CHAPTER ONE

AT THE THRESHOLD OF HEIDEGGER'S THINKING
1.1.0. Prefatory Remarks

The question of the meaning of Being (Seinsfrage) is the leit-motif in Heidegger's thought. His writings that cover a span of nearly five decades illustrate the undaunted determination in the face of this goal, where he tried to undercut the representationalist picture of human situation, along with its objectifying look on reality and its subjectified vision of the self.

Heidegger's interest in the question of the meaning of Being is not out of historical interest, but out of a strong desire to stimulate further thinking in this line while appropriating the past and the present with a view to the future. It is evident from the fact that he sets the question in motion with an observation that affects the whole of the western metaphysical tradition till Nietzsche. The development of philosophy from Plato to Nietzsche is primarily a metaphysics which is onto-theological in character. Heidegger, therefore, recommends a
new mode of thinking that can go beyond the onto-theological account of philosophy, which, at the same time, goes back to essential thinking exemplified in the pre-Socratic period.

The new mode of thinking begins with an attack on the Cartesian image of man, or the modern man of reason, and all such anthropocentric tendencies that failed to reach the essence of man. The essence of man, from the Heideggerian point of view, is to participate in the activity of creating creatively the occurrence of Being, and it is to this participatory engagement in Being that the term Dasein refers. As a co-player in the play of Being, Dasein has to submit itself to the mission of Being in a befitting manner by participating in the event of appropriation, where the truth of the world and thing takes place removing the veil of concealment. Heidegger is inviting our attention back to the essential aspects of human existence by considering the essence of man in relation to Being. The question of Kehre emerges in this context, where Heidegger demands a hermeneutic approach to the understanding of the world by undermining the foundations of classical epistemology in both its empirical and a priori forms.
1.1.1. The Problem of Kehre

In this thesis an attempt is made to provide an interpretative analysis of the question of Kehre in Heidegger's thinking allegedly set in motion with the publication of the essay, Letter on Humanism, in 1947. The purpose of this study is to show that there is no Kehre in Heidegger's thought, if by Kehre we mean a 'reversal' or 'turn' as the German expression usually means, rather it is maintained here that Kehre is the direction which thinking progressively assumes in the revelation of Being. Moreover, it has been pointed out that considering Kehre as a reversal of thought is not only misleading, but also a serious misunderstanding of Heidegger's entire philosophical enterprise.

However, it is to be mentioned at the very outset that the opinion among the Heideggerian scholars is divided on the question whether there is a Kehre in Heidegger's thinking. Those who point out the presence of Kehre in Heidegger's thought uphold that Kehre is mainly due to Heidegger's failure in carrying forward the project of fundamental ontology, which remains incomplete in Being and
Time. The related issues emerging from this critical observation can be summarized as follows.

1. Though Heidegger makes use of hermeneutic phenomenology in his early writings, it becomes increasingly ignored in the later writings and it goes to the extent that the term 'phenomenology' never appears in the later writings.

2. In the fundamental ontology Dasein enjoys an active role and the move is always from Dasein to Being. In the later writings, on the other hand, one finds that Dasein is silent and passive and it awaits the revelation of Being.

The other side of the picture is substantiated by the views of thinkers who hold the view that there is no Kehre in Heidegger's thinking. Heidegger's letter to Richardson can be shown as an evidence for this standpoint. Here, Heidegger firmly asserts that he always had in mind certain basic insights which he tried to develop in the various writings. He mentions three insights which remain as the recurring themes in all his writings.
(a) The fundamental problem of philosophy is the question concerning the meaning of Being.

(b) This question has to be elaborated phenomenologically. Hermeneutic phenomenology has the task of interpreting Being which is the text to be interpreted in this context.

(c) The phenomenological enquiry into the meaning of Being must take its starting point from a hermeneutic of Dasein which enjoys a privileged position among beings or essents.

A careful reading of Heidegger's writings brings home the fact that it is very clear to Heidegger that "the thing itself" into which phenomenology is enquiring is neither intentional consciousness nor the 'transcendental ego', but the Being of beings. But, why did Heidegger avoid this term in the later writings? An answer can be found in his path of thinking. In his letter to Richardson,\(^4\) Heidegger says that, since phenomenology in Husserl's sense was developed into an idealistic philosophical position rooted in the thought of Descartes, Kant, and Fichte, it was necessary for him to suspend the use of the term for a while
to avoid confusion and misunderstanding. But, as shown in the following pages, though Heidegger takes his point of departure in Husserl's phenomenology, his own conception of phenomenology differs radically from Husserl's original view.

The second contention regarding the transition of Dasein from activity to passivity has wider implications; and an answer to this issue must keep the whole of the Heideggerian thought in mind before making an evaluation of any part of his writings. The problem can be dealt with, to a great extent, from Heidegger's assertion 'Dasein alone exists'. Here, Heidegger employs the term 'existence' in a technical sense, drawing heavily from its etymological meaning. The term existence refers to Dasein's capacity for transcendence. Dasein alone has a world and is capable of uncovering entities. Thus, Dasein 'stands out' (ex-sistere) from the realm of entities by the unique capacity it possesses. Being manifests itself in Dasein. It means that the presencing of Being takes place through Dasein, which alone exists. But it would be a hasty conclusion to draw that presence is grounded in existence.
Dasein, from the Heideggerian point of view, is thrown into a world of existential predicaments; and there is no option to choose to be in this world or not. Though choosing and acting are integral to existence, Dasein is deprived of freedom to choose itself. Dasein has no option for not choosing to be the ground of presence. Dasein finds itself in such a way that it is always and necessarily related to something that is not an entity at all, viz. presence. These ontological features can never be brought under theoretical scrutiny as it is in the case of beings or entities.

Heidegger interprets Dasein in clear terms as that which is inherently tied to or essentially related to Being. Therefore, he says, "Being 'is' only in the understanding of those entities to which an understanding of something like Being belongs." He goes on even to the extent of asserting that Being is grounded in an entity, viz. Dasein.

Heidegger's later reorientation, where presence becomes the ground of existence, certainly brought difficulties to scholars as to how to read his mind. We find Heidegger gradually distancing presence from
existence. This meant that he gave a reorientation to his conception of Being in such a way as to assert a complete independence of Being from entities. More specifically, it meant making Being as presence independent of the kind of entity - Dasein, in whose mode of Being, existence is grounded.

However, the question of Being survived the reorientation and, therefore, it is wrong to consider the reorientation of Heidegger as an attempt to work out the question of the meaning of Being in one route and then rejecting that route setting out for another. We find a change in Heidegger's line of thinking from mid-thirties when he tried to conceive Being as presence in such a way as to keep it clear of those specific features of Dasein so that it may not endanger the unity and singularity of Being. This development in Heidegger's thinking is only a continuation of some basic problems Heidegger had in mind.

The two issues raised above are only preliminary to more specific questions with wider implications. They are mainly concerned with how to understand a thinker from a particular perspective. It is a task that demands a lot of effort, for the factors involved in the formation of a
thinker are multifarious and multidimensional. The various determinants that have contributed positively or negatively to the development of his or her thought, such as the influence from the predecessors and contemporaries, the intellectual background during the formative years, social and political developments, the life-situations in general and so many other factors leave their characteristic marks on the thought. But it does not mean that a thinker is beyond comprehension and that his thoughts will remain obscure to us forever. Since the history of philosophy has been a continuous conversation on issues pervasive and sometimes insoluble, there is ample chance to engage in a dialogue with a thinker irrespective of the time and situation in which he lived. It points to the fact that at every phase of history one can recapitulate the ideas formulated by a particular thinker and make him respond to the issues that remain problematic in his writings.

There are two issues related to the foregoing discussion. The first one poses serious doubts on the relation between the mind of a thinker and the body of his writing, i.e. the text. The second question, which is closely related to the first, searches for a connecting link
at the various stages in the development of thought in the writings of a thinker. In brief, we are faced with two questions:

(a) Can a thinker be best judged on the basis of any one - the magnum opus - of his published works?

(b) How can we account for the development of the thought of a philosopher as it is manifested in the various writings?

The first question raises serious issues regarding the relation between a creative writer and his writings. Does the text mirror the mind of a thinker? And, if so, to what extent? A work of great significance may be ascribed to a particular person. However, the insights that contributed to its formation as well as the possible interpretations it may invite are unpredictable and never exhaustive. In this context, the credibility of the position that a philosophical treatise is an objective entity laid bare before us to be interpreted becomes questionable, because an examination of all the factors involved in it are near impossible. It is precisely due to this reason that thinkers like Heidegger and Gadamer
emphasize the need for listening to the 'unsaid' in the text rather than an interpretation of it verbatim.

The truth of a text is not confined to the realm of language analysis. On the contrary, it goes beyond language and reaches the level of a constant dialogue where the spirit of questioning predominates. If this argument is conceded, it follows that one cannot expect the views of a thinker best expressed in any one of his works. In order to do justice to a thinker, one has to keep an open mind to listen to the said and 'unsaid' in the various works. This is true not only in the case of Heidegger, but also for thinkers from ancient times to the present. In short, our foremost aim must be to bring the thinker back into life rather than a strict adherence to narrow and literal interpretations. In this context, Marjorie Grene observes: "Any method of exegesis which brings the thinker to life is preferable to one that leaves his words stiff and dead on the page."

The second question necessitates a search to find out the leading theme that runs through the various writings of a thinker. It provides us with a key to his/her thought. The thematical development of the central issue that
captured the attention of the thinker may find its expression in the various writings either in a systematic or desultory way. It shows that a chronological arrangement of the writings may not suffice to provide us with a clue to the pattern of development that has taken place. The evolution of thought can be linear, spiral, cyclical or something else and it is for us to ascertain the mysterious ways through which thought carries the seeker. Thought is a form of life, and it presupposes vitality and growth. The possibility of growth in thinking is a basic factor that has to be reckoned with. If this is conceded, we have a valid argument to emphasize the cohesive nature of thought, irrespective of the shifts of emphasis that have crept into it. It also suggests that the world of a philosopher is prodigiously great and that it is necessary for the interpreter to obtain a familiarity before hand.

1.2.0. The Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to develop the Heideggerian response to the question of Kehre by reading Heidegger close to his own conception of what philosophy is and what it ought to be. By the 'Heideggerian response', I mean a systematic arrangement of his ideas taking a balanced
account of his views spread throughout his writings without assigning undue importance to any particular work. The emphasis, therefore, is not laid on the problem and its emergence in the course of the development of Heidegger's thinking. On the contrary, an attempt is made to read Heidegger moving along the path that thinking progressively takes by constructing and deconstructing the notions of everyday use. It is not even the aim to find a solution to the problem once and for all, not even to show an organic unity in his thought. The foremost aim of this thesis confines itself to a reading of Heidegger that may account for the development in his thinking. It is also shown simultaneously how Heidegger keeps the central problem - the question of the meaning of Being - in focus throughout these writings.

1.3.0. The Relevance of this Project

There are certain objectives in view when this problem has been taken for a deeper examination. First of all, to give a clear picture of the vision of a thinker one must try to find out the various strands of thought that remain as the background for the unique approach to reality which the particular thinker is noted for. It may appear to
be a laborious task, but it is near impossible to understand a seminal thinker like Heidegger in total isolation from the historical development of western philosophy. Thus, a preliminary acquaintance with the thought of Heidegger naturally leads the aspirant to a wide spectrum of ideas beginning from pre-Socratic philosophers to Nietzsche in contemporary times.

Second, it remains a well-known fact that the Heideggerian thought has made its influence in contemporary philosophical arena. His stature as an "edifying philosopher" is well-established by the way in which his influence is felt in areas as diverse as phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty), existentialism (Sartre, Ortega y Gasset), hermeneutics (Gadamer, Ricoeur), political theory (Hannah Arendt, the early Marcuse), psycho-therapy theory (Medard Boss, Ludwig Binswanger, Rollo May), theology (Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich) and so on. Therefore, the Heideggerian thought remains as a threshold to contemporary philosophical investigation and, for that matter, to any field of knowledge.

Third, one of the exciting areas of present day intellectual pursuit is concerned with making manifest
hitherto unnoticed and unsuspected features of human existence. The hermeneutic phenomenology of Heidegger is a path-breaking venture in this direction. The practical holism that is found in the Heideggerian approach calls for a primordial understanding of human condition. The holistic approach is also derivative of the spirit of phenomenology extensively found in the Heideggerian corpus of thought. Heidegger's holistic approach poses certain questions which directly pertain to the art of interpretation, for a scientific explanation of the state of affairs is out of place. On the contrary, a profound understanding of the entire edifice of thought is called for.

1.4.0. A Brief Sketch of Heidegger's Life

The question of Being began to vex Heidegger when he was still a high school student. But the decisive moment in his life came fortuitously when one of his teachers presented him with Franz Brentano's book On the Manifold Meaning of Being in Aristotle. This book made him convinced of the fact that the question of Being is worth inquiring into. Moreover, he also realized that the question of Being is the most elusive.
After having studied carefully the history of western philosophy, Heidegger categorically asserted that the 'forgetfulness of Being' was one of the very serious omissions in the history of western thought after its promising start in the early Greek period. The retrieval of Being from oblivion, thus, became the inevitable task of Heidegger, and we find him devoting his entire philosophical career towards this single aim.

Heidegger's original ideas are not so expressive in his publications before 1927. His doctoral thesis 'The Doctrine of Judgement in Psychologism' (1913) and his monograph The Theory of Categories and Meaning of Duns Scotus (1915) were rather conventional in style, but indicative of the genius of the author as a promising philosopher.

The breakthrough in Heidegger's philosophical career came after 12 years when he published Being and Time (1927) where he systematically projects his programme of thought. There are two main tasks he envisages in this book. First, to formulate an "ontological analytic of Dasein as laying bare the horizon for an interpretation of the meaning of Being in general". Second, to introduce a
complete revision of the history of philosophy by "destroying the history of ontology". Both these tasks, even though promised in Being and Time, were not carried out fully in the same text. However, it can be seen fulfilled if one patiently reconstructs his ideas in the light of the later publications as well.

Being and Time is incomplete for reasons not obvious. Heidegger held back Division III of part I where he was supposed to complete his first task, the "laying bare of the horizon for an interpretation of the meaning of Being as such." Part II also never appeared and it was to contain a discussion on "Kant's doctrine of schematism and time", "the ontological foundation of the 'cagito sum' of Descartes", and "Aristotle's essay on time, as providing a way of discriminating the phenomenal basis and limits of ancient ontology." It is unwarranted and insignificant to get into any speculation regarding the failure to publish the promised parts: let it be conceded that he was forced to publish the manuscript sooner than planned.

However, it is a fact that the published portion of Being and Time comes to an abrupt end after the explanation of our concern with history, and the accounts of
our 'historicality' and of the everyday conception of time. The only feasible answer to this abrupt end is to be viewed against his observation that language presented certain difficulties to go further ahead. Though The Basic Problems of Phenomenology is considered to be supplementing Being and Time, it does not carry the issues any further. On this issue we are forced to be content with Heidegger's own remark about the earlier works. In On Time and Being Heidegger observes that his earlier works speak still in the language of metaphysics.

Viewed from another perspective, it can be seen that Heidegger's concern to overcome metaphysical thinking in all possible ways grew more deep in later years and it may be a reason why even the project of fundamental ontology goes behind the seen. The increasing skepticism about the feasibility of transcendental reasoning as such and his conviction that Dasein is the 'shepherd of Being' represent a reorientation in his thinking, but it can never be considered as a radical shift in his thinking. Heidegger's thinking at the later period was an extension of what he envisaged in Being and Time; and this is obvious from what he says in the preface to the 1953 edition of Being and
Time, where he reaffirmed that "the road it has taken remains even today a necessary one, if our Dasein is to be stirred by the question of Being".

Heidegger was undergoing a transformation in his personal and philosophical life in the years close to Being and Time. From 1916 onwards Heidegger was teaching Catholic philosophy at Freiburg University. In a letter to Father Krebs, a Professor of Theology at Freiburg University, who officiated Heidegger's marriage, Heidegger reveals the thought that troubles his mind. In this letter dated January 9, 1919, Heidegger says that he is becoming increasingly dissatisfied with dogmatic Catholicism. It was not his intention to discard metaphysics totally. Moreover, it became clear to Heidegger that his vocation is to be a philosopher whose highest ideals are different from the ordinary man. He says:

Inner truthfulness toward oneself and those one is supposed to teach, demand sacrifice, renunciation and struggles that remain forever foreign to the academic 'tradesman'. I believe that I have an inner call to philosophy and, by fulfilling it in research and teaching, a call to the eternal vocation of the inner man.
The personal crisis in faith finally led to the abandonment of dogmatic Catholicism and the personal and philosophical conversion was almost near to an end. He spent time reading the works of the Protestant theologians, Friedrich Schleiermacher and Martin Luther. It is during this period (April 1916) that Husserl came to Freiburg University. Heidegger had occasions to meet Husserl, who called himself a 'non-dogmatic Protestant.' How far their collaboration in academic pursuit was successful and how they differed in their views will be discussed in the forthcoming chapters.

*Being and Time* brought immediate recognition for Heidegger as a thinker of excellence and won him the appointment first to Hartmann's chair at Marburg in 1927 and in 1928 to the coveted position of the chair of philosophy at Freiburg University as Husserl's successor. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger had already asked for a more primordial and authentic conception of truth, different from the Aristotelian and Cartesian definition of it. Heidegger could find such a definition in the etymological meaning of the Greek term *aletheia* and its detailed elucidation is seen in a lecture delivered in 1930, and published under the title *On the Essence of Truth*. 
In all these writings of Heidegger's we find his concern to formulate a dynamic rather than a static ontology. Consequently, there is a vibrant mutual relation among the notions he introduces along with Being. Dasein is not a static point in a pre-existing indifferent universe or a subject without a world. It is not even confined to a segment of an infinite arrow of time. Dasein's modes of comportments constitute its meaning. Dasein is, at the same time, the one who responds to the call of Being. The privileged status of Dasein is determined by its capacity for essential thought, for we find that the present day world symbolizes the forgetfulness of this essential relation and, thus, the primary concern is shifted to the realm of that-which-is.

Dasein is, if correctly viewed, the shepherded or the guardian of Being. The status and dignity of Dasein rest merely on the fulfilment of this office and, thereby, acquiring a mastery over that-which-is. The authentic existence is that whereby one makes a constant attempt to remain in the proximity of the mystery of Being. This mode of thinking is related to Being in two different ways. First, it is owned by Being and secondly, it attends or
makes a response to the call of Being. The authenticity of Dasein rests on its readiness to acknowledge the claim of Being upon itself. Therefore, Heidegger says that we ourselves are the text and texture of the question concerning that which calls for thinking. In short, for Heidegger, thinking is a response on our part to a call that issues forth from the nature of things, i.e. from Being itself. These are the main ideas that dominate the later publications of Heidegger.

When we examine the works of Heidegger, it has to be always within the compass of the central ideas he tried to project. The to and fro movement of his thought is not defective, but contributive to the understanding of Heidegger's philosophy as a whole. The unified vision of Heidegger is something to be worked out in detail rather than something to be found systematically presented in his own works.