

HEIDEGGER'S PROJECT OF A HERMENEUTIC ANTHROPOLOGY¹

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Abstract:

Based on *Zollikoner Seminare* (1987), the present paper reconstructs some aspects of Heidegger's project of an "ontic" anthropology, conceived as the general framework for the development of a paradigm for human sciences and, in particular, for daseinsanalytic pathology and therapy.

1. Heidegger's Project and the Kuhnian Paradigms

A scientific anthropology, says Heidegger, can be viewed as "the whole of a possible discipline vowed to the task to produce a connected presentation of ascertainable ontic phenomena of social-historic and individual Dasein" (Heidegger 1987, pp. 163-64).² As any science, the *daseinsanalytic* anthropology should consist in "a systematic ordering of interpretations of experience" (p. 257). This ordering implies making classifications and considering human existence within modern industrial societies (p. 164).

Contrary to what is widely thought, Heidegger is not hostile to any and every science. His deconstruction is directed exclusively against the Cartesian model of science. In order to present Heidegger's project of a daseinsanalytic science of man I shall use Th. S. Kuhn's concept of paradigm.³ The advantage of this procedure is not only that of putting order into Heidegger's rather scattered additional remarks on this

¹ Por la presente doy mi autorización, no en exclusiva, para que se publique mi ponencia "Heidegger's Project of a Hermeneutic Anthropology" en el disco compacto para computadora que la Asociación Filosofía de México publicará con las Memorias del XIV Congreso Internacional de Filosofía, realizado del 16 al 20 de agosto de 1999 en la ciudad de Puebla, México.

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² If not stated otherwise, all quotations identified only by page numbers refer to this work.

³ The idea that Heidegger's view of science can be approximated to the Kuhnian was already defended by some other authors, S. Vietta among others.

subject, but also that of allowing further comparisons with other contemporary theory scientific research.⁴ According to Kuhn, an empirical science is characterized by a disciplinary matrix and by shared solutions of paradigmatic problems ("exemplars"). The disciplinary matrix of an empirical science consists of the following items: 1) leading generalizations,⁵ 2) metaphysical model of the domain of research, 3) heuristic rules⁶ and 4) shared scientific values, including the shared conception of science. So, what can Heidegger contribute to the development of the disciplinary matrix of any *future* daseinsanalytic scientific anthropology? I say future, because there are good reasons to say that despite pioneer efforts of Binswanger, Boss and others, Heidegger's project is far from having been articulated as a paradigm of an identifiable scientific community.

2. Leading generalizations

Let us start with leading generalizations. As Heidegger deals with the factual science of man as such, he does not propose any particular generalization as being the leading one. He makes, however, several negative as well as positive remarks on this topic. On one hand, Heidegger does not accept that the ordering of interpretations of experiences could be expressed in terms of mathematical formulas or of natural laws taken in the sense of deterministic rules of human modes of being in the world.

On the other hand, Heidegger maintains that in ordering experiences in a science of man we have to see ontic phenomena in the light of the ontological ones which are their conditions of possibility. But that is not enough. It is essential that facts be seen in relation to the concrete individual, i.e. as constituting a living motivational whole together with other ontic phenomena. In order to see a behavior as a manifestation of Dasein we have to do more than just identify their ontological structure, we have to see how they fit into the life structure, that is, by the motivational context of the individual persons (p. 29).

⁴ I have developed further this kind of approach in Loparic 1999.

⁵ As he was working mainly with physics, Kuhn speaks of "symbolic generalizations" (1970, p. 182). What he wants to discuss are generalizations which determine broad traits of the subject matter and are commonly called natural laws or definitions. My expression "leading generalization" tries to preserve the moment of generality without implying the formalization nor naturalization.

⁶ I am making two items out of one item in Kuhn's original proposal, distinguishing more sharply between ontology and heuristics.

That is why we cannot get rid of genetic explanations and why they appear self-evident and necessary to us (p. 266). People indeed do make decisions and act according to motivational patterns established in everyday life. These patterns are not expressions of any eternal laws. Nevertheless, there is a meaning to be given to "always" in human matters. It is the "'always' which is a consequence of the essence" (p. 197). Not a necessary or causal consequence, but still a usually happening and commonly observed one. Thus, in order to understand one person's motivations we need an ontic anthropological knowledge of motives developed to the degree to allow us to propose genetic explanations. Leading generalizations of a *daseinsanalytic* anthropological discipline can be said to provide precisely this kind of knowledge.

3. The metaphysical model of man

Let us now go over to the next item of the matrix, the "metaphysical model" of man. As is the case of any factual science, Heidegger understands that the phenomena of an ontic anthropology must be fitted into a philosophical framework. What kind of framework is adequate in the present case? Not that of the traditional metaphysics, but the one explained in Heidegger's existential analytic. It has however to be enriched by appropriate derived existentials describing essences of different kinds of ontic phenomena (regional ontologies).⁷ An important trait of Heidegger's existentials is that they refer to ontological phenomena that show themselves *in concreto* in the human modes of being, being therefore different from suppositions of a metaphysical world behind or above the ontic phenomena.⁸ Neither ontological nor ontic phenomena are hypothetical, all are directly accessible. This requires that we change the terminology of Kuhn when applied to Heidegger. We can no more speak of "metaphysical model" of man but rather of "phenomenological description" of the ontological structure of the human being.

What is the precise relation between ontological and ontic phenomena? The former are conditions of possibility, that is, of visibility of the latter. More precisely, the ontological phenomena make possible that we see factual phenomena presented

⁷ Note that in *Zollikoner Seminare*, Heidegger does not speak any more of "*Geisteswissenschaften*". He also considers yet only accidentally the history of being (in particular some aspects of modern technological society) as being important for the shaping of the science of man (pp. 163, 133, 96, 153, 353).

⁸ This antiplatonic stand is of course a constant in Heidegger's thinking.

by concrete individuals *as* what they are, namely, as manifestations of modes of being of a Dasein (p. 256; cf. p. 342). As in the case of natural sciences, there are no "pure" anthropological facts. The difference is that now the conditions of facts are no more "free floating" suppositions about causes of their coming to be in objective linear time but higher level phenomena which are the grounds of the very emergence of these facts in the life-time (pp. 7, 234, 281). Ontological phenomena which characterize the structure of Dasein not only make ontic phenomena visible, they are themselves visible in the latter. They even provide the true content (*Inhalt*) of what is ontic. This content is what Heidegger refers to when he speaks about "essences" of ontic phenomena. Yet, ontological phenomena or essences are not seeable in the same way as ontic ones. The distinction between ontic and ontological phenomena requires, therefore, a methodological distinction between ontic and ontological *evidence* as well (pp. 8, 181). The first ones are perceptible (*wahrnehmbar*), the second non perceptible (*nicht-wahrnehmbar*) and yet "accessible" (*vernehmbar*, p. 181).

In both cases, there are considerable difficulties which it is difficult to overcome right away (p. 335). The viewing ontological phenomena is indeed a difficult problem. The essence of a human mode of being is not a visual form or any other sensational aspect (p. 293). If so, how do we get to it and what do we get when we get it? What does Heidegger mean by speaking of "simple seeing" or "uncovered immediate vision of essence" (p. 329)? To see something means to understand it *as* something. To that effect, a *specific* temporal horizon of understanding must be presupposed. Let us give an example. We see the *essence of fear* only if we view it as a mode of being in the world in the horizon of the temporal structure of everyday life, in particular, of the circular time of everyday life, that is, of the time of the fallenness. No specific biography is needed. Every other existential which makes our everyday being in the world possible is also based on this same mode of temporalization. It is essential to note that this mode of temporalization is based on an entirely different mode of temporality, namely, on the original time (of being the "there" or of being the "opening"). In order to avoid errors in these matters and identify correctly the level of analysis it is not enough to study phenomenological *theories*, it is necessary to make exercises in getting at particular ontological *phenomena* themselves by practicing immediate seeing of that which is the most truly manifest on different

levels of the Dasein structure (pp. 324, 325, 329). No previous theory about what there is should be presupposed.⁹

Quite another matter is to see the ontic phenomena. What do we mean by saying that we "sensibly perceive" *somebody* being afraid? Again, it is not meant that we get in touch just with somebody's visual aspect. Considered daseinsanalytically, the perception of fear or any other factual mode of being of another human being splits into two different problems. First, we must understand it as a possible manifestation of the Dasein structure. Second, we have to put it in relation to other factual phenomena of the present, the past and the future. In the first case we have to be familiar in an explicit or implicit way with the daseinsanalytic temporal essence of fear. In the second case, we have to also be acquainted with the biography (*Lebensgeschichte*) and the concrete situation and the of the person who is feeling afraid. That is how we can see something concrete concerning a social-historic and individual Dasein without seeing a "form".

There are thus two different types of hermeneutics which must be distinguished here: the one which operates in the temporal horizon which makes the *structure* of Dasein possible - in particular of the everyday Dasein as described by the fundamental existential of fallenness - and the other which moves in the horizon of the everyday time of an *individual* Dasein. The first type of hermeneutics, founded ultimately on the original temporal finitude of Dasein, belongs to Heidegger's phenomenology proper (as a *philosophical* discipline). It has been studied very closely and is well known. The second type of hermeneutics, founded on the derived concepts of time, belongs to ontic, that is, *scientific* anthropologies in general and has been given much less attention.¹⁰

4. Heuristic models of anthropology

⁹ An example of an exercise in seeing phenomena is Heidegger's inquiry into the essence of stress (p. 179 sq).

¹⁰ One may wonder why Heidegger did not insist more with Boss and his group on the temporality of all ontic phenomena studied by sciences of man and why he time and again spoke as if "essence" of a mode of being-there could be determined in a atemporal, Husserlian way. One possible answer is that, for the sake of making himself more comprehensible to physicians, he insisted mostly on the first Part of *Being and Time*, leaving out the discussions contained in the second Part concerning the temporal interpretation of these same phenomena. If this is so, by willing to save Boss and his colleagues and students from submission to the metaphysical way of thinking Heidegger might well have overstated the essentialistic character of his hermeneutics and thus induced him to persevere in this submission.

An example of this latter mode of understanding is the "hermeneutics of exploration", a term used by Heidegger in order to refer to the inquiry into the relationship between analysand and analyst in psychotherapy. This way of seeing facts is intended to move, says Heidegger, in a kind of "middle field" between philosophical hermeneutics and mere recording of data (pp. 342, 350). Heidegger is clearly not speaking of hermeneutics in the sense of the original mode of self-understanding, which is basic for the philosophical research, but of a derived method of understanding and interpreting. His purpose is to identify a procedure by means of which one could tackle "concrete problems", those which do not belong "too much in the domain of fundamentals and of what is 'purely philosophical'" (p. 348). What Heidegger has in view is a special kind of procedure which can be used not only as hermeneutics (science of understanding) of everyday life but also as a *heuristic*, that, is as a science of formulating and of solving concrete problems of human life.

Hermeneutics of exploration requires us to *exercise* the capacity of looking away from naturalistic causal explanations and of learning to see other persons as beings-in-the-world. This is *not* an easy task, warns Heidegger. The admission of a being such as Dasein "is extremely difficult and unusual and must be reassessed again and again" (p. 280). Let us explain further this difficulty. On one hand, the full understanding of an ontic phenomenon requires a previous phenomenological, that is, philosophical analysis of its temporal essence. What do we gain, Heidegger asks, in a human science by explaining genetically something that we do not understand? On the other hand, we cannot say that we have understood something in human affairs unless we see it in the horizon of everyday time. Not just of the original finite *circular* time, but also of the life-time of each individual which involves the temporal *extension* between birth and death and allows for something like a biography. In the opening of the original time only ontological not ontic phenomena can be seen and have meaning. In order to understand more concrete questions we need appropriate data given within more concrete horizons. The analysis of facts which characterize a human life necessarily includes considerations about the birth, early childhood, the maturational development and eventually of the death. If it is so, in order to be able to make full sense of understanding human modes of being we have to produce the *secondary existentials* of birth, early childhood, growth and so on. The hermeneutic effort just described must be completed by going down to genetic explanations of the bottom level concrete facts of everyday life. Moreover, the complete task of

understanding human beings requires us to ask another question, the one concerning that which makes possible the Dasein structure itself, namely, the opening and the history of the being itself.

If we take into account all views of Heidegger's on the variety of hermeneutics expressed in the *Zollikoner Seminare*, we can say that in order to satisfy the requirements of a scientific anthropology any analysis of an ontic subject matter related to human beings must consider six different *levels of phenomena* and therefore present six different *levels of description* and *interpretation*. The highest level is that of the opening and of the history of being. Immediately beneath it we find the ontological phenomena which reveal the Dasein's transcendence of the world and, still lower, the phenomena of Dasein's being in the world.¹¹ Next comes the level of derived existentials which characterize regional ontologies. These first four levels are the subject matter for philosophical studies, conducted either in the style of the thinking of the being itself, as practiced by the late Heidegger, or as a phenomenological ontology, as exemplified in *Being and Time*.¹² The fifth level is that of the systematic order of ontic phenomena, which themselves are displayed on the sixth bottom level. These last two levels are the natural place of daseinsanalytic scientific anthropologies.

Another important methodological point is the language of description and interpretation. In the daseinsanalytic science of man the language must differ from the conceptual language which objectifies that which is spoken about. It should not be conceived as language of calculus nor as vehicle of information (pp. 25, 118-19). Our scientific discourse about man should never become merely an unambiguous verbalization of objective facts as it happens to be in natural science, but "must essentially be ambiguous as is for instance, the language of poetry" (p. 184). What is this language positively? It is that which indicates (*das Zeigende*). An indicative or indicial language says "that such and such demands us to correspond so and so" (p. 185). "The essence of language" is to be such a way of "talking or showing" (p. 185). To use language in agreement with its essence means to respond concretely to a factual demand by indicating our understanding of how something (an ontic

¹¹ Heidegger has insisted with Boss on the bifurcation in the structure of Dasein between the being in the world and the superior level of transcendence apparently because it has been neglected by Binswanger and others.

¹² The important and difficult question whether the thinking of being still belongs to hermeneutics cannot be treated here. For Heidegger's own view on this subject, cf. Heidegger 1959.

phenomenon) is connected with something else (another factual datum) in a concrete everyday motivational context (p. 233). When we do that, we do not use concepts, we do not calculate, we do not give information. We rather *take part* in what is going on.

One might wonder whether ontic anthropologies can profit from descriptions of manifestations of human which have already been made in the language of human sciences constituted within the Cartesian, that is, naturalistic paradigm. The answer is yes. However, in order to be able to make a sound use of these descriptions, we have to operate a transition (*Übergang*) "from the common scientific terminology to the description language for phenomena" (p. 345). Even when conceding this possibility, Heidegger shows himself "very skeptical" about actual gains to be expected from such an exercise (p. 342). His main reason must have been the fact that there is no theory-free language and that accordingly facts described in the language of natural science have metaphysical contents fused with really ontic ones. Nevertheless, Heidegger has made various very interesting attempts at showing how some Freudian descriptive concepts (such as projection and repression) may be translated into the language of daseinsanalytic description.

In the light of these elements of the "heuristic model" of the Heideggerian science of man, we can say with certainty that its "method" or however one might call its way of proceeding is entirely different from the experimental method of natural sciences (currently considered the only method of science, p. 144). As said, it has nothing to do with constructing freely floating hypotheses and making suppositions. It is not the hypothetical method at all (p. 181). What kind of method is it then? Firstly, it is *descriptive* method. Any particular discipline of the scientific anthropology must provide a "description" of factual phenomena which show themselves in concrete human individuals to the daseinsanalytic understanding. Secondly, it is an *interpretative* or *hermeneutic* method. As said above, to understand ontic phenomena means to see them within their temporal horizons constituted, as said, on different levels. We have also to see them in the light of the entire hierarchy of that which makes them visible and determined as well as within their concrete motivational, that is, genetic or historical contexts. Since all horizons of the understanding are temporal and the higher level time structures are circular, the movement of the understanding must be circular as well. From the methodological point of view, Heidegger's science of man is therefore a descriptive, interpretative (hermeneutic), historic and circular type of knowledge of man's being in the world.

Indeed, Heidegger's hermeneutics is characterized by a *double circularity*. One circularity is that which exists *within* each one of the six levels of interpretation. It characterizes the movement of the understanding within one or another of different and hierarchically ordered temporal horizons. The other circularity is that which joins up the hierarchy of the six different levels of description and interpretation. As we have seen, the lower description levels serve as foundations for the upper ones. In the first case, we go from the future to the past and the present of a specific temporal horizon. On the second case, we move up and down from the lowest ontic level to the highest ontological ones. On one hand, ontic facts must be seen in the light of whole hierarchy which makes them possible. On the other hand, ontic descriptions, which at the start of the inquiry have received their "determination" from their "essential content" are apt to provide reasons to complete the phenomenology of their initial ontological determinations (p. 163). The ontic experience may thus lead to the discovery of "new existentials" beyond the previously admitted ones (p. 259). As a consequence, the Heideggerian anthropologist is necessarily involved not only in different *horizontal* hermeneutic circles - which are characteristic of each level of interpretation -, but also in a *vertical* hermeneutic circle. It starts with basic ontological admissions, goes downwards through derived existentials to everyday ontic phenomena, thus becoming able to understand them and discover new ontic connections among them. After achieving this point the circle of the understanding turns upwards and stimulates the fundamental ontological research of yet unknown derived or even fundamental existentials which make these newly established ontic connections possible.¹³

5. Shared values

As to the fourth item of Heidegger's paradigm, the "shared values", it is clear that the standard values of natural science such as measurability, calculability or indeed producibility of man or of his modes of being are not even considered. Nor does Heidegger seek in the first place for predictions, internal or external consistency,

¹³ Birth or being to the beginning is an example of a ontological phenomenon whose inquiry was not pursued by Heidegger at all and which must be described on the level of fundamental existentials if we want to give a Heideggerian interpretation of a series of important ontic phenomena, recently discovered by the psychoanalytic research (D.W. Winnicott, in particular) and related to the early stages of human life.

simplicity, empirical plausibility or indeed for any other "logical" value of traditional factual science. The main values that should characterize a daseinsanalytic science of man are rather practical or even ethical.¹⁴

6. Paradigmatic problems

This leads us to our final point, to what Heidegger has to say about "paradigmatic problems" and solutions which may characterize a daseinsanalytic factual science and its research. The center of unity of any daseinsanalytic science is the existing man (p. 259). Now, in agreement with the basic structure of Dasein, our basic relation to others is solicitude (*Fürsorge*) which implies responsibility of letting others be and letting them be independent and free. "We practice psychology, sociology, psychotherapy", says Heidegger, "in order to help people, so that they can achieve the aim of adaptation and liberty in the widest sense" (p. 199). All disturbances, sociological as well as medical, are of the same kind, namely, limitations of the possibility to be. The science of man does not aim at making men objects of theoretical or technological interest but at helping men in realizing their very nature.¹⁵ One part of the help must come from the phenomenological ontology. But that is not enough. There are also unavoidable "determinate" or "concrete" problems which must be formulated and solved by ontic anthropologies. In order to do that one cannot use pure phenomenology. Indeed, "philosophy does not have a ready answer to all questions" (p. 350) as some members of Boss's group have appeared to believe. People, warns Heidegger, must receive a methodological education in order "not to expect [from philosophy] solutions of any and every problem" (p. 336). The solution of factual anthropological problems requires factual experience and "professional understanding" (p. 343). Heidegger seems to be talking here about understanding like the one which characterizes the ontic anthropology as described above. It is in this spirit that he asks Boss to demonstrate "scientifically" by his own "research work" the phenomenological propositions put forward in the Seminar (p. 347) and to "provide more substance to fundamental reflections" by means of his rich "medical experience" (p. 352).

¹⁴ I have discussed Heidegger's views of ethics in Loparic 1995.

¹⁵ This idea of anthropology is to be compared with the Kantian concept of moral in opposition to physical anthropology.

I think that this very schematic presentation of Heidegger's view of a possible science of man inspired by Kuhn helps considerably in organizing his ideas. It is instrumental in exposing their true novelty as well as the possibility of expanding them into a full-fledged daseinsanalytic scientific paradigm, capable of guiding the research of an identifiable scientific community. It also helps to point out some of the shortcomings of the Heideggerian project. One would indeed expect Heidegger to be more clear about several points of his framework, as for instance, about the nature of systematic ordering of ontic phenomena that any acceptable generalization should express, not to speak about badly needed derived existentials. Kuhn does not seem to have ever seriously thought of a factual science which would abandon the principle of causality, substitute a daseinsanalytic ontological framework for the metaphysical one, proceed by moving in various hermeneutic circles and value above all helping human beings to be themselves and to be free. But that fact does not need to hamper making new steps in historical studies of the science of man by using Kuhn's scheme of cultural growth which as we know was inspired by developments situated far beyond the strict sphere of natural sciences.

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