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Alhassanain (p) Network for Islamic Heritage and Thought

Heidegger for Muslims

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Lesson 1

Introduction

First, you have to know what to expect as a Muslim out of the study of Heidegger. He was not a Muslim, so we are not looking for answers about what is Islam. He cannot give them to us. What Heidegger can help us with is to understand the way of thinking that has become predominant in the West, and by extension all over the world. He called it Metaphysics. The word is not his, but he re-captured the original meaning of the term and gave it an encompassing meaning as a tool to define the way of thinking of the West. That way of thinking can also be called Philosophy. Heidegger gave also a new meaning to this word taking from the original meaning and intention of its Fathers, the Ancient Greeks. He placed the beginning of Philosophy with the works of Plato and then Aristotle. And he said that this way of thinking, philosophy, carried an inherent error from its beginning. He called that error: "the forgetfulness of Being.". As a first approximation to his thinking we will say that Heidegger maintained that Philosophy cannot think Truth; or -which is the same-, that what philosophy calls truth is not Truth.

Why is Heidegger important to us?

Because all of us have been educated to think in the Western way of thinking. The only way of thinking which is available in our schools and Universities, that is, the thinking of science, the thinking of technology, the thinking of theology, psychology, sociology, anthropology, etc. We have accustomed ourselves to think this way. It is so normal, that we do not even find the need to explore our way of thinking any further. We take for granted that the way we think "is" the way of thinking. Full stop. So, why go any further about something which is normal? We simply do not see it as necessary. Then Heidegger appeared. When he said: "our way of thinking has a fundamental defect", everybody was shocked. Heidegger's new thinking put in question the unquestionable, the unthinkable: the very essence of our thinking. But what is so peculiar about Heidegger's critique is that he did not bring another epistemology, another philosophy. He did not question philosophy within philosophy. He declared nothing other than "The End of Philosophy". He closed the shop of a way of thinking that had been around for the last 2,500 years. The awesome thing is that this thinking was not just "a thinking" it is "our thinking". The thinking with which we have created everything around us, the thinking with which we think about ourselves, the thinking with which we think technology, democracy, economics and even God. This is what was so shocking. And this is why Heidegger is so important. And it is even more important to us, Muslims, than to anybody else. We can understand Heidegger in a way the kaffir never will. In a sense Heidegger, without knowing, was speaking for us, and the kaffar who have not understood him, probably never will.

The Limits of Heidegger

Heidegger left something unresolved. He finished Philosophy. But he could only vaguely point out the way forward. He resolved this problem

with what he calls "poetry", not just any poetry, but the poetry of the one who is no longer himself. The one that lets "the things show themselves" to him. The one who is no longer the observer, but the observed. But he could not go any further. I would not say that what he pointed out was nothing, it was very important. But nobody yet has picked up this unfinished affair. Because the resolution of the End of Philosophy is only one: Islam. After Heidegger's closing of the shop of philosophy, only Islam can take over. The only possible destiny of the thinking of the West, of the West itself, is Islam. This is why I say that Heidegger spoke to us, because only we, the Muslims, can finish his affair.

How to Read Heidegger

You have to understand that Heidegger is questioning our own way of thinking. But how are we going to think Heidegger other than with our way of thinking? This is all we have. Would not our way of thinking prevent us from thinking Heidegger? And the answer is: it would. This is why to think Heidegger you have to prepare yourself. You have to allow yourself to walk with him a little. You have to lose yourself a little. If you do not, if you hold onto your way of thinking too early, you will not get the picture. You have to walk with him long enough so that you can understand. Once you have reached this level, you will be able to understand Heidegger with the same easiness that you read a novel. Then Heidegger becomes extremely easy. If not Heidegger becomes obscure and difficult, which is how most people (philosophers) experience him.

Who Was Heidegger?

Martin Heidegger was born in Germany in 1889 and died in 1976. He was the last of the philosophers, the one who declared that End of Philosophy. His main work was "Being and Time" (1927) which was a major breakthrough in thinking. It was received with enormous enthusiasm and fear by his contemporaries, many of who realised the vastness of the achievement. Then he wrote over a 100 other books that cover thousands of articles and essays. His work is still not completely published. In a sense we have not finished discovering Heidegger. Other important books are: On the Essence of Truth, Holderlin and the Essence of Poetry, Early Greek Thinking, The Question Concerning Technology, Letter on Humanism, On the Way to Language, and many others equally interesting.

It is important also to know who Heidegger is not. He is not an existentialist, because Heidegger was a lot more than that and you cannot put him in the same category as Sartre. He was not a phenomenologist, because although he learned from Husserl, he went beyond his teacher.

A Warning

Thinking with Heidegger is to think at the edge of thinking. You are moving into the frontline of thinking. This is a bit like going ahead of your time. You will be experiencing the possibilities of a world that is not yet there. Heidegger will change for ever the way you look at sciences, anthropology, politics, sociology or theology. You will not be able to be persuaded by their proofs and their reasoning, which you will find deficient

and partial. This is going to make you feel like a man sent back to the Middle Ages. You will say to yourself: what are these people doing surrounded by superstitious beliefs, fantasies which they endorse with their own fantasy way of thinking? You are going to be at odds with your time.

But the reward, the immense reward is that you will be able to experience the glory of your deen with all its magnificent wonders and possibilities free of all the clouds of nonsense and superstition with which it has been surrounded in our present days. But also at an individual level, you will be able to get rid of the clouds that our way of thinking inevitably imposes on the personal understanding of our own religion. When you look in retrospect you will think that you are different. Be prepared for a great adventure that will set you free to enjoy your Islam even more.

Now we can start.

Lesson 2: Thinking and Truth

Introduction

As a start I have taken two famous essays of Heidegger "What is Called Thinking?" and "The Essence of Truth" and combined them to produce a first approximation to Heidegger's thinking. We will revisit these essays later as we progress. The idea on a gentle entry into his thinking is recommended to get used to his "fundamental ideas". Nevertheless I am going to go a little bit faster than him for the sake of abbreviation and by taking advantage -when appropriate- of our own understanding of knowledge in Sufism.

The Path Towards Thinking

Heidegger describes the coming to realisation of his thinking as a path of opening followed by a leap. This final leap will set you into a new position with regard to your understanding of the world. What comes before is the preparation for that leap.

Heidegger wrote:

"By way of a series of lectures, we are attempting to learn thinking. The way is long. We dare to take only a few steps. If all goes well, they will take us to the foothills of thought. But they will take us to places which we must explore to reach the point where only the leap will help further. The leap alone takes us into the neighbourhood where thinking resides. The leap will take us abruptly to where everything is different, so different that it strikes us as strange." [WT, p.12]

The Shocking News

Heidegger sets his thinking apart from scientific enquiry (or philosophical enquiry). He, in fact, prepares us for the shocking news that we are about to encounter, which is that science "does not think". Obviously, the type of thinking that he is referring to is not the thinking to which we are accustomed. The way of thinking that we are accustomed to, from school and University, is the thinking of science. He is saying that the type of thinking that we are used to is blind to a fundamental matter, a matter that escapes us because of the way we enquire. And that to which "our thinking" is blind is the true element of thinking: Truth. The true element of thinking is Truth. Yet scientific thinking, which takes its roots in philosophy, is blind to Truth. It can only enquire about the essence of Truth, but not Truth. And what is the essence of Truth in philosophy, is the result of enquiring through what? where? how? This is what Heidegger calls essential thinking (essentialism), which is completely different than thinking.

Heidegger says that science does not think, it only has "to do with thinking". This "fashion" of thinking -as he calls it- is only useful in as much as you are aware of the gulf that there is between thinking and "to do with thinking". What we are saying is that the way of thinking of science is a limited one, due not to the restriction imposed by every field of thinking, but based on the way it thinks (it does not matter what.) That way of thinking is useful if you understand its limitations, but if you give to this

fashion of thinking absolute validity it turns into superstition. Then, instead of being useful, it becomes a danger. This is like looking at the world through a red filtered lens. This is useful to understand the different intensities of red in nature. But you cannot conclude as the result of your research that the world is red. This is scientism, which equals superstition. In conclusion, we need to understand that there is a gulf, an unbridgeable gap, between thinking and science.

Heidegger wrote:

"For it is true that what was said so far, and the entire discussion that is to follow, have nothing to do with scientific knowledge, especially not if the discussion itself is to be a thinking. This situation is grounded in the fact that science itself does not think, and cannot think -which is its good fortune, here meaning the assurance of its own pointed course. Science does not think. This is a shocking statement. Let the statement be shocking, even though immediately add the supplementary statement that nonetheless science always and in its own fashion has to do with thinking. That fashion, however, is genuine and consequently fruitful only after the gulf has become visible that lies between thinking and the science, lies there unbridgeably. There is no bridge here -only the leap. Hence there is nothing but mischief in all the makeshift ties and asses' bridges by which men today would set up a comfortable commerce between thinking and science." [WT, p.8]

What Is The Problem?

The problem as we said before is the way/fashion of thinking. That way of thinking turns "what must be thought" away from it. But that which withdraws from this way of enquiry is in fact the most important. That which withdraws from science is what true thinking is all about: Truth.

Heidegger wrote:

"What must be thought about, turns away from man. It withdraws from him. But how can we have the least knowledge of something that withdraws from the beginning, how can we even give it a name? Whatever withdraws refuses arrival." [WT, p.8-9]

When Heidegger says from the beginning he means from the beginning of this way of thinking, that is, the thinking since Plato that we call philosophy.

Essential Thinking

One of the ways in which Heidegger characterises philosophy is that it is essential thinking. Essential thinking is a way of thinking which enquires about the essence of things.

Heidegger wrote:

"According to ancient doctrine, the essence of a thing is considered to be "what" the thing is." [QCT, p. 4]

We ask the question concerning the essence of something when we ask "What is it?"

Here let me gave you a gigantic step forward, that the kuffar cannot understand. You cannot define Allah by what?, where?, or how? Allah is beyond measure. He is not comparable to anything. The same is applicable to Truth. Truth cannot be understood by asking what?, where? or how? We

reach Allah, not by the inquisitive mind but through another approach altogether. We are not the observers, we are the observed. We are not questioning, we are the ones questioned. This is what the Sufis call Ihsan. The difference between these two approaches is "the leap".

This understanding produces a complete change in our relation to Truth and thinking. It implies that we do not manufacture "fashionable Truth" (according to our fashion of thinking). There is no such thing. Who ever tries to reach Truth with that way of questioning it only encounters something else: himself. Truth withdraws from essential (philosophical) questioning. If the enquirer is not aware of the limitation, he will think that what comes forward as the answer of his enquiry is the Truth, but it is not. And that enquirer will forever be confused. If that enquirer enquires about God, he will reach a concept of God, but not Allah. This is the world of theology. Theology does not think.

The Myth of Common Sense

Heidegger explains the reason behind the difficulty (or negligence) to question deeply into thinking itself. He explains: since our way of thinking has become normal, we assume "what is the point of questioning it?" The need to question it becomes immediately superfluous. Some of the common myths that prevents this deep enquiry are the concepts of "common sense" and "the obvious".

We take the argument from here and Heidegger says:

"No one can evade the evident certainty of these considerations. None can lightly neglect their compelling seriousness. But what is it that speaks in these considerations? "Sound" common sense. It harps on the demand for palpable utility and inveighs against knowledge of the essence of beings, which essential knowledge has long been called "philosophy".

Common sense has its own necessity; it asserts its rights with the weapon peculiarly suitable to it, namely, appeal to the "obviousness" of its claims and considerations. However, philosophy can never refute common sense, for the later is deaf to the language of philosophy. Nor may it even wish to do so, since common sense is blind to what philosophy sets before its essential vision.

Moreover, we ourselves remain within the sensibleness of common sense to the extent that we suppose ourselves to be secure in those multiform "truths" of practical experience and action, of research, composition, and belief. We ourselves intensify that resistance which the "obvious" has to every demand made by what is questionable.

Therefore even if some questioning concerning truth is necessary, what we demand is an answer to the question as to where we stand today. We want to know what our situation is today. We call for the goal that should be posited for human beings in and for their history. We want the actual "truth". Well then - truth!

But in calling for the actual "truth" we must already know what truth as such means. Or do we know only by "feeling" and "in a general way"? But is not such vague "knowing" and our indifference regarding it more desolate than sheer ignorance of the essence of truth?" [ET, p.136-7]

The Usual Concept of "Truth"

Heidegger wrote:

"What do we ordinarily understand by truth? This elevated yet at the same time worn and almost dull word "truth" means what makes a true thing true. What is a true thing? We say, for example, "It is a true joy to cooperate in the accomplishment of this task." We mean that it is purely and actually a joy. The true is the actual. Accordingly, we speak of true gold in distinction from false. False gold is not actually what it appears to be. It is merely a "semblance" and thus it is not actual. What is not actual is taken to be the opposite of the actual. But what merely seems to be gold is nevertheless something actual. Accordingly, we say more precisely: actual gold is genuine gold. Yet both are "actual", the circulating counterfeit no less than the genuine gold. What is true about genuine gold thus cannot be demonstrated merely by its actuality. The question recurs: what do "genuine" and "true" mean here? Genuine gold is that actual gold the actuality of which is in accordance with what, always and in advance, we "properly" mean by "gold". Conversely, wherever we suspect false gold, we say, "Here something is not in accord". On the other hand, we say of whatever is "as it should be": "It is in accord." The matter is in accord." [ET 137-8]

Before we continue let me recall what we have advanced so far on this topic. Heidegger points out that the word "truth" has become trivialised in our language. Let us take some advantage here because of the fact that we are Muslims. We say Allahul Haqq. Truth in that sentence dwells in another realm than when we use the word truth in ordinary language. This common use of the word truth is already betraying any access to Truth. What we mean when we use the word true in ordinary language already points to something very different than in the sentence Allahul Haqq. Haqq in Islam refers to the One, which is hidden from us by our own veiling. Truth in ordinary language is a code in a "game of accordance". This is the accordance between a proposition or statement (logos in the Greek sense, and we will come to this later) and the actuality of the thing spoken about. This means that not only our thinking betray us also our language betray us in our quest for true thinking. It leads to confusion.

"However, we call true not only an actual joy, genuine gold, and all beings of such kind, but also and above all we call true or false our statements about beings, which can themselves be genuine or not with regard to their kind, which can be thus or otherwise in their actuality. A statement is true if what it means and says is in accordance with the matter about which the statement is made. Here too we say, "It is in accord" Now, though, it is not the matter that is in accord but rather the proposition." [ET, p. 138]

What all this thing means is that access to the Truth has changed its meaning from being "unveiling" (in presocratic or pre-philosophical thinking this is called "unconcealment", aletheia in Greek) meaning the one that enquires needs unveiling so that the Truth can manifest to him; to another meaning, a theory of correspondence between a statement and what we understand by the entity itself. The first approach, "unveiling", is what

we understand as knowledge in Sufism and through Sufism we have a clear indication of what it means. The second, "a theory of correspondence" is philosophy. Throughout the history of philosophy the meaning of what we understand by the "entity" itself (Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Leibniz, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche have produced different definitions) has changed but the basic formulation of correspondence to reach Truth has not. This leads Heidegger to make a History of Philosophy, a history of Metaphysics, based on the development of the understanding of that entity against which the statement is compared in search of accordance. We leave all this for another chapter. At this stage what we want to simply understand is that this theory of correspondence in which modern thinking dwells does not reach Truth. Truth withdraws from this way of enquiry and it is never reached. Therefore the very matter of knowledge is never reached. Therefore there is no thinking, or what we call thinking has lost its element.

References:

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- QCT, "The Question Concerning Technology", Harper and Row Publishers, New York, 1977

Lesson 3: Logos and the Birth of Philosophy

Introduction

The word logos transport us to the world of the Ancient Greeks. The Ancient Greeks discovered a very powerful and exciting "idea". They discovered a new way of thinking. This way of thinking started with Plato's fascination of "theory". The "idea" that one could understand the universe in a detached way, by discovering the principles that underlie the profusion of phenomena. It was, indeed exciting. But Plato and the tradition that followed after him got off on the wrong track by thinking that one could have a theory of everything -even human beings in the world- and that the way human beings relate to things is to have an implicit theory about them. Plato gave to his way of thinking a universal validity.

Heidegger was not against this "theory" of the Greeks. He thought it powerful and important -but limited. The way of thinking which evolved from this fascination of theory, and the methodology with which it was accomplished are the themes here before us. This radical thinking of the Greeks which was initiated with Plato became the ground of the way of thinking of the West which has reached us today. This way of thinking is called Philosophy.

This investigation takes us to that point in history in which this event took place. The turning point was Plato. Yet, we refer to the time before Plato as the pre-socratic time. Socrates did not write, we know of him through Plato. So, we use Plato as the starting point of philosophy. What was it happened at this juncture that had such a profound consequence in thinking? What is the nature of this single event that was going to be carried forward for the next 2,500 years? What was before this way of thinking, from which this way of thinking moved away? How did it move away?

We speak of the Early Greeks as the thinking before Socrates and the Later Greeks after Socrates. The later is the thinking of Philosophy as elaborated by Plato and Aristotle, the philosophers. The former is the thinking of Heraclitus and Parmenides, the poets (not yet philosophers).

Aletheia and The Early Greeks

For the early Greeks, man stands in an intimate relation with Truth, deriving his own nature from that bond and existing as "the locus of the self-disclosure of Truth". At the same time he seeks to struggle with himself to allow Truth shine through what prevents its disclosure. The Early Greek word for truth was aletheia which is compounded by the privative prefix "a-" (not) and the verbal stem "-leth-" which means "to escape notice", "to be concealed". The truth may thus be looked upon as that which is unconcealed, that which gets discovered or uncovered. [BT, p.57]

We can easily relate (understand) this way of thinking before Socrates, because we have the advantage of Sufism. The Sufis have spoken of man as "the locus in which lights manifest" and that particular locus is not placed in the brain, but in the heart. In the heart of man the lights manifest. Man is engaged in this relationship: he cannot escape from it. Man is created with this feature: this capacity with which man can reach his Creator. The process by which man comes closer to Allah, is in the language of Sufism,

"unveiling". Unveiling is the removing of the nafs, of the self. The self has no business in the knowing. In that sense, the self is not the instrument of knowledge, the self cannot think Allah. Allah manifests to him, in the process of his submission to Him: when you submit to Allah, Allah gives you knowledge of Him. Covering the Truth, is clearly expressed by the term Kufr. Uncovering what covers the Truth is in itself knowledge.

Naturally, we are not saying the presocratic poets were Sufis. They did not know Islam, they could not be Sufis. Their thinking is not Sufism. What we are saying is that we are better prepared to understand the language which they used. This is important in order to understand what happened during and after the Birth of Philosophy. It will help us to understand the gap that was created and the departure that took place. This is what matters to us. We have no further need to explore the presocratics. They have nothing of use to us. We have enough with Islam.

Heidegger focuses on two poets: Parmenides and Heraclitus. He wrote lengthy works on their way of thinking. For us this has only a scholarly interest, but not an interest in what we have set as our goals in reading Heidegger. It is enough for us to know their names, their place in the chronological history and to understand their way of looking at truth. That's all.

Having understood this background, now we are ready to understand the Birth of Philosophy, that took place with Socrates/Plato.

Logic and The Later Greeks

For the later Greeks, man stands in a detached relation with Truth, deriving his own nature from that detachment and existing as "the logical maker of truth". Here the word logic is crucial to understand this "detached relationship". Here for us the word "detached" means to look away from, to separate from, to depart from. In a sense it is the opposite of being intimate, meaning being close, seeking closeness. The Sufis speak profusely about intimacy throughout their vast literature.

The expression "logic" is an abbreviation of the Greek "logike". To complete its meaning, the word "episteme" must be added: "logike episteme", or the science that deals with logos. Here logos means as much as speech, specifically in the sense of statement, predication. Statement means to say something about something, such as: the body is heavy, the triangle is equilateral, etc. Such statements express a determining something as something, a "determinatio" [without -n]. We call this determining thinking. Accordingly logic, the science of logos, became the science of thinking.

What is important to us here, is that a way of thinking was created that took its basis in logos. This way of thinking is already determined and limited by its own attachment to logos. What stems out of thinking through logos is the "relationship to truth" which comes associated to the determining of something AS something. That determining implies a measuring up of that which the statement is made, the adequatio, the correctness, what we generally mean by the truth of the statement.

Heidegger wrote:

"Logos can be made adequate or made inadequate, true or false. Every factual statement or factual logos is necessarily either true or false. (A claim to be sure which will occupy us a great deal later)" [MFL, p.2]

The logic of the Greeks brought a new way of relating to truth that was going to change everything from then on. Truth is through logic a theory of correspondence. It is no longer "unconcealment" (aletheia). The new relationship has a new direction: it goes from the I (the subject who states) to the truth of the entity (the object which is stated). This is an inversion of the previous approach, in which Truth manifests to us.

Thinking in the form of statements is always thinking about "something". It cannot think about nothing. This expression, "thinking about nothing" is ambiguous. First, it can mean "not to think". But thinking cannot be not thinking. Therefore thinking has to bring everything to be thought, including nothing (what cannot be thought as logos; nothing as in the logic of "God is nothing"), into "something" first. That "something" is what can be thought and expressed through logos. Whatever logos cannot express cannot be thought. This is already placing an exclusion of what cannot be captured by that way of thinking, that is to say, is an exclusion of what is illogical.

When this limitation is not understood, logic goes beyond itself and claims a universal capacity. It claims for itself the capacity to think everything. What in fact it does is that it reduces everything to what can be thought logically. Truth is the first victim. Truth is no longer seen through aletheia, but it becomes a theory of correspondence: if a statement is in accordance with the entity, then it is true. Whatever "is" before or beyond the statement which "is" still part of the entity is "disregarded" and it does not affect the correctness of the statement. When later philosophers (the Scholastics) discover this fascinating way of thinking of the Greeks they applied it to "knowledge" of God. God, inevitably is reduced to "something" (logical) in order to be thought. Yet, God is never thought, only the concept of God is thought. The problem here is that the result of logic's claim of universality is that "everything" must become something, before it can be thought.

Heidegger wrote:

"As science of thinking in general, logic simply does not consider thinking qua thinking of this or that object of such-and-such properties. It does not attend to the special what and how of that to which thinking relates. But this disregard of the particular subject-matter and way of being of the thing thought about never implies that thinking in general does not relate to anything. It only implies that the object of thinking is irrelevant -as long as that about which thinking thinks confront us, as such, as "something". "[MFL, p.3]

The definition of what is "something", that which can be thought through logic, will evolve through history, creating what Heidegger defined as a history of being, or a history of philosophy. The method remains Greek, but the definition of "being something" or simply "being" that can be thought will change with time. The rules of thought that came from this system of "correspondence" have remained always unclear. That lack of clarity is what triggered the systematisation of this way of thinking in search of clarity

(what in fact this systematisation achieved was a further detachment from Truth), and it is the basis in which we can speak of a history (as evolution) of philosophy. The logic that developed under the impetus of Plato and Aristotle solidify into an academic discipline only in the Stoa (the Stoics) in the last centuries before the Christian era. Centuries later, when we reach Kant (along with Leibniz) the true father of modern science, the mark of the Greeks is still there. Kant wrote in the Pure Critique of Reason:

"That logic has already, from the earliest times, proceeded upon this sure path is evidenced by the fact that, since Aristotle, it has not required to retrace a single step, unless, indeed, we care to count as improvements the removal of certain needless subtleties or the clearer exposition of its recognized teaching, features which concern the elegance rather than the certainty of the science. It is remarkable also that, to the present day, that logic has not been able to advance a single step, and thus to all appearances it is a close and completed body of doctrine. That logic should have been thus successful is an advantage which it owes entirely to its limitations, whereby it is justified in abstracting -indeed, it is under obligation to do so- from all objects of knowledge and their differences, leaving the understanding nothing to deal with save itself and its form." [MFL, p.4]

We will not yet address ourselves to the fact that Kant himself, though quite unclearly and uncertainly, took a step which turned out to be the first step forward in philosophical logic since Aristotle and Plato. But Kant did not break from logic, he was a reformer of logic, he was another philosopher.

That Greek event, which we have called the birth of philosophy, has reached us today with the same vigour and fascination with which it was first encountered. That event, the birth of philosophy, is still present with us through the modern sciences with which "our world" is being constructed today.

Conclusion

The birth of philosophy represented the creation of a way of thinking that transformed the nature of our relation to Truth, and implicitly our understanding of Truth. This transformation replaced knowledge from being understood as unconcealment to a theory of correspondence of logos. This transformation changed the way man himself was going to be understood. The intimate relation that bound the seeker to Truth as a "locus of the self-disclosure of Truth" was transformed into a detached relation that alienated the enquirer from Truth as a "logical maker of truth". This departure was the event of the birth of philosophy.

Our criticism of philosophy does not mean that this way of thinking is useless. Our criticism is that this way of thinking is limited. The lack of awareness of this limitation is the danger. Its claim to have absolute validity is the danger.

This event was born in Greece, but it went beyond the Greeks and it fascinated and shaped the way of thinking of the West, that is, philosophy. That way of thinking discovered by the Greeks is embedded in the way of thinking of what later came to be known as modern science. We are living in a world dominated by the singularity of that event that took place 2,500

years ago. It is important to know it if we are to understand the way we think today.

The Philosophy of the Greeks and Ibn Rushd

We want to briefly depart from our discussion on Heidegger to point out an interesting event in our history around the figure of Ibn Rushd.

Christianity, this dark religion, ignored and destroyed the thinking of the Greeks. The Greeks had been almost forgotten in the West. Islam on the other hand, had interactions (good and bad) with it. The most notable of these interactions is the famous argument that took place between al-Ghazali and Ibn Rushd. Al-Ghazali wrote the "Incoherence of the Philosophers" (Tahafut al-Falasifa), and Ibn Rushd replied with the "Incoherence of the Incoherence" (Tahafut al-Tahafut). The matter of the argument was the writings of Ibn Sina, who had incorporated traces of neoplatonic doctrine stemming mainly from Plotinus (via Aristotle and Proclus) to which were added some elements of Persian tradition. Ibn Sina sought to integrate all aspects of science and religion in a grand metaphysical vision. Both Al-Ghazali and Ibn Rushd criticised him. And in their own way, they were both right. Al-Ghazali, simply denied any involvement with this Greek way of thinking from a pure Islamic perspective. Ibn Rushd denied Ibn Sina too, but he left the door open to use this way of thinking provided that its limitations were understood. Ibn Rushd, popularly known as the Muslim philosopher, was not a philosopher (Ibn Sina was a philosopher) but he open the door to philosophy. Ibn Rushd, wrote the book "Decisive Treatise and Exposition of the Compatibility of Religious Laws and Philosophy" where he examined the limits of philosophy under the overall supremacy of the Revelation. Unfortunately the explosion of sciences that appeared under the Murabitun in al-Andalus, of which Ibn Rushd was a fundamental part, was slowly destroyed by the brutal incomprehension of the Muwahidun. The inheritance of Ibn Rushd, was "stolen" from us and its translations triggered the "re-discovery" of the Greeks in the West, but without the limitations he had placed on the basis of the supremacy of the Revelation and Shariah. Our chance of leading science within the Shariah was lost and we never managed to catch up with it again.

There is no point in mourning. And Ibn Rushd's view of philosophy can help us very little today. The philosophy of Aristotle has unfolded into a scientism through the work of Descartes, Leibniz, Kant and others, which Ibn Rushd would not have even imagined. In this sense al-Ghazali was right. But I prefer Ibn Rushd, because he anticipated the potential, provided that the limits of this way of thinking were understood. We owe to ourselves, to recapture this issue and to set the parameters once again. This is a task for our generation.

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Lesson 4: Man and Human Sciences

Introduction

Our subject here is man. Understanding man is understanding the most important thing of the world. In this world, nothing compares to its importance. Man is both part of the world and also the seeker of knowledge about the world. To understand him is a fundamental task critical to understanding the world. If we fail to understand who we are we will fail to understand the world.

Heidegger claims that the philosophical tradition has misdescribed and misinterpreted the human being. Therefore, as a first step in his project he attempts to work out a fresh analysis of what it is to be human. Obviously the results, if sound, are important for anyone who wants to understand what sort of being he or she is. Heidegger's conclusions are therefore crucial for the human sciences, for it should be obvious that one cannot understand something unless one has an accurate account of what it is one is trying to understand. Thus, for example, if one thinks of man as a "rational animal", solving problems and acting on the basis of beliefs and desires, as the tradition has done since Aristotle, one will develop a theory of mind, decision-making, rule-following, etc., to account for this way of being. If this description of human reality turns out to be superficial, all that hard work will have been in vain.

The Significance of Dasein

Heidegger not satisfied with the philosophical definition of man, forges a new term "Dasein", as the entity which we all are. We recall that the view of the presocratics was that man was "the locus of the self-disclosure of Truth" and with the coming of philosophy man started to become the "logical maker of truth". For the later Greeks the definition was "zoon logon echon" which is traditionally interpreted as "rational animal". The faculty therefore that defines man is his having reason. Heidegger sees this definition as problematic and tries to "return" to the presocratic intimate relation with Truth, by naming man with a new word: Dasein. Literally Dasein in German means "Being-There". Dasein is "the locus where being manifests". Dasein is regarded as the clearing (Lichtung) of the disclosure of Being. This definition is much closer to the presocratic view of man. Thinking Dasein represents the end of Humanism.

Heidegger wrote:

"The problematic of Greek ontology, like that to any other, must take its clues from Dasein itself. In both ordinary and philosophical usage, Dasein, man's Being, is defined as the "zoon logon echon" -as that living thing whose Being is essentially determined by the potentiality for discourse. Legein is the clue for arriving at those structures of Being which belong to the entities we encounter in addressing ourselves to anything or speaking about it." [BT, p. 47]

The phrase "zoon logon echon" is the point of departure. Traditionally translated as "rational animal", on the assumption that logos refers to the faculty of reason. Heidegger, however, points out that logos is derived from the same root as the verb legein (to talk, to hold discourse); he identifies this

in turn with *noeisis* (to cognize, to be aware of, to know), and calls attention to the fact that the same stem is found in the adjective "dialecticos" (dialectical). He interprets *logos* as "discourse" or a "talk". Therefore the definition of man as rational animal is already a departure from the original Greeks. This definition will depart even further throughout the history of Philosophy. The next key evolutionary departure comes with Descartes.

The Cartesian interpretation of the nature of the world has been so overwhelmingly influential in determining the whole modern outlook and way of understanding things that Heidegger considered it necessary to examine it at length. By contrast, this examination of Cartesian thinking also clarifies the intention of Heidegger himself and brings into relief the revolutionary character of his own approach.

For Descartes the only proper mode of access to the world is the faculty of knowing, "intellection", in the sense of mathematical-physical knowledge, a way of comprehending the entities which alone, according to him, ensures certain grasp of their being. Heidegger describes this way of thinking as follows: "What is such, in its mode of being, that it satisfies the conception of Being as accessible to the mathematical way of knowing alone counts as something that IS in the proper sense. " Descartes imposes upon the world the kind of being that it must have.

The modern dualism of nature and mind, with all the problems to which it has given rise, is traceable to the Cartesian distinction between the *res extensa* (the world) and the *ego cogito*. For Descartes the determination of *res extensa* is based on the concept of substantiality. "By substance", he says "we can conceive nothing else than a thing which exists in such a way as to stand in need of nothing beyond itself in order to exist. "

"Historiologically, the aim of the existential analytic can be made plainer by considering Descartes, who is credited with providing the point of departure for modern philosophical inquiry by the discovery of the "cogito sum". He investigates the "cogitare" of the "ego", at least within certain limits. On the other hand, he leaves the "sum" completely undiscussed, even though it is regarded as no less primordial than the cogito. " [BT, p. 71]

The "ego cogito" of Descartes provides the beginning of a subjectivist approach on the basis of which science can start to be formulated. This view implies a vision of man which is in contrast to Heidegger's *Dasein*.

The Characteristics of *Dasein*

Heidegger found that this definition of the Greek philosophers represented a departure and a new foundation. Because our thinking and language is dominated by philosophy, the present use of the word "man" is metaphysically contaminated. This is the reason to create a new word: *Dasein*. Heidegger gives this new name two characteristics:

Heidegger:

"We are ourselves the entity to be analysed. ...The two characteristics of *Dasein* ...[are:] the priority of 'existentialia' over 'essentialia', and the fact that *Dasein* is in each case mine. " [BT, p.68]

These two characteristics are the basis with which Heidegger will launch his critique of Human Sciences.

The first issue is "the priority of the existential over the essential". This sentence is a refusal to accept the trap of essentialism as the basis to understand man's actions by defending that the reality of man's actions is not a concept by only IS "existentially". The second one is that Dasein is in every case mine. This is a refusal to accept the reification of man, that is to consider it a thing. Heidegger intends to do so by preserving the individuality of man which "is" in each one of us through his Dasein.

These two issues are correlated since the essential enquiry about man implies to see man and his actions as an object or a thing. This Thing-like which is thought in philosophy is not man but a concept of man. Heidegger sees this as a fundamental problem, because the wrong understanding of man leads to the imprisonment of man and the robbing of his freedom. The final account of Heidegger's revolutionary thinking is that the result of the metaphysics of man is the depersonalization of man which leads to the oppression of man.

Heidegger uses Scheler to analyse this problematic. The argument of Scheler is: Man is not a Thing, not a substance, not an object. Scheler says:

"For Scheler , the person is never to be thought of as a Thing or a substance; the person is rather the unity of living-through which is immediately experienced in and with our Experiences - not a Thing merely thought of behind and outside what is immediately Experienced -. The person is not Thinglike and substantial Being. Nor can the Being of a person be entirely absorbed in being a subject of rational acts which follow certain laws. " [BT, p. 73]

This applies to the acts of man as well:

" [Scheler says] "But an act is never also an object; for it is essential to the Being of acts to be Experienced only in their performance itself and given in reflection?". " [BT, p.73]

Heidegger adds:

"Acts are something non-psychical. Essentially the person exists only in the performance of intentional acts, and is therefore essentially not an object. Any psychical Objectification of acts, and hence of any way of taking them a something psychical, is tantamount to depersonalization. " [BT, p.73]

Now let us try to understand the meaning of this radical vision of Heidegger. The search for adequate thinking set by philosophy since Descartes, through Spinoza and Leibniz is grounded on a vision of man as rational being. But the objectivation of man was only finally achieved by Kant, with the discovery of "the objective". Objective thinking, the basis of modern Human Science, rather than solving the problem of adequate thinking imprisons "man" in his own thoughts. The task set by Heidegger is to break this prison.

When a modern Economist looks at the reality of man, he places himself in the role of the objective thinker. For example, sitting down in a desk finds out that the population of Melbourne consumed last year 25tn of potatoes. Nothing is easier for him, than -after a thorough analysis of the data- to be persuaded that this data is objectively "true". To intervene comes naturally. He can easily think: "If we buy the potatoes in advance and in bulk we could

save money to all the citizens. " Others can agree that this is a great idea. Whether he is capable of doing it or not, is not as significant as to the fact that his conclusion is considered "scientific". The temptation to intervene becomes a danger when the economist is given the power to solve "the problem".

The truth is that the people of Melbourne did not consume 25tn of potatoes. It was a multitude of individuals, with a name and a will of their own, who went and chose to buy their supplies under a multifactor set of influences that cannot be grasped by numerical data. That individuality cannot be seen by the objective data the economist collected. That individuality is invisible to the so-called objective data.

Economists perform similar tasks constantly in analyzing NGP's, inflation, interest rates, employment, commercial balance etc. The temptation to intervene is perfectly rationalised as a means to "solve problems". In the larger scale, IMF and World Bank solve problems based on a similar look at their available data.

What is important here is to realise that their objective data is not reality. The reality that comes through their "careful" collection of data, is only data. The reality of man knows nothing of NGP's or balance in the spread sheets of the economist. His reality is individually "his" and his actions only "are" when "he" executes them. The depersonalisation of man is not the result of the economist making "bad" decisions. Whether he makes "good" or "bad" decisions is irrelevant to the fact that the economist's way of thinking is grounded on objective thinking. It is the objective thinking, that gives meaning to his being an economist, and it is objective thinking which is the basis of the depersonalisation of the people he is analysing.

Furthermore, this dangerous way of thinking does not stop there. This objectivation of man and his actions goes into the way in which man sets up his relationship with others by the very means of language and the possibilities created by that language. This affects the way in which man understands and interprets his experience by words such as "the facts", "value" or "ownership". We will come to this in detail in the next subtitle. Here it is sufficient to point out the problem. Heidegger wrote:

"Language in general is worn out and used up -and an indispensable but masterless means of communication that may be used as one pleases, as indifferent as a means of public transport, as a street car which everyone rides in. Everyone speaks and writes away in the language, without hindrance and above all "without danger". That is certainly true. And only a very few are capable of thinking through the full implications of this misrelation and unrelation of present-day being-there to language." (IM, p. 51)

Heidegger finally concludes:

"Language is not yet true to itself, insofar as it has not yet succeeded in giving up the absurd intention of being "science" and "research"." (IM, p.34)
The Critique of Human Sciences

Heidegger calls the Study of Dasein, the Existential Analytic of Dasein and explains how his study differs from that of Anthropology, Psychology and Biology.

Heidegger:

"After a theme for investigation has been initially outlined in positive term, it is always important to show what is not going to happen. We must show that those investigations and formulations of the question which have been aimed at Dasein heretofore, have missed the real philosophical problem (notwithstanding their objective fertility), and that as long as they persist missing it, they have no right to claim that they can accomplish that for which they are basically striving. In distinguishing the existential analytic from anthropology, psychology, and biology, we shall confine ourselves to what is in principle the ontological question. Our distinctions will necessarily be inadequate from the standpoint of 'scientific theory' simply because the scientific structure of the above-mentioned disciplines (not, indeed, the 'scientific attitude' of those who work to advance them) is today thoroughly questionable and needs to be attacked in new ways which must have their sources in ontological problematics. " [BT, p. 71]

Heidegger is saying that the fundamental problem of science is its underlying metaphysics (ontology), which he characterises as the "forgetfulness of Being" [Vergessenheit]. What is Being? Being is not an entity, but what makes everything to be; that which in its uniqueness is one and truth. This issue of the forgetfulness of Being is the key issue to understand Heidegger's critique of Metaphysics. What is the opposite of forgetfulness? Remembrance or awareness.

Heidegger goes further:

"In suggesting that anthropology, psychology and biology all fail to give an unequivocal and ontologically adequate answer to the question about the kind of Being which belongs to those entities which we ourselves are, we are not passing a judgement on the positive work of these disciplines. We must always bear in mind, however, that these ontological foundations can never be disclosed by subsequent hypotheses derived from empirical material, but that they are always 'there' already, even when that empirical material simply gets collected. " [BT, p. 75]

Heidegger is reacting against the claim of natural science to provide a comprehensive conceptual framework for all knowledge. The place of the 'ego cogito' is taken by the factual Dasein regarded as the clearing (Lichtung) of the disclosure of Being - not the absolute subject but Being is the ultimate ground of all constitution. For Heidegger, the factual is that condition of man in which he set himself for the disclosure of being. That condition he calls "authenticity". When man is authentic he can see, he can understand. The truth is always there talking to man; all he has to do is to disclose (unveil) himself. This is the task of authenticity. What authenticity consists of? Authenticity is awareness or remembrance (the opposite of forgetfulness) of Being (here we can say Truth) and also awareness of what Heidegger calls "being-towards-death" (Heidegger calls it "zu-Tod"). What man needs to be authentic is to remember Truth and death. Heidegger says that Dasein (Being-there) reaches its wholeness in death when he loses his "there":

"When Dasein reaches its wholeness in death, it simultaneously loses the Being of its there" [BT, p. 281]

Also:

"The Being of truth is connected primordially with Dasein. And only because Dasein is as constituted by disclosedness (that is, by understanding), can anything like Being be understood; only so is it possible to understand Being. Being (not entities) is something which 'there is' only in so far as truth is. And truth is only in so far as and as long as Dasein is. Being and truth are equiprimordial. " [BT, 272]

Now we can leave Heidegger and make "the leap" into our familiar territory. For the Sufis, what removes the veils (what creates clearing), is not the analytical or scientific look at creation, but rather remembrance/dhikr of Allah (Truth) in every occasion; and what sets man in his track is remembrance of death. First, when we look at the world, we must at all times make dhikr: this is the necessary condition to know. Second, the Sahaba used to repeat "death, death". This is because death gives meaning to who we are and what we are here for. For the kuffar death has only a biological signification as the end. For us death is integral to our being here and our relation to Allah. Remembrance is knowledge to us in contrast to what the kuffar call science and facts.

Another aspect of Heidegger's authenticity is Care (Sorge). Man brings about the disclosure of the entities through care. Man is no longer the observer, but rather the care-taker. His mission is to care. In this process he is the observed, rather than the observer.

Essentialism as Economics

Perhaps the human science that has the more profound effect in our life is Economics. We want to briefly outline why this way of thinking is fundamentally erroneous and why therefore its claim of certainty needs to be rejected.

We want to undertake this task by examining the meaning of two words. Two words that are fundamental to understand the commercial transaction: ownership and value.

OWNERSHIP

We start with the saying "an act only IS in its execution". With this sentence we establish that the truth of being entitled as owner means to be able to execute ownership. If a person is entitled as owner but he cannot execute his ownership implies that there is an error.

Let us look at the concept of "minority ownership" in Economics. According to this theory, on which the concept of shareholding is based, - and therefore the whole idea of Stock Exchange is based- ownership can be exercised by vote. Thus the person or persons who "own" 49% (or less) of the votes are minority owners. In contrast the person or persons who "own" 51% (or more) of the votes are majority owners. Both categories hold the title of ownership. Yet only the majority owner can exercise ownership. The minority owner has the title but not the capacity to exercise ownership.

From an existential point of view, the minority owner is not owner. Only the majority owner is owner. The minority owner only holds the concept of ownership in the form of a piece of paper that says so.

In Economics this is not an issue because this way of enquiry is not regarded as important. What matters is the willingness of individual to

subscribe the contract. The contract itself is only valid in as much as it is subscribed in good will by the parties. For Economics that is the "truth" of it. The problem is that under this approach (with which usury is also justified), the existential reality of ownership is forgotten. What matters is the paper that says you are owner, not whether you can exercise ownership or not.

This is of course the door to fraud. As it is well known in the Stock Exchange majority ownership is only a "technique" of control. The issue of control is simply masked by this conceptual idea of ownership. Let us take an example:

Mr Maxwell buys 50% plus one share of company A. For simplification we will say that he owns $\frac{1}{2}$ of company A. This entitles him to control (existentially own) company A. Now he uses capital of company A to buy 50% plus one share of company B. This will also entitle Mr Maxwell to control company B. Yet, he only owns $\frac{1}{4}$ of the shares of company B. Now he uses capital of company B to buy another 50% plus one share of company C. Mr Maxwell has control of the company C although he only owns $\frac{1}{8}$ of the shares. The process can continue n times, at the end Mr Maxwell ends up with company X in which he only owns $\frac{1}{2}$ of $\frac{1}{2}$ of $\frac{1}{2}$... (n times). In this company Mr Maxwell is a "tiny owner", yet he has control of the company.

This fraudulent use of the concept of majority ownership is everywhere in our Stock Exchange. It is based on a "concept" of ownership that denies existential ownership. The result is the exploitation of all the minority owners who have been persuaded to sign the false contract of ownership. In this contract they are not only deprived of their ownership right, but they are also deprived of the rights as lenders, since in fact all they are is lenders.

In Islam, to be entitled to be owner means you can execute your ownership. In a co-ownership all the co-owners are owners. They have identical status as owners independent of the amount of shares. Only the results of the company are shared according to the proportional ownership. In this sense, Islamic Law preserves the existential ownership, because it cannot be otherwise.

VALUE

In the same way that ownership is fraudulently misrepresented as a concept, also value is misrepresented as a psychological concept.

In Islam, the value is interpreted existentially as exchange-value or price. Qadi Abu Bakr, in defining usury (riba) says: "Riba is any unjustified increase between the value of the goods given and the countervalue [of the goods received] ". Here it is clear that in the commercial transaction the values are the same.

Ferdinando Galiani in his "Della moneta" (1750) was the first economist to point out that the value in the exchange is a "subjective" matter: subjective value. He argued that the balance between the value of one thing and that of another is an idea in the mind of the individual. In other words, the value of the goods is established by the psychological evaluation of the two parties. Each one has placed a higher psychological value on the goods that he is receiving, than in the value of the goods he gives. Otherwise

neither of them will be motivated to do the exchange. This psychological value overrides the exchange-value. The essentialist concept of value overrides the existential value.

Jeremy Bentham using the same subjectivist approach can easily argue in favour of usury in his book "Defence of Usury" (1780), because for him any commercial transaction is unequal anyway. What he calls value is subjective and therefore different for the two parties -just like in usury. By removing the existential aspect, the value is no longer seen as a human act but rather as a concept in the mind of the individual. Consequently, Bentham can affirm that "trade is like riba". Just like Allah says in the Qur'an when he warns us against the people who say "trade is like riba".

Of course, this change in meaning opens the doors to fraud. This fraud is the total domination of usury over trade which results in the human misery and exploitation that we can see across the planet. The root cause of this problem is the saying "trade is like usury" which can only be formulated (justified) if value is no longer a human act but a psychological concept.

Now we can appreciate what Heidegger means when he says "the priority of 'existentia' over 'essentia'". The opposite means the reification of man and ultimately its imprisonment in a world of self-induced fantasies.

This case against Economics deserves a lot more commentary but we are only here to outline the problems. It is up to us to enquire about them and to go further into understanding our world and our deen. What we can say in conclusion is that the concept of man as seen by Human Sciences is false, because man cannot be reduced to a concept. The fact that the economists will refute this allegation only proves that they cannot see any other way. If this is way of thinking is allowed to rule the world mankind will remain a slave within his own thoughts. This is where we are today. Islam is the only solution to this problem.

It follows that the idea of Islamic Economics, that results in Islamic banking, Islamic Stock Exchange, Islamic Insurance, Islamic inflation, etc., is simply a complete misunderstanding of both Islam and Economics.

May Allah give us the right guidance to recognise His Commands and the will to execute them here and now.

Amin!

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