

# Temporality and historicity of dasein at martin heidegger

**Andrea Javorská**

Universidad Constantino el Filósofo de Nitra  
Facultad de Filosofía y Letras  
(República de Eslovaquia)

Recibido: 03/08/2015

Revisado: 28/08/2015

Aprobado: 10/09/2015

Martin Heidegger and his fundamental ontology shows that the question of history belongs among the most fundamental questions of human existence and is closely bound to the relationship between Being and time. This problem appears on the background of revealing dynamic structure of historicity and temporality of Dasein. Thus he opens an ontological sense of the question of time that enables him to distinguish between the "ordinary" conception of time and original temporality, the sense of being which is rooted in time and which together with its modes is called a temporal interpretation.

According to Heidegger, existence has an open character, and therefore is always a part of the world, i.e. it is in the world. Such openness is an ontological meaning of "there", the Dasein (da, there – here, the being-da, das Da-sein), it is a constitutive moment of one's own ecstatic structure. A man is the only being open to the world, does not accept his world passively, but actively influences and changes it. Based on the openness, the Dasein can keep distance from the world, can come to itself and can be free in utilizing its own potential. Being an open existence, the Dasein has an understanding relationship to the world and to the

original openness of being Heidegger in his later work, after "turnover", calls "unhiddenness of being". The term "sense of being" will be replaced by the "truth of being", that will be articulated as the place for being, the purpose of which is to prevent the possible confusion of the term "truth" and the traditional conception of rightness. The most original horizon revealing the meaning of Being and everything that exists and, at the same time, articulating the answer to the question of Being, is time. The condition of a possible comprehension of time and hence being-in-time, is temporality.

### **Historicality and Understanding**

Heidegger articulated his approach towards Being itself already in his work *Being and Time* from the point of view of an authentic and non-authentic understanding of Dasein. The original structure of temporality was manifested as being the original condition of possibility of care as well as the question of Dasein's dependence as an ontological problem on its happening. Heidegger reveals an ontological conception of historicality as the foundation of the structure of happening, as the existential-temporal condition of its possibility. Heidegger had worked out the ontological conception of historicality to be able to reveal the structure of happening and gain access to its existential-temporal condition of its possibility. In this context he aimed to elaborate the Being of the historical, historicality as the ontologic structure, yet nothing historical, no beings in sense of dealing with "historical" beings. Heidegger was trying to thematize the original time as the sense of Being and later he also stresses that the structures of understanding, that he had analyzed in *Being and Time*, are the structures of understanding of Being at all. Thanks to practical handling with beings we leave beings in situation of openness. And just due to tentative practical Being-in-the-world there is also a secondary possibility - the dimension of the knowledge of "objects".

The knowledge of objects is the matter of various specialized sciences which based on various criteria had divided themselves specific beings. Their task is to recognize these beings, categorize and classify them. Aristotle had already enabled and encouraged the division of all knowledge into various scientific fields but at the same time he underlined that the question of what beings is as being, the question of Being is not the matter of research of any special positive science. Heidegger, often turning back to Aristotle, indicates the question of the sense of Being, Being of the beings, as well as the question of history and historicity itself, would not be accessible in the context of a systematic, scientific, objective, ontical research, but in the context of a thinker's role as a possibility to ask a relevant questions concerning the ontological assumption of a science. He tries to get this assumption from the structure of Being Dasein: "*it is essential to search for the ontological possibility of the origin of science in the basic structure of Being Dasein*" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 408). He focuses his attention especially on uncovering an assumption of history as the science that assumes historicity of Dasein and its rooting in temporality: "*but history assumes historicity of Dasein still by completely specific and significant way*" (Ibid., p. 425). Heidegger in fact seeks for the existential origin of history in order to be able to analyse Dasein's historicity and its rooting in temporality. How does historiography assume historicity of Dasein? How does Heidegger's topical distinguishing of historiography, history and historicity depend on the so called Being of history? Where in fact lies the fundamental structure of history?

Historical Dasein grasps beings existing as by way of being-in-the-world. Being-in-the-world is a specific meaningful structure which is ontologically typical for human existence. Human existence, as being over-thrown into the world and being towards to the death, is unanimously a final existence and also, what Heidegger calls "ecstatic temporality" is the final temporality. Precisely this final temporality

constitutes an original time and it is the basis of what Heidegger called historicity of Dasein, "i.e. *not of the fact, that it can be the subject of a historical science, but of the fact, that it exists in fact historically, giving oneself possibilities*" (Dastur, 1996, p. 29).

In his *Being and Time* he was concerned with the existential analysis of historicity: "Our next target is to find the solution to the original question of Being of history, that means of the existential construction of historicity. This solution is something that is historical by its original means" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 411).

Historical knowledge is, according to Heidegger, thus possible only on the basis of historicity of Dasein.

To be able to explain that history cannot be understood as a thing, object standing in front of us, he speaks about various meanings of understanding of the history. He focuses his explanation on general distinction between *something* historical as the past beings, in a sense of no longer occurring as well as the beings that exist but no longer influence the present. Furthermore, from his point of view, history is normally understood either as some origin of the past corresponding with the category of evolution, or as the unity of beings that changes in time. In this connection Heidegger points out the change and human fate, human societies and their cultures, as well as the tradition which is either historically researched or is accepted by some societies as something natural while its origin remains hidden. History is conceptualized as historiology: the science about the past or a historical science. As we can see, an obvious connection with temporal characteristics and almost unanimous priority of the past topicality corresponds to the outlined meanings of ordinary conception of history. What topicality of the past does Heidegger mean? How can history become a possible object of historiology?

In his interpretation Heidegger will outline the way of being of what itself is historical, its historicity and its rooting in temporality. Which beings are historical? Is

it only the Dasein or are there non-human beings as well? Do the beings have to occur first to be able to get into history later on? According to Heidegger, the Dasein does not become historical via joining and entering various circumstances and events.

On the contrary, it is by events themselves the Being of the Dasein is formed, so only "*just because Dasein is in its Being historical, circumstances, events and fates are ontologically possible*" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 411). The Dasein does not have its historicity at its own disposal; we cannot decide for it, neither can deserve it for no matter what good reasons. The structure of Being in Heidegger's conception is projected in the relation of time to being. And that is why the historicity and its existential analytic have a temporal meaning.

Besides Dasein, innerworldly beings are historical as well, but secondarily. This does not mean that they would be historical only due to the historical objectification. Can they become objects of the historical research just because they are historical? Ordinary objects, such as hand tools or even antiques, which belong to the past, belong to it for reasons different than for not being used any longer. They still do occur at present! If we have accepted an unambiguous conception of history as something past then we, together with Heidegger, ask "*in what sense are these hand tools historical, though not yet being past?*" (Ibidem). No matter if we do or do not use these hand tools, they are obviously *not* what they used to be. In what context do we talk then about something past, about what *no longer exists*?

In Heidegger's existential analytic, innerworldly beings do meaningfully belong into a unit of tools, into the world where Dasein concerns and uses them in some reasonable circumstances. But the world of these reasonable circumstances where we used to concern about or use that tool, no longer exists. In spite of that innerworldly beings can still occur. Does this mean that before - in the past - there

used to be a world that no longer exists and the innerworldly beings occur now in the world that exists? The world, according to Heidegger, is not a set of single things somewhere in the space, is not a total sum of the objects known. The world belongs to the way the Dasein is, and it conditions its basic comprehension, basic definition of Dasein as a certain way of openness. That is why the world is only "*in the way of an existing Dasein, that "as being in the world" in fact exists*". (Ibid., p. 414) In this connection people of various periods live, setting their approach to what exists, as well as their self-conception. Historicity of innerworldly beings that still occurs but meaningfully belongs into the past, thus according to Heidegger does not depend on historical objectification, but in pre-thematic relationship of the Dasein to innerworldly beings, that had belonged to the world of the "having-been" Dasein. Heidegger considers this also in his *The Origin of the Work of Art* and says we do not understand the specificity of some era by naming the objects which had belonged to that time. Our understanding of the world is set by clarifying, revealing accessibility of beings to the Dasein.

We are coming to the sphere of openness. The way we meet and understand the beings depends on what kind of openness we occur in. The specific type of openness, as Heidegger claims, differentiates also historical worlds. The openness itself is not material, touchable; it can't be a topic of any positive science. The openness is not only the matter of the non-human beings, that the human being encounters, but also of his self conception, conception of the others as well as spiritual comprehension. The circle movement of Heidegger's comprehension aims at openness as something unhidden in sense of *aletheia*. Just because the thing shows itself, that its being is manifested, we can articulate openness of beings in what and how it is. That means that beings become accessible in their own *essentia*. In this manner Heidegger talks about *aletheia* as to "*let-beings-become-accessible in their essentia*" (Biemel, 1995, p.108).

While all the effort of Heidegger's existential analytic aims at finding the possibilities to answer the question of sense of being in general, the analysis first needs to understanding of Being. Understanding being happens in the horizon of time. Heidegger talks about understanding of being from temporality, from the primordial time. Temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*) has in the plan of Dasein analysis developed into the basic dimension of human being as an original condition of possibility of the care. It was explicated in relation to the authentic "potentiality-for-being-a-whole" Dasein. Since "*temporality enables the unity of existence, factuality and falling and originally constitutes the unity of the structure of care*" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 360),

the totality of Dasein is determined by the ecstatico-horizonal structure of temporality.

### **Temporality and Historicity**

Heidegger comprehended time as the horizon of Being's understanding. Interpreted this way, time is original in sense of its ecstatico-horizonal structure which explains the totality of authentic care as "being towards death" and at the same time also the most original and deepest basis of beings: being. Time does not characterize Dasein as temporal but Dasein is interpreted as temporal. It does not mean "existing in time" but "existing temporally" as temporal being. Being can be distinguished through time, i.e. it can be interpreted as temporal. Distinguishing the being means that it can be interpreted in its sense, that something like a sense enables its explanation. This temporal interpretation is possible only because Dasein understands its own being from time.

The being of temporality lies in timing the unity of time ecstasies, phenomena of the future, "having been" and present, and it enables the unity of existence, factuality and falling. Specific constellation of connection between the meanings

of "was", "is" and "will be" creates a specific negative bound of access to time and being. If this access is meant correctly, there must be something like an open dimension, an open area from which Being can be disclosed at all, accessible and present in and by its means also possibly understood. Understanding this specific mutual bound based on unhiddenness of being and time and self-hiddenness of the unity of "was", "is" and "will be" (till unhiddenness of being of beings lasts), requires the investigation into the inner structure of these temporal ecstasies, i.e. ecstatic temporality. This structure that articulates parting or span of Dasein in timing temporality and appears as the "sense of authentic care" (Ibid., p. 358), refers to its original ecstatic unity of "having-been" (das Gewesen) as over-thrownness of Dasein into the world, the moment Being-always-already-in; present (Gegenwart) as being alongside this or that beings; future (Zukunft) as self – projection of Dasein, being kept in opportunities of coming to itself, as moment of Being-always-ahead-of-oneself-in.

The sentence from §65 of Heidegger's *Being and Time* becomes the starting point of our further analysis. Dasein can exist like an over-thrownness being only because the care itself is based in "having-been" (Ibidem).

Let us remind that Dasein is the being which in its being cares for the being itself. Its own being is assigned to him. It means that Dasein has opened itself into "here" (da) to access its own Being. "Here" suggests something like an open space of some possible region, stretched out area of a possible world - thus Being of that "Being here" (das Da-sein) is from the outset a Being-in-the-world. That means Dasein is always assigned to be this "here" of its own Being as Being-in-the-world. Heidegger writes about factuality of an assignment of our own Being and calls it "over-thrownness" of being Dasein. An "over-thrownness" means that the being of Dasein (as Being-in-the-world) is for it itself "always already" thrown into openness, into the "here". Because of that Dasein has "always already" found itself, standing in front of

its factuality of Being-in-the-world, in certain state of mood, "state-of-mind" (Befindlichkeit). The state-of-mind is a way by which it has "always already" opened into the "here" of one's own over-thrownness of Being-in-the-world. It precedes all possible reflexion or comprehension. That is why it "always already" is concerned with one's own Being. How do these short reflections correspond with our topic? How can the above described structure of Being be possible?

In *Being and Time* Heidegger makes distinction between "having-been-Being" and "past-Being". In the horizon of Heidegger's analysis, the past (die Vergangenheit) does not indicate something datable that was exhausted, and so remains exhausted "now", something that we refer to as existing "then". Heidegger does not come out from the idea of time as the sequence of the past, present and future, neither from the idea of being associated with the present as "still being" or with future or past as "already not-being". Such definition of time belongs according to him to the ordinary conception of time.<sup>1</sup> Heidegger's conception of time explicated within confines of the existential analytic of the Dasein is not an objective frame of happening, it does not occur somewhere "out" or somewhere "inside", e.g. in consciousness.<sup>2</sup> Time is not a being that appears or disappears, that can be measured, defined through terms, or something that would be everlasting.

Heidegger writes about the past regarding "non-human" beings that appear and take place "in time". The way Dasein projects oneself into this Being is called existentiality. That is why Dasein, besides being the over-thrown Being-in-the-world, is also an understanding self-projection into one's own potentiality-for-Being-in-the-

---

<sup>1</sup> Heidegger took a critical approach towards traditional conception of time that was typical e.g. for Aristotle because it is not sufficient to catch the relationship between Being and time. See: (Mitterpach, 2007, pp. 65-66).

<sup>2</sup> He diverts also from Husserl's conception of time which is according to him not determined by question of Being: "My question of time was determined by the question of Being. It was taking the direction which remains to Husserl's investigation of inner conscience of time permanently unfamiliar." In: (Heidegger, 1993c, p. 53).

world. This way of Dasein's being Heidegger calls an "over-thrown projection". According to Heidegger, Dasein as an existence cannot be the past (die Vergangenheit) because it can never essentially occur. *"Dasein can obviously never be as past, not because it would be not disappearing, but because it can never occur essentially. As far as it is, it exists. And Dasein which no longer exists, is not past in ontological sense, but is this having-been-here"* (Heidegger, 1996, p. 414). That is why he uses the term "having been" (das Gewesen) as a meaningful term for one of the temporal constituents which cannot be analyzed as isolated or alternately opposite to other remaining constituents of a complete structure of care. Having-been, Present and even Future as well are always in mutual inter-connection which creates an integrated and own phenomenon, the sense of Dasein.

The phenomenological analysis of the appearance of a being described as arriving into presence from hiddenness and non-presence enabled to distinguish the sensual present as appearance from enpresenting in a sense of "coming out", "rising up" into unhidden, or as standing up into openness. Enpresenting enables "being at" (concern, within-the-world beings) hand in hand with the fallenness of Dasein. Fallenness means to get lost in present. Presence does not represent a moment, "now" as some point in a specific temporal order. Presence as the moment "now" would be a temporal phenomenon corresponding to time in sense of within-time-ness. In time as within-time-ness, there always occurs something. But Dasein is not an occurant being, that is why one's own "Being-alongside" cannot be explained from the "now". Differing from beings that appear "in" the present, the Dasein is ecstatic. Regarding to this ecstaticness of Dasein, the past does not mean "being no longer" but it means the "having-been" of Dasein itself, nor the presence means "now" but is an access to Being in its unhiddenness. Present as an ecstatic modus is the one which enables "meeting with what can be" in a certain time

"ready-to-hand or present-at-hand beings" (Ibid., p. 370). That is why Dasein can be nearby within-the-world beings only when it is open for the possible "present enpresenting" (gegenwertiges Anwesen) of this beings, and thus for it itself. By this Being alongside is Dasein extracted so that it can be present (Gegen-wart). Present is enpresenting of beings in its unhiddenness.

Likewise it is also with analysis of the third temporal ecstasis, the future. If we allowed a vulgar interpretation of time, than the future stands for the upcoming, something that has not been before i.e. is not but will be - will become present. If the future was only to come then it would be able to appear as the future because it would permanently keep distant (Das Abwesende)<sup>3</sup> To this upcoming future Heidegger assigns a non-authentic understanding of temporality. The future (die Zukunft) in the original horizon of time (in original horizontal temporality) always already is, never upcomes. In *Being and Time* it is interpreted as self-projection of Dasein, as Being-ahead-of-oneself. Dasein projects oneself according to its own possibilities of Being and Heidegger understands this self-projection into one's own possibilities as temporalizing of future. Future enables to understand something like ahead-of-itself. That is why Dasein is as ahead-of-itself futurally. Futurally means Dasein's coming-towards-oneself in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. Ahead-of-itself points out authentic future which enables Dasein to be the way that it cares for ones own potentiality-for-Being. A phenomenal feature of the future is "coming-towards-oneself" (from some specific possibility) is "Being-towards". The future understood like this, in specific way, still concerns the man. Heidegger's interpretation of original temporality keeps accenting a dynamic structure of the unit of original temporality. But since Dasein as Being-in-the-world exists in two basic modules of Being Dasein, and gets to ones own potentiality-for-Being through

---

<sup>3</sup> The analysis of sensual determination of Anwesen and Abwesen we meet especially in the works after turnover, e.g. *Die Geschichte des Seyns, Was heisst Denken?*

concern with beings, it cannot see that the unity of temporality does not pay attention to it, misses it. If Dasein is concerned "with its Being" then it also takes care of its own ecstaticness, either non-authentically in a way of fallenness, or authentically. Temporality temporalizes either as forgetting-enpresenting expecting, i.e. non-authentically from intra-temporal beings, or as continuous renewal of the moment, i.e. authentically from one's own temporality itself.

Apparently, certain moments of the structure of Being Dasein are possible only under the condition that Dasein is in its diversification always at the same time upcoming - future (Zukunft), "already" - "having-been" (Gewesen) and enpresenting-present (Gegenwart). From phenomenological perspective these three temporal ecstases create a unit and that means they are temporalizing the original temporality. This unit, according to Heidegger, takes place in the world.

World is the space for beings which is understood by man as the one who understands Being. The world belongs to existence and indicates the way how beings can be manifested to man as it is in a whole. In phenomenology manifestation means to be somehow here. As being present in the "place" where meeting occurs. But this "place" must be somehow understood: non-authentically, model of which is materiality, occurrence in present; and authentically, for which each present is accessible from future, each understanding is a projection but an over thrown projection, since every present is at the same time determined by past. Having understood "the-step-out" that enables the presence in specific situation, always steps out from somewhere, out of some determination, dependence on what used to be. Both in authenticity and non-authenticity it appears in a relation to oneself. In first case we come to ourselves, in second one we do not. But in both cases there has to be some structure that enables things become clear and accessible to us and us to ourselves. For understanding of what Being Dasein is, Heidegger reveals a crucial modality *Eigentlichkeit des Daseins* we usually translate

by perhaps ethically not appropriate term - Dasein's authenticity. The authenticity makes finality of Being Dasein understandable. In this context Heidegger finds for his expression the phenomenon of Being-towards-death, which becomes significant in one's confrontation with finality as an authentic comprehension of human Being.

Temporalizing of the time which is characteristic for an authentic existence is in modus of historicity. Heidegger, analyzing temporal character of historical beings at all stresses the fact that we cannot come out from "Being-in-time" in a way of entity present-at-hand. Yet entity does not become "more historical by stepping back into more and more distant past, so that the oldest would be historical in the most actual sense" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 415). Dasein, according to Heidegger, is not historical because it is not here but only in temporalizing one's own temporality which has ecstatic-horizonal structure we can talk about historicity as essential structure of Dasein.

Heidegger discusses historicity as an ontological problem which he analyzes through existential analytic of Being Dasein. He points out a meaningful structure of temporalizing temporality which is represented by the historicity of Dasein. Heidegger considered existential construction of historicity; historicity in this analysis "is not only a simple ontical statement of the fact that Dasein acts in 'world history'. Historicity of Dasein is the basis for possible historical comprehension which brings along the possibility to keep history explicit as a science" (Ibid., p. 364). Heidegger was trying to explain historicity from the point of view of temporality, originally from authentic temporality.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> The contribution is a partial presentation of the outcomes of the research project VEGA No. 2/0175/12 *From Phenomenology to Metaphysics and to Reflection of the Contemporary Crisis of Society and Art* which has been pursued at the Institute of Philosophy of Slovak Academy of Sciences and the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts of the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra.

**Bibliography**

- Biemel, W.** (1995). *Martin Heidegger*. Praha : Mladá fronta, 1995.
- Dastur, F.** (1996). *Čas a druhý u Husserla a Heideggera*. Praha : Filosofický ústav ČSAV, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1999). *Heidegger and the Question of Time*. Humanity Books, Amherst : N. Y., 1999.
- Fleischer, M.** (1991). *Die Zeitanalysen in Heideggers "Sein und Zeit"*. Aporien, Probleme und ein Ausblick. Würzburg : Königshausen und Neumann, 1991.
- Heidegger, M.** (1993). *Sein und Zei*. Tübingen : Niemeyer, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1996). *Bytí a čas*. Praha : Oikoymenh, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1993a). *Co je metafyzika?*. Praha : Oikoymenh, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1993). *Básnický bydlí člověk*. Praha : Oikoymenh, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1993c). *Konec filosofie a úkol myšlení*. Praha : Oikoymenh, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1975). *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenology*, GA 24. Frankfurt am Main : Vittorio Klosterman, 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1982). *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1982.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1994). *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*. Frankfurt am Mein : Vittorio Klosterman, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1976). *Zur Sache des Denkens*. Tübingen : Niemeyer, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1992). *The Concept of Time*. Blackwell, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1957). *Identität und Differenz*. Tübingen : Niemeyer, 1957.
- Mitterpach, K.** (2007). *Bytie, čas, priestor v myslení Martina Heideggera*. Bratislava : Iris, 2007.