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## INVOKING HEIDEGGERIAN HERMENEUTICS ON THE FLAWS OF MODERNITY: THE PROJECT OF RESTORATION OF BEING

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### Abstract

The long streak of philosophy chronologically interlinked with various epochs of knowledge has a characteristic of overlapping, crisscrossing, and runs parallel as its fundamental nature. Undoubtedly, a series of conflict of ideas, a resonance of speculation and contemplation pervades the entire history of a quest for knowledge. In fact, what defines philosophy basically is its nature of heterogeneity, yet a fusion of ideas and thoughts. As such, the interpretation of philosophy witnessed in a varied form of representations, however, is considered more or less the same in Heideggerian context – having the same flaws, all but a misrepresentation of Being, deeply rooted in the fundamentals of metaphysics. For according to Heidegger, the metaphysical interpretation overemphasized upon subjective reason as something ultimate which accounts for reality, accordingly underestimated the tangible world as something illusory or nihilistic that does not matter at all in the ontological quest. To the worst of such revealing, modernity is left with insecurity, the loss of the gods, the violence of technology, the loss of dwelling and homelessness – the destitutions of modernity as Heidegger calls it.

An attack is made on metaphysics being ‘the absolutization of a horizon of disclosure’, misguiding all philosophical systems that eventually robbed of the world with all its radiance. Interestingly, Heidegger’s call for overcoming metaphysics contribute towards the therapeutic remedy – a state of resilience, a recovery of our culture from its present destitutions, the ‘turning’ away from modernity to an authentic post-modern age. This new path of thought or restoration of authenticity project in Heideggerian phenomenology then, targeted to lead us to a new paradigm which is beyond metaphysical, where Being radiates with ‘*poiesis*’ (*revealing*). So that what is lost will be re-gained and the world becomes the essential dwelling place of *Dasein*.

**Key Words:** Modernity, Dwelling, Destitution, Authenticity

### 1. Introduction:

This paper makes an attempt at understanding the ‘flaws of modernity, technically understood as ‘destitutions of modernity’ following what Heidegger stylistically defines as “the metaphysical disclosure of Being in the contemporary age”, and the therapy he suggested thereafter. This original continental thinker being widely acknowledged to be one of the most important philosophers in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, whose novel way of making a critique on metaphysics and thereby, suggesting a new path of thought had a tremendous impact in modern academics. The relevance of his work continues in diverse fields of being praxis-oriented unlike conventional theoretical approach or abstract speculation. Hence it does have lots to do in the present world of thought where a philosophy of that kind has almost no role in the present world of science and technology. Herman Phillipse expressed his first initial reaction to his reading of the *Being and Time* as “... Here finally was a philosopher for whom philosophy meant more than an intellectual game concerned with artificial problems of the external world, a philosopher who tried to intensify life itself” (Phillipse, 1998, p. xii). A new dawn of philosophy prioritizing practical world of existence is opened.



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## 2. Tracing Genealogy of Modernity Flaws: Fundamental roots of the Destitutions

In the search for genealogy of the flaws of modernity, Heidegger came up with a single reason undoubtedly, he claimed metaphysics. The history of philosophy, according to him got entangled in the web of ‘metaphysics’ that is, a tradition which overemphasized upon reason as the ultimate form of understanding. As it is the result of a long searching for something permanent, immutable, indubitable, and transcendental from the principle of universal and infallibly true, whatever is proposed against it nonetheless, do not go beyond the limit of metaphysical dimensions. Rather, all philosophical trends are believed to have developed under the influence of that kind. This trend of thought primarily underestimates the physical world of existence, overlooked local contexts, where universality suppresses diversity of ideas. The western philosophy has a character of glorifying subjective or cogito-like reality, which is now accused of committing a serious mistake. For it lacks the lived-dimension of knowledge and trivializes the world of corporeality. As such, Heidegger calls for overcoming metaphysics with an intention of re-awakening of the question of Being in the original ontological context.

For Heidegger, metaphysics is the misunderstanding of ‘Being’ in the presuppositionless ontological context, propagated in western philosophy, a tradition he hoped to radically overturn. Under this influence reality is reckoned to exist outside of the third dimensional space-time continuum - a tradition in which there occurs forgetfulness of Being, incessant progression of what is technically known as substance-oriented speculation or ‘*ousiological* reduction’. Identifying philosophical quest as a dispassionate search for knowledge that separates the knower from the known and also disrobes the embodiment of knowledge, philosophy made a turn toward substance reconnaissance and it thus continues its glorious tradition owing to its nature of metaphysics. Contrary to this, quoting Julian Young’s remarks: “the moment we detach ourselves and step back to try to get an impartial, objective view of things, the world goes dead for us – things lose the meaningfulness definitive of their being in the everyday life-world. This whole misrepresentation of reality”, Heidegger says, “is contained in a single, but difficult word: metaphysics”. He claims: “metaphysics is the essence of contemporary ‘nihilism’, the ultimate ground of the ‘destitution’ of modernity, of that is to say, its ‘oblivion of being’” (Young, Heidegger's Later Philosophy, 2002, p. 26).

Metaphysics then, blocks access to the depth and sublimity of Being. This has manifested to modernity, getting erupted in the form of a potent disease leaving the world destituted. Symptoms of the diseases such as erosion of traditional values, biodiversity loss, insecurity, alienation, antisocial behavior, faster artificiality, etc. metaphorically understood as loss of the gods, loss of dwelling or loss of homeliness, and the violence of technology respectively, became the consequences. Taking recourse to a method of ontological hermeneutics of *dasein* (being-there), Heidegger re-addressed the issue of modernity, exposed them all with certain flaws in a meticulous reflection.

### 2.1. Loss of the gods: Alienation, Insecurity, Immoral Society

Definitionally the gods of Heidegger never indicate the metaphysical God of Absolutely real and transcendent. However, in our context, gods are, by definition, the beaoning messengers of the godhead. They appear ‘out of the holy sway of the godhead’ (Heidegger, Poetry, Language Thought, 2001, p. 148) are radiantly charismatic. They are what inspire men to live according to the fundamental ethos of every community. They are authoritative by way of charisma rather than force. They are the inherent inspiration, molded by shared-ethos of the community. This shared ethos, the ethical tradition of a culture, is however, preserved from generation to generation, not in a big book of rules, but by, rather, exemplary, charismatic and therefore authoritative, figures memorialized in the collective memory of the culture (Young, Heidegger's Later Philosophy, 2002, p. 33). Such figures are what Heidegger calls ‘the gods’. Thus, it is that loss of the gods is loss of that which allows a community in its desirable equilibrium. This particular bond referred to is more than the bond in society where the integrity is bound by nothing more than mutual self-interest. When this bond is lost, it then leads to a state of chaos and turmoil where people are no longer inspired by mutual commitment to a shared conception of ethical principle of the community. A state of decadence of shattered values, degeneration of morals, priority of quantity over quality, and highly technological



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is what modernity becomes. The reason undoubtedly, is the metaphysical misrepresentation of Being where *dasein's* being-in-the-world primordially discloses its own existential dynamic phenomenon of the world; something that mirrors originality. Heidegger says that the loss of the gods is a sign and consequence of something 'even grimmer; the extinction of the divine radiance (Heidegger, Poetry, Language Thought, 2001, p. 89). Since there is nothing godly or divine radiance inspiring men to live according to the fundamental ethos of the community, modernity is succumbed to the threat of this loss of being unholy and unethical where 'sacred and values' no longer being the motivating principles.

## 2.2. Loss of Authentic Dwelling Spirit: Ontological Looking

Heidegger's phenomenological hermeneutic investigation of dwelling begins with the existential situation of being-in-the-world where 'tools are used as tools' where *dasein* unreflectively encountered everything as the way it is 'to be' – referring to a situation of human's existence, preceded by originality or primordially conditioned, devoid of institutions and cultural practices. This situation is technically understood as 'pre-ontological' understanding of being. An authentic situation of human being-in-the-world of untamed, where intuition and instinct, technically called sometimes as 'transcendental ego' remain the guiding forces. From this parameter, the inherent nature of *dasein* is pre-determined by dwelling. It means dwelling is the essential component of *dasein*. *Dasein* is best understood with a being 'to dwell' a place of the world, rather than to do anything else. Heidegger asserts that "dwelling" constitutes a central feature of human experience. He further elaborated as, "to be a human being means to be on the earth as mortal, it means to dwell" (Ladkin, 2006, pp. 87-98). Dwelling constitutes the essence of human. Fairly early, it is good to remind us all that Heidegger took the task of dwelling in the later period because he claimed, there happened the loss of place in the age of modern technology: place not in the sense merely of a bounded region of space but in the sense of dwelling called a place; "*Heimat*" or "homeland" (Young, Heidegger's *Heimat*, pp. 285-293).

But the plausible question follows: when man incessantly dwells the world following its essential characteristic of dwelling? Is there a different way of dwelling other than the way human dwells the world? Is it right to claim modernity as the loss of dwelling when man undoubtedly dwells in a place? Heidegger's response is, yes! Modernity has lost "dwelling" in the truest sense, even though, human keeps on living or dwelling the world incessantly. Modern man, according to Heidegger, is a homeless one: the plight of modernity is 'man's homelessness. Even by living or dwelling a place alone does not guarantee a spirit of how human dwells the world in the ontological sense of the term. One may feel insecure in his or her own place like a foreigner who is insecure. As such "care" which always underlies the spirit of dwelling in Heideggerian way, is absent in such condition.

To dwell in the Heideggerian origin is equated with the old German word – *das frye*, meaning a free place in the sense of a place where one is preserved from harm and danger. It further indicates a dwelling spirit with utmost security. But this security is threatened by the fear of death. The ultimate treat to one's security is, of course, death; death understood as annihilation, abyss. Death is never accepted in modernity as the essential part of *dasein's* mortal being and hence turned it as a constant threat to us. Modernity shivers before death, because it always considered death as evasion or fate. As such, modernity never lived life as free and secure, but surrounded and overwhelmed with the constant fear of death. The world now appeared as an insecure place, a frightened sojourn, the reason all rooted in metaphysical disclosure of the world.

## 2.3. Violence of Modern Technology: Anthropocentrism

Modernity defined as intense technological development is diagnosed with the age of living outdriving the ability to see the whatness, objectness, and the in-itselfness of beings. The technological mode of disclosure deprives us of the ability to stand in a gentle, careful relation to nature, hence, violent and do whatever it wants, no matter what the consequence is. This undoubtedly, is the situation which Heidegger calls 'the absolutization of technological disclosure' of beings, in which man inhabits the 'delusion' that 'everywhere and always (he) encounters only himself' (Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays, 1977, p. 27). Unlike the Heideggerian phenomenology always affirms reality to possess an



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indefinitely large number of aspects, a plenitude (*Vollzähligkeit*) of sides and facets within the inter-play of concealment-unconcealment of being, the modern technological disclosure reserves nothing. It is a one-dimensional mode of disclosure in which technology is a sheer work of man, a means to do anything innovative without limits.

The Greeks understanding of technology as bringing forth or *Techne* which is a kind of human work with a careful listening to or in tuned with nature's rhythm is ruled out in modernity. However, following the Greek, Heideggerian technological probe re-affirms technology as a human response to what Being granted as the possible means of doing so but not against it. The reversal of this concept culminates in the globalized, technological civilization that Heidegger saw as a threat to the very essence of humanity. "The limitless domination of modern technology in every corner of this planet is only the late consequence of a very old technical interpretation of the world, the interpretation that is usually called metaphysics" (Clark, 2002, p. 30). Michael Zimmerman coins this phrase as of "productionist metaphysics", the "hidden anthropocentrism of Western thought", because of its acknowledged projection of instrumentalist or technological modes of thinking upon the cosmos as a whole. Technology challenges nature's boundary and do whatever it like without limit (Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, 1977, p. 14).

### 3. The Project of Restoration of Authenticity: An entry into New Dimension of Being:

Now, in response to the flaws of modernity, Heidegger went to an extent that he prescribes a basic state of living (being-in-the-world) where certain metaphysical debates centering on subject-object dichotomy, anthropocentrism versus non-anthropocentrism, etc. were made non-issues. This is the project of 'restoration of authenticity' that is another disclosure of Being. By 'authenticity' Heidegger means primordial truth which underlies the existence of *dasein* in its worldliness. He makes it explicit that the authenticity which is achieved via *Dasein*'s resolution to life, is not merely of 'intentional' as Husserl did. It is but *dasein*'s disclosed-ness in its being-in-the-world that is an existence always already in relation to being. The ultimate concern of this project is to rediscover human existence by appraising its primordial being in the harmonious blend of meaningful life-world. Such a state is devoid of any kind of metaphysical legacy. This is more like a homecoming of *dasein* to its original position, a primordial situation where *dasein* is encountering its embedded existence in the barest form.

By referring to the essence of modernity, the paper indirectly made an attempt of asserting one of the two divisions of Being, the inauthentic 'they selves' (the flip side of the two modes on Being), with whom *dasein* finds itself thrown into a world and its *facticity*. In this state of inauthenticity, there is distance between the subject and the object, the Being and the beings and this metaphysical disclosure of Being centers round a mundane world of things and beings which are 'ready-to-hand' to be manufactured in an inauthentic and a mechanical system. Under such influence things are considered just resources to be manipulated, so are humans.

But, once beings restore their deeper layer of care structure – the fundamental concern of the restoration project, everything transforms miraculously and the ontic dimension of being-in-the-world becomes radiated with the divinity of the *four-fold* (gods, sky, earth, mortals), the earth then becomes a place to dwell, the sky regains its lost radiance and becomes the abode of divinity, and an authentic *dasein* dwells in a language that houses the Being of the beings. Man, thus restores ontological dimension of existence imbibing temporality, *facticity* and vulnerability of a death bound existence and remain essentially bonded with one another in a caring relation with things and beings. Heidegger thus leads us to a state which is beyond metaphysical realm of subject-object duality and which takes recourse to a path of meditative thinking that is now disclosed by the poets, artists and by meditative thinkers. The authentic form of existence transcends metaphysical way of philosophizing and remains resolute to unearth the hidden meaning of Being of beings. A new Hölderlinian myth of temporality takes place to a turn to the more originary form of *volkish nationalism* (*German nationalism*), a position of the *archē* that he finds in language, history, and the sites for the home coming of the German *volk*. "In its poetic confrontation with the first Greek beginning the *Volk* of Hölderlin's invocation takes upon itself the call of *being* to fulfill its ontological destiny as those called on to prepare the transition to another beginning" (Bambach, 2010, p. 111). Embracing the tragic



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dimensions of life, imbibing the fourfold of mortality, and *facticity* of earth-bound man toward a disclosure of the divinity of the heaven and the sacred on earth, authentic humans thus aspire to become a part of the fourfold.

At this juncture man attains a mystical communion with the Being of beings and mundane time is radiated with sacred and joyous temporality and inauthentic 'they self' is now recovered into a silent zone of 'mine-ness' which is essentially tied with the 'otherness of the other', *dasein* retains its authentic *mit-dasein*, its being in the world becomes a being for others and also being-in-the-world. Now man, the shepherd of Being, must listen to the silent call and presence the truth of Being and by this process man releases the thing to be what it is, by which the thing is left to rest on its own grounds. Thus man's new found authentic relation to Being is constitutive of man's essence and in this mode of disclosure things stand forth and emerge out of their own grounds, free from the categories of metaphysics of thought. Metaphysics dissolves into the technological and empirical sciences which perform a scientific study of man.

Scholars find here also an Eckhartian and a Kierkegaardian longing for restoring religiosity even when the formal and institutional religions have failed to restore the lived dimension of religiosity. Heidegger, like Eckhart, talks about the fall, the inauthentic state of being one along with other just for the sake of being, also leads to inauthenticity despite adding colors of festivals into it occasionally. The quest for restoring authenticity and of lost sense of divinity, which was always a familiar part of oneself, is now lost and dead as Nietzsche was quick enough to recover the symbolic meaning of a mad man announcing the death of God, saying that we, the modern man and his nihilism cannot keep room for a God in the way it was traditionally handed down to us unless lost religiosity is restored by the recovery of being and *angst* as well. In place of a political authenticity of Hitler and of Nazism, his philosophy kept room for a spiritual cum religious sense of authenticity that makes man crusaders, not for a political and a mundane goal, but 'for being guilty', to come to a moment of resoluteness, to come to a decision for making an effort at 'accept death' and thereby to own one's most private, intimate and individual center of oneself. Here then, Heidegger keeps room for revisiting and redefining a sense of belonging to a community, a restoration of the authentic state of belonging to a community when the individual still retains his or her individuality to think, share, and also to differ.

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