

SYMBOLS AND BEING

Abstract:

Using Heidegger's interpretation of Being and Seienden as starting point, the being of man is shown to be derived from being change and a new interpretation of man's being is achieved – that of the acausal. This concept of the acausal, and that of change, as explained in terms of both Heidegger's philosophy and that of the Pre-Socratics. Using the acausal, thought, language and man's individuality are explained. The paper continues with an analysis of the foundations of mathematics, since mathematical thought, reinterpreted in the light of the acausal, is shown to be of fundamental importance for an understanding of man's being. The paper concludes with a brief examination of Art and modern physics.

1) Introduction – The Acausal:

Since Being is an issue for man, man interprets causally because everyday Dasein, the Dasein which takes time (2), can be characterized as causal, or that interpretation of Being as beings which is the 'there-is'. However, man interprets other than causally: this other interpretation, which is prior to the causal by reason of its existence, may be termed 'acausal' (*a-causal: with-out the causal*) – and this acausal is what Homer, in the 'Iliad', speaks of when he says Calchas is the most wise seer because he understands all that is, was and will be. Heidegger understands this as revealment and concealment (3) or, elsewhere (4) as un-hiddenness, and the 'primordial time' of his 'Sein und Zeit' is akin to this acausal or potentiality of man's being, so that what he terms 'building' and 'dwelling' are implicit within it. In a sense to be established later (*Section '3' below*) it is physis, φύσις, an unfolding.

Further, acausal may be suggested as an interpretation of Anaximander's ἀδίκη – it is through τὸ χρεών that δίκη becomes much later, λόγος. Understood thus, δίκη suggests causal. However, these correlations are, at best, hints concerning the nature of the causal and the acausal – their true description, and thus that of Being and being as beings, can only be, as will be shown later, symbolic, through mathematics.

Yet, by distinguishing in this manner between the causal and the acausal at the outset of the inquiry into Being, it is possible to arrive at a clearer understanding of being, since this duality, expressive of the

nature of Seienden and disclosed in man, enables a hermeneutic to be established which is at once more accessible and clearer than the methodology of phenomenology or the hermeneutic of thought achieved by the 'later' Heidegger. It will be shown that this new hermeneutic is mathematical because of the nature of the acausal.

The fundamental characterization of the causal is consciousness, that of the acausal, the unconscious.¹ This conscious horizon may be expressed, in terms of the history of Being, by thought and feeling, the unconscious by sensation and intuition, where these terms are to be understood, for the moment, psychologically (6) ontologically, they are derived below (section 3).

The beginning of the unconcealment of Being is, however, not something that can be said, as Heidegger maintains (7), but rather something that can be experienced, numinously: *ἐνέργεια*, activity as the early Greeks understood it (8). This experiencing is the symbol from which word derives. For man, thought is part of this unconcealment – intuition the other, since Being possesses as potentiality in the change that is man not only thought but also symbol, and this symbolic perception of Being, this experiencing of Being as the One, as that which presences or transforms, is explicit for Western philosophy in the Pre-Socratics. As Tao, this perception is today becoming understood again, and with Heidegger the task of its understanding is begun.

As discourse may be said to be a fundamental expression of man's being in the world (9), so may symbolism be said to be a fundamental expression of man's being or essence. As the potentiality of thought may be expressed as discourse, so may the potentiality of the symbol be described as sensation, and the symbol is both prior to thought and beyond it. As it is projected externally by the process that is Being's change, it is abstracted and loses part of the numinosity that is characteristic of it as an essence: when it is wholly external to man's being, as appearance or an existent, it has become a sign. Change, which unfolds Being as man, is, for Heraclitus (10) conflict or discord, *πόλεμος*. An essence, as that from which something emerges (*ἀρχή*), (11) is an archetype (12), when seen optically. This gradual withdrawal of experiencing is the beginning of language and thought, and the intentionality of consciousness that Husserl described results from this withdrawal. As experiencing declines,

¹ See section (3) below.

projection increases. Individuality is itself a consequence of Being's change, and this change is already present in Being as the process that is abstraction is present as a possibility within man's being – the realization of this possibility, through change, is itself the history of Being.

Since the symbol, as symbol and sign, is prior to thought and, authentically, beyond it, it alone can explicate man's being. This explication takes the form of the mathematical where by the mathematical is meant the primordial (λόγος) that exists by virtue of man's subjective participation in the world, and it is from this λόγος that logic, as reasoning, develops through the change of Being. A symbol is beyond thought because authentic existence, the returning and reclaiming of ἐνέργεια through questioning, is a return to the unity of causal and acausal, a unity existing as ἀρχή.

2) The Fundamental Symbols – being and Change:

The most fundamental symbol is being; from Being there is change. The abstraction of change (*as a consequence of man's being*) is the idea of extension which leads to the concept of transformation or potentiality.² Potentiality itself is implicit within Being, and through man's existence this potentiality becomes the striving toward authenticity.

Mathematics, as will become clear, being a learning of things as they are (*mathesis*, μάθησις) is the abstraction of the essence through the process of intuition and thought. Thought abstracts Being's change and this abstraction takes the form of ideas and concepts, ἰδεα as Plato understands it (13). Historically, there is a symbol, often 'a priori' as Being itself can be understood, through abstraction, as an 'a priori' symbol, then thought forms this symbol into an idea through the separation of φύσις and the limiting of ἄπειρον, the limit-less (14). Intuition is the perception of the symbol as symbol in its numinous essence, a letting-be that participates in the unfolding of being, and this perception is both a participation and an identification, where identification, where identification is the transforming of an idea, by thought, into its original essence (*cf. the phenomenological method*), and accordingly, mathematics, which is both this intuition and thought as process because of man's being, embodies an authentic hermeneutic, representing (*re-presenting*) the causal.

² This is explained in more detail in section (3) below.

An idea is not an essence – the symbol is essence which thought abstracts or covers up, and each idea has its foundation in a symbol. Mathematics, as understood today, is the result of thought, an axiomatic project according to Heidegger (15); that is, mathematics has become divorced from its intuitive foundation in the symbol and a return to that foundation enables mathematics to describe man's being more authentically than either phenomenology conceived as a methodology or logos understood as a re-collection by Heidegger (16). Through mathematics, re-founded, it is possible to achieve not only the uncovering of an idea to reveal its essence, but also authentic existence: Heidegger's questioning of being begins the task of authenticity, it does not achieve it. This authenticity is possible through the use of an ontologically guaranteed mathematical symbolism instead of language as a means of uncovering Being.

The idea of the essence that is the symbol change is extension: the idea of the essence that is Being is unity, and the idea of change leads, through abstraction, to the concept of transformation, *ἀλλοιωσις*, or duration. This duration, by identification with man's terminality, embodies time, and accordingly time is understood as implicit in man's being, projected onto the world as an idea. Abstractly, this duration is the continuum and the concept of number: thought's perception of change as it issues in man through apprehension of individuality. Only change exists for Being, not time or number. Further, the concept of 'set' derives from that of continuum and number, since intuitively a set is a totality or aggregate.

3) Individuality and Authentic Existence:

Man exists because Being, precensing, is transmuted (17) – that is, because of change. Man, as change of Being, is a transforming, an evolution; historically or causally, this process is the history of Being, conceived by Hegel as a dialectic. Yet this history has as its goal the very Being from which it is derived – the returning of man to the unity of Being. To return necessitates disclosure, the revealing of Being through authenticity. Authentic existence, being the drawing toward unity of the causal and acausal interpretations (*what Jung* (18) *has described as individuation*) is a home-coming (*to use a term of Heidegger's*), a re-living of symbols and a re-participation that involves the withdrawal of projections from the idea to the essence.

Yet it is only a transition, a stillness and a non-transforming, such stillness revealing itself through mathematics, as logos. As such, it reveals **ἀρχή** as **τὸ ἄπειρον**.

Man as a disclosure of being, is primordially a participation in Being: for this disclosure of Being there is no logos in Plato's sense, only an identification. There is possession by symbols and their possibilities (*the 'unconscious'*) and not yet possession of them as occurs when logos transforms through **ιδεα** into 'reason'. Before this transformation there is no individuality because individuality (as a condition of Being) is the process of abstraction that transforms **θύσις** into **λόγος** as reason. Collectivity is primordial: through Being's change, grounded as man's dichotomy because of such unfolding, this becomes individuality, the consciousness of identity, as idea, has replaced it. In speaking about individuality one is already speaking about the change of **λόγος** – from participation to the Word. **Θάσις** through **πόλεμος** has become **νοῦς** (*mind*), and there is **διαλεκτική** (19).

This change is already foreshadowed in Heraclitus, as the genesis of the Aristotelean opposites (20). With Anaximander, this transforming is not yet evident: participation in the One, although subject to change, returns – **ἀρχή** is still the limit-less, **τὸ ἄπειρον**. There is no separation, no opposition between Being and existents. For Anaximander, therefore, there is no geographer, or meteorologist, or historian – only knowledge (*participation*) of all as it is. And it is because of change that abstraction must be returned, through mathematics, to this participation: change has caused the separation and change will re-presentation the separated.

Such a return is authentic existence. This participation to the Word takes the form of the change of Being through intuition, sensation, feeling and finally thought, all of which are conditions of man's being in the world, or how Being first shows itself through its unfolding. Intuition is unconscious (*acausal*) perception, sensation the conscious perception which arises when participation becomes transformed to identity. Feeling already implies idea – as value, judgement and finally 'truth' **θύσις** has become **λόγος**, the Word.

Optically, language may be said to consist of words or signs in the form of propositions, where a proposition may be defined as the substance of what is asserted by means of a combination of such words or signs, either true or false. The words or signs, as abstractions resulting from symbols, are placed in combination by thought either through identification or participation. For the latter, they are

primordial, and this primordiality takes the form of poetry which is 'true' insofar as it is experienced and re-present the symbols of Being from which it is derived, through words, thus revealing Being. Abstractly, through identification, such combinations are propositions, true or false because of logos as into objective truth (*or falsity*) by identification, through idea to the essence: what is as appearance, and how what is abstracted is denoted by such appearance. That is, truth itself implies, through denoting.

4) Art and Mathematics

i) Art

As Being unfolds through participation to discourse, existents, as appearance, predominate and the sense of Being that is characteristic of the numinous is lost or covered up. From being a questioning, man has himself become a subject of thought. This abstraction takes the form of technics (*q.v. technē, τέχνη*), the construction, through a wresting away from Being, of tools and things as existents deriving from them, not immediately possessed of participation, that is, capable of manual production from naturally occurring substances and materials, and with technics potentiality, as an uncovering, is itself lost in place of abstraction. There is organization beyond the authentic participation that characterized the first unfolding of Being. In language, also, the process of technics occurs, logos as appearance, and the captivation of beings (21) synonymous with the organization of the 'they' (22) through the goal of inauthenticity. The works of art which still possess the numinosum do so in spite of this organization or denotation (23), as a drawing down of Being. Such works are archetypal, participating in the symbols of Being by unfolding Being through those symbols of transformation.

Through these works (*but not only them*) authentic existence becomes a possibility since, as a looking forward to and a looking back, they realize partially the unity of causal and acausal, participation and abstraction, that is authenticity for man transformed through technics. This authenticity is not just a returning (*as Heidegger believes*) but also a rising up because it is built on and dwells in Being as an unfolding. Hence the necessity of understanding the history of Being as a record of this unfolding and concealment through mathematics.

Aesthetically, a work of art is 'true' if it symbolically preserves Being as an unfolding and looks forward to authenticity: if it represents Being and anticipates it. As a representation of Being,

mathematics is the true work of art which reveals Being and beings as Being, to man.

ii) Mathematics

Modern science, starting with Galileo, takes the process of abstraction further, into things themselves. Heidegger (24) claims mathematics makes this modern science possible, and, in a sense, this is a true, if limited, appreciation of mathematics. The learning that is 'mathesis' is not merely a causal learning, an analysis of things as they appear, but, equally, the things as they are, as intuition understands or knows. Intuition, however, understands them as symbols of Being, and this kind of knowing is already implied in the Greek concept of mathematics. For Aristotle, the potential for motion in a body lay in that body itself – it was already present, as a kind of knowing as well as describing the motion in relation to others, as a transforming. With Galileo and Newton, this intuition or knowledge of the unity, had receded, leaving abstraction predominant. Yet this intuition never actually disappeared as the 'a priori' it gave substance to scientific laws and provided the basis for much mathematical development.³

Modern physics particularly has tried to dispense with this mathematical knowing and as a consequence has established a body of facts that reveals only what is projected, not what is revealed by things or existents as they are. We say 'space-time is curved', for example, without fully understanding that we project curved space-time, as abstracts, onto what we have abstracted as 'space' and 'time', these abstracts supposedly existing independently of man, as 'facts'. Yet, ultimately, these abstracts are established from symbols – and it is in the symbols, as opposed to the projections, that knowledge resides. Should this knowing replace the 'knowledge' of 'facts' or projections, a revolution of thought will result, and what is noble in man will be returned.

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³ Q.v. Popper's notion of intuition and cosmology as the genesis of scientific theories (25).

References

- 1) Heidegger, M: 'Being and Time' (Basil Blackwell, 1962), p.67
- 2) 'Being and Time', p. 457
- 3) Heidegger: 'Der Spruch des Anaximander' in 'Early Greek Thinking' (Harper & Row, 1975)
- 4) Heidegger: 'On the Essence of Truth' in 'Basic Writings' (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978) pp. 127-141. See also 'Introduction to Metaphysics' (Yale University Press, 1959) pp.102-3
- 5) 'Introduction to Metaphysics' p. 62ff
- 6) Jung, C.G.: 'Psychological Types' Vol.6 of Collected Works: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971) chap. XI
- 7) Heidegger: 'On Time and Being' (Harper & Row, 1972) p.7
- 8) Compare its usage in Aristotle's 'Nichomachean Ethics', 1098 b, 33
- 9) Heidegger: 'Being and Time' p. 203ff
- 10) Frag. 53
- 11) Anaximander as given by Simplicius, 'Physics', 24, 13
- 12) Jung, C.G.: 'The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious' (Vol.9, Part I, of Collected Works: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2nd ed., 1968 pp. 3-41
- 13) 'Republic', X, 596
- 14) Anaximander. See (11). το $\chi\rho\omega\nu$ is synonymous with change.
- 15) 'What is a Thing,' (Henry Regnery Co., Chicago, 1967) p. 68f
- 16) 'Introduction to metaphysics' p.128f
- 17) Heidegger: 'On Time and Being' p.6
- 18) 'The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious' chap. VI
- 19) Plato: 'Republic' VII, 534
- 20) Frag. 76
- 21) Heidegger: 'Introduction to Metaphysics' p. 141f
- 22) Heidegger: 'Being and Time' p. 222f
- 23) Heidegger: 'Introduction to Metaphysics' p. 149ff
- 24) 'What is a Thing?', passim
- 25) Popper, K: 'The Logic of Scientific Discovery' (Hutchinson, 1972).