

**FROM AN EPISTEMOLOGY OF UNDERSTANDING TO AN ONTOLOGY  
OF UNDERSTANDING: HEIDEGGER'S HERMENEUTICAL SHIFT**

by

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I Bienvenu Benketo Boleko declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



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SIGNATURE

02 October 2018

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## **DEDICATION**

To my loving mother, Henriette Ngompela, who too early left me alone in this world. May her soul rest in peace.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## ABSTRACT

The current investigation explores the possibility of surpassing or subordinating epistemology to ontology by focusing on the hermeneutics of Heidegger. Based on his works, which consider the understanding as a way of being and therefore offering the foundation for all knowledge, this study will underline the decisive shift concerning the question of being (*l'être*) in the works of modern hermeneutics fathers.

A critical move made by Heidegger's philosophical perspective underlines the epistemology of understanding. The question of the ontology of understanding is investigated differently from his predecessors Schleiermacher and Dilthey, and culminates in a revolution in hermeneutics. The understanding is not knowledge, but a behavioural *Dasein*. His main contribution to hermeneutics consists of subordinating the methodological and epistemological questions to the ontological ones. The problem of understanding is no longer linked to "other" but is extended to the world. There is therefore a *mundanisation* of understanding, which overlaps its *depsychologisation*. Understanding is a mode of being of *Dasein* that extends in interpretation, which leads to language. The interpretation is only a development of understanding, which is articulated in language. The phenomenological method and critical analysis are used for this investigation.

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter is a brief that gives us the framework of this dissertation. This section served as the general introduction and is divided in eight sub-sections: Background and motivation, research problematic, research hypothesis, literature review, theoretical framework, subject limit, outline of chapters and research delimitation.

### **1.2 Background and Motivation**

Before embarking on the revalidation of the question of being in the history of philosophy the first task should be to clarify the prejudices that weigh on the meaning of being throughout the history of Western metaphysics. The second task should be to clarify the hiddenness of the question of being on the one hand and on the other hand, to demonstrate the imperativeness of its repetition. For Heidegger, the concept "being" is the broadest and most empty word (Heidegger, 1992: 25), and therefore difficult to define. This difficulty derives from the following three assumptions:

- Being is a very general concept. The agreement about it is every time already included in everything. The generality of the "being" overcomes any generic generality. The concept "being" is the more obscure;
- The concept "being" is indefinable. This concluded its supreme generality.

The inability to define being does not exempt us from questioning its meaning. And its indefiniteness leads imperatively to the fact that;

- Being is the self-evident concept. This common intelligibility demonstrates nothing other than unintelligibility. The latter brings to light the fact that any and every attitude compared to being is a puzzle a priori (Heidegger, 1992: 27).

Given the above, it is now important to analyse the concept of being through the entire history of metaphysics. However, the basic observation is that the concept of being has never been thought of in its truth, not only because philosophers have asked the question and poorly developed it, but also because being does not manifest itself: it is revealed or never reveals that veiling (Hottois, 2002: 344). It should be noted here that the quintessential philosophical misunderstanding is the confusion of being (*l'être*) and of being (*l'étant*). Metaphysics or the history of philosophy erred in thinking of being as being exclusively. In other words, the being was to swallow being (Heidegger, 1992: 51).

Martin Heidegger considers any subsequent ontology as monstrous outgrowth stuffy truths, which occurred in the early days. Ontology, he says, has been trivialised. In his opinion, the greatest responsibility is to the account of scholasticism. Indeed, the first Greek philosophers had already paved the way for their own humiliation since the initial deviations appear in the same works of those who created the metaphysics (Heidegger, 1992: 3). For Heidegger, though there have been some glimmers of truth at the beginning of philosophical thought. This error culminated at the beginning of modernity with Descartes, and after with Nietzsche and reaches its decline in technology. Peter Critchley affirmed all this in his own way:

*Heidegger is concerned to discover precisely when and how human beings lost touch with being. Heidegger reveals that the loss of being in the modern world has its origins not in the Weberian process of modernisation and rationalisation but in the way that Western civilisation has conceived reason since classical times. Praising the pre-Socratics, Heidegger makes the challenging criticism that the Western philosophy has been on the wrong path since Plato (Critchley, 2004: 2).*

In its idealistic realism, Plato identifies being with ideas. These are what is more real, more being. Thus, being is wrongly identified with essential shapes, whose essential characteristics are visibility and permanence, in short the eternal presence. In another development language, in Plato's view, truth is the ideal, that is to say, being as visible

to the intellect. The real is the visible, the important thing is to perceive what is revealed and if the real is ideal, the truth of thought is the *orthotes*, the fact of seeing correctly and reflecting this report in the proposal, which thus, is true in so far as it is consistent with what occurs (Vattimo, 1985: 98). Plato thought the other of matter and the sensible, but not the other of any being. Thus, by not seeking the being as such, but the being of being, Plato established a hierarchy of beings. We have in the foreground beings as essential ideals that give material things a little stability and reality (Hottos, 2002: 346).

On the other hand, Aristotle considers being in both directions, it is first seen as what (*eidos*), that is to say essence and then as that (*ousia*), that is to say effective existence. The latter is for him energy in act, and it is effectively the act of existing. He attributes the first way to being, not essence or *eidos* (Vattimo, 1985: 99). This treatment of *energeia* ties Aristotle to the origin of the concept of *alethia* insofar as thinking being as act, thinking as the end point of a process and therefore as a coming from. Furthermore, the fact that *energeia* is separate from the *eidos* or essence means that the Aristotelian position is a step closer to the ever more complete identification of being with what is effectively present (Heidegger, 1992: 51).

In the Middle Ages (Heidegger, 1992: 26) the question was not why being is such, but why it is a set, that is to say why it exists as such. Reasoning thus, the medieval philosophers are led to discover the supreme essence: he that is in the Bible. This *esse*, designed as immutable (St. Augustine) or as *superessentialis* (Denys the Areopagite). Nevertheless, with Thomas Aquinas, one can no longer say that it is an object because it is a being; we must now reverse the proposal. It is an *ens* only in so far as it refers to the *esse*; *ens* means *habens esse*. That is why; St. Thomas Aquinas directs the question of being toward being supremely eminent: *ipsum esse* of God, and breaks at the same time with the Greek question of being understood as *toti eneinai*. The question now applies to a being whose being grows its roots beyond the simple quiddity to the pure act of existing (Jacob, 1990: 89-90).

Descartes was the first philosopher to be critical of the whole process that considers all implied implications of the Greek conception of being as *idea* (Plato) and as

*energeia* (Aristotle). The Greek word "*idea*" has the same root as the verb "to see" that means to be effectively present. The true being has as a fundamental feature the fact of giving itself as certain. The constitutive feature of being is the certainty, the peremptory nature of what is indubitable (Vattimo, 1985: 99). Indeed, the Cartesian shift is that of modernity, but it is a continuation of the Platonic reduction of being to beings a crucially important point of Heidegger's. Cartesian philosophy is characterized by the primacy of the subject that becomes the Supreme Being, the ultimate foundation of all other beings treated as objects. It is in this sense, that in seeking the truth, the human being is only certain of two realities:

- His own as *ego cogitans* (the unmistakable certainty of *cogito*);
- Its own representations. This is what he raises before him in thought. The clear and obvious representations are therefore the only objective because they are what the *ego cogitans* extraposes. It is about what he apprehends directly and what he can be sure of (Heidegger, 1992: 50).

With this Cartesian transformation that is far from a simple story of words and thinking, the absolute and unshakable foundation of reality is now the human self before which everything should legitimize the being of things, which is not recognised simply to the extent that it is certain.

Moreover, that the notion of objectivity of which modern philosophy makes so much use is always correlative to that of the thinking subject. The objective reality is that which manifests itself to the subject thinking that it is. The objective reality is constituted by the certainty that the subject thinking has (Vattimo, 1985: 100). This desire for certainty characteristic of modernity is associated with the development of analytical thinking, calculative, and methodical that quantifies and measures everything. In this context, mathematics is very important for the development of an ensured knowledge, which will be deployed as the modern science. This knowledge is a sure guarantee also for the effective presence of the subject in mid-being or among beings. Therefore, the Cartesian subject is the one who controls all of nature and dominates it through science and technology.

However, despite the fact that in Descartes' view the true God ensures the fit between my obvious representations and the laws of nature, certainty on or about the true god

is founded in the idea of evidence I have such a god. The thinking subject is, in fact, regarded as the ultimate foundation of all truth and all reality (Heidegger, 1992: 50).

Given all the above, the thinking subject, from the Cartesian reduction of the "being true" to the certainty of the thinking subject is a reduction of things to oneself, a reduction that has the sense of possession. At the end of this process, being's reduction to certainty is its reduction to the will of the thinking subject.

In the opinion of Gilbert Hottois, the great metaphysical systems of the nineteenth century, mainly those of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, could not have been conceived without the existence of the thinking subject animated by the desire to reduce everything to one's self, and the shape of the system as a reduction of the real to a single principle could arise in that time when the *ego cogitans* was conceived as the will to reduce the whole of being to oneself (Hottois, 2002: 101).

Moreover, it is in this context that modern philosophy is called a philosophy of subjectivity, anthropocentrism. The radical assurance that the subject acquires is in theory of knowledge, that is to say, a technique increasingly powerful, making the human being master and possessor of nature and morals; the human being is free, he is the source and foundation of all values and laws.

Cartesian philosophy does not establish the dualism between becoming (*devenir*) and eternity as did Plato, but between human being, the thinking subject and free, and all the rest of being. This is the dualism between subject and object.

Kant, following Descartes, ignored the question of being because he lacked a thematic ontology of *Dasein* and a prior ontological analytic of the subjectivity of the subject. Therefore, he simply repeated dogmatically Cartesian views though revising some (Heidegger, 1992: 50). Just like all the philosophers that we have mentioned, Nietzsche is the one who completes the history of Western metaphysics by deepening

the oblivion of the question of being (Heidegger, 1978: 347). We have also the same tune from Vattimo. According to the latter, metaphysics comes to an end in Nietzsche because

he presents himself as the first true nihilist and the deepest essence of metaphysics is precisely nihilism: "The history of nihilism is that of being himself and this story is precisely that of metaphysics as forgetfulness of Being which hardens more and more" (Vattimo 1985: 97).

With Nietzsche, there is no longer that of beings. Only the totality of beings is still considered. This contemporary nihilism homogenized being, and anything goes and nothing is valuable in itself. This radical homogenisation consumes the forgetfulness of forgetting, the ontological difference is present in philosophy since its origin and culminates in contemporary nihilism. Indeed, temporalisation is not to think about the internal relationship between time and being. It amounts to only consider the fact that man is conceived of as an unlimited process devoid of any meaning and purpose (Heidegger, 1985: 376). It is noted that the totality of beings in the infinite process of time is nothing other than the expression of the will to power in the sense of creativity, productivity, incessant form and content. This will to power is not only the being of being, of nature, but also of human being, in short, of the subject.

Since having no purpose beyond itself, the will to power pursues its own development, its infinite growth. A product of the will to power, man has become the subject of that will. Now it is man who invents goals and values from a radical freedom or spontaneity. The nihilist human being or the Nietzschean human being continues to reinterpret being, to work it, to operate it, to destroy it, store it, and create new forms and new content.

From this moment, all the goals, all values now appear without reason or necessity, posed by human subjectivity. It is the reign of relativism and decisionism, morality and worldviews without any foundation other than the contingent and irrational act that establishes an ephemeral way (Hottis, 2002: 349). Having as a concern the development of power being always more updated and with new possibilities, a human

being is particularly concerned about his survival, a necessary condition for further deployment of his power. That is why an individual person seeks to master and control nature.

Thus, science and technology appear as the preferred means of his human will to power that understands the truth as efficiency, thought as calculation and the real as an infinitely operable and usable material.

In fact, Nietzschean nihilism is well suited to the description of the twentieth century under the label of techno-science that is seen by Heidegger as the culmination of metaphysics and so in this way as the ultimate stage in the history of being (Heidegger, 1968: 237). As mentioned above, the technique is, in the opinion of Gianni Vattimo, precisely the phenomenon that man, in terms of living in the world, expresses the deployment and completion of metaphysics. The exclusive donation of being as theorised will by Nietzsche – extreme concealment of being in favour of beings, is the modern technique that gives the world the form of what we now call the total organisation (Vattimo, 1985: 103). The technique performs the last step in the elimination of any residual difference between true reality and empirical reality. Once the ontological difference is eliminated the last pale memory of that difference is also eliminated. Of being itself, there is nothing left, except the beings. The being of beings is totally and exclusively being made by the will of the producer and organizer. It is understood, that for Heidegger metaphysics is the completed technique, which leads to the holistic abusive exploitation of the world (Heidegger, 1968: 237).

Indeed, the livelihood of metaphysics can only be possible when it forgets his or her oblivion (Heidegger, 1985: 89). Noticing forgetfulness begs a crucial question, which in essence, is the one formulated in slightly different terms in the last paragraph of *Being and Time*, by asking why the being of being could come to be thought of as mere presence (Heidegger, 1992: 263). Here, the issue took a more radical turn historically: how has it been possible to get to the point of complete oblivion of being, at which we find ourselves? This is where reflection on metaphysics as history is a necessary project of the sense of being that is not metaphysical. It is clear, indeed, that the perception of oblivion already implies a position, which in embryonic form, is no longer in this oversight.

It is simple to understand metaphysics as history and out of it, being in a different sense. Hence, the significance is not only negative destruction of the history of ontology;

but it is still positive as the development of a new project of the sense of being, one that leads Heidegger to reflect on the history of metaphysics (Heidegger, 1992: 263-264).

It is mainly because of this shift that we became interested in Heidegger's project. Our interest in the work of the German philosopher Heidegger is justified as far as it develops a renewed philosophy and satisfactory understanding of *Dasein*, which is an ontological modality, on which all knowledge is grafted. A balanced assessment would give credit to Heidegger for having rehabilitated the structure of pre-understanding, which is often regarded as an obstacle to knowledge. To the German philosopher Heidegger should go the credit for having shown clearly that the ontological problem precedes the epistemological problem because the latter (the epistemological problem) is based on the ontological problem. In other words, Heidegger restores the primacy of understanding over knowledge and clearly shows that all knowledge has its foundation in understanding as the mode of being of *Dasein*.

### **1.3 Research problematic and objectives**

The primary concern of Heidegger's work is the question of being. This question crosses, so to speak, the whole history of philosophy from its origins until today. The concept of being, it is said, is not only the most ambiguous, but also the broadest one in philosophy (Heidegger, 1992: 25). Heidegger's concern is precisely why the metaphysicians have watered down the question of being which nevertheless served as their guideline. This forgetting of being in the history of philosophy has had enormous consequences on existential and ethical levels. From this perspective, all beings have undergone excessive machinations, including *Dasein*. The human being was reduced to the level of things, that is to say objectified, reified. This confusion of being (*être*) with being (*étant*) allowed science to make significant progress as far as



threatening the balance of the universe. We think here lies the beginning of the environmental problem, cloning of the problem and even human cloning.

Therefore, by questioning the being of *Dasein*, in contrast to Dilthey and Schleiermacher, Heidegger proposes to clarify human ontological status as the ground, on which knowledge is based. We note in Heidegger's work a passage shift from epistemology to ontology of understanding. This is the great revolution that he operates in hermeneutics. Drawing on Heidegger's intuitions, our effort in this reflection is to give back to mankind his primacy in the universe. In view of the ontological understanding, we realise that the problem of understanding, which was once thought to be related to the problem of the other, now proves to be completely released from it, because it is linked to the problem of the world. Indeed, Heidegger *mundanises* understanding to become the mode of being of *Dasein* and not of knowledge, in contrast to Schleiermacher and Dilthey (Heidegger 1992: 143). Put another way, we can consider that the ontological understanding is itself, vigilance of *Dasein*.

As a result, we see that the world's problems are the same that concern *Dasein* to the highest degree. *Dasein* must be attentive not only to the world's equilibrium, but it must also make its necessary harmony in space and in time. It is from here that we draw the existential issues of the ontological understanding. It should be noted that in Heidegger's view, understanding is also meant to apply (Grondin, 1999:154), in other words, an understanding that is in fact what we would like to see apply to the spatiotemporal context, to the system, to the group, etc. An understanding without application is a contradiction. It is not a mechanical process, not a matter of rules, or even a procedure, but a capacity, know-being and a fineness of spirit (Jacob, 1999).

When we say that the work was done with "application" in French, it also means that it was executed with dedication and diligence. It is noted that this practical aspect of understanding is undoubtedly an Aristotelian heritage (Grondin, 1999: 155). This understanding is not theoretical knowledge, but above all practical, in other words,

an ethos. This understanding as knowing how to be good is to apply in a specific situation. Such is the thesis that cements and spices our intellectual effort in this work.

To better exploit it, we will remain in the phenomenological perspective that will be complemented by a critical analysis. The phenomenological method will be useful because our first task will be to explain this turning point operated by Heidegger and to demonstrate its existential and ethical significance, before analyzing it.

## **1.4 Research Hypothesis**

We are in a society where epistemology was favoured, based on its foundation. Any philosophy before Heidegger was the consecration of knowledge and the concealment of ontology. However, with Heidegger, there is a total reversal: the German philosopher makes us understand that a house cannot stand without a foundation.

From the above, we argue that there is a primacy of ontology over epistemology in the sense that all epistemological problems first go through ontology, which is the ground on which all knowledge must be based. In short, understanding the meaning of knowledge comes second compared to understanding as ontological modality. This is understood more easily in a child who speaks a language before having analyzed it. For *Dasein*, understanding is the mode of being on which all knowledge can be grafted.

And openness to the world of *Dasein*, in the form of “in order to,” on the one hand and, on the other hand, meaningfulness of the world, constitutes understanding as the existential condition of possibility of any other mode of knowing. It is in this sense that we should understand Heidegger's understanding of being as a power-being that is at the same time a having-been-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-gewesensein*) (Heidegger, 1980: 394).

The Heideggerian understanding is original and different from the ordinary meaning of this word that relates to the ontic. The knowledge in question here is not to be reduced to a purely conceptual understanding, since in considering the world as

a possible meaningfulness, this sense of understanding is having-been (*savoir-être*) as being used, served or harmed. This understanding is not theoretical because this is a mode, which is both simpler and more original than understanding encompassed by simply entering a being as something such as a hammer to nail tool (Heidegger, 1985). We will have to analyze, in this section, understanding as a worrisome pursuit of *Dasein*, and understanding as understanding and attitudes for all the existential dimensions. This is the main thesis that runs through this research.

## 1.5 Literature Review

In the light of philosophy, we have the question of being, its concealment and its consequences at the centre of research in philosophy. Nevertheless, with reference to what concerns us, we will mention some leading figures who have discussed the issue of the turning point operated by Heidegger in the philosophical hermeneutics before us, to demonstrate its relevance and timeliness in philosophy. Before mentioning Heidegger, we will start with the two fathers of modern hermeneutics: Schleiermacher and Dilthey. For them, understanding is a cognitive mode.

Commenting on Schleiermacher, Berner says that in all the writings of Schleiermacher hermeneutics is defined as the art of understanding, meaning that all production made by art in which we are aware of the general rules, the particular application of the interpretation cannot be reduced to rules (Berner, 1995: 49). For Schleiermacher, the object of hermeneutics is essentially discourse, no matter whether oral or written. It is therefore hermeneutic wherever there is a thought that is expressed by speech, or thought expressed in the sign. Many commentators argue that the aim of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is about understanding, although Gadamer thinks the Schleiermacherian hermeneutics would not understand the objective meaning of speech, but would grasp the individuality of the speaker or author (Gadamer, 1976: 191). Whether from the position of Berner or that of Gadamer, understanding remains the target of the hermeneutics of Schleiermacher. Comprehension is a psychological reconstruction that seeks to rediscover the creative process in its main expressive dimension (Berner, 1995: 69).

However, for Gadamer, understanding, in Schleiermacher, is a transposition in the disposition of the writer, seizure of the internal production of a work process, a reconstruction of the creative act. In order to understand this, we must return to the seminal point of departure of the individual perspective in which the general production is anchored. This goes to the starting point of speech (Gadamer, 1976: 189). That is why hermeneutics in Schleiermacher's view remains an art as long as the problem of understanding remains riveted to the problem of individuality. The hermeneutical problem in Schleiermacher's work is to understand the thought in its claim to universality even as it is inscribed in an individual subject. Therefore, to understand is to marry the conviction of the writer and the perspective from which an author meant something. The understanding here is 'intropathique', that is to say, understanding what is going into the feeling of the author to grasp what he is meaning (Kangudi). Additionally, understanding attempts to move from the exteriority of the utterance to the internal first- person perspective of the speaker or writer (Nelson, 2010: 13).

The point of departure of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is the misunderstanding or non-understanding, which is caused by hastiness or prejudice (Nelson, 2010: 4). In other words, hermeneutics is based on the fact of non-understanding of speech (Berner, 1995; Ricoeur, 1986).

For Dilthey, it is important, from the outset to clarify that there is a distinction between the natural sciences and the sciences of the mind. To this awareness there is grafted the need to produce a distinction between the realm of nature and that of history. Dilthey's hermeneutics is, in fact, developing a proper epistemology of historical sciences. In fact, the human being is understood as freedom, as opposed to the rest of nature, which is governed by determinism. The human being highlights this demarcation when he thinks of his being as life or spirit (Mesure, 1990: 96).

Habermas, commenting on Dilthey, thinks the difference between the natural sciences and those of the mind must be reduced to the orientation of the researcher, his attitude towards objects. This difference is located in objectification. It is in this sense, that we approach nature as a world phenomenon obeying general laws,

eliminating the experience of the researcher (Habermas, 1976: 177). In the sciences of the mind, Habermas believes that concepts and theoretical approaches are mimetic reconstructions. To this researcher's way of thinking, in the natural sciences, knowledge leads to theories or individual nomological statements, which have been confirmed by experience, while the theories and the requirements of sciences of the spirit serve merely as a vehicle for the production of a lived experience breeder (Habermas, 1976: 179).

It appears that the demarcation perceived in this sense is an epistemology of historical knowledge. Here there is an opening in the tradition of critical philosophies of history and the need to give priority to the acquisition of historical knowledge, while not denying the history and general science of spirit of their legitimate explanatory dimension. In view of the above, Makkreel considers the philosophy of Dilthey as 'psychologist' because of the fact that the mind sciences are based on psychology and that for Dilthey, epistemology and psychology go together and cannot be separated from each other (Mesure, 1990: 111). For Heidegger, understanding is still coloured by feeling, that is to say, understanding is co-born with affection (Heidegger, 1992). As emphasized by Jean Greisch (2000: 187): "In reality, affection has always been a form of understanding and conversely, all understanding is affected".

Understanding is a mode of being of *Dasein*, or rather the fundamental mode of *Dasein*. This is a primary understanding, which is the very structure of *Dasein* in its presence in the world so that with Heidegger, we pass from an epistemological vision of understanding to an existential vision, on which he intends to base the original concept of understanding. Understanding, for Heidegger, is open to the world. It is important to remember that understanding as opening is not cognitive understanding as it is in the sciences of the mind. It is a more original understanding that goes with existence as opening. Understanding is also a mode of being that constantly projects *Dasein* to its possibilities. This is what Heidegger says in these words: "The understanding is itself the existential structure we call the project" (Heidegger, 1992: 145).

Understanding projects the being of *Dasein*. *Dasein* is constantly projected in its possibilities because it is open. Incidentally, all understanding culminates in the description of the explanation. Without explanation, understanding remains incomplete. In the explanation, states Heidegger: "understanding appropriates comprehensibly what it understands. In the explanation, understanding does not become something else but itself"(Heidegger, 1992: 148).

## **1.6 Theoretical Framework and Methodology**

It should further noted that it is under its hermeneutical dimension, that is to say the analytic of existence, that we will focus our discussion on understanding. In order to identify the nature of the problem studied, our analysis requires consideration of some methods for its development. Indeed, in this research the analytic-descriptive method helps us to trace the evolutionary path of understanding. We incorporate the phenomenological perspective that is complemented by a critical analysis. Our task is firstly, by means of the phenomenological method, to clarify and understand the turning point operated by Heidegger in hermeneutics, and, secondly, by means of critical analysis, to assess its direct and indirect criticism and to draw out the ethical consequences hereby.

## **1.7 Subject Limit**

Indeed, the question of being in philosophy serves as a guideline for all philosophy, from its beginning until today. Heidegger tries to pull the question of the meaning of being out of the oblivion into which it is immersed, not to pursue the ontological or metaphysical debate initiated by tradition, but to return to the "things themselves" of philosophy. *Sein und Zeit* proposes a development of philosophy understood as questioning the meaning of being (Heidegger, 1992).

## **1.8 Outline of Chapters**

Our research includes four chapters. The first chapter is a general introduction. The second (Epistemology of understanding) deals with understanding as knowledge and is based on the work of two fathers of modern hermeneutics: Schleiermacher and Dilthey. The third chapter focuses on the question of being. We look closely at the evolution of this issue in philosophy from Parmenides to Heidegger. In other words,

it shows how being (*être*) was obscured in favour of beings (*étant*). It is essentially the question of being overshadowed by traditional metaphysics, by delineating only as a single-presence, beings (*Etant*).

The analysis of chapters two and three serves as a springboard to the fourth (Ontological understanding). In this final chapter, Heidegger comes to show the subordination of the theory of understanding, understood as knowledge, to the ontological question of understanding. Understanding here is the mode of being of *Dasein*, the ground on which all knowledge is based. The problem of understanding that was once linked to the “other” is completely freed from him, because it goes together with the problem of the world. Heidegger *mundanises* understanding, which therefore becomes a mode of being (of *Dasein*) and not of knowledge as in the case of Schleiermacher and Dilthey.

## **1.9 Research Delimitations and Research Ethics**

With epistemological hermeneutics and the occultation of the question of being (*être*) in favour of the question of being (*étant*), everything was under human being, who used it as he pleased, so that we come to a pre-determined, and hence biased, knowledge of this being (*étant*). Everything was being and as such easier to manipulate. However, with the ontological turn and the ontological primacy *Dasein* has over other beings (*étant*), rapport with beings must be with all respect, and the goal that guides all human interactions with nature must be the well-being of *Dasein*. From here, we can even lay the foundations for an environmental ethic that would be the subject of further research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

# EPISTEMOLOGY OF UNDERSTANDING

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter mainly focuses on human beings' understanding and the world in which they are dwelling. The hermeneutics of understanding as developed by Schleiermacher and Dilthey are discussed. Firstly, a description of understanding according to Schleiermacher is given. Secondly, hermeneutics as developed by Dilthey is discussed, based on his thinking about the *science of nature* and the *science of mind*. The relevance of this chapter is to link and to lead to the originality of Heidegger's hermeneutics of understanding.

## 2.2 The object and aim of Schleiermacherian hermeneutics

Commenting on Schleiermacher, Berner asserts that in all Schleiermacher's work, hermeneutics is defined as the art of understanding (Berner, 1995: 49). By art, we mean all composite production in the course of which we are aware of the general rules, whose particular application can no longer be reduced to rules (Berner, 1995:

49). It should be pointed out in passing that Schleiermacher called for a general hermeneutics, the reason being that in his time hermeneutics was dispersed in special disciplines, especially in classical philology and biblical exegesis. Then, what and why should we interpret from Schleiermacher's perspective?

### 2.2.1 The object of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics

From Schleiermacher's perspective, the object of hermeneutics is essentially discourse, which may be oral or written. In 1829, Schleiermacher defined interpretation as an artistic activity that consists of any understanding of another person's speech. The notion of otherness does not only mean the foreign language or passages which, in my own language, require a translation, since in every discourse there is, even in that which we seem to understand, something that one does not understand. We must understand the thought immediately oriented towards exposure, that is, the discourse, which is the object of hermeneutics. Nevertheless, exhibitions of another kind, which do not start from thought, have a quite different function, situated outside the field of hermeneutics (Berner, 1995: 50). There is, therefore, hermeneutics wherever there is a thought which is expressed by a discourse, which is nothing else than all thought which expresses itself in the sign.



In Schleiermacher's view, the work of art is not, as such, the object of hermeneutics. The art of understanding has as its object all discourses, which convey content and which communicate. In the writing of 1819, there is a very clear formula which states: "every act of discourse is not an object of interpretation to an equal degree: some objects have a zero value for this art, others have an absolute value, most are between these two extremes" (Berner, 1995: 51).

Thus, speeches, which content themselves with maintaining the language in the continuity of repetition have a zero value. Interpretation is only triggered by elaborate thought and its purpose is to develop it. Indeed, general hermeneutics is understood only with the dialectic which is nothing else than the art of the combination of thoughts and the rhetoric, which is that of their shaping because it (general hermeneutics) is dealing with thought.

The art of understanding is required whenever it comes to perceiving, through words, ideas or series of ideas. Ideas and thought are the objects of the art of understanding only insofar as they are the products of intellectual functions. Hermeneutics applies only to conversations cultivated with the most spiritual people, with whom significant conversations are engaged. In this sense, a chat does not call for the art of understanding (Berner, 1995: 52). Since we must understand the thoughts expressed

in discourse and formulated in a language, hermeneutics, which has the sole task of understanding discourse, then has language as the only presupposition. In Schleiermacher's view, thoughts are not considered as mere data, but as realities produced that must be re-energized in a concrete self.

There is no speech without the will to communicate, and therefore to be understood. The discourse, which is the object of hermeneutics is in fact the discourse which has a conceptual content, that is, which makes possible the exchange, the transmission of meaning. Authentic discourse is a will to be understood. Discourse is that movement, which starting from itself, is directed towards the other, and ideas, which

have never been merely objectifications must in their crystallization be referred them to a subject, to an individual who produced them.

### **2.2.2 The aim of hermeneutics**

Many of Schleiermacher's commentators assert that the purpose of his hermeneutics is understanding (Berner, 1995: 50), although Gadamer thinks that the aim of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is not at all to understand the objective meaning of discourse but to grasp the individuality of the speaker or author (Gadamer, 1996:

189). Whether we accept Berner's or Gadamer's position, understanding remains the aim of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics. However, what does Schleiermacher mean by understanding? To understand is to reconstruct the work (discourse) as a living act of the author. In other words, understanding is a psychological reconstruction that seeks to rediscover the creative process in its mainly expressive dimension. Besides, according to Berner's commentary on Dilthey, Schleiermacher's particularity is that he insisted on the living aspect of understanding, that is, the reconstruction that can rely only on the living relationship with the process of production (Berner, 1995: 12). Understanding a discourse means understanding the living intuition of the creative process. Here we must find psychologically the living association of thoughts.

According to Gadamer, Schleiermacher's understanding would be "a transposition into the writer's disposition, a grasp of the internal process of the realization of a work, a reconstruction of the creative act" (Gadamer, 1996: 191). Indeed, to understand is a question of returning to the seminal decision, to the absolutely individual aspect in which the general production is anchored. It is therefore a question of going to the origin of the discourse. In the same way, Margolis states:

*Schleiermacher's achievement, stated in the homeliest way, centers on the fact that he was convinced (and pursued the conviction) that man must be capable of understanding his fellow (as he understands himself) and that this ability (which may well lend itself to discipline, improvement, system, and variable talent and skill) must be the common, accessible property of humanity (Margolis, 1987: 362).*

It is worth pointing out here that it is by referring to genius in creation that it is possible to account for the necessity of the divinatory character of interpretation. This is why hermeneutics, in Schleiermacher's view, will remain an art as long as the problem of understanding remains attached to the problem of individuality. The concern of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is to understand thought in its claim to universality even though it is inscribed in an individual subject. Hermeneutics is thus, found in this double movement of constitution of the individual and the universal.

Consequently, to understand is to embrace the conviction of the writer and to be able to grasp the perspective from which an author wanted to say something. Understanding is therefore here intropathic. Further to understand is to enter into the author's feeling, to grasp what he meant. Hence, understood in this light, understanding will remain relatively and always imperfect. This is well rendered, in the Latin phrase: "*individuum est ineffabile*" (Berner, 1995: 13).

According to Berner, understanding what is at stake in hermeneutics means understanding how an individual works in the language, collaborates, and gives meaning to concepts. Hermeneutics thus tackles the individual constitution of concepts. In other words, it is a matter of seeing in hermeneutics how, starting from the individual, thought can establish something new through the detour of the linguistic medium and its general structural conditions (Berner, 1995: 55).

Indeed, according to Schleiermacher, thought is considered as a model of understanding. This explains, moreover, the generality of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics which does not mean that this hermeneutics applies to a large number of objects, as Manfred Frank rightly asserts, but to that universal object which is the thought in itself. Individual thought is always enlightened in the light of the universal (Berner, 1995: 55). However, from the ethical point of view, hermeneutics is understood in Schleiermacher's sense as a science of the becoming of the spirit, a speculative science of the action of reason on nature. To understand is really an enrichment of the self of the interpreter, a process of spiritualization, the realization of reason (Berner, 1995: 55).

### **2.3 The Lack of Understanding and the Will to Understand**

The starting point of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is not understanding but the lack of understanding. In other words, hermeneutics is based on the lack of understanding. This idea is very well formulated by Berner, commenting on Schleiermacher in these terms: "Hermeneutics rests on the factum of the non-understanding of discourse" (Berner, 1995: 56). This same idea is also supported by Paul Ricoeur, who rightly points out that it is the fact of misunderstanding that gave rise to hermeneutics in general (Ricoeur, 1984: 325). Schleiermacher notes three stages of hermeneutics, which are, pure non-understanding, misunderstanding and comprehension.

Integral comprehension is the transparency of thought to itself, since the thought of the individual finds its correspondence with the essence of thought and is nothing other than the thinking mind, which is gradually discovering itself. In this sense, in a real dialogue, there is an essential dimension of communion or community by virtue of the fact that it is the other that I understand by grasping its expressions. It is then easy to understand that hermeneutics is inscribed only in a community of communication that presupposes a community of language (Berner, 1995: 56). On the other hand, misunderstanding does not awaken the will to understand because, first, it has meaning only on the horizon of it (the will to understand). It is the former (misunderstanding) that is at the point of departure of the error of understanding, because the consciousness of the error of understanding does not help us to situate the origin and its essence.

This awareness does not help us to remedy this misunderstanding which often results from past negligence and its awareness is not a guarantee of good hermeneutics. Berner, commenting on Schleiermacher, states that in 1809, for the latter, the hermeneutic operation must not only begin where understanding becomes uncertain, for usually, when it becomes so, it has already been neglected earlier (Berner, 1995: 57). From the outset, Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is a manifestation of the will to understand. It is in this sense that the hermeneutic operation begins at the very

beginning of the undertaking of trying to understand a discourse. Indeed, it is essential to realise that misunderstanding cannot be a reality, a given, because, if it is total, then it cannot be linked to it (hermeneutics) by any means. Misunderstanding becomes here a necessary passage, that is, to want to understand a discourse, it is to act from the start as if I did not understand it because in hermeneutics, there is no immediate understanding or clarity. It should be noted that ordinary and practical understanding existed before Schleiermacher, who thinks that the interest of general hermeneutics is a theoretical interest which is reflected at the level of reflection, and consequently that immediate understanding has hermeneutic status only when it is reflected (Berner, 1995: 58).

As a continuation of what has just been said, it should be noted once more that the more rigorous practice of hermeneutics always starts from the fact that erroneous understanding occurs spontaneously and that understanding must be something wanted and searched for point by point. Therefore, to realise that I do not understand is to realise that I wanted to understand (Berner, 1995: 59). Finally, to be truthful, to understand the thought in a discourse implies the fact that one must therefore begin by understanding its medium, its condition of possibility, and its completion, which is language. It is here that we must understand the two complementary sides of understanding, namely to understand in the language and to understand in the speaker. This idea is better rendered by Berner, commenting on Wolf and Virmond, saying: "this is the double polarity of the singular universal that is the language, which determines the distinction between grammatical interpretation and technical interpretation" (Berner, 1995: 39). In other words, to understand thoughts, I must understand the language, which enables one to complete thoughts (Schleiermacher, 1997: 176), because if one does not understand the language, he or she does not understand the thoughts expressed in that language.

### **2.3.1 The grammatical interpretation**

This interpretation focuses in particular on the reality of discourse by aiming at grasping both the words and the links that compose it. In Berner's view, in the work of Schleiermacher, in the order of exposition, grammatical interpretation is always first because language is the only thing that must be presupposed in hermeneutics

and all that we find must be found from the language (Berner,1995: 68). In this interpretation, it is a matter of returning the meaning of discourse from the sole language, because the latter is common to the reader and to the author. In another register, only the language is taken into account and the author or writer is himself or herself suspended. With respect to art, this side of understanding is the art of regaining the determined meaning of a discourse from the language and using the language. Moreover, it is around this angle that a community is formed which has in common the language, which community is communicative, that is to say, a field of communication in which an author, a writer and a reader or a listener may agree.

We do not pass over in silence the fact that this interpretation is called objective because it is based on a definite object that is the language or because it concerns the linguistic framework that is distinct from the author. And it is also said to be negative in that it delimits the domain in which a proposition can receive meaning and thus excludes that which does not conform to the grammatical rules and which cannot be understood at all (Berner, 1995: 68).

Moreover, this aspect of understanding aims at reconstructing the system of concepts specific to an individual from the system of concepts specific to a language. It is concerned with the presentation of meaning in language, starting from the unity or synthesis between the linguistic law (concept and the multiplicity of uses (intuition) present in the schema). It also refers to the essential unity of words which nevertheless never appears as such (Berner, 1995: 69). After this brief review of language as a medium in which a thought comes into being, we must note that the subject who speaks has not yet been seriously examined.

### **2.3.2 Technical interpretation**

Technical interpretation is based on the force of thought, on the conatus ultimately rooted in the individual who imparts a proper meaning and a mark to his discourse. The latter being considered as produced by a subject is a produced reality, which is fully intelligible only from the productivity, which is its origin (Berner, 1995: 71). This line of thinking has as its anchor and aim the speaker, the language being for the

occasion forgotten. We must start from the human being to understand his or her discourse, since language is nothing other than the organ placed at the service of his or her individual subjectivity.

Indeed, the essence of technical interpretation is to consider discourse not from language, but from the individual who constructs it, from the human being who speaks. There is no question here of seeing how human being receives a language of which he is the heir, but how he transforms it by using it, how discourse is at his service as that which makes it possible to affirm his individuality (Berner, 1995: 71). Contrary to grammatical interpretation which is objective and negative, technical interpretation is subjective because it seeks to access the individual interiority which leaves its trace but does not manifest itself as such; it is called positive because it posits something, that is, it is creative or productive in its reconstruction effort (Berner, 1995: 72). In other words, it is said to be positive because it reaches the act of thinking that produces discourse.

Just as discovering individuality in the particularity of the exhibition is to discover its style, so also the whole purpose of technical interpretation must be defined as the perfect understanding of style. This is why in this interpretation it is an insistence that we must start from the seminal decision, from the act which prompted the author to think what he thinks as he says. The essence of the turning point consists above all in grasping, from the individuality of the subject, how the concatenation and combination of thoughts are effected, and what the subjective dynamic is which presides over their succession. This interpretation is not only limited to discovering the concatenations of thoughts but extends even to the reproduction of the combination of thoughts, which is nothing else than reconstruction; that is to say, when I pretend to understand, I must be able to reconstruct the construction of the other identically (Berner, 1995: 72).

Since style is the way in which a subject communicates his thoughts, to grasp the author's style, one must understand the author's psychology, his personality and know the environment that determines him. However, there are two aims which

emerge from technical interpretation, namely that of finding a theme, the general unity which resides in the subject of the discourse and which commands it and that of knowing the author. For this purpose, we find two interpretations directed towards the individual who speaks. There is the psychological interpretation which seeks more particularly to account for the birth of thoughts from the element of life taken as a whole and thus endeavours to grasp the genesis of a discourse within a global moment of existence, and the technical interpretation, which consists in relating to a determined thought or a will to expose from, which develops thought and, which seeks to make intelligible the composition and the meditation which corresponds to the intention or the will to expose, which is at the origin of any series of thoughts. It should be noted that this distinction appears much later in the course of Schleiermacher's thinking (Berner, 1995: 72). These two types of interpretations are complementary and form the hermeneutic circle, which stipulates that the singular is understood only from the universal and vice versa. In the hermeneutics of Schleiermacher, there are not only the two sides of understanding or the two interpretations; there are also the ways that help us to carry the interpretation to good effect. Therefore, these are the methods.

## **2.4 Methods**

Whether grammatical or technical, it does not matter; interpretation always uses two methods, which are divinatory and comparative.

### **2.4.1 The divinatory method**

This is the method of immediate intuition. The divinatory method, which is sometimes called prophetic and which seeks to guess is more intuitive and focuses on what seems to escape a more discursive approach. This method aims at the seizure of what is individual. The interpreter takes the place of others. Berner goes on to say that "the divinatory method [...] consists in putting oneself, (as interpreter) as far as possible, in the place of the author" (Berner, 1995: 76).

This method does not pretend to immediately deliver the truth because it is part of a research process and because it must await the confirmation of the comparative



method, and by its hypothetical character, divination, like the individual conception to which it is supposed to lead, is always susceptible of being rectified or modified (Berner, 1995: 76).

#### **2.4.2 The comparative method**

A discursive approach tries to relate the particular to the general to understand it (the particular). This method necessarily calls for the divinatory method and vice versa. It must help to confirm what has been obtained by the divinatory method (Berner, 1995: 76). Indeed, the two methods are complementary and this complementarity aims to better understand the author than he has understood himself (Berner, 1995: 77) that is to say, seized at its peak, perfect understanding consists in better to understand the one who speaks something that he has not understood himself. This is understandable, says Berner, if we are in the perspective of the version of the abstract of Schleiermacher's work. There is no question of understanding the author in his subjective personality, but his discourse.

Since we do not have immediate knowledge of what is in the author's mind, we must try to become aware of many things that are true insofar as the author in a reflexive movement does not become his own reader. Moreover, even on this condition, the author of the discourse is not necessarily its best interpreter. In the end, understanding the discourse better than its author did does not mean simply making conscious what was unconscious, but above all, as in the matter of aesthetic criticism, perfecting the work by pursuing it in interpretation (Berner, 1995: 78). After this marathon visit to Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, the new point of investigation will consider understanding as an epistemological moment in Dilthey's thesis.

### **2.5 The Diltheyan Understanding**

In this section, the discussion will be based on the concept of understanding according to Dilthey; it will include, respectively, the distinction between the sciences of nature and the sciences of the mind; and the distinction between explaining and understanding, and a critical appraisal. Consideration will be given to criticisms of Rickert and Windelband (Mesure, 1990: 141-149) of the reinterpretation of Dilthey's

thought, by showing, in contrast, the novelty and the originality of understanding according to Heidegger's view.

### **2.5.1 The transcendental distinction and its scope**

From the outset, it is important to point out that it is in consciousness that there is a need to distinguish between the reign of nature and that of history. It is, by the way, an elaboration of an epistemology proper to the historical sciences. Indeed, man experiences freedom as opposed to the rest of nature, which is governed by determinism. It is this demarcation that man emphasizes when he thinks of his being as spirit or as life. It should be noted that the distinction between the sciences of the mind and the sciences of nature is not based, contrary to what has sometimes been believed, on the position within the realm of two distinct ontological domains. For such a distinction would naively and metaphysically separate the spirit and nature as two radically heterogeneous essences (Mesure, 1990: 96).

For Dilthey, the autonomy of the sciences of the mind is based specifically on the consciousness that human being has of himself or herself. Dilthey's reflection on the distinction between the natural sciences and the sciences of the mind is obviously part of the work of a transcendental approach (Dilthey, 1988:93). In view of Dilthey's passage from the metaphysical or ontological distinction to the transcendental distinction, it follows that:

*There is a demarcation between the reign of nature and that of history, and within it, in the midst of a set co-ordinated by objective necessity and which is nature, we see in more than a point, like a flash of light would shine on freedom (Dilthey, 1942: 15).*

It then becomes easy and manifest to understand that Dilthey does not intend to oppose spirit or history to nature, nor freedom to necessity. There is, therefore, no radical dualism, which opposes nature and spirit without giving rise to any possibility of passage from one to the other. Moreover, this starting from the historical phenomena, which while belonging to the reign of nature and sharing its submission to determinism, evokes the idea of an intentional causality or presents in a sensible way the idea of causality by freedom. History presents itself as a place of synthesis

between the two kingdoms and hence the autonomy of the sciences of the mind is only relative, as at the heart of the substitution of the metaphysical distinction by the transcendental distinction is the experience of the subject on which we are going to reflect in the following pages.

Positively, internal experience makes it possible to legitimize the distinction between the natural sciences and the sciences of the mind. The autonomy of the sciences of the mind is to be inscribed at the very heart of the relation which the subject maintains to himself and of a purely internal experience. It thus constitutes a reflexive experience in which the self, isolating its internal states from the given circumstances through which it perceives them, concentrates its attention on processes differing from the external experiences connected with it by the negative fact that we do not externalize these processes. The very possibility of such a reflection ensures that the proper content of our internal sense possesses an original independence and a material of its own, by virtue of which, if we consider science taking such material as its object, independence of such a science remains indisputable (Dilthey, 1942: 18).

The world of mind according to Dilthey has no common measure with the intelligible world of Plato or the noumenal universe because the spirit is not external to nature as would be a spiritual substance *vis-a-vis* physical substance. Nature and spirit are merely two points of view of a dimension of phenomenal reality which belongs, on the one hand, as a phenomenon to nature, understood as a whole coordinated by objective necessity, but on the other hand, also allows freedom to shine on it (Mesure, 1990: 101). There is no sudden opposition between the understanding of the sciences of the mind and the explanation proper to the natural sciences.

Commenting on Dilthey, Habermas thinks that the difference between the sciences of nature and the sciences of the mind must be reduced to the orientation of the knowing subject, to his attitude towards objects. This difference is situated at the level of objectification. It is in this sense that we consider nature according to the way in which we can seize it as a world of phenomena obeying general laws, thus eliminating the experience of the subject (Habermas, 1976: 177).

In the sciences of the mind, according to Habermas, concepts and theoretical approaches are less artificial products than mimetic reconstructions. On the other hand, in the natural sciences, knowledge leads to particular nomological theories or statements, which have been controlled by experience, while theories and prescriptions of the mind sciences serve only as a vehicle for the production of a lived reproductive experience (Habermas, 1976: 179). It appears that the demarcation perceived in this sense is an epistemology of historical knowledge. Here, then, there is the inauguration, in the tradition of the critical philosophies of history, of the requirement to privilege in the acquisition of historical knowledge the understanding, while not depriving history and in general the sciences of Spirit of their legitimate explanatory dimension (Mesure, 1990: 105).

Extensive criticisms of Dilthey were discussed previously. However, how these differ from others thinkers such as Rickert and Windelband will be investigated in the following subsection.

### **2.5.2 Critics of the Diltheyan distinction**

Dilthey's distinction is described in two parts, namely, the outer world, nature, and the inner world of the mind. For Windelband, such an interpretation raises many difficulties and lacks systematic consistency. Therefore, in order to escape from the nonoverlapping of the formal principle and the objective principle of distinction, Windelband would like us to confine ourselves to a purely methodical distinction based solely on the consideration of the formal character of the cognitive purposes. Certain sciences, in fact, seek universal laws while the others aim at particular historical facts. In another register of language, the aim of some is the general apodictic judgment, while that of others is the singular, assertoric utterance (Mesure, 1990: 144).

From this point of view one would then have the sciences of experience (chemical science and physical science), which seek the knowledge of the real, or the universal, in the form of the law of nature or the singular as it appears in the historically determined figure. They sometimes consider the form as always identical with itself,

and sometimes the unique content determined in itself of the real becoming. The former are therefore sciences of laws, the others are sciences of events. The former teach what is eternal and the latter what happened once. But, to tell the truth, scientific thought is in one case nomothetic, and in the other idiographic. It is therefore permissible to speak of the opposition between the natural sciences and the historical sciences, on condition that we bear in mind the fact that in this methodical sense, psychology is entirely to be placed on the side of the natural sciences. This methodical opposition classifies the sciences, not from the content of knowledge, but solely from consideration of their treatment of their object (Mesure, 1990: 145). Psychology, by seeking to establish the laws of psychic life, belongs by its method to nomothetic disciplines, that is to say, to those, which in dedicated terminological usage; belong to the sciences of nature (Mesure, 1990: 145).

In Rickert's view, nothing has been a greater obstacle to a clear vision of the essence of the historical sciences than the introduction of the opposition between physical and psychic processes in the logical problems of historical science (Mesure, 1990: 147). Faced with empirical reality, the mind can adopt two epistemologically divergent attitudes: either it seeks out what many objects have in common, or it attaches to what characterises an object in its singularity. In one case, it uses the generalising method and in the other, an individualising method. These two types of knowledge, by means of which the sensible infinite can be overcome, are at the basis of two orders of the sciences, which Rickert calls respectively, natural sciences and historical sciences. These are two different ways of representing reality (Mesure, 1990: 148).

The natural sciences place their object under concepts, which express what the multitude of particular things contains in common, and which henceforth have a universal content. They order these concepts in such a way as to form a system of universal concepts, so that everything and every process that comes under their domain finds its place. The formal aim of knowledge is situated in the establishment and expression of the universal (Mesure, 1990: 148). History, on the other hand, is interested in what happens once only. It is not intended to represent what is offered everywhere and always, but rather to represent exactly, with their individual traits,

particular existences in the different points of space and the different moments of duration (Mesure, 1990: 149).

Rickert, however, in his account of Windelband's distinction between nomothetic sciences and idiographical sciences, finds in this opposition between the universal and the particular the principle of demarcation between sciences. History, he believes, is the science of the individual, which happens once, as opposed to the natural sciences whose object is the universal, and which always appears with the same character (Mesure, 1990: 149). In his *Critical Philosophy of History*, Raymond Aron thinks that Rickert's distinction between natural and historical sciences has only a logical significance and does not correspond exactly to the sciences or to the real methods. Rickert's aim was not to establish a classification of the sciences, however, but to bring out, through the logical principle of the opposition between the universal and the particular, the two possible directions of scientific work (Aron, 1987: 155). The natural sciences all have, as matrix, mathematics. In other words, mathematics is the foundation of the unity of the natural sciences, but what is it of the sciences of the mind?

### **2.5.3 Psychology as a foundational science of the sciences of the mind**

The great privilege that Dilthey granted to psychology is undoubtedly the most discussed point of his studies on the historical sciences. It is from this perspective that Makkreel describes Dilthey's philosophy as psychology from the facts that for Dilthey epistemology and psychology go hand in hand and cannot be separated from each other (Mesure, 1990: 111). The contestation of Dilthey's thought reaches its height at this level insofar as, on the basis of Husserl's logical research, psychologism, that is, the reduction of the question of validity to that of genesis, is considered as the *bête noire* of many epistemologists and theorists of knowledge (Mesure, 1990: 111). The question that deserves to be asked here is why the empowerment of the sciences of mind passes through psychology. But to properly answer this question and to fully understand Dilthey's choice of psychology, there are two important problems that deserve our attention. It is the essential necessity of the determination of a foundation for the sciences of mind and the specificity of the Diltheyan choice which is therefore connected with our question above.

### **2.5.3.1 The necessity of the foundation**

The demand for the foundation of the sciences of mind is imperative because of a state of radical dispersion. Unlike the natural sciences, which are articulated among themselves on the basis of mathematics, "the sciences of mind do not yet form a whole", and this despite the efforts of merits accomplished, in this sense by the attempts of Mill, Littré and Herbert Spencer to make a whole of the historical and social sciences (Mesure, 1990: 112). There are two reasons for this dispersion of the sciences of mind: a historical reason and a structural one.

For Measure, the sciences of mind have historically arisen in the midst of the practice of life and they have developed in the course of the demands of a vocational training, which, as a new social activity was created, made necessary the reflection of this activity and its own conditions. She affirms: "thus the various social sciences did not separate from each other by an artifice of theoretical reason which had undertaken to solve, by a methodical analysis of its object, the problem of fact posed by the world of history and Society" (Mesure, 1990: 113), but it is life itself, which causes these sciences to separate. Apart from historical reasons, the sciences of mind, for more intrinsic reasons have managed to isolate themselves from each other by the process of abstraction which is constitutive of their structure. "It is through an act of abstraction that each discipline was cutting out, so to speak, in the totality of reality" (Mesure, 1990: 113), a level of reading corresponding to the point of view, which defines it, constitutes its specific object. In this sense, every particular science comes into being only if one highlights the content of a fragment detached from historical and social reality. Each birth is accomplished as a rupture of the totality.

The multiplicity of the sciences of mind is accomplished by the dispersion, which their history realizes. It is in this context that systematization or foundation work is indispensable. In fact, the sciences of mind must constitute themselves in a whole, not only in order to spare themselves the perverse effects of specialisation, but above all by sparing them a space of communication and perceiving the articulation of their methods and of their results. Because of the disparate or heterogeneous state in which the sciences of mind were founded, the positivists found it better to impose on them

from the outside, the unity capable of ordaining them than to see how in themselves this dichotomy between the natural sciences and sciences of mind is articulated.

In spite of the dispersion in which the sciences of mind are found, they form a whole, a system. This is what makes the difference between Dilthey and the positivists. Dilthey seeks the unity of these sciences within themselves. He therefore takes psychology as the foundation of the sciences of mind. In view of the Dilthey's decision to base the sciences of mind in psychology, there have been two corollary consequences, namely, that the self-foundation of these sciences of mind means that they do not need anything than themselves for their existence. This autofoundation therefore corroborates their empowerment in relation to the natural. After that, there is emancipation of these sciences in relation to metaphysics. According to Dilthey, it was on the basis of metaphysics that the sciences of mind were detached, endeavouring to treat religion, law, morality, and the nation, not from abstract concepts, but by trying to explain human reality of itself and by itself. Even in this field, as in the field of the natural sciences, analysis has forever destroyed the concepts used by metaphysics in its beautiful period to interpret the facts (Mesure, 1990: 115). It is in this sense that legal science has replaced natural law theories based on an abstract schema of human nature. In the same process, the science of psychic life had to replace the ancient metaphysical psychology, which had as its object the soul (Dilthey, 1942: 472). The foundation requirement is to be placed in the point of view of Dilthey, namely that of bringing the sciences of the mind out of their classic double outbuilding. To put it another way, it is a question of constituting the sciences of the mind as autonomous sciences.

### **2.5.3.2 The Diltheyan Choice of Psychology**

Dilthey describes psychology as the fundamental science on which all the sciences of mind are founded. It is because psychology is the discipline which, abstracting from the living whole, which is the historical and social reality, has for its object the general qualities that psychologically individualities acquire (Mesure, 1990: 117). It is therefore psychology which supplies matter to the totality of the sciences of mind. On this basis, Dilthey thinks that all the concepts used by the historical sciences, "for example in law, will, responsibility, in art, creative imagination, the ideal" and all the



propositions contained in for example, the principle of the metamorphosis of representations under the influence of affective life into aesthetics, the laws of logical thought in a theory of science , "can only be determined satisfactorily if psychology is used" (Dilthey, 1988: 79).

Psychology is therefore, the matrix of the system of the sciences of mind, since it is the basis of all conceptualisations. In other words, it is that on the basis of which other sciences of mind are possible and around, which these sciences communicate. In the opinion of Mesure, commenting on Dilthey, psychology is the first and most elementary of the sciences of mind, the one whose truths are the basis of the edifice, which composes the sciences of mind (Dilthey, cited by Mesure, 1990: 117). It should be noted here that the sovereignty of psychology over the other sciences of mind has been at the heart of a great debate which wanted this sovereignty to return to a theory of knowledge (Mesure, 1990: 119-121).

From the Diltheyan perspective, after this bitter dispute between psychology and the theory of knowledge, psychology prevailed. On this subject Dilthey asserts that it is "a fully developed science of psychic life, a descriptive and comparative psychology that subordinates the theory of knowledge" (Mesure, 1990: 122). There is here a radicalisation of the psychological foundation. In view of the foregoing, no human discipline, whether in law, religion, economics, art or science, can claim autonomy from psychology. Mesure, commenting on Dilthey, believes that despite the illusion of Kant's criticism of reason, which in principle emancipated the theory of the knowledge from psychology, it is now the case, she says, that no transcendental spell, and no magic word of The Kantian School can abolish the dependence of the theory of knowledge on psychology (Mesure, 1990: 122). Overall, psychology reigns, indeed, at the heart of the theory of knowledge. Psychology thus reigns without sharing based on the edifice of the sciences of the mind because psychic life is the dimension common to all aspects of the world of the mind, and through the intermediary of the theory of knowledge. After this analysis of Dilthey's thinking, what about explanation and understanding in his hermeneutics?

## **2.6 The articulation explanation-understanding**

Many interpreters of Dilthey who criticised his philosophy have as their starting point his famous formula: “we explain nature, we understand the psychic life.” It is the interpretation of this formula which has led to the exclusive opposition between explanation and understanding. It is in the light of this articulation that we shall illuminate the relation between the two methods which constitute the hermeneutic circle. But what does Dilthey mean by natural explanation?

### **2.6.1. Natural explanation**

In the natural order, human being knows things. Here there is no question of the knowledge of the thing in itself, but we know only phenomena of things through space, time and categories. Habermas, commenting on Dilthey, asserts that the explanation attaches to events given by nomological hypotheses, because of established initial conditions. It requires the application of theoretical propositions to facts which have been established by systematic observation (Habermas, 1976: 179). In other words, in the natural sciences, phenomena are explained by hypotheses, which must be subjected to experimental verification. The explanatory approach is the natural approach of natural sciences. Since our aim is not to highlight explanation, a specific approach of the natural sciences, but understanding in the sciences of the spirit, we should now be allowed to devote all our attention to the process specific to the sciences of mind, which is understanding. In other words, it is a matter of conceptualising the process by which knowledge is possible in the human order.

### **2.6.2 Understanding**

In the sciences of mind, man knows another, that is, his fellow. Man, in fact, is not a stranger as is the physical thing, because he gives signs of his own existence. Understanding these signs means understanding man. How is it possible for two historical beings to know each other? Life, in fact, in its outpouring, produces stable forms or configurations, which are called the chain which one must know in order to understand man. In the opinion of faithful interpreters of Dilthey, there are two theories of understanding in Diltheyan thought: understanding in the horizon of psychology and understanding in the horizon of meaning.

### **2.6.2.1 Understanding in the horizon of psychology**

In the first stage of his thought, Dilthey did not go as far as Schleiermacher. Understanding is defined as lived participation in the experience of others, or sympathy. Understanding a human reality external to mine would literally revive what the other has lived, and thus reproduce or recreate a strange or foreign mental element. In other words, great historical creations stem from the sympathetic understanding of personal characteristics, from our ability to relive the inexhaustible totalities through the richness of our lives (Mesure, 1990: 68). This is why, for Habermas, it is the richness of our own experience that allows us to imagine, through a sort of transposition, an analogous experience outside of us and to understand it. Therefore, we do not understand ourselves and understand others unless we transpose our experience into all forms of expression from our life and from a foreign life (Habermas, 1976: 183).

This Diltheyan approach to understanding is said to be intuitive, even irrational, by the fact that it is connected with the installation of psychology at the centre of the sciences of mind. History in this context is above all psychology of the actors of the past. Indeed, understanding supposes that the historian takes the place of the actors of the past to regain their states of mind and to relive what they have experienced (Mesure, 1990: 220). Because of the dominant influence of Schleiermacher, Dilthey succeeds in a universal hermeneutics, which considers that the rules governing the interpretation of the scriptures also apply to any written or oral expression of mankind. In the eyes of Gadamer, Dilthey has especially retained from Schleiermacher the belief that the interpretation of a text does not give us access only to the objective meaning of words, but also to the individuality of the author (Gadamer, 1996: 175-177). Accordingly, it is indeed Schleiermacher's reading that led Dilthey to situate understanding in the rise of the psychic states present at the genesis of a work. Understanding here consists in understanding the author better than he has understood himself because there are involuntary representations alongside conscious representations. It is interesting to clarify a certain conception of understanding that Raymond Aron attributes to Simmel, although it belongs to the first theory of Dilthey's understanding. According to this conception, if we know others by analogy with ourselves, if we project our own states outward, in this sense, to

understand others is to be found in them. Understanding does not reach the other as such, but is a transfiguration of ourselves. If understanding is to live or relive, then we only understand ourselves (Simmel, cited by Aron, 1987: 195).

After a careful reading of this conception of understanding, it is evident that this understanding, defined as substituted experience, implies an absurd monadological conception of hermeneutics in the moral sciences (Habermas, 1976: 181). At first glance, understanding seems to be based on a relationship of intersubjectivity. In other words, this understanding gives the impression of communication of a consciousness, which is practically impossible. It is, in principle, a sympathetic coincidence. As readers, we try to relive the experience of others. There is here erasure of my subjectivity, to leave the space for another subjectivity. It is by denying my own subjectivity that I coincide with that of others. Additionally, this alleged sympathy is merely an opportunity for the reader's consciousness to project himself outside and transform himself into that of others. There is here the erasure of the subjectivity of others to allow only the subjectivity of the historian to emerge (Mesure, 1990: 223). Therefore, due to some perceived difficulties in the first theory, Dilthey felt obliged to profoundly rearrange his conception of understanding.

#### **2.6.2.2 Understanding in the horizon of meaning**

Understanding at this stage, therefore, is no longer a question of reliving what the authors and the actors have experienced, by probing hearts and kidneys, but of constructing the internal logic of a system of the author's subjectivity, that is, the set of values and norms that express its spirit, in other words, give it its meaning. It is about understanding everything that makes sense (Dilthey, 1988: 85). There is, for the moment, a large gap in the first theory of understanding, which was a reconstruction of the germinal process of a work. However, understanding is no longer a psychic process that intervenes in the author or his readers. There is now a shift from the psychology model.

At the heart of this new theory is always the internal/external duality, but the duality is no longer that of the depths of the psyche and of its externalizations' being established between the sense of external or internal concepts, but above all the duality between the external sensible phenomenalization of life and that which produced it and, which manifests itself in it. It is the duality that exists between a given legal system, for example, and the spirit that animates it and gives it its meaning (Dilthey, 1988: 83-84). In other words, it is a question of understanding the objective spirit of a system or of an author. The objective spirit is not to be understood in the Hegelian sense, that is to say, the moment of the return to self of the idea. In Hegel's view, this notion is to be understood in its vast speculative system, which means the self-deployment of universal rationality. For Dilthey, objective spirit means objectified mind that is, externalized or phenomenalized (Hegel and Dilthey cited by Aron, 1987: 78).

In the Diltheyan conception, the notion of the objective spirit leaves the speculative ground for the epistemological field and encompasses all the realities amenable to letting a meaning be grasped in them, and thus apprehended in terms of spirit. Spirit is meant in the sense of the spirit of all mental objectifications, and includes all kinds of life forms, lifestyle, language, customs, family, civil society, state and law, in short all forms in which the mind is objectified and ... is known (Dilthey, 1988: 151).

Thus, understanding is defined as that which, in external realities such as a piece of music, the painting, which one paints, the court, where the right is pronounced, the prison where the sentence is served, deals only with meaning. It therefore consists in making meaning of a historical event or a social reality by inscribing it in the institution to which it belongs. In other words, it consists in grasping the spirit of the institutional systems, or the *oeuvres*, or works, in which the epoch makes sense. It is a question of understanding the objectification of the mind. After defining the concepts of explanation and comprehension in a long elucidation, we shall now try to appraise their value.

### 2.6.3 The relevance of the articulation

Many interpreters of Dilthey have thought of the relation between explanation and understanding in terms of exclusive opposition. A careful reading of Dilthey's exposition on "the stages of historical understanding" in *Edification*, however leads to another perspective. In this argument, Dilthey mentions three main moments of historical understanding. The first stage is that of the narrative and is animated by the curiosity of the human reality, especially as it relates to the homeland. This stage corresponds to the work of Herodotus. The second is that of orientation towards explanation. This period is initiated by the work of Thucydides. Through the explanation of the past Thucydides highlighted the fact that apart from curiosity, there are other reasons to study history.

In short, by highlighting its explanatory dimension, Thucydides has shown the decisive importance of history for political thought, since, as in the natural sciences, the demonstration of regularity in the interactive whole also makes possible in history prediction and action based on knowledge. His successors, like Polybius, only enriched the process by inserting in the explanatory method the action of durable forces such as those of the constitution, military organisation, and finances and deducing from the study the forces which act in this state in the various political events. It is necessary to add to the explanatory method the spiritual forces as Machiavelli and Guicciardini did.

The third stage corresponds to the time of Voltaire (in the 18th century). Thus opens the period of modern historiography, marked by the fact that historians are interested in everything that is cultural history or culture. Indeed, the beginning of historical knowledge is no longer the explanation of a succession of political events, but a history of culture, which calls for an understanding of the collaboration of such cultural systems. Understanding becomes one of the essential moments in the historian's approach (Dilthey, 1988: 106).

According to Dilthey, the three stages remain alive in historiography, that is to say that one cannot reject out of hand the stages represented by Thucydides and Herodotus in favour of the comprehension as such. He affirms:

*The joyful art of the narrative, the explanation that goes to the heart of things, the application of systematic knowledge, analysis of particular interactive sets and the principle of evolution, these moments integrate with each other and reinforce each other (Dilthey, 1988: 157).*

There is an integration of an explanatory moment into the process of the sciences of the mind because, first, their object is a psycho-physical entity, which implies both approaches, and secondly because the logic of these sciences imposes a combinatorial understanding and explanation. There is therefore no exclusion between the two approaches, but there is complementarity even if, in Dilthey, there is a predominance of understanding.

Thus, in Diltheyan thought, in order to account for a human, historical or social reality, there is first the explanation, and then comes the understanding, which is grafted onto the first. In this sense, the relation of explanation and understanding is not one of mutual exclusion, but a mutual dependence because every explanation calls for an understanding. However, the entire process of complementary approaches is mainly due to the fact that comprehension is the one feature of the sciences of mind whose originality in relation to the natural sciences was to be demonstrated. It is in this sense that it is up to every interpreter of a work.

In fact, it seems to me that the relevance of this articulation should be completed by repeating Arendt's statement that "the real meaning of every event always transcends the past causes that can be assigned to it" (Arendt, 1980: 97-98). This formula clearly explains this interdependence from one side to the other.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

This chapter had discussed the question "How do we understand?" Based on the works of Schleiermacher and Dilthey, two prominent names in modern hermeneutics. The first section of the chapter underlined hermeneutics as the art of understanding and showed that the problem of understanding was intimately linked to the central act of discourse. However, in order to understand the discourse,

Schleiermacher argued that it was necessary to go through the grammatical interpretation. This was important to recover the meaning solely from the analysis of language and from the technical interpretation, as started by the person or the subject of discourse, to understand the latter. This concept of interpretation supported the contention that divinatory and comparative methods were important in the process of understanding. Understanding from the Schleiermacherian perspective was mainly described as a psychological reconstruction of the creative process in its essentially expressive dimension.

In the second part, the discussion focused on understanding in the Diltheyan sense. The distinction between the sciences of mind and the sciences of nature was made by underlining the complementarity between explanation and understanding. In Dilthey's work, two theories of understanding were analyzed. Understanding was defined as the grasping or the arising of sense, or the objective spirit of an event, a social reality. In short, for the two authors, the being, which is a question of knowing here, is a being as *Seindes*. There is already from this perspective the occultation or forgetfulness of being (*Sein*) in favour of the beings (*Seindes*), which are the object of the sciences of the spirit. This matter of occultation will be the topic of our next chapter.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **HEIDEGGER AND THE QUESTION OF BEING**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

From the beginning of philosophy, the problematic of 'being' has been at the core of debate in this field. For those accustomed to philosophical praxis, it is superfluous to recall that the question of 'being' underlies the work of Heidegger and traverses it from beginning to end. In Heidegger's view, the concept of 'being' is the most equivocal, the most general and the emptiest in philosophy (Heidegger, 1992: 25).



The difficulty raised by the notion of being led in the history of Western philosophy to the occultation of this notion. The main concern throughout the history of considering the question of 'being' was about the attitude of the metaphysics thinkers in forgetting this question that served them as the guideline (Heidegger, 1992: 25). In order to address this issue, this investigation uses the critical analysis method by considering the history of western philosophy. Firstly, the question of forgetting 'being' and truth is addressed, and secondly, the focus is on the beings other than *Dasein* and finally on *Dasein* itself.

### 3.2 The question of being and metaphysics

In Heidegger's understanding, the concept of "being" is the most general and empty word (Heidegger, 1992: 25) because of several challenges raised by its definition. These difficulties are captured in the three following prejudices:

*Firstly, it has been maintained that 'Being' is the "most universal" concept [...]. An understanding of 'being' is already included in conceiving anything which one apprehends as an entity. But the "universality" of 'Being' is not that of a class or genus. The term 'being' does not define that realm of entities which is uppermost when these are Articulated (sic) conceptually according to genus and species [...]. It has been maintained secondly that the concept of 'Being' is indefinable. This is deduced from its supreme universality, and rightly so, if definitio fit per genus proximum et differentiam specificam [...].*

*The indefinability of 'being' does not eliminate the question of its meaning; it demands that we look that question in the face. Thirdly, it is held that 'being' is of all concepts the one that is self-evident. Whenever one cognizes anything or makes an assertion, whenever one comports oneself towards entities, even towards oneself, some use is made of 'being'; as this expression is held to be intelligible "without further ado", just as everyone understands "The sky is blue", "I am merry". The very fact that we already live in an understanding of Being and that the meaning of 'being'*

*is still veiled in darkness proves that it is necessary in principle to raise this question again (Heidegger, 1980: 22-23).*

In view of the above, it is important now to review the question of being throughout the history of metaphysics. However, the postulate and the basic observation are that being has never been thought of in its truth, not only because philosophers have posed and elaborated in insufficient detail the question, but also because 'being' does not give itself up: it reveals itself or is never revealed only by veiling simultaneously (Hottois, 2002: 344). It should be pointed out here that the great philosophical misunderstanding par excellence of all time is the confusion of 'being' and beings. Metaphysics as the history of philosophy has been misguided by thinking of 'being' exclusively as beings. In other words, 'being' has been identified as beings (Heidegger, 1992: 51).

Martin Heidegger considers all precedent ontology to be a monstrous outgrowth stifling the truths that we saw in the beginning. Ontology, he argues, is trivialised. The heaviest responsibility lies with scholasticism. Indeed, the early Greek philosophers had already prepared the seed for this forgetfulness of the question of 'being' since the initial deviations appear in the very works of those who created metaphysics (Heidegger, 1992: 3). For Heidegger, although there were glimmers of truth at the beginning of philosophical thought, as early as Plato, philosophy began to obscure the question of 'being'. This error reached its climax with Descartes at the beginning of modernity, culminating with Nietzsche and reaching its decline with the evolution of technology (Hottois, 2002; Steiner, 1987: 70).

In his idealist realism, Plato identifies being with ideas. These are the most real, most important being. Thus, 'being' is wrongly identified with essential forms whose essential characteristics are visibility and permanence, in short the eternal presence.

In another register of language, in Plato, the truth is the ideal, that is to say 'being' is visible to the intellect. What counts here, as the truth is the fact of revealing itself, of appearing in the present, while the obscure and the concealed from which the appearance comes are forgotten. The 'true being' being the visible, the important thing is to perceive what is revealed and if the truth is the ideal, the truth of the thought is thus the *orthotes*, to see right and to reflect this report in which, in this way, it is true

in so far as it conforms to what manifests itself (Vattimo, 1985: 98). Plato identified being with 'transcendent beings, thought the other of matter and becoming (of the sensible), but not the other of all being. Thus, in seeking not 'being' as such, but the being of beings, Plato has established a hierarchy of beings. We have in the foreground the essential ideals that give material things a little stability and reality (Hottos, 2002: 346).

According to Aristotle, 'being' is considered in two senses, it is first seen as what (*eidos*), that is to say, as essence, and then as presence or *ousia* (Heidegger, 1975: 5), that is to say, actual existence. This last is for Aristotle energy (*energeia*), and it is to the act of existing effectively that it attributes the 'being' of the first way and not to the essence or *eidos* (Vattimo, 1985: 99). This valorization of *energeia* brings Aristotle closer to the origin of the concept of *aletheia* in the sense that thinking of 'being' as an act is to think of it as the point of arrival of a process and therefore as "coming from". Moreover, the fact that *energeia* is distinct from the *eidos*; or in other words the fact that the "*que*" is distinct from 'what' or essence, makes the Aristotelian position a step closer to the ever more complete identification of being with what is actually present (Heidegger, 1992: 51).

In the middle ages with St. Augustine of Hippo and Denys Aeropagite, there is a reorientation of the question of 'being' (Heidegger, 1992: 26). The question of the origin of the world brings out that of the reason of existence. By reasoning thus, medieval philosophers are led to discover the supreme essence: the one who is in the Bible. This *esse* is conceived as the immutable 'being' *superessentialis*.

However, with St. Thomas Aquinas, we can no longer say of an object that it is because it is a 'being', we must now reverse the proposition. It is an *ens* only in so far as it refers to the *esse*; *ens* means *habensesse*. In this way, Thomas Aquinas directs the question of 'being' to the supremely eminent Being: the *ipsumesse* of God, and at the same time breaks with the Greek question of being understood as *toti en einai*. The question now applies to a 'being' whose being has its roots beyond mere quiddity, to the pure act of existing (Jacob, 1990: 89-90).

Descartes is in his turn the philosopher with whom we find a first result that is decisive of the forgetfulness of the 'being', which takes into account all the implications of the Greek conception of 'being' as *idea* (Plato) and as *energeia* (Aristotle). To Descartes, only what is stably defined by a form (idea, that is to say visibility) is true because the Greek word "idea" has the same root as the verb "to see", that which is actually present (Descartes, cited by Vattimo, 1985: 99). True being has as a fundamental trait the fact of giving itself as certain: the constitutive trait of being is the certainty, the character of what is indubitable (Vattimo, 1985: 99). Indeed, the turning point initiated by Descartes in the conception of being is that of modernity, but it is in the continuity of the Platonic reduction of being to beings. Cartesian philosophy is characterised by the primacy of the subject who becomes the Supreme Being, the ultimate foundation of all other beings assimilated to objects. It is in this sense, that in seeking the truth, humankind is absolutely certain of two realities:

- his own existence as *ego cogitans* (the unquestionable certainty of the *cogito*)
- and
- his own representations. This is what he poses before himself in thought. Clear and obvious representations are therefore the only objective objects because they are what the *ego cogitans* extraposes. It is about what he apprehends directly and of which he can be sure (Heidegger, 1992: 50). With this Cartesian transformation that is far from being a simple story of words and ways of thinking, the absolute and unshakable foundation of reality is now the human ego, before which the 'being of things' must be legitimized, 'being,' which is recognised as 'being' only to the extent that it is certain.

In line with all of the above, Steiner affirms Descartes's point of view:

*Beings are only true insofar as they enter into the polarized bond of rational subject and verifiable object... Everything is referred back to the human viewer. The cogito comes before the sum; thought precedes being; truth is a function of the certitude of the human subject (Steiner, 1987: 70).*

It is noted, moreover, that the notion of objectivity, of which modern philosophy makes such great use, is always correlative to that of the subject. Nevertheless, what constitutes it is then and precisely the certainty that the subject has about it (Vattimo, 1985: 100). This desire for certainty, characteristic of modernity, goes hand in hand with the development of analytical, calculating, methodical thought that quantifies and measures everything. In this context, mathematics is very important for the development of assured knowledge that will unfold under the name of modern science. This certain knowledge is also a guarantee of the actual presence of the subject in the midst of being. The subject has "objective control" of nature and dominates the latter through science and technology. However, even if with Descartes, the truthful god ensures the adequacy of my obvious representations and the laws of nature, the certainty about this truthful god is founded only on the evidence that I have of the idea of such a god. The *ego cogitans* is, in fact, regarded as the ultimate foundation of all truth and reality (Heidegger, 1992: 50). In view of all the foregoing, on the part of the subject, the Cartesian reduction of being-true to the certainty of the subject is only the reduction of things to oneself, a reduction, which has the meaning of taking possession. At the end of this process, the reduction of being to certainty is its reduction to the will of the subject.

In the opinion of Gilbert Hottois, the great metaphysical systems of the nineteenth century, principally those of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, could not have been conceived without the existence of this subject, animated by the desire to reduce everything to itself. In addition, the very form of the system, as a reduction of the real to a single principle, could only arise in this epoch of the self-conceived as a desire to reduce to oneself the totality of 'being' (Hottois, 2002: 101). Moreover, it is from this perspective that modern philosophy is said to be a philosophy of subjectivity, an anthropocentrism. The radical assurance that the subject thus acquires concerns the theoretical side of knowledge, that is to say a technique that is more and more powerful, rendering man the master and possessor of nature and, on the moral dimension, that is to say, man is free, he is the source and the foundation of all values and laws.

Cartesian philosophy institutes dualism, no longer between becoming and eternity, like Plato, but between man, the thinking and free subject, and all the rest of 'being'. This is the dualism between the subject and the object.

Kant, following Descartes, neglected the question of 'being' by the very fact that he missed a thematic ontology of *Dasein* and an ontological analytic, preliminary to the subjectivity of the subject. This is why he has only dogmatically taken up Cartesian views by revising them a little (Heidegger, 1992: 50). Moreover, of all these philosophers mentioned here, Nietzsche is the one who completes the history of Western metaphysics, and therefore the forgetfulness of being, without succeeding in getting rid of it (Heidegger, 1992: 347). The same is held by Vattimo. According to the latter, metaphysics comes to an end in Nietzsche because he presents himself as the first true nihilist, and the most profound essence of metaphysics is precisely nihilism: "the history of nihilism is that in which there is nothing about being itself, and this story is precisely that of metaphysics as a forgetting of being, which is hardening more and more" (Vattimo, 1985: 97).

With Nietzsche, there are only people left. Only the totality of 'being' is still considered. This contemporary nihilism homogenizes essence fundamentally. Everything has worth and nothing has more value than itself. This radical homogenization, which consumes the forgetting of the forgetfulness of the ontological difference is present in philosophy from its origin and culminates in contemporary nihilism (Steiner, 1987: 70). Indeed, temporalization does not consist in thinking about the internal link between 'time and being'. It amounts to considering only the becoming that man conceives as an unlimited process devoid of any meaning and purpose (Heidegger, 1985b: 376). It should be noted that the totality of 'being' in the infinite process of time is nothing but the expression of the will to power in the sense of creativity, and incessant productivity of forms and contents. This will to power does not pass only for the 'being' of being, of nature, but also of humankind, that is to say, of the subject. It is for this reason, Steiner elucidates as follows: "the Nietzschean Will-to-Power is itself only a wildly exalted subjectivity" (Steiner, 1987: 70).

Since having no finality of itself, the will to power is aimed only at its own development and infinite growth. A product of the will to power, man has become the subject of this will. Now it is human being who invents goals and values from a radical freedom or spontaneity. This Nietzschean man, or the nihilist man, constantly reinterprets being in order to work it, to operate it, to destroy it, to store it and to create new forms and new contents (Steiner, 1987: 70). Starting from this moment, all the goals, all the values, appear from now on as posed without reason or necessity by human subjectivity. It is the reign of relativism and decisionism, morals and conceptions of the world without any other foundation than the irrational and contingent act that institutes ephemeral matter (Hottot, 2002: 349).

Having as his concern the development of ever more power and new possibilities, man is particularly concerned with his survival, a necessary condition for the further deployment of his will to power. That is why he will seek to dominate and to control nature. Thus, sciences and techniques appear as privileged means of the will of human power, which reduces the truth to efficiency, thought to computation and the real to a matter infinitely operable and exploitable.

Indeed, Nietzschean nihilism is well suited to the description of the twentieth century under the label of techno-science, which is seen by Heidegger as the culmination of metaphysics and thus in this way as the ultimate stage of the history of 'being' (Heidegger, 1968a: 237). As if to increase the above, technique is, in the opinion of Gianni Vattimo, precisely the phenomenon, which in terms of inhabiting the world of man, expresses the unfolding and the completion of metaphysics. The exclusive donation of 'being' as a will theorized by Nietzsche - the extreme concealment of 'being' that leaves nothing to be seen as being – corresponds to the modern technique that gives the world the form of what we call today total organisation (Vattimo, 1985: 103). The technique takes the last step on the path of eliminating any residual difference between true reality and empirical reality. Once this ontological difference is finally, abolished, the last and feeble memory of this difference is abolished. Of being itself, nothing remains, there are only beings. The being of the being is totally and exclusively being posited by the will of humankind, the producer and organizer. It is understood

that for Heidegger, complete metaphysics is the technique and general instrumentalization of the world (Heidegger, 1968a: 237).

More fundamental than any attitude of being, truth as unveiling always implies a concealment. Decay and error are founded on the essence of truth. It is in this order of ideas that we understand well the fact that metaphysics, while posing the question of being, immediately forgets it and confines itself to the consideration of beings (Heidegger, 1968a: 89). Since ancient times, philosophy has always associated truth with being. In this sense, the phenomenon of truth is in the trimming of the problematic of fundamental ontology (Heidegger, 1968a: 263-264). According to William Earle:

*The history of Western thought from the pre-Socratics to the present is the history of the degradation of human essence through a forgetfulness of 'being' to such an extent that Nietzsche, at its end, could say that Being is nothing but an empty sound, a mist. 'Being', like God, is dead (Earle, 1958: 86).*

### **3.3 Truth and Non-truth**

Heidegger starts from the common notion, in the metaphysical tradition, of truth as the conformity of the proposition to the thing. To be true, the proposition must conform to the thing. However, this conformity is possible only in a domain where the being-there can relate to the being that is already opened. This is the opening of being-there to 'being' (Heidegger, 1968a: 263-264; Smith, 2007: 158).

Heidegger does not simply reject the conception of truth as conformity or correspondence (Wrathall, 1999: 71), but assumes it to be the original and immediate phenomenological mode in which the experience of truth is given, a mode, from which one must depart and which cannot be liquidated as pure appearance. To seek to conform to the thing means to take the thing as the norm of our judgment and our speech: the fact that there is here a norm, to which we must conform means that it is



freedom, which is here at stake. To open oneself to the thing as it is by seeking to conform to it as a norm is an act of freedom (Heidegger, 1968a: 263-264).

From the same perspective, Georges Ndumba asserts that truth or falseness depends on the objects, of their union or their separation, so that to be in the truth is to think that what is separated is separated, and that what is united is united, and to be in the wrong is to think contrary to the nature of objects. It is not because we think in a true way that you are white, but because you are white, that by saying that you are white, we are telling the truth. This example shows us that the ontological truth is the one that determines the *noologique* truth (Ndumba, 1988: 97).

On the other hand, the question we are asking ourselves is whether to assert that the essence of truth is freedom as the opening of being to 'being' is not to reduce the truth to something subjective, to an arbitrary act of humankind. It would be so if we thought of freedom as a property of humankind. One cannot therefore think of the fact that 'being' becomes accessible as a free act of humankind understood in the subjective sense. Openness to 'being' is not something that humankind can choose because it constitutes the 'being-there' him or herself as such and as being-in-the-world (Ndumba, 1988: 24). This freedom is therefore in no way a faculty of which *Dasein* would dispose, it is rather that which disposes of it. Humankind does not have freedom as a property, rather the opposite is true.

Freedom, 'being' *ek-sistant* and revealing possesses humankind and it is so original that it alone allows a humanity to come into contact with a being as such in its totality, a rapport that founds and draws all history. It is the original opening to the world that makes possible any conformity to being (truth) and any choice (practice) does not depend on a choice made by humankind itself but constitutes it. That would mean that being-there can come into contact with the beings as it is always already thrown into a historical opening (Ndumba, 1988: 85). The fact that liberty disposes of humankind therefore signifies in essence that humankind has access to being and to oneself when an individual makes him or herself an object of knowledge in a light, which there is always, the basis of understanding, which he does not choose, but which constitutes the self as a being-there.

Besides, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger asserts that the concrete historical existence of man is always already fallen, that is to say, inauthentic (Heidegger, 1992: § 27). If the truth is freedom as (*laissez-être l'étant*) "letting being be" (See Steiner, 1987: 71), an opening to being in what it is, this freedom can always be exercised as not to let be the being of being as such, by disguising and distorting it. However, "in order that" the opening that makes being acceptable be possible, something such as not letting being appear as it is, an error which could occur in different forms, including moral ones, this possibility must be inscribed in the original structure of the opening itself (Heidegger, 1992: §27).

This *ek-sistant* freedom as the essence of truth is not a property of man, but man does not exist unless he is possessed of this freedom and thus made capable of history. The essence of non-truth cannot therefore arise from the mere incapacity and negligence of man, but rather from the essence of truth. If we think of the truth as original openness and as unveiling, then non-truth will have to be thought of as darkness and veiling. We find an example of the deep link that exists between truth and non-truth in the Greek word *Aletheia*, which possesses an **a** privative, which indicates that the manifestation of the truth as unveiling presupposes a buckling and a burial originating from which the truth comes (Heidegger, 1992: 222 & 267). Accordingly, Wrathall explains the Heideggerian origin of *Aletheia* clearly in the following statement. He posits that:

*aletheia must be understood as a privative alpha af. Xed (sic) to the stem leth- or lath-, and he referred to Aristotle and Heraclitus as support for his claim that the oldest tradition of philosophy understood truth precisely as a 'taking entities out of their hiddenness and letting them be seen in their unhiddenness (Wrathall, 2010: 14).*

In line with what is said above, Natalija Bonic casts more light and affirms with concision:

*In Being and Time, as well as in On the Essence of Truth, Heidegger introduces his conception of truth by way of contrast with the traditional conceptions - truth as homoiosis (Aristotle), adaequatio (Aquinas), and Übereinstimmung (Kant) - all of which he claims to be "derivative", i.e., founded on, and thus already removed from, the original meaning of truth. Originally, truth is not to be conceived as agreement or correspondence, but in the phenomenological sense, as disclosure, bringing-to-light. If something is to be brought into agreement with something else, Heidegger argues, it must have first been dis- closed, rendered visible/intelligible. "Truth is disclosure of beings through which an openness essentially unfolds." Truth, in the sense of "disclosure of beings", is in Being and Time called uncoveredness (Entdecktheit) and in On the Essence of Truth unhiddenness (Entborgenheit) (Bonic, 2005: 63).*

Moreover, the original connection between truth and untruth is revealed by phenomenological analysis in the fact that any truth that we can say or know is the manifestation of a particular 'being' or a group of beings, never the appearance of 'being' as such in its totality. Furthermore, particular beings or groups of beings appear to us precisely to the extent that the totality of being does not come to the forefront as such. Vattimo puts it better: "to the extent that the let-be lets be the being to which it relates in a particular relation and thus unveils it, it veils the being in totality in itself, the let-be is at the same time a veil" (Vattimo, 1985: 86). It is also in this vein that we must understand that this veiling of the totality of the being is the non-truth essentially linked to the truth. This dissimulation of the being in totality is not simply a consequence of the fact that we know being only partially (Vattimo, 1985: 87).

Nevertheless, what is the derivative of the possibility of error, that is, the disguise and distortion of being? It is therefore legitimate to think that error depends either on the fact of not knowing everything (concealment of the being in totality), or of the preponderance of one being over the others (errors related to interest for example). However, it is above all to the inauthentic existence of being-there, to decay, that is linked the untruth that belongs to the very essence of truth (Heidegger, 1992: 27). In

line with this, Natalija Bonic affirms that the issue of the untruth is linked to the truth and Heidegger was very concerned about it. She states:

*For Heidegger, the task of philosophy is not only to pursue truth, as has been traditionally maintained since the time of Plato, but also, and crucially so, to combat untruth. By untruth, Heidegger means the various misconceptions and problems, which, if undetected, can lead philosophical inquiry seriously astray. The danger of being led astray is aggravated by the fact untruth mostly comes in disguise, id est, as semblant truth. For that reason, it is of essential importance for any inquiry to understandingly distinguish between truth and untruth, or else risk the possibility of being misled (Bonic, 2005: 61).*

In fact, in everyday life, installation consists in not letting the concealment of what is concealed prevail. Where the being concealed from being in totality is only tolerated as a limit, which accidentally announces itself to us, concealment as a fundamental event is absorbed by oblivion. The decay of inauthentic existence is therefore possible only because truth itself implies in itself non-truth as obscuration necessarily bound to all enlightenment. Being-there is often in existence inauthentic because of the very essence of truth, that is to say, the very structure of being (Heidegger, 1992: 55).

### **3.4 Overcoming metaphysics**

The tendency inscribed in metaphysics from the very beginning, to forget 'being', by letting the foreground come to the fore only as being such a tendency founded on the essential link uniting truth and untruth, is therefore perfectly realized in the world of the technique (Earle, 1958: 86). In realising its forgetful essence, metaphysics also comes to an end in that there is no longer any meta, no beyond. The being of being is no longer something for which we must look beyond 'being', it is its actual functioning within an instrumental system posited by the will of the subject. It is precisely in this situation of extreme distress of thought that it becomes possible to go beyond metaphysics and, perhaps, to escape the oblivion of the 'being' that characterises it. That is why Joshua Tepley commenting on Heidegger affirmed this:

*Metaphysics thinks entities as entities; 'Because metaphysics interrogates entities as entities, it remains concerned with entities and does not turn itself to being as 'being'; "Metaphysics", insofar as it always represents only entities as entities, does not recall being itself'. In sum, metaphysics concerns itself only with entities, not with being. Its lack of concern with the latter is why it must be overcome (Tepley, 2014: 475-476).*

To Heidegger, the sustenance of metaphysics can only be possible when it forgets its forgetfulness (Heidegger, 1985a: §14). To perceive oblivion leads us to ask ourselves a decisive question which, in substance, is the one formulated in slightly different terms by the last paragraph of *Being and Time*, asking why the being of being could have come to be thought of as mere presence (Heidegger, 1992: §83). Here the question has taken a more radically historical turn: how was it possible to arrive at the point of complete forgetfulness of the being in which we find ourselves? Or as Heidegger put it: "Why is there 'being' in general at all, and not rather nothing?" (Heidegger, cited by Earle, 1958: 85). It is from here that the reflection on metaphysics begins as a history and, in this reflection, is already implicitly a project of the meaning of being which is no longer metaphysical. It is clear, indeed, that the perception of oblivion already implies a stance, which in a rudimentary way, is no longer in this oblivion.

From Heidegger's point of view, it is the same thing to understand metaphysics as history and to come out of it by understanding being in a different sense from the way metaphysics did. Hence the significance, not only of the negative destruction of the history of ontology, but still positive, the elaboration of a new project of the sense of being, which Heidegger's reflection on the history of metaphysics undertakes (Heidegger, 1992: 49).

Commenting on Heidegger, George Steiner (1987) asserts that historical reflection does not have the sense of knowing, in the history of thought, as the progressive unveiling of a truth, which from the point of view of the absolute knowledge, which Hegel considers to have reached, can be recognised as such and integrated into a

definitive perspective (Steiner, 1987: 70). It follows, according to Heidegger, that since the questioning of being is characterized by the fact that it absolutely forbids the establishment of a radical distinction between the object of the question and the being who asks the question, all research of a metaphysical nature has the property of questioning the very one who questions: the action of questioning becomes a mode of being of the questioner. We are the existent who questions the being of all existence. It is here that the position of the general ontological problem is logically prepared by a phenomenological examination of this *Dasein*, which constitutes the access path and the fulcrum of all metaphysics (Heidegger, 1992: 44 & Earle, 1958: 87).

To George Steiner, commenting on Heidegger, traditional metaphysics must be overcome because:

*In all metaphysics as we know it since Parmenides, and even in the most existentially biased of philosophic theologies, to think is, in essence, to see, to observe. As result, Sein is something made present to the eye. As such, it has remained unthought, Ungedacht, and has not been made articulate in language. And also, all Western metaphysics, whether deliberately or not, has been Platonist in that it has sought to transpose the essence of man out of daily life. It has posited a pure perceiver, a fictive agent of cognition detached from common experience. It has disincarnated being through an artifice of introspective reductionism of the sort dramatized in Cartesian doubt and Husserlian phenomenology. That is why Heidegger must begin all over again (Steiner, 1987: 78 & 81).*

Nevertheless, Heidegger has to find a way to pose the question of being by refusing the abstraction of the traditional ontologies and replacing them with a new ontology. Steiner articulates:

*Sein und Zeit will try to think and say being and Being. It will try to. The imperative is, strictly, one of attempt [...]. To think Being is the task of Heidegger's Fundamental ontology, that ontology of foundations which*

*is to be distinguished utterly from the Platonic model of ideal Forms, from the Aristolian-Aquinian network of cause and substance, from Cartesian scientific rationality and from Nietzsche's inspired, but nihilistic, identification of being and will. The fundamental ontology is to replace all particular ontologies [...]. Heidegger utterly rejects this procession of abstraction and what he regards as the resultant artifice of compartmentalization in man's consideration of man [...]. A philosophy which abstracts, which seeks to elevate itself above the everydayness of the everyday, is empty. It can tell us nothing of the meaning of being, of where and what Dasein is (Steiner,1987: 78-81).*

### **3.5 Dasein**

*Dasein* is one of the key concepts of Heideggerian philosophy. This assertion is confirmed in the quotation of Sheehan below:

*The concept of Dasein is pivotal to the philosophical standpoint of Heidegger. Although not directly translatable into English, in colloquial German, Dasein means human existence with the entity to ask what it means to be. Similarly Johnson (2002) defined Dasein as meaning be-there. Dasein is the foundation upon which Heidegger built up the entirety of his thinking. Sheehan summarised by stating that "...Dasein is the answer to the questions about the meaning of being" (Sheehan et al. cited by McConnell-Henry et al., 2009: 5).*

In the same vein as all of the above, Carl Mitcham affirms that:

*Dasein' is a German word, which may be literally translated as 'there [da] being [Sein]' or 'being there'. Although not coined by Martin Heidegger, in his major work *Being and Time* (1927), he gives the term special philosophical significance. Prior to Heidegger, Dasein was often used technically to indicate the kind of being or existence that a thing has; more commonly it referred to the being of persons. Heidegger follows and*

*intensifies the common usage when, in the introduction to Being and Time, which is dedicated to 'the question of the meaning of Being', he attempts to determine how to address this question (Mitcham, 2001: 28).*

According to François Vezin (1986), *Dasein* is one of the central notions in Martin Heidegger's masterpiece: *Being and Time*. At first, this term, which is formed of *da*, there, and *sein*, to be, is not a philosophical term. It is the substantive infinitive of the verb *dasein*, to be present. Regardless of whether it is a verb first, the Hegelian expression (*Dasein*) quoted by Heidegger offers an example. But as a substantive, *Dasein* is neutral. He uses the definite article and writes the word with a capital letter, like all the nouns in German: das *Dasein*.

In the 17th century, *Dasein* meant presence and this meaning remained in use and featured in all dictionaries. On the other hand, in the 18th century, it received its philosophical meaning. It is the Latin equivalent of *existentia* and the French *existence*. Indeed, in the 21st century, *Dasein* means human life, human existence. But when Heidegger uses it, in French it means that he himself will specify it in *Being and Time* as being or humankind. In Heidegger's opinion, the word *Dasein* is not synonymous, but a namesake of humankind (Heidegger, 1992: 521). This *Dasein* is not a subject for whom there is an object, but a being in being. It does not mean man or subject, even if it is true that we are such, but the place where the question of being arises, the place of manifestation (Kangudi, 2006). After this brief history of the *Dasein* concept, it becomes easier to inquire into *Dasein* itself.

### **3.5.1 The quiddity of Dasein**

To Heidegger, "*Dasein* is an entity, which is in each case I myself; its being is in each case mine" (Heidegger, 1980: 150). But what is meant by being? Being is what something that is as it is, and all that is, including man, that is, *Dasein* is. Being is thus, defined by its being, because it makes that which is so named being, and not rather not being. To question the being refers to the being of *Dasein*. Being cannot be grasped as far as it is in virtue of his being. But being, in the same way, refers to the



being of which he (being) is to be. The beingness of being, it is first what makes the being to be, and what makes it be what it is, it is the *ousia* or *beingness* (Heidegger, 1975: 8), the *étance* of the being (Jacob, 1990: 860).

Since we are ourselves every day and have the possibility, among other things, of questioning, we place it in our terminology under the name of *Dasein*, and *Da-sein* is synonymous with everything except the man (Heidegger, 1992: 31). The specificity of *Dasein* is that it only needs to be for this being who is to be discovered. The agreement of being is itself a determination to be *Dasein*. What ontically distinguishes *Dasein* is that it is ontological. The ontological being of *Dasein*, to which we are referring is characterised as fore-ontological, that is to say, it enters into the manner of being of *Dasein*, an understanding of being (Heidegger, 1992: 36).

*Dasein* always understands itself in terms of its existence –in terms of a possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself (Heidegger, 1980: 33). The question of its existence could be clarified by itself. The latter is an ontic (what is related to beings) affair for *Dasein*. This is why the analytic of existence has the character of understanding that is not *existentiell* but existential (Heidegger, 1980:33). The existential analysis of *Dasein* is pre-inscribed in the ontic constitution of *Dasein*.

In Heidegger's view, *Dasein* has a primacy that is on several levels, but for our purpose, let us focus on three. The first level is an ontic primacy. This being is determined in its being by existence. The second level is an ontological primacy. Based on his determination by existence, *Dasein* is in itself ontological. *Dasein* has a third primacy because it is the ontic and ontological condition of possibility of all ontologies (Heidegger, 1992: 38).

In the opinion of De Waelhens (1971), *Dasein* is characterized in its being by the permanent relation of instability that it maintains with itself. *Dasein* is an existent whose being is always put in play. Everything that *Dasein* is or can be is characterized by its uncertainty and proves to be dependent on possibilities of which it alone will decide. It is therefore inseparable from the study of its existence and merges with it (De Waelhens, 1971: 27).

It follows, since only *Dasein* is interpreting, that only it confers meaning, and that it is meaningful only relatively to him (*Dasein*). The other existing ones have meaning only as signified by him and relatively. Any existing that is not of the *Dasein* type must be considered as meaningless in itself. *Dasein* is distinguished from all other raw existing by its capacity of transcendence that is to say by its capacity to constitute, to understand an intelligibility, a 'being'. However, only man, among all beings, knows that being is. In other words, the understanding of being distinguishes man within the beings (Heidegger, 1968b: 79). On the other hand, the tool has a particular mode of existing that one could qualify as referential. This mode is called "being-under-the hand" in order to highlight the immediately practical nature of this being and its ontological dependence on our activity (Heidegger, 1992: 44). *Dasein* is basically "able to be". Humankind is freedom. This necessary freedom is not a property of *Dasein*, but the very being of its existence, what can be called its transcendence.

According to De Waelhens, moreover, we are completely mistaken, we engage in an impossible endeavour when we strive to provide for the being of *Dasein* an abstract and immutable definition to which it could be reduced. Therefore, also, one cannot say of *Dasein* that it exists, that it has existence, thinking of the scholastic sense of *existentia*. The existence type designated *existentia* is in no way that of *Dasein*. A thing is what it is, and remains stuck in itself. Its inertia and its total determinability are entirely opposed to the unstable existence of *Dasein*. All that *Dasein* is or may be is characterized by its uncertainty and proves to be dependent on possibilities of which he (*Dasein*) alone will decide. *Dasein* will be what he will have resolved to be, he is self-determination (De Waelhens, 1971:27).

However, when we say that the essence of *Dasein* is in its existence, it means that it exists necessarily or that it essentially belongs to it to be and that *Dasein* cannot be provided with an abstract and universally valid definition, since what it is lies in the how, freely chosen, of its existence. *Dasein* exists in such a way that it is understood from its existential possibilities. *Dasein* is his possibility. He always presents himself under the species of the ego. This ego, however, is neither a substance nor a pure subjectivity

free from any relation with anything else, as idealism desires (De Waelhens, 1971: 30).

Therefore, *Dasein* is the one who:

*through the variation of behaviours and experiences, maintains himself (sic) as identical and remains related to this multiplicity. Ontologically, we understand him (sic) as the being-there-in-front stands each time already and constantly in a given area, circumscribed, where it has place, as what stands at the base in a privileged sense, as the subjectum (Heidegger, 1992: 156).*

In accordance with Jacob, *Dasein* is a *being-there-in-front*. It is always this sense of 'being' that is involved when one's being remains undetermined. 'Being-in-front' is, however, the kind of 'being' of a being that is of the order of *Dasein*. The latter is the only one who is capable of understanding and interpreting the meaning of being from a presupposition or pre-comprehension that he has always already implicitly as an existence, which is none other than "the being that we ourselves precisely are". The link of this implicit understanding of being, that of its possible explication into a true interpretation of being, is none other than that of this being, which is in the mode of the 'being-there' of the interpretation of the meaning of being, namely the Da of the *Dasein* (Jacob, 1990:898). Above all, for Dreyfus and Sreekumar Nellickappilly, commenting on Heidegger, *Dasein* is the name of a certain entity- the human being - he (Heidegger) more properly uses it to designate the being of that entity, in which case it is equivalent to the term "existence" or "human existence" (Galt-Crowell, 1993: 375; Nellickappilly, 2017: 1). That conception of *Dasein* as human existence is also assumed by Von Herrmann, when he states:

*Accordingly, Dasein is a pure expression of being, an expression for being, in terms of which and in respect to which the being having an understanding of being is designated as "Dasein." In this way, the designation "Dasein" moves close to the concept of existence as the being of beings that*

*understands being. For like existence, "Dasein" also has to do with the being of the being designated as Dasein (Von Herrmann, 2011: 214).*

Since *Dasein* is related to I myself and there are many others like myself, it is logical that there is a plurality of *Dasein*.

### **3.5.2 The plurality of *Dasein***

*Dasein* is I. Mine belongs of itself to *Dasein* (Heidegger, 1992: §12). In George Steiner's view, *Dasein* is 'being,' which questions being, by first questioning its own *Sein*. Man is man because he is a being—there (Steiner, 1987: 80). It is not a being, given once and for all, and possessing qualities. It is simple. It should be remembered that there is no pure consciousness detached from the world because *Dasein* is to be there (*da-sein*), and there is the world: the concrete, literal, actual, daily world (Steiner, 1987: 81). According to Heidegger, *Being-in-the-world is an essential state of the Dasein's 'being' [...]. Dasein is a 'being-in-the-world with other's'*. Therefore, *Dasein is being-with and Dasein-with (Mitsein und Mitdasein)* (Heidegger, 1980: 80/149). This is a new fact of primary importance. Indeed, the world is not only populated with utensils, it includes beings who, like me, are *Dasein*, who like me are each a 'being-in-the-world'. These "others" accompany me, and contrariwise the utensils serve me. The others are *mitsein*. The "others" are not what remains of humanity apart from myself. They do not oppose my *I-hood* (Heidegger, 1980:152), they are therefore those whom, at first sight, one does not distinguish, but those among whom I am also (Heidegger, 1992: 160). To be more precise, Heidegger affirms that the others already are there with us in being- in-the-world (Heidegger, 1980: 152).

They are existential, insofar as they are constituents of the being of my existence. My being itself is an existence in common with the other. The world I live in, I share with others. That is to say, the world of *Dasein* is a shared world. This world is a *Mitwelt* (Heidegger, 1992: 160). To exist is for mankind to exist with other human beings. Heidegger insists on this and states that:

*Being-in-the-world is the basic state of Dasein by which every mode of its Being gets co-determined... And the Dasein of Others is encountered*

*within-the-world. By others we do not mean everyone else but me - those over against whom the I stands out (Heidegger, 1980: 153-154).*

In any case, we do not conclude the existence of the other; the other accompanies us in a world from which he is inseparable. Others, in fact, participate closely in my existence because *Dasein* is fundamentally and ultimately to be-in-common.

On the other hand, misanthropy, or the absence of the neighbour, as an absence is only meaningful in a *Mitsein*. We speak of absence only where the presence of others is right. There is solitude only relative to the possible presence of others. As an illustration, I can be alone in the middle of a crowd; this is a peremptory proof that the true presence of the other is not reducible to the de facto fact of a material neighbourhood, but that it is based on being-in-common. It is in this order of ideas that it is logical to say that the solitary exists according to a deficient mode of *Mitsein* (Heidegger, 1992: 163).

The *Dasein* who is fundamentally in the world, must necessarily be concerned about this world. The world in the work of Heidegger is:

*Always the one that I have with others. In this sense, the world of Dasein is a with-world (Mitwelt) and Being-in is being-with others. That is to say, their Being-in-themselves-within-the-world is Dasein-with (Mit-dasein). The world is where concernfully Dasein dwells essentially (Heidegger, 1980: 155).*

The world is a system of modifiable relationships. The world co-implies a priori and necessarily the possibility of the game, which is precisely the space of the world. The worldhood (*mundanity*) of the world is to be seen as referential totality, which constitutes significance (Heidegger, 1980: 160). In other words as Suvak states:

*Dasein is not simply self-consciousness, but mainly and fundamentally is conscious of itself or conscious of itself as being (-in-the-world). Being-in-*

*the-world is a fundamental characteristic of Dasein and co-original with this openness to its own being is an openness to other beings as well as the being of other beings* (Suvak, 2000: 4).

From this, it becomes clear that *Dasein*, which is fundamentally being-in-common, can care about others because *Dasein* in itself is essentially being-with and even *Dasein's* Being-alone is Being-with-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1980: 156-157). The attitude of *Dasein* towards others is defined by concern towards others. In this sense, the attitude of *Dasein* towards itself is solicitude (Heidegger, 1980: 158).

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has emphasized the notion of 'being' as one of the key concepts of Martin Heidegger. The question of 'being' has been overshadowed in the history of Western metaphysics because all philosophy after Parmenides has lost sight of the ontological difference and hence the confusion of 'being' and beings. To put it simply, all Western philosophy has thought of 'being' only in terms of beings by forgetting nothingness, since being itself is unveiling and veiling at the same time.

Drawing parallels between 'being and truth', we have said that the latter, contains in itself untruth. It is therefore in the very essence of truth that it also implies non-truth. The forgetting of 'being' having reached its climax, we have therefore justified the surpassing of metaphysics by a new question, which would take into account the problem of nothingness. Given that there are several beings, we have pointed out the primacy of one of these beings, who is *Dasein* and who alone has the capacity to question his being, to understand. But then how do we understand? This is the task of our last chapter.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **ONTOLOGY OF UNDERSTANDING**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The question of epistemological understanding discussed in the previous chapter allows us to approach understanding in its ontological sense. More explicitly, our cogitations here gather around the interrogation, which bears on the mode of being of this being which exists in understanding. This is the turning point Heidegger made in hermeneutics. To better highlight, the ontological understanding, our remarks will have four points. We will start from the analysis of the world. Then we will try to clarify

what Heidegger means by the anticipation structures of understanding, to lay bare his notion of understanding that extends to interpretation (the third point). Finally, we will end with language, which is nothing other than the articulation of explicitation (explicitness).

## 4.2 The world and the tools

There is a fundamental link between the world and *mundane things* (Magid, 2015: 451). *Dasein* is a being-in-the-world, in the sense that the world constitutes the beingness of *Dasein* because it cannot live without the world. Commenting on Heidegger, George Steiner asserts: “the world comes at us... in the form and manner of things” (Steiner, 1987: 8; See also Heidegger, 1980: 92). It follows that *Dasein* encounters mundane things or inner-worldly beings within the world. This is why it is necessary to specify what we mean by world and by tools (*mundane things*).

### 4.2.1 The world

The notion of the “world” is of paramount importance if one wants to make a serious study of *Dasein* because the latter cannot be understood apart from it. *Dasein* maintains relations with the world and other inner-worldly beings. From the ontological point of view, the world is not a character of being, but it is an existential (Vattimo, 1985: 32). This link can be discovered etymologically. *Dasein* (Da-sein) means be there and “there” refers to the world in which *Dasein* dwells. A similar argument made by Heidegger gives four connotations to the concept of “world”. He affirms that world can signify:

*Firstly, “world” is used as an ontical concept, and signifies the totality of those entities, which can be present-at-hand within the world. Secondly, “world” functions as an ontological term, and signifies the Being [sic] of those entities which we have just mentioned. And indeed “world” can become a term for any realm which encompasses a multiplicity of entities: for instance, when one talks of the “world” of a mathematician, “world” signifies the realm of possible objects of mathematics. Thirdly, “world” can be understood in another ontical sense - not, however, as those entities which *Dasein* essentially is not and which can be encountered within-the-*



*world, but rather as that “wherein” a factual Dasein as such can be said to “live”. “World” has here a pre-ontological existentiell signification. Here again there are different possibilities: “world” may stand for the “public” we-world, or one’s “own” closest (domestic) environment. Finally, “world” designates the ontologicoexistential concept of worldhood. Worldhood itself may have as its mode whatever structural wholes any special “world” may have at the time; but it embraces in itself the a priori character of worldhood in general (Heidegger, 1980: 93).*

For Heidegger, “ontologically, the world...is a characteristic of Dasein itself” (Heidegger, 1980: 92). Additionally to what is mentioned above, Levinas states:

*To understand being is to exist in such a way that one takes care of one’s own existence. To understand is to take care [...] The phenomenon of world or, more precisely, the structure of being-in-the-world presents the precise form in which this understanding of being is realised (Levinas et al., 1996: 18).*

If this thesis could be justified, the exit of oneself (*self-examination*) *sortie de soi* to the world would be integrated with the existence of *Dasein*, because the understanding of being, we already know, is a mode of existence. It is given in the form it goes from existence, as the fundamental characteristic of the finitude of *Dasein* (Levinas et al., 1996). It is on the finitude of the existence of *Dasein* that its transcendence towards the world is founded. In other words, being-in-the-world is by no means the subject of which modern philosophy speaks because this notion presupposes precisely that the subject is something which opposes an object understood as simple-presence. Being there is never something closed, which would be necessary, but it is always already and constitutively related to the world (Vattimo, 1985: 40). In a similar way, Heidegger affirms that, “the notion of existential identity and that of world are completely wedded. To be at all is to be worldly” (Steiner, 1987: 83). It is further noted that the world from Heidegger’s point of view is diametrically opposed to the idealist rationalism of Descartes, who conceived the opposition between the subject (*ego cogitans*) and nature (world) as *res extensa*. For Heidegger,

consequently, to know the world, for *Dasein*, is not knowledge, but rather a mode of living in the world (Heidegger, 1980: 95).

What Heidegger puts in place of the usual conception of the world is something that makes it possible. This justification process serves as proof. The phenomenon of the world, as Heidegger describes it, will join or explain the classical opinion, which does not always start from initial or authentic phenomena.

For Levinas, the common conception is that the world is equivalent to all the things discovered by knowledge. Indeed, things, if we stick to the concrete meaning of their appearance for us, are in the world. Any appearance of a particular thing assumes the world. It is from the atmosphere that things solicit us. What meaning can we give to this reference to the world that phenomenological analysis must not leave out of consideration and erase? It reveals itself, in the first analysis, as closely related to *Dasein*, the atmosphere that *Dasein* lives in; it is as such that we say our world, the world of an era, of an artist, etc. This invites us to search in the mode of existence of *Dasein* itself the phenomenon of the world, which will thus appear as an ontological structure. The atmosphere of the surrounding world is not the naked and abstract spatiality of the world, but its reference to the existence of *Dasein*. The latter is a being characterised by an essential commitment in a world, which can discover a fact such as the atmosphere, from which an infinitely poorer concept like space, acquires a meaning. Anthropologists say it better when they deal with the relationship that *Dasein* has with the world: man inhabits the world and the latter inhabits him (Levinas *et al.*, 1996: 22).

The world is also where *Dasein* is thrown. Similarly, Steiner asserts:

*We are “thrown” (geworfen) into the world, proclaims Heidegger. Our being-in-the-world is a “throwness”, a Geworfenheit. There is nothing mystical nor metaphysical about this proposition. It is primordial banality, which metaphysical speculation has long overlooked. The world into which*

*we are thrown, without personal choice, with no previous knowledge [...] was there before us and will be there after us (Steiner, 1987: 85).*

As said previously, in the third chapter, *Dasein* is already always a *Mitsein*, therefore the world of *Dasein* is a shared world. To sum up, “World [sic] is nothing other than this “in-view-of-itself”, where *Dasein* is involved with its own existence and in relation to which the encounter with the handleable came about” (Levinas *et al.*, 1996: 22).

#### **4.2.2 Tools (work-tools)**

Let us start from the ambient world to determine the mood, to describe the worldhood or *mundanity* of the world according to the expression of Heidegger. The things with which *Dasein* exists are, above all, objects of care and solicitude. They are offered by hand, they invite handling. In addition, they are used for something: axes to split wood, hammers to hammer iron, handles to open doors, houses to shelter us etc [...]. They are, in the broadest sense of the term, tools, *outillage*, equipment or instrumentation (Heidegger, 1985b: 393; Levinas *et al.*, 1996: 19; Steiner, 1987: 86-87).

What is their mode of being? The being of the utensil does not identify itself with that of a mere material object, revealing itself to perception or science. Contemplation cannot grasp the utensil as such. “The purely contemplative gaze, however penetrating it may be, thrown on the aspect of this or that thing cannot discover a tool” (Heidegger, 1992: 69). Additionally, Heidegger thinks that it is by use, by handling that we access it in an adequate and entirely original way. It is at this level especially that Heidegger opposes the current opinion, shared by Husserl, that before handling, we must represent what we handle (Heidegger, 1980: 105).

Thus understood, tools are objects that *Dasein* discovers by a certain mode of its existence: handling. They are not simply things. In this regard, Vattimo comments, Heidegger says that the things we encounter in the world are instruments before being mere presences, realities endowed with objective existence (Vattimo, 1985: 32). The same argument is made by Levinas who states:

*Tools are thus objects that Dasein reveals by a given mode of its existence-handling. Tools are not then simply “things”. Handling is in some way the affirmation of their being. Handling determines not what tools are but the manner in which they encounter Dasein, the manner in which they are. The being of tools is “handlability” [maniabilité] (Zuhandenheit) (Levinas et al., 1996: 19).*

In a similar fashion, Vattimo assures us that handling is not a simple presence on which a new property would be grafted. It is entirely irreducible and original. In other words, the handlability of things, to know their meaning in relation to our life, is not something that adds to their objectivity, but constitutes their mode of being and gives them the most significant way they first appear in our experience (Vattimo, 1985: 32). It comes to light, as Levinas (1996) affirms:

*It (the handlability of tools) is essentially constituted by the “referral” [renvoi]. The tool is “in view of” [en vue de] something, because it is not a separate entity, but always in tandem with other tools. Its mode of being entails giving precedence to the totality of the function [oeuvre] in relation to which the tool exists. The tool is efficient in its role, and the handlability characterises its being “in itself” [soi]; it exists uniquely in its role in the case where handlability is not explicitly present but recedes into the background, and the tool is understood in terms of its functions. This function is itself instrumental: the shoe exists in order to be worn, the watch in order to tell the time. But, on the other hand, the productive function makes use of something in a view of something. What is handlable then refers back to materials (Levinas et al., 1996: 20).*

It is clear from the above quotation that, through tools, we see the forest as wood, water as hydroelectric power. All those tools constitute the world as the totality of things (Levinas et al., 1996: 20). Additionally to the above, it is simply on their handleability that those tools are considered because they (tools) are not *prima facie* in themselves.

They are always connected with us as instruments. Their being is radically and constitutively related to their being in the project of being (Vattimo, 1985: 33).

To sum up this section with Levinas, we can say that Dasein encounters tools in its everyday life. Accordingly, Levinas' point of view, "being, for *Dasein* is to understand being. To understand being is to exist in such a manner that "existence itself is at stake" (Levinas *et al.*, 1996: 22). So in the next section, before analysing understanding itself, we will explore first the fore-structures of understanding, which lead to understanding.

### **4.3 Fore-structures of understanding**

By fore-structures of understanding, we mean what precedes us as being thoughtful: prejudice, authority and tradition. We will limit ourselves to these three structures. These structures are the ground on which any understanding is based. A similar argument is made by Ka-Wing Leung who affirms: "The interpreting of something as something, or the making explicit of something that is understood, is in turn achieved on the basis of another structure, the structure that Heidegger calls "fore-structure" (Heidegger cited by Leung, 2010: 26).

#### **4.3.1 Prejudice**

According to common sense, prejudice means a judgment made before the final consideration of all material determinants of the merits. In the practice of justice, it means legal decision prior to the judgment itself. Prejudice also means judgment error. It should be noted that it is from the *Aufklärung* (romantic enlightenment), especially with Cartesian doubt, that the concept of prejudice has received the negative meaning that is familiar to us (Gadamer, 1996: 291; Gadamer 2004: 274). Similarly, Paul Regan, commenting on Gadamer, asserts:

*The term praejudicium refers to judgements, pre-supposition, bias, prejudices from cultural traditions, whether positive or negative. They are necessary springboards towards better understanding where even vague notions of a text's meaning are important because they ensure the*

*familiarity of words and 'construal' of its meaning. The 'expectation' of what has been experienced before gives the interpreter a working hypothesis from which to further develop understanding (Gadamer, cited by Regan, 2012: 296).*

In fact, prejudice is often due to the prestige of the interlocutor or the authority he or she enjoys and especially by the precipitation that resides in the subject himself or herself. Authority becomes a source of prejudice because among moderns, the ultimate source of all authority is not tradition, but reason.

It is noted here that writing, in this context, has an authoritarian character because the possibility that a written thing is not true is not easy to achieve. What is written has the palpable character of what can be shown. However, the general tendency of the *Aufklärung* is to admit no authority and to submit everything to the court of reason (Gadamer, 1996: 297). The Enlightenment thinkers are the ones who limited the meaning of prejudice in their critique of religion to unfounded judgement (Leung, 2010: 33). However, from Gadamer's point of view, the overcoming of all prejudices is itself only another prejudice whose mere revision opens the way for an appropriate understanding of the finitude that dominates not only our being but also our historical

consciousness. Long before self-understanding through reflection on the past, we understand ourselves spontaneously in the family, society and state where we live. The awareness of the individual by himself or herself is only a trembling light in the closed circle of the current of historical life. Thus, the prejudices and also the judgments of the individual form the historical reality of his or her being (Gadamer, 1996: 298).

We think the prejudice understood in Gadamer's way is what is called *jurisprudence* in law. As justice reasons with the finite historical character of the human being, it becomes imperative to rehabilitate prejudices and recognize their legitimacy.

### 4.3.2 Authority

As we said above, authority is the source of prejudices according to the romantic enlightenment. It opposes freedom and reason. In this context, it means blind obedience. Nevertheless, in its essence, authority, in Gadamer's view, has nothing to do with an act of submission and abdication of reason. On the contrary, it is rooted in an act of recognition and knowledge. Judgment requires acknowledgment that the other is superior in judgment and insight, and his or her judgment prevails over ours, and has pre-eminence over ours (Gadamer, 1996: 300). Authority does not receive itself. It is acquired by anyone who claims. It is based on an act of reason which admits its limits and which gives others greater sagacity.

In its true sense, authority maintains no commerce with obedience to a given order. It does not have a direct relationship to obedience because it is very tied to knowledge. The character of giving orders and being obeyed that recognizes authority is not the essence, but the consequence of the authority that someone has. It is in this sense, that the authority of a superior who commands has its true foundation in an act of freedom and reason, or because he or she sees things from above, or because he or she is an expert, he or she carries it to knowledge (Gadamer, 1996: 301). The underlying idea of authority is recognition that what it says is not unreasonable or arbitrary. It is at this precise point that the meaning of the authority is claimed by the educator (*Magister dixit*), the supervisor, the specialist. In short, authority belongs to tradition.

### 4.3.3 Tradition

All that tradition and custom have consecrated has authority. Moreover, our finite historical being is by tradition, which has always influenced our action and our behaviour. All education is based on tradition. Tradition as understood by Gadamer as something long-established, persistent, and constantly repeated (Gadamer cited by Leung, 2010: 34). Traditions are freely assumed, but not created and founded in their validity by a free discernment. From this perspective, tradition is needed without having been founded in advance.

However, with the Age of Enlightenment the concept of tradition has become ambiguous and opposed to reasonable freedom. Gadamer, for his part, thinks there is no absolute contrast between tradition and reason. For tradition itself bears some elements that relate to freedom and history itself (Gadamer, 1996: 302). It should be remembered that tradition is essentially conservation, which is at work in any historical transformation. Since conservation is an act of reason, even though it often goes unnoticed, tradition cannot be in opposition to reason. Even if the innovation and the reasoned project are seen as the way of acting of the only reason, it appears that even in the ongoing world, in a revolutionary period, there is always something that is preserved, a part of the past, much more considerable than one thinks, that is conserved and recovers authority in allying with what is new (Gadamer, 1996: 303).

This is why our excursion into the topic of “tradition” is not an objectifying behaviour that would take tradition as something foreign. It must be considered as something that is in us, recognition of ourselves. From this perspective, understanding is an insertion into a traditional process, where the past and the present are constantly interfering. As pointed out above, *Dasein* is always already being-in-the-world, that is our thrownness (Steiner, 1987: 85) in the world. It is the sense that we can understand our insertion in the tradition. In line with all the above, Paul Regan justifies and affirms:

*The profound concept of historicity and understanding is that we are thrown into a world that has a historical context, which becomes better understood as Dasein matures in time. We are composed of this world and context, our essence is already in this all surrounding and ancient world, temporally and unavoidably not of our own making. We are born with a past even as we begin to know we exist and have the ability to think and wonder, adapting to the world as it is. This is evident by the phrase the ‘biological clock’ which ticks away long before we are aware of our own mortality. Therefore, we study history in so far as we ourselves are historical. This reduces the risk of being self absorbed and forgetting about history whilst also allowing us to remain naive and re-present the past into the present and future (Gadamer, cited by Regan, 2012: 298).*



In short, let us sum up this section by affirming with Leung that: “the ultimate aim of Gadamer’s consecutive moves from prejudice to authority and from authority to tradition is to demonstrate that tradition, or “belonging to a tradition” is the condition of understanding” (Leung, 2010: 34).

#### **4.4 The existential triad**

Under this subsection, focusing on the existential triad, the discussion will be mainly based on the feeling of the situation, understanding and interpretation.

##### **4.4.1 The feeling of the situation (*Sentiment de la situation*)**

*Dasein*, as being-in-the-world, finds himself or herself firstly thrown into the world, secondly projected in its possibilities and finally fallen in everyday life (inauthentic life). The feeling of the situation has no linguistic character. It remains and is understood only as the feeling of the situation. *Dasein* is understood in a certain affective disposition. It stands here already affecting in a determined way. It is this phenomenon, at first sight banal, that classical psychology takes an interest in by insisting on the tone or the affective colour that is mixed with any state of consciousness: good or bad mood, joy, boredom, fear. For Heidegger, these dispositions are not states, but modes of understanding oneself to be there (Heidegger, 1992: 178-180; Levinas *et al.*, 1996: 23).

To Heidegger, the disposition is a kind of existential being of the co-original open-world, of coexistence and existence, because it is itself essentially being-in-the-world. It is a fundamental existential mode in which *Dasein* is there. The arrangement is not only an ontological characteristic of *Dasein*, but because of what it discovers and has, at the same time, the significance of a methodological principle for existential analysis (Heidegger, 1992: 184).

The affective disposition does not detach itself from the understanding by which it exists, revealing to us the fact that *Dasein* is doomed to those possibilities. It is neither the symbol, nor the symptom, nor the index of this situation; it is its situation. The description of affectivity does not prove the reality but it provides the analysis that

shows by its existence, *Dasein* is already thrown in the middle of its possibilities. In other words, as Levinas affirms: “to exist for man is to seize his own possibilities [...]. The intimacy of this relation between *Dasein* and its possibilities that is characterized [...] by the fact of being its possibilities. To-be-in-the-world is to be one’s possibilities” (Levinas *et al.*, 1996: 23-24). It should be noted that thrownness, or dereliction, is understood in the sense of the source and the necessary foundation of affectivity, this being possible only where existence is delivered to one's own destiny (Levinas *et al.*, 1996: 24).

For Heidegger, dereliction, abandonment to imposed possibilities, gives to human existence a *de facto* character in a very strong and very dramatic sense of the term. The empirical facts of science are imposed on a spirit. However, to be ascertained as facts, a situation such as effectiveness must first be there. This situation is fulfilled by a *Dasein* who exists in its *Da*, his here below, and is thrown into the world. To be thrown into the world, abandoned and left to oneself, is the ontological description of the fact. Human existence is defined for Heidegger by this “effectivity” or “facticity”. The understanding and interpretation of this effectiveness constitute the analytic ontology of *Dasein* itself for us. This is why the author of *On the Way to Language* (*Acheminement vers la parole*) and his followers define ontology as “the hermeneutics of facticity” (Heidegger, 1976: 96; Heidegger cited by Levinas *et al.*, 1996: 24).

For Levinas, understanding of possibilities by *Dasein* is done in its dereliction, as an understanding of the possible. Commenting on Heidegger, Levinas affirms:

*Dasein is always already beyond itself. But being thus beyond oneself -to be one's possibilities- does not mean, as we have already said, to contemplate this beyond as an object, to choose between possibilities as we choose between two paths that intersect at a crossroads. This would be to deprive possibility of its character of possibility by transforming it into a plan established beforehand. Possibility must be seized in its very possibility - as such it is inaccessible to contemplation but positively characterizes the way of the being of Dasein. This way of being thrown*

*forward toward one's own possibilities, of adumbrating [esquisser] them throughout one's very existence, is a crucial moment of understanding, which Heidegger defines by the word Entwurf, which we translate as "project-in-draft" [projetsquisse] (Levinas et al., 1996: 24).*

Furthermore, *Dasein* is not always in its authentic life but can fall to its everyday life. In this inauthentic life, *Dasein* becomes alienated by its possibilities and by other *Daseins*. "This phenomenon is called "fall", the third characteristic of existence alongside dereliction and the project-in-draft" (Levinas et al., 1996: 25). The fall, as described by Heidegger is:

*A mode of the existence of Dasein shunning its authentic existence in order to relapse into everyday life [vie quotidienne] (Alltäglichkeit). Dasein does not understand itself in its true personality but in terms of the object it handles: it is what it does, it understands itself in virtue of the social role it professes. We have not been able to insist on the character of Dasein by virtue of which it understands other persons, by virtue of which it coexists. We make the point here to say that in "everyday life" this coexistence becomes equally commonplace; it is reduced to superficial social relations, which are entirely determined by handling in common [maniement en commun], other persons being understood as one understands oneself, in terms of things. Dasein, fallen, is lost in things and knows another personality only as "the one" [l'on] or "everyone" [tout le monde]. It understands itself - and this term always means it is its possibilities - with an optimism which is nothing other than a flight in the face of anguish, that is, in the face of its authentic understanding. (Heidegger, 1992: 131).*

It is further noted that in the fall, states Heidegger, "we rediscover all the structures of understanding in an altered and fallen form. The word, whose union with understanding we will demonstrate later, and which authentic *Dasein* possesses under the modality of silence, becomes chatter and verbiage, introducing equivocation into existence" (Heidegger cited by Levinas et al., 1996: 25).

Nevertheless, as being-in-the-world, being-there has not always only some understanding of the totality of meanings, but also always has a certain emotional tone. In other words, things are not always theoretically sensible. They have emotional value. It is by taking account of affectivity that existential analysis is endowed with a guard against the risk of privileging an aspect of being there in favour of the others, since philosophy has often favoured the theoretical or cognitive aspect by neglecting the emotional aspect.

Finally, the feeling of the situation allows Heidegger to take a decisive step in the development of his thought. The situatedness of being does go hand in hand with understanding. This situatedness is a kind of fore-structure of understanding, more original than understanding (Heidegger, cited by Vattimo, 1985: 42).

#### **4.4.2 Understanding**

Understanding is a fundamental existential. Indeed, in all the behaviours by which being is in commerce with beings, there is always an understanding of the being of being-there. It is, moreover, what being knows where it is himself or herself, and it also reveals being itself as being-in-the-world in the structure of *in order of* whom, which defines it as revelation (Ndumba, 1988: 58). In line with all the above, Leung commenting on Heidegger says:

*Heidegger intends to use the term "understanding" in a sense that he supposes to be the original or primary sense to mean a "fundamental existentielle"... In this sense, understanding is "the condition of possibility for all of Dasein's particular possible manners of comportment" (Leung, 2010: 24).*

The opening of the world to *Dasein* in the form of "*in order to*", on the one hand, and of significance, on the other hand, is to understand it as an existential, a condition of possibility of any other mode of knowing. It is in this sense that Heideggerian understanding should be understood as the potentiality-for-being, which is also being

of an inalienable being – being of beings, while at the same time being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1992: 180).

The Heideggerian concept of understanding is original and different from the ordinary meaning of this word, which refers to the ontic. This understanding is not an intellectual faculty of being-there, which would be, moreover, the gift of power over this or that. The knowledge we are talking about here is not to be reduced to a purely conceptual understanding. This understanding is not theoretical because it is a mode both simpler and more original, such as the comprehension of grasping a being such as a hammer as a tool for nailing (Heidegger, 1985b: 393). We will have in the next sections to analyze understanding as a worrying quest of *Dasein*, understanding as potentiality for- being and understanding as a way of living, to highlight the entire existential dimension of the latter.

#### **4.4.2.1 Understanding as anguish of *Dasein***

Anguish (anxiety) is one of the essential ontological dispositions. This is understood in both a theological (in relation to sin and fault) and a psychological (as a state of mind) sense, from Kierkegaard's point of view. The latter links anguish to the experience of dealing with its many possibilities. He states: "the relationship of freedom to fault is anxiety because freedom and fault are still possible" (Kierkegaard, 2015: 112). However, to Freud, anguish is precisely that which is peculiar and familiar to us, but which we have repressed to preserve ourselves from something or to obey civilising demands. It refers to what the second topic will circumscribe under the term '*that*' (Freud, 2001: 252, 258). However, Heidegger's phenomenological analysis of anguish takes it from psychology to ontology (Heidegger, 1992: § 40).

To Ciocan, Heidegger before analysing anguish, took his time to prepare us by explaining what fear is in order to distinguish these two dispositions of affectivity. He affirms this by stating:

*Heidegger is interested to unveil the structure of anxiety and its capacity of revealing the totality of Dasein's being. But, in order to be able to clarify the structure of anxiety, Heidegger prefers to start by approaching a*

*neighbouring and more easy-describable mood, namely fear. Fear appears in Being and Time only to prepare the ground upon which a clearer and richer exposure of the structure and existential-ontological force of anxiety can possibly emerge (Ciocan, 2010: 66).*

The existence of *Dasein*, consisting in understanding being, grasped as "*being-in-the-world*", is specified as existence, including in the state of dereliction, its fundamental possibility of existing. What is this understanding that captures *Dasein* as the ultimate achievement and accomplishment of this effectiveness?

According to Levinas, anguish is an affective understanding. He affirms:

*This mode of understanding is anguish. Every understanding comes about in an affective disposition. Affectivity, such as joy, fear, or sadness, is characterized- a point we have not stressed until now - by its double direction: toward an object [vers un objet] (Wovor) that is in the world, and toward itself, toward the one "for whom" [pour qui] (Worum) one is grieved, happy, or frightened. This taking stock of itself, fundamental for affectivity, shows moreover in the reflected form of verbs that express affective states - being delighted, frightened, saddened, etc (Levinas et al., 1996: 29; Huneman and Kulich, 1997: 60).*

According to Levinas (1996), anguish has the same structure as fear, but offers a peculiarity that sets it apart among affective states. He affirms that:

*We must first distinguish it (anguish) from fear. The one "for whom" we are frightened is "ourselves"; it is Dasein attained and threatened in its "being-in-the-world". On the other hand, the object of fear, we encounter the object of fear in the world by virtue of a determined being (être). It is different for anguish: the object of anguish is not in the interior of the world like a "menacing thing" [quelque chose de menaçant] about which one must make this or that decision. The object of anguish remains entirely indeterminate. Indeterminacy is in no way purely negative: specific and original, it reveals to us a sort of indifference that all the objects usually*

*handled by Dasein possess for anguished Dasein. Anguish presents a way of being in which the nonimportance, the insignificance, the nothingness of all inner worldly [intra mondains] (innerweltlich) objects becomes accessible to Dasein. In passing, let us make a point that should not be forgotten: we say that anguish reveals to us the insignificance of "inner worldly" objects; this does not mean that it acts as a sign for us, that we deduce this insignificance from the fact of anguish, or that we prove anguish after having taken note of the nonimportance of things. Anguish itself reveals and understands this insignificance. Moreover, correlatively, this insignificance is not revealed as something innocuous, a sort of purely theoretical negation and theoretically conceivable, but as essentially anguishing and, as a consequence, as taking leave of the domain of Dasein, as something human (Levinas et al., 1996: 30).*

However, with inner worldly objects sunk into nothingness, the anguished *Dasein* does not lose its constitution of being-in-the-world. Quite the contrary, anguish brings *Dasein* back to the world as a world - to the possibility of being in sight of oneself – it only tears it out of the world as a whole of things, handy utensils. In anguish, *Dasein* understands in an authentic way, brought back to the bare possibility of its existence, to its pure and simple effectiveness emptied of all contents, nothingness. It is this effectiveness of the being-in-the-world, of the pure and simple *Da*, which is the object of the anxiety, which threatens (Heidegger, 1992: §40).

The object of anguish is identified with its *for whom*: it is being-in-the-world. In doing away with inner worldly things, anxiety makes it impossible to understand oneself from the possibilities relating to these objects, and it thus brings *Dasein* to understand itself from itself, it brings it back to oneself. Anguish, by bringing existence back to itself, saves it from its dispersion in things and reveals to *Dasein* its possibility of existing in a particularly acute way as being-in-the-world. It constitutes the situation where the totality of the ontological structures of *Dasein* is collected in unity. In other words, anguish is not absolutely an experience in which *Dasein* deals with a being: on the contrary, it is his own being in the world, which is revealed to him in his

dimension of being in dereliction (Huneman and Kulich, 1997: 62; Magrini, 2006: 77; Vietta, 1951: 170). A similar argument is observed by Ciocan who states:

*Fear is a mood that emerges in the face of something definite, a menacing entity within-the-world, one that is approaching me in a threatening way, one that menaces from a definite direction and with definite perils. Anxiety, on the other hand, emerges in the face of 'something' indefinite and assails 'something' equally indefinite, namely, the being-in-the-world of Dasein as such. What is at issue is not an entity, not something concrete, but a nonentity, something distinct and different from any entity whatsoever. In other words, the 'intentionality' of anxiety is not focused on something determinate (Ciocan, 2010: 67).*

Anguish, let us repeat, is an understanding. It includes in an exceptional way the possibility to exist in an authentic way. Heidegger refers to the anguish that is a possibility of existing as a "worry" (Heidegger, 1992: § 41).

The total formula expressing concern consists of these three elements: being-beyond oneself, having already been in the world, and being-close to things. Their unity is not that of a proposition that could always be arbitrarily established, but that of the concrete phenomenon of anxiety. Moreover, ontological understanding is not only understood as anguish. It is also potentiality-for-being (*pouvoir-être*), being impregnated from end to end with possibilities.

#### **4.4.2.2 Understanding as potentiality-for-being (Pouvoir-être)**

Being-in-the-world is a dynamic mode of existence. It is about dynamics, about possibility, not possibility in the logical and negative sense as "*absence of contradiction*" (empty possibility), but of the concrete and positive possibility, of that expressed by saying that we can do this or that, that we have possibilities towards which we are free.

By understanding, *Dasein* can know where it is as to the possibility of being (Huneman and Kulich, 1997: 57). The tools that we discover in the world, these usable tools that



are useful for something, relate to our possibilities - seized or missed - to handle them, possibilities made possible by the fundamental possibility of being-in-the-world, that is, of existing for the very purpose of existence. This dynamic character of existence constitutes its fundamental paradox: existence is made of possibilities, which, however, precisely as possibilities, stand out in the forefront. Existence gets ahead of itself.

To express the intimacy of this relationship between *Dasein* and its possibilities, we can say that it is characterised, not by the fact of having possibilities, but of being its possibilities; a structure which in the world of things would be inconceivable and which positively determines the existence of *Dasein*. Being-in-the-world means being one's possibilities. What are these possibilities?

To be his possibilities is to understand them. But that does not mean a return to the notion of internal conscience. The originality of the Heideggerian conception of existence in relation to the traditional idea of an internal consciousness is that this knowledge of oneself, this internal illumination - this understanding - not only no longer admits the subject-object structure, but has nothing theoretical about it. It is not an awareness, a pure and simple observation of what we are, an observation capable of measuring our power over ourselves. Here, on the contrary, understanding is the very dynamism of this existence, this very power over oneself. In this sense, understanding constitutes the mode whose existence is its possibilities: what was taking consciousness becomes suddenly taken and, hence, the event of existence itself. Instead of the consciousness of traditional philosophy, which, as it becomes conscious, remains serene and contemplative external to the destiny and the history of the concrete man of which it becomes aware, Heidegger introduces the notion of *Dasein* including its possibilities, but which comprises, *ipso facto* his destiny, his existence here below.

Additionally, being-there is in the world in the form of the project, which is a kind of guide, open to modifications and developments. The concept of the project, which defines the totality of the beingness of being, has a precise meaning here. It is understanding as a way of possessing all the meanings that make up the world before

meeting the particular things. All this is possible only because being-there is constitutively power-being and understanding of things is possible only by considering them as open possibilities (Vattimo, 1985: 39).

#### **4.4.2.3 Understanding as a way of life (savoir-être)**

To understand is always to apply. In this sense, understanding without application is not really understanding. It (understanding) is not a mechanical process, nor a matter of rules, nor a procedure, but ability, a power-being and a delicacy of the mind (Grondin, 1999: 154).

Indeed, when we say that a work was done with "application" in French, it also means that it was executed with meticulousness and dedication. Here, then, there is insertion of the interpreter into what he understands. Understanding as vigilance is constitutive of the understanding of meaning, but it is also the correctness of understanding. It should be noted that this practical aspect of understanding is, without doubt, an Aristotelian heritage (Grondin, 1999: 155). As we said above, understanding is not theoretical knowledge, but especially practical. In other words, it is an ethos.

For Jean Grondin, understanding as the mode of living of *Dasein* is also understood as situational knowledge that seems to be more often opposed to the calculation of who knows how to take advantage of the situation. This situational knowledge is relativistic and Kantian universalism. We will not elucidate this debate in this work. What is important to know here is that the former is not knowledge of pure speculation (intellection). It does not consist in knowing by the mind an ideal norm, an abstract good, a mathematical universality. It consists of applying the good in a concrete situation. It is rather knowledge as application (Grondin, 1999: 157).

Situational knowledge, at a certain moment, becomes what is often called "moral action", which does not proceed from an objectivist conception, dependent on modern scientific objectification. It is knowledge as action and practical application. Aristotle was the first to propose this model in his ethics. His goal was to mark the limits of a strictly instrumental, epistemic or technical intelligence of the norms of action (Grondin, 1999: 158). Therefore, it is obvious that the mode of living as understanding

is indebted to a tradition, a fund that carries it. Moreover, this reference to ethos is not a plea for the relativism of acting or applying it to the hermeneutic of understanding, but has a function that admits that rightness does not depend on the detachment from the situation of the action in the same way as authoritative knowledge in the scientific and technical field.

From this perspective, this knowledge does not belong to the order of the *episteme* whose model is provided for the Greeks by mathematics. It differs from technique, which is also the knowledge of a doing and which aims at the production of an object outside me. Know-how is not object knowledge and does not allow this distance. Whoever knows here is not confronted with a state of affairs that he or she would only notice. He or she is involved in what he or she knows. In other words, this knowledge is a capacity for discernment that is not a matter of objectification, but of vigilance, awakening to the situation. This is why, refusing to be objectified, knowledge cannot be learned as a mathematical knowledge (Grondin, 1999: 160). The best example of this knowledge is the case of a child who speaks and understands a language even though he or she does not know the grammatical rules of the language.

#### **4.4.3 Interpretation**

Being aware of possibilities is itself, through the backlash of these possibilities discovered in *Dasein*, a potentiality-for-being. The intrinsic project to hear it has the opportunity to develop. This development of hearing is called explicitness (Heidegger, 1992: 194). It is first an explanation, a development and disenchantment, a discovery, a surgery, an epiphany of understanding (Heidegger, 1992: 185). Moreover, the translation of *Auslegung* by interpretation has the great felicity of recalling that any worthy interpretation must first begin by a clarification of the possibilities of understanding, which determines it. Interpretation is not understood here first as the methodology of exegesis because the exegesis of things precedes that of texts (Kangudi, 2006).

It should be pointed out that, in Heidegger's case, what is explicit is the one that attaches to the thing intended for one or another use. For, in the hermeneutic circle (Huneman and Kulich, 1997: 49), the pre-anticipation and the explicitness are tied

into a new structure called sense (Kangudi, 2006). It appears that it is when an innerworldly being has come to understanding that we say that it has a meaning. The latter is understood in many aspects:

- the aspect of the entire referral system that controls the concern;
- the aspect of articulation. This can be articulated in the constitutive revelation of understanding, what we call meaning. It is from there that it derives its formal aspect;
- the aspect of anticipation. The meaning is the preconception of the project structured by the *acquis*, the prior view, the anticipation;
- the existential aspect. If the meaning is always put in revelation with the discovery of a utensil and the revelation of the being that is projected, only the being-there can be sensible or not sensible. That is why the meaning remains constitutive of being-there; and
- the circular aspect which stems from the symmetry between the agreement of the world on the one side and the existence of the other (Kangudi, 2006).

To Heidegger, interpretation is a development of understanding. Heidegger himself explains this fact in his own words when he elaborates:

*The projecting of the understanding has its own possibility – that of developing itself. This development of the understanding we call “interpretation”. In it the understanding appropriates understandingly that which is understood by it. In interpretation, understanding does not become something different. It becomes itself. Such interpretation is grounded existentially in understanding; the latter does not arise from the former. Nor is interpretation the acquiring of information about what is understood; it is rather the working-out of possibilities projected in understanding (Heidegger, 1980: 188-189).*

During interpretation, the enunciation of language does not reveal something new on the existential level; it only gives it an expression. Indeed, interpretation allows understanding to be seen as a revelatory power of being-in-the-world. The being-

there, discovering the world in the ontological preoccupation of its structure of significance, from which inner worldly beings can understand each other explicitly, gives oneself to understand oneself. He discovers the world already understood, one explains it as such.

Additionally, interpretation always culminates in appropriation because through interpretation we explain things in our words. It is in this sense that:

*"In it [interpretation] the understanding appropriates understandingly that which is understood by it." This means that in interpretation we make into our own, into our property, what is in the first place foreign to us and does not belong to us. This character of interpretation is the most obvious in the case of translation, which, in Heidegger's words, is "making what was presented in a foreign language accessible in our own language and for the sake of it (Heidegger, cited by Leung, 2010: 25).*

It should be noted that *Verstehen* and *Auslegung* do not constitute two different moments as if one had first the understanding of the given and then the explanation of its usable object. This expression "*Verstehen* and *Auslegung*" suggests a *co-originary* structure of understanding and interpretation. Interpretation is not a second moment, promising the self-realization of understanding in the schematization of meaning (Ndumba, 1988: 60).

Appropriation is never a pure perception, a blank seizure of a pre-given subsistent being, since the explanation of something as this or that is based essentially on an acquired and a prior view and an anticipation, without reference to a world (Heidegger, 1992: 188). What is articulable inside the *découvrir ententif* is the meaning. The latter covers the formal frame of what belongs by necessity to what the interpretation (*explication ententive*) is.

Since hearing and interpretation form, on the one hand, the existential constitution of the being-there, meaning, on the other hand, is conceived as the formal existential frame of the opening inherent in hearing it. It is from this perspective that meaning is

an existential of *Dasein*. Only *Dasein* can, therefore, be charged with meaning or meaningless. In another register of language, the being of *Dasein*, and being discovered with him, can appropriate to each other in agreement or remain closed to each other by *inintente*. That is why, sticking to this existential-ontological interpretation, in its principle of the concept of meaning, everything that does not have the kind of being of *Dasein* must be conceived as foolish, as essentially meaningless. And only the fool can be a challenge to meaning (Heidegger, 1992: 197).

The term hermeneutics, from Heidegger's point of view, is a little more technical, and equivalent to the term explicitness. In *Being and Time* Heidegger defines the term in these words: "the phenomenology of *Dasein* is a *hermeneutic* in the primordial signification of this word, where it designates this business of interpreting" (Heidegger, 1980: 62).

In view of the above, it is easy to think that Heideggerian phenomenology is an interpretation because its express task is to recover the phenomenological way of the essential phenomenon of *Dasein*, against its own dissimulation. This is why being, that phenomenally does not show itself, is precisely this possible being (of which *Dasein* is nevertheless the constant concern). This is why to bring up to the surface in a way, to confront *Dasein* with his own being, it is therefore necessary to practice an explication or hermeneutics of *Dasein* (Heidegger, 1980: 63).

To sum up this section, let us accept what Leung says about Heideggerian understanding and interpretation. He affirms: "Since Heidegger thinks that understanding underlies every comportment of *Dasein*, for him interpretation is at work in everything we think and do, everything we say and write" (Leung, 2010: 39). Besides, what is understood and interpreted has to be explained through the medium of language. On the same note, Leung asserts: "interpretation achieves the appropriation, explicitness, and unveiling, by putting what is held in fore-having, and seen in a particular point of view, into concepts" (Leung, 2010: 27).

## 4.5 Language

Language is the important medium through which human beings can communicate. To Heidegger, language is the house of being, where human being lives. He expresses this fundamental idea in his own words and affirms: "Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells. Man is the "shepherd of Being" (Heidegger, 1978: 217/234). In line with all of the above, Steiner commenting on Heidegger affirms: "*Dasein* is grounded in the language, the intelligibility of being-in-the-world, expresses itself and can only express itself in discourse. We live, says Heidegger, by putting into words the totality-of-significations of intelligibility" (Steiner, 1987: 92).

It is from the existential triad situation-understanding-interpretation that we come to language in the philosophy of Heidegger. But the problem of language really arises in the articulation of explicitness. Indeed, by explaining comprehension through language, we produce a meaning. The latter becomes the articulation of the agreement. The new moment is that of the statement that brings articulation to the level of judgment. In fact, language is seen as a second articulation, the articulation of explicitness in statements (Heidegger, 1992: 191).

However, the origin of the utterance from understanding and explicitness prepares us to say that its primary function is not communication to others or even the attribution of predicates to logical subjects, but the *faire-valoir*, the demonstration, the manifestation (Heidegger, 1992: 192). From Heidegger's point of view, the utterance has a meaning insofar as it is based on hearing and represents explicitness as a derived form of fulfilment. It has three meanings: monstration (epiphany), preaching, and communication (Heidegger, 1992: 200-201). Primarily, the statement means monstration. We refer here to the original meaning of logos as allowing being to see itself. For example, in the statement "the car is out of order", what is revealed at first sight is nothing other than being seen from the point of view of its usability and not the meaning. The statement as a monstration is the most original intention that Aristotle calls *apophansis* (Heidegger, 1992: 32).

Secondly, the utterance can be understood as preaching to the extent that all preaching is what it is only as a demonstration. Besides, the links of the predicative articulation, subject-predicate are found inside the monstration (epiphany). From this same perspective, to determine does not mean to first reveal, but is rather a mode of demonstration, to constrain the view to be limited first of all to what is shown as such – the car. This passage from the demonstration to preaching is a restriction and not an increase because its goal is the derivation of the most original, or at least the original (Kangudi, 2006).

Thirdly and finally, the utterance means communication, declaration. Taken in this sense, communication is directly related to the utterance in the first two meanings. The utterance as communication shows others what is shown in their determination. The aim of the utterance is to be uttered. It is in the sense that it is said that the utterance can be shared with others. In short, the Heideggerian utterance is a demonstration that determines and communicates (Heidegger, 1992: 202). The manifestation that the utterance accomplishes is done because of what is discovered in the hearing. It (utterance) does not leap into the void to discover being in the primitive state. It is still already based on being-in-the-world. It therefore needs a prior knowledge of what is generally discovered and which it shows in determining it (Heidegger, 1992: 203).

Despite the fact that the speech was addressed in § 34 of *Being and Time* after the feeling of the situation, the understanding, the explanation and the statement, it does not diminish the fact that it is the element, in which understanding unfolds. In Heidegger's own view, discourse has the same existential level of origin as the feeling of the situation, and understanding (Heidegger, 1992: 161). Discourse is the articulation of what is understanding. It is also the signifying articulation of the understandable structure of being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1992: 200). Clearly, speech is what constitutes the expressiveness of the feeling of the situation, and understanding. It is at this level that discourse appears as a moment of language, a significant articulation of the understanding of being-in-the-world, in its feeling of the situation (Heidegger, 1992: 162-200).



According to Ricoeur (1969), in *Being and Time*, to say (*le dire*) seems to be prior to speak (*le parler*). To say designates the existential constitution, and speaks of its mundane aspect, which falls within the empirical. It is for this reason that the first determination of to say is not to speak, but the couple "listen and silence". To understand is to hear. My relationship to the word is not that I produce it, but that I receive it: "hearsay is constitutive of discourse" (Heidegger, 1992: 201). This priority of listening marks the fundamental relationship of speech to openness to the world and to others. On the same note, Heidegger adds and affirms: "speaking is, "in advance", a hearing; we are only able to speak because "we have already listened to language. What do we hear there? We hear language speaking" (Heidegger, 1978: 411).

According to Ricoeur, commenting on Heidegger, linguistics, semiology and the philosophy of language stand ineluctably at the level of speech and do not reach the point of saying. In this sense, speech refers to the speaking man, and to say refers to things said (Ricoeur, 1986: 94). Before we turn to the notion of authenticity, we will first follow the fall of speech into chatter. Talk is talk about something. As Heidegger said:

*In any talk or discourse, there is something said-in-the-talk as such [ein Geredetes as solches]- something said as such [das ... Gesagte als solches] whenever one wishes, asks, or expresses oneself about something. In this "something said", discourse communicates (Heidegger, 1980: 205).*

*Dasein*, before standing in a peculiar relationship to his being, is always already handed over, to the other *Dasein*; it is at the level of speech, saying and communication. Thus, it shares the general articulation of understanding in everyday life. Everydayness is characterised by indifference and the levelling of differences (Heidegger, 1992: 43). According to Heidegger, the way of understanding *Dasein*, taken in everyday life, in oneness" and in "theyness", is mediocrity. The latter exempts it from an original understanding. The original relation to the over-what of the word is lost in the said and the release (Steiner, 1987: 92).

One might think that, for Heidegger, the domain of decay covers the whole of the communicative understanding, in which the sharing of knowledge, beliefs and ideas is constituted. The relation to the "thing itself", the original understanding of the word "what-on-what", is lost, to give way to the absence of substance, to the abyss of gossip. This lack of background explains why chatter can only rest on repetition and the recalled (*Nachreden*) that is meant to asperse, to gossip pejoratively and emptily (Steiner, 1987: 92-93). Here, there is a shift from *Gerede* (simply talk), that embraces the floodtide of trivia, gossip, novelty, cliché, and jargon, to *Nachreden*.

In relationship and repetition, the difference between what is drawn and conquered at the source, and what is re-told, fades (Heidegger, 1992: 133). *Dasein* loses its character of clearing to be closed to the relationship and the re-said of advertising. The absence of substance is veiled in the evidence and the certainty of everyday life, which constitute, with the aid of gossip, the most daily and tenacious reality of *Dasein*. Above the abyss, the bottomless, *Dasein* stands in suspension, in a strangeness that is not worrying to him or her. On the contrary, the assurance he derives from the distraction and curiosity, that leads him to see everything and to understand everything, leads him even more violently into the vortex of decay.

But this forced uprooting involves a very particular temporality. In a way, one could certainly say that *Dasein* is "in" time. Its life is between birth and death. The first belongs to a definite past and the second to an undetermined future. *Dasein*, on the other hand, is essentially determined by historicity (*historialité*) (Heidegger, 1992: 197). It does not relate to birth and death in general, but always to his or her death and birth. The temporality that extends between birth and death is part of its existential structure. The phenomenon of death is an insurmountable possibility and it is interpreted as being- towards-the-end (Heidegger, 1980: 293).

Even by putting his or her death in the silence of oblivion, *Dasein* remains a mortal being. Death, as an existential, has a paradoxical structure. As an apt possibility, death as such is not an experience. I cannot witness my own death (Wittgenstein, 1972: 84). In everyday life, death presents itself as that of others; it concerns being-with

*Dasein*. In death, the other *Dasein* is transformed, in appearance, into a mere being-at-hand. *Dasein* leaves his or her world to become a simple corpse under the hand. But the interpretation of death as a passage towards being-under-the-hand or being-at-hand-of-hand, just like the interpretation of the dead as the deceased who remains in the world, only obscures the existential character of death (Heidegger, 1980: 293).

Being-with in the world includes the representativity of one *Dasein* by another. In daily concern *Dasein* can always, and essentially, be replaced by another. Here we find the generality of "theyness". In "theyness", one *Dasein* is equivalent to another. At this level, each *Dasein* can at the same time be his other. This is the place of solicitation, where one *Dasein* puts himself or herself in the place of the other, in concern (Heidegger, 1992: 239).

As long as *Dasein* is, death is a "not-yet" (*pas encore*). As a possibility, death remains of the order of the future. But as soon as *Dasein* reaches this not-yet, it becomes "no longer-being-able-to-be-there" (Heidegger, 1980: 294). Death is the end of *Dasein*, and as an existential, death as an end is part of the very being of *Dasein*. Just as *Dasein*, as long as he is, is on the contrary constantly his not-yet, so is he also already his end. The ending designated by death does not mean a being-at-the-end of *Dasein*, but a being for the end of that being (Heidegger, 1992: 182). In the same way, Steiner commenting on Heidegger affirms:

*so long as Dasein has not come to its own end, it remains incomplete. It has not completed its Gänze (entirety). Dasein - this is an immensely important point has access to the meaning of being because, and only because, that being is finite. Authentic being is, therefore, a being-towards-death, a Seinzum-Tode* (Steiner, 1987: 99).

For Heidegger, speech is co-native with understanding. It is the articulation of understanding. Language has its roots in the ontological outbreak of *Dasein*. Speech holds a key role in the authenticity of *Dasein* and this word of authenticity is not a word full of meaning either. We meet silence in two different places: first in the "silence" of authentic speech, then in the call of the ethical dimension.

According to Heidegger, it is in silence (*schweigen*) as a mode of speech that an authentic understanding is constituted. The one who is silent in the being-one-with-the other can give more authentically to understanding, or better configure understanding, than the one who never breaks his or her word. An abundance of words about something never gives any guarantee that understanding will be increased. On the contrary, inexhaustible discussion seemingly covers comprehension and brings it to apparent clarity, that is, to the in-comprehensibility of the trivial (Heidegger, 1992: 131).

Inexhaustible discussion brings speech into indeterminacy and insignificance. Authentic speech as "silence" can form, authentically and develop understanding. This movement of building understanding seems to indicate that understanding is not necessarily preliminary to speech. Understanding is not a condition of possibility of speech, but, as the existential foundation of *Dasein*, a co-originator of understanding, speech seems to be able to reverse *rappports*. For speech to be an understanding, understanding must itself be translated to speech. This seems to indicate that understanding is always articulated. In this respect, Heidegger writes: "*Comprehensiveness, even before the appropriate explanation, is always articulated.*" Speaking is the articulation of understanding. It is therefore fundamental for the explicitness and the statement (Heidegger, 1992: 129).

We would be tempted to say that even before utterance and explicitness, comprehension is articulated because it is already language. Understanding would then be given to language as a possibility that depends on it. The true constitution of understanding does not need to be stated. It can take place in the "silence" as the authentic mode of speech. On this specific point, Grondin gives the example of the understanding of a piece of music or a painting which is done in contemplation and which does not need the word (Grondin, 1999: 189). In the meantime, the word is not only explicit, it opens being originally, in a new understanding, that precedes as its condition of possibility.

For Heidegger, "keeping-silence" remains a mode of speech. It does not necessarily imply complete silence, the absence of any word. "Silence" does not mean to be silent. "Silence" does not mean refraining from speaking. According to Heidegger, one can in a sense "silence" only the one who truly speaks: "Only in true speaking can authentic silence become possible" (Heidegger, 1992: 165). Whoever speaks little or does not speak cannot be silenced. If, therefore, silence is a moment of speech, if with silence speech becomes authentic speech, silence could be conceived as the moment of "scansion". It is not itself a word, a statement, a sentence, the moment of silence, that punctuates a word, making a meaning come to it.

Briefly, it is only in real speaking that authentic silence becomes possible. Silence is later also the voice of conscience that calls *Dasein* from the nothingness of the world into the "reticence" of its existing power-being.

#### **4.6 Ontologization of understanding: critical appreciation**

By starting his hermeneutics with the inauguration of a new question, Heidegger does not provide a solution to the problem posed especially by Dilthey. He did not eliminate the Diltheyan aporia from a theory of understanding, condemned in turn to oppose the naturalistic explanation and to compete with it in objectivity and scientificity. This *aporia* is only transported (diverted) elsewhere and thereby aggravated. It is no longer in the epistemology between two modalities of knowing, but between ontology and epistemology taken as a whole (Ricoeur, 1986: 94).

With the Heideggerian philosophy, we continue to practice the movement back to the foundations. Moreover, we are unable to proceed with the return movement, which from fundamental ontology, would lead back to the properly epistemological question of the status of the sciences of the mind. But a philosophy that does not engage with science exists only for itself. Moreover, it is only on the return journey that the claim is holding the questions of exegesis in particular and in general of historical criticism for derived questions (Ricoeur, 1986: 94-95). It is in this sense, that we think that as long as we have not actually made this derivation, the overcoming of the foundation questions remains problematic.

According to Ricœur (1969), the ontology of understanding is a short way to the extent that it breaks with methodological debates. Hence, it is an ontology of finite being, in which to understand it is no longer a mode of knowledge, but a mode of being (Ricoeur, 1969: 10). It is for this reason Kangudi, as inspired by Ricœur, supports the idea that shows that self-understanding passes through other channels of interpretation and reinterpretation (Kangudi, 2006).

However, Heidegger's new approach to understanding marked a fundamental turning point for hermeneutics. Indeed, the ontologization of understanding by Heidegger, understood existentially, and the temporal interpretation that it gives the mode of being of *Dasein*, made it possible to rehabilitate and to emphasize the structures of anticipation of the understanding (Gadamer, 1996: 137).

By digging in this ontological soil, Heidegger shows that what was once considered as an obstacle to knowledge is actually, what precedes and is the basis of knowledge. It is in this sense that the structures of anticipations of understanding, namely prejudices, authority and tradition, are the soil on which all knowledge about the sciences of the mind is built, and thus are no longer what barricades the road to knowledge.

As a result, there is in the author of *Being and Time* a refutation of the claim of the pure subject in knowledge, because the latter is always already known as a subject who is situated, who has a tradition. This strong conviction of Heidegger leads us to think that he (Heidegger) would have supported the contribution of what is not rational in knowledge, especially in its first stages.

All of Heidegger's hermeneutics, as valuing tradition, want to teach us that all thought must always be part of a tradition and that if we know it is because we are constitutively capable of knowledge or open to knowledge. Consequently, the value of Heidegger is to have highlighted the fact that to understand is a mode of being of *Dasein*, which is not a theoretical knowledge. From this perspective, the hermeneutics of Heidegger

is the one that digs to the roots of our knowledge. For us Africans, it is an interpellation so that we can reconsider our tradition to establish our thought.

## 4.7 Conclusion

In this fourth section of this work, we discussed the great *Wendung* that Heidegger performed in hermeneutics. We attempted to answer the question “*what is the mode of this being that exists only by understanding?*”

Indeed, in Dilthey, the question of understanding goes hand in hand with the problem of others, but in *Being and Time*, this question is to be sought from the point of view of being with the world. In other words, Heidegger de-psychologizes it by *mundanizing* understanding. The question of the world takes the place of the question of others.

The world, for our author, is an existential. All that one encounters there are things that, before being mere presences, are instruments. After analyzing the Heideggerian world, we tried to highlight what Heidegger himself calls the pre-comprehension structures, including prejudices, authority and tradition. These structures, once obstacles to knowledge, become in Heidegger what knowledge is based on.

As for understanding, we have analyzed it in the existential triad through the feeling of the situation, understanding and interpretation. *Befindlichkeit* is the way to find oneself, to feel one way or the other, or to put it better, the emotional tone in which we happen to be. Heideggerian understanding is essentially a project. It is the apprehension of a possibility of being. This is what we have named to understand as being able to be. But before we got there, we had to show with Levinas that anguish, as a worrying quest for being, is itself a kind of understanding.

To understand is a way of being. Understanding is not theoretical, but practical knowledge. It is understood here as situational knowledge. The third concept of the trilogy is explicitness, which is nothing more than the extension, development, and unfolding of understanding. It is by articulating the explicitness in statements that one

arrives at language. The statement in the Heideggerian sense is essentially a demonstration. In his analysis, the author of *Being and Time*, prefers to say it in relation to speech because saying designates the existential constitution and speaking only designates its mundane aspect, which falls within the empirical. In the opinion of the Black Forest philosopher, the first determination of “to say” is the couple listen-to silence.

Despite the great turn he has made in hermeneutics, and by his rehabilitation of the anticipation structures of understanding, Heidegger failed to resolve the difficulty inherent in Dilthey's legacy. His no less commendable effort is limited to the transposition of the Diltheyan *aporia* within ontology.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

This investigation was conducted into the concept of Understanding in Martin Heidegger's view, in the dynamic of overcoming epistemology towards ontology. It highlighted the ontological turn made in hermeneutics by Heidegger. It covered respectively the epistemology of understanding, the eternal and traditional question of being in the history of Western philosophy, and the ontology of understanding.

The first chapter served as the general introduction. The second chapter was about the epistemology of understanding. I discussed the views of Schleiermacher and of



Dilthey. The Schleiermacherian understanding is an *intropathique* process by means of which the subject moves into a foreign consciousness in the face-to-face situation. To understand a text means to endeavour to read the mind of its author. With Dilthey, understanding is exclusive to the sciences of the mind and explanation belongs to the sciences of nature. Understanding is nothing else here than knowledge of the sign, a psychological process that leads to the knowledge of others.

The third chapter addressed the eternal and traditional question of being in the history of Western philosophy. Heidegger traced the seeds of oblivion to the question of being to the beginning of the history of Western philosophy. Thus, being has been reduced to beings. Clearly, it is the forgetting of being that is enshrined in metaphysics and any theory of knowledge.

This is what forced Heidegger to seek the foundation of a new ontology: fundamental ontology, the science that deals with the being of *Dasein*, because he is the only one who can question his being. This important shift in Heidegger's philosophy is a gateway: from the epistemology to the ontology of understanding.

The fourth chapter focused on the ontologization of understanding. In Heidegger's view, understanding is a behaviour of *Dasein*; a mode of living of *Dasein* in the world, where human being is always already thrown. This shift is a real revolution in philosophical hermeneutics because Heidegger emphasized the subordination of methodological or epistemological questions to ontological questions by highlighting the primacy of ontology over epistemology. Thus, Heidegger demonstrated that the problem of understanding is totally isolated from that of others and linked to that of the world. In short, Heidegger *mundanised* understanding. There is, so to say, a *worldization*, or *mundanization* of understanding, which imbricates its *de-psychologization*. According to Heidegger, understanding is always extended into interpretation that leads to language. Interpretation is, accordingly, a development or explication of the understanding that is articulated in language.

In line with all of the above, Heidegger deserves credit for rehabilitating the structure of pre-comprehension, which is often considered an obstacle to knowledge. The

philosopher of the Black Forest must therefore be credited with having made it clear that the ontological problem precedes that of epistemology because the latter is itself based on ontology.

But Heidegger failed to eliminate the dichotomy of a theory of understanding that maintains opposition to naturalistic explanation. He did not solve this dichotomy, but it is transported elsewhere and thereby aggravated. In short, this turning point remains problematic insofar as, after the explanation of the ontology of understanding, Heidegger could not rest the critical question.

Finally, with Ricœur, we agreed to break the impasse in which is found the Heideggerian ontology; phenomenology must be situated between Heideggerian ontology and reflective philosophy, which opts for a longer and diverted way of an interpretation of the signs, where the desire to be and the effort to exist, which constitute us, are themselves expressed and explained.

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