

Theses of University Ph.D Dissertation
Ethics Inherent in Heidegger's early Philosophy

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I. Theses of the Dissertation in English

I analyse the early philosophy of Martin Heidegger from a special viewpoint in my dissertation. The starting point of the survey is a Heideggerian idea according to which when people become authentic through the life experiences of anxiety, being-towards-death and conscience, they necessarily alienate from other people. (So it is true that the way of living characterised by the author as existential solipsism¹ contains strong individual aspects.) Nevertheless, the idea in *Being and Time* continues with that the person who has already become authentic *can* become the conscience of others. In my writing I try to highlight the situation in which the former possibility occurs and the authentic person becomes the conscience of other people. To this project other questions of mine are strongly connected, namely whether it is *necessary* to turn towards others after separating from them; and what the final *result* of turning towards others is.

I think, the previous questions can be answered with the help of the early Heideggerian texts. I propose the claim of ethics to be right within the early Heideggerian era, if the criterion of *general applicability* related to the individual authentic person, its behaviour, and care is valid. We can think of such *ethics* that focuses on individuals, the others, and the surrounding world as well; whose universality is responsive towards the requests of society, is not based on the habits of inauthentic people, furthermore that questions the whole ethical tradition. Though, we know quite well that the authentic is *only one way of existence*, it still carries the possibility of a general ethics in the early Heideggerian philosophy. If the possibility of becoming authentic is universal, then the ethical characteristics of an authentic person *can* be applicable to everyone in general. Ethics understood this way not only as an aspect of human *existence* can be talked about but after finding its connection with being as a science as well.

In my writing I stress and highlight the view that Heidegger neither denied the existence of partial ontologies based on the existential analysis, nor the scientific fields related to the former ontologies' results. His question, connected to these partial ontologies, 'merely' was that whether the 'Dasein's ways of behaviour, its capacities, powers, possibilities, and

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, transl. John Macquarrie, Edward Robinson, Oxford, Basil Blackwell Publisher Ltd., 1962, 233.

vicissitudes, have been studied with varying extent in philosophical psychology, in anthropology, ethics, and 'political science', in poetry, biography and the writing of history, each in a different fashion',² and if it was so whether they had connected their subject to being or not. Though, *Being and Time* focuses on the question of being, so 'It cannot attempt to provide a complete ontology of Dasein',³ I still believe it can be the most appropriate *starting point* of an ethical survey within the *Heideggerian ideas*. From his contemporary writings it appears that this presupposition of mine *actually* was consistent with his thoughts.

Analysing ethics is important because when opposing different ideas and systems with Heideggerian views we can receive answers to the question "What makes the authentic person to become the conscience of others?". I express my viewpoint through at first sight opposing opinions. The oppositions are as follows: phenomenological-hermeneutical philosophising, that interprets and *describes*, confronts with the *prescriptive* character of ethics; the logic-physics-ethics triple division of philosophy neither covers the XXth century philosophical activity, nor the previous eras'; and finally by denying disciplines, the Heideggerian fundamental ontology, that tries to ground sciences in general, has a live ethical part. (This ethics, though, is quite different from other such beliefs.)

My suggestions connected to the previous oppositions are as follows: the ground of Heideggerian discipline denial is due to the fact that with the division of philosophy and its continuous inheritance, the vitality of philosophising was lost. In my opinion though, this does not mean that we cannot speak about ethics, and a related philosophical survey that has demands towards people. On the other hand, the describing-interpretative method of phenomenological-hermeneutical philosophy or philosophising declines the prescriptive, normative, evaluating theses that are thought to limit human freedom. At the same time I believe the self-raising, self-awakening aspect of formal implication (formale Anzeige) that is a characteristics of philosophy cannot be overlooked here. This self-raising, self-interpreting aspect is a great help for people who would like to understand a *situation* that contains authentic people who take care of themselves and their peers, too. This self-interpretation is a rich ground for being ethical. Finally the third, traditional, vulgar-conscience-interpretation-based opposition that is grounded on the Kantian 'court of justice'⁴ idea does not give room for individual, free decisions. These mentioned three opposing points' comparison with the

² HEIDEGGER, Martin, *op. cit.*, 37.

³ HEIDEGGER, Martin, *op. cit.*, 38.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 339.

Heideggerian ideas leads us to the understanding of an ethical behaviour (that is directed towards the person itself and the others as well) as lying deep within humans. This ethical behaviour *can* be the result of an altered relation with being, of an inner change, and of self-reflection. Ethical thoughts coming from an outside source are therefore neglected: neither happiness, nor satisfaction, usefulness, obedience, or deeds that are fulfilled only for reaching values are not the *aims* of an ethics that lets us make ‘only’ free choices.⁵ Heidegger’s thought comes from inside the person, so it is right to start with the intelligence that we create our own *collective* world *together* with other people and surrounding things. As a consequence, authentic people are responsible for their peers, who therefore can be looked after and can be supported to become authentic, altogether with the surrounding world, though, without getting a ‘prize’.⁶

During the creation of my train of thoughts the text dealing with the logic of Leibniz, written immediately after *Being and Time*, became very important. In this text the ethical request of turning towards others appears as a fact. Here Heidegger, while trying to solve the problem of defining philosophy, finally ties fundamental ontology and metontology together as the subject of his science (the then accepted metaphysics). At the mutual ground of metontology, the human ability to step out from a special way of being that is tied with the ability of looking at it from a distance, and fundamental ontology, that is a scientific field capable of surveying being itself, the question of ethics is possible to be asked. Reading this text we can be certain about that the inner human possibility for ethical-ontological transformation can meet such an outer viewpoint that can be the ground of its general accessibility.

II. Structure of the Dissertation

The structure of my writing is built upon the previously mentioned steps. At the beginning I pay attention to those writings that contain answers for the question of rejecting the discipline of ethics as part of philosophy. Here *Being and Time*, *The Basic Problems of*

⁵ Heidegger rejects the Kantian categorical imperative as an obligatory order. Instead he says „I am in a situation, I have to understand this and act according to it.” And because no situation is the same, there are no rigid norms or prescriptions to apply. Having become ourselves we can act in many ways. Consequently his ethics is flexible, and situative as well.

⁶ I do not survey Heideggerian political thoughts, as they did not appear in the early period.

Phenomenology, The Basic Concepts of Metaphysics and from a later period the *Letter on "Humanism"* are mentioned. In them the demand of paying attention to others can be found and from this it becomes clear that this demand does not come from a traditionally set ethics. As a consequence of the previously mentioned, I think that any kind of ethics must be derived from human nature itself, especially from the very appropriate phenomenon of conscience. After introducing the denied ethical concepts I try to interpret one acceptable to Heidegger, namely, the *Nicomachean Ethics* by Aristotle. Its practical, everyday-life-connected characteristics can govern human activity not any outer order.

In the following chapter I write about that why it is difficult to turn back to the other people after separating from them. It happens when I introduce the authentic, inauthentic ways of existence through the experience of anxiety, being-towards-death and conscience and I try to show the special character of the latter mentioned conscience. This specialty is the ground of turning towards others. Due to this reason I believe this phenomenon to be very significant and the ground of ethics at all.

In the following chapter I search for the answer whether there is any chance to think further the possibility, gained from the 'magnum opus',⁷ of turning towards others. A methodological, interpretative step helps in this search that is called formal indication. When facing with life experiences this formal indication (formale Anzeige) not only interprets but warns as well. It warns us to be ourselves (in the way we should according to the phenomenon of conscience). Within this chapter I mention Heidegger's thoughts on intentionality as it is the key of reflection on ourselves. Heidegger does not accept the concept of a pure ego, but says that we already speak about the notebook laying by the side of our PCs which we draft into and use at hand and not a generally described, square formed, lined, paper made and folded object. The surrounding things around us can be directly touched the way they are at hand. This everydayness, and evidence are the solutions to define ourselves and our world as well. This chapter mainly deals with the *Einleitung in die Phänomenologie der Religion*.⁸

In the last part of my writing I deal with the Logic (Leibniz)⁹ lecture course. In this we can read about the exact place Heidegger himself *found and appointed to ethics within his*

⁷ As Theodore Kisiel calls the piece in *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, 6. <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft8h4nb54d/>.

⁸ HEIDEGGER, *Einleitung in die Phänomenologie der Religion: Phänomenologie des Religiösen Lebens*, hrsg. Matthias JUNG und Thomas REGEHL, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1995 (GA 60).

⁹ The German title is quite different: *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz*, hrsg. Klaus HELD, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1978 (GA 26).

philosophy. The *written* text is an ‚evidence‘ to have the right to talk about ethics in the early Heideggerian philosophy. On the other hand this piece of writing is connected to the earlier parts in my writing: the possibility of understanding being is the chance only for humans, as a stone cannot understand itself. Only in the case of fundamental ontology that deals with the analysis of existence, and meta ontology can the question of ethics be raised. This question, though, means an altered relationship towards one’s existence that alteration is the sole ability of humans (and not the outer categorical order of an ethical system). This means that the possibility of general applicability not only textually appears but we can have an answer for ethics with its help as well.

To sum the previously mentioned up, it can be said in the early writings of Heidegger the basis of ethics, as an attitude influencing human behaviour, that is universal, that is based on freedom, that is responsible, and can be analysed philosophically, can also be searched for. The ground of ethics lays within people. This ethics can become reality when humans decide on an inner change. As a possibility it is always there, so cannot be avoided.

III. Method of analysis

Following Heidegger’s searching method of phenomenological hermeneutics, I try to take on the project of the phenomenological destruction of Ethics. In order to reach this aim, I analyse the traditional and Heidegger-contemporary Ethics as well. My aim is to get the ideas of Heidegger himself with this method.

Theses of the Dissertation:

- the denial occurring in Heidegger's early 'magnum opus', *Being and Time*, refers to his opposition with contemporary and traditional Ethics
- his opposition with the contemporary and traditional Ethics hide his ethical thoughts
- the first opposition is that: the phenomenological-hermeneutical philosophising is contradictory with the normative, prescriptive form of any Ethics. This opposition is dissolved with the attention raising and warning character of formale Anzeige. This characteristics of the hermeneutical explication does not say any imperatives, but it saves from the one-sided interpretation of phenomena, and situations. Understanding formale Anzeige in this way, we can apply this method through the phenomenon of conscience. This says to us to be ourselves, to act the way we are and not obeying any commands or unaccepted norms.
- the second opposition is as follows: separating philosophy into disciplines meant that the vitality of philosophy has been lost. As a result, the discipline of ethics does not fulfil its function just as logic or later metaphysics. Consequently, as he finally states that, ethics must be handled together with philosophy or rather fundamentalontology starting with their mutuality and followed with their co-work. This is appointed in Band 26.
- it is possible to talk about ontical Ethics if its connection with being is shown. Its starting point is written in Band 26.
- the Heidegger-contemporary and the preceding Ethical views both have basic problems. It is because their conscience-concept is based on a conscience-call that misses the existential ways of being authentic or inauthentic. Consequently, their ethics will be glued to humans as an outside system.
- Heidegger's ethical views are tied to Aristotle, to the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The ethical ideas of the Greek thinker are connected to the practical, every-day-life. This ethical thought cannot be forgotten. This character is repeated in conscience, when we are always to listen to the call.
- the three phenomena of angst, being-towards-death and conscience which show the authentic and inauthentic existential ways of Heidegger also highlight what is it like if we depart from our fellow people, if we face with our finitude and if we become authentic. An authentic person, though, can become the conscience of others, as well. This is the sign of responsibility and the root of ethics in the early 'magnum opus'.

- turning responsibly towards others is improved by the formale Anzeige, the formal indication. As being part of the phenomenological explanation, it does not prescribe anything, but warns us to be ourselves. This slight turn, though, helps to avoid the norms of prescriptive ethics.
- the connection of Ethics and being itself is uncovered by Heidegger himself. While searching genera metaphysics, he states that the question of Ethics can be found on the ground of fundamentalontology and metontology.
- as a result, Heidegger's early philosophy can be connected to Ethics according to his early writings.



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Ph.D. List of Publications

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List of publications related to the dissertation

Hungarian book chapter(s) (2)

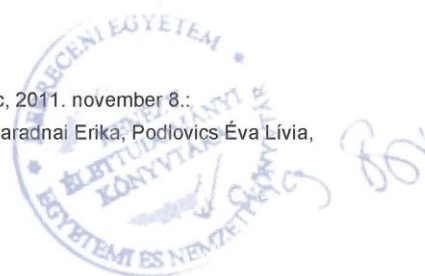
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