

## Revisiting Heidegger's Vision of Language: "Language is the House of Being"

Dr. Rajiba Lochan Behera

Assistant Professor, P. G. Department of Philosophy, Utkal University, Vani Vihar, Bhubaneswar, Odisha – 751004 (India)

### ARTICLE DETAILS

#### Article History

Published Online: 14 Oct 2019

#### Keywords

Being, Being-in-the-world, Da-sein, Discourse, House of Being, Language etc.

#### Corresponding Author

Email: uuphilo19[at]gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

*My purpose in this paper is to cogitate the nature of Heidegger's notion of language, more precisely; language is the house of Being. As we know that language is taken as an already-organized entity, this is debriefed philosophically. For Heidegger, both the subject matter and the subject matter of the philosophy of language are always together which means to be understood of human language is to be understood human discourse. The principal ideas about language in the philosophy of language for Heidegger are practically and permanently grounded on certain landscapes of human discourse which are called as human activity, well-designed high brow exertion and constitutive ways of demeanour etc. Heidegger claims, language is assured to Being by the way of making Being to say something in language. For him, deprive of any purpose, there is no language. So, language is appropriated in saying and saying is in need of Being which finds its voice in the word that constitutes in a language. The relation between language and Being is not possible deprive of any rule rather it's a subject to supreme necessity. So to say who we are, we the humans being remain committed to and within the being of language, and can never step out of it and look at it from somewhere else.*

### 1. Introduction

The shared view of the liaison between being and language is a claim that language speaks. This claim can be taken in to Heidegger's account of the nature of language that the possibility of undertaking an experience with language which means the experience is not of our own making rather we are only able to speak because we have already listened to language. For Heidegger, we perceive language speaking is to listen is Being. But Being is not distinct from this "saying" – it would be more correct, to say that being "is a "Saying"". In other way we can put it that we are trying to listen to the voice of Being where the word is used with care owing to the intimacy of language and Being, Heidegger calls it the "language of Being" as clouds are the clouds of the sky.

This paper encompasses two sections, the *Section-A* is a sketch of Heidegger on language in the context of the projection of fundamental ontology which delineates the necessary relation between language and Being. The sketch is made with a view to answering the question of what discriminates discourse from the language. In the *Section-B*, we will discuss his accounts of assertions and discursive meaning as part of an answer to the question.

#### Section A

### 2. Language and the "House of Being"

In "A Dialogue on Language," Heidegger admits that the reflection on language and on Being has determined his path of thinking which cannot be more accurately captured by other remarks than these. We can understand in two different ways the phrase "language is the house of Being." One way, we can understand that language constitutes the house where Being reveals itself. In the meantime, language transforms

itself into the essential saying. Another way, we can hold that language is the essence of man. Only through language, a human can hear the message of Being and build a house in language as the guardian of Being.<sup>1</sup> Language seems to be granted the primal role in its relation to the beings. This is reflected in such remarks as language speaks itself in us, and language itself has woven us into the speaking. However, the relationship of man and language cannot be dissolved. Man is given the dative role, so to speak, as the recipient of the message of Being, through whose experience alone can the occurrence of an event be initiated. This role is co-primordial with the nature of language. Therefore, Heidegger called it "the house of Being".<sup>2</sup>

Language is called "the house of Being"·· It is the keeper of being present, in that it's coming to light remains entrusted to the appropriating how of Saying. Language is the house of Being because language, as Saying, is the mode of Appropriation (OWL, 135).

### 3. Language and Being

There is a necessary relation between languages and Being that is determined by our destiny which is needed in the usage of language, belong to the Appropriation. According to Heidegger, there are two sides to the meaning of this expression. Firstly, only by language can Being be shown forth, can the world be made to appear, and can the things be presented as the things they are. Language is the beginning of Being itself. Secondly, only in language human can find the proper house of his existence. One could say, language is the

<sup>1</sup>Heidegger, M., *On The Way To Language*, (trans.) Peter D. Hertz, Harper & Row, Publishers, New York, Cambridge, 1982, pp. 6-9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp. 130-136.

home of the nature of the human. These two dimensions can be re-formulated in one sentence as language is at once the house of Being and the home of the human. Heidegger writes in the "Letter on Humanism:"

Language is the house of being. In its home man dwells. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home. Their guardianship accomplishes the manifestation of Being insofar as they bring this manifestation to language and preserve it in language through their saying (*LH*, 239).

This accent on the human as the "guardians" of "the house of being" has to be understood in light of what Heidegger considers to be the nature of the human. Only the human is "destined to think the nature of his Being. Language is not merely one capacity human possesses along with other capacities. Through language, man can hear the message of Being; he dwells in language as the guardian of Being. Human and language are mutually indispensable. Language, as Saying, is closely related to thinking as the remembrance of Being. The destiny of Being comes to language in the words of essential thinkers. Thinking is a recollection of Being. In its proper sense, the language, that is, the house of Being is not an arbitrary everyday language, but the language of Being, in which Being speaks itself.<sup>3</sup> Language and the human determine each other, mutually . . . by virtue of their belongingness to Being. In accounting for the relation between the human and language, Heidegger suggests that Being must enter into the speaking of language in order to take up our stay with language. Man achieves his nature as human and becomes at home in the house of language. In this act, the human is owned by Being and language as language is brought to itself as language. In this sense, it is similar to Being and Time and both Being and Time and language and human is gifted. Man must experience a transformation in order to dwell in language as the home of the nature of the human. The following paragraph which comes from Heidegger's book titled *The Way to Language* which discusses something about the responsibility of man for the use of language.

. . . a transformation of language is needed which we can neither compel nor invent. This transformation does not result from the procurement of newly formed words and phrases. It touches on our relation to language, which is determined by destiny: whether and in what way the nature of language as the arch-tidings of Appropriation, will retain us in Appropriation (*OWL*, 135).

In thinking experience, the man responds to the Saying of language. Through the appropriating of the event, man is transported into the realm of the essential origin of language and Being. This event of appropriation is not subjective, but it is gifted with supreme necessity. In the poem "The Thinker as Poet", Heidegger expresses his creative thought:

We are too late for the gods and too early for Being (Being). Beyng's poem,

just begun, is a man.

To head toward a star . . .

To think is to confine yourself to a

single thought that one day stands

still like a star in the world's sky. ("*TTP*", 4)

In this poem, Heidegger sings, when thought's courage stems from the bidding of Being (Being), and then destiny's language prospers. It is clear that Being's disclosing is indistinguishably correlated with language. Therefore, reflection on the question of Being is at the same time a reflection on the nature of language.<sup>4</sup> In the second section, I will look to his accounts of assertions and discursive meaning for part of an answer to the question.

## Section B

### 4. Discourse and the use of language

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger remarkably extricates language from discourse. The discrepancy falls neatly into the ontological budget that he uses to direct his existential analysis, namely, the difference between being on hand, being handy, and being here. Discourse pertains only to being-here and vice versa, that is to say, discursiveness and being-here are distinguishable but they are correspondent. Discourse is existential; a constitutive way of being-here that is disclosive of our being here. To say that we exist as discursive beings are to say that, in and through our discursiveness, the meaning of disclosing itself to us, and no less fundamental than it does in the ways we understand possibilities in our day-to-day lives. By contrast, again, according to *Being and Time*, language is a discourse that has been stated. Language is not a way of being here but something encountered within the world as ready-to-hand. It can then be broken down in turn into word-things on hand in nature and culture. Language, as used, is not simply on hand but handy and this use of languages as ready-to-hand assumes discourse. In this way, Heidegger differentiates three distinct ontological aspects of language: *existential language, language as use, and language as something on hand*. To appreciate the distinction between language as use and language as something on hand, consider the difference between reading a poem and analyzing the language of the poem. There is much more to be said about this difference between language as an object or cultural artifact on hand in our environment and language as a handy means of manipulating things in that environment. Thus, the difference between language use and discourse is not as perspicuous as that between the use of language and its objective presence in nature and culture.

### 5. Discourse and Da-sein:

Discourse is the articulation in accordance with the significance of the attuned intelligibility of being-in-the-world. Its constitutive factors are: what discourse is about, what is said as such, communication, and making known. There are not properties which can be just empirically snatched from language but are existential characteristics rooted in the constitution of being of Da-sein which first make something like language ontologically possible. (*BT*, 152)

<sup>3</sup> Heidegger, M., "Letter on Humanism", 1947, p. 239-274.

<sup>4</sup> Heidegger, M., "The Thinker as Poet", 1947, pp. 4-6.

The ontological-existential character of discourse can be analyzed by Da-sein. Since discourse is constitutive for the being there, that is, attainment and understanding, and since Da-sein means being-in-the-world, Da-sein as discoursing being-in has already expressed itself. Da-sein has language. As an expression, language harbors in itself an interestedness of the understanding of Da-sein. And discourse belongs to the essential constitution of being of Da-sein. Discourse expressing itself is communication. Discourse necessarily constitutes the disclosedness of being-in-the-world and is pre-structured in its own structure by the fundamental constitution of Da-sein.<sup>5</sup>

## 6. "Da-sein": Two views of Language

At the time of the composition of *Being and Time*, Heidegger was uncertain between two incompatible views of the nature of language. In order to identify this uncertainty about language, we may draw a division between two conceptions of the nature of language such as the first one may be called *instrumentalist view* and the second one may be called *constitutive view*. But before going to discuss these two views, we would like to give the reason behind this. When we understand the concept "Dasein" in general, the existential of Being-in must be given an appropriate construing as structures of the social context itself. Heidegger says that "Dasein in general" is logos<sup>6</sup>. For Heidegger, the public world of expressions articulated in logos which receive its fullest concretion in language.

If logos, as the articulation of the understandability of the "there," is a primordial existential of disclosedness, and if disclosedness is primarily constituted by Being-in-the-world, then logos too must essentially have a kind of Being which is specifically worldly. The situated understandability of Being-in-the-world speaks itself out as logos. . . . The way in which logos is spoken out is language (*BT*, 161).

For this reason, we have interpreted logos as the cultural articulation of norms and standards by Dasein as the Anyone, and "meaning" as the background of intelligibility that determines how things are to count or matter for a culture. The background of shared meaning makes it possible for exemplifications of Dasein to exist as commentaries on the public text of the world. There is continuity in our interpretive appropriations of equipment contexts because we are participants in the shared forms of life of our culture. Since logos are the publicly accessible realm of expressions of the intelligible world, Heidegger says, the totality-of-words that our language has a "worldly' Being" that can be encountered as equipment: "as an entity within-the-world, this totality thus becomes something which we may come across as ready-to-hand."<sup>7</sup> When our everyday encounter with words in use has broken down can we come to encounter language as a mere set of lexical entries and rules: "Language can be broken up into word-things which are present-at-hand."<sup>8</sup> Heidegger

recognizes the importance of language as a medium of shared intelligibility is clear in *Being and Time*. He concludes his argument of logos and language with a question about "the kind of Being [that] goes with language in general": "Is it a kind of equipment ready-to-hand within-the-world, or has it Dasein's kind of Being, or is it neither of these?"<sup>9</sup> Unable to answer this question, he concludes that:

Philosophical research will have to dispense with the "philosophy of language" if it is to inquire into the: "things themselves" and attain the status of a problem which has been cleared up conceptually (*BT*, 166).

According to Heidegger, our access to things is always mediated through a world that is shaped in advance by a system of cultural and historical interpretations, and these interpretations may very well turn out to be linguistically articulated. Now we would like to discuss two views of language regards to Dasein as below:

*Instrumentalist view*: On this view, language is regarded as a sort of tool-one type of equipment among others which contributes toward making up the intelligible world. Our ability to use language, for Heidegger, is grounded in some prior grasp of the nonsemantic significance of the contexts in which we find ourselves. It is only because we have first understood the nature of reality that we can then come to comprehend the meanings of words. "Language is seen as a tool for communicating and ordering this prior grasp of reality."<sup>10</sup> Although the language may play a very important role in making the world intelligible, it is itself possible only against the background of an understanding that is nonlinguistic. There is clear evidence in *Being and Time* that Heidegger was inclined to adopt such an instrumentalist view of language. The picture of words "accruing" to "significations" suggests that there is a prior grasp of the nonsemantic field of the significance of the world which becomes the basis for gaining mastery over a language.<sup>11</sup> Heidegger says that "logos, for the most part, speaks itself out as language"<sup>12</sup>, but there is no reason to think that the realm of significations that comes to expression in language is necessarily bound up with language in any way. There is clearly the intimation that there could be a fully articulated sense of the world derived from our ordinary participation in contexts of significance prior to or independent of the mastery of a language.<sup>13</sup>

*Constitutive view*: In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein claims that language is not so much as a tool on hand for our use as a medium in which man dwells. For him, Language generates and makes possible our full-blown sense of the world.<sup>14</sup> The constitutive maintains that the mastery of the field of the significance of a world presupposes some prior mastery of the articulate structure of a language. The idea that one can first have a coherent and fully worked-out grasp of a

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 166.

<sup>10</sup> Charles B. Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge*, Hackett Publishing Company, USA, 1983, p. 117.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, pp. 117-18.

<sup>12</sup> See *Being and Time*, p. 349.

<sup>13</sup> See *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge*, p. 118.

<sup>14</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigation*, Indiana University, Macmillan, 1953, p. 116.

<sup>5</sup> Heidegger, M., *Being and Time* (trans.) Joan Stambaugh, State University of New York Press, Albany, USA, New York, 1996, pp. 149-162.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 349.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 161.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 161.

totality-of-significations onto which a totality-of-words is later mapped is on this view incoherent. Instead, words and the world are seen as interwoven in such a way that to enter into one is simultaneously to master the other.<sup>15</sup> In Wittgenstein's metaphor, "Light dawns gradually over the whole."<sup>16</sup> Here there is no way to identify a nonsemantic field of meaning which can be grasped independently of the language that serves to constitute it. There are also suggestions in *Being and Time* that language is more than one kind of equipment at our disposal for dealing with the world. Whereas the ready-to-hand is ontologically defined by its place in a total context, language plays the role of generating those contexts of activity and making possible the fact that there are such contexts at all. Heidegger says that language constitutes both the understanding and situatedness of everydayness, and lays out the possibilities of grasping the world and others:

Proximally, and within certain limits, Dasein is constantly delivered over to this interpretedness [of the public language] which controls and distributes the possibilities of average understanding and the situatedness belonging to it. [Language], within its organized and articulated contexts of signification, preserves an understanding of the disclosed world, an understanding of the Dasein-with of others and of one's own Being-in (*BT*, 167/8).

According to this view, language inhabits our lives and shapes the situations in which we find ourselves. Far from seeing language as something that Dasein as the anyone merely has on hand<sup>17</sup>, Heidegger says that the anyone is constituted by language:

"The anyone is constituted by the way things have been publicly interpreted, which speaks itself out as idle talk" (*BT*, 252).

## 7. Conclusion

The point is that we are inept to step outside language might lead us to think that the possibility of enduring an experience with language which is itself brought to language every time we speak. Heidegger says, in most of the cases, language never has the floor instead whatever we are speaking about blocks the experience of language itself as the "house of Being". In this way, we can understand that language is linguistically expressed of the voice of Being that can be considered as the mystery of Being.

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<sup>15</sup>See *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge*, p. 118

<sup>16</sup> Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, New York: Harper, 1972, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> See *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge*, p. 119.