



# Martin Heidegger's Conception Of Individual

Satabdi Mukherjee  
Ph.D research scholar

Philosophy  
Diamond Harbour Women's University, South 24 Paraganas, India

## **ABSTRACT**

'Existentialism' is basically the philosophy of common people. This type of philosophy has been developed by focusing on the various problems of human life. Currently, my main topic of discussion in this essay is how the existentialist philosopher Martin Heidegger describes the individual. A review of Martin Heidegger's philosophy shows that the main problem in his famous book '*Being and Time*' (*Sein und Zeit*) is the focus on the individual and in this book he refers to the individual as 'Dasein'. Although he recognized the importance of other animals living in the world, he gave the highest place to man. Because, according to him, that man has the possibility by which he can raise questions about his own existence. While discussing about man, Heidegger mentions three characteristics of man, there are- 1) Existenz, 2) Facticity and 3) Fallenness. The main purpose of his philosophy is to show how a person can be called an ideal person by living his life. And discussing it, the concept of individual freedom and death is very important. Heidegger says that the individual is familiar with the world through a certain mood, he says this mood is 'Angst' or 'Dread'. Heidegger believes that through this angst the individual realizes his freedom. The question that naturally arises is, does death have any role in realizing this freedom? According to him, through death that one becomes self-aware or comes to know one's true nature. And Only when a person faces the truth he can realize his true freedom.

**KEYWORDS:** Dasein, Facticity, Existenz, Authentic Existenz, Inauthentic Existenz, Freedom, Fallenness, Angst, Death

## **INTRODUCTION:**

This 'Existentialism' is basically the philosophy of common people. This type of philosophy has been developed by focusing on the various problems of human life. The first thing that comes up when discussing 'Existentialism' is that the word 'Existence' comes from the latin word 'ex-sistere', which means 'to stand out', that is, to be aware of oneself. When discussing existentialist philosophers, they are divided into two groups. Some of them are called theistic existentialists, among them are Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), Karl Jaspers (1883-1971), Gabriel Marcel (1889-1995). On the other hand there are those who do not believe in God. They are Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Martin Heidegger (1889-1996) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). Among them, Kierkegaard is called the father of existential philosophy, because he was the first to talk about human existence. The main aim of these existentialist philosophers is to show that every person living in the world has his own independent existence. Just as they are different from other

animals living in the world, they are also different from other people. Because, these existentialist philosophers think that every person has his own will, so he has the freedom to act according to his own will. According to all existentialist philosophers, individuals are not part of any group. Although there are differences between theists and atheists regarding belief in God, but one thing they have in common is that, they both place great importance on the existence of the individual. Currently, my main topic of discussion in this essay is how the existentialist philosopher Martin Heidegger describes the individual.

A review of Martin Heidegger's philosophy shows that the main problem in his famous book *'Being and Time'* is the focus on the individual. Although he recognized the importance of other animals living in the world, he gave the highest place to man. Because, according to him, the individual has the only capacity to know himself or to become self-conscious. And so Heidegger uses the word 'Existence' only in the case of man and he thinks that only man has the ability to transcend his present state and move towards the future. Heidegger in his book *'Being and Time'* refers to the individual as 'Dasein'.

### **DASEIN**

The term 'Dasein' is composed of two words: 'Da' and 'Sein'. 'Da' means 'there' and the word 'Sein' means 'Being'. Thus, the word 'Dasein' means beings that exist in the external world. Self-revelation, self-relatedness, self-diffusion, self-exploration are all characteristics of the individual. Describing human existence, Heidegger says, "Dasein perpetually doubts itself, puts itself under its own supervision, pierces through itself, errs, repents or at times disperses itself, it is said to transcend itself"<sup>1</sup>. According to Heidegger, it is because of these characteristics that man is different from other things or animals in the world. While describing this human existence, when he says, "The essence of Dasein is in its existence"<sup>2</sup>, then the main thing he highlights through this statement is that the existence of man is such that it cannot be given, as well as described. Rather, it can be said that human existence can be questioned. And speaking of this, Heidegger says, that man has the possibility by which he can raise questions about his own existence.

Heidegger mentions two important distinctions of design. The first distinction is 'ontic' and 'ontological' and the second is 'existential' and 'existential'. Ontic refers to everything that 'is' in the world. According to him, this ontic feature applies to human beings as well as to all other material entities in the world. Ontically, he says, the individual is always at the level of possibility. However, this possibility can only be observed in the case of individuals, other worldly objects do not have this feature. They always remain the same as they are and they do not have the power to transcend their own being. On the other hand, ontological, refers to those aspects of dasein that raise questions about being, i.e., according to Heidegger, the individual is the only being who can ask questions about himself. And it is this characteristic of the individual that makes him an ontological entity. Discussing this ontic and ontological existence, Heidegger said, "Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it is ontological"<sup>3</sup>. However, since the individual has both ontic and ontological properties are present in, he describes dasein as an 'Ontico-ontological' entity. The second difference that Heidegger mentions about dasein is between 'existential' and 'existential'. Existential is associated with the ontic existence of dasein. For example, in the case of a tree we can speak of this existential or ontic structure of dasein. On the other hand, ontological, is associated with the ontological existence of the dasein and the characteristic of the dasein is revealed by this feature. After discussing the nature of man in this way, the question that naturally arises is, what is the main purpose of a individual's life? or how can a person live if it can be said that he is living an ideal life? In this case, answering this question according to Heidegger's philosophy, he thinks that the main purpose of every individual's life is to fulfill his plans guided by his own free will. And only through this one can realize his freedom. In this case, the question that comes up again while discussing freedom, does death create any kind of hindrance in realizing this freedom? Or is death the means by which the individual can realize freedom? In describing the matter, Heidegger mentions three existential structures of the individual. There are- 1) Existenz, 2) Facticity 3) Fallenness. The topics are described below-

**FACTICITY**

Heidegger says that facticity is the stage where the person finds themselves in the world and according to him this is the real situation of human beings. Describing the matter, he said that people find themselves in a certain environment in this world. For example, a person born in India, has a family identity, has a specific physical structure and he has grown up in a particular social environment. Heidegger has thus explained the state of seeing themselves in a particular world as 'thrownness'. I find myself living in middleclass India, with traits inherited from my parents, with a personality partially determined by my early childhood, facing responsibilities and expectations thrust on me by my 'station in life'. My entire past is my facticity, for it is a set of facts about which I have no choices. However, I find myself born into middleclass family, but I have potentialities to choose myself. In this case the person has the freedom to determine which environment he will live. So Heidegger says, although our facticity is always determined, but we have the right to nominate how our future will be formed and it is not controlled. Thus, we can say, where facticity is determined, where existenz is indetermined. Heidegger thinks this existenz is the stage where the person can realize his freedom.

**EXISTENZ**

Heidegger uses 'Possibility' and 'Understanding' to define 'existenz'. Heidegger says, existenz is the possibility and necessity of choosing oneself. When we say dasein is his existence is to say that to be human is to have free choices. On the other hand, understanding, for Heidegger is not always a selfconscious or reflective activity. It does mean that this understanding is not always articulated or conceptualized (that is, 'ontological'). Talking about human beings in this case, Heidegger said that human being is always imperfect, he still wants to be what he is not. That is, according to him, human beings have the power by which he can fulfill all his possibilities. Now it is seen that Heidegger mentions two types of existenz, 1) Authentic existence and 2) Inauthentic existence.

**AUTHENTIC EXISTENCE**

Authentic existence is when we have realized and understood what we are. He thinks that authentic existence is the human aspect of the person where the person can raise questions about his own existence. According to him, a person with such a human being is always asking what he is doing in his life or how he is handling life. When human being know about himself, he realizes that living as a common people cannot be the significance of his life and in this case he realizes that he is different from other people living in the world. According to Heidegger, "Authentic existence is can begin only when we have realized and thoroughly understood what we are. Once we have grasped that human reality is characterized by the fact that each human being is, uniquely, himself and no one else, and that each of us has his own possibilities to fulfil, then our concern with the world, instead of being a mere concern to do as people in general do, to do things necessary for living as other members of our society live, can become *authentic* concern, to fulfil our real potentiality in the world"<sup>4</sup>.

**INAUTHENTIC EXISTENCE**

Heidegger said, a man who is leading an inauthentic existence is in a condition of fallen state. Such a man ignores the reality of his own relation to the world. He cannot straightforwardly from any opinion, and his statements are partly his own, partly those of people in general. In this case, the person does not try to know himself as a single person. As a result, he does not realize that each person has different possibilities, which separates him from other people living in the society.

Heidegger basically means by discussing authentic and inauthentic existence that, people can nominated themselves and through this act he attains authentic existence. On the other hand, without proper nomination, anyone can become inauthentic, that is, he cannot realize his real nature. Therefore, according to Heidegger, the people who are truly aware of themselves, they knows what his true nature is. On the other

hand, people do not want to realize their real nature, they like to live everyday life to reduce one's responsibilities. But while there is a difference between authentic and inauthentic existence, Heidegger says that both are the natural features of human beings or *dasein*. Thus, where people with inauthentic existence make their lives to avoid their responsibilities, when people possess authentic existence they are guided by free will, strives to fulfill their own plans. Heidegger believes that authentic beings are the only ones who can realize real freedom.

### **FREEDOM**

While discussing about freedom, Heidegger said in his book *'Being and Time'*, authentic existence is the kind of character trait by which a person can realize his complete freedom and according to him, freedom of choice and recognition of this freedom is possible at this *existenz* level. Heidegger believes that within each individual there is the potential to realize his own freedom. But he also said, this possibility is not a quality of the person. In this case he explains the matter with an example, he says, like the fruit of an oak tree has the potential to become a big tree i.e. the fruit of the oak tree to become an oak tree - this is its own characteristic. But Heidegger did not speak of the possibility of the individual in this sense. When he says, 'Dasein is its own possibility', he means by this statement is that each individual's potential is different. Heidegger did not accept any generalization of individual possibilities. He said, in his book *'Being and Time'* 'Choice to choose oneself' meaning to choose oneself according to one's choice. According to him, freedom is the inherent possibility of the individual and so the human being is free and necessarily has the capacity for self-transcendence. However, although Heidegger describes *dasein* or the individual as free, he says that the individual has a tendency, ensnares itself, to be lost, liberated. That is, Heidegger said, the goal or purpose of every person is to have an authentic existence. But he also says that every individual has a tendency to deny his true nature and thereby become attached to activities that are absolutely worthless for the authentic existence of human life. so, inauthentic being find himself in crowd and becoming *das man* is his main goal in life. Heidegger identified this *das man* as the main enemy of authentic existence. Now the question that naturally arises is, who does Heidegger mean by 'das man'?

### **AVERAGE EVERYDAYNESS: FALLENNESS AND DAS MAN**

Heidegger said *existenz* or possibility is one of the existential structures of *dasein*, it is possible that *dasein* may fail to recognize this *existenz*, and fail to recognize his various possibilities. In fact, the third existential structure of *dasein*, which Heidegger characterizes as *Fallenness*, is just this tendency to neglect one's *existenz*. Such a person does not try to know his real nature. Heidegger said that people are so busy with various problems and activities of their daily life that they do not have the opportunity to implement the possibilities in which they are in dormant state. Heidegger considers this *fallenness* to be the root cause of inauthentic existence. In this case, the individual considers himself as one of the entire human race and this nature of the individual is described by Heidegger as 'das man'. He said that all these people have no question about themselves, he has no desire to know why he is doing these things. In fact, these people do not have any awareness about themselves as a person in the society. That is, what Heidegger wants to say is that *das man* cannot make a decision to solve the problem of his personal life. *Das man* has no responsibility, he does not understand that he is separate from the crowd, and this is the result of the inauthentic existence. Heidegger said in this regard, "The self of everyday is *das Man*-self, Which we distinguish from the authentic Self-that is, from the Self which has been taken hold of in its own way. As *das Man*-self, the particular *Dasein* has been dispersed into *das Man*, and must first find itself. This dispersal characterized the 'subject' of that kind of Being which we know as concerned absorption in the world we encounter as closest to us"<sup>5</sup>. The question that naturally arises is how does one turn away from everyday life or inauthentic existence and venture towards attaining an authentic existence? Heidegger says that the individual is familiar with the world through a certain mood, he says this mood is 'Angst' or 'Dread'.

## **ANGST OR DREAD**

Heidegger said, the authentic life comes about through a very special mood towards the world, the mood of Angst or dread. It is the mood of recognition of the personal responsibility for one's own possibilities. We have already argued that angst differs from ordinary fear in that it does not take on a particular object; it is dread towards Being-in-the-world-in-general. Especially, it is dread of nothingness. Dread comes about in a period of trauma, one of those incidents which force us to reevaluate our most fundamental desires, interests, and values. Heidegger believes that through this angst the individual realizes his freedom. The question that naturally arises is, does death have any role in realizing this freedom? Now let us see what role death plays in realizing freedom.

## **DEATH**

Heidegger described man as 'beings towards death' in his philosophy. He mentions two types of personality traits – finitude and uncertainty. Human life is finite because death determines the limit of life, and there is uncertainty in a person's life i.e. death can end a person's life at any time. When a person realizes that his life is limited and uncertain, a kind of anxiety arises in him, and as a result, he does not try to know himself, but rather gets lost in the crowd of ordinary people. People with these inauthentic existences are always deprived of realizing their real freedom. On the other hand, knowing that life is finite and uncertain, some people feel that time can be used as much as possible to realize their plans. Heidegger thinks these people are driven by authentic existence. According to Him, it is through death that one becomes self-aware or comes to know one's true nature. And the moment a person faces the truth, he will realize his true freedom. Thus, a review of Heidegger's philosophy shows that death plays an important role in realizing individual freedom.

So it can be said briefly, according to Heidegger there are two types of existence, authentic and inauthentic and those people who are guided by authentic existence they accept death as real and try to implement their plans. through which he can realize freedom. And Heidegger considered them ideal people.

## **REFERENCES**

1. Sinari, Ramakant, *Reason In Existentialism*, Bombay Popular Prakashan, 1966, P.40
2. Blackham, H.J, *Six Existentialism Thinkers*, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd...1961, P.88
3. Solomon, R.C, *Phenomenology and Existentialism*, Harper & Row Publishers, 1972, P.199
4. Warnock, Mary, *Existentialism*, Oxford University Press, 1970, P.55
5. Solomon, R.C, *Phenomenology and Existentialism*, Harper & Row Publishers, 1972, P.218

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

1. Heidegger, Martin, Translated: Macquarrie, John, & Robinson, Edward, *Being and Time*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1962
2. Macann, Christopher, *Four Phenomenological Philosophers*, London and New York, 1993
3. Blackham, H.J, *Six Existentialism Thinkers*, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd...1961
4. Sinari, Ramakant, *Reason In Existentialism*, Bombay Popular Prakashan, 1966
5. Solomon, R.C, *Phenomenology and Existentialism*, Harper & Row Publishers, 1972
6. Warnock, Mary, *Existentialism*, Oxford University Press, 1970
7. Macquarrie, John, *Existentialism*, Penguin Books Ltd, 1972

