

DASEIN AS THE PRIMARY CONDITION FOR THE TRUTH: THE ANALYSIS OF BEING AND TIME

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Abstract – The main concern of this paper is to explore and investigate on the problem of Truth. In the history of philosophy, the problem of Truth is directly connected with that of Being. These two concepts of Being and Truth are interrelated and interchangeable. The problem of Truth begins with the misinterpretation of Being. Before Heidegger, Being has been understood as an entity, as that which is present-at-hand, that is, as that which is not self-conscious. This resulted in misinterpretation of Truth as an entity. To solve the problem of Truth, we have first to revisit the question concerning the meaning of Being. Being is neither, an essence, form nor matter as pre-Socratic, classical, medieval and modern philosophers defined it. Rather, Being is that which is self-conscious of itself, that is, it is the one who understands his being and can raise questions about his own being. This Being is not other than man who Heidegger calls Dasein. He is the only Being who exists. The existence of other entities depend on the existence of Dasein because he is the one who assigns meaning to them and they exist not for their own sake but for the sake of Dasein. Truth, however, is not only the object of knowledge but also having pre-theoretical connection with Being. Truth is a property of man. It belongs to man, because he is the only being who is able to interpret his own being through language. There was no Truth and there will be no Truth without man. Man is the one who uncovers things from their unhidden as being in a certain way and of a certain type. He is the only one who lets things open out of their hiddenness. He is like the sun which illumines things in the world. Therefore, Truth is in so far as man is and as long as man is there is Truth.

Keywords: Being, Dasein, Existence, Unconcealment, Knowledge, and Truth.

Introduction

This paper intends to investigate and explore the problem of Truth. The problem of Truth is directly connected with that of Being. These two concepts are interrelated to the extent that the problem of Truth begins with the misinterpretation of Being, that is, when Being is interpreted as an entity and not as a self-conscious thing. However, it is the aim of this paper to show how Heidegger's philosophy of Being solves the problem of Truth. It is our task to emphasize that, Truth is making manifest that which lies hidden. In other words we can say that, it is a process of disclosing, uncovering, discovering and revealing that which in some sense lies hidden. This process of disclosing, uncovering and dis-covering, or making manifest requires a pre-given context in which things are disclosed or unconcealed and *Dasein* is that pre-given context. Sreekuma Nellickappilly affirms that, "Truth is not a transcendently given reality as it has been understood during medieval and modern philosophies, but it presupposes a background of intelligibility in *Dasein*."¹ Therefore, Truth is possible if and only if there is *Dasein*. In other words, Truth is *Dasein*-related and man-bound. It is through *Dasein's* existence that Truth is disclosed. Thus, it is through the analysis of *Dasein* in the light of temporality that enables us to show how Heidegger's philosophy of Being solves the problem of Truth.

1.1 Heidegger on the Question of Being and its Forgetfulness

In philosophy and other academics arena, the question of Being takes precedence. According to Heidegger, Being has been forgotten and the forgetfulness of Being is as a result of misinterpretation made by traditional

¹ Sreekuma Nellickappilly, Chapter 35, "Martin Heidegger: the Ontology of Dasein and the Concept of Truth" (*Aspect of Western Philosophy*, 2015). 7. <https://nptel.ac.in/courses/109106051/module5/chapter35.pdf>.

metaphysics. Traditional Metaphysics takes the question of Being as something evident. Unfortunately, the problem has not been taken as a crucial question for actual investigation.² This resulted into the problem of many thinkers either to neglect or forget the real problem of philosophy. According to Kockelmans, a true philosopher is the one who takes up this problem again where the early Greeks, especially Parmenides and Heraclitus, left off.³

According to Heidegger, this concept of Being cannot be self-evident due to the fact that it is used in the most diverse meanings, therefore, it is the call of every philosopher to investigate and reexamine the question of Being in a more systematic manner. The reexamination involves the proper understanding of the question. The question presupposes the answer, due to the fact that, when someone asks the question of what Being is, it implies the presence of the pre-knowledge about the answer in the mind of the questioner. According to Heidegger, therefore, the work of philosophy is to “purify, enlarge and assign a foundation to this preliminary insight and to make sure that it eliminates its vagueness and explain the factors which have led to this vagueness.”⁴

Heidegger believes that, traditional metaphysics failed to understand the nature of Being. Being is not a thing, that is, an entity. Rather, Being has to be differentiated from those things which have being. This is evident with medieval and modern philosophers’ interpretation of the meaning of Being. Most of these philosophers have failed to provide the ontological difference between Being and those things which have being. This failure has resulted into the forgetfulness of Being. Being cannot be reduced to any being (entity), because this Being gives being to other beings. The question concerning Being cannot be answered through the analysis of the being of an entity but through interpretation of Being whose being reveals being.⁵ Therefore, the forgetfulness of Being, is responsible for the deterioration of civilization and the crisis of man in the world. In order to rescue the crisis of man we have to go back to the things themselves not metaphysically but phenomenologically because it is through phenomenology that we are able to go back and study things in themselves as they appear to us.

1.2 Human Being as *Dasein*

In the first division of *Being and Time*, Heidegger provides fundamental analysis of *Dasein*. *Dasein* is human being is the only being who is self-conscious in the world. It is the only being who can question his being and able to raise questions on other beings in general and Truth in particular. He is the only being whose existence is an issue for him.⁶ The expression that the essence of *Dasein* lies in his existence implies that the essence of man is his Being-in-the-world. He is the only being who exists in the world, the center of the world and the determinant of Truth because he is conscious of his possibilities. He is the only being who makes himself understandable in his own mode of being. The universe, nevertheless, can exist without a human being, but a universe to have meaning, there must be a human being or *Dasein* to bring sense to the entities which are mere present in the world. Other entities derive the meaning of their being from *Dasein* because he is self-conscious of his being.

Dasein’s special position in the world does not mean that he is everlasting. According to Heidegger, to be a human being means to live with expectation of death.⁷ His understanding of human being is as a result of a reaction against Cartesian conception of the subject as *res cogitans*.⁸ Overenget writes:

² Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 2.

³ Joseph J. Kockelmans, *Martin Heidegger: A First Introduction to His Philosophy*, 12.

⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 2.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 213.

⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 49.

Heidegger rejects the Cartesian subject-object dichotomy in both its subjective and objective garb. He does not see the modern shift in emphasis away from *res cogitans* to *res extensa* as any more tenable. Or less Cartesian, for that matter, than the traditional emphasis on a mental reality. Thus, Heidegger seeks to get beyond the entire dichotomy, and aims at rehabilitating the subjective perspective without resorting to the *res cogitans*.⁹

Besides, Descartes separates mind and body but Heidegger believes that there is a unity between the two because knowledge is something which is absorbed in the midst of worldly existence. He insists that Human beings do not have body but they are bodily. They are not the world but they are worldly. He does not want to separate between the perceiving and knowing subject from its concrete worldliness as traditional epistemology separates,¹⁰ therefore, Heidegger overcomes both radical individualism and Cartesian dualism.

1.3 Heidegger's Conception of Truth

We have seen that the concepts of Being and Truth are interrelated and interchangeable. It follows that philosophy can be defined as search for Truth. Although the question of Truth has been the point of discussion since the beginning of philosophy, few philosophers have been able to inquire deeply into the question of what Truth is.¹¹ Heidegger is one of the contemporary philosophers who has seriously examined and connected the question of what Being is and the question of what Truth is. In other words we, can say that the question of Being and Truth are the central themes in Heidegger's philosophical reflection. Walter Biemel, affirms that, "The core of Heidegger's questioning is two folds: it is an inquiry into Being and at the same time it is an inquiry into *aletheia*."¹² Heidegger's understanding of Truth is different from his predecessors especially the modern philosophers. He attempts to revive ancient Greeks' understanding of Truth, where by Truth is understood as *aletheia* which Heidegger understands it as unconcealment. He believes that, the abandonment of the notion of Truth as unconcealment is a result of misinterpretation of Being.

1.3.1 Heidegger's Phenomenological Interpretation of Truth

Guided by phenomenological method, Heidegger realizes that there is a need for the revisiting and revival of the Greeks' understanding of Truth as *aletheia*. The aim is to correct and criticize and the modern philosophical understanding of Truth. According to Heidegger, there is an essential difference between, Truth as correctness, agreement, correspondence and Truth as unconcealment. Plato and philosophers who came after him understood Truth as correctness, that is, a correspondence between knowledge and the object. Heidegger claims that, "All metaphysics including its opponent, positivism, speaks of the language of Plato."¹³

Heidegger believes that, the primary phenomenology of Truth has been hidden. It has been hidden due to the forgetfulness of the question of Being. As we have already pointed out, traditional philosophy interprets *Dasein* as

⁸ C. F. Botha, *Chapter 2: Being and Dasein*, 36.

⁹ Einar Overenget, "Heidegger and Arendt: Against the Imperialism of Privacy" (*Philosophy Today*, vol. 39, Issue 4, 1995), 439.

¹⁰ C. F. Botha, *Chapter 2: Being and Dasein*, 36.

¹¹ W. B. Macomber, *The Anatomy of Disillusion: Martin Heidegger's Notion of Truth* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967), 3.

¹² Walter Biemel, *Martin Heidegger: An Illustrated Study* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), 25.

¹³ Martin Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking in Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger* (Revised and Expanded Edition), Trans, D. F. Krell (London: Routledge, 1993), 444.

a thing, that is, as an entity. This resulted into the forgetfulness of the ancient Greeks' concept of *aletheia* (Truth) as an opening that lets unconcealment occurs.¹⁴ Heidegger, affirms that

At the same time, we must not overlook the fact that for the Greeks, who were the first to develop this initial understanding of being as a branch of knowledge and to bring it to dominance this primordial understanding of truth was also alive, even if pre-ontologically, and it even held its own against the concealment implicit in their ontology-at least in Aristotle.¹⁵

The purpose of Heidegger is to make *Dasein* at center of everything. For him man, is the center of the universe and the source of all Truths. His interpretation of Truth as unconcealment opens up again a new dimension of Truth that was not visible to the philosophers of modernity.¹⁶ In modern times, Truth is understood as correspondence, that is, a correctness or agreement between the intellect and the object. It is a relationship where by the intellect has to conform to the reality. In this sense, Truth is understood in terms of knowledge as a relationship between the knower and the known object, that is, a relationship between the subject and the object. According to Braithwaite, traditional theories of Truth based on the subject and object metaphysics and the distinction between ideal and real, and representation and reality engendered by that metaphysics.¹⁷ Heidegger, therefore, aims at providing phenomenological understanding of Truth as making manifest that which lies hidden, that is, to uncover the entity as it is in itself.

1.4 *Dasein* (Man) is the Primary Condition for Truth

According to Heidegger, Human existence is an essential form of Truth. In order for things to be known, there must be a light to bring them out of their concealedness.¹⁸ This light is *Dasein as Being-in-the-World*. Braithwaite admits that, "the uncovering or discovering of entities depend on the world's disclosedness, that is, the structure articulation of the world. The world is disclosed through the activity of global or communal *Dasein*."¹⁹ Sreekumar Nellickappilly also argues that:

The idea that truth is to be primarily understood as unconcealment is justified by citing the ancient Greek conception of truth, where the term for truth is *aletheia*. The Greek word *aletheia* means dis-closing, un-covering, discovering, revealing or making manifest that which in some sense lies hidden. Such process requires a pre-given context to which things are disclosed or unconcealed. Heidegger says that *Dasein* with its peculiar ontological structure is that context. It thus becomes the source of intelligibility. Therefore, truth is not transcendently given reality in his framework. It presupposes a background of intelligibility in *Dasein*.²⁰

In other words we can say that, there is Truth in so far as there is *Dasein* and as far as *Dasein* is, entities are disclosed. Heidegger claims that, "There is' truth only in so far as *Dasein* is and so long as *Dasein* is. Entities are

¹⁴ Catherine Frances Botha, *Heidegger: Technology, Truth and Language*, MA Dissertation (University of Pretoria, 2001), 50. <http://hdl.handle.net/2262/30416>.

¹⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, 207.

¹⁶ Catherine Frances Botha, *Heidegger: Technology, Truth and Language*, 50.

¹⁷ Tannis Braithwaite, *Heidegger's Analysis of Truth in Being and Time*, 87.

¹⁸ Catherine Frances Botha, *Heidegger: Technology, Truth and Language*, 51.

¹⁹ Tannis Braithwaite, *Heidegger's Analysis of Truth in Being and Time*, 100.

²⁰ Sreekumar Nellickappilly, Chapter 35, *Martin Heidegger: The Ontology of Dasein and the Concept of Truth*,

uncovered only when *Dasein*s, and only as long as *Dasein*s, are they disclosed.”²¹ Truth was neither there nor will be there if there is no *Dasein*. Heidegger insists that:

Newton’s laws, the principle of contradiction, any truth whatever-these are true only as long as *Dasein* is. Before there was *Dasein*, there was no truth; nor will there be any after *Dasein* is no more. For such a case truth as disclosedness, uncovering, uncoveredness, cannot be.²²

Furthermore, there are two senses of Truth, namely *Dasein*and entities. *Dasein* is the one who uncovers things and entities are there as unconscious beings uncovered by *Dasein*. *Dasein*s the truth in the first sense because he is that which makes this uncovering, discovering and disclosure possible. Heidegger argues that:

Being-true as Being-uncovering, is a way of Being for *Dasein*. What makes this very uncovering possible must necessarily be called ‘true’ in a still more primordial sense. *The most primordial phenomenon of Truth is first shown by the existential-ontological foundations of uncovering.*²³

The entities which depend on *Dasein* to have meanings within the world are said to be true in the second sense. Heidegger claims that:

Uncovering is a way of Being for Being-in-the-World. Circumspective concern, or even that concern in which we tarry and look at something, uncovers entities within-the-world. These entities become that which has been uncovered. They are ‘true’ in a second sense.²⁴

It is through interpretation that entities are discovered and uncovered, that is, through *Dasein*’s acts of interpretation. This activity of interpretation is always on process and it never ceases. When *Dasein* says something, he is interpreting how things are in the world. Nevertheless, the ability of *Dasein* to uncover or discover Truth is determined. It is determined by the world’s disclosedness, that is, “on the world’s showing itself to *Dasein* as having certain structure.”²⁵ It is cannot be denied the fact that, world has its own structure independent of our sense perception, activities and interest. Heidegger writes that:

It is therefore essential that *Dasein* should explicitly appropriate what has already been uncovered, defend it *against* semblance and disguise, and assure itself of its uncoveredness again and again. The uncovering of anything new is never done on the basis of having something completely hidden, but takes its departure rather from uncoveredness in the mode of semblance. Entities look as if... That is, they have, in a certain way, been uncovered already, and yet they are still disguised.²⁶

Therefore, *Dasein* as Being-in-the world, with other and in itself is the primary condition for Truth. Truth always flows out of the activities of *Dasein*. This means that, Truth to be uncovered and discovered depends on

²¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 269

²² Ibid.

²³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 263.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Tannis Braithwaite, *Heidegger’s Analysis of Truth in Being and Time*, 103.

²⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 265.

Dasein's skills, concerns, practices and purpose. Hence, Truth is possible only because there is *Dasein* and without *Dasein* there would be no Truth.

Conclusion

The study has endeavored on the problem of Truth. We have seen that the problem of truth is directly connected with that of being. The problem of Truth began when the question of Being was misinterpreted. Prior to Heidegger, human Being was understood as an entity, that is, a thing. This led to the separation of *Dasein* (man) from Truth. *Dasein* is the one who uncovers or discovers things because he is the self-conscious being who assigns meaning to other things. Therefore, truth is bringing into light that which lies hidden, and that process is made possible only by *Dasein* (man).

Recommendation

It should be understood that Truth is not only an epistemological concept but also a phenomenological concept. It is philosophically wrong when we interpret the problem of truth in relation to that of knowledge exclusively. Further, truth cannot be known if there is no conscious being to make it known. Human Being is like a sun which illuminates things and makes them known. As far as human being (*Dasein*) is, truth will always be there. Therefore, we should not separate man from truth, truth cannot exist without man, hence *Dasein* is the primary condition for the truth.

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