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Summary of the thesis: *Hermeneutical project of existence – the phenomenon of understanding in Martin Heidegger's early philosophy*

The research problem of my thesis can be expressed by the question about the role understanding plays in the meaning (*Sinn*) constitution in the Martin Heidegger early philosophy. Heidegger does not comprehend understanding as a cognitive process, but he perceives it as a way of Being (*Sein*), which constitutes the core of human existence. This means that the epistemological questions are beyond the scope of my research. My thesis concerns ontological issues, which are grasped in a specific way that makes it impossible to perceive Heidegger as a representative of traditional metaphysics. The author of *Being and Time* makes an extraordinary shift. He grasps Being as a phenomenon, as something apparent, what is always understood, and as such is responsible for constitution of the being (*Seiende*) meaning and simultaneously for making this being apparent as meaningful. This does not mean that being should be perceived as independent from Being or that Being should be interpreted as a light that makes being visible to the human eye. Being (*Seiende*) is rather to be seen as something that encloses with itself the meaning. Since Heidegger perceives being and Being in the horizon of sense, his ontology can be called phenomenology. On the other hand, because this phenomenology explores the meaning constitution, the axis of which is understanding, it turns out to be hermeneutical. The research objective is to analyze the phenomenon of understanding and to describe the decisive role it plays in constituting the meaning of human reality. This phenomenon turns out to be the one that binds two spheres: ontic (the space of being) and ontological (the space of Being). This remarkable position allows us to conceive it as a key to interpreting Heidegger's early philosophy.

Heidegger belongs to the circle of these philosophers, whose reflections have earned thousands of critical studies. However, only a few of them see the phenomenon of understanding as their leitmotif. This does not mean that only these few critical studies deal with this phenomenon. Rather, almost every writing concerning Heidegger philosophy deals with understanding to some degree. However, these studies rarely do justice to the significance it has in Heidegger's early philosophy. This is caused by the specific sense of phenomena in Heidegger's reflection. Neither of them has a structure that can be grasped independently from other structures, that is, from other facets of the constitution. As ways of Being, phenomena describe some functions of the dynamics of the meaning constitution. These functions are interrelated and can only be

grasped within the horizon of the totality of this dynamics. For this reason, these interpretations of Heidegger's reflection, which do not see the phenomenon of understanding as their main subject, must take into account its problematics. In turn, the research that focuses on understanding cannot underestimate the broader context of phenomena that constitute the totality of existence (as can be seen in the structure of my thesis).

The outcome of the above analysis is of great importance for the novelty of my thesis and the originality of the solution to the research problem. The best-known Heidegger work, *Being and Time*, is divided into two parts. The break that separates these two parts causes commentators great difficulties. Usually, the first part is said to analyze the world as a space of practical human actions, and the second to be dominated by the ethical and existential issues, which reach its culmination in the question of the finitude and temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*) of the human being. Generally, interpretations of Heidegger's thought are limited to one of these horizons, resulting in a reduction or neglection of the other. In my thesis I argue with this reduction or neglection, and I go against the tide with the interpretations of both parts presented above. I capture Heidegger philosophy as the question of meaning constituting, and I make this question the leitmotif of the interpretation of both parts of *Being and Time*. I treated these parts as a description of two different dimensions of the meaning constitution, dimensions that are deeply related and equally important to the totality of this constitution dynamics.

My thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter is divided into three paragraphs and aims at the introduction to the Heidegger conception of understanding by showing its place in the horizon of philosophical tradition. Husserl's phenomenology is the starting point (§ 1) of the study. I show how Heidegger develops the three main discoveries of phenomenology (intentionality, categorial intuition, and apriori) and how he adopts them in his own reflection. Categorial intuition seems to be the most important of these discoveries because it allows Heidegger to see the phenomenality of Being as such. Heidegger rejects the objective (*gegenständlich*) nature that categorial intuition has in Husserl's phenomenology. He captures it as non-objective and pre-objective access to the dimension of Being. As such, categorial intuition becomes an understanding of Being that keeps human being close to his own Being. Since this understanding turns out to be the center of phenomenological problematics, the new elaboration of the nature of phenomenology seems to be necessary. Phenomenology becomes hermeneutics. In order to show its new quality, I reach for the Dilthey reflection, which is the subject of the next paragraph (§ 2). The dynamics of life, perceived as meaning-giving totality, which precedes particular and separated meaningful elements, is the axis of Dilthey thought. This life demands to be understood. However, understanding is not outside of life; it is the very

essence of life. Life consists in understanding what has appeared in this life as meaningful. Life develops and expands in the medium of understanding. It comes in this understanding to itself; it becomes itself. Albeit Heidegger resigns from using the term 'life', he discovers the same structure of the dynamic meaning-giving totality in Being. Simultaneously, he modifies the nature of understanding. In Dilthey philosophy, understanding rationalizes life that is essentially an obscure, mysterious, and irrational drive. As such, life itself is ultimately beyond the understanding that grows out of it, because life needs it. Since philosophy is a mode of understanding, Dilthey hermeneutical reflection rationalizes life itself, when it seeks to grasp it. Heidegger does not agree with the role of philosophy and understanding grasped in that way. To go beyond this conception, he reaches for a St. Augustine reflection (§ 3), which allows him to discover the radical uncertainty of human existence. Being (*Sein*) turns out to be the dynamics that makes an appearance of being (*Seiende*) possible and hides itself behind this being. This means that Being not only requires understanding, but also the kind of understanding that covers it. It is *conditio sine qua non* of a steady life that needs firm meaning. The world turns out to be this stabilizing structure and, at the same time, space that render Being forgotten. In this case, Heidegger uses Augustine's form of turning to oneself. It allows him to show how the human being can remind himself of his own Being without withdrawing from the world. Human selfhood (*Selbstheit*) turns out to be essentially ruptured, on the one hand thrown in the world, and on the other forced to return to itself understood as the openness to Being. The involvement in our own Being lays the foundation for this dynamics. It constantly pulls man towards himself and, at the same time, pushes him to the firm and preserved understoodness of the Being, i.e., to the world.

The analysis of the first chapter provides my thesis not only with the horizon of further research but also with the key points that determine particular issues that need to be raised. Being and *Dasein* can be seen as the pivotal terms that form the core of the second chapter analysis. The goal of the first paragraph (§ 4) is to make Being obviousness problematic. I prove here that the phenomenality of Being mentioned above has its source in this Being itself, and that it happens (*geschehen*) only in its understanding enowning[1]. The fact that Being is essentially bound with appearance leads me to the conclusion that this Being itself is the appearance of being. This does not mean yet that it is just a light, which removes a darkness from the being that has already

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[1] The term 'enowning' is the term proposed by Parvis Emad (translator of the Heidegger's *Contribution to Philosophy*). Emad translates in that way the German word *Ereignis*. I do not relate here to the late Heidegger, but I use this word which Emad literally understands as 'making (something) one's own'.

existed covered with it. Being (*Seiende*) as being[2] has already been understood in its Being. Otherwise, being could *be* without Being. At the same time, I cannot agree that Being or its understanding creates beings. Being (*Sein*) turns out to be the meaning-giving dynamics and the space where this dynamics happens. In turn, being is what keeps this meaning safe. Being (*Seiende*) cannot exist before Being, but rather grows for a shaped meaning. This does not mean that understanding has power over being or Being, rather the dynamics of Being has the absolute priority in the space of meaning constitution. Being (*Seiende*) is understood in a certain way because Being allows that and demands this understanding. This issue brings us to the second paragraph of this chapter (§ 5), in which I pose the question on *Dasein*, that is, the understanding entity. Here, I analyze the relationship *Dasein* − Being and *Dasein* − man. *Dasein* is an extraordinary entity, in which ontological difference is broken, because on the one hand it has its place in the ontic sphere, and on the other hand it participates in the openness of Being itself. Therefore, existence (as a way of Being of *Dasein*) is a unique way of Being that determines a unique entity that lets all beings be. In this section, I finally prove that existence and existing entity (*Dasein*) have no power over Being itself, but rather that the openness of Being itself demands the entity that is essentially opened to Being and as such plays the role of a gate, through which Being comes to the world. As for the *Dasein* − man relationship, I prove that *Dasein* should not be grasped just as a human, but rather a human should be studied as *Dasein* he carries within himself. This does not mean that one entity has another within itself, but that the human being arises in the place where Being comes to the world.

In the last section of this chapter (§ 6), I focus on the methodological issues in the Heidegger's early philosophy. The fact that phenomenology has understanding, and thus hermeneutical, nature is not the main question. Rather, the most problematic is the question of the possibility of access to Being. Since Being itself is non-objectifiable, how can it be grasped as an object of studies? To settle this question, I call the conception of formal indication that Heidegger elaborated in the early 1920s. Formal indications can be conceived as concepts that bear no determined objective content ('what' − German *was*) but are used as signposts directing towards proper enowning of Being openness. These concepts have an empty space that needs to be fulfilled with the own facticity (*Faktizität*) by the one who follows them. However, in this fulfilment their emptiness and formality do not disappear, because their fulfilment is never ultimate and requires continuous renewal. Every application (embodiment) of a formal indication needs to be overcome and demands another attempt to follow the signpost it carries.

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[2] The second 'being' is used as a present participle.

This analysis makes me pose the question on the reason of determining phenomenology (and philosophy) as a science that objectifies Being. Heidegger dismisses this determination fairly quickly after *Being and Time* is published. The task of philosophy is to turn *Dasein* back to the openness of Being and stay close to it. The foundation of philosophy lies the way of Being that Heidegger calls philosophizing. The human being is essentially a philosophical being. In this perspective, everyone turns out to be a philosopher in some way. It does not mean the depreciation of academic philosophy or the whole philosophical tradition. Rather, both should be understood as ontic forms of philosophizing. This means that Heidegger's philosophy should also be understood as such a form, and simultaneously as an indication that leads beyond itself towards philosophizing.

In the third chapter, I pose the question on *Dasein* as the gate through which Being comes into the world. As Heidegger defines *Dasein* as being-in-the-world, this phrase is to be understood literally. In the first paragraph (§ 7), I analyze the meaning of the world in Heidegger's early philosophy. I prove that this phenomenon cannot be treated as a practical context of human actions. Rather, it denotes the totality of what has been understood, the Being understoodness, the space responsible for the appearance of all being. The world is a medium in which every entity is understood as what it is. However, as the totality of understoodness, the world is also a necessary confinement of Being. Though in the face of being the world is always the excess of its possibilities, in the face of the Being openness, it is the structure that this openness petrifies and keeps it steady. For that reason, the function of the world in Heidegger's early philosophy is ambivalent: on the one hand, the world is the dimension in which Being is opened, and on the other, the sphere that closes it. In the second section of this chapter (§ 8), I pose the question on the significance of the Other for the constitution of the world. As an entity appears in the world as what it itself is, so the Other (as another *Dasein*) appears in the world as the entity that is essentially open to Being. To include the Other in the meaning constitution makes seeing the structure of the world as my own selfish project impossible. The world primarily turns out to be the project of Others. These Others cannot be identified or pointed with a finger, but they are an anonymous force (They – German *das Man*) that at first teaches us to understand the world, and then determines its structure. This means that *Dasein*'s own understanding is essentially dependent on how Others have already opened the world and how they have confined it in that opening.

The objective of the fourth chapter is to analyze the *Dasein* structure of opening to Being, the core of which is the phenomenon of understanding. In the first paragraph (§ 9), I focus on understanding that Heidegger describes as a project. The dynamics of the project consists in

moving *Dasein* forward towards its own possibilities that I grasp as prior sketching (*vorzeichnen*) paths to being. This moving forward does not mean to show *Dasein* alternative paths to being, but rather to reveal *Dasein* as these paths. Man can deal with entities in the various ways just because his *Dasein* is the prior sketching of these ways itself. This prior sketching is not to be understood as creating from nothing but rather as transcending the totality of being and the whole understoodness thereof. The transcending makes new paths to being possible and simultaneously broadens and completes this understoodness. The creative power of the project lies in letting *Dasein* become what it has already become anew. For that reason, understanding of the world and *Dasein* is constantly changing. The issues of meaning and interpretation (*Auslegung*) become the subject of the second section of this chapter (§ 10). Interpretation is not the cognitive operation but a way of Being. Its task is not to make anyone aware of his possibilities. Interpretation gives form to these possibilities and makes them explicit. In turn, meaning is the interpretation workspace, which is developed during the interpreting. Interpretation makes it possible for an entity to always be understood 'as' this or that. However, it does not create meaning, but rather shapes it in a certain way. Meaning itself is a formal aspect of project, the space of what has already been understood and what allows us to broaden this space. As such, it always gives each project a starting point and a horizon that enables an understanding of what is to be brought into understoodness. Meaning is based on three pillars: fore-having (*Vorhabe*), fore-sight (*Vorsicht*), and fore-conception (*Vorgriff*) that constitute the fore-structure of understanding, laying the foundations for what we know as the hermeneutical circle. Meaning determines the assumptions for each understanding. Without them, understanding would be impossible. It must have a certain fore-meaning that makes possible the dynamics of understanding meaning-giving. This analysis goes to the heart of my research because the phenomena described above are the basis of the hermeneuticality of human existence.

The remaining two paragraphs of this chapter are devoted to two more phenomena that complete the *Dasein* opening to Being: discourse (*Rede*) (§ 11) and attunement (*Befindlichkeit*) (§ 12). None of them can be taken merely as a non-essential supplement to understanding. Both are rather the fundamental aspects of the opening to Being, without which understanding would be impossible. Discourse is not just a human language but rather a primal activity that parts the meaning and makes it possible to be interpreted (*ausgelegt*). To reveal discourse as a necessary aspect of existence allows Heidegger to grasp Being in its essential relationship to human discursivity. Consequently, whole Being turns out to be discursive and, as such, to be always expressed. This does not mean that there are prepared words for every aspect of Being (or

being), but rather that words grow up for every aspect of understoodness. The last phenomenon analyzed in this paragraph, attunement, could be conceived as the second side of understanding. It is responsible for the sensitivity to what project is able to 'see'. Attunement also causes *Dasein* to always have some understoodness in such a way that it finds itself in a certain world. This allows us to look at the previous analysis in a new way. Although the world is always projected by *Dasein*, that does not mean the project creates the world. The world is that dimension of meaning that is handed over by Others and that is only completed (never ultimately) by project. For that reason, understanding cannot be treated as a power over the world but rather as that aspect of existence that cares for the power of the world and the entity that appears in it.

The fifth and final chapter is divided into six paragraphs. In the first of them (§ 13) I focus on the structure of the phenomenon of care that expresses the uniform dynamics of existence as that way of Being that cares for its own Being. Besides understanding and attunement, Heidegger also brings falling (*Verfallen*) into the structure of care. It is one of the two modes of existence, inauthenticity, which can be called *Dasein* flight from itself towards the world. Taken as such, inauthenticity cannot be removed from the existence structure and is essentially related to, or even dependent on, authenticity. After all, flight is possible only because *Dasein* is originally open to what threatens it and pushes it to flee. Heidegger considers this opening of *Dasein* to be authentic. This is the subject of the next three sections of this chapter.

At first (§ 14), I pose the question about the authentic attunement, which Heidegger calls anxiety (*Angst*). Anxiety makes *Dasein* sensitive to the space of primordial Being, which turns out to be non-being or no-thing that reveals groundlessness of the world. For that reason, Being shows itself as what threatens and strikes the steady understoodness of *Dasein* and causes *Dasein* to flee to save its comfortable and sure existence. It should be emphasized here that Being that is opened by anxiety needs to be enowned with understanding. Otherwise, the meaning-giving dynamics would stop because it cannot be confined to the circle of handed over understoodness. The next step in the analysis is the question of the authentic project (§ 15). I approach this issue from the point of view of authentic possibility that project enowns, the possibility of death. I enumerate three senses of death and none of them can be equated with loss of life. First, the possibility of death disrupts the structure of the world. Death does not destroy understoodness, but opens it up radically. Second, death is the possibility of impossibility, that is, it brings *Dasein* to the immeasurability of possibilities and becomes the condition of possibility of all possibilities. Third, death is the limit of possibilities and as such the limit of what *Dasein* can. Running forward (*Vorlaufen*) of *Dasein* into death as authentic

projecting is the ontological structure of the meaning constitution. This structure shows that *Dasein*'s encounter with its limit takes *Dasein* back to its understoodness, disturbs this understoodness, and opens it to further complement. In the fourth section of the chapter, I pose the question of the authentic discourse Heidegger calls conscience (§ 16). It is the silent summon that calls *Dasein* to its ownmost (*eigenste*) possibility of death and makes it silent. The analysis of this paragraph constitutes an important transition to the remainder of this chapter as it reveals the possibility of ontic authenticity. Conscience bears witness that what *Dasein* is fleeing from is what *Dasein* should return to. Although this return happens in the ontological sphere, since the meaning-giving dynamics happens as long as *Dasein* exists, conscience allows us to see that *Dasein* as an entity influences this happening. This does not mean that *Dasein* can change its ontological structure, but that it can fight the shroud that essentially covers what has been opened.

The last two paragraphs of the fifth chapter are devoted to the change in the consideration of authenticity. This does not mean a change in the research scope; my focus is still on the ontological, not ontic, sphere; however, I pose the question of the ontological possibility of an ontic choice between authenticity and inauthenticity. In the penultimate paragraph (§ 17), my analysis focuses on the phenomena of guilt and freedom. Conscience gives *Dasein* to understand its fundamental guilt. Guilt means, on the one hand, the indebtedness of *Dasein* that owes its own ground to the Being itself and, on the other hand, *Dasein* essential inability to enown the totality of the openness of Being itself. However, this inability does not free *Dasein* from its responsibility to attempt to enown this openness. Guilt makes *Dasein* understand that it should return to itself as the opening to Being, since only then it will be itself. In turn, freedom is primarily the possibility to choose oneself or give up that choice. As such, freedom does not unleash *Dasein* from the bonds with which the world binds it. Ontologically seen, freedom as understanding is binding. By binding *Dasein* to what is encountered in the world, freedom allows *Dasein* and the intraworldly entity to be. In that way, it gives *Dasein* a choice and, at the same time, makes it responsible for what it has allowed to be. *Dasein* turns out to be essentially the responsible entity. The fundamental dimension of this responsibility is the responsibility for Being that gives itself to *Dasein*. To fulfil the claim of Being, *Dasein* has to entrust itself to the openness of Being and let it into the steady structure of world understoodness. In the last paragraph of the chapter, I show how *Dasein* as resolute can answer to the call of Being. Resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*) is not an ontic action but an ontological structure of this answer. To be authentic, *Dasein* must be willing to hear the call of conscience, that is, to be resolute. This resoluteness cannot be determined ontically since no intraworldly entity can

determine authenticity except the openness of the situation to which authenticity leads. For that reason, while every choice has an ontic form, this form cannot be seen as a determinant of authenticity or inauthenticity. Only the choice of oneself as an opening to Being determines the authenticity of existence. In the second part of this paragraph, I prove that the structure of existence described above implies an indelible ethical dimension of Heidegger's project. This outcome does not mean to limit the research scope, but to reveal the ethical dimension of the Being openness.