

**A STUDY OF THE CONCEPT OF MAN
IN HEIDEGGER'S PHILOSOPHY**

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to consider "How does Heidegger discuss the problem of having to exist as a human being?"¹ As a solution to this problem, the concept of man's existence considered by Heidegger is explained and discussed². This paper will contribute to the problem by evaluating the humanism of Heidegger from Theravada Buddhist point of view and by recommending with the Myanmar concept of "*Ye dhamma hetuppahava*" which is based on the concept of "condition or causes"³.

1. Research problem
2. Tentative solution
3. Contribution

Key words: (1) existence (2) *Ye dhamma hetuppahava* (3) condition or causes

INTRODUCTION

The topic of this paper is "A Study of the Concept of Man in Heidegger's Philosophy." It will present the existentialist, Heidegger's concept of man, who is the forerunner of existentialism because Heidegger's concept influenced the existentialist trends in philosophy to a certain degree. This paper is to solve the problem "How does Heidegger discuss the problem of having to exist as a human being?"

In fact, the term existentialism is the philosophical term. The philosophy which is carried by this term spread across the field of philosophy as well as that of literature. However, concerning this ideology, there are still criticism and pondering among those who believe in this ideology. Therefore Sartre, existentialist, himself who carried this term into philosophy stated that there was no satisfactory answer to the question, "What is existence?"

In existentialism, man is considered to be fundamental. In doing so, existence is given priority. The nineteenth century, Danish Scholar, Kierkegaard developed the basic concept of existentialism. But his existentialism was not popular then. The concept of existence, the concept of facticity and the concept of freedom which could clearly be seen in Heidegger's opinion became the basic concepts of Contemporary Existentialism. In this paper the philosophical background of Heidegger's existentialism will be presented briefly. It is recognized that Existentialism is a movement which developed keeping up with the time. It is also accepted as a concept which is based on man's personality and freedom.

The concept that only existence is the most important thing is prominent in the philosophy of Kierkegaard. Jasper and Heidegger brought out it again in the twentieth century. In this paper, only the concept of Heidegger will be presented. In presenting this concept, descriptive method and evaluative method will be applied. This paper is an attempt to evaluate the humanism of existentialism from Myanmar Buddhist point of view.

Research Problem

This paper will attempt to solve the problem "How does Heidegger discuss the problem of having to exist as a human being? "

Research Method

To solve the problem of this paper, descriptive method will be used to make literary survey and then evaluative method will be used to present the solution of the research problem in this paper.

A STUDY OF THE CONCEPT OF MAN IN HEIDEGGER'S PHILOSOPHY

Heidegger's philosophy of "*Sein* and *Zeit*" (Existence and Being) is the problem of "Being" in general. According to Heidegger, man is the only being in the world that is capable of considering the nature of being as a whole. For Heidegger, man is defined as "potential existence". This is to say that man is always transcending what he is at any given moment. He is always stretching towards the future and aiming at something which he is not yet.

According to Heidegger, furthermore, man is not a being in isolation. His existence is "existence-in-the-world", and so he is conditioned, in every mode of his thought and action, not only by the material situation in which he finds himself but also by other people in the world. Being bound up with other people is the essential mode of the existence of everyone. According to Heidegger, the being of man is "being with". Every individual and standpoint exists only against the back-ground of ways of thinking common to men as members of a social group. The group is mankind at large, and it's referred to as the "One". According to Heidegger, it is from the existence of the One as a necessary part of man's being, the distinction between authentic and inauthentic existence is derived.¹

1.1. The Concept of Individual Decision

Martin Heidegger has perceived the meaningfulness of Kierkegaard's position that man is a tragic figure in a finite world. He agreed that man must become intensely aware of his own individuality, of the specialness of his own person. According to him, man can define his existence by three traits: (1) mood (feeling), (2) understanding and (3) speech. Heidegger called these traits existentialia. For him, man can be aware of his own true identity, the essence of his existence. Heidegger also agreed that man is able to transcend the limits of the non-inquiring world and asserts his destiny.

According to Heidegger, there are two possible modes of existence. One is authentic and the other is inauthentic. These are simply two ways of living. According to

Heidegger, *Dasein* is always facing the decision between existing inauthentically and existing authentically. It always exists in one mode or the other. Authentic existence is not a grasping of some nature or essence of oneself quite different from the others. It is a matter of what one is and that one is no more than this. Inauthentic existence is a way of hiding this truth from oneself.

According to Heidegger, the group is mankind at large. It is referred to as the "One". From the existence of the "One" the distinction between authentic and inauthentic existence is derived. If one accepts himself as a kind of generalized man as totally part of the group, it is inauthentic. If one realizes one's possibilities as an individual, alone, as if one were isolated and independent then that is authentic existence.

According to Heidegger, there are no readymade absolute values for man. He has himself and can create his own values. So he can build a reality in accordance with his own needs. In so doing his life becomes authentic. But if absolute values are given to him and he passively accepts them then his life is inauthentic.

For Heidegger, man is looking forward the future but, man has been the one in a certain past situation. Heidegger uses the term facticity for this past inborn situation. Therefore, for a man, real existence depends on individual decision. A man can live in the existing life, bravely facing his facticity conditions and leading towards his future by deciding upon the present choices. According to Heidegger, a man who does not have the fixed ability is continuously changing.

He states that man is thrown into the world without his wish. He is abandoned among the established situation and events. Man comes to exist without his wish and action. He must accept this facticity whether he likes it or not. According to Heidegger, man has to carry on his life deciding upon choices which are crucial for his life. Man makes crucial decisions in his life which endangers his life and the life of others. What is required on the part of an individual is to take resolute decision.

1.2. Being-in-the-world

Heidegger uses the term "*Dasein*" meaning the mode of the existence of the human being. It also means being-in-the-world. The central problem of Heidegger is the problem of being focused in the life and existence of man. According to him human existence is engrossed in the sense of anxiety and anguish and there is fear of inevitable death. Thus absolute nothingness confronts man in this world when he has to make crucial decisions in his life.

The most typical feature of Heidegger's existentialism is his analysis of being. For him, man is thrown in this world and finds himself lost. He is faced with pure nothing. The way out of this situation is search of being. According to him, man also is that which he can become. That is, he has freedom and responsibility to transform his world and shape his own future. "Arrived from a past, moving into a future, a man must affirm the present movement for decisive action. Such resolution is the nature of an authentic human being."²

Jean Wahl in his 'Philosophy of Existence' gives a comment on Heidegger. According to Heidegger, man is characterized by the ideas of possibility and project. But one which puts an end to man is death. Death is defined by Heidegger as the possibility of impossibility or perhaps one might equally say as the impossibility of the possible. For Heidegger, it is only when man is dead that his life becomes a veritable whole. Thus the idea of boundless freedom ends in failure.

Heidegger's thought is discussed by Jean Wahl in "*Philosophy of existence*" as follows:

Heidegger's thought is influenced as much by Nietzsche as by Kierkegaard. Our fate is to live as beings limited by death; we must decide to be what we are –finite beings, limited by death. Once again freedom is submerged by a feeling of necessity. Our projects are limited by our past. The relation between projects, possibility, the future, on the one hand, and the past and the situation, on the other, raises the problem of idealism vs. realism in Heidegger's philosophy.³

According to Heidegger, the supreme possibility is the possibility of impossibility, and our freedom is overwhelmed by necessity. Heidegger is also influenced by Nietzsche. According to Heidegger, man's fate is to live as beings man is limited by death. So man is a finite being. But man must decide to be what he is. Man is free to decide and freedom is submerged by a feeling of necessity.

In an age in which the forces of nature and technology are overwhelmed it is difficult for man not to be just another thing in a world of things. The existentialists including Heidegger try to find out the role and the meaning for man to exist, to be authentic. Man developed science and through it gained power over nature that he lost balance. Man is alienated not only from nature and from other selves but even from himself. Heidegger considers this fact of alienation and how great the alienation or the estrangement of man is.

Heidegger maintains that these conditions can be understood only in the philosophical problem of being. So he undertakes a most profound and original analysis of being. For Heidegger the fundamental roots of man's problems are ontological. The basic alienation of man is alienation from being itself.

The central problem of his philosophy is the problem of being focused in the life and existence of man. He analyzes the individual man in his relation to himself, to his environment and to other man. The existence of the individual is finite and temporal. Hence the whole of human existence is permeated by a tragic anxiety or anguish by his sense of the inevitability of death.

The individual is envisaging his own death and is confronted by absolute nothingness. Heidegger asserts that man's existence is a being for death.

Heidegger also makes a distinction between dread and fear. According to him, fear always results from particular situation, while dread is our response to the world as such, to the sum total of beings. For Heidegger, dread is ever present and then dread is one's fundamental feeling.

For Heidegger nothingness is not the mere absence of existence. It is a primordial reality. Heidegger is ascribing to death a status beyond the mere non-existence of the individual. That is why Heidegger asserts that man's existence is a being for death.

Heidegger also emphasizes the element of risk in all human decision includes commitment to a philosophical position. Every decision endangers not only the individual who makes the decision but in some degree others also. That is why Heidegger defines philosophy as the endangering of being by a being.

According to Heidegger, the acceptance or rejection of a philosophical position endangers not only the philosopher himself but others because the individual is embedded in the world so that all being is affected by his philosophical commitments.

Heidegger rebels against the dehumanization of Western values and world civilization. In the twentieth century mankind might expect so much of a good civilized existence. But instead of finding it unlimited savagery and negativistic philosophies are emerging. Everywhere the individual is being lost among large mobs. The whole world is over populated, over mechanization and over organization threatens the autonomy and independence of man. In the mechanical world there is so much being done. There is so much to do externally. So man has no time for himself. There is no time for man to get to know himself and be with himself. So man is alienated. He is alienated not only from nature but from other selves and even from himself. That is what Heidegger calls alienation.

Man finds nature alien to him. He also finds other selves alien to him. Because of this alienation, man finds himself torn up from the roots. Heidegger considers how deep these roots go and how great the alienation is. Heidegger sees that the problems are deeper than the vision extended by the social scientists. Heidegger maintains that these conditions can be understood only in the context of the philosophical problem of being. Hence Heidegger tries to undertake a most profound and original analysis of being.

Heidegger convinced that the whole history of Western metaphysics had laid its foundation upon an improper base. He accused that the improper base involved a misconception about the nature of being. Heidegger asserts that being may be understood in two ways. One is that being may be viewed as a noun. Another way is that being may be comprehended as a verb. When being is viewed as a noun it designates a particular being, a thing or an object. In this sense being refers to which is definite and specific to somebody or something. This is called the notion of being. Another way of being as a verb can be comprehended not objectively but subjectively. So being may be thought as a

creature or as the being of that thing. Hence for Heidegger being designates some particular thing but it may also be taken as the act of existing of the thing.

Being can tell one about what something is or it can tell one that something is. Heidegger calls the latter being-itself and he believes that it is not easy to put this idea of being into words, because there is nothing specific or definite is involved. Here Heidegger gives an example of defining a man. He says that one may describe all the physical properties of a man and thus define him as a being. But there are no words to express the being of him. Hence Heidegger says that nouns and adjectives can express the fact that he is something. But words cannot convey that he is.

Hence for Heidegger, to get to the act of existence of the person, 'his isness', one must sheer away all objective properties until what is left is nothing. This 'isness' is the very core of one.

Heidegger explains the distinction between the two concepts *Dasseiende* and *Dassein*. '*Dasseiende*' is a being or things which have to do with the objective world out there. The latter sense of being is more to existence than that. This latter sense of being is *Dassein*. It is what Heidegger believes as the basis for a new ontology, a new fundamental philosophy. In this way, Heidegger showed the necessity for understanding existence as rooted in being.

Our tradition, Heidegger holds, has succumbed to a tendency toward *objectification*. As a result, we have taken the world to be made up of substances, things, objects; and the self or soul or mind has been understood as just another substance or thing. No wonder the crucial question seemed to be the epistemological one: whether the subject (a thinking thing, the mind) can *know* the object (a different kind of thing). Can a subject *transcend* its subjectivity and know the truth about objects existing independently of it? We have seen how Kant's Copernican revolution "solves" this problem by making the knowable objects dependent on the knowing subject, but at the price of leaving things-in-themselves unknowable. All this, Heidegger believes, is a result of our having "covered over" the phenomenon of Being. And, most crucially, it has distorted our understanding of our own Being.⁴

Heidegger analyzed being used by the ancient Greek philosophers. In Western philosophy each metaphysician has described being in terms of some specific kind of being. Heidegger says that Western philosopher describe being not in terms of 'isness'

but in terms of 'thingness'. Heidegger points out that Aristotle theorizes metaphysics as the science of being as being. But Aristotle thought of this being as if it were substance which was something definite. Hence Aristotle understood being as an analogy of a thing. Even Plato's ideas were something conceptually definite. Hence Heidegger points out that the Western philosophers describe being in terms of a thing. He says that the Western Philosophers abstracted being as things from the being of things by setting the stage for the development of science.

Heidegger gives a remark that that is why there is development of science in the Western world. Heidegger says that in the Orient, being is not conceived of on the analogy of things so that there is no such development of science. Besides, the Western tradition emphasizes objectivity and organization. Everything has to be planned and organized. Consequently people want their lives to be organized. This is interpreted as the full life. But when the arrangements are diminished people get tired of things and of doing things. Heidegger points out that when people get tired of things and of doing things they become lonely even when they are in a crowd. Hence man's crisis is philosophical at its root and nothing except philosophy can get to the heart of this crisis. That is why Heidegger does not believe in the objectivity and organization of the Western World.

Heidegger does not believe that it is necessary to take power over the world in order to have it. If one opens himself to life, nature and life become part of him. Then he becomes infused with them. He can know life by flowing with it, not by striving for power.

Heidegger is convinced that it is impossible to heal the estrangement from being if the subject-object distinction is overcome. In the West, Descartes thinks of reality as divided into mental and the physical. Hence Heidegger's basic aim is to deconstruct dualistic philosophy. He does not see the world as divided into two irreducible kinds of being: man and nature, subject and object, mind and matter.

Heidegger does not even use the word 'man' to describe man. He calls man (*Dasein*) which means 'being there'. He thinks that this concept is not conducive to thinking of man as cut off from reality.

Heidegger's primary interest lay in ontology. But it is a type of ontology that has to be built on an understanding of man rather than of the world. But Heidegger supposes that it has to understand man and what is in man can give greater insight into reality.

Heidegger strongly believes that if we are going to understand reality or being one must not do this on the basis of things that stand outside because human being has being and insight to his subjectivity. Hence his ontology is based on an understanding of the being of man rather than of anything in the world.

Heidegger regards that it is indispensable to distinguish between man and things. For him things are simply present. They have no more being than that which is openly observable. In contrast, man is not merely present. Besides, things can be understood in terms of categories. But man is not just a part of a general category. Things have functional value since they can be used. But man is not a functional creature to be used. Therefore according to Heidegger man must not interpret himself as a thing. If he interprets himself as a thing his existence become inauthentic.

According to Heidegger man must look to his own potentialities. Instead of looking to his own potentialities, if one merely is drifting through life, is living only on the surface and never reaching one's being below, man finds himself becoming part of some general category. Heidegger says that if man defines himself in terms of what one does or one's occupation he is reduced to the status of a thing to be used. Then man falls away from his true self. He becomes estranged from human potentials, living not with himself but with the crowd. Heidegger identifies this kind of man with a man who is free but who tragically has chosen to run away from the realization of himself.

Heidegger states the factors that separate man from the things. These are awareness of one's true condition, understanding and discourse. One's true condition is not overt occurrences. It is beneath the surface which is man's reality. When one's life is characterized by ambiguity he is confused about his own meaning with the causes of things that happen. Then his life is ambiguous rather than understanding. True discourse means establishing an inner tie with another *Dasein* or persons. For one who is inauthentic has just meaningless chatter with the others. For Heidegger silence can often speak more eloquently than words. When Heidegger speaks of understanding it is not a mere matter of intellectual comprehension. So to understand something is not just to

possess information about it. To understand something is to know it upon a nonverbal level. So understanding has to be with the entire self. For Heidegger when one understands with his whole being, he brings truth into his life. That is why Heidegger protests against the objective theory of truth that makes truth a purely intellectual affair.

Heidegger sees truth as something one is, not something one has. When one knows truth with his true being there is no need to put it into words. Heidegger says that if one could pause a moment in his race to keep up the demands of daily life, he might find some release from the bondage of an inauthentic existence. On the contrary, if a man tries to run away from his possibilities he will find anxiety, estrangement and tensions of life. Consequently, his total being is gripped by a feeling of meaninglessness. Things that make him feel good will be seen without meaning. For Heidegger man does have the potential to live fully. But he only does so on rare occasions. So people who are not used to facing reality try desperately to avoid having to face the reality of death. Thus they place death outside of themselves. They can only think of it abstractly. Heidegger says that they only think of death in terms of the lives of others not in terms of their own lives. Death is not real to them. Death is for them an external event that happens to men generally. Heidegger says that death is their own possibility. So man has to have such a conception in order to be realistic about death.

Heidegger believes that people would be stronger if they would accept anxiety. Like Kierkegaard, Heidegger distinguishes fear and anxiety. Fear is of something definite. But anxiety refers to nothing definite. But anxiety is a condition of life. Heidegger says that in an atomic age, man must learn to live with anxiety. So trying to avoid it is to flee to inauthenticity.

In the twentieth century, which is an age of science and power philosophers have turned away from traditional metaphysical interests. Existentialism arose not in support of scientific and technological world. It arose in revolt against it. They did not reject metaphysics but they developed a radical metaphysics based on the idea of man's existence and his creative activity rather than any substances such as matter and spirit.

Throughout history great philosophers emphasized reason, ideas, definitions, and abstractions and the ought that these are more important than concrete human being. So, it is believed that for these philosophers "essence precedes existence". Kierkegaard,

Heidegger and the existential philosophers who came after him thought that Hegel and, indeed, most of the philosophers of the Western World had it backward. So the existentialists insisted that “existence precedes essence”. So these are two famous phrases “essence precedes existence” and “existence precedes essence”, that are often used to sum up the differences between existentialism and other philosophical approaches. Existentialism has a straightforward idea “existence precedes essence” and that idea is crucial to philosophical thought in the twentieth century.

CONCLUSION

Existentialism is an ideology which arouses people's interest in the Twentieth Century. Its popularity in the Twentieth Century may not be without any reason, People who existed in that Century accepted and studied that ideology relating to and reflecting their existence. There may be mistakes as well as truth in that ideology as those who find out that ideology are the ones among people. Nevertheless, it is an ideology to be studied as a mere ideology as well as for getting knowledge.

It may be said that Existentialism can make people have more confidence. This ideology makes people believe that he is independent, he possesses himself, and he has the right to make his own decision. However, there are some concepts which are the medicine for the ones who can use it skillfully and the danger for the ones who misuse it. It can lead to the wrong path if one misconceives it. The uneasiness is the driving power which animates Heidegger's Philosophy. The will to overcome this separation either from God or from others and from the world is there, but it is felt at once that a contradiction arises between being for oneself and communication with others. The result is that existentialism became prevalently, the philosophy of man against himself. It is the philosophy of an age where societies as well as individuals are in conflict with themselves. It cannot reject that suffering and Dread are faced in man's life. All man, wealthy person or the poor, have suffering or trouble, it is true. And then all men face suffering, because there is no one who is complete his desire. And then it may be said that the concept of man's condition of Heidegger's Existentialism, is boundless and their descriptions commit the fallacy of ambiguity.

In fact, man is the one who lives holding the truth which is partially true because, people are still looking for the truth which is absolute. In the present time, it is impossible for people to go on with the concept of "meaninglessness" in the society. As Heidegger's concept is a disappointment to life, meaninglessness and vagueness on the definition of freedom, it is difficult to solve the problem of man from philosophical point of view and to evaluate it. Besides, in Heidegger's concept, the concept of the absolute paradox of

man's life (or) the arrival of man to the worlds without his wish and action is different from the concept of Myanmar. Myanmar Buddhists believe in the concept of "*Ye dhamma hetuppabhava*"(ယေ ဓမ္မာ ဟေတုပ္ပဘဝါ) "*Ye dhamma hetuppabhava*" means that "something happens because of certain causes". Myanmar Buddhists consider that nothing happens without any causes. The 'reason or cause' which Myanmar believed that is not supernatural. We believe that everything happens in accordance with the relating reasons.

We also believe in "life circle". Heidegger considers that life is a paradox and there is nothing after death. Myanmar Buddhists believe that life continues with cause and effect and we receive the good as well as the bad according to our deed. In addition, a concept which is true in a certain time may be changed in accordance with the times. In the concept of man, (1) considering the benefit of the people of that time and (2) considering the benefit of mankind, we should consider the later one.

To sum up, Heidegger's concept should not be considered to be a truth even though it is consistent as it is an ideology developed keeping with the times only for that age.

NOTES

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