

HEIDEGGER: TRUTH IN THE METAPHYSICS OF ONTOLOGICAL PHENOMENON OF DASEIN: THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL BEING

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Abstract

Since the inception of this world man has been constantly trying to know the truth. This “knowing” is philosophy. It is philosophy, which has interpreted man and his activity in general. Human life cannot properly be understood without Philosophy for the good of the body is as important as the good of the mind. Conception of life originates from philosophy. Philosophy gives self-consciousness and develops a spirit of enquiry after truth. Heidegger using his phenomenological method draws attention to salient features of reality and awakens us to the pattern of truth which has been for long ignored from antiquity; the ontological truth. This philosophical work will submit that truth cannot take place in the realm of ontology for that will make truth to be highly subjective and lacks the objectivity that is imperative for social and political interaction. .

Keywords: Conception of life, Self-consciousness, Ontology, Ontico, Truth, Social and Political

Introduction

Since the days of ancient philosophers, the question of what truth has been raised time and again. It is one of those questions which will always disquiet mankind, without finding a definite and universally accepted answer. Each school of thought offers its own solution which is often open to criticism

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from other philosophical movements. Because of its perennial character, it is a most genuine philosophical question.

Aristotle defined philosophy as “the Science of truth holding that the highest form of philosophy, “first philosophy” was metaphysics “the Science of being qua being.”¹ One of the primary senses of being with which metaphysics concerns itself is « being in the sense of the true. Heidegger is one of the great philosophers of being in Western thought. The phenomenon of truth is encapsulated in the phrase *adequatio intellectus et rei*. For instance “Aquinas is well-known for having defended the view that truth consists of an adequation between the intellect and a thing.” Perhaps no discussion of this within his literary corpus is better known than that offered in question of his disputed questions on Truth (De Veritate). However, in addition to describing truth as an adequation of the intellect and a thing, he considers a number of other definitions. Most importantly, he develops a notion of truth of being (what might be called “ontological truths”) along truth of the intellect (what might be called “logical truth”).

So truth as it appeared in Western thought is conformity of a proposition to reality, of what is said to that of which it is said. This tradition reached its focal point in medieval Scholasticism as has been said of Thomist theory of truth. Thanks to a theological background supplying the notion that what things are, corresponds to ideas in the mind of God, the medieval could speak therefore of truth of judgments, or logical truths, and the truth of things, or ontological truths. But the difficulty to this approach as Heidegger sees it, is that it presupposes that we already know what an object is, what a judgment is, and what it means for the two to correspond. For Heidegger then, the context of truth must be the immediate presence of judgments to things. The basic function of judgment, accordingly, is to render things accessible, a work more of

discovery than of description. The presupposition of such discovery is Dasein's radical openness to being, something that must be understood in terms of man's mode of being in the world. We shall in this work examine the notion truth of according to Heidegger especially as it is exemplified in the metaphysics of the ontological phenomenology of Dasein. We shall try to find out the contributions he made to the long-aged problems of philosophy with regard to the nature of truth.

The Order of Comprehensibility of Being

Being understood as predicated from an actual existence reveals its truth as a result of the mutual disposition of the intellect and the thing known according to the principle that «the intelligible in act is the intellect in act.² Acknowledging the view of truth as some disposition of the knower and the thing known, Heidegger however, wants to be more specific as to the very *locus veritatis*. Referring to Aristotle's doctrine on truth, Heidegger says that Aristotle never defends the thesis that the primordial 'locus' of truth is the judgment.³ The *locus veritatis* is according to, Heidegger, the *Dasein*.

For Aristotle, logos has a double function, namely both to uncover and cover up human existence (Dasein), and in this way making being to be true. But in this interpretation of noesis, Aristotle reduces logos to *aisthesis* and stresses only the function of *dianoein*, omitting the element of *noein* itself. In view of this, one must distinguish in the order of noesis between nous and *noein*, both of which enable logos as *dianoein* to function in uncovering truth in being. Nous, Heidegger renders by the German noun *Vernehmung*, *noein* by the verb *Vernehmen*. In the English translation of *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, the aforementioned terms have been translated as follows.

Noein means Vernehmen (to apprehend), nous means vernehmung (apprehension), this in two senses that belong together. To apprehend means to accept, to let something (namely that which shows itself, which appears). Come to one, Vernehmen means also to bear a witness, to question him and so determine the facts, to establish how the matter stands to apprehend (Vernehmen) in this twofold sense means to let some come to one not merely accepting it, however, but taking a receptive attitude toward that which shows itself when troops prepare to receive the enemy, it is the hope of stopping him at the very, least, of bringing him to stand (Zum stehen bringen). This receptive bring-to-stand is meant is noein.⁴

Linguistic analysis of *noein* and *nous* allows Heidegger to interpret *noesis* as a process of occurring of being, which is also the most dominating element in the whole realm of apprehension. And, although man is not included directly in the process of *noesis*, then in order to participate in this appearing and apprehension, he must himself be, he must belong to being. But the essence and the mode of being-human man can only be determined by the essence of being⁵. Dasein, however apprehends not only being but also Being. We shall now examine the notion Dasein to see where Heidegger actual places truth.

The Hermeneutic of Dasein and the Phenomenology of Truth

The basic purpose of Heidegger is to question the meaning of being. His method is phenomenological, which he interprets in the radical sense of letting that which shows itself be seen as it

is. The basic phenomenon he let be seen in being and time is Dasein, considered as “there-being”, that being in whom the Being-process can reveal itself. Through phenomenological analysis, Dasein reveals itself as finite transcendence whose ultimate meaning is time.

For Heidegger, there is a need to rediscover the ontological being from obscurity, to retrieve being from the chasm of oblivion. Hence, he declares, “the question of the meaning of Being must be re formulated. If it is a fundamental question..., it must be made transparent and in an appropriate way”. To get this done, he chose a being whose knowledge paves way for the knowledge of Being as such. He then recommends: Thus, to work out the question of Being adequately, we must make an entity, the inquirer transparent in his own Being. The very asking of this question is an entity’s modes of Being...this entity which each of us is himself its Being, we shall denote by the term Dasein”. Owing to the uniqueness of the being of man, Heidegger distinguishes from other beings (Seiendes) and designates it with the German word ‘Dasein’ meaning standing there. Man is then the only being that can stand out of his existence and investigate into his own being and the beings of other entities. Man is distinct from other entities such as stones, tables, plants, and so on, in that it has a special relationship with Being, and understands Being in an ontological way unlike other entities. Man is ontologically distinguished from other entities because he surpasses them in his capability to investigate and understand being, hence man is specially qualified to serve as the locus for an inquiry into Being in general, since this understanding is a definite mode of his being. Hence, he focuses on the being of man. He maintains that “the question of Being is ontico-ontologically distinctive.... Dasein (Man) then reveals itself as that entity which must first be worked out in an ontological adequate

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manner, if the inquiry is to become a transparent one...that
entity which in principle is to be interrogated beforehand as to
its Being” Thus the first requirement in the question of Being
becomes the analysis of the being of man (Dasein) with the
hope that a well understanding of man’s being will lead to the
understanding of Being (Sein).

Through phenomenological analysis, this Dasein, reveals itself
as finite transcendence whose ultimate meaning is time. For
Heidegger truth depends on the self manifestation of Dasein.
Concerning the dependence of truth on Dasein, Heidegger
says:

There is truth only in so far as Dasein is and so
long as Dasein is. Entities are uncovered only
when Dasein is; and only so long as Dasein is,
are they disclosed. Newton's law, the principle
of contradiction, any truth, whatever - there are
true only as long as Dasein is ... Through
Newton the laws became true; and with them,
entities become accessible in themselves to
Dasein ⁶.

Because the Kind of Being that is essential to truth is of the
character of Dasein, all truth is relative to Dasein's Being. The
two different metaphysics of being posited by Aquinas and
Heidegger result in two theories of truth, for truth follows
being⁷. If being is to be derived from factual essents (das
Seinders), then the truth of their beingness is to be discovered
in the immanent order of human subjectivity i.e., in the
existential, structure of Man's Dasein: There is truth in so far
as Dasein is and so long as Dasein is⁸. In contrast, if being is to
be taken from actual existents, then the truth of their beingness
is to be found in the transcendent order of things themselves.
Truth is found more in being of things than in quiddity.

Defining transcendence as surpassing (Überstieg), Heidegger does not understand by it a characteristic which could possibly be a property either of objective or subjective beings, and as such, it cannot be described as a «subject-object relationship. Transcendent Dasein (a tautological expression in itself). Surpasses neither 'bondary' which stretched out before the subject and forces it to remain in (Immancence) nor a 'gap' which separates it form the object”⁹. Consequently, Dasein is the Locus Veritatis and philosophy takes its departure from the hermeneutic of Dasein, which, as an analytic of existence, has made fast the guiding-line for all philosophical inquiry at the point where it arises and to which it returns.”¹⁰

The hermeneutic of Dasein leads to a phenomenology of truth. The ontological difference of Dasein between how its 'self is and what it is not, is the foundation for establishing *veritas transcendentalis*. But since transcendence indicates that towards which surpassing happens, then the question is what is in Dasein that is transcending? Heidegger answers: That towards which Dasein transcends, we call the world; and we can define transcendence as Being-in-the- world. World goes to make up the unified structure of transcendence; the concept of world is called transcendental because it is part of this structure.¹¹

'Being-in-the-world' is a way in which man's (Dasein) character is defined existentially. It is the most essential aspect of man's being (Dasein). Joseph Omoregbe comments that “the human being is a being in the world, and this implies that man finds himself in the world in the midst of things, though he is essentially quite different from them”xxxx 'Being-

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in-the-world' as the transcendental characteristic of human Dasein is by the same token, the transcendental of the world which reveals itself to Dasein as the actual totality of what exists for the sake of Dasein. In other words, not only Dasein itself is transcendental, but the world in which Dasein is has transcendental characteristics within Dasein's Existence. However, if both Dasein as 'being-in-the-world' and the world itself have transcendental characteristics in their ontic and ontological foundations, then transcendence conceived as surpassing is essentially freedom: surpassing to the world is freedom itself."¹²

The ground of truth lies in Dasein's capacity to let things be what they are. When they appear, man can let these things serve as the criteria of his thoughts and conduct. By letting what reveals itself be and by letting thought conform to things, man achieves the phenomenon of truth. The capacity to do this must be the ultimate ground of truth. Hence, Heidegger concludes, truth is in essence freedom."¹³ He defines freedom as causality, but understood as the origin of reasons (Ursprung von Grund)¹⁴ and their mutual relationship as Grund (grounding) Dasein's freedom has many ways of grounding both beings and Being ; so understood, Heidegger calls grounding *Begründung* (foundation). Grounding as founding reveals beings in an order of ontical truth, and Being in an order of ontological truth. In conclusion of his understanding of grounding as the foundation for both ontical, and ontological truth"¹⁵ Heidegger says,

Thus we see that, the 'birthplace' of the principle of sufficient reason is neither in the essence of the assertion nor in its truth i.e. in transcendence itself. Freedom is the origin of the principle of sufficient reason for founding, expressing itself as ontological truth, is

grounding in freedom, the unity of out stripping and deprivation.¹⁶

But for Heidegger, this freedom is not something which man possesses. Rather, it is something which possesses man: « Freedom, so understood as the letting-be of what-is, fulfils and perfects the nature of truth in the sense that truth is the unconcealment and revelation of what-is.»¹⁷ Now let us see truth as unconcealment.

Truth and Unconcealment

Heidegger sought to grasp anew the concept of truth by a decisive point of departure, namely the interpretation he has given to the Greek work for truth, the word 'aletheia' 'Lethe' means: hiddenness, concealment, coveredness, veiledness, and 'a' means 'privation', in translation, truth as 'aletheia' means un-hiddenness, un-concealment, discovery, disclosure, revelation. Truth, then is basically an un-covering of what-is; uncovering of that 'what-is' means letting-be of being as it is, allowing to-be in its right way of being. Allowing something to be in its right way of being is nothing else but leaving it free as it is in itself i.e. freedom¹⁸.

Thus, truth is an existential dimension of Dasein. Being-true as Being-Uncovering, is a way of Being for Dasein¹⁹. Heidegger analyzes the phenomenon of truth as an un-covering of Dasein's being-in-the-world; uncovering is a way of being for being-in-the-world²⁰. By uncovering Dasein is in the truth²¹. In view of the identity between truth and Dasein, truth is not disposed by man but man is disposed by truth.

Therefore truth as unconcealment means that there is not at the outset a situation of some sort of knowledge from which one then begins unrestrictedly to build knowledge and acquire truth. Rather, at the outset there is the situation concealment and one must wrest the truth from it in an explicit exertion.

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One must rend the veil from truth. This holds both for the truth about external things and for the inner truthfulness of the man himself. Heidegger speaks of the error in which man always finds himself and which belongs to the inner constitution of this Dasein. Thus, the real opposite of truth is not lie. The lie is secondary: there must first be a truth before one can consciously hide it in a lie. The real opposite of truth is the deceptive appearance whose indeterminateness like a thick fog, hides the true essence of things. To such deceptive appearance belongs what Heidegger has called the world of chatter and ambiguity ^everything is understood in an approximate manner such that absolutely nothing is doubtful. The path to truth therefore, consists in conquering deceptive appearance.

The question we may ask is, does a disclosure of the truth consists merely in removing the Veil from a truth is complete already or whether this truth is not itself created, or at least co-created in this process of disclosure? Again the truth something finished and needing only to be evoked or is the truth created, or at least modified, and thereby enlarged in this very process of evocation? These are the questions we are led to ask by Heidegger's concept of truth as unconcealment and we know that it is not just a matter of another characterization of the word truth or of an ingenious etymology, but that here the essence of truth is grasp in a new way - *Die Wahrheit gehoert zum wesen Des Seins* - truth belongs to the essence of being

Evaluation and Conclusion

When one attempts to examine the notion of truth But Heidegger's approach is radically different. He speaks from within Being out of the experience (aus der Erfahrung) of Being. His words are not propositions or assertions about Being. His whole approach is to listen, to hear, to be touched

by Being. It does not in the end depend on concepts (Vorstellungen) but on a deeper experience of Being. For him Being is experientially encountered and it is from this standpoint that he speaks of it as a rising upon into presence, an emergence into the light (phos, phainomenon), a surging up into the clear (Lichtung). From Heidegger's standpoint Being is truth.

It is sufficient to point out that Heidegger contributed to solving the perennial problem of truth. However truth is one of those philosophical questions which will always disquiet mankind without finding a definite answer. I feel actually that in point of fact, that it is Heidegger's failure to distinguish between various levels of truth which allows him to assert that all truth is relative to Dasein. It seems to me that he has uprooted truth from its own domain which should be logic and tried to transplant it into that of ontology, where it cannot take root. But at the same time I duff my cap for Heidegger because if truth is only located in logic and not in Being, what takes care of truth in Human social and political plurality when engaging *with* others? This calls for further research.

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¹² The Essence of Reasons, 103.

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¹⁶ Essense of Reason, 123.

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¹⁸ Being and Time, 262.

¹⁹ Being and Time, 263.

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