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The Heideggerian Ontology and The Exposure of The Being in the "Poetic Dwelling"

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Abstract: *The Heideggerian metaphysical ontology aims, above all, to reconceptualise the relationship between Being and being and to relate this founding corellation to human existence. For Heideggarian analysis, the authentic school of thought of the ancient Greeks has been forgotten, discarded, with this very act, itself, being silenced. Thus, the initial concept of Being, as thought up by Plato or the pre-Socratic philosophers, was replaced with that of being, resulting in the confusion of the two. Therefore, for more than two thousand years, the tradition of Western philosophy would discuss Being, but in reality the concept at stake was that of being. The Being, as a primordial reality without which absolutely nothing can be thought and uttered, not even Nothingness itself, was excluded from the exercise of meditation, being confused with beings, with ephemeral existences, be they material or animated. While looking for answers regarding the inquiry into the nature of Being, beings were wrongly looked at. But the Being continued to manifest its luminosity, in the sense evoked by Heideggerian metaphysics, especially around man, the only being of a special type, located in the opening of the Being, (Da-Sein) which can be reoriented from beings to Being, becoming, according to Heidegger, the shepherd of Being. Only in this way does he realize that his existence is a poetic one, that is, open to the non-hiding of the Being, in the sense of Heideggerian terminology. What is this type of poetic universally-human existence, so that it does not belong only to the poet, why was it forgotten along with the Being and what danger threatens modern man through this forgetfulness evoked by Heidegger? This article aims to capture some aspects of the conceptual area of these topics.*

Keywords: *Being; beings; Da-sein; ontic; dwelling; poetry; utterance; Hölderlin.*

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Poetic dwelling as a universally human act. Premises.

As Whitehead (2020) said, "human experiences of love, autonomy, and morality" should not be "reductible to neurological phenomena, definitively solving the problem(s) of meaning and existence". He argues that

> "neuropsychiatry and neuroexistentialism are not the solution; neuroscience and the objects it studies cannot reach existence or being […]. *Clinical psychology and psychiatry must not be replaced with applied neuroscience*. Instead, help can be found in the careful examination of human existentials, the unique structures that belong to existence. This requires the existential phenomenological hermeneutics of German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) which has in recent years been fruitfully applied to psychiatry (Aho, 2019), health psychology (Whitehead, 2019) and medicine (Aho, 2018)."

So, for example, regarding the synesthesia of poetic contemplation states and experiences, we will not attempt any analysis from the perspective of health conditions, but we will try a rendering as close as possible to the Heideggerian interpretation.

Heidegger admitted to the metaphysical dimension of poetry and argued that the hermeneutic approach to poetic thinking must stern from the premise of contemplative *listening*. Thus, an authentically contemplative endeavor cannot be fulfilled through the simple act of analytic *hearing*, but the effort of *listening* is needed. The affective splendor of romanticism, melancholy or the sensitive modulations of nostalgia may also be considered experiences which the poet thinks man has abandoned. As for the poetic state itself, it seems to be absolutely rejected under the accusation of dreaming and dangerous non-realism. And yet, Heidegger warns, the poet says none of these. On the contrary, in an incomprehensible manner at first, he offers a subverted answer, contrary to expectations. Thus, he confesses "*...yet, man poetically dwells on earth*…". Therefore, if we pursue the Heideggerian suggestion and we *listen* to the poet's message, we will notice that he conveys it is not he who has a special destiny or poetic dwelling in the world, but each man could live poetically. Particularizing the poetic work of Holderlin, from which he takes for interpretation multiple passages, among which the verse… *man poetically dwells*…, Heidegger wondered how such a statement could be real (Heidegger, 1995, pp. 199-200). Quotidian existence seems to radically contradict it. Mundane people are caught up in

the social dynamics of the impersonal *one*. Thus, we will say "we go to work every day because that is how *one* goes to work, we dress or act a certain way in society because *one* dresses and acts a certain way". This impersonal *one* seems to be the undisputed dictator of our perennial lives, of our mode of existing, thinking and affectively interacting (Heidegger, 2003, pp. 173-175). The housing crisis, evoked as an example by Heidegger, indicates the fact that the modern world's man is in search of a safe place, a shelter to provide him with the much longed for comfort and peace. Such states he cannot attain in this pursuit of the existential balance provided by a safe and peaceful living, steady for a long time. There are always other goals, other demands, other mobilities which arise, through which the modern or postmodern man must change the location and horizon of his interactions. He builds to reside, hopes for edifications which will ensure his durability and existential stability. But, Heidegger finds, the poet seems to not take into consideration all these realities. Or maybe he had understood them better than the city's man? Thus, despite the seemingly incontestable evidence, poetic utterance conveys that each man ultimately lives poetically, therefore not pragmatically, anchored to the last depths of his conscience in the empiricism of daily life. What is more, after poetic meditation, we don't build to live, but we live to build. Then, if living is of the poetic order, what can be built from such a living?

The specifics of poetic dwelling

The contemporary discourse on poetry gravitates around a simple and precise statement: poetry is a literary species and its place is well crystalized in the history of literature. Heidegger wondered: if we accept this comforting and superficial definition, then how can we say that man dwells *poetically*? What link could there be between the understanding of poetry as a literary species and this dwelling, apparently conceptually strange? But does the poet refer to poetry regarded as just a trend in the history of literature, or is he talking about a state, an existential dimension where the rigors of science and analytic research are inoperable, incapable of formal quantifications and definitions? It seems that only through accepting the interpretation of poetry as an existential state in which the Being reveals itself, could we meditate on man's poetic dwelling. As Heidegger observes, what can, however, be more incompatible than poetic dwelling and poetic creation? Most often, when one discusses poets, they are considered as examples of brooding consciences, separated from any evidence of reality. These human presences are regarded as incompatible with the pragmatism

of both the past and modern world and are regarded as sources of an excessive and delusional romanticism. The creation and existence of poets is often judged as a revelation of some inability of adapting to the empiric ordinary. The question *what are poets good for?* reveals itself here in the wholeness of its arguments.

Thus, poets are the ones accused of their inability of living and fulfilling themselves in the middle of human stronghold, they suffer from the lack of a solidity of living. Then how can one state that all men live, after all, *poetically*? In their dream-dominated existence, poets can only make up fantasies which are not connected to the dimensions of spatial-temporal reality, firm and incontestable both logically and perceptually. Furthermore, it would be hard to believe that the ordinary man, who pragmatically follows the schedules of his social activity, could live and, thus, create poetically. Heidegger warns that we are wrong when we tend to judge the concepts of living and building in their commonly used sense. The poet's utterance, which Heidegger considers synonymous with Holderlin's poetry when he evokes it, does not actually refer to the concept of living in the sense of being in possession or ownership of a location (Heidegger, 1995, pp. 200-201). In the same sense, building, evoked by the poet, is something else than the actual activity of erecting buildings, albeit destined for institutions or for members of the community. The poetic logic reverses the causal link between building and living or dwelling, in the sense that, in the paradigm of poetic contemplation, man does not build to live, but instead he lives to build. What exactly can be built from this poetic living? We will state, firstly, that the poet lives in the dimension of his poetry, in his poetic universe (Heidegger, 2000, pp. 113-114). But to live in such an idealistic location, he must first build it. The causal link seems to work here in the traditional way, as one can see in the case of human society: man builds so that he can then live in what he has built. Therefore, the poet creates poetry so that, afterwards, his conscience can lay in the rhythm and paradigm of this construction. But how did the poet come to build his poetry with its universe of splendors and metaphysical significances? Was it not precisely because he was already dwelling in a state of poetic inspiration and living? And only from this living does he embark on the construction of poetry.

The poetic listening of the language as letting it be

Such a construction can only be inaugurated through the essential aid of *language*. Heidegger ascertained, in this context, that our ordinary world, this society reestablished on knowledge and information flow,

portrays the picture of a linguistic chromatism possibly more active than ever. The interaction between the diverse languages used by the world's peoples, the way in which they intertwine semiotically and semantically through the efficacy of constant translations are characteristic elements for the incontestable progress of modern man. He seems to overcome communication barriers represented in the past by the clearcut distinction of spoken languages active worldwide. Language seems now to be forever placed in the service of man and his evolutions. But has language not become a mere tool, a trivial utensil which *indicates* but no longer *names*, exactly in this way? Is language not hiding, more precisely, revoking its function and primordial purpose, of showing the Being which sustains and allows for the existence of all beings, exactly through its destruction, this attempt at forcefully integrating it into the paradigm of the Da-sein, of modern man? Heidegger considers that we are witnessing a process of technical submission of language, an attempt at turning it into a machine, the result being its use as a medium, an appendix which sustains the dynamic life and communication of modern man. In reality, with the oblivion of the fundamental purpose of language, the oblivion of the Being has also been accelerated, the emphasis being placed on the exploiting knowledge and control of beings. The language must be allowed to name and reveal the Being, but this can only happen through taking accountability of an ontic reversion: it is not the human conscience that must control the language, but the language must control and guide the human conscience. This conceptually existentialist departure, which Heidegger designates as letting language be, implies that the language be *listened to* and followed in its revelatory influence. The one most suited for listening to it as such is *the poet*. Through poetry, language becomes again a spiritual instance which takes human conscience into possession and reintegrates it into the luminosity of the Being, placing it close, once more, to the proximity of its glow. It is true that the Being, as its most general possible concept, entails and envelops the entirety of all beings, but, like the solar star, which supports the entire planetary system, it will shine much more brightly on the planets closer to its incandescent presence. Thus, the poet would be the conscience situated in the opening of the Being's luminosity, in its shining proximity. Therefore, through poetry, that is, through letting language be, the Being reveals itself, without eclipsing beings, but on the contrary, exposing their authentic names and purposes (Heidegger, 1995, pp. 200-202). From this perspective, the poet and poetry would be the most privileged realities with regard to the truth of Being, people being obliged to acknowledge this fact and give credit

to the primordial role of the authentic poet in the past but, most importantly, present destiny of humanity.

Dimension and Measuring in the poetic topos of the Da-sein

And yet, reiterates Heidegger, Holderlin's verses do not tell us that the poet would be a privileged person, capable, through his own creation, of putting back into operation the authentic role of language and reveal, as such, the wholeness of Being. These verses say that "*Full of merits, and yet poetically, does man dwell on this earth*…". The central metaphysical matter remains, namely the possible warning that it is not the poet, but *any man*, regardless of his moral and gnoseological state, who is full of the *merits* of existence and *dwells poetically*. Does this formulation, however, mean that each man could be a poet, or that he holds the ability of being a creator of poetry? Holderlin's verses, Heidegger ascertains, do not indicate such an analytical positioning. In fact, they do not tell us anything about the possibility that any man could be a poet or an authentic consumer of poetry. They tell us that the *dwelling* of man on earth is poetic. *Full of merits* is the man who holds this enigmatic dwelling. What are these *merits*? Heidegger identifies them as three important concerns, namely the protection of the natural environment, architectural projection and erection of buildings and the development of tools, from the simplest to complex machinery. But these merits cannot represent the essence of poetic dwelling, the basis of this type of primordial ontic living, they are only the natural results of it. For this reason, Holderlin mentions them as secondary elements which follow the reality of living poetically. But the essence of this poetic dwelling does not seem to be indicated by the poet. And yet, considers Heidegger, it is not only indicated, but also precisely revealed, through the word *earth*, a term whose presence is apparently not justified in the entirety of the cited verses. Thus, mentioning the fact that *man dwells* should not be doubled by the specification *on this earth*. It is implied that man can dwell, in his ample, both historical and individual evolution, only on this earth, technology not allowing yet the colonization of other planets. However, Heidegger states, the introduction of the term *on this earth* does not target a tautologic indication, on the contrary, it allows the consideration of the real dwelling of man (Heidegger, 1995, pp. 204-205), namely life *on earth* and *under the sky*, between the time and ephemerality of mortals and the eternity of unknown gods (Biemel, 1996, p. 179).

Heidegger introduced two new metaphysical concepts with a hermeneutical purpose, namely *Dimension* and *Measuring*. Thus, the

Heideggerian interpretation of the ontic vision proposed by Holderlin's verses brings into question the postulation of Dimension as an open interval between the sky and the earth, where mortals live the drama of their positioning in time but also the permanent momentum towards un-hiding eternity. As such, they are under the sky and on earth, that is, in the Dimension of Being which hides behind the beings it supports and carries in the flow of their ephemerality. But mortals are not called to a full accession in connection with the dynamic of beings swiped in time and, as such, temporalized. On the contrary, they are given the chance of vertical existential projection on the level of knowledge as well, the privilege of including conscience on an axis which does not entail the horizontal layer of the reunion of the past and future, but the ascent from being situated on earth and under the sky towards the eternity of immortals, as Horderlin states, hermeneutically resumed by Heidegger. The destiny of mortals is then that of *Measuring*, a measurement which evaluates the distance between beings and Being, the distance which separates but also reunites ephemerality and eternity. The Da-sein reveals, as such, its positioning between Being and beings, the special ontic situation it holds, being placed in the opening of the Being's light as a revelatory mirror of it, but also as the factor which measures the Dimension interposed between temporality and eternity, between what the poet calls immortals and mortals. Heidegger will emphasize the fact that this act of measuring is not only a simple evaluation of some spiritual, ontic and gnoseological distances, but it represents the approach through which human conscience can evolve, can overcome itself and its fragile condition. Thus, man not only *measures* Dimension, he measures himself against immortals and eternity, tries to compare himself with the perfection of the Divine, hopes to liken his unique being to their absoluteness (Schwieler & Magrini, 2018, p. 84).

The conceptual triad god-unknown-poet

This wish also entails a dangerous aspect, that of out-of-control *technique*, of technological progress which acquires autonomy, extends itself without the control of human rationality and can change humanity's dream of evolution into a nightmare of self-destruction, the project of submitting nature's primordial energies failing into a dehumanized world. According to the Heideggerian expression, the heart of nature *which dwells hidden in the holy twilight* remains unfound by the thought which only seeks its use as a handy tool (Babich, 2006, pp. 197-198). In this context, man no longer compares himself to the Being, he is no longer an authentic measurer of Dimension

and a *shepherd of Being*, he becomes a destroyer of worlds and a prisoner of the multiplicities of being. But, as Holderlin evokes, where the *danger* of man's error appears, or the Danger, as Heidegger describes it, there also lay the signs of his redemption, of his return to the Being (Cooper, 2020, p. 47). Man is and remains part of his true destiny when he lives poetically, that is, when he measures the Dimension and measures himself to the Being and the Immortals. Holderlin states that man lives poetically on this earth referring, this way, to the authentic *Man*, to what man must be. The morally decayed one still holds the possibility of ascending to the Being and to the act of measuring the Dimension, and he poetically dwells on earth, but the expression and luminosity of the Being are eclipsed in his conscience by the oblivion imposed through the blockage of the conscience on the inferior level of its primary instincts. From these instincts, man cannot fulfill his role as shepherd of the Being, and his poetic living is completely overlooked. But who is the poet from this perspective? What more can the existence and purpose of his destiny hold, compared to the poetic living of each man? If man lives poetically, that is he *measures the Dimension* which unites the sky and the earth, eternity and ephemerality, immortals and mortals, then the poet is the great witness and contemplator of this process, the one who reveals it fully and utters it with the name of the Being (Heidegger, 1995, pp. 208-214).

His dwelling is in fact a positioning, from the start, in the shining opening of the Being, not only with the purpose of reflecting it, but, firstly, with the mission of *naming* it through poetic construction, and thus, on the scale of the dynamics of his contemplative conscience, he lives to build. Heidegger introduces, in this context, the conceptual triad *god-unknown-poet*. It is the diagram of a hermeneutic further study through which he tries capturing the role conferred by Holderlin, as an exponent of poetic living, to the man placed from the start inside poetic living. The unknown could represent, Heidegger states, the primary background which envelopes and unites everything under the sky. Essentially, it could be the hiding state of the Being which, as a matter of fact, reveals itself as a state of hiding, that is, as a mystery. The god does not have access to this mystery of the Being, as Holderlin's verses state, resumed afterwards by the Heideggerian analysis, or maybe it is gifted only to the creative knowledge and perseverance of man. But what kind of edification and research do these accounts refer to? Of course, to the poetic creation and thinking developed through poetic living. Therefore, it seems that the poet would be the most privileged when it comes to ascending knowledge of this *Unknown*, towards the engulfing mystery of the Being. But, according to what has already been stated, each man, poetically dwelling on this earth, could access the luminous mystery of

Being by becoming an exponent of it. And yet, the evidence of reality continues to contradict such an optimistic view. No clue could reveal a tendency of the spatial-temporal man, the Da-sein, to return to the metaphysical mystery and luminosity of Being, from the inexhaustible compound of beings. But in this whole extent of its pragmatic existence in the middle of society, man does not live nor build authentically, instead he lives in the world of imperfect copies, evoked by Plato, in the cave of illusions and shadows generated constantly by the universe of beings (Platon, 1986, p. 312), away from the truth perceived as a *state of un-hiding*, as *aletheia* (Heidegger, 1988, p. 184). The truth is within his reach but is not accessed, poetic living still carries it but it is not activated in the entirety of its effects. For this resurrective shock, in which the Da-sein would reorient itself towards Being and would become an exponent of it, relating to the model offered by the poet and his creation is necessary. He, first and foremost, measures the ontic Dimension of the world which exists between the sky and the earth, between immortals and mortals, he measures himself against the eternity and luminous exposure of Being and, through this endeavor, lets the unknown of Being express itself through his verses. As such, Heidegger mentions, man only lives *authentically* as long as his entire activity falls within the protection and prosperity of his own family and property, as long as he is a cultivator of that which is offered by nature and a builder of dwellings for institutions and for his fellows with the status of citizens, that is, of people of the stronghold.

Man builds *authentically* when he lives *authentically*, when he takes full responsibility of this authentic dwelling, which is poetic dwelling. With a view to the accomplishment of this duality of living and building which he is meant for, he must consider the ontic measure of the Dimension of the spatial-temporal world, situated between the earth and the sky. Why does this not happen? Heidegger stresses, in this context, that modern man is characterized by a non-poetic living. In fact, this statement does not oppose the affirmation that man lives poetically on this earth, on the contrary, it confirms it. In order to live non-poetically one must first live the experience of poetic dwelling or, even more, to maintain this type of living but *as a possibility*, reclusive, suspended in its full effects. Blinding, explains Heidegger, can only be a real fact when related to seeing. The latter has been lost, or exists in others, and only in this way can it be discussed as a negative state, as a situation of lacking, of absence of an organic function (Heidegger, 1995, p. 217).

The risks of non-poetic dwelling and the return towards the Being through benevolence. Updates.

The ontic normality of poetic dwelling through which man measures the Dimension which reunites eternity with time and reveals himself as a protector of Being is not, therefore, eliminated, but only withdrawn, hidden behind the experience of non-poetic living. Heidegger considers that it is possible that one of the important causes of this withdrawal may even be the excessive wish to measure the entire world and the Dimension between eternity and ephemerality, the rush and selfishness of modern man who transposes himself in a process of forcing life's resources, of re-regimenting in the calculations of technological progress. And the more profound this act of violence against beings is, the more the Being withdraws its luminosity and man no longer manages to attain the authentic measure of the world. This must come on its own, must arise from man's destiny, who renounces the obsession of submitting the universe through formulae and techniques of consumerist efficiency. Trying to clarify the circumstances under which man could overcome the crisis of non-poetic dwelling, Heidegger answers by reciting the next verses by Holderlin:

…As long as benevolence, Sheer,

Lives on close to the heart, man

Not to his own harm relates himself

To divinity...(77, cit. Heidegger)

Therefore, *benevolence* is indicated as the state which could bring man in the wholeness of poetic dwelling once more, in the opening of the Being, as a protector of it. Only by being dominated, in the depths of his conscience, by benevolence, by the impulse of a superior and constructive will, can man pursue his true destiny, which is that of measuring the entire universe but also of measuring himself demiurgically in relation to Divinity. But this benevolence is essentially the piety of thought, which stops, wondering, in the face of the indefinite Universe, of the Dimension and Being that the Divine utters nothing about. Holderlin's poetry, always hermeneutically approached by Heidegger in his university studies and courses (Dreyfus & Wrathall, 2002, p. 11), but also Heideggerian thinking in its entirety, focuses precisely on the lack of benevolence, of piety of the thought and action of modern man. In this context, Heideggerian analytical endeavors tackle extremely current existential problems. For our modern

times, the sign of the absence of contemplative benevolence, but also of inter-relational benevolence, represents a warning as well as a call to man's return to the Being. Whether he will take responsibility of this duty of reviving his own conscience, if he will let poetic dwelling re-embrace him, remains an enigma for the upcoming decades. The understanding and undertaking of the concept of benevolence also as a state of grace as Holderlin identified it, by interpreting the ancient Greeks, especially Sophocles, might be a possible beginning. At the dawn of western civilization, the ancient poet's voice would tell us that if man allows himself to be surrounded and borne by grace, he will attract upon his destiny even more grace (Heidegger, 1995, pp. 218-219).

> Η χάρη λοιπόν είναι αυτό που πάντα ονομάζει χάρη

Conclusions

> *Therefore, grace is that which always beckons grace.* (Sofocle, Aias, cit. Heidegger)

Heidegger resumed this thought in the modern form of his metaphysics. Thus, addressing our modern times and mentalities, he urges us not to forget that, although we have come too late for gods and too early for the Being, the darkening of the world will not touch its light because man is *the poetry of Being* (Heidegger, 1971, p. 4).

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