

MARTIN HEIDEGGER'S PHILOSOPHY:

THE QUESTION OF "AUTHENTIC EXISTENCE" AND " MIT-SEIN"

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ملخص:

مشكلة " الكينونة وأصالتها" و " الوجود للآخرين" في فلسفة هيدجر

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل مفهوم (DASEIN) أي الوجود - هنا؛ المصطلح الذي أستعمله هيدجر، للتعبير عن الكينونة الإنسانية وذلك بإعتبارها موجودا وإعيا، والذي يسميه عبد الرحمان بدوي في كتابه "دراسات في الفلسفة الوجودية" بالآنية.

وهذا المقال يقتصر أولا على طرح مشكلتين أساسيتين في فلسفة هيدجر المعاصرة المتمثلتين في معنى "الكينونة وأصالتها"، وثانيا على معنى مصطلحه الفلسفي (MIT-SEIN) أي الوجود للآخرين في كتابه القيم "الوجود والزمان" (Being and Time - 1927).

ومن خلال دراسة فلسفة هيدجر، تبين بأن الإنتقادات التي وجهت إليه من قبل الفلاسفة لم تتفهم أو تستعوب أفكاره الغامضة التي أبتدعها في فلسفته. وعلى هذا الأساس فإن هذه المحاولة المتواضعة تبين بعض الأفكار الغامضة في فلسفة هيدجر المعقدة والمبهمة.

In this article, I would like to discuss two main points in Martin Heidegger's philosophy. First, what does Heidegger (1884 - 1976) mean by "authentic existence"? Second, what does the term "Mit-sein" mean in his thought?

Heidegger's philosophy has been the subject of many critical discussions, but Heidegger says that his philosophical ideas cannot be classified as existence philosophy. He claims that he is not concerned man's existence but he is interested in Being in its totality. Thus Heidegger's view is that philosophy must return to the truth of Being because only through a rediscovery of Being that can modern man be protected from the chaos which threatens him. Also, when discussing the question of Being, Heidegger points out that Being is indefinable. It is, in fact, a general concept and yet it is not well understood. The generality of the problem involves the exclusion of the possibility to answer the question, what is the meaning of Being? But in asking this question, this means that the answer is present in our mind and Being is present to us.

Before discussing the meaning of "authentic existence" it is better to know first what Heidegger means by "DASEIN" as a whole and as Being for death as the notion of authenticity is explicit in the idea of death. "DASEIN", that is, being-there, as an existent which is always ahead of itself, excludes the idea of

seizing it as whole. The "DASEIN " can only be completed when it dies, that is, when it stops existing. For Heidegger, death is not an experience that can be understood easily. The problem of misunderstanding what death means, remains even when we consider the death of others, since we are faced with others' death, which can never be the same as our own death. Thus, the individual cannot experience the act of dying as an other person is experiencing it. It is only when he himself is in the same position that he can really know what dying is. Because death is essentially personal, that is each individual has his own death, it is inseparable from existence, and also it is the main characteristic of existence. Therefore, when we think of death as the end of "DASEIN" , we think of it as an end which will be. In "death" is neither completed nor does it vanish. Death is a possibility which belongs to "DASEIN" since possibility involves the idea of Being, "DASEIN" might be seen as a Being that projects itself towards or for its own death.

According to Heidegger death is an expression of "DASEIN"'s supreme possibilities. Furthermore, the possibility of "DASEIN" death must involves its facticity, that is to say, since death is the expression of "DASEIN" as existence it must be related to Being -in- the world. In his book **Existentialist thought** , Ronald Grimsley points out that: **"If I am cast into the world it is in order to die there".⁽¹⁾** This relation between death and

abandonment in the world suggests a relation between death and Being - in- the world. Thus, Being -for- death express the "DASEIN"'s deepest possibility as a Being which projects itself in its abandonment for this end.

Heidegger's view point is that death as the end of "DASEIN" undetermined possibility of human existence. Because "DASEIN" sees to mask the dreadfulness of death, "authentic existence" will accept the meaning of death by anticipating it. In order to understand Being -for- death has to experience dread of death and also to conceive the foundation of freedom as the freedom -for- death. Thus, the notion of authenticity is prominent in the idea of Being for death; and the conscience as a power is a voice that calls "DASEIN" in order to escape from its imprisonment in the publicity of being-there.

When examining the cry of conscience in Heidegger's view, one is faced by three essential facts. Firstly, conscience is an appeal to the idea of possible Being (existence). Secondly, this call to be ourselves brings us into the situation of dreadfulness and makes us confront our existence as "abandoned" beings that is facticity. Thirdly, in seeking to flee from the implications of this situation by losing ourselves, in a concern for the world (fallenness). These three components were the constituents of care. Thus Heidegger thinks that the conscience may be described as the voice of care.

According to Heidegger, the reply which the call seeks that to evoke is guilt; that is to say, the idea of having failed to fulfill a "moral" obligation. At the level of "authentic existence", guilt is not related to objective gap but rather to the nullity of my own existence as "DASEIN". Thus, guilt refers to the fundamental structure of "DASEIN" that is to the existence that I am the nullity of which I am guilty is an aspect of my existence for which I am responsible, something which I bring into Being. Hence, it is related to the idea of myself as existence. Furthermore, our existence as beings constitutes limitation, that is a kind of nullity which is imposed by our condition. Similarly, our authentic possibilities are limited by our existential condition, in other word by death. In willing these possibilities we become authentic which helps in order to create our nullity thus we are guilty when we are considered to be free and we are guilty because we are finite. The situation becomes worse when we cannot overcome this finitude.

Thus, the "authentic existence" is then attained by being guilty, that is by accepting this existence as it is. Therefore the call of conscience is then not related to the idea of faults but is a fundamental aspect of the human nature which makes these faults. Since man accepts and lives his guilt, he comprehends it. So comprehension is involved in the "DASEIN" as a form of being which is aware of itself as guilty and reveals itself as possibility. This awareness and comprehension leads "DASEIN" to feel its

loneliness as abandoned Being; because conscience makes him ready for dread. For Heidegger, the "DASEIN" is revealed as the will to have conscience, to comprehend and to use language. This is what he calls resolve and this resolve which replies to the call of conscience is the testimony of authenticity. The resolve existence is the existence which projects itself in silence and anticipates dread, comprehends and accepts its own guilt:

"DASEIN" is constantly in action. This inner determination transforms every situation into a means of self-realisation. Since the authentic resolute existence is always to achieve the combination of the willed and the imposed, and the particular concern and universal attitude, it is prevented from falling into the routine. "Authentic existence" is not a state that has been achieved once and for all because it is constantly renewed by striving; without this striving, the "DASEIN" and the tendency to fall entrap every one who fails to unite resolve, conscience, and guilt into the totality of care.

The self of every day "DASEIN" is the "they self". Heidegger distinguishes between authentic and inauthentic condition of human life. Inauthentic "DASEIN" lives not as itself but as "they" live. In "authentic existence", we are always afraid of an other individual's idea and opinion, and we fear failure in order to achieve a good standard before doing anything and experiencing our ability. In his book **Heidegger**, George Steiner thinks that:

"DASEIN" is also grounded in language that is the intelligibility of being-in- the- world express itself and can only express itself in discourse"⁽²⁾. Therefore, this authentic language is what Heidegger calls "Rede" which George Steiner thinks of as "the speech of "DASEIN".

For better understanding what Heidegger means by inauthenticity and the falling of "DASEIN" into inauthenticity it is useful to quote Heidegger's explanation:

DASEIN has, in the first instance, fallen away from itself as an authentic potentiality for Being its Self, and has fallen into the "World". "Fallenness" into the "World" means an absorption in Being -with-one- another, in so far as the latter is guided by idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity ... On no account, however, do the terms "inauthentic" and "non-authentic" signify "really not", as if in this mode of Being, Dasein were altogether to lose its Being. "Inauthenticity" does not mean anything like Being-no-longer-in-the-world, but amounts rather to a quite distinctive kind of Being -in-the-world- the kind which is completely fascinated by the "world" and by the Dasein-with of Others in the "they". Not-Being-itself functions as a positive possibility of that entity which, in its essential concern, is absorbed in a world. This kind of not-Being has to be conceived as that kind of Being which is closest to Dasein and in which Dasein maintains itself for the most part.⁽³⁾

According to Heidegger "DASEIN" is always "DASEIN" with and a being -in- the world in which human being has been thrown, thus inauthenticity and fallenness are characteristic of

existence. Falling is existentially determinative, and it is inevitable. It characterizes any involvement with others and with the physical world. Without inauthenticity "theyness", and "talk", "DASEIN" is not made aware of its loss of self, and then cannot strive to return to authentic Being. Through inauthenticity of its Being in the world, "DASEIN" attempted to seek the authentic, as Heidegger puts it: **"Authentic existence is not something which floats above falling every -dayness. Existentially, it is only a modified way in which such every dayness is seized upon"**⁽⁴⁾.

For Heidegger, Beings is inseparable from temporality, that is to say, outside time, existence can have no sense; because it can neither be experienced nor thought meaning fully. Through care, the existential mode, Being grasps its own location and implication in the world. Thus, care is defined by Heidegger as follows:

Care is always concern and solicitude, even if only privatively. In willing, an entity which is understood - that is, one which has been projected upon its possibility- gets seized upon, either as something with which one may concern oneself, or as something which is to be brought into its Being through solicitude.⁽⁵⁾

According to George Steiner's writings on Heidegger's philosophy, however, careful and deep is our apprehension of the death of others, we cannot experience death of an other human being as he does. Each individual has his own death and he experiences it alone. It may well seem that it is a bit stranger to

think about "authentic existence" as being towards death. One might think about a healthy existence not a pathological one. Also, not about an existence characterized by death obsessions and portentous fatality. Thus, in his pessimism, Heidegger seems to be influenced by a number of philosophers like Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), Auguste Comte (1789-1857), Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), and Søren Kierkegaard's insistence, (1813-1855), on the centrality and utter solitude of a human being's death. Further for many reasons, it appeared that Heidegger refuses to see death as an event because he focuses on the dialectical oneness of existence, and the ending emerges from the whole construct of **"Being and Time"** (1927).

Now let us discuss the term "Mit-sein" in Heidegger's thought. For Him, "Mit-sein" presupposes a combination of the existence of "x" for "y", and the existence of "y" for "x". The term "Mit-sein" has been the subject of many critical discussions. However, Heidegger used both terms "Mit-sein" and "being-with" interchangeably. My being is not "pure" but essentially strives towards being with the other. This is the existential foundation for all personal relations and ultimately society itself. Even if there were no others, (say I lived on my own on a desert, Island) my being would still be "being-with". That this is so would be shown by my loneliness. For instance, I see the other as: first, like myself in some respects. Second, different from myself in other respects.

Realizing my being as essential "being-with", I therefore realize the existence of the other.

Although Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) criticizes Heidegger's "being-with" or "Mit-sein", for not considering consciousness and negation in the definition of man's relationship to the other, he has developed his theory of Being-for-others from Heidegger's theory of "Mit-sein" others as a starting point. Indeed by looking Sartre maintains, the other rejects me as the subject that I am for myself, and sees me as an object. Here, the look is the ideal abstraction of the consciousness of the other. In his book **Being and Nothingness** (1943), Sartre thinks that: **"The essence of the relations between consciousness is not the Mit-sein it is conflict"**, ... ⁽⁶⁾ and he states that the intersubjective relationships are based on struggle.

Thus, it seems to Sartre that the concept of Heidegger's being-with (Mit-sein) is one of cooperation rather than conflict so that it does not translate clearly and distinctly the position of an individual confronting another one. Furthermore, Heidegger lacks the sense of encounter since he considers that **"our relation is not "frontal" opposition but rather an oblique interdependence"** ⁽⁷⁾ as individuals meet only through common interests or projects, but not in the way of direct encounter. In his article "Sartre and Heidegger", Michel Haar noted that Sartre distorts the Heideggerian analysis of coexistence because, he thinks, he

schematized it. But in Sartre's view, the conflict arises between me and another. This other would be the subject who creates in me the possibility of Bad Faith (*mauvaise foi*), self-deception*, which is a lying to oneself, and also which is in fact the interiorization of the other's objectification of me according to the way he defines me in this relationship. However, as the author of the article puts it **"But being- oneself is neither nonexistence nor problematic"** ⁽⁸⁾ Haar goes further arguing that for Heidegger I am not myself originally but the others, through the fact that this relation is both pre-objective and pre-subjective. For him, understanding not knowledge of the others happens at the first level. In his book **Being and Time** Heidegger claims that:

... because Dasein's Being is Being-with, its understanding of Being already implies the understanding of Others. This understanding, like any understanding, is not an acquaintance derived from knowledge about them... knowing oneself is grounded in Being-with, which understands primordially. ⁽⁹⁾

The concept of understanding has been chosen because it does not come out of acquaintance resulting from knowledge about them, as he argues that :**"When others are encountered, it is not the case that one's own subject is proximally present-at-hand and that the rest of the subjects, which are likewise occurrents,..."** ⁽¹⁰⁾

* See more information about "Bad Faith" in author's M.litt. Theses, Jean-Paul Sartre's conception of Bad Faith . (Glasgow University, 1985).

This is to say that the understanding in question appears at a stage where there is neither ego nor alter ego yet.

It appeared that Sartre sees that "Mit-sein" is insipid and alienating, collaboration destroys individuality. Indeed individuals are in conflict. He also thinks that Heidegger sees individuals as being essentially in cooperation. But Haar assumes that Sartre has misinterpreted Heidegger, for in fact, Heidegger stresses the conflict between an individual's attempt to be "authentic" and the threat of being how "they" want him to be. What can be understood from Heidegger's view point is that there is no conflict between me and an other, but there is conflict between being myself or being "they". However, Sartre claims that there is conflict between me and an other- the other sees me as X, and I can choose to reject that description, or to live it.

My conclusion, then, is both negative and positive. It is negative in that Heidegger's questions of "authentic existence" and "Mit-sein" (being-with) are ambiguous. Thus, to this extent I agree with most of thinkers who have tried to disclose Heidegger's ambiguous analysis of both terms "authentic existence" and "Mit-sein", and challenged his inconsistency. Heidegger's question of Being has been the subject of many critical discussions. However, unlike many of these critics, I have attempted in order to show that the greatest ambiguity lies in the interpretation of the "DASEIN" which is not in line with Heidegger's philosophy.

NOTES :

- 1 - Ronald Grimsly, **Existentialist thought** .

(Cardiff University, 1967, p. 63)

- 2 - George Steiner, **Heidegger**.

(London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1978), p.92.

- 3 - Martin Heidegger, **Being and Time**.

- Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward
Robinson.

(London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 220.

- 4 - Ibid, p 267 .

- 5 - Ibid, p.p. 238-9 .

- 6 - Jean- Paul Sartre, **Being and Nothingness**.

Translated by Hazel. E.Barnes.

(London: Methuen, 1969), p.267 .

- 7 - Ibid, p.246.

- 8 - Michel Haar, "Satre and Heidegger", **Jean Paul Sartre :**

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by Hugh J. Silverman and Frederick A.Elliston. (The

Harvester Press, 1980), p.p. 168 - 87 .

- 9 - Martin Heidegger , **Being and Time** . p. 161.

- 10 - Ibid , p.155.

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