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Mini Review

EXISTENCE AND BEING: A PHILOSOPHICAL VIEW

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Abstract

In the contemporary philosophy of existence which coinciding with the thought of the loss of God widely disseminated in the philosophies like that of atheism, materialism and naturalistic humanism have put a modern man into a situation of the dilemma of his existence. Some philosophers have repeatedly disavowed their association with existentialism insisting that their philosophy is primarily concerned with “being” rather than with existence. Terminologies, related to existentialist themes, as coined by like contingency, insecurity, self-extrangement and dereliction of human existence leads to ultimate meaning to temporality, historicity and authenticity has provoked to think about the thought of freedom towards death, the interrelation of ‘being’ and ‘existence’, ‘being’ and ‘truth’, ‘being’ and ‘nothing’, ‘being’ and ‘transcendence’ which ultimately might gave the thinkers the thought of ‘being’, in reality.

Keywords: Existenz; Being; Phenomenology; Hermeneutics; Dasein

Existence and Being: A Philosophical View

In the present age philosophy must be able to present a doctrine and a truth of universal validity as has been augmented by Husserl. In the quest of truth, he claims to provide an unshakable foundation for a universal science. Philosophy, according to Husserl, is not so much as science of facts as a science of essences and philosophical knowledge is not knowledge of facts but knowledge of essences.

St. Thomas Aquinas, and later on Husserl teach that truth exists objectively, independent of seeker and the knower (Reinhardt, 1952, pp.126). In the context of truth and its philosophy of ‘being’ both Husserl and St. Thomas Aquinas on some aspects while disagree on some others related to Being. St. Thomas conceives that the analytical activity of reason is both active and passive, whereas, Husserl asserts the primarily passive nature of reason. In brief St. Thomas succeeded where as Husserl failed because he included in his approach to reality, not only sense experience, but also the contents of revealed truth. In contrary Husserl’s phenomenology is a purified transcendental consciousness. The focus of Thomistic philosophy is the creation and uncreated Being of God and his relationship to the various gradations of created being.

On the basis of sense experience and side by side with it Husserl’s philosophy Heidegger, in his philosophy of existence which he wants to anchor in the new fundamental ontology, applies phenomenology and its methodological devices. The central question, therefore, of Heidegger’s

philosophy (a universal ontology, starting out from a hermeneutics of man) concerns not “existence” but “being” which reads what is Being and why is it? The same phrase had been put forward by another philosopher namely Leibniz in a very contradictory question format viz. Why is there something rather than nothing?’

Heidegger, in his philosophy of existence applies phenomenology and its methodological devices which he borrowed from Husserl. The central question, therefore, of Heidegger’s philosophy (a universal ontology, starting out from a hermeneutics of man) concerns not “existence” but “being” which reads what is Being and why is it? (Heidegger, 1973, pp. 37)

According to Heidegger’s through verbal communication to Stefan Schimanski while argument on his book entitled “*Being and Time*” that the central theme revolves around Being not around existence, but the haunting question in the mind of Steffen Schimanski is and has been not man’s existence but “being-in-totality” and “being as such”. However, Heidegger is primarily interested in ontology, not in anthropology. (Reinhardt, 1952, pp. 132)

According to Steffan Schmanski the central theme of Heidegger’s book “*Being and Time*” is existence and not Being, as argued by Heidegger and it is this fact that has led to the adoption of the term existentialism. In Heidegger’s view “existence” and ‘man in existence’ or ‘existence in man’ is merely a starting point and means for the illumination of Being as such, i.e., for the elaboration of fundamental ontology. It is his contention that the inquiry into the meaning of “Being” was the central problem.

“Being” was taken for granted: it was treated as if it was something self-evident and it is being made use of in an extremely vague manner in all human knowledge, in all statements and judgments, in all human behavior. Heidegger points out that although other things like stones, plants, and brutes certainly exist, but they lack the means to illuminate the meaning of their existence. Human life, however, differ from the life of all other existents in that it alone is and must of necessity be concerned about its Being and its potentialities. The human life alone is capable of piercing the mystery of its own existence. It alone makes genuine choices and decisions. It may gain full possession of itself and thus exist authentically or it may lose itself and disintegrate into an unauthentic form of existence. Heidegger in contradiction to other beings used the term *Dasein* means “being there” in order to describe the way man exists. Human *Dasein* “ex-sits” rather than “in-sits” that is, it does not “stand in itself” like things, plants or brutes, but it “stands out” to that boundless realm of “being” from which it receives its own meaning and which imparts to it the understanding of its own self as well as the understanding of the being of every other existent. Man alone can learn to know by insight into his own existence the absolute ontological ground of everything that is and can thus prepare himself for the humble and obedient acceptance of the mandates of “Being”. According to Heidegger human *Dasein* is furthermore “being-in-the-world” and in this respect too man’s mode of being differs essentially from the ways in which other existents are in the world. Man, as existing, is actively related to the objects and beings which surround him, and without his active insertion into the world.. Human *Dasein*, as has been stated, differs from other modes of existence in that it is always concerned about its Being and its possibilities. (Reinhardt, 1952, pp. 132-135)

Heidegger in his book, *Being and Time*, discusses “temporality” and ‘historicity’ of human *Dasein*. He asserts that philosophic thought is intimately linked to the meaning of “Being” with the phenomenon of “time” and the understanding of the ‘temporality’ of *Dasein* in its relations to the dimensions of past, present and future. This opens up the ‘horizon’ for a new interpretation of “Being”. (Reinhardt, 1952, pp. 136-37)

The genuine potentiality of Being of *Dasein* is ‘death’ and to envisage the same it is necessary to consider the way death appears in the context of everyday existence. The authentic understanding of “being-toward death restores true selfhood and it also imparts insight into the Being of fallows. However, the authentic understanding of ‘Being’ is grounded, according to Heidegger, in historicity and is transmitted in the history of civilization. “Historicity” designates the specific kind of motion or movement that occurs in human history, in contradistinction to any kind of physical and mechanical motion (Pettigrew, D. 2012, pp. 205-237).

The several essays which Heidegger has published since the appearance of the first part of his major work in 1927, are all organically related to these fundamental themes of Being and time. There is, however, an unmistakable shift of emphasis from existence to ‘Being’. Heidegger, furthermore, shows increasing interest in the interrelation of philosophy and poetry. In the essay on the Essence of Truth he describes the philosopher as “a wanderer into the neighborhood of Being”. In the context of interrelation of philosophy and literature, Heidegger was closest to that of Greece philosophical concepts, especially in the age of pre-Socratics. The man was then the guardian of being and dwelled in its intimate proximity. And this closeness to “being” is the distinguishing mark of the true philosopher and the true poet in every age. Their creative thinking has its source in the “ground of the truth of Being”. Heidegger argument that the problem of truth as such is inseparably linked with the problem of Being. The most important essay’s among Heidegger’s ones is the lecture on the nature of Metaphysics with its postscript where the philosopher analyzes the concept of ‘nothingness’ which is viewed as a metaphysical category and in its relation to the problem of ‘Being’. To pose the problem of ‘Being’ Heidegger contends, one must first have faced the problem of “nothingness”. The one specific mood in which “nothingness” is experienced is “dread”. In the lecture of Metaphysics by Heidegger, he approaches to metaphysical data the Being of the thinker is always involved and implied. He can neither step outside his own Being nor outside “Being” itself and thus achieve a scientific objective.

Heidegger concludes his inquiry into the nature of metaphysics by describing the true philosopher, as the one, who obediently and faithfully responds to “call of Being”, the one who dedicates his life to the maintenance of the truth of being. Only this attitude on the part of philosopher can succeed in kindling an identical single-minded devotion in others. The true philosopher and the true poet strive to find the word which enunciates the truth of being. And dread opening up for man the abyss of ‘nothingness’, may then cause him to listen to this word in speechless silence. For ‘nothingness is the veil of being’.

Heidegger asserts, the question as to the truth of being and the question as to the way in which man is related to the truth of being are inaccessible to metaphysics. Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, stated man is thrown into the truth of Being, so that in the existence of his *Dasein* he should be guardian of Being and in the light of Being the things that might appear in their true nature. Whether and how God, history and nature enter into the light of Being this matter is not form man to decide: he is simply called to be in all humility the “shepherded of Being”. One of the latest thinkers Friedrich Nietzsche deeply experienced the homelessness of modern man his separation from Being. It seems to Heidegger that any true “humanism” understands the humanities of man from his nearness to Being, from his “ex-static” dwelling in the neighborhood of Being, and from this “care” for and

about Being. The real meaning of “humanism” can thus only be restored by a redefinition of the term, and such a redefinition requires first of all a more genuine understanding of man’s nature and *Dasein*. (Howey, R. L. 1973 pp. 47-106)

Being of man is a being-in-the-world, as stated in Heidegger’s philosophy, it had discovered that we have degraded man to a mere this worldly creature and have thereby plunged headlong into the philosophy of positivism. It is Heidegger’s contention that in this grandiose Thomistic philosophy of order the control theme of all philosophy namely, “Being” is not made the real object of the philosophical inquiry “Being” he says in effect, is recognized in Thomism as the light that illumines with its sheen everything that is and thus makes philosophy and philosophic questioning possible, but “Being” itself is not subjected to a thorough going philosophic analysis. The “truth of Being” calls for different forms of realization and revelation, and such a task, according to Heidegger, can only be accomplished by a new “fundamental ontology”.

In Heidegger’s terminology “Being” does not signify the pure act which for Aristotle and St. Thomas describes the nature of the Being of God. ‘Being’ for Heidegger is that reality which is encountered in everything that is and which makes possible everything that is ‘Being’ is the historical evolution of this all-pervading reality toward its actual existence. If ‘being;’ were identical with God, then this deity would be a ‘becoming’ or ‘emerging’. God which is “nonsense”. In scholastic terminology, Heidegger’s ‘Being is the actuality of The Essence’. From which the individual essence issue as modi of its contingency. Although the transcendent God is not encountered in the realm of strict philosophy, ‘being’ is his image and similitude.

Sartre’s views on consciousness allowed him to reject traditional rationalistic views. The phenomenological positions related to consciousness, can turn our attention to Sartre’s ontology, i.e. his theory of being, as he exposes it in his magnum opus, Being and Nothingness. His aim is to provide the reader with as complete a description as possible of being; using the phenomenological views that he exposed earlier Transcendence of the Ego. Sartre claims—many times—that his project is not metaphysical in nature. By this, he means that he is not looking for a justification of existence or any sort of explanation as to why being is rather than not—an explanation that would lie beyond this world and this existence for metaphysics. Instead, he dismisses such questions by insisting on the fundamental contingency of everything that exists. A description of being and its different modes is both possible and necessary.

Another significant concept of Heidegger is his Being-to-death. It is the first time since Plato that death has been given central philosophical significance in the interpretation of life. One achieves authentic existence when one rises above the mundane plane which is inauthentic existence and dissociates from the average ‘they’ as Heidegger terms it.

For Heidegger, it is authentic existence which dares to face death. It is only one’s own death which is his own, an experience not shared with others (Rankin, 2014 pp. 51-55). It is then that he let go the claims of the public wins freedom and achieves authenticity. Authenticity is an important ethical concept and the relation of the individual to death is not essential aspect of it. His ‘resolve to death’ is the whole content and meaning of freedoms. Freedom is not an abstract concept but a risk, a demand, a venture.

In this paper, we examine definition of being. We see how being distinguishes from human being and discuss some particularities of the human being, such as contingency, facticity, and the situated body.

Sartre begins his treatise by indicating his rejection of any dualistic view of the world. Dualism conceives of the world as composed of two different realms. For example, Plato thought that the world we live in is an imperfect copy of the perfect world of Forms. He thought these two worlds were separate, distinct realms of being. Another example of dualism can be found in the philosophy of Descartes insofar as he regards the realms of mind and matter to be incommensurable. For his part, Sartre wants to present a view in which there are different modes of being instead of different realms of being, i.e., that there are different ways for being to be. The two most fundamental modes in Sartre’s ontology are being in-itself and being for-itself. With regards to being in-itself, we cannot say more than that the “in-itself is,” because the in-itself lies beyond our experience of it, our being conscious of it. While consciousness is conscious of being, it does not reach being; rather it encounters a phenomenon of its own making. What is unveiled through our conscious grasp of being is a world supported by being, of which we can say nothing but that it is. Being in-itself is said to be trans-phenomenal, i.e., it lies beyond the phenomenal experience of humans. This is why Sartre defines ontology as “the description of the phenomenon of being as it manifests itself” (Sartre, 1957, pp. 07). All that the human being can hope to describe is this being as phenomenon, and not the being in-itself that lies beyond it, beyond our experience. The ontological inquiry presented by Sartre in Being and Nothingness is thus tainted by the intentionality of consciousness presented in earlier works. It must, therefore, be a “phenomenological ontology.”

Given this, all one can say is: “Being is: Being is in-itself. Being is what it is” (Sartre, 1957, pp. 29). This definition allows us to infer a few things about Being. First, being in-itself is full of itself; it is a fullness of being without any lack. The world of differences, categories, objects, space, and time is the world of phenomena for consciousness. It is consciousness that introduces such distinctions, and thus generates a world. Being-in-itself, however, remains unaffected by this. It is what it is. It is timeless and changeless.

How does Sartre determine the existence of being in-itself when all we have access to as intentional consciousnesses

are phenomena? As he explains, the fact that these phenomena happen is sufficient proof that there is an in-itself. Refuting Berkeley's idealist view that "to be is to be perceived," Sartre takes the appearance of phenomena as an indication that there is a being in-itself behind it. Further, the very nature of consciousness is taken as a proof that there exists an in-itself. Consciousness exists only as conscious of something. As such, there has to be a being of which it can be conscious in order for it to exist. Sartre says: "If you were to take the world away from consciousness, it would no longer be consciousness of anything, therefore no longer consciousness at all". Sartre refutes the charge that his conception of being is dualistic, saying that being for-itself exists only because there is a being in-itself. They are intertwined and necessitate each other.

In contrast to being in-itself, being for-itself is the being that "is what it is not and is not what it is". This famous Sartrean formula, repeated many times throughout the treatise, summarizes what the existence of consciousness is. Being for-itself is the mode of being of consciousness, i.e. of the human being. The human being; is in the mode of the for-itself. When Sartre uses the term "for-itself", he is referring to the human being. He says that the for-itself is none other than the nothingness that encounters Being. The for-itself, the human being, i.e., consciousness, is conceived of as a nothingness of Being, as a lack of Being. Indeed, intentional consciousness is initially empty, a void that is filled through its consciousness of the world. Consciousness is that by which negation comes to the world.

In fact the term consciousness introduces negation in the world. It is not fully itself, and this distance from itself allows it to form projects as well as to be free from determinations, i.e., to move ahead in the future. It is freedom that allows us to back away from the fullness of being. As Sartre says: "Freedom is the human being putting his past out of play by secreting his own nothingness" (Sartre, 1957, pp. 64). Indeed, as a free being, the possibilities are merely possible; one is not bound by them.

The for-itself is a being in a situation that has a certain grasp on the world and shapes itself through it. Sartre says that the for-itself is a project; it is constantly making itself. Being a nothingness and a nihilating being, the for-itself is not determined and is hence free to become through its actions. It can freely break from its past or even from social or historical conditioning and affirm itself through its actions. This freedom that the for-itself has however, generates anguish, an anguish that is so powerful that one will be tempted to flee it by engaging in bad faith.

Marcel has successfully discussed the concept of 'Being'. The best approach to being is through man's ontological exigency, the exigency for being. This exigency is not, he claims, simply a desire or vague aspiration; it is "a deep

rooted interior urge", even an "appeal", for being. He characterizes this exigency as an urge, "...An exhaustive analysis bearing on the data of experience and aiming to reduce them step by step to elements devoid of significant values" (Marcel, 1949, pp. 15). Being has close association with intrinsic value, (that is, value not simply due to man's choices), values which, when experienced announce that everything cannot be "reduced to a play of successive appearances which are inconsistent with each other or in the words of Shakespeare, to "a tale told by an idiot." (Marcel, 1949, pp. 14)

Heidegger, he left one question unanswered how 'Being' is related to "nothingness" and of the two which is the ultimate ground of existence. From Heidegger's point of view, it seems that what appears first as "nothingness" is ultimately revealed as "Being" and all existence are ultimately grounded in that immense realm of "Being" which reveals itself behind the veil of nothingness and which restores to man all things and beings, including his own authentic *Dasein*. But in this present age of modernization the total abandonment ring puts a final appeal to man's freedom where he may definitively choose either the powers of this world, as an immoral substitute for the real ground of his being or he may regain his selfhood by striking roots again in the Being of the living God.

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