciousness which is shared by all men and through which i can ultimately communicate with them, to inform me of the meaning of my existence. Michael Gelven more lucidly reflects on this ontological phenomenon thus:

¹⁷. Ibid p40

*The very meaning of Dasein is one who reflects one's existence. This means that I cannot think of Dasein except in terms of possible ways of existing. ...This existenz does not refer to Dasein's being alive or functioning but rather to its awareness that it is.*¹⁸

This is what we call fundamental ontology; the transcendental analysis of the existing self which provides the ultimate basis for all philosophical inquiry. Such ungraspable phenomenon like all others is brought to show itself in the way it is in itself. Thus, through hermeneutic phenomenology, Heidegger takes the accepted and normal problem areas of philosophy and reinterprets them in terms of transcendental awareness.

In *Being and Time* for, we clearly see Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology at work. He reinterprets such concepts like “world”, “self”, “fear” and “understanding” etc. He asks: what are the kinds of awareness and consciousness by which the word “world” takes its meaning? What does it mean to be oneself?, to be afraid?, to be such that one understands? etc. Such words are not objective entities divorced from the type of subjective concerns about them, nor are they “definition” in any abstract or verbal sense. Each is, instead, a way in which one exists. He takes a concept like “world”, for example, and, (like many others concepts he used), examined it in the concept of what it means for a human being to be in a world. Gelven illuminates this point more clearly thus: “Instead of treating the *world* cosmologically as an objective entity, or epistemologically as an object of knowledge, he examines what it means for a human being to be in a *world*”.¹⁹

In doing this, Heidegger brings to bare a very crucial point; that one of the many ways in which I exist is to be aware of the world and that what the world actually is, in this case is relatively unimportant, but what it means for me to be in a world is very important. This mode of existence whose

^{18.} Ibid p40-41

^{19.} M. Gelven: A commentary of Heidegger's *Being and Time*, p34

analysis reveals what it means to be is so referred to as existential. For Heidegger therefore, the question of being starts with an inquiry into my own particular understanding of being, what Heidegger calls *existentiell* i.e. understanding. He says, “the question of existence never gets strengthened out except through existing itself. The understanding of oneself which leads along this way we call *existentiell*”²⁰

While accepting the incalculable indebtedness of Heidegger to Husserl there is a profound difference between the duo. This point of divergence very clearly shows itself in the concept of intentionality, the basic character of consciousness.

In Husserl's thought, this concept can perhaps be best approached from the formal definition of phenomenon: that which shows itself in itself. But this self showing needs something to which it can show itself. This something according to Husserl is transcendental consciousness, distinguished from empirical consciousness, which is accessible to us in simple reflection, and which is the sphere studied by the empirical science of psychology. Magda King here captures Husserl's thought more correctly:

*Consciousness – which must always be understood as transcendental consciousness – is in turn dependent on the phenomenon, since it is its very essence to be conscious of...i.e. it always goes out something, it aims at something, it means something, it intends something.*²¹

Evidently, the disclosure of being which Husserl ascribes to consciousness belongs to the existential way of being in Heidegger's thought. In the same fashion, it is easy to see that the two thinkers are united in thought that the metaphysical starts from being in not fundamental enough, and that the home ground of philosophy can only be the transcendental ground where the disclosure of being happens. Furthermore, the two agree that the “place of the fundamental” cannot be

^{20.} Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.33

^{21.} Magda King 1964:157-158)

simply one of realities among realities in the world, but that the transcendental subject must exist in a totally different way from the merely real object. But this marks the radical division of the thinkers, with each working out his problem in so different a way that a comparison between their thought is difficult to make. The difference is in their special method of gaining access to the transcendental subject; consciousness itself. For Husserl, this is a task that must be done; to develop a reliable method for gaining access to consciousness itself, a method that will enable us to see the immensely complicated contents and activities of consciousness just as immediately as we see the real world in an act of sense perception.

Husserl calls this method, the phenomenological reduction or, eidetic reduction. It proceeds step by step, by way of series of reductions. Husserl therefore proceeds to suspend, to “put into brackets”, to put out of action everything that we normally accept ready-made-from consciousness, and so to turn the phenomenological eye to consciousness itself. Here again, we turn to Magda King for further insightful illumination;

The reality of the world, as it is naively experienced by us, is suspended, put out of action, not because the reality is in the least doubtful or uncertain but because it is a product of consciousness, and the aim is to get those activities into view which first of all constitute this reality²²

It must be pointed out that phenomenology is discussed here only as a method of investigation employed by Heidegger to make explicit existential facts. Seen in comparison with Husserl, the father of modern phenomenology, the parallels in Heidegger's thought are as striking as the differences. In Heidegger's interpretation of “transcendental subjectivity” via phenomenology, he most strikingly showed the potentialities of Husserl's method (reference being and time). The demonstration of phenomenology in this work strikes the reader with its

²². Ibid p.150

air of vigour and self reliance which is in no small measure due to the demand for original experience and self-evidence.

According to Heidegger Therefore,

*No way of thought, not even the way of metaphysical thought, begins with man's essential nature and goes on from there to Being, nor in reverse from Being and then to man. Rather everyday of thinking takes its way already within the total relation of being and man's nature, or else in not thinking at all.*²³

His is an investigation into what we, as men conscious of our own existence really are; it is an analysis of how man relates to the possibilities of his own existence. In our discussion above, we have attempted to restate and answer the difficult and unique question of “what it means to be”. This is the question of the existence of Man-Dasein, who can only be said to be in the context of its ability to understand what it means to be, hence to consider oneself as existing is to be aware of oneself as Dasein thus:

- Dasein is ontically prior because it exist.
- Dasein is ontologically prior because it can be questioned about its existence.
- Dasein is fundamentally – ontologically prior because the questioning of its existence provides the foundation for all other inquiries.

Heidegger shows by the explanation above that an understanding of being, meaning and purpose, is only possible to a finite existence. It is therefore out of the question to regard Heidegger as a destroyer of tradition. He is far from declaring the whole of metaphysics to have been one vast mistake, arising from ambiguous use of language. He shows how and why metaphysics had to be as it is, why its language had to be ambiguous and where the limits of its truth lie.²⁴

²³. M. Heidegger: Being and Time, p79-80

²⁴. King, 2964:163

Heidegger further used hermeneutic phenomenology as against Husserl's Phenomenological reduction to achieve delightful result. In short, Heidegger made explicit what already shows itself, and the only way to understand them is for each one to see for himself what they are "letting him see". We may say then that, philosophy (as expounded above) does not merely apply to existence, as it were an abstract theory of relations capable of applying to existence and other orders, it is rather existential in its deepest nature. Perhaps Kant, the initiator of existentialism may capture the mood more illuminatingly:

*The practical value, which a merely speculative science may have, lies without the bounds of this science, and can therefore be considered a scholium merely and like all scholia, does not form part of the science itself. This application, however surely lies within the bounds of philosophy especially of philosophy drawn from the pure sources of reason where its speculative use in metaphysics must necessarily be at one with its practical use in morals.*²⁵

This expression is basically a phenomenological description of the transcendental self. It describes the first order of our consciousness by which we are made of ourselves as the free and determining factors in our own existence and in our comprehension of the external world through which we discover the essential structures of man's existence, thereby illuminating the way in which man understands both his own being and the being of other beings. Henry Adams very correctly captures this idea of man in his autobiography, *The Education of Henry Adams* that, "man is he who is . . . that he belongs to earth . . . and that, man is heir and learners in all things"²⁶

Conclusion

It is thus understood through our analysis of Heidegger's philosophy (and perhaps for the first time) that, our most distinctive human feature is the

²⁵. Kant 1954:364

²⁶. M. Heidegger: Being and Time, p274)

fact that we, of all beings on earth bear witness to other beings and ourselves. In so doing too, we affirm our existence as this kind of being among-beings, which quality “is one of man's possessions”.

If there is any lesson the transcendental philosophy of Heidegger teaches us, it is the fact of the essence of human life; that it is founded in the facticity, or objectivity of Dasein. Not only do we humans come into relationship with other beings through our characteristic consciousness but that, other beings come into their own beings as objects through the being of human beings. They are witnessed by us. Heidegger thus insists that, from the position of our own essence, “we can never encounter only (ourselves)”. Hence, any conception of our environment that perceives only necessarily flawed from the point of view of essential human nature.

The submission here is that, the man project of Heidegger reveals a great deal about the being of man as Self Conscious of its existence as a being who really exists. As a Self Conscious existent Heidegger's Philosophy reveals that, a man as such is actually aware of his responsibilities, for whom the responsibility falls directly on his own shoulders. He it is, whose spirit can be shifted by inauthenticity, by emasculation by machines and by the failure to achieve a proper understanding of his finitude, but who through the principles of hermeneutic self-reflection owns up its existence in authentic living through which the true being of Dasein, the investigator of being can be/is disclosed.

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